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# Intersubjectivity and Recognition

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# Introduction



# Intersubjectivity and Recognition

*Elisa Magri & Danielle Petherbridge*

University College Dublin, School of Philosophy\*

[elisa.magri@ucd.ie](mailto:elisa.magri@ucd.ie)

[danielle.petherbridge@ucd.ie](mailto:danielle.petherbridge@ucd.ie)

Recognition and intersubjectivity are two key concepts that have traversed the most important philosophical traditions, including German Idealism, Phenomenology, Critical Theory, Pragmatism, and ethics broadly construed. However, while the philosophical roots of recognition are often associated with Classical German Philosophy, it is a matter of disagreement whether recognition and intersubjectivity can be taken as synonyms. For instance, Robert R. Williams argued for the existence of the concept of intersubjectivity in German Idealism, exploring the convergence between Husserl's and Hegel's phenomenology. According to Williams, the problem of recognition is the problem of the other. Essentially, it is a question of carrying out Descartes' programme, i.e. the primacy of subjectivity, without lapsing into Cartesian solipsism.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Fichte's and Hegel's philosophy provide the ground to conceive of the other as a category that is inextricably linked to the metaphysics of *Geist*.

However, it is worth noting that the concept of recognition calls into question issues of ontological individuation, metaphysical identity, moral responsibility and acknowledgment that shift significantly not only from Fichte to Hegel, but even more substantially from German Idealism to Phenomenology. While the former is broadly concerned with the metaphysical architecture of subjectivity, the latter brings forth issues related to our affective and epistemic appraisal of other

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\* Correspondence: University College Dublin, School of Philosophy, Dublin 4, Ireland.

1 WILLIAMS 1992, 35.





embodied subjects. And yet it is undeniable that both concepts share a common philosophical task, which consists in shedding light on the structure and development of our basic acquaintance with the alien world. From this point of view, Critical Theory has played a crucial role in addressing the social implications of the concept of recognition as well as in uncovering its different modalities, which range from the sphere of affectivity to the linguistic and pragmatic dimensions of interpersonal encounters.<sup>2</sup> By and large, however, the relation between recognition (*Anerkennung*) – as conceived by German Idealism (esp. Hegel and Fichte) – and intersubjectivity – as developed by the XX century phenomenological movement, represents an open question sporadically addressed in the literature.<sup>3</sup>

One can explore the philosophical connection between intersubjectivity and recognition from different perspectives that either reconstruct specific philosophical debates, or focus on selected issues that shed new light on the reaches and scopes of both concepts. In any case, the dialogue between German Idealism, Phenomenology, and Critical Theory proves to be fruitful and deserves more work and research, especially in light of the open questions it raises. Leaving aside whether and how philosophers like Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, or Levinas did consciously attempt to inherit and pursue the original problems posited by Hegel and Fichte, it is still a matter of controversy whether and how (1) recognition and intersubjectivity overlap social and moral issues, especially in Hegel's case, and (2) whether the concept of intersubjectivity has enough explanatory power to explicate the many different phenomena it is supposed to cover.

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2 See, in particular, HONNETH 1995 and PETHERBRIDGE 2013.

3 While the questions that inspired this issue are specifically concerned with the convergence between recognition and intersubjectivity, the parallels and philosophical connections between German Idealism and Phenomenology have been the objects of a number of studies in recent years. See, for instance, STAHELER 2003 and 2016 as well as the essays edited by WAIBEL, BREAZEALE, ROCKMORE 2010, FABBIANELLI and LUFT 2014, MANCA, MAGRI, FERRARIN 2015, and MORAN and MAGRI 2017. Concerning Hegel and Critical Theory, see the articles edited by O'CONNOR and GILADI 2017.

Problem (1) involves not only textual and exegetic analysis of Hegel's texts, but also a deeper engagement with the extraordinary stratification of readings of the famous IV chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>4</sup> While, for many scholars, the master-servant relationship is inexorably linked to the problem of sociality, others have stressed that this represent a reductionist reading that neglects to take into consideration the systematic development of the self throughout the *Phenomenology*.<sup>5</sup> It is undeniable that the concept of *Anerkennung* introduces to the I-Thou relation, but it is questionable whether such relation corresponds to the discovery of intersubjectivity as plurality of egos, or to the dimension of sociality (implying anthropological and moral issues), or rather to a different form of self-knowledge and practical development of rationality. In this sense, the philosophical dialogue between intersubjectivity and recognition helps us re-read Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in light of its unexplored issues and problems, such as the genesis of the self and its different forms of affective and reflective awareness.

Problem (2) concerns more closely the extent of the concept of *Intersubjektivität*. For Husserl, the concept of intersubjectivity is linked to the problem of the phenomenological reduction. While he tries to work out the individuality of the ego in relation to other egos, he borrows the notion of *Einfühlung* from Theodor Lipps, but he is careful to distinguish his own approach from Lipps'.<sup>6</sup> In this way, the notion of intersubjectivity is crucial to uncover the phenomenology of the alien world, to paraphrase Waldenfels, namely to bring to attention the richness of the self-other relation (which is not restricted to human beings, but includes non-human beings and even, as shown by de Warren in this issue, the departed selves). Yet intersubjectivity appears, sometimes, as an umbrella term that covers many different aspects of interpersonal experience, including the constitution of a

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4 For a historical overview, see BODEI 2007.

5 See, for example, the different views on recognition of Herrmann and Cobben in this issue. See also de BOER 2013 and FERRARIN 2016.

6 For a critical reconstruction, see ZAHAVI 2014.

pre-objective world as well as the basic and primordial encounter with another self. To be sure, for Husserl, several distinctions apply when it comes to articulating the sphere of subjectivity as such (e.g. the transcendental self, the personal ego, the subject of practical and moral action, the monad, etc.). It appears then worthwhile to reconsider the goals and reaches of the concept of intersubjectivity in light of the different levels of recognition that the phenomenological method enables, and in this sense the connection to contemporary research in Critical Theory looks very promising.

This issue of *Metodo – International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy* aims to provide the ground for new discussions on the philosophical connections between these different philosophical traditions (German Idealism, Phenomenology, and Critical Theory). It also aims to investigate more deeply whether and how the conceptual relation between recognition and intersubjectivity is fruitful for our understanding of the life-world and social reality more generally. On the one hand, the contributions of Cobben, Gardner, Herrmann, Moran, Jardine, Russell, de Warren, and Dahlstrom engage with a number of issues, that surround the concepts of intersubjectivity and recognition, with particular regard to the constitution of the intersubjective world. The topics discussed range from the appraisal of the other in Hegel's philosophy as well as in the phenomenological and critical traditions to responsibility, shame, after-life, and pragmatics. On the other hand, Hartz and Ponzio explore in detail the hidden relevance of Fichte's and Hegel's thought in Arendt and Levinas respectively.

Paul Cobben's paper, *Recognition and Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Philosophy*, frames the problem of recognition in Hegel's philosophy drawing attention to the fact that the subjects involved cannot be taken as concrete individuals. Referring to Sartre and Heidegger, Cobben weaves together a subterranean dialogue between Hegel and Phenomenology. For Cobben, the concept of recognition in Hegel's philosophy must be explored systematically and cannot be reduced to the *Phenomenology*. In this way, Cobben instructively illuminates the

problematic relation between Hegel's account of recognition and the concrete intersubjective terrain provided by the sphere of institutions and ethical life.

Sebastian Gardner's paper, *Sartre's Original Insight*, is an elegant and fine-grained analysis of the problem of intersubjectivity in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* that draws on Sartre's criticism of Hegel. Gardner shows that Sartre's account requires an apriori, transcendental level of justification of intersubjectivity, and this provides the ground for an altogether different account of the I-We relation compared to Hegel's. At the same time, Gardner shows that Sartre's account has political and ethical implications that are capable of overturning the Hegelian-Marxian traditional approach to social philosophy.

Steffen Herrmann's paper, *Asymmetrical Reciprocity. From Recognition To Responsibility and Back* draws an original and thought-provoking parallel between Hegel's logic of recognition and Levinas' theory of responsibility. For Herrmann, the master-servant relationship in Hegel's *Phenomenology* exhibits an asymmetrical relationship that is ontologically relevant for sociality. More specifically, Herrmann argues that the IV Chapter of the *Phenomenology* contains an asymmetrical dependency that is rooted in the structure of communication and is paralleled by Levinas' account of responsibility. Ultimately, however, Herrmann suggests that both Hegel and Levinas overlook a fundamental aspect about recognition that is grasped by Arendt's reflections on the self-exposure that is distinctive of our response to the other.

Dermot Moran's paper, *The Phenomenology of the Social World: Husserl on Mitsein as Ineinandersein and Füreinandersein*, provides a detailed reconstruction of the quest for sociality within the phenomenological movement, making references not only to Husserl, but also to a constellation of thinkers that are often neglected in the literature, such as Jan Patočka, Alfred Schutz, and Tomoo Otaka. Moran argues that Husserl refers to many different forms of social constitution that one can also find in Heidegger, such as *Mitsein*, *Weltlichkeit*, *Alltäglichkeit*,

*Zeitlichkeit*, and *Geschichtlichkeit*. These different concepts point to a stratification of sense in Husserl's philosophy that is not devoid of problems, as shown by Schutz's criticism of Husserl.

James Jardine's paper, *Elementary Recognition and Empathy: a Husserlian Account* explores the affinity between Honneth's account of elementary recognition and Husserl's theory of empathy. In particular, Jardine's fine-grained insight shows that both elementary recognition and Husserl's view of empathy lie below the level of judicative thinking as they depend on a net of motivational nexuses that form the basis for our response to others as persons. In this way, Jardine illuminates the dual stratification inherent in both Husserl's and Honneth's modes of recognition, thereby establishing the basis for their dialogue.

Matheson Russell's paper, *Habermas and the 'Presupposition' of the Common Objective World*, is a thought-provoking contribution regarding the significance of the pre-objective world or life-world in both Habermas and Husserl. Russell focuses particularly on the linguistic modes of intersubjectivity, thereby advancing the debate on the connection between Habermas's pragmatic model and Husserl's phenomenology. In particular, Russell suggests that there is an important convergence between Habermas and Husserl, which involves the articulation of our practical involvement with the world as sustained by linguistic practices.

Nicolas de Warren's paper, *Souls of the Departed. Towards a Phenomenology of the After-Life*, argues that it is possible to decline the problem of intersubjectivity in a specific and non-egological way when the loss of another person is at stake. Combining in a fascinating and insightful way philosophy and literature, de Warren makes a case for the conceptual articulation of the relation to the departed, drawing on Ingarden's notion of metaphysical intuition and Patočka's writings. In this way, de Warren shows that, while the death of the other interrupts the circularity and mutual constitution of intersubjective relationships, there is still room not only for surviving the absence of the other, but also for surviving our own absence in the other's departure.

Daniel O. Dahlstrom's paper, *Scheler on Shame: A Critical Review*, investigates the relation between shame and intersubjectivity, providing a thorough and critical review of Scheler's account of shame. Dahlstrom draws attention not only to Scheler's distinction between bodily and spiritual shame, but also to the relation between shame and self-protection as well as to the peculiar entanglement between universality and particularity that characterises the experience of being ashamed. Thus, Dahlstrom shows that shame includes different levels for Scheler, involving a complex stratification of bodily feelings, self-worth awareness, and love.

Emily Hartz's article, *The Existential Dimension of Right: Individuality, plurality and right in Fichte and Arendt*, investigates closely the relation between Fichte's and Arendt's account of right. The author's view is that it is possible to conceive of the sphere of right as an existential dimension in a way that is not captured by standard treatments of right. Drawing on Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* and Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*, Hartz argues that both Fichte and Arendt conceive of right as the dimension in which we ontologically come to express ourselves as human subjects. Yet Hartz also points out the fundamental contrast between Fichte's emphasis of modern State and Arendt's view of "the right to have rights", which is essentially linked to the problem of vulnerability inherent in any system of rights.

Julia Ponzio's article, *Il riconoscimento e la possibilità del dire in Levinas*, articulates the problem of recognition and forgiveness in Levinas drawing on Levinas' appraisal of Hegel's view of forgiveness and reconciliation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The author's view is that Levinas offers the tools to reconceptualise the problem of recognition in a way that does not depend on the Hegelian logic of self-justification and self-appropriation. Yet Ponzio also develops the hypothesis that Levinas' approach to the problem of forgiveness contains *in nuce*, albeit implicitly, a fundamental Hegelian inspiration that does not seek to reduce the other to the self.

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## Articles





# Recognition and Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Philosophy

*Paul G. Cobben*

University of Amsterdam\*

[P.G.Cobben@uva.nl](mailto:P.G.Cobben@uva.nl)

*ABSTRACT.* Very often, it is misunderstood what Hegel means by the relation of recognition between self-consciousnesses. Axel Honneth, for example, assumes that the self-consciousness has to be understood as a concrete individual, and he thinks that the recognition between self-consciousnesses thus concerns concrete individuals. In this contribution, I argue that the self-consciousness is a theoretical construction that serves, admittedly, the comprehension of the concrete individual, but at the same time, needs to be sharply distinguished from the concrete individual. The relation of recognition has nothing to do with the intersubjective relation, in which concrete individuals try to articulate their unique subjectivity to one another in an adequate manner.

*KEYWORDS.* Hegel; Recognition; Self-consciousness; Hegel's system.

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\* *Correspondence:* Paul G. Cobben – University of Amsterdam, Department of Philosophy, Oude Turfmarkt 145, Amsterdam.



## 1. Introduction

«Das Selbstbewusstsein ist an und für sich, indem, und dadurch, dass es für ein anderes an und für sich ist; d.h. es ist nur als ein Anerkanntes».<sup>1</sup> In this famous sentence from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel introduces his concept of recognition (*Anerkennung*). Very often, it is misunderstood what Hegel means by the relation of recognition between self-consciousnesses. For example, G. Gadamer illustrates this relation by comparing it to individuals greeting each other.<sup>2</sup> I can only greet another person if the other person answers my greetings. In this sense, to greet presupposes that we are already recognizing each other as individuals. Also A. Honneth assumes that the self-consciousness must be understood as a concrete individual, and he thinks that the recognition between self-consciousnesses thus concerns concrete individuals too.<sup>3</sup> In this contribution, I argue that Hegel, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, indeed intends to comprehend what the concrete individual is, viz. to conceive of the individual as the unity of body and mind; however, this concept is established only at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The self-consciousness is a theoretical construction that serves, admittedly, the comprehension of the concrete individual, but at the same time, self-consciousness needs to be sharply distinguished from the concrete individual. The relation of recognition has nothing to do with the intersubjective relation, in which concrete individuals try to articulate their unique subjectivity to one another in an adequate manner. An adequate conception of the relation of recognition makes clear that Sartre's criticism is untenable, and it makes clear that the asymmetry between the self and the other pointed out by Levinas', shows more resemblance to Hegel than the symmetric relation of recognition suggests.

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1 HEGEL 1977, 111 (hereafter PhoS): «Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it exists for another».

2 Cf. GADAMER 1976, 229.

3 Cf. COBBEN 2012, 91 ff.

## 2. Hegel's determination of self-consciousness as the result of the development of consciousness

In the first chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Consciousness), Hegel tries to think a self that is radically open to otherness. We could say, he in fact attempts to formulate the minimal condition under which an intersubjective relation is conceivable at all. A self that is not principally open to otherness will never be able to communicate with another self. We can conceive of Hegel's elaboration of this self as a way of thinking through the empiricist tradition.<sup>4</sup> The self, which is radically open to otherness, appears as a *tabula rasa* that is capable of immediately absorbing an externally given nature. The suchlike self immediately coincides with the nature, to which it relates.

However, when self and nature immediately coincide, we can hardly speak of an open relation. Nature must be determined in distinction to the self. The openness of the self must concern an openness for a nature distinct within itself, viz. a nature that is differentiated into distinct properties. However, this new relation creates a new problem. If the self, conceived of as *tabula rasa*, relates itself to a manifold of properties, the self loses its unity in the manifold of properties. To regain this unity, nature should unify the manifold of properties itself. To this effect, we must understand nature like modern natural science does by making nature into an object, i.e., a nature, in which many natural forces are active: nature is an interplay of forces. This works because, in the natural force, nature has a unity that grounds the manifold in which it manifests itself. The force appears as a natural law, viz. perceptible variables that are mathematically interconnected.

As long as nature is conceived of as an interplay of many natural forces, it remains impossible to think the self, which is open to these many forces of nature, as a unity. It should be possible to discover a force of nature that unifies all forces of nature, and all laws of nature in which they express themselves. In this situation, nature would have a unity in which the unity of the self, which is open to nature,

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4 COBBEN 2012, 11-53. See also COBBEN 2009, 17-22.

expresses itself. From the reflection about what it actually means to say that a force of nature expresses itself in a law of nature, we learn that this is not possible. The condition of nature appearing as the interplay of forces is constrained by what Kant calls the Copernican Turn: nature's appearance as a reality structured by natural laws, presupposes a self that already assumes that nature is structured according to laws. Only under this condition, it makes sense to formulate law hypotheses and to test them experimentally. The unity, which is attributed to nature by understanding it as the self-expression of natural forces, refers to the self that projects this unity in nature.

Hegel concludes that the attempt to think a self that is radically open to otherness cannot maintain the view of the self as a *tabula rasa*. The self cannot borrow its unity from otherness, and thus the self can only conceive of itself as a self, when it borrows its unity from itself. Out of its relation to otherness, the self must be immediately returned to itself. In other words, the self that relates to otherness must already possess an own self-being; otherwise, the self would lose itself in otherness. The self, which has returned out of its otherness back to itself, is the self as self-distinction, i.e., the self as formal self-relation, or the self as *self-consciousness*.<sup>5</sup> For Hegel, this self takes the shape of the concept (or the law): it is the unity of the moments of generality and particularity.

### 3. The consciousness as a critique of the Cartesian 'cogito'

Hegel's way of thinking through of empiricism seems to result in a rationalistic position: the formal self-relation seems to be identifiable with the Cartesian *cogito*. If this would be the case, all openness of the

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5 PhoS, 102: «[...] consciousness is for its own self, it is distinguishing of that which contains no difference, or *self-consciousness*. I distinguish myself from myself, and in doing so I am directly aware that what is distinguished from myself is not different [from me]».

self to otherness is gone, because then the *cogito* (as *res cogitans*) is conceived of as a substance that excludes all otherness (as *res extensa*). The self-consciousness is, however, essentially distinguished from the *cogito* – not merely because the self-consciousness is not a concrete individual (the self-consciousness is a formal self-relation, i.e., a mind that is not even capable of having a determined content of thought), but especially because self-consciousness has been developed from a self, which relates itself to nature. Therefore, from an external perspective, we must conclude that self-consciousness has a body, even though it has no knowledge of this body. Moreover, we cannot conceive of the nature, to which this bodily self-consciousness relates, as a *res extensa*. So far, we spoke about nature in relation to a self that was open to it. After the development of the self into self-consciousness, we should conceive of nature differently too, viz. as a nature that has, like self-consciousness, its own self. For Hegel, this nature is *living* nature.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the setting of the formal self-consciousness is as follows. From the internal perspective, self-consciousness is a formal self-relation, it is its own essence. From the external perspective, the self-consciousness also has a body, and it relates itself to an external nature, which is determined as life, as a being with needs. The objectified nature appears within the internal perspective as an independent objectivity that threatens the self-consciousness, because the essence of this objectivity is not the self. Only if this opposition between the external perspective and the internal one is negated, and the formal self-consciousness is not contradicting itself, self-consciousness can be conceived of as an actual self-consciousness.

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6 PhoS, 106: «But *for us*, or *initself*, the object which for self-consciousness is the negative element has, on its side, returned into *intself*, just as on the other side consciousness has done. Through this reflection into itself the object has become Life».

#### 4. The reality of the self-consciousness a bodily self-consciousness

The first attempt to think the reality of self-consciousness is made on the level of what Hegel calls desire.<sup>7</sup> The self-consciousness no longer seems to relate to an alien independence; therefore, it can conceive of itself as a self-relation without contradiction if its bodily needs are satisfied by eliminating the life to which it relates (i.e., by killing it and digesting it as prey). However, this solution is only temporal, because the bodily needs will return, so the self-consciousness will relate to an alien objectivity again. This process repeats itself endlessly. Then, the only possible conclusion is that the independence of the self-consciousness is inconceivable in the immediate relation to nature: the self-consciousness can merely be thought if it manages to detach itself from nature. Yet this is only possible if nature has its own independence. However, precisely this own independence of nature leads to the contradiction of the substance dualism that characterized the philosophy of Descartes.

Hegel undertakes a second attempt to overcome the contradiction of self-consciousness by introducing the relation of recognition. This time, he does not put the self-consciousness in relation to nature, but he puts it in relation to another self-consciousness.<sup>8</sup> In this relation, we can think self-consciousness without contradiction. In this relation, self-consciousness can be with itself, i.e. it can be distinguished from the alien independence; at the same time, it does not succumb to this alien independence, because the latter is in no way distinct from it: the alien independence is self-consciousness after all. Here, Hegel overcomes the problem of substance dualism by conceiving of self-consciousness as a substance that doubles itself, thinking it as a perfect symmetrical relation to another substance. Exactly by virtue of this perfect symmetry, the otherness of the other substance immediately returns to itself again. Hegel signifies this relation of recognition as the

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<sup>7</sup> PhoS, 109.

<sup>8</sup> PhoS, 110: «*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*».

concept of *spirit*, as the I that is immediately a We.<sup>9</sup>

The relation of recognition makes clear that we cannot conceive of self-consciousness as a closed self. Self-consciousness is altogether not conceivable in the singular. It is, by its nature, related to another self-consciousness. Nonetheless, the conclusion should not be that we must understand the relation of recognition as one of intersubjectivity. Precisely because of the symmetry, the one self-consciousness is not in any way distinct from the other self-consciousness. The self-consciousness still has nothing to do with a concrete individual that can relate, in its unicity, to another concrete individual. The relation of recognition expresses that the human being as a spiritual being shares something essential with other human beings. Insofar as self-consciousness expresses its freedom with respect to nature, it shares this freedom with others essentially. By being reasonable, humans participate in one and the same human reason.

To be able to link the relation of recognition to concrete individuals and intersubjectivity, we need to account for the fact that a real self-consciousness has a body too. Only the bodily self-consciousness is an individual self-consciousness. However, this evokes the problem that precisely this embodiment breaks out of the symmetry that essentially characterizes recognition. If the other self has a body, the self-consciousness relates to an alien substance again. Hegel works out this problem in the life-and-death struggle for recognition.<sup>10</sup> In order to achieve their symmetric relation, bodily consciousnesses must eliminate the embodiment. Still, through such elimination, they cease to exist.

## 5. The lord/bondsman-relation

On the level of the lord/bondsman-relation, Hegel undertakes a third

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9 PhoS, 110: «With this, we already have before us the Notion of *Spirit*. [...] 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'».

10 PhoS, 114: «A life-and-death struggle».



attempt to think the reality of self-consciousness. Here, he wants to comprehend the conditions that would make it possible that the relation of recognition does not contradict the embodiment of the self-consciousness. Only if this attempt turns out to be successful, the way to thinking about intersubjectivity is open.<sup>11</sup>

Central to the lord/bondsman-relation is Hegel's analysis of the fear of death. As such, the fear of death is connected to animal life. We can indeed conceive of life as an interplay of forces between the living organism and its surrounding nature. External forces influence the organism, they interact with it, and they threaten its unity. The organism responds with counterforces that maintain its unity: in relation to external nature it satisfies its needs. The survival of the organism consists in this interplay of force and counterforce. Still, the organism loses in the end: confronting the supremacy of the surrounding nature, it confronts the power of the absolute lord (death)<sup>12</sup> and dies. It experiences the power of the absolute lord in the fear of death. The organism is no longer able to sustain the interplay of forces, and it is forced back into itself. We can describe the organism in the state of fear of death as the force that is forced back into itself.

We can also conceive of the bodily self-consciousness as a force that is forced back into itself, seen from the outside at least.<sup>13</sup> However, the question is how this is compatible with its self-consciousness. On the level of desire, it was clear that thinking self-consciousness in relation to an independent life leads to contradictions. Admittedly, our concern is now the organism of the self-consciousness (rather than one in the

11 Sartre reproaches Hegel that he identifies, by introducing the relation of recognition, being and being-known: «C'est encore la connaissance qui est ici mesure de l'être et Hegel ne conçoit même pas qu'être-pour-autrui qui ne soit pas finalement réductible à un 'être-objet'» (SARTRE 1943, 283). This would lead to two 'mistakes', viz. an epistemological optimism and an ontological one (SARTRE 1943, 285). At the level of the lord/bondsman-relation, however, it appears that there is no epistemological optimism. Hegel would affirm what Sartre says when he remarks: «En un mot la conscience est un être concret et *sui generis*, non une relation abstraite et injustifiable d'identité» (SARTRE 1943, 284). Later on in this paper, it will become clear that also the ontological optimism does not apply to Hegel.

12 PhoS, 117: «The fear of death, the absolute Lord».

13 PhoS, 117: «As a consciousness forced back into itself».

outside world), but this only makes the contradiction even more inescapable. The illusion of desire that it could eliminate alien life is definitively refuted. In the fear of death, the power of alien life is experienced as something absolute. For the first time, self-consciousness is confronted with the fact that it cannot evade its body, and that the latter is, nonetheless, a body that contradicts the first's existence as self-consciousness. Its body appears as the alien independence that it cannot overcome. Again, it becomes evident that we cannot comprehend self-consciousness in relation to nature.

The bodily self-consciousness can only survive the experience of the fear of death if it does not confront the bodily consciousness with the absolute lord (death); instead, the bodily consciousness has to relate, as a pure self-consciousness, to a pure self-consciousness. This is exactly what Hegel tries to conceive of. The first move is to conceive of the supremacy of nature not as death but as the supremacy of second nature. It reminds us of the transition of the state of nature to the state of law in Thomas Hobbes. In the state of nature, natural (bodily) individuals are indeed free, but they are unable to realize their freedom because they are involved in a life-and-death struggle. The life-and-death struggle is only overcome when they make the transition to the state of law. The individuals enter into a social contract, in which they recognize a "lord" (*Leviathan*), whose laws they will obey. This replaces the objectivity of the state of nature by social objectivity (state of law), a second nature expressing the self-consciousness of the lord.

However, Hegel puts forward a fundamental critique of Hobbes' project. The latter's state of nature presupposes that it is possible to conceive of bodily self-consciousnesses without contradiction. We just saw that this is impossible. Furthermore, entering into a social contract presupposes that the individuals are mutually recognizing each other. This implies that the state of law, which the social contract should bring about, is also its precondition. The result is an unacceptable circularity. Hegel concludes, therefore, that bodily self-consciousnesses are already living in a state of law. As a bodily individual, the human

being is a “bondsman”, i.e., dependent on nature; but as a spiritual individual, it has replaced nature by a second nature, and hence serves the laws of the lord of society. His actions are not determined by animal instincts but by the laws of society. Outside society, outside the cultural order, it is generally impossible to conceive of bodily self-consciousnesses.

It seems, however, that the contradiction characterizing the bodily self-consciousness is still not resolved. Second nature indeed remains an alien substance. Taking this substance as the expression of the self of the lord does not change anything about that. The relation to the lord can still not be conceived of as the symmetry of the pure recognition. This explains Hegel’s second move: the relation of the bodily self-consciousness (the bondsman) to the lord is essentially mediated by the fear of death.

In the fear of death, the bodily self-consciousness relates to its own body as a force that is forced back into itself. Earlier on, we concluded that in this relation, self-consciousness cannot be conceived of without contradiction. However, when the fear of death does not ground in the absolute lord (death) but in the lord of society, the situation changes. Precisely because the fear of death confronts self-consciousness with the absolute independence of its body, self-consciousness experiences that it is absolutely distinct from it. In this experience, it becomes cut loose from its natural reality to the extent that it no longer capable of having a determined relation to nature. If self-consciousness would lose, in this situation, all determinacy, it would have no independence and collapse. The reason why this does not happen, is because self-consciousness now has a determinacy in relation to the lord of society. Such relation can thus not be simply understood as one in which the societal ruler exerts power over a subject.

The power of the societal ruler manifests itself in the determination of the enacted laws. In relation to this determinacy, self-consciousness cannot be conceived of without contradiction. Only when the determinacy is understood as the expression of a pure self-consciousness, we can conceive of the self-consciousness’ relation to

the lord without contradictions: only then, we conceive of self-consciousness as a symmetric relation to another self-consciousness. It implies that the bondsman does not subject itself to the lord because the latter confronts him with an alien power, but because he recognizes his own essence in the lord. In serving the lord, the bondsman serves his own being. This being is his pure freedom, the spirit that is conceived of as the symmetric recognition of self-consciousnesses. Consequently, it is absolutely impossible to identify the lord with the societal ruler.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that self-consciousness' relation to nature is mediated by its relation to the lord implies that self-consciousness does not express its particularity only in relation to nature; instead, we should understand it as spiritual particularity that subsequently manifests itself in nature. Only as such, the selfness will not get lost in the relation to nature.

## **6. The citizen of the Polis as the historical reality of the bondsman who has recognized himself in the lord**

At first, the fact that the bondsman has recognized his freedom in the lord remains implicit, and he merely expresses himself practically in the obedience of serving the law of society. Only when the bondsman has posited external nature as expression of his essence in and through the activity of labor, he can recognize himself in the lord (who is indeed the essence of nature). According to Hegel, this particular relation can be illustrated by the society of Ancient Greece, the Polis.

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14 Hegel's and Levinas's analysis of labor are quite similar (See: COBBEN 2007, 322-4). For both thinkers, labor is only possible if the relation to nature has been transcended. For Hegel, this transcendence is expressed as the bondsman's relation to the lord. Levinas too, expresses transcendence as a relation to the lord, viz. as «la relation avec l'Autrui, avec l'infini». (LEVINAS 1974, 141). The Other (*l'Autrui*) is, for Levinas, the lord: "maître", "maîtrise" (LEVINAS 1974, 146). The symmetrical relation of recognition seems to contradict Levinas's a-symmetrical relation to the Other. We will see, however, that also the relation between bondsman and lord can be elaborated as the a-symmetrical relation between objective and absolute spirit.

Here, the bondsman appears as the citizen of the Polis, and the lord appears as the human law that is served by the citizens. The citizens recognize themselves in the human law as a law that expresses their own autonomy. In their actions, they do nothing but realizing the norms and values of the human law, which they know to be their essence. External reality appears to them as nothing but the expression of these norms and values.<sup>15</sup> Understood as such, we can compare the Polis to what Heidegger's conceives of as *Dasein*.<sup>16</sup> The finite self is thrown into the world of the Polis, and it is 'disposed' by the tradition that is expressed in the human law: the citizens of the Polis share a pathos<sup>17</sup>, which ties them to the human law, making their determinations of self-consciousness coincide with those of the human law. The intersubjectivity between citizens thus acquires a very specific and limited meaning here. The citizens are related to each other insofar as they share the tradition of the Polis. In this tradition, everyone can have his own particular place, yet this particularity belongs already to the moments resulting from the self-differentiation of the human law. In that sense, for the individuals, their particularity is given to them beforehand by society, and they are completely assimilated with the finitude of their tradition. In this case, communication between individuals is comparable with the one between family members who cannot cut loose their identity from the shared family life.<sup>18</sup>

The historical reality of the Polis shows that it is possible to transform natural reality into a second nature, into a nature that is the expression of self-consciousness. This formation not only presupposes that natural reality allows to be transformed into a nature expressing self-consciousness, but the same thing goes for embodied reality.

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15 PhoS, 281: «On account of this unity, the individuality is the pure form of substance which is the content, and the action is the transition from thought to actuality merely as the movement of an insubstantial antithesis whose movements have no particular, distinctive content and no essentiality of their own».

16 Cf. COBBEN 1999, 107 ff.

17 Cf. COBBEN 2015.

18 HEGEL 1989, §158 (henceforth abbreviated as Grl).

Indeed, the bodily activity mediates the transformation the external nature. The formation of nature must not only concern objective (external) reality but subjective (bodily) nature too. We have seen that Hegel conceives of lifeless nature as well as living nature as an interplay of forces. It becomes clear that self-consciousness can express itself in this interplay of forces, when Hegel posits that the interplay of forces is brought to self-consciousness in the relation of recognition. «In dieser Bewegung sehen wir sich den Prozess wiederholen, der sich als Spiel der Kräfte darstellte, aber im Bewusstseyn. Was in jenem für uns war, ist hier für die Extreme selbst».<sup>19</sup> While we can understand, from the outside, lifeless nature as a interplay of forces, we can understand living nature as a interplay of forces that is executed practically by life itself: the instinctive actions of the living species practically intend to reproduce the life of the species. The actions of the bodily self-consciousness (self-conscious nature), which take place according to the human law, do not reproduce life but the *good life*. The good life is not naturally given, but it is the spiritual content of the human law. Therefore, the *Bildung* that needs to take place to realize the human law implies, first of all, the *Bildung* of the natural self: the self must learn to prioritize the determinations of the human law above his natural instincts. This *Bildung* of the subjective nature immediately coincides with the *Bildung* of objective nature: this objective nature will then be posited as the expression of the human law.

The lord, in which the Greek citizen recognizes himself, is not the pure self-consciousness. Rather, the human law is a specific historical form in the freedom of the self-consciousness manifests itself. The citizen is not yet able to relate himself to the tradition of his freedom. Put in a Kantian phrasing, one could say that human law is a subjective maxim shared by all citizens. However, in principle, the citizens have already developed universal freedom. They have indeed cut themselves loose from nature, and they have replaced the

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19 PhoS, 112: «In this movement we see repeated the process which presented itself as the interplay of Forces, but repeated now in consciousness».

determinations of their natural inclinations with those of the human law. They are, therefore, open to alternative determinations of the human law. Hegel reconstructs the history of Europe after the Polis, in which this universal freedom actually becomes conscious of itself.

## 7. Relations between persons in the Roman Empire

In this reconstruction, the first move is Hegel's interpretation of the transition from the Greek world to the Roman Empire. The citizens of the human law undergo a transformation, and they become the free and equal persons of the Roman Law. This transformation is mediated by the struggle between the poleis. In this struggle, it becomes explicit that the determinations of the human law only realize self-consciousness in a contingent manner. Indeed, the human law of the other polis has another content. Here, citizens experience that the determinacy of their freedom is unessential, and they learn that they have to conceive of themselves as formal persons. Cut loose from their traditional determinacy, these free and equal persons relate to each other as interchangeable persons in a symmetrical relation of recognition.<sup>20</sup> In this movement, that which was already clear to us (from an outside perspective), now becomes explicit from the internal perspective: the freedom of self-consciousness can only be conceived of without contradiction in relation to another self-consciousness. Nonetheless, we cannot claim that the formal relation between persons expresses universal freedom. In the relation from person to person, the relation of recognition does not find its adequate expression in any way. Of course, we can characterize the relation between persons as a symmetrical one, but it has not yet freed itself from natural reality. The person is real insofar as he is also an embodied individual. Hence, the real relation between individuals cannot be conceived of as a symmetrical relation.

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<sup>20</sup> PhoS, 290: «The universal being thus split up into a mere multiplicity of individual, this lifeless Spirit is an equality, in which all count the same, i.e. as *persons*».

Because the person is an embodied individual too, he relates to nature. In this relation, he preserves his freedom as self-consciousness by making the natural thing (the matter) his property. Insofar as the matter is his property, he has the matter freely at his disposal. In that sense, the person's freedom appears in the property. The symmetrical recognition between free individuals appears in the exchange of property. This exchange indeed expresses that natural matters are used as means to express free recognition. However, these natural matters also have their own reality, i.e., it is not evident that they can be used as means to express a person's freedom. In the downfall of the Roman Empire, this becomes explicit. Here, there no longer exists an order of property, in which the persons can realize their freedom. Consequently, to reconstruct the realization of universal freedom, a second move is necessary.

Before discussing the second move, I want to investigate to what extent we can speak of the relation from person to person as an intersubjective relation. In opposition to the original relation of recognition, the relation from person to person is about bodily self-consciousnesses. Other than the citizens of the polis, they have disconnected themselves from the determined tradition of their world, so their intersubjectivity is not necessarily limited to the particularity that they have within this tradition. However, the emancipation from tradition did not result in intersubjectivity. The persons express themselves in relation to one another insofar as the exchange properties. Yet it is completely irrelevant, with whom they exchange properties. As persons, the individuals are entirely interchangeable.

## **8. The Reich der Bildung: the subjectivizing of the natural content**

In the second move (the *Reich der Bildung*), Hegel gives his reconstruction of the Christian world in the Middle Ages. Again, a movement that was already clear for us (the outsider's perspective), is



made explicit from the internal one: the other self, in relation to which we must conceive of the reality of self-consciousness, must be conceived of as a pure self. The self thus must not only cut itself loose from tradition, but from natural reality in general. This means that the real self-consciousness becomes explicitly conscious of the fear of death, which made clear that self-consciousness can exclusively be real in a relation of pure recognition.

During the downfall of the Roman Empire, the “absolute lord” (death) appears in the form of the destructive violence of the “Herr der Welt”<sup>21</sup>, i.e., the Roman emperor, who is no longer able to maintain the social order. At that moment, persons cannot express their freedom in a matter as property any longer. The destructive violence of the lord of the world appears as the absolute loss of the reality of freedom. However, the negative experience of this absolute loss does not result in the downfall of the person. The experience of absolute loss turns around in one of absolute positivity, when the person experiences himself as absolutely distinct from natural reality. The person experiences his absolute independence in relation to nature. He can relate to nature as such, because he has a free relation to nature. Nevertheless, in this situation, we cannot conceive of the independence of the person (of pure self-consciousness) as a relation of recognition. With the downfall of the property order, the other persons no longer appear in the matter as property, and a real relation to other persons is not possible anymore. To preserve his independence in opposition to nature, the person must determine himself in a way, which makes sure that his self-being does not get lost. He achieves this in relation to an “negated” matter; a matter, to which he relates freely: this matter is a sort of *Ding an sich*, a *Dingheit* that Hegel also signifies as *unwandelbares Wesen*.<sup>22</sup> For us, this

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21 PhoS, 293: «Lord of the world».

22 PhoS, 126-7: «Earlier we saw the Stoical independence of pure thought pass through Scepticism and find its truth in the Unhappy Consciousness– the truth about what constitutes its own true being. If this knowledge appeared then merely as the one-sided view of consciousness as consciousness, here the *actual* truth of that view has become apparent.” PhoS, 293; “Since it is, to begin with, only the *immediate unity* of the two and

*unwandelbare Wesen* anticipates the explicating of the pure lord, the pure relation of recognition, which – as we already know from an outside perspective – grounds the relation to the natural world. Here, the pure being still appears as a being that is immediately distinguished from the natural reality, and hence it is not yet differentiated any further.

When the person articulates his independence in opposition to nature in relation to the *Dingheit*, it also means that nature is, by principle, not an alien substance to him that can threaten his self-being. When reality appears to him as otherness, this otherness expresses his own being in the form of alienation. By principle, the otherness can be posited as expression of the freedom of the person. In the relation to the *Dingheit*, it is expressed that external nature principally has a reasonable cause. Hegel thus reconstructs the medieval world as a *Reich der Bildung*; a realm, which explicitly posits external reality as the expression of freedom.<sup>23</sup>

The person of the *Reich der Bildung* goes through a *Bildung*, which forms a reflective repetition of the *Bildung*, which the citizen of the polis goes through as the bondsman that recognizes himself in the lord in the end: he recognizes the law of the state as expression of his autonomy. The person is a bondsman (a self-consciousness tied to nature) too, insofar as he aspires wealth in order to satisfy his needs. He relates to a lord, who appears as *Staatsmacht*, i.e., the objective institutional reality to which he, the bondsman, relates by serving it. Here too, the bondsman will recognize himself in the lord in the end. Indeed, the *Reich der Bildung* culminates in the French Revolution, the world in which the general freedom of self-consciousness manifests itself immediately as the essence of reality.<sup>24</sup> This time, however, the process of *Bildung* is not a purely practical process that takes place

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so takes them to be, not the same, but opposites, one of them, viz. the simple Unchangeable, it takes to be the *essential* Being».

23 PhoS, 297 ff.

24 PhoS, 356: «It is self-consciousness which grasps the fact that its certainty of itself is the essence of all the spiritual 'masses', or spheres, of the real as well of the supersensible world, or conversely, that essence and actuality are consciousness's knowledge of *itself*».

within the framework of a given tradition. In his relation to the *Dingheit*, the person of the *Reich der Bildung* knows, from the beginning, that he relates to the tradition of his actual existence, and that this tradition expresses his essence in the form of alienation. The person self-consciously carries out a *Bildung* that seeks to negate this form of alienation.

In thinking through the process of *Bildung*, Hegel refers to Adam Smith's analysis of the free market.<sup>25</sup> The free persons aspire wealth to satisfy their needs. The mediation of the free market develops, on the one hand, subjective nature (the needs are increasingly socialized, i.e., they correspond better to the laws of supply and demand); on the other hand, objective nature (the system of production) develops itself. Under the influence of market competition, the ongoing technological innovation results in the rationalization of the production process. In the end, the production process can be automatized because the modern technology, based on modern natural sciences, sets no boundaries to the insight in the workings of nature.<sup>26</sup>

Hegel characterizes the completely rationalized production process, i.e., the production process that rests upon general laws that are completely transparent, as «absolute freedom».<sup>27</sup> Here, the *Dingheit* to which the person relates, and which provides the basis for the conviction that reality can be posited as the expression of freedom by principle, appears to be realized. The reality is an actual *Dingheit*: a substance that exists of nothing but the movement, in which the known content of the general law is transposed into a realized content. Here, the ideal of the French Revolution appears to have been realized. Reality is nothing but the realization of the general law structure,

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25 PhoS, 301-2: «The actual has simply the spiritual significance of being immediately universal. Each individual is quite sure that he is acting in his own interest when seeking this enjoyment; for it is in this that he becomes conscious of his own independent existence and for that reason does not take it to be something spiritual. Yet, even when looked at from an external point of view, it is evident that each in his own enjoyment provides enjoyment for all, just as in working for himself he is at the same time working for all and all are working for him». See also GrI. § 189.

26 GrI. § 198.

27 PhoS, 355 ff.

which is expressed in the formal recognition of the persons who regard each other as free and equal.

Nevertheless, the general law can only be realized in the actions of a free individual that continuously realizes a specific law. However, the specific law contradicts the general freedom. Hegel argues, therefore, that the French Revolution will inevitably result in terror. Every individual is suspect, because no one can immediately realize general freedom. The realization of general freedom takes on a purely negative meaning: all individuals must be eliminated, because they threaten the realization of general freedom. Here, it becomes explicit that the relation of recognition, which is realized in the citizens of the French Revolution, who regard each other as free and equal, obstructs any possible intersubjectivity. Any person, who shows any aspect of his subjective particularity, must be eliminated.<sup>28</sup>

The terror generates the experience of the fear of death, and that, which we already knew (from an external perspective), now becomes explicit to the persons themselves: we can only conceive of the reality of self-consciousness within a cultural order that has overcome the fear of death. Here, the fear of death appears as the absolute power of absolute freedom. The persons know that this absolute power is their own essence. Although this power turns against their existence insofar as they are bodily self-consciousnesses, precisely the fact that they experience this power as absolute power implies that this power does not relate to their self-consciousness insofar as self-consciousness is embodied in a *determined* way (for this would impair its absoluteness). As an absolute power, absolute freedom is substantial: it carries the moment of particularity in itself, and it does not derive it merely from otherness. It means that the *bodily* self-consciousness does not relate to absolute freedom out of its embodiedness. Self-consciousness already relates to absolute freedom all the time. Conversely, absolute freedom precisely is absolute, because it particularizes itself in the self-

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28 PhoS, 360: «[...] And the external reaction against this reality that lies in the simple inwardness of intention, consists in the cold, matter-of-fact annihilation of this existent self, from which nothing else can be taken away but its mere being».

consciousness, which knows itself as particularly distinguished from absolute freedom. Hegel signifies this relation as *moralische Weltanschauung*.<sup>29</sup>

## 9. Intersubjectivity between moral subjects

In the *moralische Weltanschauung*, Hegel interprets Kant's practical philosophy. In Kant's philosophy, the subjectivity of the person (the subjectivity of the moral subject) does not arise from his embodiedness, but as a moral subject, the person already relates to absolute freedom (reason) subjectively all the time. The categorical imperative expresses exactly this relation. The moral person who lets his will be determined by reason, relates to reason subjectively, i.e., his subjectivity precedes his embodiedness. On the other side, he can express his subjectivity exclusively in his actions as a bodily being. A moral action is an action that appears in the real (natural) world. Still, the action's determination as being moral does not lie in its bodily determination, but in its determination as a subjective expression of absolute freedom (general human reason).

Only at this level, we can ascribe unique subjectivity to the bodily self-consciousness, and only at this level, it becomes meaningful to speak about an intersubjective relation. Nevertheless, it is not easy to determine the content of this intersubjective relation. The self-consciousness must express his subjectivity in *actual* acting. The actual acting is, however, only an expression of free subjectivity, if it is *not* determined by bodily inclinations. Whereas the living self-consciousness is always determined by inclinations too, it remains unclear what it could mean to express free subjectivity in actual acting. The self-expression of free subjectivity cannot be conceived of in the immediate relation of the free self-consciousness to its body.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> PhoS, 365 ff.

<sup>30</sup> PhoS, 373-4: «Or, again, the *actually non-moral* sphere, because it is equally pure thought, and is raised above its actual existence, is yet, in imagination, moral, and is taken to be completely valid. In this way the first proposition, that there is a moral self-

Still, the realization of free self-consciousness can be conceived of at the level of society. We observed, indeed, that the human law of the Greek world expressed the autonomy of self-consciousness. Contrary to the self-consciousness of the Greek citizen, the self-consciousness of the *moralische Weltanschauung* can relate to the human law freely. As *conscience*, self-consciousness no longer asks the question whether it can realize its subjective freedom (since it is already realized in the human law); instead, it asks how to find its subjective freedom in the objectivity of the human law.<sup>31</sup> The development of conscience results in the relation of the *schöne Seelen*, a new form of the relation of recognition.<sup>32</sup> To one another, the *schöne Seelen* mutually speak out the conviction that their actions (as realizations of the human law) express their subjective freedom.<sup>33</sup> Here, it becomes evident again that we can only conceive of the freedom of self-consciousness in a relation of pure recognition to another self-consciousness. However, it also becomes evident again that it is impossible to connect this recognition with intersubjective communication between non-interchangeable individuals. The recognition of the *schöne Seelen* remains separated from the objective content of the human law.<sup>34</sup>

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consciousness, is reinstated, but is bound up with the second, that there is *none*, i.e. that there *is* one, but only in imagination; or, in other words, it is true that there is none, yet, all the same, it is allowed by another consciousness to pass for one».

- 31 PhoS, 383: «It is pure conscience which rejects with scorn such a moral idea of the world; it is in its own self the simple Spirit that, certain of itself, acts conscientiously regardless of such ideas, and in this immediacy possesses its truth».
- 32 PhoS, 398: «The actuality and lasting existence of what it [the self, p.c.] does is universal self-consciousness; but the declaration of conscience affirms the certainty of itself to be our self, and thereby to be a universal self. On account of this utterance in which the self is expressed and acknowledged as essential being, the validity of the act is acknowledged by others». For «beautiful soul», see PhoS, 400.
- 33 PhoS, 398: «The spirit and substance of their association are thus the mutual assurance of their conscientiousness, good intensions, the rejoicing over this mutual purity, and the refreshing of themselves in the glory of knowing and uttering, of cherishing and fostering, such an excellent state of affairs».
- 34 PhoS, 400: «The knowledge that knows itself is, *qua this* particular self, distinct from others selves; the language in which all reciprocally acknowledge each other as acting conscientiously, this universal identity, fall apart into the non-identity of individual being-for-itself: each consciousness is just as much simply reflected out of this

To conceive of the reality of bodily self-consciousnesses, we must negate the opposition between the pure recognition of the *schöne Seelen* and the reality of second nature. To achieve this, we must make the transition to absolute spirit, which expresses the self-consciousness of objective spirit.<sup>35</sup> At this level, the self-consciousnesses recognize each other as members of a society, which serves a shared absolute lord: the absolute lord of objective reality, viz. the pure freedom of self-consciousness.

## 10. Intersubjectivity and absolute spirit

The first phase of absolute spirit is the natural religion, where the self-consciousnesses represent nature's unity as the sun god<sup>36</sup>, and where they serve this god as their absolute essence. It is true that, at this level, the self-consciousnesses are free (because they are not living merely instinctively but rather serve their absolute essence), but this freedom does not yet appear in any way. Their actual acting remains fully embedded in general occurrences of nature. Only when the freedom of self-consciousness is explicitly expressed in the actual acting of the self-consciousnesses, self-consciousness can actually express its absolute essence in the form of freedom. This happens at the level of the Greek world, where on the one hand, freedom is expressed in the actual acting in the second nature of the human law; on the other hand, the absolute essence of the self-consciousnesses is no longer represented in a natural thing (the sun, and later on: in the flowers, a totem animal, a mummified body) but by an object of art, i.e., an object that self-consciousness has produced through freedom. At the level of the religion of art, the second nature of the Greek world

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universality into itself».

35 PhoS, 408: «The word of reconciliation is the *objectively* existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself *qua universal* essence, in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself *qua* absolutely self-contained and exclusive *individuality*– a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute* Spirit».

36 PhoS, 418 ff: «God as Light».

is represented as an absolute world that has taken the shape of works of art.<sup>37</sup>

In the Greek world, the freedom of self-consciousness is still tied to a specific tradition. In the *Reich der Bildung* of the Middle Ages, those traditional ties are overcome, and self-consciousness understands his real freedom as the realization of free and equal persons (of the French Revolution). In the *revealed religion*<sup>38</sup> (Hegel's reception of Christianity), the essence of this world is represented as an absolute essence: as *Holy Spirit*, as the god that appears in and through the service of the religious community.<sup>39</sup>

On the level of revealed religion too, precisely because the absolute essence of self-consciousness is still part of a religious representation, this essence is not yet adequately expressed.<sup>40</sup> Only when the reflection on the French Revolution has been executed in the real world, and when it has become evident that the absolute freedom must not be realized by free and equal persons but by moral subjects instead, the essence of this world can be brought to an explicit understanding in the *absolute Wissen*. The absolute freedom, which is realized in and through the moral subjects, is not separated from the real world, but it appears in it. Surely, the moral subjects are the result of the *Bildung*, which took place in the second nature of the real world. This second nature was shaped in the Greek world, and it was developed further in the Middle Ages and Modernity. In his philosophy of right, Hegel outlines how every single individual repeats this historical developmental process in the ethical institutions of the modern state of

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37 PhoS, 424: «If we ask, which is the *actual* Spirit which has the consciousness of its absolute essence in the religion of art, we find that it is the *ethical* or the *true* Spirit».

38 PhoS, 453 ff: «The revealed Religion».

39 PhoS, 476: «This Knowing is the inbreathing of the Spirit, whereby Substance becomes Subject, by which its abstraction and lifelessness have died, and Substance therefore has become *actual* and simple and universal Self-consciousness».

40 PhoS, 477: «The community also does not possess the consciousness of what it is; it is spiritual self-consciousness which is not an object to itself as this self-consciousness, or which does not unfold itself to consciousness of itself; but rather, in so far as it is consciousness, it has those picture-thoughts which we have considered».



law.<sup>41</sup> The traditional world of the polis repeats itself in the family; the rationalization of tradition that led the Middle Ages to the French Revolution, repeats itself in the institutions of civil society; and Modernity's process of becoming self-conscious repeats itself in the institutions of the state. Under the conditions of this *Bildung*, the bodily self-consciousness can become self-conscious about the fact that the realization of its freedom in its objective world is a (world-)historical appearance of its pure freedom.

Only now we can make sense of intersubjectivity. The condition for intersubjectivity is the relation of pure recognition. Solely in this relation, we can conceive of self-consciousness without contradiction. Solely in this relation, self-consciousness can be conceived of as the absolute being, i.e., as *free*. In the relation of recognition, Hegel expresses, in a manner of speaking, his version of Kant's Copernican Turn: the structure of the concept is the absolute form of anything that can possibly be known to us. Reality is, by principle, reasonable. Without this assumption, the other subject remains inaccessible.

However, if we understand the Copernican Turn like this, it is incomplete. Conceived of as the absolute being, reason cannot exist separated from the real and natural world. The theoretical Copernican Turn presupposes, therefore, a second version, viz. a practical one: nature already has the form of a second nature all the time, i.e., nature must be posited as the expression of the autonomy of the subject. Only under this condition, we can resolve the contradiction that reason is absolute in terms of content but appears in the form of finiteness, viz. *separated* from a given nature. Reason, conceived of as spirit (pure recognition), appears in historical reality.

We should understand the self-realization of absolute spirit in world history as the historical process, which explicitly develops the self-consciousness of pure freedom appearing in history. The further development of second nature conditions the development of this insight: the institutional structure of the state of law must make this development possible.

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41 Cf. COBBEN 2009, 136 ff.

We have already seen that this institutional structure should enable the bodily self-consciousness to go through the development from polis to schöne Seele at the level of the individual. Only under this condition, the bodily self-consciousness can understand that its freedom obtains a specific historical form. Only in this situation, there is room for intersubjectivity. Indeed, subjectivity is only real when it appears in reality.

Insofar as Hegel claims that the institutions of the constitutional state (the objective spirit that realizes freedom) are necessarily derived from absolute spirit, there does not seem to be any room for subjectivity. In that case, objective spirit would be nothing but a moment of absolute spirit. However, we have seen that absolute spirit comprehends objective spirit as such, and hence it respects the own nature of objective spirit.<sup>42</sup> Absolute spirit indeed retains the moment of particularity, but it does not mean that the moment of particularity does not have independence. Concretely speaking, the actual constitutional state has an own independency with respect to the concept of constitutional state: the institutions of the actual constitutional state (e.g., family, labor system, democracy) compose a specific form of realization of the concept of the family, the labor system, and democracy. The concept of the constitutional state is not a rationally induced generalization of existing constitutional states, but it is the intrinsic understanding of a constitutional state, which precedes any concrete state. For this very reason, an intersubjective relation between members of the state is conceivable: in an absolute sense, they already are connected all the time. As empirical individuals, the subjects are distinguished from one another; however, from the viewpoint of their conceivability, the subjects are bodily self-consciousnesses that already are related all the time. Precisely because of this relation, they have a criterion to say that they are distinguished from one another.

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42 Sartre refers to Hegel's ontological optimism when he remarks: «Car les consciences sont des moments du tout qui sont, par eux-mêmes, 'unselbständig', et le tout est médiateur entre les consciences» (SARTRE 1943, 288) Here it becomes clear that he does not recognize the distinction between absolute and objective spirit.

In ethical institutions, different individuals can fulfill the same roles. In that sense, they do not seem to be different. Still, they already distinguish themselves as subjects at this level, because each of the ethical institutions forms a unity of abstract right and morality: the moment of particularity already is part of the concept of the institutions. However, the individuals only distinguish themselves as concrete subjects insofar as the moment of particularity appears in an empirical individual. I am a husband, a member of a corporation, or a citizen in my particular manner. This particularity is only knowledgeable (and expressible in an intersubjective relation), because I make these roles appear empirically.

The question, whether the concrete subjectivity of individuals coincides with the particular way, through which the individuals express their role in the ethical institutions of the constitutional state. Is the self-being of a concrete individual tied to the societal institutions, in which it expresses its self-being? Of course, it is evident that the individual cannot be conceived of as a self-conscious individual apart from these institutions, but does it also mean that whatever the individual can express of its self-being necessarily has a place in these institutions? Or does subjectivity instead possess a dimension prior to whatever is expressed in freedom? Does the knowledge of our own subjectivity, and the knowledge of the other's subjectivity, instead has something to do with a long-time life-experience that sometimes learns us something about ourselves or the other, which we were not aware of at all in the beginning; something, which we thus cannot regard as our free self-expression?

We cannot make sense of the dimension, which precedes free self-expression, as a natural self, as a bodily occurrence, as an instinctual life existing outside of our self-consciousness. If this were the case, it would not only become incomprehensible how we could possibly draw upon this dimension as something that belongs to our self-being, but it would also become incomprehensible how this dimension could become the content of our intersubjective communication. The natural self can only be part of subjective self-being in a meaningful way, if we

conceive of it as something that is a moment of spiritual self-being already all the time.

In the third part of his *Enzyklopädie*, Hegel discusses the philosophy of spirit. It begins with the natural spirit, which is the spirit that immediately harmonizes with the general natural world. This natural spirit goes through a development, which frees it step by step from its embeddedness in natural relations up to the point that it can take up a free relation to nature. From a systematical point of view, it has now reached the position that is the point of departure for the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The important thing here is that the bodily self-consciousness originates, apparently, from a stage of the spirit, in which the free relation to nature was not yet developed, and where the spirit did not yet fall apart in a manifold of free subjects. Precisely because the free subjects have shared this natural spirit, they have the possibility to communicate, out of their free subjectivity, about a dimension, which precedes their freedom. They are open to the self-being of themselves as well as the one of others, which is presupposed in the self-being already all the time. This form of self-being forms the unconscious soil for free intersubjectivity.

In contrast to the *Encyclopaedia*, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* discuss the form of self-being preceding the free self only marginally. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel speaks about societal forms preceding the free society at the level of natural religion. In the *Grundlinien*, he develops how the bodily self-consciousness, which is immersed in nature, must grow up to become a free person under the title of the education of the child. However, in my view, to complete Hegel's conception of free subjectivity, it is necessary to work out how these preceding forms of self-being still interplay a role in the forms of free subjectivity too, viz. as a moment that requires ongoing negation. Nevertheless, within the context of this paper, such an elaboration is not yet possible.

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# Sartre's Original Insight

*Sebastian Gardner*

UCL\*

[sebastian.gardner@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:sebastian.gardner@ucl.ac.uk)

*ABSTRACT.* Sartre's discussion of «being-with-others» in Part Three of *Being and Nothingness* is extraordinarily rich and highly original. At its core, I argue, lies an insight into the aporetic character of intersubjectivity – «the scandal of the plurality of consciousnesses», as Sartre puts it – which emerges most clearly in his critique of Hegel's theory of intersubjectivity. My aim in this paper is to isolate this thesis of Sartre's and spell out his grounds for it. I argue furthermore that Hegel's conception of intersubjectivity corresponds to that of natural consciousness, such that, in rejecting Hegel, Sartre is also impugning the reality of a conception integral to ordinary thought. I suggest that Sartre's insight also holds the key to his distinctive approach to social and political theory in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

*KEYWORDS.* Hegel; Sartre; Transcendental Intersubjectivity; Dialectic.

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\* *Correspondence:* Sebastian Gardner – University College London, Department of Philosophy, Gower Street, London (UK), WC1E 6BT.



The history of philosophical reflection on intersubjectivity is a chiefly post-Kantian affair, in which Sartre occupies a singular position. Sartre is known for having characterized human relationships as irresolvably conflictual in his early philosophical writings, while his literary works from that period give forceful expression to an intensely pessimistic vision of human relations, according to which love, hatred, sexual desire, and so on, are merely so many variations on a fundamental dynamic, and all ultimately futile to an equal degree.

This part of Sartre's account of intersubjectivity must however be distinguished, on my view, from his fundamental insight concerning what may be called the transcendental logic of intersubjectivity – his claim that the condition of being with-and-among others cannot be made rationally transparent, for the reason that intersubjectivity, as such and of itself, lacks the intelligibility and reality attributed to it in ordinary thought, and in much philosophical theory. I describe this claim as one of transcendental logic, though the term is not used by Sartre himself, in order to make clear that it is not an instance of conceptual analysis, and nor does it belong straightforwardly to either the epistemology of other minds or normative theory. Certainly it is bound up with and has bearing on these more familiar areas of enquiry: Sartre articulates it in the context of a lengthy discussion of the grounds of our knowledge of others, and it has implications for how we should understand the problems of social and political life. But the crux of Sartre's position is a negative *a priori* claim concerning the relation of the concept of intersubjectivity to its purported object.

The interest and importance of this insight has not, I think, been well appreciated. In part this is due to the simple fact that Sartre's position is at variance with the firmly pro-intersubjectivist consensus of the age, but it also owes much to the way in which Sartre allows his argument to be construed as dependent on premises which are, critics have alleged, naively Cartesian or dogmatically subjectivist. My primary aim in this paper is to show that, though the text of *Being and*

*Nothingness* may admit of interpretations which make controverting his position a simple matter, Sartre's doctrine of aporetic intersubjectivity, once disentangled from its surroundings and pared down to its essence, holds up under scrutiny and commands attention.

## 1. Sartre's thesis

The historical originality to which I alluded lies in the challenge posed by Sartre to the long and distinguished philosophical tradition, beginning in classical German philosophy, which maintains that a single arc of theoretical reflection can comprehend simultaneously (i) self-conscious subjectivity in all of its interiority, and (ii) the essential institutional, ethical, and other normative structures of modern sociality, in such a way as to exhibit their rational interconnection. Sartre refers to this outlook, as he finds it in what he considers its fully developed form, namely Hegel, as intersubjective «optimism». There is no space here to rehearse the history in any detail, but I think it will be agreed that this is a fair characterization of one important trajectory in the post-Kantian development, and it will be helpful to have the major landmarks in view.

The basis of our cognition of others in theoretical and practical contexts is an issue to which Kant pays scant attention, but which becomes abruptly central to the work of his successors, who evince a deeper appreciation of Rousseau's insight into the interdependence of our self-conception and our conceptions of others – a relation which they regard, furthermore, as opening up new philosophical avenues. Schiller in the *Letters on Aesthetic Education* addresses on a broad historical plane the question of how the individual might hope to realize the reconfiguration of subjectivity demanded by her own practical reason at the collective level of aesthetically informed *Bildung*. Fichte in his later Jena writings advances the extraordinarily original and powerful idea that bare self-consciousness presupposes (cognition of) its own recognition by another self-consciousness.



Schelling recasts this transcendental moment as a turning point in the self-construction of consciousness, which makes possible, through human history, the absolute unification of subjectivity and objectivity or Freedom and Nature. Hegel, dissatisfied with Fichte's solution on various counts, including its alleged «one-sidedly» subjective character and the sharp separation which it presupposes of transcendental from empirical levels of consideration, reworks Fichte's thesis that recognition is constitutive of self-consciousness in Chapter IV of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in terms that, if Hegel is right, (a) dispose of the empty formalism implied by Fichte's treatment of the I, (b) acknowledge the role played by Nature in the formation of self-consciousness, and (c) facilitate the construction of a new ontology of *Geist*, the fruits of which are seen in Hegel's treatment of the human sphere at large. A great deal of later philosophy, from the Young Hegelians, through Dewey, down to Habermas and Brandom in the present day, follows Hegel's path of expounding the social character of human reason and the permeation of sociality *by* reason.

Sartre's critique of this tradition, in all of its varieties, focuses, as I have said, on the aporia which he claims to find at the root of intersubjectivity: his thesis, in preliminary formulation, is that intersubjective consciousness demands a doubling of standpoints, between which we can alternate without strict inconsistency or overt conceptual incoherence, but which resist systematic integration, or more exactly, which can be integrated only at a level of thought which prescind from one or other of the standpoints which it pretends to synthesize. The upshot is that intersubjectivity involves a mere *superimposition* of disjoined perspectives, sufficiently stable to allow for the conceptual scheme of ordinary psychology and the pursuit of common forms of life, but which falls short of the unity required for intersubjective structures to qualify as fully intelligible realities. Sartre attempts to establish this result, moreover, by drawing on the native resources of classical German philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Indeed, Sartre's model for the aporetic superimposition just described is the Unhappy Consciousness of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (§§206-11/III:163-6). References to this

Fichte has been credited by Dieter Henrich with an original insight into the problem posed by self-consciousness,<sup>2</sup> and my parallel suggestion regarding Sartre – that he offers a similarly ground-level insight concerning the interrelations of self-consciousnesses (in Sartre's memorable phrase: «the scandal of the plurality of consciousnesses»<sup>3</sup>) – is intended to follow Henrich's pattern in two respects. First, the insight itself concerns the existence of an aporia, and implies no positive theoretical claim. Sartre's own account of our knowledge of other minds is therefore not strictly at issue. Second, elaborating the insight involves certain steps which cannot be presented as matters of immediate logical implication, and because conceptual analysis cannot directly establish Sartre's aporetic conclusion, its demonstration needs to be indirect. Accordingly, I will reconstruct his argument – with reference to his critical discussion of Hegel in the chapter on «The Existence of Others» in *Being and Nothingness*, where the insight first gets articulated – in the form of a dilemma for intersubjectivism.

It is characteristic of aporetic theses that they are elusive, and the present case is no exception. At one extreme, Sartre may seem to be saying something incontestable and anodyne – perhaps simply that there exists no collective mind in the same sense as there exist individual minds; and at the other extreme, to be denying the basic facts of interpersonal knowledge and social existence which define the very phenomena he holds to be problematic. Getting his insight into focus means arresting its tendency to oscillate between trivial truth and inconsequential absurdity.<sup>4</sup>

Also to be acknowledged at the outset is Sartre's openness to the objection that his whole approach, which proceeds at a level of

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work, prefixed PS, are first to the numbered paragraphs of the translation and then to *Phänomenologie des Geistes* in Hegel's *Werke*.

2 HENRICH 1982.

3 SARTRE 1995 [1943], 244/300, henceforth abbreviated BN. References are first to the English translation and second to the original French edition of 1943.

4 Notable treatments in the commentaries include O'HAGAN 1981, SCHROEDER 1984, THEUNISSEN 1986, Ch. 6, and HONNETH 1995 and 2003.

maximal abstraction and aims to grasp the very essence of the self-other relation, fails to get purchase on any philosophically substantial issue. If this is true, then Sartre is, as I have indicated, not on his own. The tradition of theorizing in which Sartre follows supposes that abstraction is needed precisely in order to exhibit the *deep* intelligibility of intersubjectivity, by bringing to light a structure which intermediates between various spheres: general metaphysics, knowledge of other minds and other-ascription of mental states, social ontology, and normative ethical and political theory. If Sartre is right that such intelligibility is missing, and if what this result should really be taken to signify is that philosophers have been thinking about the issue in entirely the wrong way, then that is a whole other story – with wide repercussions, since, the next section will argue, our ordinary pre-philosophical conception of intersubjectivity appears to involve equally a set of highly abstract commitments.

## 2. Commitments of natural consciousness

Before turning to Sartre's text, I want to offer a characterization of our pre-theoretical conception of intersubjectivity, which will allow us to understand why so much is at stake in Sartre's critique of Hegel's intersubjectivism: because our ordinary conception of intersubjectivity corresponds so closely to that of Hegel, critique of the latter implies a critique of natural consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Attempts to state in philosophically neutral terms the basic constituents of intersubjectivity as natural consciousness conceives it, are inevitably prey to the charge of tendentiousness, but the following list of conditions has a good claim to capture key elements of any recognizable modern conception of intersubjectivity, which is what Sartre and Hegel are concerned to elucidate.

- It is a condition for a relation to qualify as intersubjective that

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<sup>5</sup> Sartre himself does not explicitly make this mapping, but it is clear that he regards Hegel's intersubjectivism as mirroring errors in natural consciousness.

it should allow for its being *understood* as such from the standpoint of the individual subjects which comprise its *relata*. (Intersubjectivity, like selfhood, is necessarily self-ascribable, "I-/We-thinkable".)

- Intersubjective relations presuppose that subjects have access – if not explicitly or in fact, then implicitly or in principle – to a *universal* under which they can jointly know themselves to fall. (Whatever determinate, mutually differentiating conceptions of self and other may be deployed in intersubjective relations, all parties must be able to conceive themselves as being in some essential respect, however indefinite, of a single *kind*.)
- Intersubjective relations, though amply creative of the *properties* of subjects, do not ground but presuppose the basic *individuation* of their *relata*. (Our fundamental numerical distinctness from one another is not something which could have been *produced* out of our relations to one another.<sup>6</sup> This independence is integral to our conception of intersubjectivity as a domain which we do not merely act *on* but which we participate *in*, in a sense that nature does not permit.)
- We find ourselves standing in relations to others somewhat as we find ourselves standing in relation to external material objects, in so far as our relations to particular others exhibit a *contingency* which is necessarily absent from our self-relation. (Self-relations cannot assume the same richly complex, limitlessly mediated forms as our relations to others, which exploit, in a way that self-relations cannot, the separateness of external bodies.)
- Nevertheless, the *general* circumstance of finding oneself in relations to others, though not given as deriving from any prior and independent source, cannot be outright contingent. (The natural facts of common species membership, biological generation, material dependence and so forth, though possessing a kind of necessity, are insufficient to explain the

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6 Such that «it is by the very fact of being me that I exclude the Other» (BN 236/292).

non-accidental interlocking of our existences: the manner in which we are intentionally contained in one another, «mutually imbricated»,<sup>7</sup> in a way that things in nature cannot be, and that our relation to nature cannot replicate. Because the possibility of being (so to speak) inhabited by others cannot be erased, we cannot take the distance from others that we can from nature: solipsism, as distinct from mere isolation, is phenomenologically inconceivable.)

- Intersubjectivity encompasses the possibility of the other's immediate, apodictic *presence*. (Necessarily it is possible in principle to look others in the eye, as we commonly put it: to apprehend the other with certainty of being presented with a *subject* of predication, a *bearer* of properties, and not merely with a predicate.)
- The possibility of being determinately related to another subject presupposes a *common dimension*, some homogeneous medium of interrelation, with respect to which we find ourselves interchangeable in principle, and by virtue of which intersubjective relations have, potentially if not actually, a communicative character.<sup>8</sup> (Whatever I can say or do to or with you must be something that, were our positions reversed in appropriate respects, you could intelligibly say or do to or with me. And what makes this the case – the plane on which we meet and by virtue of which we are able to interact – must in some sense pre-exist our encounter, i.e., cannot be a simple direct function of our conjunction.)

All of these conditions are ordinarily taken to be fulfilled in the simple transactions and communicative acts of everyday life. No puzzle is presented when one person employs a shared natural language to induce another to act in a certain way, social behaviour manifests the unproblematic interaction of beliefs and desires across individuals,

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7 BN 236/292. The Other «penetrates me to the heart» (BN 237/293).

8 See BN 240/296 regarding the «common measure» and «homogeneity» of self and other.

and no internal subjective dissonance is registered by default in quotidian intersubjective episodes; we do not seem to need to cross any conceptual or metaphysical divide in order to make contact with one another, and such exchanges do not typically induce an experience of self-diremption. This capacity for immediate congruence, whereby we find ourselves securely co-situated and enjoying equal reality on a common plane, is most naturally taken to demonstrate the full reality of the field of intersubjectivity, and speaks loudly in favour of philosophical positions, such as Hegel's, which affirm its full rational reality.

If Sartre is right, reflection which takes the experiential coherence of everyday intersubjective phenomenology – including, pre-eminently, linguistic practice – as a guide to its ontological ground, allows itself to be misled by appearances. The question is therefore: By what measure of philosophically intelligibility could it be held that intersubjectivity is not what it seems? Once again, if Sartre's thought is to come into focus, it is crucial that it be distinguished from more familiar claims. It may be philosophically puzzling that a mind can have physical effects which in turn can have mental effects, and that these sequences can exhibit a causality of reason, or manifest freedom, and that we are able to grasp others' bodily behaviour as freighted with rich mental life, and can comprehend an indexical with the peculiar properties of the first-person pronoun. Equally it may be doubted that it is possible to discover universally valid norms governing the relation of one subject's will to that of another. But none of these are Sartre's fundamental concern. His target conclusion is not that theoretical or practical solipsism is inescapable, i.e., that the problem of other minds is insoluble or that human relations fail to admit of rational regulation. The aporeticity of intersubjectivity, for Sartre, lies in the impossibility of *completing* the picture projected by the various commitments listed above: they cannot all be followed through – they cannot all be *rationalized* – without coming into collision.

To a degree this result should already seem half-way plausible, for natural consciousness' commitments, once spelled out, are revealed

neither to be individually self-explanatory and self-justifying, nor to explain and justify one another. Indeed it is not even clear that they are consistent, in so far they appear to presuppose (i) a form of consciousness which extends beyond selfhood yet somehow avoids terminating in mere objectivity, and, in addition, (ii) the possibility of an essential unity inseparable from its constituents, which are nonetheless able to grasp themselves independently: natural consciousness appears to envisage intersubjectivity as both a purely relational structure, and a relation-facilitating reality in its own right, and to conceive intersubjective relations as both external, in so far as they mirror the relations of bodies, and internal, in so far as they allow for our intentional containment in one another.<sup>9</sup> These tensions are what Hegel's theory aims to resolve – without success, according to Sartre, and in a way that brings to light their specific irresolvability.

### 3. Sartre's critique of Hegel's intersubjectivism

Sartre's discussion of Hegel begins at a point where he takes himself to have demonstrated the inadequacy of «classical» accounts of knowledge of other minds, namely those of realism and idealism, and also of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity, which he describes as having failed to make any real advance beyond Kant. From this it might have been expected that, following the historical sequence, Sartre would proceed next to Heidegger, but instead he turns to Hegel, whom he considers the first to have grasped the true «ontological» character of intersubjectivity, though not in a correct form. Sartre's treatment is dense and intricate, and I will attempt to reconstruct his critical argument independently from the positive theses which are also woven into his discussion.<sup>10</sup>

Though Sartre presents his critique of Hegel in the form of a

9 BN 298-9/359-61.

10 The portion of the text in question is BN 235-44/291-300. Note that, if Hegel's account fails, Heidegger's *Mitsein* – which in one respect aggravates Hegel's defectiveness – offers no alternative (BN 244-50/301-7, 413-29/484-502).

«twofold charge of optimism», «epistemological» and «ontological».<sup>11</sup> This may suggest that Hegel's account is to be criticised in two different respects, the first of which has to do with knowledge of other minds. It is better viewed however as a single argument in several stages, none of which involve questioning the possibility of knowing another's mental states. In the first, preliminary stage, Sartre challenges Hegel's assumption that intersubjectivity can be understood in terms of cognition. In the second, Sartre fixes on Hegel's concept of reciprocal recognition, which, Sartre argues, both specifies what is required for the intelligibility of intersubjectivity, and shows why it cannot be supplied. The third stage seeks to confirm the aporia by arguing that Hegel's intersubjectivism presupposes the metaphysical holism of his *Logic*. I will take them in turn.

(1) Sartre begins with the assertion that Hegel undermines his own achievement – grasping intersubjectivity ontologically – by subordinating the «relation of being» of self and other to a «relation of knowledge»:<sup>12</sup> Hegel represents intersubjective relations as if their essence were exhausted by the shared conceptual representations that we form of them. This assumption is rejected by Sartre not simply because it is idealistic,<sup>13</sup> but on the grounds that, in the present context in a way that is not true of others, knowledge necessarily modifies being: in becoming conscious of the other, I do not simply add to my doxastic stock, rather I am necessarily *altered* in respects that go beyond cognition. Intersubjective relations involve, Sartre claims, the production of *new* kinds of objects and properties, to which *new* relations are required, and of which the self must try to *achieve* a certainty not afforded immediately by the new entities themselves. Intersubjectivity thus sets self-consciousness a task, one which, for all that Hegel is entitled to suppose at the relevant point in his *Phenomenology*, there is no *a priori* guarantee of its being able to

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11 BN 240/296.

12 BN 240-1/296-7.

13 Though also for that reason: «consciousness *is* before being known» (BN 241/297).



complete. There would be reason to think that knowledge of intersubjectivity can catch up with its being, and secure their harmony, only if there were reason to think that the new ontological dimensions of plural self-consciousnesses necessarily cohere in a single “social reality”. That this is so is assumed by Hegel, but without justification: In celebrating the new logical moment of *Geist*, Hegel grasps correctly that thought and being are interrelated in the social sphere in a way that they are not in our cognition of nature, since in intersubjectivity the object of knowledge is itself a *knower*, which knows itself *as* (known to be) a knower. To be sure, this implies a potential infinity of new relations, but all that we are entitled to assert of them is that they concern a new «dimension of being» of self-consciousness,<sup>14</sup> a new realm of objects and properties exhibiting an original type of complexity. Whether they also constitute an intelligible reality is a further and separate matter, which we cannot be allowed to decide by direct appeal to absolute idealism.

I describe this argument as merely preliminary, since it only lays down the terms of Sartre’s challenge. Even if Hegel cannot assume the identity of the epistemological and ontological aspects of intersubjectivity, it may still be asked why the possibility of their rational coordination should be positively in doubt. The second stage of Sartre’s argument is designed to answer this question.

(2) Hegel, following Rousseau and Fichte, sees that, if intersubjective relations are not to shrink to relations to mere objectivity, then they must retain the essential character (whatever it may be) of self-relations, whatever other dimensions they may also involve. The question is how this possible – or, more pointedly, how it can *not* be impossible (since, on the face of it, the only thing that can grasp itself as related to *itself* is precisely a *self*). Because natural consciousness has no answer, philosophical construction is necessary. Hegel proposes accordingly that intersubjective relations are possible in so far as they are *reciprocally recognitive*. Such relations are not cases of mere

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<sup>14</sup> BN 268/326-7.

duplication or mirroring – i.e., merely relations to another *instance* of the kind of thing that I am, or to a mere *image* of my I-in-its-particularity – rather they consist, according to Hegel, in a recuperation or *restoration* of selfhood. To the question, What is a self, such that it is open to the possibility of «finding itself in another»? , Hegel has an answer: Individual self-consciousness is *deficient* in «truth» in a way which makes possible both the initial movement of self-alienation which reciprocal recognition presupposes, and the restoration itself. The merely formal emptiness which comprises the deficiency of self-consciousness, on Hegel's account, is what dialectically compels the individual into sociality.<sup>15</sup>

Sartre agrees with Hegel both that a speculative grounding of natural consciousness is needed if its commitments are to be shown to be consistent, and that individual self-consciousness is deficient.<sup>16</sup> However, the latter presupposition, though necessary for Hegel's cognitive solution, is also its undoing. If self-identity («existing in its truth») is missing from pre-intersubjective self-consciousness, then intersubjectivity cannot supply it, for, whatever the rewards of intersubjectivity may be, selfhood cannot be one of them, since for

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15 E.g., Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Mind*, §§424-5.

16 Sartre's reasons for thinking that self-consciousness is defective are not Hegel's, and on his account, what is defective in self-consciousness not only cannot be remedied by intersubjectivity but in fact *entails* the impossibility of intersubjective realization; see BN 298-302/360-3. The difference may be put by saying that, whereas for Hegel the defectiveness of pre-intersubjective self-consciousness consists merely in the purely formal character of its self-identity – its lack of determinacy – Sartre understands it as a *formal* defect: because the subject is always still occupied with the (uncompletable) *task* of becoming reflexive and is always *striving to achieve* self-identity, which it never comes into possession of (each is «perpetually a reference to a *self* which it has to be», BN 241/298), it is in no position to project its reflexivity out into the intersubjective arena; it cannot lend to being-with-others what it does not have. If it sought to (re)discover "itself" in intersubjectivity, it would first need to abandon the task which constitutes it, i.e., cease to be. In one regard Sartre agrees with Hegel regarding the mirroring of self-consciousness in intersubjectivity: consciousness of being-with-others – of its formal failure – *underlines* and *reexpresses* my own failure to achieve self-identity and the absolute limit that this sets on the kinds of relations that I can form with the Not-I. (I present Sartre's critique of Hegel, however, without reliance on his theory of the self's original defectiveness).

Hegel, as for Fichte, the form in terms of which self-consciousness must understand itself is that of self-identity, «I = I»,<sup>17</sup> and grasping oneself in the shape of an identity is incompatible with grasping oneself as the effect of any composite cause. If, alternatively, what we ordinarily call selfhood is a condition available only to intersubjectively embedded beings, and to which they can lay claim only on the strength of their intersubjectivity, then intersubjectivity does not have the character that natural consciousness supposes. In any case, if this is Hegel's view, then his true claim is not, as it initially seemed to be, that in intersubjectivity self-consciousness finds its *own* reflexivity projected outwards onto a larger but still self-enclosing canvas, but rather that intersubjective reality comprises an *original* whole, which may presuppose individual self-consciousness in the same weak sense as self-consciousness presupposes existence as a natural organism, but the true constituents of which are not the individual self-consciousnesses with which his story began. On this model, pre-intersubjective self-consciousness cannot be said to *enter into* intersubjectivity, but only to provide materials out of which intersubjectivity *creates* new entities, which supplant it.

The problem is not removed by positing a logically contemporaneous coming-into-being of intersubjective reality and individual self-consciousnesses. This would accord with natural consciousness by dint of reproducing its commitments, while doing nothing to elucidate them. If anything, the difficulty would then be aggravated, for if the complex structure "self and other as constellated in a non-aggregative unity" is ultimate, then intersubjectivity involves a superimposition of two modes of self-consciousness – consciousness of oneself as two different *types* of entity, the one enjoying independence from intersubjectivity and the other enclosed within it – without any possibility of insight into their ground or systematic integration. The complexity of the contemporaneity model, once internalized by individual self-consciousness, as intersubjectivity requires, becomes a lack of coherence within it.

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<sup>17</sup> BN 235/291, 239/295.

The dilemma which stands at the core of Sartre's anti-intersubjectivism can now be spelled out. (1) If the *relata* of intersubjective relations are self-identical selves, then they are (monadically) closed in a way that is, of course, compatible with their entering into certain sorts of (limited) relations with one another, but incompatible with their mutual intentional containment, and with the supra-relational reality of intersubjectivity. (2) If, on the other hand, the *relata* lack self-identical selfhood, then intersubjectivity cannot supply it, and whatever entities intersubjectivity may give rise to cannot grasp themselves as enjoying the independence which is necessary for intersubjectivity to constitute a field in which they participate. Stated differently, the «circuit of selfness» disclosed in reflection to each subject<sup>18</sup> needs to run *through* relations to others if intersubjective relations are not to be merely relations to contents of the world; but no entity which grasps itself as individuated by means of this circuit can intelligibly abstract it from the context of reflection in such a way as to reinstall it outside themselves. Hegel's concept of reciprocal recognition appears in this light a product of conflicting vectors in natural consciousness' conception of intersubjectivity: it expresses the form that a solution would need to take, but the concept provides no actual solution, merely encapsulating the conflicting demands placed upon philosophical theory by natural consciousness.<sup>19</sup>

If this is correct, then Sartre's argument is independent of quasi-Cartesian assumptions to the effect that (to take some of the more obvious candidates, cited in criticism of Sartre<sup>20</sup>) (i) object- and subject-

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18 BN 102-4/146-9, 150-8/196-205, 239/295.

19 It is instructive at this point to consider Honneth's Hegelian critique of Sartre, which turns on the claim that the meagreness of Sartre's basic ontology leads him to under-describe the actual rich phenomenology of recognitive consciousness (HONNETH 1995). If, however, Sartre's challenge is pitched at the fundamental level that I suppose, this does not meet it: Sartre grants the *phenomenological* veracity of the Hegelian conceptualization while disputing its Hegelian *ontological* interpretation. (Of course, a general issue lurks here. On my account (2010), Sartre's metaphysical reach extends beyond phenomenological characterization; this is needed if the ordinary is to be revised. Cf. MULHALL 2013 and MORRIS 2015.)

20 E.g., HONNETH 1995, 161-2.

consciousness are metaphysically repugnant, or (ii) that the essentially practical character of the self-relation cannot be integrated with the essentially theoretical character of our relation to others, or (iii) that intersubjective relations are riven by an insurmountable dichotomy of intuition and concept, or (iv) that the reality of the Other presupposes an impossible sublation of the distinction of facticity and transcendence, or, finally, (v) that the absolute freedom of the for-itself is necessarily antagonistic to the reality of the Other. These are not altogether false trails, since each represents a consideration that, in *some* form, plays some role at some point in Part Three of *Being and Nothingness*, but none are the motor of the present argument. Thus while it is of course true that Sartre regards the problem of the Other as bound up with his comprehensive dualism of being-in-itself and being-for-itself, this general metaphysical duality is not responsible for the aporeticity of intersubjectivity; the «scandal» of intersubjectivity is a further «event», over and above the *surgissement* of being-for-itself. Similarly, Sartre's thesis of the immiscibility of subject- and object-consciousness is not the source of the aporia: Sartre dwells on the non-objectifiability of interiority<sup>21</sup> in order to (a) confute an important subsidiary element in Hegel's theory, his conception of *Leben* and self-consciousness as able to form a transparent rational unity, (b) defend his own, previously articulated, conception of intersubjective cognition, and (c) bring to light the positive forces which obstruct even a contingent harmony of the epistemological and ontological dimensions of intersubjectivity.

(3) What I am calling the third stage of Sartre's argument corresponds to what he calls the charge of «ontological optimism».<sup>22</sup> It focuses on the *Phenomenology's* argument for the necessity of intersubjectivity, which is revealed to be methodologically ambiguous and ultimately dependent on Hegel's *Logic*.

The *Phenomenology* invites, on the one hand, an interpretation

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21 BN 240-3/296-9.

22 BN 243-4/299-300.

according to which self-consciousness functions as the central node of intelligibility, the point at which object-consciousness has been understood, and the basis of all that follows, giving Hegel's overall argument in that work the shape of an "X": the diverse components of objective knowledge come to a head in the "I", which then expands into progressively comprehensive circles of spirit. This construal opens Hegel, as we have seen, to Sartre's objection that self-consciousness in its first capacity does not secure its second, for understanding it as having a world, practically and/or theoretically, does not suffice to explain its supposed capacity to transcend itself into intersubjectivity.

It might be proposed that this move can be validated if we understand Hegel's theory of intersubjectivity as a development of Fichte's, in the following way. What Fichte aims to show in his *Foundations of Natural Right* is that the experience of recognition by the Other – their «summons to activity», which leads me to posit myself as a member of a community of rational beings – is a strict condition of self-consciousness. For, Fichte argues, it is only by *being determined to self-determine* that I can come to know myself as self-active and, thereby, come to be presented to myself as an object in the way that I-consciousness demands.<sup>23</sup> Hegel can be interpreted as following out a direct implication of this account which Fichte's exclusively first-personal philosophical method leads him to overlook: If I need the Other to issue me with a summons, then the Other who summons me also needs *me* to summon *them*; so either the process cannot get started, for want of a unitary transcendental ground, or it can do so only by virtue of some antecedent ground irreducible to individual self-consciousness.<sup>24</sup> Hegel's claim would accordingly be – in line with the holist trajectory of the *Phenomenology*, and as on other occasions where reflection on the purported individuation of entities reveals a greater underlying whole – that self-consciousness resolves itself "upwards" into a reality that contains it as a part.

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23 FICHTE 2000 [1796-97], §§1-4 ('First Main Division: Deduction of the Concept of Right').

24 In GARDNER 2005, 237-40, I suggested that this consideration brings Sartre into line with Fichte (though not Hegel). This now seems to me too quick.

On this construal of Hegel's intersubjectivism, it would support, not presuppose, his metaphysical holism. The problem, however, is evident. Even if Fichte's transcendental argument succeeds, and even if it implies (as just argued) a further trans-subjective ground, Hegel's conclusion has still not been secured, for what has been shown is only that *something or other* initiates the «scandal of plural self-consciousnesses», not that this indeterminately conceived ground is the «We»; to suppose so is to read back into the *origin* of intersubjectivity what is only conceived *through* it.<sup>25</sup>

Now what *would* validate the transition is a different interpretation of the argument, which Hegel also seems to invite, according to which a constant conceptual form repeats itself at each point of *Gestalt*-reconfiguration, and logically compels consciousness' forward movement – the form described by Hegel, on the occasion of its first appearance, as a «movement» in which the «immediately simple» is first sublated in an other, and then restored as something «reflected into itself».<sup>26</sup> On this reading, which makes the *Phenomenology* in effect an application of the *Logic*, the same general *type* of necessity as transforms sense-certainty into perception, and that in later chapters carries spirit through the various transformations which terminate in absolute spirit, is *also* and *equally* what raises I-consciousness to We-consciousness.<sup>27</sup>

This bypasses Sartre's criticism in one respect, while leaving Hegel exposed in another. If a certain *conceptual form* is what supplies the

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25 See Sartre's discussion of the «metaphysical» question, «Why are there Others?», BN 297-302/358-64.

26 PS §107/III:89.

27 Weight can be lent to this interpretation by attending to the course of Chapter IV and what follows in the *Phenomenology*. *Contra* Rousseau and Fichte, Hegel denies that the We is immediately realizable in reciprocal recognition, since his proclamation that *Geist* has made its appearance (PS §177/III:145) is followed directly by the master/servant dialectic. In so far as intersubjectivity *begins* in this asymmetry, Hegel may be thought to *accept*, at this initial point, the break of intelligibility between I and We asserted by Sartre. In other words, Hegel knows that the problem of intersubjectivity is insoluble with the resources at hand. The redirection of the enquiry in the second half of Chapter IV into stoicism and other ideologies of servile self-consciousness supports this construal. On this interpretation, Hegel's reply to Sartre's objection is therefore, as indicated, that it is

relevant dynamic, it must nonetheless be thought to have worked *through* individual self-consciousnesses (since it cannot be thought to have coerced them externally) – in which case, it has still to be explained how an individual self-consciousness can relate (subordinate?) itself to the conceptual form, which *ex hypothesi* cannot be simply “the form of self-consciousness”. Sartre’s dilemma thus returns in modified form: If the conceptual form adduced by Hegel is exemplified in self-consciousness, then it must *consist in* (the form of) selfness, for self-consciousness has no other form; if not, then its relation to selfness can only be external, and intersubjectivity, even if it does not destroy the subject’s reflexivity, cannot give it new reality.

Sartre’s criticism of the *Phenomenology* is therefore that Hegel exploits an ambiguity between two ways – the one “Fichtean”, the other “Platonistic” or “logical” – of telling the story of the advance from individual self-consciousness to intersubjectivity, in order to give an impression of continuous intelligibility: Hegel presents as self-consciousness’ *own* self-motivated achievement, a change of shape which in fact must be engineered from outside it. The *Phenomenology* thus relies on the absolute idealism which it is supposed to be arguing us into.<sup>28</sup>

If Sartre is right about Hegel, and if Hegel’s theory of intersubjectivity articulates our ordinary conception of intersubjectivity, then this concept is defective not in the weak sense

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*only* through a massive self-displacement, involving religion’s solution to the Unhappy Consciousness, that self-consciousness can come to make intersubjectivity intelligible to itself – and find itself (when direct discussion of intersubjectivity is resumed at the beginning of the Spirit chapter) belonging to ethical substance, a member of a «living ethical» world (PS §§437-40/III: 325-6). Sartre can accept this claim of Hegel’s if it is understood in conditional form: *only if* I were capable of becoming God, could I understand myself as belonging essentially to a We. (The issues raised here are endlessly complex and I am seeking not to defend the “logical” interpretation, but merely to indicate how it serves Sartre in his dispute with Hegel. For an account of the *Phenomenology* that limits self-consciousness to an epistemological *means* by which we arrive at a monistic ontology, see HORSTMANN 2006.)

28 Hegel «places himself at the vantage point of truth – i.e., of the Whole – to consider the problem of the Other»: if he resolves it so easily, «it is because for him there never has been any real problem in this connection» (BN 243/299-300).



that it mistakes the properties of its object, but in the strong sense that the concept lacks objective reality *a priori*.<sup>29</sup> In Kantian terms, the transcendental logic of intersubjectivity proves to be a dialectic, not an analytic.<sup>30</sup> Yet Sartre can hardly wish to be understood as saying that what is taken to be the *domain* of the manifold of individual self-consciousnesses in their projects of interrelation is *empty* – it is, after all, his own claim that this field exhibits its own *specific* pattern of non-coherence, which differentiates it from others and shapes the phenomena that populate it. How, then, should we think of intersubjectivity, according to Sartre: can it be conceptualized *positively*, i.e., as anything *more* than a projected but unrealizable object of natural consciousness?

The new concept which Sartre introduces, in language intended to counter Hegel, is that of «detotalized totality».<sup>31</sup> Now the obvious objection suggests itself, that, in order for there to *be* a *detotalized totality*, there must once have *existed* a *totality*, if not in time then in some other order, in the same way that the fragments of a broken vase imply a former vase. Sartre must of course deny this, since it amounts to a reinstatement of Hegel's position on the basis that, even if present conditions fall short, the possibility of actualizing the concept is guaranteed (the pieces give evidence, as it were, that a vase can be constructed from them).

The following shows how Sartre may meet the objection. In general, attempts to conceptualize the impossible result, on the one hand, in formulae that appear to refer to *impossibilia* – “Square circles are

29 Similarly, according to Sartre, there is no such thing as “the mind”, as ordinarily conceived. The reality of each individual for-itself is the reality of its consciousness, and when consciousness represents itself to itself as what Sartre calls a *psyche*, this entity is its own fiction: see BN Pt. II, Ch. 2, Sect. III, 158-70/205-18 (summarized in GARDNER 2009, 117-22).

30 In parallel with the way that Kant's Paralogisms of Pure Reason show the non-realizability of rational psychology's Idea of the soul *qua* object of cognition, limiting self-knowledge to transcendental apperception, Sartre shows the unrealizability of the “Idea” of intersubjectivity. The comparison may be pursued: just as Kant grants the Idea of the soul regulative significance, and objective reality for practical cognition, Sartre transfers the “Idea” of intersubjectivity into the practical context of social and political critique.

31 BN 252/309-10 and 299-302/360-4.

geometrically impossible" – while also, at the same time, enabling the formation of positive concepts, viz., of the attempts themselves: self-stultifying acts, necessary performative failures – the *thinking* of "I do not exist" or "Nothing is being thought", the *uttering* of "I am not speaking" or "I promise to break my promises" – are indexed by the *impossibilia* which they invoke (but fail to realize). In the same way, Sartre's «detotalized totality» can be understood as referring to a *sustained endeavour*, a «project», which must end in self-stultification but which has not yet come to its end, and to which existence must be attributed in so far as each individual for-itself is necessarily conscious of itself as engaged in this performance, and of each other for-itself as also doing so.<sup>32</sup> Now, if the manifold of for-itselfs could be conceived not merely *distributively* but *collectively*, then it could be urged at this point, against Sartre, that objective reality can after all be given to the concept of their totality, simply by dint of its *grasping itself as such*. Again, Hegel would then be vindicated, for the «We» would have posited itself into existence, and Sartre's «detotalized totality» would have resolved itself into Hegelian spirit. But if Sartre is right, this is exactly what cannot be done, since the possibility of the collective unity of the manifold of for-itselfs which this Hegelian story of objective spirit's self-positing presupposes at the outset, is exactly what needed to be established.

I acknowledged the elusiveness of Sartre's insight and its liability to aspect-switching. More may now be said about this. One natural response to Sartre is to wonder if he is not imposing, as necessary for the intelligibility of intersubjectivity, a condition which it is *logically* impossible to meet, reducing his "aporia" to a facile paradox: if intersubjectivity requires the numerical identity of my "I" with your "I", or something equivalent, then it is of course impossible. To the extent that we start with our actual knowledge of intersubjectivity, Sartre will inevitably seem to be making some such assumption. And since the nub of his argument – the dilemma he presents for

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32 Sartre of course freely admits such entities into his ontology; the for-itself *is* a contradictory project of seeking to become God.

intersubjectivism – turns on a failure to make intelligible the transition from individual self-consciousness to intersubjectivity, the reality of the former remaining beyond doubt, Sartre appears to be asserting the non-compossibility of self-consciousness and intersubjectivity: a claim which, we infer, must rest on some positive doctrine which, whatever it may be, cannot be as well grounded as our actual common knowledge that both individual self-consciousness and intersubjectivity enjoy reality. On this view, Sartre merely diverts us from the truly purposive philosophical task at hand, of developing a theoretical understanding of *how* exactly the two realities can co-exist, a question which Hegel at least attempted to answer.

If the reconstruction presented earlier is correct, then this response misconstrues Sartre (and thereby misses the opportunity to grasp the deeply perplexing character of intersubjectivity, in the same way that Fichte, Henrich shows, reveals what is deeply puzzling in self-consciousness). For Sartre does not deny that we are related to others internally, and that we intentionally contain one another: on the contrary, he asserts the greatest possible intimacy with the Other's interiority – «there is a sort of *cogito* concerning» the Other's existence.<sup>33</sup> That intersubjectivity has reality in *this* sense is a premise of his critique of Hegel and no more stands in doubt than do ordinary plain truths concerning the social properties of persons and other social facts. Sartre's thesis, rather, is that we have no insight into what makes this situation *possible*, and his argument rests only on the assumption, which is present in natural consciousness and endorsed by Hegel, that the ground of intersubjectivity must be accessible to individual self-consciousness. This is where philosophical reflection comes to a halt, according to Sartre: self-consciousness cannot without self-cancellation alienate itself in the way needed to rationalize the necessity of its relation to the Other.

It is reasonable to regard Part A of Chapter IV of Hegel's *Phenomenology* as seeking to give metaphysical reality to Rousseau's

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<sup>33</sup> See BN 251/308; discussed in GARDNER 2005, 326-33.

problematic conception of the General Will.<sup>34</sup> Rousseau offers his account as normative political theory, yet it is hard to reconstruct his argument as a piece of strict contractarian reasoning, and if one thinks, as Hegel no doubt does, that Rousseau is right that the problems of normative political theory in general cannot be solved without delving into the foundations of selfhood and relations to others (in a way which yields moreover a less methodologically individualistic outlook than Kant's), then Hegel's endeavour to rationalize Rousseau is strongly motivated. In Sartre's terms, however, the familiar stumbling-blocks of Rousseau's political theory – how can I be *forced* to be free? how can the General Will be my *own* will? – become the problem of Hegel's metaphysics of intersubjectivity – how can I *be* the We? – meaning that Rousseau's problem, of grasping how it might be possible for us to live together, remains unsolved. To anticipate the following section, we can now begin to see how Sartre's aporetic thesis might have a positive aspect, for if taking natural consciousness' conception of intersubjectivity at face value – construing the sum of its commitments realistically and accordingly seeking their real ground – fails to make it intelligible, then aporeticity offers itself as at least allowing natural consciousness to sustain, on a *non*-realist basis, its commitments concerning what it means to live with-and-among others. The insight is also purgative, for once illusions of essential collectivity and foundational community have been eliminated, it is seen that the only possible foundation of collective life is *solidarity*, a condition which is not given but which can be constructed, through a self-overcoming of individual subjectivity motivated not by considerations of utility but by affirmation of freedom as the Good.<sup>35</sup>

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34 The problem emerges in the crucial sixth chapter of Book I of *The Social Contract*, when Rousseau advances from (i) individuality in the state of nature, by way of (ii) an «agrégation» of the forces of each, to (iii) a «forme d'association», in which (iv) each is «partie indivisible du tout», (v) this «tout» being «la volonté générale». Granting that the General Will is necessary for rational collective life, what underpins this movement? Utility, or non-fulfilment of need, is not a sufficient explanation.

35 The «absolute conversion to intersubjectivity» (SARTRE 1992 [1947-48], 406-7, 479) which yields solidarity with others, is Sartre's version of Rousseau's social contract.

#### 4. Sartre's social theory

I noted at the beginning that Sartre's conception of aporetic intersubjectivity is associated with a pessimistic account of personal relationships, and the text of *Being and Nothingness* leaves little doubt that, in 1943, Sartre is heavily preoccupied with the sphere of intimate relations; the concrete practical and axiological upshot of the aporetic character of intersubjectivity, he explains, is that attempts to form purposive relations with others, even if they do not in fact come to grief, are essentially empty. The broader implications for ethical and political thought appear plainly nihilistic or at best Hobbesian. Marxist and other critics have hurried to point out the evident disputability of Sartre's ("bourgeois individualistic") assumption that dyadic personal relationships are ontologically and hermeneutically independent of broader social, historical and material structures – entities which, they argue, display a robust degree of reality, and attention to which gives us reason to reject the anti-intersubjectivism of *Being and Nothingness*.

Against this assessment, I suggest that, though *Being and Nothingness* may seem to close philosophical enquiry into intersubjectivity, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* represents a continuous development of Sartre's earlier thought with respect to this topic,<sup>36</sup> in so far as Sartre discovers a constructive use for his earlier aporetic thesis in application to the social sphere, allowing him to appropriate the social realism of his critics on the Left. Properly substantiating this claim would require a lengthy discussion, but some things can be said briefly to make it plausible.

It quickly becomes clear to readers of the *Critique* that Sartre regards social ontology as at once problem and solution, *explanandum* and *explanans*.<sup>37</sup> Theoretical problems of understanding history and society

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36 The standard view, by contrast, is that Sartre makes philosophical progress to the extent that he deserts his early anti-intersubjectivism; e.g., HONNETH 1995, 166-7.

37 Central passages are in part II of the Introduction, and in Bk. I, Ch. 1, of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. I am of course not offering here a summary of the *Critique*; my suggestion is just that the aporeticity of intersubjectivity is the precondition of its major

have their solution in grasping the peculiarly problematic *kind* of existence possessed by social entities, and this mode of existence is also the ultimate source of the problems of actual social and political existence: it mediates the factual causes of political conflict and domination, making them occasions for the irruption of a metaphysical problem underlying collective life, and lending them forms that make them resistant to rational solution. Thus for Sartre the decisive role reserved by classical liberal theory for individual self-interest, and by marxist theory for material factors, is taken by an ontological structure, which subsumes them: the Sartrean problem, concerning the heterogeneous types of existence exemplified by individual subjects and by social realities, is what threatens to make the (familiar, manifest) problems of conflicts of interest and material scarcity insoluble, and sets human history in motion – which, if it has a meaning, must lie in the resolution (in some sense that, Sartre is well aware, has yet to be specified) of the original aporia of intersubjectivity.

What allows Sartre to go on to raise questions concerning the conditions of rational sociality and the total meaning of human history, without executing a metaphilosophical *volte face*, is essentially straightforward. It turns on a notion which had already been introduced in Part Two of *Being and Nothingness*, though not expanded on. Having argued that individual mindedness consists in consciousness grounded on freedom, which misrepresents itself as sharing in the unfree mode of being of the in-itself, Sartre acknowledges that the «psychic facts» into which consciousness degrades itself, once they have been constituted, acquire a quasi-reality; they are derivative and virtual, but not abstract or illusory.<sup>38</sup> Being-for-itself thereby surrenders to what is, in terms of origin, its own fiction. In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Sartre turns to examine, as *Being and Nothingness* had only begun to do,<sup>39</sup> the quasi-autonomous

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innovations – the «practico-inert», the role of scarcity, the shift to ternary relations, intersubjectivity's mediation by «things», and so on.

38 BN 158-9/205-6, 161-3/208-11, 170/218.

39 In the section on the «We»: BN Pt. III, Ch. 3, Sect. 3.

life of these pseudo-realized fictions, in order to lay bare their specific logic, which is inadequately grasped in the respectively idealistic and materialistic dialectics of Hegel and Marx. The failure of subjects to cohere intelligibly renders human reality ontologically vulnerable: it defines an empty space into which the entities which give the social and historical world its pseudo-substantiality project themselves. In this way the aporetic thesis provides the key to the new forms of social and historical explanation explored in Sartre's *Critique*.

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# Asymmetrical Reciprocity

## From Recognition To Responsibility and Back\*

*Steffen Herrmann*

FernUniversität in Hagen\*\*

[steffen.herrmann@fernuni-hagen.de](mailto:steffen.herrmann@fernuni-hagen.de)

*ABSTRACT.* In this article, I argue that Hegel's concept of recognition and Levinas' concept of responsibility complement each other and lead to the idea of an asymmetrical reciprocity in which the origin of our social relations is not mutual equality, but rather mutual inequality. I will unfold this argument in three steps. I will first work out a fundamental asymmetry of recognition in Hegel by means of the figure of the bondsman before elucidating in a second step the asymmetry of responsibility in Levinas by means of the figure of the hostage. In the last and third step, I will correlate both asymmetries and show how far the asymmetry of recognition and the asymmetry of responsibility constantly develop from and transition into one another in our social relationships.

*KEYWORDS.* Hegel; Levinas; Arendt; Responsibility; Master-Servant Dialectic.

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\* Translated by Lilian Peter.

\*\* *Correspondence:* Steffen Herrmann – FernUniversität in Hagen, Institut für Philosophie, Universitätstraße 33, 58084 Hagen.



Although Hegel and Levinas may be considered two central figures for theories of intersubjectivity, there is little research on connections between the two.<sup>1</sup> I would like to productively correlate their theories and show that their fundamental concepts – recognition and responsibility – complement each other. My proposition is that we should consider the primal scene of sociability, following Hegel and Levinas, starting from the idea of *asymmetrical reciprocity*: The origin of our social relations is not mutual equality, but rather mutual inequality. In order to develop this thought, I will draw on those two fundamental figures by Hegel and Levinas that display our asymmetrical relationship with others with particular sharpness, namely the figure of the bondsman and the figure of the hostage. Being a bondsman or being a hostage are, as I will show, more than just pathological forms of intersubjective relationships; they rather provide the fundamental forms of how we relate to others. Being a subject always means being *subject to* in a double sense: by way of being dependent upon the recognition of others as well as by way of being exposed to the responsibility for others.

Hegel's and Levinas' theories of intersubjectivity started gaining greater attention in the 1990s. Authors such as Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Zygmunt Bauman and Simon Critchley have contributed to the fact that theories of recognition and responsibility now belong to the core of social philosophy. In the light of their interpretations, at least three differences between both theoretical traditions strike the eye. The first concerns the normative measures of what can be considered a successful form of sociality. Both theories are based upon very different ideas of the latter: While, from the perspective of the theory of recognition, social exchange is mainly about approving the other's identity, the perspective of the theory of responsibility focuses on respecting the otherness of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. BERNASCONI 2005, BESNO 2007, PAGES 2011, PEPPERZAK 2007, 2010, REY 2006, LIEBSCH/KEINTZEL 2010.

other. Where the former contemplates recognition as based upon some kind of identification, the latter contemplates it as renouncing identification. The second difference concerns the process of subjectification. Both traditions agree in that the genesis of subjectivity must be thought as starting from a communication process. They disagree, however, with regard to the question as to how this communication process is to be imagined. Where the theory of recognition starts from the subject and its desire for recognition, the theory of responsibility starts from the demand of the other. While subjectivation for the former thus means rediscovering oneself in the other, for the latter it means discovering the other within oneself. A third point of controversy, finally, is the question as to how the social bond is structured. Where the theory of recognition assumes a symmetry of social relations, the theory of alterity assumes an insurmountable asymmetry of social relations. While intersubjective relationships are structured according to the principle of mutuality for one theoretical tradition, the other assumes a unilateralism between the 'I' and the other.

There are, as we can see, wide-ranging differences between the theory of recognition and the theory of responsibility. They cannot be seamlessly translated into one another. Any attempt to correlate them faces the challenge of having to take a position regarding these oppositions. There are at least three ways to proceed: The first chooses a *comparative* approach and examines which one of both traditions is more suitable to appropriately comprehend social relations and then decides for one or the other.<sup>2</sup> The second way is based upon an *integrative* approach which tries to dissolve the oppositions between the two traditions by showing that aspects of one theory can be found in the other.<sup>3</sup> The third way, lastly, which I will pursue in this paper, follows a *complementary* approach. It shows that the theory of recognition and the theory of alterity do not oppose but rather refer to

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2 Cf. HONNETH 2008.

3 Cf. DÜTTMANN 2000. STAEBLER 2016 emphasises the methodological kinship between Hegel's phenomenology and the phenomenological tradition following Husserl.

one another mutually, in such a way that each of them can only be reasonably understood in conjunction with the other.<sup>4</sup> This approach has the advantage, I believe, that it neither has to compare what cannot be compared, nor does it level out both traditions. It instead preserves the independence of both theoretical traditions in their opposition by way of showing their correlation.

In the following, I would like to develop the proposition of the asymmetrical reciprocity of social relations in three steps. I will first work out a fundamental asymmetry of recognition in Hegel by means of the figure of the bondsman (1) before elucidating in a second step the asymmetry of responsibility in Levinas by means of the figure of the hostage (2). In the last and third step, I will correlate both asymmetries and show as to in how far the asymmetry of recognition and the asymmetry of responsibility constantly develop from and transition into one another in our social relationships. My final conclusion will be that sociality is not to be understood as per sample of symmetrical, but rather as per sample of asymmetrical reciprocity (3).

## 1. The Asymmetry of Recognition: Hegel and the Figure of the Bondsman

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in 1807, can be considered an important milestone in his thought regarding recognition, for here he makes the process of recognition result in the relation of lordship and bondage for the first time. The common argument is that, by reference to the dialectic of lordship and bondage, Hegel shows that relationships of mutual recognition can only be realised in reciprocal and symmetrical relations. In contrast to this classical interpretation, I would like to argue that what Hegel actually illustrates by reference to the figure of the bondsman is a constant asymmetry of recognition. In order to develop this idea, we have to bring to mind the point in

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4 Cf. BEDORF 2010.

Hegel's argumentation where he first introduces the relation of lordship and bondage. Before illustrating my alternative interpretation, I will first briefly outline what I call the classical interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

The classical interpretation reads the relation of lordship and bondage as the result of a struggle for recognition. The two protagonists that Hegel puts in the centre of his thought concerning the constitution of self-consciousness are in a relation of irreconcilable discord, which unavoidably leads to this struggle. Each of them assumes his being superior to the other and taking a favoured place in the world. As long as none of the two is willing to resign his self-concept, a conflict develops from this discord, ending in the very moment in which it escalates from a simple competition to a fight to the death. Hegel says: «Thus the relation of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove *themselves* and each other through a life-and-death struggle.»<sup>6</sup> In the light of such a death struggle, the protagonists react in very different ways. While one looks death in the eye without any fear, the other caves in at death's door. Where one subject is willing to give up on its claim for superiority and to instead surrender to the claim for superiority of the other when facing death, the other subject appears unperturbed by the death threat – it instead holds on to its claim for superiority. According to the classical interpretation, this holding on to its own conviction is the crucial achievement of what will for Hegel later be the lord. While the bondsman clings to life and remains thus chained to his animal-like nature, the lord is able to overcome the latter. He outmasters his creaturely passions, instincts and fears and manages to keep up the image that he has of himself. Put otherwise: He would rather die for his beliefs than giving them up and living in chains. It is not until taking up this attitude, according to Hegel, that man stays aloof from his animal-like existence. This thought becomes clear in another work where Hegel speaks of suicide: «The human being alone is able to

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5 I have developed this thought in detail in HERRMANN 2012.

6 HEGEL 1977, 113-4f.

abandon all things, even his own life.»<sup>7</sup> Human existence comes to itself in the lord because for him the humane dimension of his life with its values, beliefs and mindsets outvalues his creaturely being and the needs, desires and affects coming with it.

My alternative interpretation of the lordship and bondage relation assumes that the struggle for recognition is more complex than posited by the classical interpretation. This begins with the fact that in the *Phenomenology*, the struggle is not abandoned before one of the participants dies (as Hegel had stated in earlier writings during his time in Jena), but instead fought out until the very end. For the protagonists, the fight to the death does not remain a mere anticipation; it becomes bitter reality. One subject initially survives the struggle as the winner before then deciding to bow to the other as the bondsman. I believe it is crucial to consider this process in order to understand as to why Hegel makes the struggle for recognition result in the lordship and bondage relation in the *Phenomenology* for the first time: It enables him to show in how far recognition may become the reason of inequality and asymmetrical dependency.

Let us thus review again what Hegel says: In the *Phenomenology*, we follow the development of the self-consciousness that survives because it has killed the other. Hegel himself makes very clear that the history of experience of the self-consciousness leads up to the point at which it has «survived this struggle».<sup>8</sup> On this basis, the interpretation of the struggle shifts its focus: The question is then no longer which one of the two subjects has faced the threat of death, but rather what surviving this struggle means for the subject. Hegel's answer is very clear: Being the winner of the struggle is not so much a sign of braveness but rather what causes the subject to fail. The subject has to realise that in as much as it has destroyed its counterpart, its being certain of its own self-concept – which was supposed to be fulfilled when winning the fight – has become questionable. «This trial by death however», Hegel states, «does away with the truth which was

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7 HEGEL 2003 § 5 Addition.

8 HEGEL 1977, 114.

supposed to issue from it, and so, too, with the certainty of self generally.»<sup>9</sup> In the context of the fight to the death, the subject fails in so far as the other that it has killed can no longer approve its self-concept. When killing the other, the subject inherently kills the condition of possibility of conscious certainty of itself.

The conclusion that the self-consciousness draws from its survival must be seen in the light of this loss of its self-certainty. Hegel says: «In this experience, self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness».<sup>10</sup> The surviving subject realises that it must maintain life in order to fulfill itself as a self-consciousness. It is this discovery that represents the crucial turning point in the progression of this history of experience. When encountering a human being the next time, the subject will no longer seek conflict; quite the reverse, it will seek submission. It will approve the superiority of the other and recognise him as its lord. The reason for this self-imposed bondage is that it guarantees the subject the stability of its self-concept. So long as the bondsman approves the lord, he will in return receive recognition from the latter. The bondsman is thus ready for submission because he will, in return, receive at least the amount of recognition from the lord that he needs in order to achieve a minimal form of self-certainty.<sup>11</sup>

The submission of the bondsman is thus, according to my alternative interpretation, not due to his lack of bravery but must rather be understood in the light of his dependency upon recognition. Accepting the submissive relationship is, from the bondsman's perspective, a result from his experience of frustration: He has to realise that, in order to achieve certainty, he is dependent upon others. Without recognition, however, he must come to doubt his real existence in the surrounding world: Doesn't he actually live in a condition of invisibility? Hegel describes this condition elsewhere as «waking [...] dreaming».<sup>12</sup> When talking of invisibility, Hegel brings a

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9 HEGEL 1977, 114.

10 HEGEL 1977, 115.

11 Cf. also Paul Redding for the argument that the bondsman is willing to submit in return for a form of self-certainty (REDDING 2009, 106).

12 HEGEL 1986, 199.



description into play that is also used frequently in discussions regarding contemporary social theory in order to address the social exclusion of subaltern subjects. Without the recognition of others – this is the core idea in both Hegel and contemporary social theory – people are endangered to drop out of the circle of those counted as the members of a society.<sup>13</sup>

What is at stake in the struggle for recognition, as we are now able to conclude, is not so much the protagonists' physical life, but rather their 'being-in-the-world'. What Hegel wants to show us when transitioning to the lord and bondage relation is that the development of this relationship results from the very fear of losing this being-in-the-world. The «absolute Lord»<sup>14</sup> that makes the bondsman's consciousness surrender, according to my subaltern interpretation, is not so much the fear of physical death, but rather the fear of social death. The bondsman gets to feel what social death means once he has killed the other and is left behind without recognition. Hegel thus says: «In that experience it [self-consciousness] has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations.»<sup>15</sup> Experiencing the dissolution of one's own existence as described by Hegel here means transitioning to the experience of social invisibility as a result from the loss of self-certainty. According to my subaltern interpretation, the bondsman represents the very figure that reveals how existential our dependency upon recognition is. He would rather accept a disregarding form of recognition that enables him to reach at least some form of self-certainty than not being able to achieve any self-certainty at all.

One will certainly want to object at this point that I have so far only reconstructed half of what Hegel says. And indeed his thoughts are, eventually, meant to sublimate the aforementioned asymmetry of recognition. The argument at the core of the lordship and bondage

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13 On invisibility cf. HONNETH 2001 and BAUMAN 2003.

14 HEGEL 1977, 117.

15 HEGEL 1977, 117.

dialectic says: In so far as the lord has to realise that being recognised by someone he despises is worth nothing, he ends up in an «existential impasse».<sup>16</sup> Recognition relationships, according to this thought, contain a potential for emancipation, since they aren't satisfying for the privileged agent unless a symmetrical equality between both agents gets established. Based on this assumption, Hegel then concludes that recognition relationships can only be realised in mutual and symmetrical relations.

I think that Hegel's conclusion is wrong. There are many ways to obstruct the dissolution of the lordship and bondage relation, but this is not even my point: I think that his argument simply does not work. Let us remember the self-concept with which the agent who later becomes the lord faces up to his counterpart: He is convinced at this point to be superior to the other. Believing in his own superiority necessarily means regarding the other as inferior. Put otherwise: The lord's self-concept depends on his being in an asymmetrical social relationship with the other, and the bondsman's submission approves this self-concept. There is just no reason for him to doubt or alter it. Hegel argues that the lord's disregarding the bondsman devaluates the recognition of the latter and thus leaves the lord unsatisfied. The error he commits is that he presumes what is yet to be shown: The failure that Hegel speaks of only makes sense if the subject seeks the recognition of someone equal but has to realise that the only recognition it receives comes from someone inferior, and that it thus does not find what it is looking for. But the subject of this history of experience does not actually seek the recognition of someone equal – it seeks the recognition of its superiority by someone inferior, and this is exactly the kind of recognition it receives from the bondsman. So in his aim to achieve certainty in his self-concept by being recognised by the bondsman, the lord can indeed be successful. His disregard of the bondsman does not necessarily entail a devaluation of his recognition. Quite the opposite: The bondsman's recognition consists in the very gesture of certifying his own inferiority and thus confirming the self-

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16 KOJÈVE 1980, 19.

concept of the lord.

Up to this point, my argument was that the lordship and bondage relationship contains an asymmetry of recognition that is not necessarily doomed to failure. In the next step, I would like to show that this relationship does not simply depict a random empirical fact, but is rather socio-ontologically fundamental to sociality as such. The structure of the lordship and bondage relation being inherent in every intersubjective relationship becomes clear when considering our communicative relationships. The reciprocity of speech and response, understood as an exchange of recognition rather than a mere exchange of information, contains the very form of asymmetrical dependency that Hegel thought of with the figure of the bondsman. The reason for this lies in the diachrony of our communicative relations: Speech and response cannot take place at the same time. They must come after each other for otherwise we would be exposed to but a babel of voices. So the mutuality of recognition can only be established step by step. Every and any process of recognition must begin with a unilateral advance of recognition: One subject recognises another subject without being able to know at this point whether it will in return itself receive recognition from the other subject. In order to achieve mutual recognition, one subject has to take the risk of first unilaterally rendering recognition.<sup>17</sup> Let us make this clear by reference to an example: Greeting someone and the other person's greeting in return can be considered a mutual process of recognition in which the agents communicate that they are of importance for one another. In order to achieve mutuality, one subject has to initiate the communication and greet first. It thus renders an advance of recognition without knowing whether its recognition will be returned. Even more: In the moment in which the subject addresses another, the latter is no longer a random other; it becomes a significant other whose response has authority and weight. The initiation of communication comes along with the unequal situation in which the subject that speaks first is much more dependent upon the subject it addresses than the other way around.

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<sup>17</sup> Marcel Hénaff argues in a similar way (HÉNAFF 2010, Part II).

Neither does the addressed subject necessarily have to greet in return, nor can the subject that speaks first just ignore a disrespectful response, since it has awarded the other with a certain authority. This asymmetrical dependency is not empirically contingent but rooted in the very structure of communication as such. It thus cannot simply be sublated by the participants. Even if the two subjects have promised each other in advance that they will greet one another, this promise does not guarantee that in the moment of communication the other will actually greet in return. It is the asymmetrical structure of the communication process that is indicative of a socio-ontological interpretation of the bondsman figure. A subject that addresses another subject in order to receive recognition renders an advance of recognition. It recognises the other as someone who is as such worth being recognised, and at the same time as someone whose recognition it would like to receive. But a subject can never know for sure whether it will actually receive the recognition it is seeking; therefore, addressing another creates a situation of asymmetrical dependency. The relation between the subject that addresses and the subject that is being addressed equals that of the bondsman and the lord. What prevails in both instances is an asymmetry of recognition. The result of my alternative interpretation of Hegel's thoughts is thus that recognition and asymmetry are not necessarily contradictory. Quite the reverse, they are equiprimordial in so far as they form the basis of our intersubjective communication relations.

## **2. The Asymmetry of Responsibility: Levinas and the Figure of the Hostage**

Hegel's point of departure is the addressing subject. Levinas' philosophical signature, however, is to start from the subject that is being addressed. In asking what it means to be someone's addressee, responsibility is the register that then comes into focus when contemplating social relations. Levinas' social philosophy is arranged

around the figure of the hostage.<sup>18</sup> It first appears in an essay from 1967 entitled *Language and Proximity*; in his subsequent writings, it becomes more and more prominent before finally occupying centre stage in his late work *Otherwise than Being*. The figure of the hostage is, on the one hand, designed to reveal a morality that is fundamental to social relations. On the other hand, Levinas uses it to make clear that this morality is rooted in an ineluctable asymmetry. His core idea is that the source of our morality is not the subject's potential for reflection – be it in the sense of using rules of sagacity, of universalising guiding principles or of orienting oneself by hierarchies of values – but rather its *exposition to alterity*. In order to understand this exposition, we must take a closer look at Levinas' phenomenology. What does it mean to encounter another human being?

For Levinas, the primal scene of intersubjective encounters is the situation of the face-to-face. He contemplates this situation as an essentially communicative scene in which an addressing subject and an addressed subject face one another. What fascinates Levinas about the face-to-face situation is the mutual and unveiled gaze into the face of another human being. Levinas' fascination for this situation of mutual gaze is easy to comprehend when considering the difference between looking into a 'living face' as opposed to a 'portrayed face'. The gaze at a portrayed face – be it a painting, a photograph or a mask – remains uninterrupted. The colour, texture, tone and shade of the eyes can as leisurely be perceived as the pores and wrinkles of the skin or the contours of the eyes, nose and cheeks. The portrayal of a face can thus be perceived piece by piece. This is not the case with the living face – it does not allow us to dwell, our gaze is being perturbed. It is hard to look the other in the eye without doing something. For Levinas, this is due to the fact that the other is able to reverse the gaze relation. While the portrayed face silently tolerates the gaze, the other can himself look at us. And the gaze of the other demands a gesture: a smile, casting down one's eyes, or a grimace. We are of course free to

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18 «[...] man must be thought from the condition or incondition of hostage [...]» (LEVINAS 2006, 68).

refuse these gestures and to just look the other motionless in the eye – but the fact that this costs us an exceptional effort only bears witness to the demand of the other. Levinas thus states: «The Other imposes himself as an exigency».<sup>19</sup> The question – and the concern of Levinas' philosophy – is what it means to be affected by this demand. Its basic structures can best be reconstructed by virtue of the three meanings of the French word *répondre*:

(i) “Répondre à qn.” as “respond to sb.”: Levinas contemplates the subject as a responding subject. His basic proposition is that we cannot leave the demand of the other unanswered, for in the moment of confrontation we cannot act as if nothing were happening. We are forced, rather, to somehow react to the other's demand. «It is that discourse», says Levinas, «that obliges the entering into discourse.»<sup>20</sup> Even remaining silent is a response to the demand of the other. Saying nothing does not mean doing nothing, for it means to disregard or ignore the other. There is no way of evading the other's demand. The demand of the other cannot be neutralised: Refusing a response is still a reaction that confirms the very demand that it is trying to reject.<sup>21</sup>

(ii) “Répondre de qc.” as “to answer for sth.”: When in everyday life we speak of taking over responsibility for something, we refer to acts of which we consider ourselves to be the originators, given we have acted voluntarily and not under constraint. The concept of freedom thus seems to outline the condition under which we are able to take over responsibility. How about our responsibility when the demand of the other forces us to respond? Can we then still claim responsibility for our response? Levinas answers this question starting from the concept of «invested freedom».<sup>22</sup> He uses this concept to show that the subject not being released from its responsibility despite being forced to respond is actually a characteristic of the face-to-face-relation. The subject must in fact take over responsibility for something of which it

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19 LEVINAS 1979, 87.

20 LEVINAS 1979, 201.

21 As an example, cf. PEPPERZAK 2012, 4: «Any response changes the preceding speaker into a listener, who, in turn, responds to the responder.»

22 LEVINAS 1979, 84.

is neither the origin nor the beginning. Levinas speaks of a «responsibility for the other, for what has not begun in me».<sup>23</sup> The reason why this is a case of responsibility is that the subject is indeed forced to respond; but what and how it responds is up to the subject alone. We may speak of being ‘forced’ to give a certain response in particular situations of everyday life; this is, however, a phrase to express that we have actually *decided* on a certain response. The demand of the other always leaves the subject the possibility of freedom within a certain unfreedom, and this is why Levinas can say: «The will is free to assume this responsibility in whatever sense it likes; it is not free to refuse this responsibility itself.»<sup>24</sup>

(iii) “Répondre de qc. devant qn.” as “to answer sth. before sb.”: The last step of Levinas’ thoughts is to make clear that the demand of the other does not only force to take over responsibility for one’s response, but also to frame this response in moral terms. His proposition is that our social relationships always appear in the light of morality. In order to elucidate this idea, I would like to draw on the historical event that has deeply influenced Levinas’ thinking: the persecution and extermination of European Jews by the National Socialists. Levinas’ proposition must be understood in its full radicality: Even among the Nazis, morality cannot have been entirely suspended. What the Jews had to go through when entering the camp can be interpreted as attempts to neutralise the normative demand coming from them. Taking away their clothes, shaving their heads and tattooing a number into their skin would then have to be understood as attempts to transform the individuals into a uniform mass of bodies as soon as they arrived – bodies that were supposed to appear as nothing but things. From this perspective, the internment ritual would have to be regarded as a practice of dehumanisation, aiming to suspend the normative demand that came from the enslaved and to disconnect any moral consciousness on the perpetrators’ side, so as to enable a

23 LEVINAS 1978, 125.

24 LEVINAS 1979, 218-9. Cf. also Derrida: «This responsibility that assigns freedom to us without leaving it with us, as it were – we see it coming from the other. » (DERRIDA 2005, 231-2).

ruthless extermination procedure. We know from many survivors' reports that all these attempts of dehumanisation were, to some extent, doomed to failure: Humans can be treated as if they were things, but they cannot actually be turned into things.<sup>25</sup> Put otherwise: It is possible to disregard the demand of the other, but it is impossible to suspend it. The ongoing desire of the camp wardens to degrade and torture the inmates despite their already miserable situation can thus be understood as evidence for the impossibility of neutralising the morality of alterity. From this perspective, the torment of the inmates would not just be a hollow form of sadism but rather it would bear witness to the persistence of the moral consciousness the perpetrators were unable to get rid off, despite all efforts to dehumanise the other. Their immorality would thus need to be understood as the irreducible morality of alterity because it still relates to this register, even if in a negative form.

Levinas was not (or not primarily) interested in such a perspective on the perpetrators. Whenever he seems to be speaking of the camp, his perspective is that of the persecutees. But his thoughts on the subject matter are nonetheless surprising. He writes that the responsibility for the other goes so far as to the subject being responsible even «for its persecutor».<sup>26</sup> This thought that may seem a little disturbing at first can be interpreted in different ways. One may argue that what Levinas is thinking of is not really the National Socialist perpetrators, but rather the fundamental communication structure, namely being haunted by the demand of the other. An argument against this interpretation is, however, that Levinas' theory must prove itself specifically in extraordinary situations, given that the proposition of the morality of alterity is supposed to actually be socio-ontologically fundamental. For this reason, I think that we have to understand Levinas' thought in the sense that the victims of the

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25 Cf. Robert Antelme who speaks of the executioner as someone powerless, for his only power is the power of murder. This means that «He can kill a human being, but he cannot turn him into something different» (ANTELME 1987, 305). This thought has been theoretically tidied up by Avishai MARGALIT (1996).

26 LEVINAS 1978, 126.



National Socialist persecution cannot secede from being morally exposed to their perpetrators. Levinas' dictum of the «impossibility of killing» may clarify this idea.<sup>27</sup> I believe that the way this statement must be understood is that one cannot take another one's life and declare it a 'neutral' killing, even if the other used to be one's own torturer. Because of their moral exposition, human beings cannot but understand violence as 'justified' or 'unjustified' revenge, 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' self-defense or as 'rightful' or 'unrightful' liberation. Being exposed to the demand of the other makes it impossible for us to contemplate social relationships other than in the normatively loaded vocabulary of morality and immorality.

Returning to the point from where we started, we can now better understand as to why the figure of the hostage is emblematic for Levinas' thought. The other human makes us their hostage in so far as his demand engages us morally. Of course this does not mean that the other makes us do the right thing per se. Quite the opposite – Levinas says that the face of the other is also «inviting us to an act of violence».<sup>28</sup> What is crucial is that we cannot but try to justify violence against others. This makes clear that our relationships with others can only be understood in the light of morality. Morality doesn't spring from a devotion to the other in an empathetic, compassionate or generous way, but rather from the visitation by the other. It is not based upon a relation of mutual equality and of symmetrical exchange between two parties, but rather on the relation of a unilateral asymmetry by way of which the subject finds itself as inherently in the grip of morality. Levinas thus states: «The responsibility for another, an unlimited responsibility which the strict book-keeping of the free and non-free does not measure, requires subjectivity as an irreplaceable hostage.»<sup>29</sup>

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27 LEVINAS 1979, 199.

28 LEVINAS 1985, 86.

29 LEVINAS 1978, 124.

### 3. Asymmetrical Reciprocity: From Hegel to Levinas and Back

In the foregoing paragraphs I have reconstructed Hegel's theory of recognition and Levinas' theory of responsibility. I have argued that both Hegel and Levinas reveal a fundamental asymmetry at the basis of social relations. In the following, I would like to argue that both asymmetries are mutually intertwined. In doing so, I will follow Derrida's proposition that the relation between Hegel and Levinas can be described as «transcendental symmetry of two empirical asymmetries».<sup>30</sup> In order to make this proposition plausible, I will show that both thinkers' theories each contain an empty space that can be filled by the other. The leading question for my argumentation will be: In how far do the asymmetry of recognition and the asymmetry of responsibility merge in the figure of asymmetrical reciprocity?

Let us first take another look at Hegel. The empty space of his thinking becomes specifically clear in his description of the «movement of recognition» that precedes his reflections on the dialectic of lordship and bondage. Hegel describes it as a threefold process that begins with the subject coming out of itself, its attempt to supersede, and, lastly, its return into itself.<sup>31</sup> What is crucial for my argumentation in this paper is the way in which he introduces the second subject after this process. «Now, this movement of self-consciousness in relation to another self-consciousness has in this way been represented as the action of *one* self-consciousness, but this action of the one has itself the double significance of being both its own action and the action of the other as well. [...] Thus the movement is simply the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses.»<sup>32</sup> Hegel thus stresses the necessity of describing the search for recognition as a twofold activity. But in just adding the other subsequently, he reduces

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30 DERRIDA 1978, 157. Adriaan T. Peperzak comes to a similar conclusion in his contemplation of Hegel and Levinas, namely that a social relationship can be described as «twofold or chiasmic asymmetry» (PEPERZAK 2000, 161).

31 HEGEL 1977, 111.

32 HEGEL 1977, 111-2.

him to a behavioral double that is not affected by the behaviour of the other, but rather acts in the exact same way. Put otherwise: Because Hegel describes the activity of both subjects as «double movement», he loses sight of the fact that what one subject does inherently affects the other, and that the other has to cope with this. We can thus state that what is characteristic of Hegel's account is its *aperspectivity* – he does not distinguish between the perspective of the addressing subject and that of the addressed subject. What therefore remains unthought is what it means for a subject to be confronted with the other subject's dependency upon recognition. Put otherwise: Hegel teaches us the meaning of the desire for recognition, but disregards a description of what it means to be confronted with this desire.

Levinas' theory of responsibility allows for filling the empty space just outlined, in so far as the demand of the other can be described as a confrontation with the desire for recognition. It is interesting in this context that in an essay from 1978, Levinas describes the «search for recognition by the *other man* in Hegel» as one of the few moments in the history of philosophy in which the alterity of the other appeared.<sup>33</sup> He elsewhere speaks of the «way the Other has of seeking my recognition» and makes thus clear that his philosophy is a change of perspective in giving priority to thinking about what it means to be affected by the dependency upon recognition.<sup>34</sup> If we understand Levinas' theory of responsibility as an answer to Hegel's theory of recognition, it becomes clear that the desire for recognition can, with Levinas, be understood as a call for response. The reason for this is that the demand that is at the core of Levinas' thought can be interpreted as the most fundamental way in which the desire for recognition, as posited by Hegel, articulates itself. In so far as any kind of answer confirms, to some extent, the call it is responding to, giving a response can be considered the most fundamental form of confirming the desire for recognition. Levinas' theory of responsibility

33 LEVINAS 1982, 119.

34 LEVINAS 1996, 70. Simon Critchley also argues along these lines: «Ethical experience is, first and foremost, the approval of a demand, a demand that demands approval.» (CRITCHLEY 2007, 16).

can thus be interpreted as the essential flip side of Hegel's theory of recognition.

What I have outlined above shows how far the asymmetry of recognition transforms into an asymmetry of responsibility. The first part of my argumentation, the asymmetrical reciprocity of social relations, has thus been established. What remains to be shown in a second step is how far the asymmetry of responsibility transforms back into an asymmetry of recognition. It is this transformation that now reveals an empty space in Levinas' thinking. Just as Hegel focuses unilaterally on the desire for recognition, Levinas concentrates unilaterally on the necessity of responsibility. His subject merges entirely in its responsibility for the other. Levinas thus misses the fact that by way of answering, the subject does not only avow *for* the other, but also inherently conceptualises itself coming *from* the other. When stating in *Otherwise than Being or beyond Essence*: «This book has exposed my passivity, passivity as the-one-for-the-other; [...] The-one-for-the-other goes to the extent of the-one-being-hostage-for-the-other. In its identity invoked the one is irreplaceable, and does not return to itself [...]»,<sup>35</sup> Levinas misses the fact that every and any form of taking over responsibility also contains a conception of self and thus a projected return to oneself.

I would like to clarify this point by referring to Hannah Arendt.<sup>36</sup> In the paragraph «The Disclosure of the Agent in Speech and Action» in *Vita Activa*, she reflects about how a person's individuality expresses itself. For Arendt, it is not so much what one thinks of oneself and claims publicly that determines «who somebody is»,<sup>37</sup> but rather what our speech discloses involuntarily about ourselves. When speaking, we always have to take a stand in relation to the plurality of human beings. How we deal with the demand of the other – be it a child, a friend, a stranger – in concrete situations reveals much more about who we are than the abstract ideals that we have of ourselves. In the

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35 LEVINAS 1978, 141.

36 On the relation between Levinas and Arendt, cf. TOPOLSKI 2015.

37 ARENDT 1958, 178.

grapple of speech we show who we are, by means of how we respond. A response, however, is not meaningful as such; it becomes meaningful once others have recognised it as a response. Arendt contemplates speech as having to be stored in «stories», for this is the only way in which the particularity of how we act can be comprehended in its full complexity and in which stereotypes and character masks can be avoided.<sup>38</sup>

Arendt's reflections on self-disclosure make clear how the circle of the twofold asymmetry of social relations becomes complete in the giving of an answer. Starting from Levinas' reflections, we saw how the dependency upon recognition diagnosed by Hegel transforms into the subject's being exposed to responsibility. By referring to Hannah Arendt, we then saw how being exposed to responsibility transforms back into the dependency upon recognition. The subject thus permanently sways between being a bondsman and being a hostage; it is subjected not only to its call for recognition, but also to its gift of responsibility. This twofold subjection shows that subjects bring about their social existence in relation to one another. The proposition of the asymmetrical reciprocity of social relations designates an intersubjective process that moves from the asymmetry of recognition to the asymmetry of responsibility and back.

Shining a light on this process was the last step of my argumentation. Before finishing this paper, I would like to briefly draw on one last question: What does considering sociality as being based upon the idea of asymmetrical reciprocity change for the theory of intersubjectivity? I would like to answer this question by reference to Iris Marion Young's reflections. In her essay *Asymmetrical Reciprocity*, she argues that the idea of symmetry is deeply rooted in our ideas of intersubjectivity.<sup>39</sup> This can be seen in everyday situations whenever we prompt others to think about something from a different perspective («Just think about what this must feel like for X!»). Young sees the problem of this idea in the fact that it considers

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38 ARENDT 1958, 184f.

39 YOUNG 2001.

intersubjectivity on the basis of the reversibility of social perspectives. This idea is reflected in those philosophical theories that argue for subjects as being able to participate in a '*view from nowhere*' in which they can transgress their particular stance to something more general. The symmetry of social relations is, in this tradition, based on all social agents being able to take a general stance. The same is true for the tradition in which the symmetry of social relations is based upon the idea of a '*view from somewhere*'. The general stance, however, is in this tradition not situated beyond our world but much rather, it is understood as part of it, in so far as it draws on ethical life and the norms, values and ideals of a community. Although the general stance is here no longer abstract but based in the lifeworld, the assumption that intersubjectivity is based upon taking a supraindividual stance remains dominant also in this tradition.

Young criticises both traditions as being unable to account for the plurality of social relations. Neither can social perspectives simply be exchanged, nor would this even always be desirable. Taking over somebody else's perspective might in fact often be usurping and blind for their specific perspective. To give an example, Young speaks of the dispute between white and black feminists in the second wave of the feminist movement.<sup>40</sup> While the former wanted to form a union with the latter on the basis of the universal subject woman, the latter pointed out that there were severe differences between them that ran the risk of being made invisible by way of the universalisation of the subject woman. Starting from this example and others, Young argues that social relationships are always local and require situated evaluations that account for the differences between social agents. Put otherwise: Successful sociality does not necessarily require that we would think or act in the same way if in the situation of the other, but rather that we give us and others the chance to act out of a specific situatedness. In this perspective, intersubjectivity is thus not based upon taking a supraindividual stance in which particular perspectives *overlap*, but rather upon the gathering of particular standpoints that

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40 YOUNG 2001, 210f.

*differ* in their perspectives. Asymmetrical rather than symmetrical relations are at the basis of successful sociality. In Young's words: «Through such dialogue that recognizes the asymmetry of others people can enlarge their thinking in at least two ways. Their own assumptions and point of view become relativized for them as they are set in relation to those of others. By learning from others how the world and the collective relations they have forged through interaction look to them, moreover, everyone can develop an enlarged understanding of that world and those relations that are unavailable to any of them from their own perspective alone.»<sup>41</sup>

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41 YOUNG 2001, 225.

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# The Phenomenology of the Social World: Husserl on *Mitsein* as *Ineinandersein* and *Füreinandersein*

Dermot Moran

Boston College & University College Dublin\*

[dermot.moran@ucd.ie](mailto:dermot.moran@ucd.ie)

*ABSTRACT.* In this paper I discuss Edmund Husserl's phenomenological account of the constitution of the *social world*, in relation to some phenomenological contributions to the constitution of sociality found in Husserl's students and followers, including Heidegger, Gurwitsch, Walther, Otaka, and Schutz. Heidegger is often seen as being the first to highlight explicitly human existence as *Mitsein* and *In-der-Welt-Sein*, but it is now clear from the Husserliana publications that, in his private research manuscripts especially during his Freiburg years, Husserl employs many of the terms associated with Heidegger, e.g. *Mitwelt*, *Weltlichkeit*, *Alltäglichkeit*, *Zeitlichkeit*, and *Geschichtlichkeit*, and had detailed discussions of various forms of social constitution. It is clear that Husserl and Heidegger were exploring these themes in dialogue with one another, and that Husserl, in fact, has a rich phenomenology of sociality that is worth exploring in its own right. In this paper, I will outline some of the key aspects of Husserl's contribution.

**KEYWORDS.** Phenomenological Movement; Social World; Husserl; Schutz; Heidegger; Patočka.

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\* *Correspondence:* Dermot Moran – Boston College, Department of Philosophy, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467. University College Dublin, School of Philosophy, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland.



## 1. Introduction: The Phenomenology of Sociality in Germany in the 1920s

In this paper<sup>1</sup> I shall discuss Edmund Husserl's phenomenological account of the constitution of the *social world*, as well as some phenomenological contributions to the constitution of sociality in Heidegger, Gurwitsch, Walther, Otaka, Schutz, and others. The phenomenology of social life began to occupy philosophers' minds in

- 1 Earlier versions of this paper were given in the Workshop on *Judgment, Responsibility, and the Life-World*, sponsored by the Australasian Phenomenology and Hermeneutics Association (APHA) in collaboration with Philosophy at Murdoch University and the Jan Patočka Archive at the Center for Theoretical Study and the Institute for Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic as a part of the Australian Research Council project, *Judgment, Responsibility and the Life-world*, Academic Conference Centre, Institute of Philosophy, Prague, 9-11 May 2012 (Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012); and at the Irish Research Council sponsored Workshop on *Life-World and Natural World: Husserl and Patočka*, held in University College Dublin, Newman House, Dublin, 29-30 November 2012.

Abbreviations of Husserl's works (English pagination is followed by the Husserliana volume and page number):

- Hua III/1: Husserl, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie 1*, hrsg. K. Schuhmann, Hua III/1. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977; trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 2014.
- Hua IX: Husserl, E. *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*, hrsg. W. Biemel, Husserliana IX. The Hague: Nijhoff 1968.
- Hua XIII-XIV-XV: Husserl, E. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil. 1905–1920*, hrsg. Iso Kern, Husserliana Volume XIII. The Hague: Nijhoff 1973; *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil. 1921–1928*, hrsg. I. Kern, Husserliana Volume XIV. The Hague: Nijhoff; 1973 and *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil. 1929–1935*, hrsg. I. Kern, Husserliana Volume XV. The Hague: Nijhoff 1973
- Hua XXXIX: Husserl, E., *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916-1937)*, Husserliana XXXIX. Dordrecht: Springer 2008.
- FTL: Husserl, E. *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft. Mit ergänzenden Texten*, hrsg. Paul Janssen. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974; trans. D. Cairns as *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. The Hague: Nijhoff 1969.
- Crisis: Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*. Hrsg. W. Biemel. Husserliana VI. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1954; Reprinted 1976, partially trans. David Carr,

Germany especially during the 1920s. Evidence of this can be seen in various publications in Husserl's *Jahrbuch für phänomenologische Forschung* through the 1910s and mid-1920s. It begins with Adolf Reinach's *Die apriorischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechtes* (*Jahrbuch* volume 1 1913), and Max Scheler's *Formalism in Ethics* (1913-1916), the first volume of which also appeared in Volume One of Husserl's *Jahrbuch*, and his *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1923). The key phenomenological contributions range from the identification of specifically 'social acts' in Husserl and Reinach, to discussions of collective intentionality,<sup>2</sup> empathy, intersubjectivity, and 'living-with-one-another' (*Ineinanderleben*) in Scheler, Stein and Walther, as well as Heidegger's characterization of *Mitsein* as a fundamental existentiale of *Dasein*. Indeed, in his private research manuscripts, Husserl employs many of the terms, e.g. *Mitwelt*, *Weltlichkeit* and *Alltäglichkeit*, *Zeitlichkeit*, *Geschichtlichkeit*, normally associated with Heidegger. For instance, Husserl himself uses the term *Mitwelt* in the *Crisis of European Sciences*,<sup>3</sup> which may have been inspired by Heidegger's use of the terms *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*, but it is more likely that the influence runs the other way – from Husserl to Heidegger. Husserl, however, tends to use the term *Mitsein* in a reasonably non-technical sense to mean simply 'belonging with' or 'being alongside' – as the manner in which being a side implies that there are other sides alongside: 'a side has only got sense through the co-belonging of opposing sides' (*eine Seite hat nur Sinn durch Mitsein von Gegenseiten*<sup>4</sup>).

Throughout the nineteen twenties and thirties there was an explosion of interest in the phenomenology of social relations from different phenomenological perspectives, specifically to be found

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*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1970.

CM: Husserl, E. *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, hrsg. Stephan Strasser, *Husserliana* I. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950; trans. Dorion Cairns, *Cartesian Meditations*. The Hague: Nijhoff 1967.

2 See SZANTO 2016.

3 Hua VI, 482. In this passage, interestingly, Husserl is speaking of the human relation to animals.

4 Hua XV, 124.

among Husserl's students and followers, e.g. Gerda Walther, Edith Stein, Tomoo Otaka, Alfred Schutz, Jan Patočka, and even Aron Gurwitsch's *Die mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Milieuwelt* (posthumously published in 1977).<sup>5</sup> The key question is: How is this social world constituted in intentional life and how can the researcher come to reflect on that world and make its structures apparent? In this regard, Husserl took an explicitly *transcendental* approach that depended on the reduction. He claimed that the social world as such could be revealed in its essential features only by a transcendental approach that started from the suspension of the natural attitude. Alfred Schutz, on the other hand, maintained that one had to put aside Husserl's transcendental reduction in order to do a phenomenology of the social world.

There is, then, in the phenomenological tradition, a broad range of approaches to the phenomenology of sociality – from the emphasis on 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*) and the, more or less, collective 'they-self' or 'one-self' (*Man-Selbst*) in Heidegger, to the discussion of 'anonymity' in Schutz, to the notion of specifically collective intentional 'social acts' in Husserl<sup>6</sup> and in Adolf Reinach, who discussed them already in his *The A Priori Foundations of the Civil Law* (1913) (acts such as commanding, requesting, warning, questioning and answering, and promising that institute particular social bonds that have objective reality in social institutions such as marriage). Indeed, the phenomenology of collective intentionality is now a major topic in contemporary social philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

Max Scheler's contribution is extremely important in this regard, and is replete with rich insights that deserve separate treatment and will not be discussed here. Scheler revived the Hegelian distinction between 'community' (*Gemeinschaft*) and 'society' (*Gesellschaft*) and distinguished different kinds of belonging that relate to different levels

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5 See GURWITSCH 1979. Gurwitsch wrote this text in the early 1930s and planned it as a Habilitation but left Germany due to the National Socialist rise to power and never published the text in his life-time.

6 See Hua XIV, 360.

7 See, *inter alia*, SCHMID 2005 and 2009.

of personal and interpersonal social life, ranging from belonging unreflectively to the 'mass', 'tribe' or 'horde', or to the 'life-community' to more sophisticated self-conscious forms of belonging that belong to personal life. For Scheler, moreover, these levels do not correspond to historical stages in the development of humanity but are present all at once in concrete social relations.

Gerda Walther's *Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften* [*On the Ontology of Social Communities*] is an important and neglected contribution to the phenomenology of sociality, which was originally published in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* (volume VI, 1923), followed soon after by Edith Stein's brilliant but neglected *Eine Untersuchung über den Staat* [*An Investigation of the State*], published in *Jahrbuch* vol. VII (1925) which deals with various possible kinds of 'living together' (*Zusammenleben*) from families to the state. One should also include in the list of discussions of social ontology other key works not published in the *Jahrbuch*, but still associated with phenomenology, such as Karl Löwith's *Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen* [*The Individual in the Role of Fellow Human Being*] (1928), written as a Habilitation thesis under Heidegger. Löwith's work extends the concept of *Mitwelt* found in Heidegger by offering an historical context (ranging over Hegel, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, and others) but also criticises the role of reflection in destroying the authentic nature of 'being together'. Hans-Georg Gadamer later reviewed Löwith's work and, more recently, Axel Honneth has returned to it in his discussion of the relations between intersubjectivity and recognition. Löwith discusses the manner in which the world is encountered as the human world and in which being-together in the world is accomplished through language (*Miteinandersein als Miteinander-sprechen*). He discusses Scheler's notion of the human being as person and as such independent of the natural world. Löwith highlights the way human beings occupy different social roles and that we encounter others often primarily *through* their roles or 'personae', e.g. as 'mother', 'father', 'neighbour', and so on. Löwith explains how our encounters with others are often regulated in advance by the recognition of these roles.



One allows oneself to be determined by the other, as Löwith puts it.

Aron Gurwitsch's discussion in his *Die mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Milieuwelt* [*Human Encounters in the Social World*], deeply influenced by Scheler, distinguishes between looser more external forms of social partnership and more integrated forms of social communal being-together that involve mutual belonging and 'mutual understanding' and genuine partnership. Gurwitsch takes issue with Karl Löwith for not differentiating between different kinds of social relationship. He writes:

The sense in which a father 'belongs' to his children is different from the sense in which an officer 'belongs' to the military, and is different again from the manner in which 'an old man does (not) belong young people'.<sup>8</sup>

Gurwitsch goes on to articulate different kinds of being together which have their own implicit structures of knowledge and recognition. He writes:

In common situations the partner listens deliberately. While each plays his role, he divines the purposes and tendencies of the other even when the other does not declare them— as is clear from the example of the chessplayer.<sup>9</sup>

One must also not ignore the impact of Martin Buber's 1923 book, *Ich und Du* [*I and Thou*]. The more or less home-schooled, independent scholar Buber was an avid reader of Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey. This I-Thou relation is to be contrasted with what Buber terms the 'I-It' relation. Husserl, too, speaks often of the 'I-Thou relation' (*Ich-Du-Beziehung*).

In the background, of course, is the towering figure of Max Weber and the growing Marxist movement that emphasises the collective

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<sup>8</sup> GURWITSCH 1979, 110.

<sup>9</sup> GURWITSCH 1979, 113.

nature of human being – human being as ‘species-being’ as Karl Marx discussed it in his 1844 Manuscripts which also appeared for the first time in the 1920s. In his early *Early Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), first published in 1932, Marx defines ‘species being’ as follows:

To say that man is a species being, is, therefore, to say that man raises himself above his own subjective individuality, that he recognizes in himself the objective universal, and thereby transcends himself as a finite being. Put another way, he is individually the representative of mankind.<sup>10</sup>

Marx’s account of alienation in these manuscripts was taken up by many phenomenologists including Herbert Marcuse and Jean-Paul Sartre. Lucien Goldman has even claimed that György Lukacs’ account of reification in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), another important work on social philosophy from the 1920s, influenced Heidegger’s *Being and Time*.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Heidegger on *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*

Heidegger’s ground-breaking *Being and Time* (1927),<sup>12</sup> of course, contributed a new and decisive chapter with its discussion of ‘being-in-the-world’ (*In-der-Welt-sein*) as involving *Mitsein* as an existential characteristic of Dasein. Dasein is *Mitsein*, and it is always essentially *Mitsein*, even if it is factually alone in the world, like the castaway Robinson Crusoe (SZ §26), a figure invoked by Husserl and Scheler among others and always indicative of how one is never completely alone. For Heidegger, Dasein is essentially being-towards-others,

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10 MARX 1975, 327.

11 See GOLDMAN 2009 and HEMMING 2013.

12 HEIDEGGER [1977] 1962. Hereafter SZ followed by the English pagination and then German pagination.

oriented to them in 'solicitude' (*Fürsorge*) and 'care' (*Sorge*). In *Being and Time* (Division One, Chapter Four), following his chapter on 'Being-in-the-world', Heidegger explores the existential structures of 'being-with' (*Mitsein*), 'existing-with' (*Mitdasein*), and 'being with one another' (*Miteinandersein*). *Mitsein* (literally 'being-with') in everyday German means 'togetherness' or 'companionship', but Heidegger gives the term the particular philosophical inflection it continues to have in the literature, namely, that character of *Dasein* whereby it is always already structurally related to other *Daseins* (even when one is alone and others are actually absent). Heidegger states in *Being and Time* §26: «Being-with is an existential constituent of Being-in-the-world»<sup>13</sup>. He goes on to say: «So far as *Dasein* is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being»<sup>14</sup>.

In *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger proposes a new way of thinking about human beings in terms of 'being in the world'. He reinterprets human existence as *Dasein* whose fundamental structure is care. It is both absorbed in the world, thrown and falling, and also deciding for itself and its future, and in this sense taking care of itself. Heidegger's account of *Dasein* treats it as a 'dispersal' (*Zerstreuung*) or 'dissemination' which is already stretched along through its life in time and is 'made manifold' in space and through its embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*). Heidegger speaks primarily of human *Mitdasein* and *Mitsein*.<sup>15</sup> In encountering tools in their environment, human *Dasein* also encounters *whom* the tool is for, *who* used it, *who* owns it, and so on. The other *Dasein* (albeit primarily and mostly the unknown or anonymous other) is already encountered with the equipment that is handy for *Dasein*, and this 'who' is not added as an afterthought.<sup>16</sup> Heidegger writes:

The world of *Dasein* is a with-world [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is

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13 SZ, 163/125: «Das Mitsein ist ein existenziales Konstituens des In-der-Welt-seins».

14 SZ, 165/128: «Sofern *Dasein* überhaupt ist, hat es die Seinsart des Miteinanderseins».

15 SZ, §26.

16 SZ, §26.

Being-with Others [*Mitwelt mit Anderen*]. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is Dasein-with.<sup>17</sup>

The 'who' of this everyday social self is Heidegger's focus. When one is absorbed in the 'they-self' (*Man-selbst*) one is constantly the same, but indefinite and empty:

When one is absorbed in the everyday multiplicity and the rapid succession of that with which one is concerned, the Self of the self-forgetful 'I am concerned' shows itself as something simple which is constantly self-same but indefinite and empty.<sup>18</sup>

Heidegger is interested both in 'care of the self' and in 'the constancy of self' (*Die Ständigkeit des Selbst*)<sup>19</sup> which is the authentic counterpart to the non-self-constancy of the everyday self. This notion of the 'self-subsistence' (*Selbt-ständigkeit*) of the ego or self is returned to again in SZ §66. The authentic self keeps silent. It keeps its head down. Resolute existence is reticent. The problem is that in one sense authentic selfhood is a kind of lone and lonely resolute figure – a Kierkegaard standing over and against the society and the they-self. Heidegger also speaks of a kind of abandonment to a world which one cannot master.<sup>20</sup> Heidegger spends a great deal of time explicating a kind of being-with-others which is anonymous. This is the realm of 'das Man'. In this situation, Heidegger puts it, «Everyone is the other; and no one is himself».<sup>21</sup> For Heidegger, living as 'the they' or 'the one' (*das Man*) is inauthentic because it «deprives the individual Dasein of its answerability».<sup>22</sup> This has led to the view that Heidegger, although

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17 SZ §26, 155/118: «Die Welt des Daseins ist *Mitwelt*. Das In-Sein ist *Mitsein* mit Anderen. Das innerweltliche Ansichsein dieser ist *Mitdasein*».

18 SZ, §64, 368/322.

19 SZ, 369/322.

20 SZ, §69a.

21 SZ, 165/128.

22 SZ, 165/127.

he recognizes the fundamental being-with of Dasein, tends to see authentic Dasein as primarily located in individual self-responsibility that makes decisions independently of the masses. There remains a question as to how Dasein can authentically participate in community.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Schutz and Patočka on the Social World

But the most important work by far, in terms of its impact on the developing science of sociology, was Alfred Schutz's 1932 *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (translated *The Phenomenology of the Social World*). Just four years later, in 1936, the young Czech philosopher and student of Husserl, Jan Patočka, produced his important Habilitation thesis, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*.<sup>24</sup> Patočka published a second, enlarged edition in Czech in 1971. This work was translated into German and French, and Patočka himself contributed an *Afterword* or *Postscript* to the French Edition (1976).<sup>25</sup> Patočka says the book is an attempt at systematic analysis of a pressing problem – the problem of the natural world or life-world. This natural world is an intersubjective world, a world of life (whose structures cannot be captured by the formal sciences). Patočka discusses the distinction between home and the unfamiliar. He stresses that home is not where one is but where one feels most familiar. He writes that home is not merely our individual home; it includes community as well. While Patočka embraces Heidegger's conception of *Mitsein*, he thinks Husserl's valuable notion of *Heimwelt* has been missed by Heidegger. He writes:

Husserl's idea that there is a zone of home, correlative and opposed to the alien (farther and farther removed in the

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<sup>23</sup> See McMULLIN 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. PATOČKA 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. PATOČKA 1976, 168–81.

style of its structure), that there is a private sphere as opposed to what is more or less public, cannot be explained by Heidegger's analyses<sup>26</sup>.

For Patočka, Heidegger has no way of answering why it is the case that the space of home is not in the same space as the space of the workshop. Patočka later returns to this theme in his lecture *I and the Other: Appresentation and Being-With* in a series of lectures on phenomenology that he gave in 1968 when his teaching was restored at the Charles University.<sup>27</sup> Patočka follows Heidegger in criticizing Husserl for thinking our basic foundational experience is our perceptual interaction with things in nature, and agrees with Heidegger on the care-structure of human existence. As he writes in his Postscript to the French edition of *The Natural World as Philosophical Problem* (1976): «We have to acknowledge that what lies at the ground of the natural world is not 'internal time-consciousness,' but rather care and temporality». But he criticizes Heidegger for his misunderstanding of the structures of *Mitsein*. Patočka also says that Heidegger misses the «elementary protofact of harmony with the world which is the same for children as for animals».<sup>28</sup> At this point Patočka invokes Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit to speak about the manner in which nature must already be spirit. As spirit we are in harmony with nature: «Our spirit is evidence that the world is not a mathematical world but rather a light; it shows that there is something in nature with which our spirit can be in harmony».<sup>29</sup> Earlier in these lectures Patočka had distinguished different levels of the 'I'.

There is the I capable of being plural, the I appearing as a Thou, the I for others. The Thou is the second I as present, in reciprocity, in a mirroring, the process of exchange, in

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26 Cfr. PATOČKA, forthcoming.

27 Cfr. PATOČKA 1998, 63-8. See also CROWELL 2010: 7-22.

28 Cfr. PATOČKA 1998, 133.

29 PATOČKA 1998,134.

this double situation (I here– you there, etc.). Then there is the I in absolute originality which only it itself can live, incapable of plurality.<sup>30</sup>

Patočka does not agree with Schutz that the self cannot be experienced immediately in self-presence. Following Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Patočka believes in an immediate experience of the embodied self, not necessarily apprehended cognitively.

Here Patočka accurately describes the original impersonal subject or ‘They-self’ (*Man-Selbst*) of *Mitsein* with its distantiality, levelling down, and its commonality. Patočka criticises Heidegger for reading everything communal as ‘fallen’ and public. This is Heidegger’s own insertion – not something that is in the things themselves.

There is, then, a continuous engagement with the constitution of the social world in phenomenologists of the nineteen twenties and thirties, a development which was disastrously disrupted by the arrival of National Socialism in 1933. But let us turn to Husserl’s own account of the phenomenology of sociality, which was at the heart of this engagement with the constitution of social life.

#### 4. Husserl’s Phenomenology of the ‘We-World’ (*Wir-Welt*)

For Husserl, the social world is the world shared primarily with other human subjects (and with animals), what Husserl variously calls the ‘we-world’ (*Wir-Welt*), or the world of ‘those around me’ *Mitwelt* (Hua VI: 482), or, in the *Crisis of European Sciences*, ‘we-community’ (*Wir-Gemeinschaft*, Hua VI: 416; Hua XIV: 223). This is the world of ‘we-humans’ (*Wir-Menschen*, Hua IX 339, 342); the world of ‘co-subjectivity’ *Mitsubjektivität* (*Crisis*, 255; Hua VI: 258), of co-existing intentional subjects operating together in a shared ‘intersubjectivity’. As Husserl writes in the *Crisis*:

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<sup>30</sup> PATOČKA 1988, 60.

But each soul also stands in community (*Vergemeinschaftung*) with others which are intentionally interrelated, that is, in a purely intentional, internally and essentially closed nexus (*Zusammenhang*), that of intersubjectivity.<sup>31</sup>

And he writes similarly in a manuscript from his middle period in the early 1920s:

I am, and everyone is, in the horizon of the we [*im Horizont des Wir*], and this horizon is at the same time the horizon for many communities and for all those to which I in particular belong and to which each person belongs in his or her own right. And over and above this, a further extension to inauthentic communities [*von uneigentlichen Gemeinschaften*] as common possession and of the remote effects of persons on persons, of community on community, etc. Effects extending out.<sup>32</sup>

There is much to comment on this concept of a 'horizon of the we'. Husserl tries to describe the structural features of this horizon in various works. He distinguishes between those who are immediately present to me now, my contemporaries, those who are absent or dead, those who belong to the past, those who will be my successors, possible people, putative people, fictional and imagined people, and so on. Influenced by Husserl, Alfred Schutz, whom we shall discuss further below, categorizes these kinds of social world in his *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932; translated as *The Phenomenology of the Social World*),<sup>33</sup> with his own concepts of *Mitwelt*, *Vorwelt*, *Folgewelt*, and so on.

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31 *Crisis* §69, 238; Hua VI, 241.

32 Husserl Manuscript 1921/1922, Hua XIV 223, my translation.

33 Hereafter PSW followed by pagination of the English translation.



Husserl is aware not only that the social world is built upon tradition and incorporates the sedimented achievements of generations of anonymous others (everyday language is a repository of such sedimentations), he is also aware that even the everyday world is layered and structured in complex ways. Husserl introduces his notion of 'life-world' or 'world of life' (*Lebenswelt*) as his shorthand for all these complex interconnections. To be human is to be already en-worlded. Husserl writes in the *Crisis*:

Consciously we always live in the life-world; normally there is no reason to make it explicitly thematic for ourselves universally as world.<sup>34</sup>

As Husserl's assistant Ludwig Landgrebe puts it:

It is essentially impossible to find men in any "pre-worldly" state, because to be human, to be aware of oneself as a man and to exist as a human self, is precisely to live on the basis of a world [...].<sup>35</sup>

Husserl distinguishes the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) into zones of familiarity and unfamiliarity, 'home-world' (*Heimwelt*) and 'alien-world' (*Fremdwelt*),<sup>36</sup> neighbour and stranger, friend and foe, between what is accepted as normal and what is regarded as not falling under the normal and hence is "anormal" in some respect.<sup>37</sup>

One of the most interesting aspects of the passage I have just quoted above<sup>38</sup> is that Husserl here speaks – *avant* Heidegger – of 'inauthentic' (*uneigentlich*) ways of belonging to a community. One can belong simply as part of a group which is, more or less arbitrarily, thrown together. To use Alfred Schutz's terminology, when I am travelling

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34 *Crisis*, Appendix VII, 379; Hua VI, 459.

35 Cfr. LANDGREBE 1940, 38-58, esp. p. 53.

36 See STEINBOCK 1995.

37 See HEINÄMAA 2013.

38 Hua XIV, 223.

together with other passengers on the same airplane, we are constituted as a group of ‘consocials’,<sup>39</sup> and there is even a very particular dynamic that emerges in such a ‘thrown together’ group, e.g., if the flight has turbulence, then there is a general atmosphere of unease, or if there is a disturbance among the passengers, and various people bond together or oppose one another in various ways, and so on. Various forms of group behaviour emerge even among a group of relative strangers who are thrown together temporarily in a situation. But Husserl goes on to talk about human beings belonging always within more intimate structured groups: family, friends, club members, members of a specific language community, and so on. Husserl, as we have seen, even uses the term *Mitsein*, albeit rarely and only in his later works, which we now associate more properly with Heidegger.

Especially in the three Husserliana volumes comprising *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, edited by Iso Kern (Hua XIII, XIV, and XV), Husserl gives detailed accounts of the various kinds of collective intentional and social acts that humans carry out in order to enter into social relations that transcend the sphere of individual acts. In his key published works, on the other hand, Husserl’s usual approach is to begin from the Cartesian ego and to move outwards in terms of its constitution of others and of an intersubjective world. Thus Husserl speaks, both in *Cartesian Meditations* and in *Crisis*, of the problem of the ‘communalization (*Vergemeinschaftung*) of the ego’<sup>40</sup>, raising the question of what has priority – the transcendental ego or the intersubjectively constituted community. Traditionally, Husserl has been interpreted as prioritizing the individual transcendental ego.

On his basis of his reading of the *Crisis*, however, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in the Preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*, interprets the later Husserl as prioritising intersubjectivity.<sup>41</sup> As Merleau-Ponty puts it there, the *cogito* is always situated, and transcendental subjectivity is

39 See EMBREE 2004.

40 *Crisis*, 185-6; Hua VI: 189.

41 Cfr. MERLEAU-PONTY [1945] 2012: vi. Hereafter ‘PP’ and page number of English translation.

only possible as an intersubjectivity. But it is more correct to see Husserl as more or less having a continuous interest in the social or 'spiritual world' all through his mature work, especially from around 1910-1911, when he begins, especially in his lectures *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*,<sup>42</sup> to discuss the experience of the other in empathy and the emergence of a natural world (inspired by Avenarius) which is not the same as the world explicated by the natural sciences. In *Ideas I*, Husserl already speaks of human beings as 'being in the world'. Merleau-Ponty himself never stopped reflecting on the complex interrelation between transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity and also on the kind of reduction needed to make clear this interrelation. Thus he writes in his late *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964)<sup>43</sup>:

The passage to intersubjectivity is contradictory only with regard to an insufficient reduction, Husserl was right to say. But a sufficient reduction leads beyond the alleged transcendental 'immanence', it leads to the absolute spirit understood as *Weltlichkeit*, to *Geist* as *Ineinander* of the spontaneities, itself founded on the aesthesiological *Ineinander* and on the sphere of life as sphere of *Einfühlung* and intercorporeity.<sup>44</sup>

Merleau-Ponty is indeed correct to say that thinking properly about intersubjectivity requires examining closely human being-in-the-world, and the manner in which this is founded on bodily incarnation and being-with-one-another on the corporeal dimension, prior to speech and language. That is not to say that Husserl does not recognize the importance of language for communalization and the constitution of the social world, but that he sees it as founded on a

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42 HUSSERL 2006. The original German text is collected in Hua XIII.

43 MERLEAU-PONTY [1964] 1968. Henceforth 'VI' and page no. of English translation followed by page number of French edition.

44 VI,172; 223-4.

more shared, embodied sense of incorporation and agency.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, Husserl tries to think through the process of constitution from different entry points. His usual 'Cartesian way' is to uncover what is essential and even apodictic about the individual transcendental ego, the source of all 'sense and being' (*Sinn und Sein*), as he often puts it, and then to proceed outwards from the ego-subject, to the constitution of others in empathy and then to the constitution of the natural and spiritual worlds through various forms of intersubjective constitution. At other times, especially in the *Crisis*, Husserl begins from the standpoint of the self already embedded in a social and historical culture (and in the case of the European West, it is also a scientific culture), and examines how this culture has come to find itself the way it currently is (e.g. the impact of Galilean science on modernity), and recognizes the interconnecting unity of what he calls, in *Cartesian Meditations*, 'the community of monads' (*Monadengemeinschaft*). In other words, Husserl is already dealing with issues concerning the nature of sociality and historicity long before his encounter with Martin Heidegger. Of course, Heidegger adds a new dimension with his meditations on the nature of *Mitsein* as an existential characteristic of Dasein's being-in-the-world,<sup>46</sup> but already in *Ideas I* (1913), Husserl is talking about human existence as 'being in the world'. In the very beginning of *Ideas I* § 1, he introduces the notions of horizon and world together. He writes:

Natural knowledge starts with experience and remains in experience. In the theoretical attitude that we call the natural attitude, the entire horizon [*Gesamthorizont möglicher Forschungen*] of possible lines of research is accordingly designated by one word: the world [*die Welt*]. Thus, the sciences of this original attitude are, one and all, sciences of the world, and, as long as this attitude dominates to the exclusion of others, the following concepts

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45 See DEPRAZ 1995.

46 SZ, §§ 25-7.

coincide: 'true being', 'actual being', i.e., real being, and – since everything real merges into the unity of the world – 'being in the world [*Sein in der Welt*]'.<sup>47</sup>

It is worth noting that Husserl is here already employing a locution 'being in the world' (*Sein in der Welt*) which will reappear in reversed and hyphenated form in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) as *In-der-Welt-sein*.

## 5. Intersubjectivity and the One World 'For Us All' (*Welt für uns alle*)

The Australian philosopher William Ralph Boyce-Gibson, who visited Husserl in Freiburg, in his *Diary* from 1928, records Husserl as saying that in his *Foreword* and *Afterword* to the English Translation of *Ideas*, he was planning to advert to two new themes not treated in *Ideen I*, namely, intersubjectivity (empathy) and 'the ego and habit'.<sup>48</sup> Of course, we now know that Husserl was working, in the manuscripts now published as *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* (especially from 1911 to 1937), on more detailed investigations and had also been developing his analysis of the experiential world in dialogue with Richard Avenarius' conception of the 'pre-found' world, *das Vorgefundene*, the world as encountered in everyday, naïve experience, the 'human concept of the world'.<sup>49</sup>

In his *published* writings Husserl had attempted to discuss 'the transcendental problem of intersubjectivity' in his *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929), especially §96, and in his Fifth Cartesian Meditation (delivered as a lecture in February 1929 and published in French in 1931), especially §58. In *Formal and Transcendental Logic* §96 in particular he talks about the experience of the 'world for everyone'

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47 Hua III/1, 9/17.

48 Cfr. GIBSON 1971, 65.

49 Cfr. AVENARIUS 2005.

(*Welt für jedermann*) in which I experience every other ego as having sense, validity, and acceptance from myself.<sup>50</sup> In *Formal and Transcendental Logic* Husserl explicates the problem of transcendental intersubjectivity as follows:

[The problem is] To understand how my transcendental ego, the primitive basis [*Urgrund*] for everything that I accept as existent, can constitute within himself another transcendental ego, and then too an open plurality of other egos [*eine offene Vielheit solcher Egos*] – “other” [*fremder*] egos absolutely inaccessible [*absolut unzugänglich*] to my ego in their original being, and yet cognizable [*erkennbarer*] (for me) as existing and as being thus and so [*als seiend und soseiend*].<sup>51</sup>

Husserl believes that every ego not only grasps the essence of ego-hood, alongside recognizing its own undeniable factual existence, it also belongs, as we have seen, to an ‘open horizon’ of other egos. These egos can be selves that existed in the past, or other possible egos that one encounters in various ways.

The world manifests itself and is constituted as ‘there for everyone’ (*für Jedermann daseiend*)<sup>52</sup> in an ‘intersubjective cognitive community’ (*intersubjektive Erkenntnisgemeinschaft*). Husserl never stops insisting that the phenomenon of the world presents itself as objectively there in itself and as accessible through inexhaustibly many viewpoints. The world is both public and inexhaustible. In *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl goes on to explicate the interrelation between intersubjectivity and objectivity:

It follows that a sense of “everyone” [*Jedermann*] must already be constituted, relative to which an objective world

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50 FTL §96, 237; Hua XVII, 244.

51 FTL §96, 239-40; XVII, 246.

52 Hua XVII, 247.

can be objective. This implies that *the sense of “everyone”* (and therefore of “others” [*von Anderen*]) cannot be the usual, higher-level sense [*gewöhnliche, höhigstufige Sinn*], namely the sense “every human being” [*jeder Mensch*], which refers to something real in the objective world and therefore already presupposed the constitution of that world.<sup>53</sup>

By ‘higher-level’ Husserl means that to arrive at the end product of actual human beings engaging concretely in social relations in the context of a historical world requires many layers of grounding – foundational layers laid at a deeper level. Husserl’s argument is complex. He is arguing that the sense in which the ‘I’ of my immediate experience can avail of the *sense of ‘everyone’* cannot involve an appeal to actual existing entities – other *human beings* – in an already constituted world. He argues that we have to go back to the constitutionally lower level of my ‘sphere of primordial ownness’ (*Sphäre primordialer Eigenheit*),<sup>54</sup> free from all contamination of ‘others’ and in which the first sense of otherness must be constituted. That is, at the very basis of my experience of my ego, there must be constituted the equally primordial experience of the ‘not I’ (*Nicht-Ich*).<sup>55</sup> There is within the ego a deep splitting (Husserl speaks of ‘ego-splitting’, *Ichspaltung*) – a sense of a first otherness over and against which I define or delimit myself as ‘I’. Husserl goes on to point out the inevitable temptation of collapsing into transcendental solipsism. He asserts that we must emphasise both sides of the issue:

The world is continually there for us [*für uns da*]; but in the first place [*zunächst*] it is there for me [*für mich da*]. [...] The first thing, therefore, is to consult the world of experience [*Erfahrungswelt*], purely as experienced.<sup>56</sup>

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53 FTL §96 (a), 240; Hua XVII, 247.

54 Hua XVII, 248.

55 Hua XVII, 248.

56 FTL §96 (b), 242; Hua XVII, 249, trans. modified.

Husserl goes on to say that «the naïve and purely apprehended world of experience [*die naïve und rein-gefasste Erfahrungswelt*] must be constitutionally clarified».<sup>57</sup> In keeping with the particular focus of the *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl says that initially the theoretical world, the world as postulated by objective scientific cognition must be understood, and then, moving into the particular ‘regions’ of the world, the very notion of the world of ‘exact nature’ – the world as constituted by geometry – has to be interrogated.<sup>58</sup> We have a foreshadowing here of the *Crisis* project.

Husserl here is sketching a version of the argument that he had originally developed in more detail already in the Fifth Logical Investigation (1901). In a footnote to his 1929 *Formal and Transcendental Logic* §96 (d) he states that he has already been working on this problem from his 1910/1911 lectures on the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and will offer a ‘brief presentation’ (*eine kurze Darstellung*) of them again in his forthcoming *Cartesian Meditations*. In his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl somewhat unhelpfully discusses the constitution of this ‘intersubjective nature’ in terms of communication between ‘monads’ (§55), a conception he has borrowed from Leibniz (possibly through the influence of his student Dietrich Mahnke).<sup>59</sup> According to the steps laid out in *Cartesian Meditations*, the first form of sociality is the experience of the ‘community of nature’ (*die Gemeinschaft der Natur*<sup>60</sup>). In this common nature, the other also appears as a psychophysical organism. Animals are presented as ‘abnormal “variants” of my humanness’.<sup>61</sup> Human beings in particular are constituted as belonging to a common form of time with me.<sup>62</sup> We

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57 FTL §96 (c), 243; Hua XVII, 249-50, translation altered from Cairns.

58 FTL §96 (c).

59 Dietrich Mahnke (1884–1939) studied mathematics, physics and philosophy in Göttingen from 1902-1906, particularly under Husserl. He was deeply interested in Leibniz and attempted to construct a new monadology bringing Leibniz into contact with Neo-Kantianism. He published his *Eine neue Monadologie* in 1917 and sent Husserl a copy. See also CRISTIN 1990.

60 CM §55, 120; Hua I, 149, trans. Altered.

61 CM §55, 126; Hua I, 154.

62 CM, 128; Hua I, 156.



are on the way to constituting an open community of others. Especially in *Cartesian Meditations* §58, Husserl goes further and speaks not just of the constitution of the transcendent, shared objective world and also the constitution of other subjects but of the higher level acts involved in the 'constitution of humanity' (*Konstitution des Menschentums*<sup>63</sup>). Human beings have to arrive at a point where they have a universal conception of 'humanity' as an open-ended group to which they belong. Here he speaks of specifically 'social acts' (promises, commands, agreements, oaths, etc.), that bind persons together in distinctly personal ways. Husserl calls these '*Ich-Du Akte*'. It is in this section of the *Cartesian Meditations* also that Husserl uses the word 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*) for the first time in print. He speaks of the specific character of the cultural world as having the character of 'accessibility for everyone' (*Zugänglichkeit für jedermann*, CM §58, 132; Hua I: 160). Husserl further distinguishes between the 'unconditioned communality and accessibility' (*unbedingte Zugänglichkeit*) of the world of nature (anyone can see a mountain or a tree), and the more conditioned communality of the cultural world (access requires understanding of the relevant local language, for example), whereby it is justified to speak of people as belonging to essentially 'different cultural surrounding worlds' (*verschiedene kulturelle Umwelten*). Here he speaks in the plural of different *Lebenswelten*,<sup>64</sup> a theme to which he often returns if one considers many of the texts in Husserliana XXXIX. Just as space is given from an orientation with myself as the zero-point of orientation, so also in the cultural world, it is given in an oriented way, with myself and my living present at the centre: «Here I and my culture are primordial, over and against every alien culture».<sup>65</sup> As if referring to Heidegger, although he did not truly read the text of *Being and Time* until later in 1929, Husserl goes on to say that it is self-evident that every predicate of the world «accrues from a temporal genesis, and indeed, one that is rooted [*verwurzelt*] in human

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63 Hua I, 159.

64 Hua I, 160.

65 CM §58, 134; Hua I, 161.

undergoing and doing».<sup>66</sup>

Of course, Husserl returns to face these issues concerning the constitution of the life-world directly in the *Crisis of European Sciences*. «Transcendental intersubjectivity must be made into a problem», he writes in the *Crisis*: intersubjectivity can only be treated as a transcendental problem through a radical self-questioning («durch ein *Mich-selbst-befragen*»<sup>67</sup>) through which I have myself, others, and humankind in general. Psychology in particular misconstrued this task because it based itself on the familiar ground of the «taken for granted, pregiven world of experience, the world of natural life».<sup>68</sup> Here he is using language that is very close to *Cartesian Meditations* § 58. In fact, in *Crisis* §59, he identifies the life-world with «the world for us all».<sup>69</sup> Husserl writes:

In psychology, the natural, naïve attitude has the result that human self-objectifications (*Selbstobjektivationen*) of transcendental intersubjectivity, which belong with essential necessity to the makeup of the constituted world pregiven to me and to us, inevitably have a horizon of transcendently functioning intentionalities [*Horizont von transzendental fungierenden Intentionalitäten*] which are not accessible to reflection, not even psychological-scientific reflection.<sup>70</sup>

Husserl's sense is that a newly uncovered and deeper 'functioning intentionality' is at work in the constitution of the common world, something later exploited by Merleau-Ponty.

In a text from the early 1920s Husserl emphasizes that, besides my own original actions and *Urstiftungen*, I am a child of my times (he

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66 CM §58, 135; Hua I, 162: «[...] im menschlichen Leiden und Tun».

67 *Crisis*, 202; Hua VI, 206.

68 *Crisis* §58, 204; Hua VI, 208: «Auf dem Boden der selbstverständlich vorgegebenen Erfahrungswelt, der Welt des natürlichen Lebens».

69 Hua VI, 213: «Welt für uns alle».

70 *Crisis*, 208; Hua VI, 212.

sometimes uses the term 'child of the world', *Weltkind*), and I am an inheritor of tradition and act within a community. He asks: «What is now my real, original own, how far am I really originally founding?».<sup>71</sup>

Husserl is struggling with the idea of defining the genuine originality (and authenticity) of my own actions in the light of tradition, since in many ways my actions are already predetermined by the kind of tradition I am in. Husserl lays stress on the original freedom of my will which can 'collide' with the goals (*Zwecke*) of others.<sup>72</sup> Husserl also has his version of public life as a life of convention, of the normal, the usual. The title of one text is

A part of what we call culture has the form of conventionality, custom, speech. ... the customary (social tradition, social habit) the social ought constituting itself with this customality).<sup>73</sup>

For Husserl, this all belongs to «life in prejudice, life in tradition».<sup>74</sup> Husserl also lays stress on this community as a 'speech community' (*Sprachgemeinschaft*) which is at the same time a 'communicative community' (*Mitteilungsgemeinschaft*). Speech, for Husserl, is key to the creation of shared idealities, common reference points.

Husserl uses the term '*Mitsein*' in relation to the social experience of 'being with others' in Hua XIV: 308 in a text from 1923, No. 14, entitled *Die intersubjektive Gültigkeit phänomenologischer Wahrheit* [*The*

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71 Hua XIV, 223: «Was ist nun mein wirklich originales Eigene, wiefern bin ich wirklich urstiftend?».

72 Hua XIV, 224.

73 My translation. Cfr. Hua XIV, 493: «Ein Teil dessen, was wir Kultur nennen, hat die Form der Konventionalität; Sitte, Sprache. Nähere Analysen der "guten Gesellschaft" und der Sprache. Das "Übliche" (soziale Tradition, soziale Gewohnheit) und das mit der Üblichkeit sich konstituierende soziale Sollen. Konventionelle Objekte. Das Regelrechte, Normale, Regelwidrige, Nichtgesollte im Sinn konventioneller Norm, wir könnten auch sagen, das Normale, Regelrechte im Sinn der Tradition. Das Kathekon, das Usuelle. Die natürliche Einstellung und die Tradition (Vorurteil)».

74 Hua XIV, 230: «Das Leben in Vorurteilen, das Leben in Tradition».

*Intersubjective Validity of Phenomenological Truth*].<sup>75</sup> Somewhat later, in a text from 1931,<sup>76</sup> Husserl explicates *Mitsein* in terms of *temporal* co-presence with others (which is a point strongly emphasised by Husserl in his analysis of empathy):

Being with others [*Mitsein von Anderen*] is inseparable from me in my living self-presenting [*in meinem lebendigen Sich-selbst-gegenwartigen*], and this co-presence of others is foundational for the worldly present, which is in turn the presupposition for the sense of all world-temporality with worldly-co-existence (space) and temporal succession.<sup>77</sup>

Husserl also uses the term 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*) in the 1930s e.g. in *Crisis* 260; Hua VI: 264 and in Hua XV. The term 'everydayness' is a late term by Husserl – it does not occur in the two earlier Intersubjectivity volumes, Husserliana XIII and XIV. Indeed, one manuscript is entitled *End of February or Beginning of March 1932. Action, the practical tradition, the usual, the everyday, the construction of normality. The groundedness of the already existing, the preceding instinct, wares*.<sup>78</sup> See also Hua XV: 170 (from 1930-1931) and Hua XV: 407ff, where in a text from November 1931 he speaks of the concept of 'everydayness', of 'dwelling' (*Wohnen*), and relates it to the concept of 'home world':

A tribe as a familial community in symbiosis has its (stable

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75 See also Hua XIV, 419 (from 1927) and Hua XIV, 454 (where he refers to corporeal being alongside other bodies); Hua XIV, 493.

76 See Hua XV: XLIX.

77 Cfr. Hua XV, XLIX: «Mitsein von Anderen ist untrennbar von mir in meinem lebendigen Sich-selbst-gegenwartigen, und diese Mitgegenwart von Anderen ist fundierend für weltliche Gegenwart, die ihrerseits Voraussetzung ist für den Sinn aller Weltzeitlichkeit mit Weltkoexistenz (Raum) und zeitlicher Folge.

78 Hua XV: LX; A V 7, Bl. 48-52: «Ende Februar oder Anfang März 1932. Das Handeln, die praktische Tradition, das Gewohnheitsmässige, die Alltäglichkeit, der Aufbau der Normalitäten. Die Bodenständigkeit des schon Seienden, die Instinkte vorangehend, die Guter» (see Hua XV: LX, introduction by the Editor).

or unstable) home of a higher level, 'village', village territory. Common inner world for all family homes, both individually and in the village in general in a new way (dwelling, place of dwelling, but not merely applied to physical things). The village in turn has its 'outer world'. *Heimat* in the strict sense, a communalized humanity in the strict sense and an environment, *Lebenswelt* (present, existing now for this humanity) in the strict sense. Accordingly, from what went before we must distinguish:

1. Inner environment (*Umwelt*), the "everyday" world in which everyday life plays itself out in its normal forms of everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*), to which belongs a circle of interest of everydayness.

2. The outer *Lebenswelt*, the sphere of the world, which is no longer everyday life-interests but still life-interests.

3. The outer horizon of the world.<sup>79</sup>

And see the note on the next page of this text Husserliana XV: 412:

We understand by 'everydayness' the actual living style of the present of human doing and undergoing, human striving, acting, creating with its actual horizon of interest, so we find a fundamental distinction in the structure of this everydayness through the distinction between private and

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79 Hua XV, 411: «Ein Stamm als Familiengemeinschaft in Symbiose hat sein (stabiles oder bewegliches) Heim höherer Stufe, 'Dorf', dörfliches Territorium. Gemeinsame Innenwelt für alle Familienheime, einzeln und in dörflicher Allgemeinheit in neuer Weise (Wohnung, Wohnstätte, aber nicht auf das bloss Dingliche angewendet). Das Dorf hat wieder seine Aussenwelt. Heimat im engsten Sinne, eine vergemeinschaftete 'Menschheit' im engsten Sinne und Umwelt, Lebenswelt (gegenwärtige, jetzt seiende für diese Menschheit) im engsten Sinne. Doch ist da von vornherein zu scheiden : 1) Die innere Umwelt, die 'Alltagswelt', in der das alltägliche Leben in seinen normalen Formen der Alltäglichkeit sich abspielt, wozu ein Interessenkreis der Alltäglichkeit gehört . 2) Die äussere Lebenswelt, die Weltsphäre, der nicht mehr 'alltäglichen' Lebensinteressen – aber noch Lebensinteressen. 3) Der äusserste Welthorizont».

stately ('official').<sup>80</sup>

Husserl goes on to contrast private life with the life of the functionary (and the philosopher is one such functionary) who must have the public good also in mind.<sup>81</sup>

In his comments in the margin of his copy of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Husserl underscores the notion of 'average everydayness'<sup>82</sup> and writes:

In my sense this is the way to an intentional psychology of the personality in the broadest sense, starting from personal life in the world: a founding personal type.

I have placed, over against each other, natural apprehension of the world in natural worldly life (or, this worldly life itself) and philosophical, transcendental apprehension of the world – hence a life which is not a natural immersion in a naïvely pre-accepted world nor a matter of taking oneself-in-naïve-acceptance as a human being, but which is the idea of a philosophical life determined by philosophy.<sup>83</sup>

Heidegger had claimed such a starting point of everydayness had been overlooked,<sup>84</sup> but Husserl resents this and refers back to the note above.

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80 Hua XV, 412: «Verstehen wir unter Alltäglichkeit den aktuell lebendigen Gegenwartsstil menschlichen Tuns und Leidens, menschlichen Strebens, Wirkens, Schaffens mit dem aktuellen Interessenhorizont, so finden wir einen Grundunterschied in der Struktur dieser Alltäglichkeit durch die Unterscheidung des Privaten und des Staatlichen».

81 Hua XV, 413.

82 SZ, § 5, 38/16.

83 Cfr. HUSSERL 1997, 287.

84 SZ, 43.

## 6. The Worldhood of the World: Homeworld and Alien World

In relation to his employment of themes more usually associated with Heidegger, Husserl not only discusses 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*), but also *Weltlichkeit*, worldhood or worldliness. The concept of 'world' is introduced in print in *Ideas I* as the horizon of horizons. Here Husserl also talks about the world as experienced in the natural attitude. In later writings, from around 1917, he introduced his conception of the 'life-world' and begins to discuss different forms of 'worldhood'. Thus, in *Husserliana XIV: 409*, he speaks of 'worldhoods' in the plural (*'Weltlichkeiten'*) meaning by that objects that are to be found in the world, that are the product of functioning intentionality. This is an interesting text entitled *Ich und die Welt. Wir und die Welt. <Funktionierende und realisierte Intersubjektivität. Konnex im Funktionieren>* (Wintersemester 1926/27) [*I and the world. We and the world. Functioning and realizing intersubjectivity. Connection in functioning'* (Winter semester 1926/27)]. Here Husserl writes:

The others as pre-found, as present-at-hand objects, as worldlinesses [*Weltlichkeiten*] – the others as functioning subjects [*als funktionierende Subjekte*] and equally as being worldly. I myself in this duality of mode of being. I as functioning I, that is also as I, as subject-consciousness – in connection with other functioning egos. Connecting in functioning. I, in my intentionality, know the others as 'I-with' [*als Mit-Ich*], as experiencing with the other, living with him, suffering with him, acting with him (and against him, opposing as a mode of 'with').<sup>85</sup>

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85 Hua XIV, 409: «Die Anderen als vorfindliche, als vorhandene Objekte, als Weltlichkeiten – die Anderen als funktionierende Subjekte und zugleich als weltlich seiende. Ich selbst in dieser Doppelheit der Seinsweise. Ich als funktionierendes Ich – das ist eben als Ich, als Bewusstseinssubjekt – in Konnex mit anderen funktionierenden Ich. Konnex im Funktionieren. Ich in meiner Intentionalität der Anderen bewusst als Mit-Ich, als mit ihnen erfahrend, mit ihnen lebend, leidend, tätig, mit ihnen (und gegen sie, das Gegen als ein Modus des

Here the subject is seen as being already in a cooperative functioning subjectivity with others, even if one is opposing the other or resisting them. In Text 6 of Husserliana Volume XV, written 1929-1930, Husserl speaks of being in the 'natural attitude of worldliness' (*die natürlichen Einstellung der Weltlichkeit*), in which can be found already the distinction between myself and others. Husserl states that the usual abstraction of myself as different from all others and as alone in the world is not a radical abstraction and changes nothing regarding my being 'experientable for everyone' (*für-jedermann-erfahrbar*) even if a universal plague were to leave me genuinely alone in the world. The transcendental reduction however uncovers a new form of transcendental aloneness and singularity – the 'ego in its transcendental ownness'.<sup>86</sup> In other words, human beings cannot ever stop being in the mode of being-with-others, even if one is the last person left alive on the planet.

Especially in his later period, during the nineteen thirties, Husserl often employs the term 'homeworld' (*Heimwelt*)<sup>87</sup> to express the claims that the world is always presented within a familiar context (e.g. the world as 'normal lifeworld', *normale Lebenswelt*)<sup>88</sup>. Husserl also uses the term 'near-world', translated as 'familiar world' by David Carr (*Nahwelt*)<sup>89</sup> as equivalent. He means the familiar world. Husserl also speaks of the 'human environment' (*Umwelt*) or the 'generative

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Mit)».

86 Hua XV, 6: «In der natürlichen Einstellung der Weltlichkeit finde ich unterschieden und in der Form des Gegenüber: mich und die Anderen. Abstrahiere ich von den Anderen in gewöhnlichem Sinn, so blei be ich „allein“ zurück. Aber solche Abstraktion ist nicht radikal, solches Alleinsein ändert noch nichts an dem natürlichen Weltsinn des Für-jedermann-erfahrbar, der auch dem natürlich verstandenen Ich anhaftet und nicht verloren ist, wenn eine universale Pest mich allein übrig gelassen hatte. In der transzendente len Einstellung und in eins der vorhin bezeichneten konstitutiven Abstraktion ist aber das *ego* in seiner transzendentalen Eigenheit nicht das auf ein blosses Korrelatphanomen reduzierte gewöhnliche Menschen-Ich innerhalb des Gesamtphanomens der Welt».

87 Hua XV, Hua XXXIX, *Crisis* Hua VI, 303.

88 Hua XV, 210.

89 *Crisis*, Hua VI, 303.



homeworld' (*generative Heimwelt*).<sup>90</sup> The world is neither the totality of objects in a physical sense nor the whole of all our subjective activities. Rather, *my* present world (full of meanings, spiritual and cultural values and objects) is inevitably enrooted in traditions and customs.<sup>91</sup> Homeworld is in this manner the peculiar unity between present horizon and meanings. The notion of 'homeworld' highlights the manner in which the world is shared with others and, especially, with those who live in close proximity with us. Homeworld is contrasted with 'alien-world' (*Fremdwelt*). It is not easy to define the boundaries that separate the homeworld from alien worlds. Husserl regards the distinction between homeworld and alienworld as transcendental.

Every world is constituted according to the conditions of normality and abnormality.<sup>92</sup> That is, the world unfolds necessarily within relations of proximity and remoteness. If the world is, as Husserl states, a meaningful horizon that emerge continually in the unity of our history,<sup>93</sup> it is inevitably lived through different perspectives and distances. In this continuous movement, we can distinguish between familiar and strange elements, customs and people. Furthermore, different worlds can be interwoven. We can share, for example, the same place or town with other people whose habits or approaches to the world are radically different to ours. In this way we would not consider them our 'home-comrades'. The unfolding of the world in terms of home and alien world is related to the problem of history<sup>94</sup>: the world is always meaningful within a historical and intersubjective horizon. *Our* world is not only linked to our own experiences and remembrances, but it bears in its core the stamp of the others (aliens and home-comrades).<sup>95</sup>

What is the relation between Husserl's discussion of the constitution of the sense of the world as *für Jedermann* and Heidegger's

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90 Hua XXXIX, 335.

91 Hua XXXIX, Beilage XLIII.

92 Hua XXXIX, Nr. 58.

93 *Crisis*, Beilage V; Hua IX, Beilage XXVII.

94 Hua XXXIX, nr. 48.

95 Hua XXXIX, nr. 17.

understanding of the public *das Man* character of the availability of entities in the world? This is a question that needs more work. It is addressed by Theunissen in his *The Other* which already identifies Husserl's everyone with Heidegger's *das Man*.<sup>96</sup> But Husserl – and indeed phenomenologists such as Gurwitsch – allow for many more authentic forms of public being with others. Entrance into public arrangements is not necessarily alienating. Husserl always returns to discussing familial relations, relations with one's neighbours. He puts an emphasis on commerce, trade, linguistic sharing, all kinds of social being that complete human beings rather than alienate them.

Let us now turn to Alfred Schutz' 1932 work which was published at a time when Husserl was drafting the writings that became the *Crisis*, having abandoned his efforts (in 1931) to write a systematic philosophy based on revised German text of the *Cartesian Meditations*.

## 7. Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology of the Social World (1932)

Schutz was not directly a student of Husserl. He was deeply influenced by Max Weber (who had lectured in Vienna in 1918 and was a friend of von Mises), particularly Weber's 'interpretative sociology' (*verstehende Sociologie*) and the latter's insistence that the social sciences offered 'description'<sup>97</sup> and abstention from value judgements, but he also thought that Weber's conception of method was quite superficial. Weber began from the recognition of social action and from the identification of different ways of grouping or associating in society. Schutz begins from Weber's distinction between subjective and objective meanings – subjective meaning for Weber resides in the 'intentions of individuals'.<sup>98</sup> Weber assumes this as a

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96 THEUNISSEN 1984.

97 PSW, 5.

98 PSW, 6.

primitive, whereas for Schutz it is a complex and ramified act.<sup>99</sup> Objective meanings are objectively knowable. Schutz criticises Weber for not distinguishing between an 'action' (*Handeln*) in process and one that is completed.<sup>100</sup> Schutz recognises that sociology must use 'common-sense concepts' but that sociological science cannot admit these common-sense concepts in an unclarified way.<sup>101</sup>

Schutz was also strongly influenced by Scheler, especially his writing on empathy. In the twenties, especially from 1925 to 1927, moreover, Schutz became particularly interested in Henri Bergson,<sup>102</sup> especially his unified approach to consciousness and temporal experience in a series of manuscripts subsequently published as *Lebensform und Sinnstruktur* (*Life Forms and Meaning Structure*).<sup>103</sup> Influenced by the phenomenologist Felix Kaufmann (who attended meetings of the Vienna Circle), Schutz began to read Husserl, especially his just published phenomenology of the consciousness of inner time, edited by Martin Heidegger (1928). For Schutz, 'the problem of meaning is a problem of time'.<sup>104</sup> Schutz approaches social constitution from the standpoint of temporal constitution.

In 1932, Schutz produced his major work, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (*Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*).<sup>105</sup> The publication was subsidised by Husserl's Japanese student, the legal and political theorist Tomoo Otaka (1899-1956) who had spent a year in Vienna studying with Kelsen and a year with Husserl in Freiburg, and had published his own book in defence of democratic values in the same year, *Grundlegende der Lehre vom Sozialen Verband*,<sup>106</sup> which Schutz read and on which he wrote a lengthy critical review. For Otaka, social bonds were ideal spiritual forms (*ideale Geistesgebilde*) and at the same actually existent entities in the historical world. Moreover, social

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99 PSW, 7.

100 PSW, 8.

101 PSW, 9.

102 See LANGSDORF 1985.

103 Cfr. SCHUTZ 1982, 31-117.

104 See BARBER 2012, 28.

105 SCHUTZ, 1967.

106 Cfr. OTAKA 1932. See UEMURA & YAEGASHI 2016.

entities such as states are not to be identified solely with their legal structures (as Kelsen maintained).

Schutz sent a copy of his own book to Husserl who invited him to become his assistant. Schutz's book earned Husserl's praise. Husserl called him 'an earnest and profound phenomenologist'. Schutz visited Husserl first in June 1932<sup>107</sup> and borrowed copies of sections of Husserl's draft German text of the *Cartesian Meditations*.<sup>108</sup> They subsequently met frequently and they corresponded, but he could not afford to leave his banking job. Husserl described him as a banker by day and a phenomenologist by night. Schutz subsequently attended Husserl's Prague lectures in November 1935, which deeply impressed him. His last visit to Husserl was at Christmas 1937 when Husserl was already quite ill. Schutz later recorded his debt to Husserl in his article *Husserl and His Influence on Me*.<sup>109</sup>

Schutz approaches the phenomenology of the social also – here deeply influenced by Husserl – from the perspective of the ego and especially its experience of temporality. Schutz argues that the examination of social relations in the social world do not need the transcendental reduction – he is able to pursue eidetic structures precisely as they are experienced in the life-world. His aim in PSW is 'to analyse the phenomenon of meaning in ordinary (*mundanen*) social life' (PSW, p. 44). The social world is immediately given and experienced as meaningful and actual; we do not need to employ an 'epoche':

The concept of the world in general must be based on the concept of 'everyone' and therefore also of the 'other'.<sup>110</sup>

And again:

The object we shall be studying therefore is the human

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107 SCHUHMANN 1977, 410.

108 SCHUHMANN 1977, 415–6.

109 SCHUTZ 1977, 41–4. See also WAGNER 1984, 179–200.

110 PSW, 97.

being who is looking at the world from within the natural attitude.<sup>111</sup>

We perceive, grasp, or notice the other person's meanings and intentions as genuine transcendent realities in the world. I 'interpret' the other's 'course of action'.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, I interpret the other not just in relation to his or her action in the context of a whole social world:

What is given both to the acting self and the interpreting observer is not only the single meaningful act and the context or configuration of meaning to which it belongs but the whole social world in fully differentiated perspectives.<sup>113</sup>

The social world is not homogeneous but is given 'in a complex system of perspectives'<sup>114</sup> and observers take these perspectival meanings into account when establishing the meaning of a situation (e.g. the intimate shared knowledge of a husband and wife in a larger social setting). The social world is experienced in everyday life as already meaningful.

Schutz believes that in recollection the ego can only encounter its past states and not its present nature. On the other hand, the experience of the other takes place *in the present*<sup>115</sup>; the other's and my streams of experiences are 'simultaneous'. Other-experience therefore has a certain primacy over self-experience. Schutz thinks there is not just one mode of self-experience but there are 'different modes or tenses of givenness for one's past, present and future (i.e. intended) behaviour'.<sup>116</sup>

Schutz interprets the life-world primarily as the social world with its

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111 PSW, 98.

112 PSW, 101.

113 PSW, 8-9.

114 PSW, 8.

115 PSW, 102.

116 PSW, 41.

presupposed context of shared meanings that lay the basis for social action and interaction, what Husserl and Schutz call the ‘we-world’ (*Wir-Welt*) or ‘with-world’ of one’s ‘contemporaries’ (*Mitwelt*): ‘Living in the world, we live with others and for others, orienting our lives to them’.<sup>117</sup> We immediately experience this social world as meaningful. Human ‘behaviour’ (*Verhalten* – Schutz translates it as ‘conduct’, Heidegger: ‘comportment’) is already meaningful in the everyday world.<sup>118</sup>

Schutz correctly saw Husserl’s intentional description of ‘social acts’ (*soziale Akte*) as having enormous importance for the social sciences.<sup>119</sup> For Schutz, Husserl has clearly articulated that the focus of the social sciences is on the *everyday* social world. In this regard, Schutz opposed the attempt by philosophers of science such as Ernst Nagel and Carl Hempel who wanted to model the methodology of the social sciences on the natural sciences. Schutz writes in 1953:

It seems to me that Edmund Husserl and the phenomenological school have demonstrated more clearly than any other philosophy of which I know that even our logic is rooted in this world of everyday life, which he calls the *Lebenswelt*, and that “nature” in the sense of the natural sciences is nothing else but a layer of this common life-world of all of us, a product of a systematic process of abstraction, generalization, and idealization in which man with his subjectivity is not included.<sup>120</sup>

Schutz differentiates between the many different kinds of ways we interact with others – we have our immediate neighbours with whom we have perceptual contact, but we also have wider circles of ‘consociates’ (PSW, 109; Schutz uses the English terms ‘associate’ and ‘consociate’ as a translation of *Mitmenschen*) – we share a common

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117 PSW, 9.

118 PSW, 10.

119 See SCHUTZ 1959.

120 SCHUTZ 1997, 123-49, esp. p. 133.

social space and time with me, a here and now. Schutz contrasts *consociates* (with whom I have general dealings) and a wider group of 'contemporaries' who are more anonymous.<sup>121</sup> My contemporaries belong to the *Mitwelt* but I don't necessarily know them. Besides the world of my contemporaries (*Mitwelt*), there is the 'world of my predecessors' (*Vorwelt*), and the 'world of my successors' (*Folgewelt*). Someone made these roads, built my house. Someone opens the park gates in the morning. Someone will inherit this house.

In an important subsequent article *The Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity in Husserl* (originally delivered at the Husserl Colloquium in Royaumont in 1957),<sup>122</sup> Schutz sketches the emergence of intersubjectivity as a theme in Husserl's writing from *Ideas I* to the *Cartesian Meditations*. He enumerates deep theoretical problems in Husserl's account of the recognition of the other subject precisely as *another subject* rather than as a modification of myself. Specifically, Schutz asks how Husserl is able to exclude all reference to others in performing what Husserl calls the 'second' *epochē* to reduce all experience to the sphere of ownness and then go on to discuss social predicates. Is there not a primordial experience of the 'we' already constituted within the self?<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Schutz believes Husserl's apperception of the other's body as analogue of my own is faulty, as we do not at all perceive or experience the other's body in the inner manner in which I experience my own (as Schutz says, Scheler, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty had also pointed out).<sup>124</sup>

But, interestingly, Schutz also goes on to discuss Husserl's *Crisis*, especially section §54, where Husserl attempts to describe the constitution of the other person and also the group of persons from the individual ego. Schutz's queries how Husserl ever arrives at the 'transcendental we' which for him is the 'primal ground of all communities'. Schutz is particularly critical of Husserl's proposed

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121 PSW, 109. Schutz's account of the anonymity of public life is developed in Natanson 1986.

122 SCHUTZ 1966, 51-91.

123 SCHUTZ 1966, 59.

124 SCHUTZ 1966, 63.

solution to the problem of the constitution of intersubjectivity, and is also deeply unhappy with Husserl's invocation of the 'primal ego' in *Crisis* §54. Schutz sees Husserl as believing that every personal ego's experience of itself also includes an experience of itself as a member of a community, as part of a 'we' and as also recognizing another as a 'thou'. Yet at the same time Husserl insists that the *epochē* creates a unique kind of philosophical solitude where I cannot co-validate the presence or experiences of others. The problem Schutz identifies in Husserl is that there is no guarantee that the community that I constitute from within myself coincides with the community that the other constitutes for herself or himself. This is an important criticism, to which, I believe, Husserl has no response. In general, in Husserl's intersubjective monadology, it is not clear how these transcendental subjects communicate. Schutz refers to *Crisis* §71 where Husserl suggests an answer to this problem. Husserl writes:

But this means at the same time that within the vitally flowing intentionality in which the life of an ego-subject consists, every other ego is already intentionally implied in advance by way of empathy and the empathy-horizon. Within the universal *epochē* which actually understands itself, it becomes evident that there is no separation of mutual externality [*Aussereinander*] at all for souls in their own essential nature. What is a mutual externality for the natural-mundane attitude of world-life prior to the *epochē*, because of the localization of souls in living bodies, is transformed in the *epochē* into a pure, intentional, mutual internality [*Ineinander*].<sup>125</sup>

Husserl speaks of the manner in which every ego 'implicates' other egos – but what is the meaning of this intentional 'implication'? Husserl's claim is that transcendental egos overcome the 'mutual externality' (*Aussereinandersein*) produced by being localized in

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<sup>125</sup> *Crisis* § 71, 255; Hua VI, 259.



physical bodies and gain a new kind of intersubjective community where all belong as internal members in 'internality' or literally 'within-one-another-ness' (*Ineinandersein*). But what evidence does Husserl offer for this transformation of mutually exclusive externality into shared internality? Schutz comments:

It is completely unclear how an intentional in-one-another could account for the reciprocal implication of streams of life belonging to single subjects, and even to all psyches.<sup>126</sup>

In this important paper Schutz also draws attention to Eugen Fink's remark in his 1933 paper on Husserl in *Kant-Studien* that one cannot simply transfer the relation between individual and plural humans to the transcendental sphere and that Husserl's use of the term 'monad' is simply an index of a larger problematic and not a solution to the problem of transcendental intersubjectivity. It is certainly true that Husserl's embrace of the Leibnizian language of monads has not been seen as illuminating in term of the relations holding within transcendental intersubjectivity.

## 8. Conclusion

What I have tried to do here is to open up some themes and lines of communication with which to explore further the rich connections between Husserl, Heidegger, Gurwitsch, Schutz, and Patočka, among others, on the nature of the social world, and specifically on the nature of public existence in the world. There are many commonalities to be explored further – the relation between the individual and the communal, the nature of authenticity and inauthenticity, the constitution of the *Mitwelt*, and the nature of the anonymous subject in the public realm. Husserl's deep reflections on empathy, intersubjectivity, socialisation, and communalisation offer an

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<sup>126</sup> Schutz 1996, 78.

important and relatively neglected contribution to the phenomenology of sociality that deserves much closer attention and scrutiny.

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# Elementary Recognition and Empathy: A Husserlian Account

*James Jardine*

University of Copenhagen & University College Dublin\*

[james.jardine@ucd.ie](mailto:james.jardine@ucd.ie)

*ABSTRACT.* This article explores the affinity between Axel Honneth's conception of elementary recognition and Edmund Husserl's work on empathy, with the aim of indicating one way in which phenomenological analysis might contribute to critical social theory. I begin by sketching the 'two-level' account of recognition developed by Honneth in recent writings, which distinguishes between 'elementary' and 'normatively substantial' forms of recognition. The remainder of the paper then seeks to offer a deeper account of elementary recognition by identifying it with Husserl's conception of empathetic perception. I begin by clarifying what Husserl means by 'the person,' before illuminating the sense in which empathy counts as a distinctive kind of perceptual recognition of other personal selves, and shedding phenomenological light on empathy as a *sui generis* mode of interpersonal intentionality. I then conclude with some preliminary remarks regarding the relationship between empathetic perception and other forms of interpersonal responsiveness and recognition.

*KEYWORDS.* Husserl; Honneth; Elementary Recognition; Personhood.

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\* *Correspondence:* James Jardine – University College Dublin, School of Philosophy, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland. Center for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen, Karen Blixens Plads 8, DK-2300, Copenhagen, Denmark.





## 1. Recognition: Honneth's Two-Level Account

In recent work, Axel Honneth has proposed a two-level account of interpersonal recognition, distinguishing a mode of 'elementary' recognition from those 'normatively substantial' forms of recognition which serve as the intersubjective conditions for specific modes of socialised agency.<sup>1</sup> My aim in this opening section of the paper will be to clarify what is at stake in this distinction, by way of highlighting certain relevant strands from Honneth's rich and expansive body of work. I will first contrast Honneth's early take on recognition with a different position developed by Robert Pippin, before indicating how Honneth's later account, while in some respects aligning his conception more closely with Pippin's analysis, motivates a novel distinction between two forms or levels of recognition.

In his relatively early work, *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth distinguished between three different interpersonal relations, each of which embody a certain kind of mutual recognition – namely, emotional support, respect, and social esteem – arguing that each of these relations serve a necessary function for the formation of a definite dimension of the 'practical identity' or 'practical self-relation' of the agents thereby related. Honneth thus argues that loving parental care (and its continuation, in this respect, later on in life through personal relations of friendship and romantic love) is inextricably bound up with the development and sustaining of the *self-confidence* involved with taking one's own needs and emotions to be of value; that being respectfully treated by others as entitled to certain rights is a necessary precondition for the *self-respect* involved with taking oneself to have moral responsibility; and that the *self-esteem* involved with taking ourselves to have traits and abilities through which we can contribute to the social world only emerges when we feel ourselves to be accordingly evaluated by the relevant social community.<sup>2</sup>

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1 HONNETH 2008, 152.

2 HONNETH 1995, 92-130.

In his philosophically rich reading and defence of Hegel's practical philosophy, Pippin disputes Honneth's claim that it is sufficient for mutual recognition that persons simply reciprocally relate to one another with the right kind of «attitude», and hence dismisses his account as merely psychological.<sup>3</sup> For Pippin, what is crucial for the experience of being recognised is rather that I am able to offer an account of the rational norms underlying my actions to others whom I recognise as members of my social community, an account which those others understand as a normative account of my action in accordance with the practices of practical justification that exist in that community. Pippin puts the point as follows: «one is an agent in being recognized as, responded to as, an agent; one can be so recognized if the justifying norms appealed to in the practice of treating each other as agents can actually function within that community as justifying, can be offered and accepted (recognized) as justifying».<sup>4</sup> As this last formulation implies, Pippin regards mutual recognition as having far-reaching consequences, in that it serves as a condition of possibility for genuinely *free agency*, where such agency is understood both as inherently linked to the motivating presence of credible justifying reasons and as a thoroughly social status.<sup>5</sup> As Pippin further articulates the point, the category of rational agent, rather than being a metaphysical or natural kind, is itself a social norm to which we are held responsible by others through practices of recognition.<sup>6</sup> In sum, then, while the Honneth of *The Struggle for Recognition* thematised recognition in terms of the mutually held interpersonal attitudes which mediate agency by supposedly fostering such affective self-relations as self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, Pippin rather argues that relationships of mutual recognition have normative relevance because they manifest and appeal to those «institutional norms» whose mutual acceptance is allegedly required for one's deeds

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3 PIPPIN 2008, 183, 193.

4 PIPPIN 2008, 198-9.

5 PIPPIN 2008, 183, 190-1, 196-7; cf. BRANDOM 2009, 68-71.

6 PIPPIN 2008, 198, 155.

to exhibit determinate and free agency 'among us'.<sup>7</sup>

However, Pippin's take on recognition cannot be so easily opposed to the account developed by Honneth in more recent work. Particularly in his exchange with Nancy Fraser (incidentally published several years before Pippin's critique), Honneth emphasises that «the distinctively human dependence on intersubjective recognition is always shaped by the particular manner in which the mutual granting of recognition is institutionalized within a society».<sup>8</sup> Honneth's thought here is that the «expectations of recognition» that we bring to social encounters, and which delineate the kind of respectful treatment we expect from others, are not grounded in ahistorical features of human psychology but rather shaped by the practices of recognition found in our community, owing «their normative justification to principles institutionally anchored in the historically established recognition order».<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the processes of recognition or misrecognition which satisfy or frustrate such expectations – as well as the kinds of practical self-relation which are thereby made possible or called into question – are here conceptualised as thoroughly dependent upon social norms which specify the style of respectful treatment we owe to others in our social community.<sup>10</sup> Honneth argues that struggles for recognition emerge when these norms, and the 'subjective expectations' which they shape, are frustrated; and such struggles serve as a crucial empirical resource for critical social theory in that they display the (immanent *and* transcendent) surplus of norms and expectations which are frustrated by actual social relations and hence bear emancipatory potential.<sup>11</sup>

More recent work, then, has seen Honneth move closer to Pippin's emphasis on the constitutive role played by institutional mediation in situations of recognition or misrecognition. Moreover, one can find in Honneth's most recent writings an explicit and detailed analysis of the

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7 PIPPIN 2008, 203.

8 HONNETH 2003, 138.

9 HONNETH 2003, 137.

10 HONNETH 2003, 138.

11 HONNETH 2003, 136-8, 186, 263; Cf. HONNETH 2007, 3-48.

mediation of human freedom by social norms and institutional practices, an interest which overlaps substantially with Pippin's work on recognition.<sup>12</sup> This is not to say, however, that important differences do not remain between their respective positions, and in the following I will attempt to clarify and critically develop a claim which Honneth endorses but Pippin would likely reject.<sup>13</sup> While Honneth now accepts and renders thematic the institutional mediation of processes of recognition, in a recent work entitled *Reification* he also insists that all such historically shaped forms of recognition are articulations of a primitive recognitive stance, one that precedes the socialisation of the human subject into institutionally mediated recognitive practices. This 'elementary' or even 'existential recognition' is not itself bound by institutional norms, and indeed Honneth suggests it is even operative in standard situations of 'misrecognition,' where norm-responsive forms of recognition are actively denied.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Honneth argues that such recognition is more basic than and a precondition for the communicative activity, which we earlier saw Pippin identifying as constitutive for all activities of recognition, of being oriented towards the practical reasons of the recognised subject.<sup>15</sup> Rather, what «occurs in this type of recognition, what makes up its particular character, is that we take up a stance towards the other that reaches into the affective sphere, a stance in which we can recognize in another person the other of our own self, our fellow human».<sup>16</sup> Elementary recognition, then, consists in a pre-judicative or «non-epistemic» way of recognising another human subject, a recognition which has an affective salience and «compels us to take up some sort of position» towards the other, but without yet determining «the direction or tone of that position. Love and hate, ambivalence and coldness, can all be

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12 HONNETH 2014.

13 Cf. PIPPIN 2008, 203-4, 193.

14 HONNETH 2008, 152-3.

15 HONNETH 2008, 50-1, 151-2. This claim also stands in evident contrast with Brandom's characterisation of recognition as the "attitude-kind" involved with taking «someone to be responsible or authoritative, attributing a normative deontic status to someone» (BRANDOM 2009, 70).

16 HONNETH 2008, 151.

expressions of this elementary recognition as long as they can be seen to be modes of existential affectiveness».<sup>17</sup>

We have seen that Honneth has in recent writings endorsed a two-level account of recognition, which distinguishes those forms of recognition that gain their specific character from institutional socialisation and condition specific types of self-relation, social action, and cultural identity, from an 'elementary' mode of recognition that precedes and is articulated by the latter. For Honneth, such elementary recognition consists in a more-or-less universal interpersonal stance which already pervades the lives of (at least mentally 'normal') young infants, and which is presupposed by and tacitly operative in all other forms of interpersonal recognition and misrecognition. Moreover, such recognition is regarded as being both ontogenetically and logically prior to 'cognition,' by which Honneth appears to mean the adoption of a detached and strictly epistemic or judicative attitude towards another person.<sup>18</sup> Rather, elementary recognition opens us to being affected by another human being as another human being, and the openness at issue here is more primitive than any activity of judgement-formation with regard to a perceptually present person.

In the remainder of this article, I will argue that in developing a phenomenological account of *empathy* we can bring into view a highly plausible picture of elementary recognition, one which accords with and deepens many of Honneth's descriptions of the distinctive character and function of the latter.<sup>19</sup> Drawing upon the phenomenological reflections of Edmund Husserl, the connection

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17 HONNETH 2008, 151-2. This, at least, is the view which Honneth ultimately offers in the 'Rejoinder' to his critics in *Reification*, though other parts of the text are more ambiguous. For critical discussion of Honneth's argumentation in *Reification*, see VARGA 2012, PETHERBRIDGE 2013, 176-81, JARDINE 2015, and the comments from Butler, Geuss, and Lear in HONNETH 2008.

18 HONNETH 2008, 46-7.

19 The point of convergence between elementary recognition and empathy has been briefly highlighted by ZAHAVI 2010, as well as being explored in more depth in JARDINE 2015. However, while the latter article drew primarily upon the resources offered by Edith Stein's work *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, the present contribution makes use of Husserl's expansive body of writings on empathy and personhood.

between empathy and elementary recognition will be explored across three different lines of thought. On the one hand, I will explicate and develop Husserl's classification of empathy as the perceptual or intuitive experience of other people. As we shall see, Husserl uses the term 'empathy' to designate an experience which, on the one hand, lies below the level of judicative thinking and evaluative modes of interpersonal recognition, and on the other, involves a recognition of the mindedness and personal distinctiveness of the other person. On the other, I will emphasise that empathy provides an immanent motivational basis for those forms of affect and praxis which are responsive to others as persons. In our everyday experience of others in the social world, *inter*-personal empathy engages the empathising person just as much as it does the person empathised, in that others do not only show up for us perceptually but also as exhibiting various forms of axiological and practical significance, which in their turn manifest the emotions and practical interests of the empathising subject. Before turning to these two claims, however, some stage-setting will be necessary. In order to see the sense in which, for Husserl, empathy is a form of experience which discloses the *personhood* (*Persönlichkeit*) of the other, it will be helpful to first spell out what the notion of the personal self designates in this context. And this is what I will now proceed to do.

## 2. Husserl on Personhood and Understanding Persons

Briefly put, Husserl's central intuition regarding personhood is that to think, evaluate, and act as a person is not merely to be *subject to* (or driven by) desires and impulses, but to be the *subject of* one's convictions, evaluations, and decisions.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, this view involves the thought that our comportment as persons is, to some degree and with exceptions, responsive to our surrounding world in a

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<sup>20</sup> For further discussion of Husserl's distinctive conception of the person, see HART 1992 and JACOBS 2010; 2014.

way which involves intentionality and rationality. In the normal and paradigmatic case of personal action, for instance, one's bodily engagement is not merely blindly driven by urges and instincts, but realises practical intentions that one has freely formed on the basis of justifying reasons or motives. Similarly, those of our thoughts and emotional evaluations which exhibit personal agency involve an appeal, in one way or another, to how we take the world to truly be, where this appeal can be critically assessed with regard to its degree of appropriateness. Broadly construed, then, our agency as persons consists in a way of freely responding to the things, situations, persons, institutions, commitments, commands, and so on, of the (natural and social) world as we find it in experience.<sup>21</sup> And part of what makes this way of responding 'free,' and in this way genuinely expressive of the person who responds, is that it involves an appeal to legitimising reasons.<sup>22</sup> In a text written between 1915 and 1917, Husserl puts this thought as follows:

Rational activity is always spontaneity and the genuine activity of the subject. In such activity the subject alone is effective; it is the subject itself which acts, and it does so of its own accord. It is not the subject itself which acts when it lets itself be determined by the "allure" of the matter, but rather when it lets its own sense and legitimacy be honoured, when the 'I' is the subject of the intention which is fulfilled. The subject of "opinions," who takes a position, the subject as *subject of reason* is active when it strives towards and achieves its goal, and not when it lets itself be passively pulled along by instincts and inclinations.<sup>23</sup>

21 HUSSERL 1989, 148-9/1952, 141.

22 HUSSERL 1989, 269/1952, 257.

23 «Alle Vernunfttätigkeit ist Spontaneität und wirkliche Aktivität des Subjekts. In ihr ist es rein wirkend, selbsttätig, von sich aus. Selbsttätig ist das Subjekt, wo es sich nicht von dem „Reiz“ der Sachen bestimmen lässt, sondern wo es ihrem eigenen Sinn und Recht Ehre widerfahren lässt, wo die Intention, deren Subjekt das Ich ist, sich erfüllt. Das „meinende“, stellungnehmende Subjekt, das Subjekt als *Vernunftsubjekt* ist tätig, wo es sein Ziel erstrebt und erreicht, und nicht, wo es von Trieben, Neigungen passiv sich

This passage alludes to a second crucial feature of Husserl's treatment of personhood: namely, his claim that the personal self is constituted by habitual attitudes, stances, or opinions (*Einstellungen, Stellungnahmen, Meinungen*). For Husserl, our episodes of thinking, emoting, and acting exhibit personal agency not only by virtue of their appeal to reasons, but also through a distinctive way in which they implicate our personal past and future. The point here is simply that the degree to which such episodes manifest enduring attitudes or stances, stances which have been actively 'instituted' at some point in one's personal history and have since come to be habitually accepted – that is, the degree to which our episodes of thinking, emoting, and acting articulate one's convictions, emotional dispositions, and long-standing practical resolutions – determines the degree to which they reveal who one is and what one is about as a person. Seen from this point of view, personal selfhood is not something which could be exhaustively manifest in a single experiential episode, but is rather a unique *style* which imbues much of our activity, in as much as such activity displays habituated and enduring stances.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, one's personality or personhood (*Persönlichkeit*) consists in one's enduring and unique way of being (to some degree, rationally) motivated by and responding to the world: «According to the universal he is a human person, but his kind as his character, his personhood, is a unity, constituted in the course of his life, of multifarious motivations based upon multifarious presuppositions».<sup>25</sup>

In thematising such habitual character under the heading of *style*, Husserl evidently means to suggest that it is not something originally correlated with a judgement or evaluation which picks out stable

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ziehen lässt» (Ms. A VI 10/6b.) I am grateful to Ullrich Melle, Director of the Husserl Archives in Leuven, for granting me permission to refer to Husserl's unpublished writings.

24 HUSSERL 1989 341-3/1952,329-32. Cf. HUSSERL 1989, 289-90/1952,277, where it is suggested that such style does not only imbue and, as it were, 'make mine' my attitude-manifesting comportment, but also my sensibility and bodily habits.

25 HUSSERL 1989, 286-7 [translation modified]/1952, 274.



character traits and predicates them of a person. As he formulates the point, the description of a person's individual style is exactly a «difficult matter».<sup>26</sup> Husserl argues elsewhere that the perceptual style of a material thing comprises a domain of sense which surpasses and precedes judicative articulation, and this applies all the more here, since the uniqueness and ambiguity of a person's style downright evades the generality of descriptive conceptualisation.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Husserl does maintain that personal style is something which we can get to know (*kennenlernen*), both in our own case and that of others.<sup>28</sup> However, this is not a matter of simply judging the person to be the bearer of (reified) 'features;' rather, it involves gradually acquiring a familiarity with the personal subject in her specificity and historicity, a familiarity which can only be approximately expressed through the predication of generic character traits to him or her.

Importantly, Husserl emphasises that such a mode of familiarity comes in degrees. On the one hand, when pursuing a thematic interest in rendering the personhood of a person intelligible – that is, in actively pursuing the question of who she is and what she is about – we are ultimately faced with an infinite task, whose ideal obtainment would require one to 're-live' and explicate the person's life *in extenso*, discerning the development of her habitual way of being motivated.<sup>29</sup> (While Husserl doesn't explicitly make this point, it seems plausible to regard attempts at such ambitious and thematic personal understanding as being embedded within a *narrative* that explicates and interrelates events within a person's life.) On the other hand, Husserl points out that understanding persons always involves a dialectical interplay between the comprehension of specific modes of comportment and the discerning of unitary character. Acquiring a deeper understanding of a person's activity already demands some acquaintance with her personal style – in that such an understanding

26 "Aber wirklich einheitliche Person ist das Ich, wenn es einen gewissen *durchgängig einheitlichen Stil* hat, dessen Beschreibung eine schwierige Sache ist." (Ms. A VI 10/47a.)

27 HUSSERL 1977,50-1,77,102/1962,68,102,134; cf. Ms. F III 1/209a.

28 Ms. A VI 10/38b.

29 Ms. A IV 17/43a.

must recognise those elements of the person's reason-responsive activity which occur habitually – and yet getting to know personal style may only proceed through comprehending the specific motivational contexts (*Motivationszusammenhänge*) which pertain to concrete episodes of acting, emoting, and thinking. While this thought may seem to suggest that the very project of understanding persons is threatened by a vicious circularity, the conclusion Husserl draws is rather that all forms of personal understanding involve both some comprehension of specific motivational contexts *and* an immediate assessment of character (*unmittelbare Charakterbeurteilung*), where these two elements are reciprocally motivated and open to further determination and correction in the ongoing course of understanding.<sup>30</sup>

One of the central thoughts Husserl is offering here is that the issue of personal character or style, that is, the issue of 'who' someone is, inevitably emerges when we inquire more deeply into 'why' someone has acted in a certain way. In seeking to understand the motivational situation in which someone's action was embedded – in explicating the nexus of actual and potential goals, means, ideals, and habitual inclinations with which they were acquainted in deciding to act as they did – a personal self with a certain historical and attitudinal character simultaneously comes into view.<sup>31</sup> However, this somewhat abstract thought tells us little with regard to the forms of access we have to the lives of actual people, in that the kind of understanding it evokes is one that could presumably be extended to fictional and non-existent persons too. And it seems to me that one way in which phenomenological analysis might be able to shed some light on the nature of elementary recognition is by addressing just this matter, that is, by locating and explicating the mode of experience in which other personal selves are first given.

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30 Ms. A VI 10/38b.

31 Ms. A VI 10/7b.

### 3. Empathy as Perception and Re-enactment

In pursuing this end, the Husserlian concept of empathy (*Einfühlung*) proves to be a helpful tool.<sup>32</sup> In lectures given during the winter semester of 1910-1911, Husserl describes empathy as a «special form of empirical experience», namely that in which we experience (*erfahren*) the conscious life of another person without living through (*erleben*) that life as we do our own.<sup>33</sup> As he goes on to explain, the (correct) observation that we lack first-personal awareness with regard to the experiential lives of others does not entail that we can only become acquainted with them by way of a projective transfer of our own actual or possible conscious states. In empathetically grasping that another person is angry, I do not need to be angry myself, and nor do I need to envision by means of imagination or memory what feeling angry is like.<sup>34</sup> Rather, the most basic form of experiential acquaintance I can have with another's anger, and the kind which Husserl labels 'empathetic,' consists in my directly apprehending this anger 'in,' say, the person's flushed cheeks and clenched jaw. What we are dealing with here is a complex but unitary experience – which he also describes simply as «the *perception* of the human being over there» – in which a variety of (sensuously given) expressive bodily movements immediately display, not only the exteriority of the other's body, but also elements of their interiority or mindedness (*Innerlichkeit, Geistigkeit*).<sup>35</sup> Husserl claims that the structure of empathetic perception incorporates but is irreducible to that of the mere perception of material things. While the latter already involves a moment of 'appresentation,' in that the perceived thing necessarily implies a horizon of perceptible aspects that are currently shielded

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32 My discussion of empathy in this article will obviously be constrained by spatial and thematic limitations. Curious readers can consult JARDINE & SZANTO 2017 for a concise overview of the phenomenological concept of empathy, and ZAHAVI 2014 for a more detailed treatment.

33 HUSSERL 2006, 82/1973, 187.

34 HUSSERL 2006, 83/1973, 187-8.

35 HUSSERL 2006, 149-50/1973, 224-5.

from view, empathetic perception is additionally characterised by «appresentations of what is ‘interior,’ ‘subjective’», appresentations that have a style of motivation and fulfilment which is entirely their own.<sup>36</sup> To this degree, I take that it Husserl would have agreed wholeheartedly with his student Edith Stein when she writes that empathy is a *sui generis* kind of experiential act, distinct from the perception of material things, as well as from imagination and memory.<sup>37</sup> He thus uses the term *Einfühlung* to pick out the distinctive kind of perceptual experience we have of other human beings, an experience in which others show up for us directly as expressive units whose bodily movements manifest and embody mindedness.

Importantly, Husserl notes that empathy is not simply a matter of becoming acquainted with discrete and isolated affective states. Rather, from the outset, our empathetic experience recognises the other as «the centre of a surrounding world, appearing to him, presentified to him in memory, thought about, etc.», such that the other’s living body is not given as the container of an inner realm but as a passageway (*Durchgang*) which displays the other’s subjectively accomplished and world-engaged activity. As Husserl puts it, what the other’s body expresses is first and foremost «the “he:” he moves his hand, he reaches for this or that, he strikes, he considers, he is motivated by this or that».<sup>38</sup> Despite the radical differences between self-awareness and empathy, then, in both cases we are primarily acquainted with subjectivity in its very directedness towards and responsiveness to worldly objects and situations.<sup>39</sup> Admittedly, our initial empathetic comprehension of the details of the other’s perceptual, intellectual, affective, and practical responses is often rather limited, the other’s bodily movements betraying little more than a general ‘type’ of subjective response, and drawing with it a «horizon of indeterminateness and unknownness».<sup>40</sup> But this «open» horizon is

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36 HUSSERL 2006,149-50/1973, 224-5.

37 STEIN 1989, 11/2008, 20.

38 HUSSERL 1989, 358/1952, 347.

39 HUSSERL 1989, 333-4/1952, 321-2.

40 HUSSERL 1989, 353/1952, 342.

itself «informed by the essential type of a concrete interiority, of an 'I' and its surrounding world (*Umwelt*), appearing in such and such a way».<sup>41</sup> We can reformulate these thoughts by noting that empathetic perception always grasps the other as the subject of a world-directed experiential life, one which is recognised as surpassing even the elements of mentality directly displayed in expressive bodily movements.

However, it should be emphasised that empathy is not limited to our initial perceptual contact with others. Understood in a broader sense, empathy picks out those experiences which disclose the other as an embodied and experiencing subject. And Husserl notes that our perceptual grasp of another human being will often seamlessly slip in to acts of intuitive illustration (*Veranschaulichung*), in which we re-enact the other's experience, bringing it to mind as if we were the other. In his somewhat tortured formulation: «If someone, right before my eyes, burns or cuts himself, or else when he gets news of something that I overhear, which results in his emotional suffering, etc., we feel immediately with him (in a feeling-with that is not, in the usual, completely different sense, feeling-with, sympathy) – or at least so it seems».<sup>42</sup> Now, such empathetic re-enactment should not be understood as constituting the most basic form of acquaintance we have with the embodied mind of the other; rather, Husserl emphasises that it involves vividly envisaging, and occasionally further determining, senses which first emerge as empty intentions or presentations in the course of empathetic perception.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, part of what typically distinguishes such empathetic re-enactment from mere imagination is that it arises from and explicates perceptual empathy, at least to some degree.

Nevertheless, what makes this facet of Husserl's treatment of empathy particularly relevant for the present purposes is that he occasionally suggests that empathetic re-enactment can play a decisive

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41 HUSSERL 2006, 150 [translation modified]/1973, 225.

42 HUSSERL 2006, 151/1973, 226.

43 HUSSERL 2006, 149-51/1973, 224-6.

role for our thematic understanding of the other *as a person*. As we saw earlier, in actively pursuing the matter of who the other is and what they are about, it is necessary to acquire a detailed understanding of the motivational situations in which a range of the other's subjective responses are embedded, such that the other's enduring motivational style can be discerned. And here empathetic re-enactment provides resources that go beyond perception. In envisaging another's action as arising from a nexus of reasons, goals, and affects, and then contrasting this with other re-enacted situations from a person's history, Husserl argues that we can sometimes obtain a kind of intuitive insight into the other's personhood as a habitual motivational system (*Persönlichkeitsanschauung*).<sup>44</sup> It seems plausible that this kind of empathetic re-enactment does not merely involve explicating empathetic perception, but would also need to draw upon a general understanding of how and why people act, as well our communicative understanding of, and personal familiarity with, this particular individual.

#### 4. Empathetic Perception as Interpersonal Recognition

On the basis of these last considerations, one might conclude that recognising the personhood of another person is something which cannot be accomplished by perceptual empathy alone, arising only through an extra-perceptual mode of empathetic re-enactment. And indeed this thought would seem to cohere with some of Honneth's characterisations of elementary recognition. While Honneth takes care in distinguishing elementary recognition from a more narrowly defined 'perspective of the participant,' which involves the

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44 «Die Einheit der Persönlichkeitsanschauung, die hier als „Nachleben“ bezeichnet ist, ist eine besondere: Ich muss mich nicht ihrer in vereinzelte Akte derselben einfühlen, sondern ich muss das einheitliche Leben in extenso nachleben können, d.i. gleichsam mitfühlen, mitdenken, mithandeln können in einer Weise, als ob ich wirklich so fühlen etc. müsste, dass ich eben in einführender Weise von den betreffenden Motivationen berührt, ja gleichsam selbst motiviert bin» (HUSSERL, Ms. A IV 17/43a; cf. A VI 10/7b).

communicative understanding of another's reasons for acting, he nevertheless states that it involves «the act of taking over the perspective of another person».<sup>45</sup> It is perhaps surprising, then, to find Husserl explicitly stating that other people's expressive bodily movements can already serve to perceptually exhibit unique personal character. As he writes:

Now, as to the persons we encounter in society, their living bodies are naturally given to us in *intuition* just like the other Objects of our environment, and consequently so are their personalities (*Personalitäten*), unified with their living bodies. But we do not find here two things, intertwined with one another in an external way; living bodies and persons. We find unitary human beings, who have dealings with us; and their living bodies participate in the human unity. In their sensuously intuitive content – in what is generically typical of living bodies, and in the many particularities which vary from case to case – ones of facial expressions, of gestures, of the spoken “word,” of the individual's intonation, etc. – is expressed the mental life of persons, their thinking, feeling, desiring, what they do and what they omit to do. What is also already expressed here is their individual mental character (*individuelle geistige Eigenart*), which, to be sure, comes to givenness in an ever more perfect way in the unfolding of the states which become understandable to us in their nexus as well. Everything is here of an intuitive character; as are external world and living body, so is the unity of living body and mind of the man there before me.<sup>46</sup>

This passage may appear at first sight to offer a somewhat

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45 HONNETH 2008,34-5. The concept of the “perspective of the participant” referred to by Honneth here derives from Jürgen Habermas. See HABERMAS 1979,1-68.

46 HUSSERL 1989,246-7 [translation modified]/1952, 234-5.

romanticised interpretation of our experience of other human persons. Nevertheless, my contention is that by relating these remarks to other elements of Husserl's thinking regarding empathy and personal selfhood, a phenomenologically compelling account of elementary recognition can be developed.

To begin with, we should dwell a little more on Husserl's claim that others present themselves to empathetic perception as consciously engaged in a common surrounding world.<sup>47</sup> To illustrate this thought, consider that I see a man across the street from me get out of a car and walk into a pizzeria. Assuming that the lighting conditions and spatial proximity are sufficient for me to get a good look at this unknown other, then there will be a range of descriptive assertions that I can make that merely explicate what is directly given in this experience, and an indefinite plethora of questions that arise from these assertions, and which thought and imagination can speculatively traverse. Thus, I can say, and on perceptual-empathetic grounds, that the man saw the pizzeria as such and was purposively walking into it; that his facial expressions and posture betrayed an emotive condition in a more or less determinate manner, his gruff scowl and bulky walk manifesting a certain frustration; that the slightly exaggerated way he glares at the watch shows he is not in the mood to be kept waiting, and so forth. And beyond such descriptive assertions, I can think to myself about, for instance, where the man was coming from, what he is after in the pizzeria, and whether there is somewhere he needs to be or if he is 'always like this.' Evidently, such assertions and questions only scratch the surface of the man's personal life, and it can hardly be said that I have a deep understanding of his world-directed thoughts, emotions, and actions and of the character which they engage. But what my thoughts do betray is a comprehension of the man's bodily activity as engaging certain kinds of emotive and practical *attitudes*. Moreover, even with such an anonymous other I will still have some understanding, whose source is admittedly difficult to determine, that such attitudes are embedded in and even contribute to a worldly

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47 HUSSERL 1989, 358, 334, 201/1952, 347, 321-2, 191.



situation, and that they do so in a manner which is responsive to certain norms. For instance, I might say to myself, "I can see he's angry about something," and I will likely at this stage stop staring, fearful of the further irritation and even practical consequences which are bound to emerge if his irritable gaze locks onto mine and sees it is as an affront.

As these last considerations evince, it is often extremely difficult to neatly separate out the senses which the other's expressive movements display perceptually, and the more probable or evaluative sense-articulations that emerge from the imaginative, judicative, emotive, and practical activity of the empathising subject.<sup>48</sup> However, Husserl would argue that we can only attempt to actively explicate the motivational context of another's attitudes through thought, imagination, and our own personal responses, once we have become perceptually acquainted with them *as attitudes*. One way of motivating this claim is by noting that, when faced with another's angry behaviour, we do not have to first imagine ourselves being angry, apply a body of general theoretical knowledge, or actively respond to the other in emotion or practice, in order to begin immediately treating the other's emotive condition as a world-responsive and norm-governed attitude. Rather, just as our perceptual experience of a thing as having a certain shape or colour implies appearance-systems in which such features can be further exhibited, our empathetic perception of another's anger from the beginning implies a foreign motivational context in which that anger inheres and actively participates. To employ a Wittgensteinian metaphor, to recognise another's anger is not to identify an isolated mental state but to become acquainted with a pattern within the weave of a personal life.<sup>49</sup>

48 Matters are evidently more tricky here than they are with the relatively clear-cut case of thing-perception, and this is one reason why, as Zahavi has aptly put it, the problem of empathy was for Husserl the «preoccupation of a lifetime» (ZAHAVI 2014, 123-4).

49 See WITTGENSTEIN 1968, II, §2. Cf. WITTGENSTEIN 1968, I, §539: «I see a picture which represents a smiling face. What do I do if I take the smile now as a kind one, now as malicious? Don't I often imagine it with a spatial and temporal context of kindness or malice? Thus I might, when looking at the picture, imagine it to be of a smiler smiling down on a child at play, or again on the suffering of an enemy».

And while this personal context is evinced in my empathetic grasp of an unknown other only as a «horizon of indeterminateness and unknownness», it is nevertheless co-accepted in my empathetic-perceptual grasp of the other's emotive condition.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, even if the other's motivational context is only properly lived through, in her emotive and practical engagement, by the other, this does not make it something wholly inaccessible to me. Not only does the motivational context of another's action depend upon and articulate a common world, with which I am also familiar, and its meaningful things, events, norms, and institutions; it is also a domain of sense whose distinctively personal contours can be gradually disclosed through further empathetic perception and re-enactment.

But what are the implications of this line of thought for the claim that empathetic perception already accomplishes a recognition of another personal self? In this connection, Husserl suggests that in witnessing another's embodied comportment as manifesting certain emotive and practical stances, I already come into a certain kind of ambiguous experiential contact with their unique personal style. For instance, in seeing another's emotive response, we typically comprehend in the other not merely a momentary episode but an emotional disposition or habituality, or as one can also simply say, an 'emotion' that persists beyond its specific episodic appearance.<sup>51</sup> As Edith Stein puts it, «I not only grasp an occurring feeling in the friendly glance, but friendliness as a habitual feature», just as «an outburst of anger reveals to me a 'violent temperament' (*Gemütsart*)».<sup>52</sup> Building upon what was suggested earlier, we can say that what this involves is my taking the other's emotive episode to manifest an abiding emotive attitude, a *way* of responding emotionally that 'displays,' albeit most minimally and provisionally, the other as a subject of habitual emotive character. As we have seen, Husserl acknowledges that, as a form of interpersonal understanding, this

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50 HUSSERL 1989, 353/1952, 342.

51 On this matter, see also GOLDIE 2000, 12-6, DRUMMOND 2004.

52 STEIN 1989, 86 [translation modified]/2008, 104.

mode of comprehension has a limited 'depth;' and the kind of claim it makes regarding the other's character is one whose rationally motivated acceptance requires fulfilment through ongoing experience. But the important point here is that in encountering another's expressive bodily movements as manifesting an emotive stance – as a genuine outburst of the other's feelings, rather than merely a set of arbitrary bodily movements – we already accept that the 'who' we are in encountering is a person with a specific character. In this way, our empathetic grasp of another's anger as a motivated enactment already manifests 'something' of the habitual style of the expressive unity we have before us, even if we cannot really describe 'what' it manifests. Or put more acutely, it manifests *someone*; where this designates not merely a locus of experience but a person with a style and history of their own. As Husserl puts it: «The I of the person with its stream of lived experience, and with the stream of acts which flow forth with it, is grasped in empathy; and within the kind of motivations that are thereby co-grasped, in their habitual type, the individuality is also grasped. The other person is grasped in his I-life, his I-willing, and his I-working, etc.».<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, Husserl can be read as suggesting that such interpersonal recognition is not only an occasional occurrence, but a ubiquitous dimension of our perceptual experience of others in the social world. In this regard, he draws an instructive analogy with the case of perceiving an oak tree. The sticking point in this analogy is that becoming perceptually familiar with the individual character of the tree is a gradual process, and that this process involves the perceived tree acquiring a greater specificity with regard to its perceptual *type*. The shine of a torch reveals the unknown 'spatial thing' lurking in the darkness as 'a tree'; and upon closer inspection I notice its typical height, texture, and shape: it is 'an oak.' Eventually I recognise, in its specific features, 'that tree'; the one which I have gazed up at and clambered upon for years now, but whose labyrinthine branches still contain a universe of possibilities for future exploration. Similarly,

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53 HUSSERL 1989, 399 [translation modified]/1952, 389-90.

when perceiving another person we frequently (even, in the bustle of contemporary life, generally) know (*kennen*) very little of their individual character, and rather comprehend their bodily comportment and gait «in terms of universal I-being».<sup>54</sup> What this means is that the limit-case of our encounter with a stranger involves recognising the other as instantiating the wholly general type, «a person, a man», or in the more normal case, «a man of this class, of this standing, of this age, etc.» Importantly, this generic and typified grasp of others is not simply a matter of our taking them to be a certain kind of ‘cultural object,’ as ‘something’ which is evaluated and used for certain ends in our culture. Leaving aside the important question of how, and in what sense, such (reifying) social engagement is possible, Husserl emphasises that our grasp of others as of generic social types informs our empathetic comprehension of their emotional expressions and of the intentions and projects guiding their witnessed actions, particularly when we have amassed prior empathetic experience of other individuals of the relevant type.<sup>55</sup> Thus, for instance, while the well-heeled older man walking briskly towards the pizzeria might look to us as hungry and feeling entitled to good service, the younger man with a delivery bag on his shoulder, moving at the same pace and towards the same location and even with a similar gait and posture, instead appears to be reluctantly fulfilling his work duties. The essential point here is that such typified others are

54 HUSSERL 1989, 239-40 [translation modified]/1952, 229.

55 «Ich weiß, was das [für] eine Persönlichkeit, ein Mensch ist, dem Allgemeinen nach, und es ist Sache der Einfühlungserfahrung, in ihrem Fortgang mich über den Nebenmenschen, über seinen Charakter, über sein Wissen und Können, über seine habituellen Dispositionen verschiedener Art und Richtung zu belehren. [...] Je mehr Erfahrungen ich in Bezug auf einen Menschen, und zunächst in Bezug auf Menschen überhaupt, in Bezug auf Menschen dieser Klasse, dieses Standes, dieses Alters etc. habe, um so reicher, bestimmter ist meine einführende Auffassung von ihm (ich kann auch sagen: meine Vorstellung und Kenntnis von ihm), um so mehr kann ich ihn “durchschauen”» (HUSSERL, Ms. A VI 10/46a). The concept of limit-case is not employed explicitly by Husserl here, but is used forcefully in this way by SCHUTZ (1967), who offers a detailed analysis of the role of typification in social encounters. The connection between social types and the phenomenology of empathy has also been illuminatingly discussed by ZAHAVI 2014, 145-6 and TAIPALE 2016.

originally present to us as exhibiting forms of personal life, as emoting and acting in a way which exhibits typical and socially inculcated motivational structures. In this way, even highly anonymous and typified social encounters involve a minimal kind of recognition of the personhood of the other. And just as the perceptual grasp of 'a tree' can transform itself into one of 'this familiar tree,' so too can a generically typified grasp of another person gradually develop into a familiarity with the other's individual personal character or style.

## 5. Empathetic Perception as Elementary Recognition

In previous sections, I argued that Husserl's analyses of empathetic perception illuminate a specific kind of recognition that is pervasive within our experience of other human beings in the social world. It was suggested that empathetic perception is a *sui generis* kind of intentional experience, in that it is structurally distinct from both the perception of material things and the imaginative re-enactment of another's conscious state. Moreover, we saw that empathetic perception already involves an acceptance of the *personhood* of the other, in that the other's bodily movements are, from the outset, grasped as manifesting a foreign subject of attitudes with a habitual character, even if this grasp only remains at the level of a generic (personal) 'type.' Moreover, it is important to emphasise that, while such empathetic perception can be aptly characterised as the most basic form of interpersonal understanding, it needn't require any element of active judgement. Indeed, Husserl goes so far as to claim that the other embodied person is consciously given as an expressive unity «already *prior* to the *turn and grasp* of experience», that is, exactly at the level of passive perceptual givenness.<sup>56</sup> As the attentive reader will have discerned, there are evident points of overlap between this account of empathetic perception and Honneth's construal of elementary recognition. We saw in the opening section of this paper

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<sup>56</sup> HUSSERL 1989, 257/1952, 245.

that Honneth characterises elementary recognition as a more-or-less universal interpersonal stance, one which is tacitly operative in all other forms of interpersonal recognition and misrecognition, and that occurs below the level of detached cognition. In short, and like empathetic perception, elementary recognition can be defined as «the experience that other individuals are fellow humans».<sup>57</sup> However, Honneth also emphasises that interpersonal recognition has an *affective* dimension that is absent from Husserl's account of empathetic perception. As he ultimately emphasises, this is not to say that elementary recognition need involve «positive, benevolent feelings», or that it requires any specific emotional state to be in play. Rather, what is necessary here is only that the recognised other affectively strikes the recognising subject as inviting of her *some kind* of interpersonal engagement.<sup>58</sup>

However, it may be that the difference between Honneth and Husserl here is more apparent than substantial. While Husserl would insist that the very empathetic givenness of another person needn't involve any element of affect or practical intentionality, he was also attentive to the phenomenological fact that such givenness often only comprises one element of our immediate experience of others. In much of our everyday engagement with the social world, others are from the beginning experienced, not *merely* as perceptually present persons, but as those who engage us and who we relate to affectively and practically.<sup>59</sup> To return to our earlier example, the aggressive man shouting outside of my window, standing by the pizzeria down below, first strikes me as 'irritating'; when I stop what I am doing to peer out and take a better look at him and our gazes interlock, he then appears

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57 HONNETH 2008, 152.

58 HONNETH 2008, 151-2. A further difference here concerns Honneth's claim that elementary recognition is not only operative in our relations to others, but also in the relations we have to the natural world and to ourselves (HONNETH 2008, 60-74). While there may be good reasons to think that such recognition serves as a condition of possibility for certain kinds of self- and world-relation, to identify all three relations seems to me to undercut the distinctive character of inter-*personal* experience and comportment, and I will consequently avoid discussing this facet of Honneth's position.

59 HUSSERL 2014, 49-50/1976, 58;1989, 192/1952, 183; cf. DRUMMOND 2013.

to me as 'threatening'; but as his initially aggressive facial contortions relax into a jovial smile, my fear dissipates and I now find the man 'amusing'. In this case, as I live through the alterations in my emotive state, correlative changes in axiological sense are displayed in the man as I emotively experience him, and in this way my emotive acts can be characterised as a feeling, or perceiving, of value (*Wertföhlung, Wertnehmung*).<sup>60</sup> However, in those cases where an encountered other affectively strikes us in a way only another person can, or appears as demanding of us a practical interpersonal response, then some element of empathetic perception will be functioning as an underlying or founding layer of our emotional or practical response. What this means is both that our emotive and practical intentionality 'borrows' the object of our empathetic perception (being directed towards *this* specific person), and that it is motivated by and further articulates what is discerned empathetically (in that, for instance, the man now strikes me as amusing rather than threatening *because* of the 'good will' expressed in his smile).<sup>61</sup> While empathy, understood in the strict sense of an intuitive presentation of foreign subjectivity, is not an intrinsically emotive or practical activity, it thus plays a necessary role in our being immediately affected by, and allured to respond to, other people.

To formulate this point slightly differently, in our concrete encounters with others in the social world empathy functions as an *inter*-personal form of experience which engages the empathising person just as much as it does the person empathised. Rather than appearing as a mere theme of disinterested epistemic cognition, the other person shows up for us as bearing forms of significance which manifest our own (personal) emotive habits and practical interests. But in order that such interests and habits be awoken by and responsive to a concrete personal other, a dimension of empathetic givenness must be simultaneously operative. Particularly if this last line of thought is

60 HUSSERL 1989, 10-2/1952, 8-10.

61 Cf. HUSSERL 1989, 196-7/1952, 186-7. For more detailed discussions of the manner in which empathy motivates other-directed forms of affect, see DRUMMOND 2006 and JARDINE 2015.

persuasive, it thus seems that we have good reasons to identify Honneth's elementary recognition with a certain kind of empathetic perception.<sup>62</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I explicated a conception of 'elementary recognition' by contrasting earlier and later work by Honneth with an opposed proposal developed by Pippin. Moving beyond the more ahistorical and psychological account of recognition found in his earlier work, Honneth's mature theory distinguishes between those modes of recognition or misrecognition whose normative structure depends upon historically institutionalised 'recognition orders,' and a more primitive and pervasive form of (elementary) recognition which lacks such rich normative structuration. The task of the remainder of the article was to render thematic such elementary recognition by drawing upon Husserl's fine-grained phenomenological analyses of empathy, an aim which I pursued by highlighting certain features of empathy that both motivate its identification with elementary recognition and deepen our understanding of the latter. More exactly, I argued that elementary recognition (*qua* empathy) can be characterised as (i) a *sui generis* mode of intentional experience best characterised as a perception of other human beings, (ii) already involving a certain recognition of the other as a *personal self*, (iii) and, as such a perceptual mode of interpersonal recognition, *ubiquitous* within our experience of human others in the social world.

Finally, let me briefly indicate some implications of the argument of this article. I suggested in the preceding section that affectively taking up an evaluative or practical stance towards another person is an

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62 I include here the caveat, 'a certain kind of,' since Husserl occasionally refers to a form of empathy that is involved with the perception of non-human animals as embodied others, and I would not defend the claim that this latter kind of empathetic perception necessarily involves elementary recognition. See, e.g., HUSSERL 1989, 351-2/1952, 340.



activity which is founded upon and articulates elementary (that is, empathetic) recognition. Further exploring the different kinds of interpersonal responses at play here, and their motivational relations to empathy, might allow us to clarify the sense in which higher-order forms of recognition (or their denial) serve to ‘articulate’ elementary recognition. It may also allow us to specify with more precision how such ‘normatively substantial’ forms of recognition are made possible by the (to some degree, socially formed) emotive and practical habits of the recognising person, as well as the mediating role played here by those ‘institutional’ norms which determine the kind of recognition subjects expect from one another within a particular social horizon – and to clarify how these two elements can come apart in situations of misrecognition. It seems to me, moreover, that by reflecting further on such issues, phenomenology and critical social theory could engage in lively and fruitful relations of mutual enlightenment and reciprocal development.

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# Habermas and the 'Presupposition' of the Common Objective World

Matheson Russell

University of Auckland\*

[m.russell@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:m.russell@auckland.ac.nz)

*ABSTRACT.* Habermas asserts that the 'presupposition' of the common objective world is thrust upon us by the pragmatics of language use. However, this is a dubious claim. A pre-linguistic relation to the world as common and objective is required for language acquisition. What's more, Husserl's analyses indicate that aspects of our experience of the common world are grounded in experiences of spatio-temporal horizontality and of the co-presence of others within that world-horizon. This is not to negate the importance of communicatively achieved intersubjectivity, nor to diminish the rational significance of our linguistically articulated 'world concepts'. But it is to suggest that the 'presupposition' of the common objective world has phenomenological, not linguistic-pragmatic, roots.

*KEYWORDS.* Husserl; Habermas; Life-world; Pragmatics.

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\* *Correspondence:* Matheson Russell – University of Auckland, Philosophy Department, 6 Grafton Rd, Auckland 1010, New Zealand.



*The waking have one common world,  
but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own.*  
Heraclitus, fragment B89

Heraclitus thought it worth remarking that the world of our waking experience is singular and shared. It was not until the post-Kantian era that this theme became a topic of serious philosophical reflection in the work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Ludwig Feuerbach. At the heart of their epistemologically-oriented inquiries was the observation that the experience of the world's objectivity is contingent upon the experience of others:<sup>1</sup>

The certainty of the existence of other things apart from me is mediated for me through the certainty of the existence of another human being apart from me. That which I alone perceive I doubt; only that which the other also perceives is certain.<sup>2</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the same set of interconnections between intersubjectivity, objectivity and world were explored by Edmund Husserl. For the founder of phenomenology, the experience of the world as «once for all truly existing [...] for everyone» is a fundamental feature of our «natural attitude».<sup>3</sup> However, far from treating the natural attitude as an axiomatic starting point, Husserl fixed upon it as a central topic for philosophical reflection. How do we

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1 G.W.F. Hegel no doubt also belongs to this constellation of thinkers. However, his important discussions of recognition and the sociality of reason never directly treat the topic in the terms discussed here.

2 FEUERBACH 1986, 59 (§41).

3 HUSSERL 1969, 236: «[...] The world is the world *for us all*; as an Objective world it has, in its own sense, the *categorical form*, 'once for all truly existing', not only for me but *for everyone*».

experience the world *as* there for everyone? What makes this experience possible? And why does this experience, as remarkable as it is, appear so “natural” to us? Husserl embarked on a decades’ long project of phenomenological inquiry into these matters, and his reflections are still among the most creative and extensive in the literature.

In recent decades, Jürgen Habermas has continued the line of thought that runs from Heraclitus to Husserl. He affirms its core insight regarding the connection between the objectivity of the world and intersubjectivity: «To say that the world is ‘objective’ means that it is ‘given’ to us as ‘the same for everyone’». <sup>4</sup> He also gives a central place in his philosophy to the supposition of a single, objective world, identifying it as one of the “‘transcendentally’ necessary” structures that make communication and communicative rationality possible. <sup>5</sup> Furthermore, like “the phenomenologist,” whose approach Habermas refers to approvingly, he seeks to make the phenomenon of the objective world a topic of dedicated philosophical reflection:

The phenomenologist does not [...] simply begin with the ontological presupposition of an objective world; he makes this a problem by inquiring into the conditions under which the unity of an objective world is constituted for the members of a community. <sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, Habermas’s inquiry into the conditions of world-experience runs in a quite different direction than Husserl’s. Rather than reconstructing the meaning structures of world-experience and tracing their genesis within the sphere of transcendental subjectivity,

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4 Habermas, «From Kant’s ‘Ideas’ of Pure Reason to the ‘Idealizing’ Presuppositions of Communicative Action: Reflections on the Detranscendentalized ‘Use of Reason’», in HABERMAS 2003, 89. Hereafter *FKI*. Also: «The vertical view of the objective world is interconnected with the horizontal relationship among members of an intersubjectively shared lifeworld. The objectivity of the world and the intersubjectivity of communication mutually refer to one another» (HABERMAS 2003, 16.)

5 *FKI*, 98.

6 HABERMAS 1984, 12. (Hereafter: *TCA* 1).

Habermas asserts that the presupposition of the common objective world is thrust upon us by *the pragmatics of language use*:

It is linguistic practice—especially the use of singular terms—that forces us to pragmatically presuppose such a world shared by all. The referential system built into natural language ensures that any given speaker can formally anticipate possible objects of reference. Through this formal presupposition of the world, communication about something in the world is intertwined with practical interventions in the world.<sup>7</sup>

This is a controversial claim. Can it really be maintained that language and/or language use is the source of our experience of the world as singular, objective and shared? Must there not be some relation to the world as singular, objective and shared prior to, or in addition to, our linguistically-mediated relation to it?

In the first section of the article, I review the philosophical background and methodological commitments that give Habermas's linguistic-pragmatic approach to the phenomenon of the common objective world its distinctive shape (I). I then consider Habermas's account of the 'presupposition' of the common objective world, first in its relation to the concept of the lifeworld and then in relation to what Habermas calls 'formal world-concepts'. These discussions will show how Habermas can view our relation to the world as always both a *presupposition* and an *achievement*, since our relation to the objective world as such is a relation constructed in the linguistic medium (II). But this leaves unanswered the question of the origin of our 'presupposition' of the common objective world, in particular its relation to the pre- or extra-linguistic strata of human experience. In the final section of the paper, I argue that the 'form' and 'sense' of our world-experience are grounded in perceptual (not linguistic)

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<sup>7</sup> FKI: 89.

experiences of spatio-temporal horizontality and of the co-presence of others within that world-horizon (III). These conclusions do not negate the importance of communicatively achieved intersubjectivity, nor do they diminish the rational significance of our linguistically articulated *world concepts*, but they do suggest that the 'presupposition' of the common objective world has phenomenological, not linguistic-pragmatic, roots.

## 1. Habermas's Kantian pragmatism

Habermas's mature philosophical position has been aptly described as a Kantian pragmatism.<sup>8</sup> It is Kantian in a number of respects. It places autonomy at the centre not only of its conception of morality but also of its conception of rationality;<sup>9</sup> it insists that «the constructions of reason» (to use Onora O'Neill's expression) provide the final court of appeal in all matters of rational debate;<sup>10</sup> it affirms the emancipatory power of critical self-reflection as the path of genuine enlightenment,<sup>11</sup> and, most importantly for our discussion, it affirms the legitimacy of the project of transcendental philosophy introduced by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Habermas agrees with Kant that we require a form of philosophical inquiry whose aim is to analyze «our a priori concepts of objects in general—that is, the conceptual structure of any coherent experience whatsoever».<sup>12</sup> Indeed, he argues that an additional set of "a priori concepts" must be added to the agenda of transcendental investigation, namely those conceptual structures that

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8 Habermas applies this term to himself, see HABERMAS 2003, 8. For discussions of this description and its meaning, see BAYNES 2016, 82-96; FLYNN 2014, 230-60; BERNSTEIN 2010, 168-99; LEVINE 2010, 677-95.

9 For Habermas, the social practice of giving and asking for reasons rests upon the communicative freedom of participants. See *FKI*: 93-99.

10 *FKI*, 102-9. The allusion is to O'NEILL 1989.

11 Habermas, «From Kant to Hegel and Back Again: The Move toward Detranscendentalization» in HABERMAS 2003, 181.

12 Habermas, «What is Universal Pragmatics? (1976)», in HABERMAS 1998, 44.



enable «situations of possible mutual understanding».<sup>13</sup> Not only the conditions of possible *experience* but the conditions of possible *mutual understanding* must be made the theme of study, and Habermas's own work is conceived as a contribution to the second of these tasks.

However, Habermas argues that such tasks need to be approached afresh within our radically altered philosophical context, so much so that the Kantian transcendental problematic of the experience of objects collapses into the new problematic of mutual understanding. Without being able to reconstruct, let alone defend, the arguments he puts forth, it will have to suffice to mention the basic philosophical commitments that Habermas holds.<sup>14</sup> Following the linguistic turn, he argues that the subject's relation to the world can no longer be understood in 'mentalistic' terms as an 'idea' or 'representation' of the world (Descartes, Hobbes, Locke)—nor as the active 'constitution' of a world of appearances (Kant, Husserl)—but must be modelled in terms of propositionally structured content susceptible to semantic analysis (Frege). Furthermore, following the pragmatic turn, the symbolically structured character of lived experience must be understood in relation to the agent's practical ability to 'cope' with its environment and its rule-following ability to interact with others through symbolic action (Pierce, Mead, and later Wittgenstein). On this view, the 'world-constituting' activity of the subject is not solitary but social, not intuitive but linguistically mediated, not atemporal but historically situated.

On the basis of these commitments, Habermas concludes that the 'transcendental' conditions for the experience of objects must be traceable to our problem-solving behavior and our practical ability to use signs within a linguistic community. The relation of thought to things (the starting point of the Kantian and the phenomenological traditions) is derivative upon the relation to things that we establish as speaking and acting beings. Accordingly, the insights Kant bequeathed

13 HABERMAS 1998, 44.

14 For a fuller analysis of Habermas's arguments for embracing a paradigm shift to a linguistic intersubjectivism focusing on the critique of Husserl's phenomenology, see ZAHAVI 2001 and RUSSELL 2011.

to modernity via his transcendental philosophy must now be set upon new foundations. The necessary conditions for the possibility of experience and cognition can no longer be explicated via a self-reflection upon subjectivity but must be investigated via a reflection upon the formal structure of *practices* or *performances* of speaking and acting beings.

After the pragmatist deflation of Kantian conceptuality, 'transcendental analysis' refers to the search for presumably universal but only *de facto* unavoidable conditions that must be fulfilled in order for fundamental practices or achievements to emerge. [...] The reflexive self-reassurance by an active subjectivity *in foro interno*, outside space and time, is replaced by the explication of a practical knowledge that makes it possible for subjects capable of speech and action to participate in these sorts of practices and to attain the corresponding accomplishments.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned above, Habermas's theory of communicative action is supposed to contribute to this 'detranscendentalizing' revision of the project of transcendental philosophy by rationally reconstructing the basic structures of language use that enable speakers to come to an agreement with each other about something in the world. Its theme is the conditions of possible *mutual understanding*. Its method is the rational reconstruction of the 'formal pragmatic' presuppositions of communication, understood as a constellation of practices and performances that are practically mastered by competent speakers.

In order to 'rationally reconstruct' these features of communication, the 'participant standpoint' is basic. The know-how of speakers, along with their unthematized understanding of the situation of communication, is the source material for the inquiry. However, the rational reconstruction of this background knowledge does not rely upon an introspective process of self-reflection as does

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15 HABERMAS 2003, 11.

phenomenological inquiry, since the capacities and performances in question are connected to *public practices* rather than being features of 'inner' subjective experience to which others gain access only through self-disclosing reports of the first person.

In his mature writings, Habermas identifies four basic features of communicative practice which are 'transcendentally necessary' in the sense that they "cannot be corrected by experiences that would not be possible without [them]."<sup>16</sup> He calls these «idealizing performative presuppositions of communicative action»:

1. the shared presupposition of a world of independently existing objects,
2. the reciprocal presupposition of rationality or 'accountability,'
3. the unconditionality of context-transcending validity claims such as truth and moral rightness, and
4. the exacting presuppositions of argumentation that force participants to decenter their own interpretative perspectives.<sup>17</sup>

All four of these presuppositions are necessary to account for the possibility of the 'cognitive' use of language, i.e. its role in the communication and justification of knowledge. To assert *that p* is to assert a *belief* that one holds to be true or right (3<sup>rd</sup> presupposition). It is to make a *knowledge* claim.<sup>18</sup> This means that one asserts *p* to be (i) *true* in the sense that it describes a state of affairs that obtains in the world independently of its being believed or stated (1<sup>st</sup> presupposition), and (ii) *justified* insofar as the speaker is able to show why it is worthy of belief in a suitable procedure of discursive testing (4<sup>th</sup> presupposition). Furthermore, to assert *that p* is to assume (iii) one's own rational capacity to assume responsibility for making claims that satisfy conditions of rational acceptability, along with (iv) the rational capacity of one's interlocutor to take up a rationally motivated 'yes/no'

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16 *FKI*, 98.

17 *FKI*, 86.

18 Habermas shares this conviction with Dummett and Brandom. See HABERMAS 2003, 125, 143-4.

stance with regard to the rational acceptability of the claims made (2<sup>nd</sup> presupposition). In what follows, I shall focus more or less exclusively on the first of these four "idealizing presuppositions": the shared presupposition of a world of independently existing objects.

## 2. Lifeworld and formal world-concepts

Kant's treatment of the cosmological ideas in *The Critique of Pure Reason* asserts a distinction between the *regulative* function played by the idea of a unitary world as a principle of completeness employed by the faculty of reason, and the *metaphysical illusions* that follow from treating the world as an object of experience. According to Kant, the idea of the world makes it possible for us to anticipate the possibility of a systematic unity of knowledge, but the idea of the world is neither a condition for the constitution of objects of experience, nor itself an object of experience.

Like Kant, Habermas believes that the idea of the unitary world is a cornerstone of rationality. He also agrees that the 'transcendental difference' between 'the world' and 'the innerworldly' must be retained.<sup>19</sup> The world is not an object of experience. Nonetheless, with Heidegger, Habermas observes that we *experience* objects as 'innerworldly'. That is, objects are experienced *as* belonging to the single, objective world. When we think of, speak of, or interact with a real object, we experience it and treat it *as* an element standing in relation to a broader totality of mind-independent objects to which we, along with others, have access. The world is thus not merely a 'regulative' idea of reason that enables the construction of theoretical knowledge. Rather it is a condition of the *experience* of objects. Thus, it is more akin to the forms of intuition or categories of the

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19 *FKI*, 90: «Like Kant's cosmological idea of reason, the conception of a presupposed world rests on the transcendental difference between the world and the innerworldly, which reappears in Heidegger as the ontological difference between 'Being' and 'beings.' According to this supposition, the objective world that we posit is not the same kind of thing as what can occur in it as object (i.e. as state of affairs, thing, event)».

understanding than the ideas of reason.<sup>20</sup>

Heidegger's conception of world, as a totality of meaningful relations that structures a context of life, is subsumed and incorporated by Habermas under the Husserlian category of 'lifeworld'.<sup>21</sup> The 'shared lifeworld', as Habermas understands it, denotes the stock of interpretative patterns and background convictions available to agents to interpret the situations in which they find themselves. The world is opened up to us and becomes intelligible through our repertoire of interpretative possibilities. «Everything that members of a local linguistic community encounter in the world they experience not as neutral objects, but in light of an inhabited and habituated 'grammatical' preunderstanding».<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, for members of a shared lifeworld, the ways in which the world is 'disclosed' always enjoy a presumption of intersubjectivity. That is, thanks to sharing a lifeworld, members can assume that their interpretations of a given situation will be intelligible to, if not actually endorsed by, others.

But Habermas recognizes that *the world itself* is not equivalent to the understandings we have of it, even if those understandings are shared with others. A 'shared lifeworld' is not 'a world of independently existing objects' as such.<sup>23</sup> What then is the relationship between the two?

On one hand, Habermas claims that our grasp of the objective world is sustained through our *achievements* as communicating subjects.

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20 *FKI*, 90: «[...] This conception no longer fits within the Kantian framework of oppositions. Once the a priori categories of the understanding and forms of intuition have been detranscendentalized and thus disarmed, the classic distinction between reason and understanding is blurred. Obviously, the pragmatic presupposition of the world is not a regulative idea, but it is 'constitutive' for referring to anything about which it is possible to establish facts».

21 For a fuller discussion of Habermas's appropriation of the concept of lifeworld from Husserl, see RUSSELL 2011, 42-5.

22 *FKI*, 93.

23 There has been a controversy in recent years concerning whether Heidegger recognized this distinction and/or had the conceptual resources to account for it satisfactorily. The controversy was precipitated by LAFONT 2000. I can't pursue these debates here. This discussion is limited to presenting Habermas's own approach to this controversial issue.

When we attain intersubjective recognition of validity claims through communication, we not only assure ourselves of the intersubjectivity of our lifeworld, we also assure ourselves of 'the unity of the objective world'<sup>24</sup>: «The world gains objectivity only through *counting* as one and the same world *for* a community of speaking and acting subjects». <sup>25</sup> Our speech and action is always culturally shaped, historically situated, and linguistically articulated, but in and through it we come into contact with *the world itself*. The world is not hidden behind our linguistically-mediated understandings, as though behind 'a veil of appearances'.<sup>26</sup> In phenomenological parlance, we might say that the world is the 'object pole' of our intentional relations, while the 'lifeworld', broadly speaking, denotes the ('noematic') senses according to which the world, or more precisely that which is encountered within the world, is experienced or interpreted.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, Habermas claims that the 'presupposition' of the common objective world is a 'transcendentally necessary' condition for reaching agreement through communication:<sup>28</sup> «The abstract concept of the world is a necessary condition if communicatively acting subjects are to reach understanding among themselves about what takes place in the world or is to be effected in it». <sup>29</sup> When we assert *that p*, we must assume that we are speaking of some mind-independent world of objects, a world of objects that is 'there' also for our interlocutor; without such an assumption, acts of referring can neither

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24 TCA 1, 10.

25 TCA 1, 12.

26 This is another way of phrasing Habermas's commitment to 'internal realism'. For a discussion, see LEVINE 2010.

27 Of course, Habermas would not see the connection to Husserl, but he makes the same critique of Kant's distinction between appearance and "thing-in-itself" from a pragmatic point of view. See FKI, 90.

28 FKI, 98.

29 TCA 1, 13. Habermas quotes Melvin POLLNER 1974: «The assumption of a commonly shared world (lifeworld) does not function for mundane reasoners as a descriptive assertion. It is not falsifiable. Rather, it functions as an incorrigible specification of the relations which exist in principle among a community of perceivers' experiences of what is purported to be the same world (objective world)».

succeed nor fail.<sup>30</sup>

What then is the status of the ‘presupposition’ of the common objective world invoked by Habermas? How can our grasp of the common objective world be both a ‘presupposition’ and an ‘achievement’ of communication?

The first point to make is that there are at least three level of ‘intersubjectivity’ that Habermas canvasses in his account.<sup>31</sup> (1) The most demanding is the intersubjectivity that inheres in a shared, linguistically-articulated common conviction, i.e. a validity claim to which both parties assent. In every attempt to reach an agreement about something, there is the risk of disagreement. Hence, intersubjective recognition of validity claims is a fragile form of intersubjectivity. (2) The intermediate level of intersubjectivity is the sharing of a lifeworld, i.e. participation in a common language, background knowledge and shared interpretative frameworks. A relatively rich level of commonality can almost always be assumed at this level, even in the face of overt disagreements. Since it is impossible to problematize one’s lifeworld as a whole, disagreements always take place against a ‘massive background consensus’. (3) The third and most attenuated form of intersubjectivity is that in which agents orient themselves together toward a common domain of reality without presupposing any shared agreements or convictions about it, and, indeed, without necessarily even sharing a lifeworld or language. It is at this third level of intersubjectivity that Habermas situates what he calls ‘formal world-concepts’, which he also calls «formal

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30 *FKI*, 86.

31 Cf. «Here we should distinguish three levels: the level of linguistic articulation of the lifeworld background, the level of practices of reaching understanding within such an intersubjectively shared lifeworld, and the level of the objective world, formally presupposed by the participants in communication, as the totality of entities about which something is said. The interaction between world-disclosure and innerworldly learning processes—an interaction that expands knowledge and alters meaning—takes place on the middle level where, within the horizon of their lifeworld, communicatively acting subjects reach understanding with one another about something in the world». (HABERMAS 1998, 336). My discussion changes the order in which these three ‘levels’ are presented.

presuppositions of intersubjectivity».<sup>32</sup> Among these formal world-concepts we find the presupposition of the common objective world «as the totality of objects to be dealt with and judged».<sup>33</sup>

The distinction between second and third levels of intersubjectivity becomes salient in instances of disagreement and communicative breakdown. When disagreements arise, we find ourselves compelled to retreat, as it were, to a *less descriptive stance* towards the world. The ability to relate together to the world in this more attenuated fashion enables speakers to sustain a more abstract level of agreement and thus to keep the conversation oriented to a common subject matter, however loosely defined, and in such a way to sustain the disagreement *as* a disagreement. If this deeper level of 'intersubjectivity' were not assumed, there would be no disagreement *about* the world. As Melvin Pollner remarks:

That a community orients itself to the world as essentially constant, as one which is known and knowable in common with others, provides that community with the warrantable grounds for asking questions of a particular sort of which the prototypical representative is: 'How come, he sees it and you do not?'.<sup>34</sup>

The practice of conflict resolution we call 'discourse' rests on this basis:

For both parties the interpretive task consists in incorporating the other's interpretation of the situation into one's own in such a way that in the revised version 'his' external world and 'my' external world can—against the background of 'our' lifeworld—be relativized in relation to 'the' world, and the divergent situation definitions can be

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<sup>32</sup> TCA 1, 50.

<sup>33</sup> HABERMAS 2003, 16.

<sup>34</sup> POLLNER 1974, 40. Quoted by Habermas, TCA 1, 13. A similar set of observations are set out by WILLIAMS 1978, 64–65.



brought to coincide sufficiently.<sup>35</sup>

On my reading, what Habermas describes as the set of ‘formal world-concepts’—objective world, social world and subjective world—represent the most attenuated level of intersubjectivity that is possible, beyond which the possibility of discourse disintegrates altogether.

Formal world-concepts are organizing structures found within worldviews. They provide the “formal scaffolding” that speakers use to organize problematic situations requiring resolution.<sup>36</sup> They are something like ‘ontologies’, demarcating domains of reality.<sup>37</sup> But, if they are ontologies, they are ‘formal’ ontologies. They do not give us a representational grasp on how things stand; they give us an orientation to domains of reality “freed of all specific content”:

Validity claims are in principle open to criticism because they are based on formal world-concepts. They presuppose a world that is identical for all possible observers, or a world intersubjectively shared by members, *and they do so in abstract form freed of all specific content.*<sup>38</sup>

Formal-world concepts thus provide a system of reference that secures the *identity* of the object domains in spite of changes *within* them and changing *interpretations* of them. In this sense, formal world-concepts are an identity-preserving conceptual apparatus; and, at the same time, they unburden the specific content from having to serve an identity-preserving function. They make intelligible the possibility that *any belief whatsoever* about the world could be false, without disrupting our self-consciousness as rational beings:

The content of our descriptions is of course subject to

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35 TCA 1, 100.

36 TCA 1, 70.

37 TCA 1, 45.

38 TCA 1, 50. Emphasis altered.

revision, but the formal projection of the totality of identifiable objects in general is not—at least not as long as our form of life is characterized by natural languages that have the kind of propositional structure with which we are familiar. At best, we may find out a posteriori that the projection was insufficiently formal.<sup>39</sup>

This final remark suggests that there is a learning process connected to our acquisition of formal world-concepts, and indeed Habermas describes two kinds of historical learning processes in connection to our world-concepts.

First, he reconstructs what we might call an 'ontological' learning process. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, he sketches the contours of this learning process through a discussion of the transition from the 'mythical' interpretation of the world to the modern 'rationalized' lifeworld.<sup>40</sup> (i) Whereas mythical worldviews tend to interpret the natural world in anthropologizing ways, the modern worldview differentiates nature and culture, and learns to oppose the «causal connections of nature» to the «normative orders of society».<sup>41</sup> (This establishes the necessity of the distinction between 'the objective world' and 'the social world'.) (ii) Whereas mythical worldviews tend to conflate words with things, e.g. attributing causal (magical) powers to words, the modern worldview differentiates language and world: «Linguistic communication and the cultural tradition that flow into it are [...] set off as a reality in their own right from the reality of nature and society».<sup>42</sup> The 'historical' consciousness characteristic of modernity is a consequence of this recognition that culture and beliefs change over time, independently of changes that occur in the world itself. (iii) Whereas mythical worldviews tend to conflate the

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39 *FKI*, 98.

40 This process is further described in Habermas, *TCA 1*, Chapter II, and in *TCA 2*, Chapter V. Habermas also presents an ontogenetic analogue which he details in various places, including HABERMAS 1983, 116–94 and HABERMAS 1979, 69–94.

41 *TCA 1*, 49.

42 *TCA 1*, 50.

experiences of the subject with the state of the world, the modern worldview differentiates between the internal world of subjectivity, to which the individual has privileged access, and the external world that is in principle intersubjectively shareable.<sup>43</sup> (This establishes the necessity of distinguishing ‘the subjective world’ over against ‘the objective world’ and ‘the social world’.)

Second, alongside this ‘ontological’ learning process, we observe a process of ‘formalization’. The constancy of the objective world, the social world, and the subjective world is less and less secured through the constancy of the *interpretation* of them. Instead, it comes to be secured through ‘formal’ world concepts. «This identity-securing knowledge becomes more and more formal along the path from closed to open worldviews; it attaches to structures that are increasingly disengaged from contents that are open to revision».<sup>44</sup>

It is with the acquisition of ‘world-concepts’ that are sufficiently differentiated and sufficiently formal that the modern worldview finds its rational footings, and this supplies the conditions necessary for a productive and rational ‘innerworldly’ learning process. Hence, Habermas asserts that: «The rationality of worldviews is not measured in terms of logical and semantic properties but in terms of the formal-pragmatic basic concepts they place at the disposal of individuals for interpreting their world».<sup>45</sup>

To summarize, even though the world appears to us straightforwardly to be common and singular, this is not an immutable structure of experience. Our relation to ‘the’ world must itself be understood as *an achievement of linguistic beings*, an acquisition that occurs within the *linguistic dimension* itself. Furthermore, it is a feature conditioned by our linguistic practice and the worldview that is embedded within it. As Habermas puts it, the deep-seated structures of the lifeworld background include an “architectonic of the interlocking of the intersubjective lifeworld and objective world”.<sup>46</sup> But

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43 TCA 1, 52.

44 TCA 1, 64.

45 TCA 1, 45.

46 HABERMAS 2003: 158.

several objections to such a view present themselves, and I shall consider some of them in the following section.

### **3. The roots of the 'presupposition' of the common objective world**

In this section, I want to present an argument in three phases that places in question whether Habermas's linguistic-pragmatic theory can provide a philosophically satisfying analysis of our intersubjective world-experience.

#### *3.1 The problem of the origin of the 'presupposition' of the common objective world as a problem of shared meaning*

Habermas's reconstruction of the historical evolution of world-concepts from the 'mythical' to the 'modern' is open to criticism on a variety of fronts.<sup>47</sup> It is not clear that modern individuals relate to the world and reason about it in the fully differentiated and 'rationalized' ways that Habermas describes. Metaphor, narrative and symbol still play an integral—perhaps, ineliminable—role in the lives of us moderns.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, and more importantly for our purposes, the evolutionary account, even if it were convincing, does nothing to explain the presupposition of the common objective world as such. On the contrary, we can only assume that members of pre-modern societies, even those structured by a 'mythical' worldview, were able to speak with each other about the world and were able to problematize controversial truth claims.<sup>49</sup> If so, then the presupposition of the

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47 See RASMUSSEN 1985, 133-44; JEFFREY 1991, 49-73; and, most recently, ALLEN 2016, 37-69.

48 An extended argument for this thesis has been provided by TAYLOR 2016.

49 Habermas never denies that the linguistic practices of assertion and justification are possible for speakers operating with pre-modern worldviews. He only claims that pre-modern worldviews lack world concepts that are sufficiently differentiated, leaving even participants who engage in an exchange of reasons incapable of reaching properly rational conclusions. See TCA 1, 71-4.

common objective world must already have been operative at the very beginning of the historical evolution that Habermas describes. Whatever 'learning process' has occurred with respect to our world-relation(s), it must have taken place on the basis of an *already existing* 'presupposition' of the objective world. No doubt it is true that our historical acquisition of formal world-concepts makes possible complex and refined forms of linguistic intersubjectivity, including those most demanding forms of intersubjectivity that are achieved in specialized modern discourses, e.g. science. But this does not resolve the question of the origin or status of the 'presupposition' of the common objective world.

To explain the genesis of 'presupposition' of the common objective, therefore, Habermas must refer to the origins of language and to the process of language learning. His primary resources for doing so are the accounts of G.H. Mead and Jean Piaget. From Mead's theory of symbolic interaction, he derives an account of how 'symbols' emerges from the capacity for 'gesture' common to several species of animal.<sup>50</sup> In Piaget's theory of cognitive development, he finds confirmation of the necessity of the three world-relations and of the necessity of a reflexive relation to one's interpretations of the world (decentration).<sup>51</sup> However, Habermas's own claim that the presupposition of the objective world is 'forced' upon us by linguistic practice is undermined by Piaget's account of cognitive development, and it is questionable whether Mead can save it.

Habermas himself reports approvingly Piaget's view that «the growing child works out for himself» distinctions between internal and external worlds, and between social and physical objects.<sup>52</sup> It is surprising that he makes this statement without noting the problems that it creates for his own historicizing account. Piaget's theory of cognitive development renders Habermas's own story about the evolution of worldviews redundant, since each child has within

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50 TCA 2, 3-42.

51 TCA 1, 67-72.

52 TCA 1, 68.

themselves the capacity and the drive to generate the requisite world-concepts. It also brings into question the claim that the 'system of reference' to the common objective world is transmitted via the acquisition of language, since what the child 'works out for himself' he works out quite apart from having formal world-concepts taught to him via the learning of a language and the internalizing of a worldview.<sup>53</sup> In short, Piaget's theory opens the door to the thought that there might be a learning process *apart from the presuppositions imposed by linguistic practice* that occurs in the cognitive development of the child by means of which the grasp of the world as objective and shared is attained. Does Mead's contribution do anything to mitigate these threats to Habermas's controversial claim?

Mead's account of the emergence of significant symbols, through gesture to words, proceeds on the basis of an assumption that some non-human animals (i) already relate to objects as *meaningful* components of worlds, and (ii) already possess the capacity to share or communicate meanings to other members of the species through *gestures*. However, animals that make use of gestures do not 'internalize' gestures so as to be able to use them as conventional signs to designate the same referent, i.e. as part of a rule-governed linguistic practice. Animal gestures are not *shared* among conspecifics as symbols designating common objects. But only when signs are held in common in this way, i.e. when they are mutually understood to have the same meaning for each user, can *experiences* of the world be shared as such. The structures of meaning that already saturate the lives of non-linguistic animals thus remain merely 'objective', common to all members of the species but not shared.<sup>54</sup> The transition from gesture to symbol via the mechanism of 'taking the attitude of the other' is supposed to account for this all important difference.

Habermas finds fault with Mead's theory at a number of points, but it is clear that Mead's guiding problem is Habermas's guiding

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53 Piaget does not deny that language acquisition is intertwined with other developmental achievements, but he does not attempt to explain the latter by the former. See PIAGET 1972.

54 TCA 2, 5-15.

problem, how to account for *shared meaning*, and that he accepts Mead's fundamental argument that the sharing of meaning requires conventional signs (symbols) that are used as part of a rule-governed practice.

[...] Two organisms find themselves in the same environment and mutually observe each other having similar responses to some *one* stimulus in their environment. But how are they supposed to be able to communicate to one another that they have in view the *same* stimulus—unless they already have the corresponding concept available to them? Yet they acquire this concept only by means of a criterion they apply in the same way—that is, by means of a symbol that has the same meaning for them both.<sup>55</sup>

Hence, if the 'objectivity' of the world rests upon its being 'given' as 'the same for everyone', then objectivity is *only* attainable through the mediation of linguistic symbols. This is why it is plausible for Habermas to think that it is "linguistic practice—*especially the use of singular terms*—that forces us to pragmatically presuppose such a world shared by all."<sup>56</sup>

Now, if it is true that all shared meaning is conditional upon shared signs, especially singular terms, then even 'the world' as a shared meaning must be linguistically mediated in the same fashion. But it is contestable that shared meanings occur only *within language* (3.2). What's more, it is not clear that everything that is meant by the 'presupposition' of the common objective world can be learned through acquiring linguistic competence (3.3).

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<sup>55</sup> *FKI*, 118-9.

<sup>56</sup> *FKI*, 89.

### 3.2 The pre-linguistic competencies required for language learning

Phenomenologists such as Richard Cobb-Stevens and Dan Zahavi have questioned whether it makes sense to view our human capacities for making and sharing meanings as co-extensive with our capacities and activities as language users. They point to pre-linguistic cognitive competences that must be in place in order for socialization and language acquisition to occur as evidence that humans possess pre-linguistic abilities to identify objects and to interact successfully with others as co-subjects.

First, the process of language learning relies upon the ability of the learner to identify signs as significant elements in their environment.<sup>57</sup> This ability implies a competence in perception that is pre-linguistic but nonetheless *intentional* in the classical Husserlian sense.

[...] Recognition of sounds as repeatable tokens of a type is clearly a condition of taking things as signs, and therefore of acquiring linguistic competence. The discernment of phonemes, morphemes, and words within a sequence of sounds is just as intuitive a procedure as the discernment of any other this-such structure.<sup>58</sup>

While it is no doubt true that we acquire more precise and sophisticated competencies *as perceivers* through the acquisition of linguistic terms and distinctions, this does not in any way signify that linguistic ability can be made to explain the 'intentional' performances of perception *as a whole*.

Second, the process of language learning, as the initiation into a social practice, implies a *communicative* form of social interaction that must also function extra- or pre-linguistically:

In order for me to be corrected, I must already be able to

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<sup>57</sup> Admittedly, Habermas does attribute such capacities to pre-linguistic human agents in the accounts of language learning and socialization that he provides. But the significance of this attribution is left unexamined. See, for example, HABERMAS 1992, 27 n.18.

<sup>58</sup> COBB-STEVENS 1990, 45.



grasp the others as subjects and their statements as statements of correction—hence I must already be able to perform syntheses of identity. To put it another way, if one denies that the solitary subject can follow rules alone, then one must also deny that this subject can meaningfully interact with other subjects. It is precisely for this reason that doubting the possibility in principle of solitary rule-following ultimately leads to skepticism, for the subsequent introduction of intersubjectivity can by no means solve the problem.<sup>59</sup>

In order to be taught, the pre-verbal human child must not only be capable of a relation to the world—or at least to objects and events within it, e.g. signs—but also capable of a *communicative* relation to others—e.g. as beings who are pointing out objects or features as intended for common attention.<sup>60</sup>

We therefore have to reject the limitation of intersubjectivity to the linguistic level. Without in any way diminishing the importance and uniqueness of the forms of intersubjectivity made possible through linguistically mediated communication,<sup>61</sup> we must acknowledge that the linguistic modes of intersubjectivity are necessarily a ‘founded’ strata from a phenomenological point of view. As Zahavi rightly states, this points to the continuing relevance of phenomenological studies into the structures of perception, action, and intersubjectivity that obtain pre- or extra-linguistically:

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59 ZAHAVI 2001: 201.

60 The phenomenological bases of language acquisition are discussed in more detail in RUSSELL 2011, 57-8.

61 Elsewhere I have defended Habermas’s insights into the uniqueness of the form of intersubjectivity that emerges from mutual recognition of validity claims: «[...] in raising validity claims we are able to relate to ourselves, others and the world in exactly the same way as others—namely, to the extent that we achieve consensus regarding propositional claims. As such, it becomes comprehensible how we can have (and fail to have) genuine mutuality in our conception of the world and coordination in our purposive action in the world» (RUSSELL 2011, 55-6.)

Correctly understood, communication does not exist either prior to or apart from subjects; rather, it consists in an openness of subjects toward one another. Understanding communication will accordingly require an analysis of the pre-linguistic intersubjectivity of the subject, for the relation to others is exhibited in and across the registers of temporality, corporeality, intentionality, and emotionality. Phenomenology has performed such analyses, and for this reason phenomenology can also make it comprehensible how and why subjects can communicate linguistically, instead of simply presupposing such communication.<sup>62</sup>

But even if we accept these arguments, as I believe we should, does this imply that human beings can possess a relation to *the objective world* as singular and shared apart from language? Is it still possible that it is first in the medium of language that we become capable of a relation to the world *as* a singular and shared reality, as Habermas maintains? Or are we able to attain a world-experience as singular and shared already in an extra- or pre-linguistic form? If the latter, then we would have reason to reject the assertion that the presupposition of the common objective world is 'forced' upon us by linguistic practice.

We have already alluded to evidence from Piaget's developmental psychology which suggests that as children we are capable of organizing experience into domains of reality along the lines traced by Habermas's three world-concepts without being 'forced' to do so by linguistic practice. But, in the final phase of the argument, I shall supplement this developmental perspective with a slightly more detailed reconsideration of Husserl's phenomenological analyses of the world, since his close analyses identify a series of 'learning moments' *essential* to the construction of the concept of the common objective world that cannot be precipitated by language or linguistic practice, or so I shall argue.

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62 ZAHAVI 2001, 204.

### 3.3 Husserl's phenomenological contributions to a clarification of the origins of the 'presupposition' of the common objective world

Where Habermas speaks of a «pragmatic presupposition» of the objective world, Husserl speaks of a «general positing» of the world which characterizes «the natural attitude».<sup>63</sup> As in Habermas, the general positing of the world is not a judgment of any kind, let alone a judgment of (the world's) existence. (It thus respects Kant's transcendental distinction between 'world' and the 'innerworldly'.) The general positing is rather an "attitude" in which we typically find ourselves, a particular way in which we (passively) frame our experience *as* the experience of something 'there' in 'the' world.

Experience is the performance in which for me, the experiencer, experienced being 'is there,' and is there *as what* it is, with the whole content and the mode of being that experience itself, by the performances going on in its intentionality, attributes to it.<sup>64</sup>

In order to reflect on the enigmatic status and structure of this natural attitude, Husserl's phenomenological *epochē* prescribes a suspending of the 'general positing' that is at its core.<sup>65</sup> This may seem paradoxical, yet it purportedly allows the phenomenologist to consider the structure of the general positing of the world itself. So, what does Husserl learn about world-experience by undertaking the *epochē*? I shall focus on just two key 'learning moments' in the life of subjectivity that Husserl reconstructs. The first derives from the individual's bodily experience of the horizontal structure of the world. The second derives from the experience of others.<sup>66</sup>

(1) Perceptual experience is implicated in a system of relationships

<sup>63</sup> HUSSERL 1982, 56. (Hereafter: *Ideas I*)

<sup>64</sup> HUSSERL 1969, 233.

<sup>65</sup> *Ideas I*, 61.

<sup>66</sup> A more comprehensive and detailed discussion of Husserl's reflections on intersubjectivity and its relation to world-experience is offered by ZAHAVI 2001, 25-61.

between the body and its surroundings. It is in this nexus that the subject discovers the world as horizontal.

The physical thing is a thing belonging to the *surrounding world* even if it be an unseen physical thing, even if be a real possibility, unexperienced but experienceable, or perhaps experienceable, physical thing [...]. It is inherent in the essence that anything whatever which exists in reality but is not yet actually experienced can become given and that this means that the thing in question belongs to the undetermined but *determinable* horizon of my experiential actuality at the particular time.<sup>67</sup>

The 'unthematically given horizon' here is not at all that transmitted by a cultural tradition (*pace* Habermas).<sup>68</sup> The experience of the 'world-horizon' relates to the bodily 'I-can', the ability of the subject to move in relation to objects and perceive an infinite variety of profiles of any singular thing. Similarly, the visibility and invisibility of the surrounding world of perceptible things is determined by one's position and capacities as a perceiving body. It is on these potentialities of the perceiving body and its relations to other 'bodies' in the environment (broadly conceived) that the sense of the world's structure as a unified 'horizontal' context of experience is based.

The spatiotemporal world-horizon that the perceiving subject is capable of discovering *apart from the presence of others* Husserl sometimes calls 'first nature'.<sup>69</sup> This is a world not yet endowed with

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67 *Ideas I*, 106–7.

68 TCA 1, 82: «In the first case, the cultural tradition shared by a community is constitutive of the lifeworld which the individual member finds already interpreted. This intersubjectively shared *lifeworld* forms the background for communicative action. Thus phenomenologists like Alfred Schutz speak of the lifeworld as the unthematically given horizon within which participants in communication move in common when they refer thematically to something in the *world*».

69 Husserl 1969, 240: «My intrinsically first psychophysical Ego (we are referring here to constitutional strata, not temporal genesis), relative to whom the intrinsically first someone-else must be constituted, is, we see, a member of an *intrinsically first Nature*,

the full weight of reality or objectivity since it is not secured in its sense as mind-independent. At most, it represents a thin stratum of world-experience as it is given ordinarily in the natural attitude. Nonetheless, already at this level the world takes shape as a universal and inexhaustible horizon of possible experiences for the experiencer. It contains physical objects, already constituted as spatially and temporally coherent unities, within an infinite horizon of other such objects.<sup>70</sup> This give us, Husserl says, the 'form' of the world:

[...] An empty mist of obscure indeterminateness is populated with intuited possibilities or likelihoods; and only the 'form' of the world, precisely as 'the world', is predelineated. Moreover, my indeterminate surroundings are infinite, the misty and never fully determinable horizon is necessarily there.<sup>71</sup>

(2) If the first 'learning moment' teaches us that the primary 'form' of world-experience is *not* dependent upon intersubjectivity but rather on bodily experience, the second teaches us that the experience of the world *as* an objective and mind-independent reality *is* dependent upon intersubjectivity. (Here we circle back to the post-Kantian theme mentioned in the introduction to our discussion.)

Already at the level of 'first nature' physical objects are constituted as objectivities that *transcend* the acts of consciousness in which they are 'intended'. They are experienced, for instance, as perceivable in

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which is not yet Objective Nature, a Nature the spatio-temporality of which is not yet Objective spatio-temporality: in other words, a Nature that does not yet have constitutional traits coming from an already-constituted someone else».

<sup>70</sup> In accordance with his method, Husserl makes no reference to the neuro-physiological capacities of the perceiver that make possible the performances or achievements he describes. It could be that, ontogenetically, a reliable sense of object permanence is acquired by the child at the same time as basic elements of theory of mind. Nonetheless, there is no reason to see his account as in conflict with the empirical description of these capacities and of their ontogenesis in human children, since it is a logical (inferential) reconstruction, not a developmental account, of meaning structures and their interconnections.

<sup>71</sup> *Ideas I*, 52.

any number of distinct perceptions. But in each of these acts, the object is still essentially 'subjective' in the sense that it 'is' only ever as a correlate of *my* conscious acts; it is not yet secured as transcendent to *my* consciousness of it. On reflection, it becomes clear that in order to experience the world as we do in ordinary perception, i.e. as a contexture of entities that *transcend our consciousness of them*, something else must be added.<sup>72</sup> This 'something' Husserl traces to intersubjectivity, the expectation that the entities I perceive are perceivable by others as well: «it is again experience that says: These physical things, this world, is utterly transcendent of me, of my own being. It is an 'Objective' world, experienceable and experienced as the same world by others too».<sup>73</sup>

The surprising result of these reflections is the conclusion that our *perceptual* grasp of the ontological independence of the world is intelligible only upon our supposition that others perceive the same worldly entities as we do. It is for this reason and on this basis that actual corroboration and 'communalization' of experiences among subjects can serve the goal of confirming or disconfirming *what is the case*.

We may be forgiven for seeing here a simple repetition of Habermas's own point, namely that «To say that the world is 'objective' means that it is 'given' to us as 'the same for everyone'».<sup>74</sup> And this is true. However, the point of difference is that the anticipation of perceivability-for-others that characterizes our ordinary perceptual experience, for Husserl, is not an anticipation that we must be trained through linguistic practice to embrace. Certainly, our linguistic interactions encourage it, since they provide constant (if not universal) confirmation that our anticipations are well founded; and our linguistic capacities provide our anticipations of intersubjectivity

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72 HUSSERL 1960, 105-8.

73 HUSSERL 1969, 233.

74 *FKI*, 89. Also: «The vertical view of the objective world is interconnected with the horizontal relationship among members of an intersubjectively shared lifeworld. The objectivity of the world and the intersubjectivity of communication mutually refer to one another» (HABERMAS 2003, 16).

with much more differentiated and sophisticated content. Nonetheless, we can anticipate sharing perceptual experiences with pre-verbal infants as well as animals, and they with us.<sup>75</sup> The level of intersubjectivity implicated here is again perceptual, not linguistic.

Habermas would likely object that, while this may be so, a mutual grasp of objects as ‘the same’ among plural observers requires symbolic mediation. But what matters in the first instance—for the purposes of establishing the ‘transcendent being’ of an object—is not whether it is given as ‘the same’ for a plurality of subjects (e.g. under a common description) but simply that the same object is ‘given’ to a plurality of subjects. An object may well be given differently to each subject; indeed, we should expect that a physical object, which only ever shows to perceivers one ‘aspect’ at a time, will be given differently. Nonetheless, that the object is identified as the same object in the domain of bodily action and perception by a plurality of agents establishes its ‘objectivity’ in the sense that it cannot be regarded as a merely subjective phenomenon.

How far away does this take us from Habermas’s own position? Habermas does not deny the possibility of Davidson-style ‘triangulation’, even though he does deny that this mechanism can explain the sharing of understandings.<sup>76</sup> And he himself acknowledges that the identification of real objects relies upon a practical involvement with them and cannot be sustained through shared linguistic references alone. In agreement with Hilary Putnam, he writes that: «To achieve secure semantic reference, it is important that speakers are, as agents, in context with the objects of everyday life and that they can put themselves in contact with them repeatedly».<sup>77</sup> (Indeed, this last admission is a sign of a gradual shift that has occurred in Habermas’s late thought. Since the mid-1990s, he has been increasingly willing to acknowledge the indispensable role that *experience* plays alongside *discourse* in intramundane ‘learning

75 Developmental psychologists see the phenomenon of ‘proto-declarative pointing’ in infants as an important marker of this. SIMON BARON-COHEN 1991, 233-51.

76 FKI, 112–20.

77 FKI, 89.

processes'.<sup>78</sup> In this respect, he has moved closer not only to the classical pragmatists, whose influence he has long acknowledged, but to the phenomenological tradition, which has ever since Husserl emphasized the foundational ('constitutive') role of the active-passive bodily subject.)

But Habermas has not noticed just how significantly the perceptual (or 'pragmatic') dimension of world-experience changes the game when it comes to the 'presupposition' of the common objective world. In its bodily experience, the acting-perceiving subject *learns practically* what the spatiotemporal horizontality of the world amounts to in a way that will become foundational, even paradigmatic, for its life as a meaning-making being. In its bodily experience of others, alongside whom ('strategically') and with whom ('communicatively') it interacts in the world, the acting-perceiving subject learns that the world is 'given' not merely to itself but also to others. In these two regards, at least, the 'form' and 'sense' of the world as it is 'presupposed' by communicative subjects is founded at least as much upon experiential learning processes as it is upon the constraints imposed by language games of reference, assertion, and justification.

#### 4. Conclusion

Husserl's 'phenomenological' reflections are endorsed and incorporated into Habermas's own account of the 'lifeworld'.<sup>79</sup> But only in part. Habermas rejects those aspects of Husserl's philosophy that he takes to be bound up with the problematic presuppositions of the philosophy of consciousness. This leaves him with a revised lifeworld-concept that is «represented by a culturally transmitted and

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78 See, in particular Habermas, «Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn (1996)» in HABERMAS 1998, 343-82; and Habermas, «From Kant to Hegel: On Robert Brandom's Pragmatic Philosophy of Language», in HABERMAS 2003, 131-73, esp. 150-5.

79 Habermas, «Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions, and the Lifeworld (1988)», in HABERMAS 1998, 239-46.



linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns».<sup>80</sup> But the linguistic-pragmatic revision of the concept of lifeworld relegates to the dustbin precisely those aspects of Husserl's analysis that are essential for spelling out in more detail what Habermas himself identifies as the 'pragmatic presupposition' of the common objective world. That 'presupposition' consists, or so I have argued, in a complex background of practical knowledge and expectation that inheres in the 'natural attitude' that we take up as perceivers, actors, and thinkers—not just as speakers.

However, it seems to me that these 'phenomenological' contributions on the theme of world-experience should be seen as congenial from the standpoint of Habermas's own project. First and foremost, they underscore a basic claim that Habermas himself wants to advance: namely, that the presupposition of the common objective world is foundational for our basic concepts of truth, reason, objectivity and reality. At the same time, they do not signal a fall back into an objectifying and overly naturalizing account of human agency (the error Habermas accuses Davidson of committing), nor do they preclude the incorporation of Wittgensteinian or Heideggerian insights into the distinctive normativity and intersubjectivity of language and discourse.<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore, to acknowledge the extra-linguistic dimensions of *world experience* is not to suggest that fully-formed *world concepts* can be secured apart from language. There is no doubt that the acquisition of a *concept* of world makes possible a new form of world-relation. Indeed, I would defend the importance of formal world-concepts for making intelligible the distinction we draw between what is objectively correct and what is merely taken to be objectively correct.<sup>82</sup>

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80 TCA 2, 124.

81 TAYLOR 2016 provides a recent impressive case study in how phenomenological perspectives can be successfully married with a thoroughgoing hermeneutic approach. See especially the discussions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and motor intentionality in Chapter 5.

82 LAFONT 2002 has argued for the importance of Habermas's formal concepts of world in this connection.

But these conceptual acquisitions *rest* upon the very 'presupposition' of the common objective world that Habermas identifies, a presupposition that cannot be explained by linguistic practice alone, for the reasons we have discussed. The intersubjectivity of world-experience must therefore be established and sustained at two different levels, at the level of bodily perception and action, and at the level of the mutual recognition of validity claims. Husserl recognized as much when he wrote that:

*World-experience*, as constitutive, signifies, not just my quite private experience, but *community-experience*: The world itself, according to its sense, is the one identical world, to which all of *us* necessarily have experiential access, and about which all of *us* by 'exchanging' our experiences—that is: by making them common—, can reach a common understanding; just as 'Objective' legitimation depends on mutual assent and criticism.<sup>83</sup>

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# Souls of the Departed

Towards a Phenomenology of the After-Life

*Nicolas de Warren*

Husserl Archives - Center for Phenomenology and  
Continental Philosophy (Leuven) and Penn State University\*  
[njd15@psu.edu](mailto:njd15@psu.edu)

*ABSTRACT.* This paper develops a phenomenological approach to life after death on the basis of certain fragmentary insights proposed by Jan Patočka. Rather than consider the after-life in either metaphysical or religious terms, as the continued survival of the soul after death, this paper considers life after death in terms of how the dead still survives in the living and, likewise, of the living experience of one's own death with the passing of the Other. These complex ways in which ghosts of the dead inhabit and haunt the living are examined not just in terms of remembrance and memory, but through a more poignant form of presence in which the metaphysical quality – the meaningfulness of their existence – becomes manifest.

*KEYWORDS.* Patočka; Ingarden; Metaphysics; After-life.

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\* *Correspondence:* Nicolas de Warren – Department of Philosophy, The Pennsylvania State University, 240 Sparks Building, PA 16802.



*La mort de l'autre, si on peut le dire ainsi, se trouve aussi de notre côté au moment même où elle nous arrive d'un tout autre côté.*

*Derrida*

## 1.

Questions concerning what happens to us after death, to where we might journey and to how we might still endure after ceasing to physically exist, have long fascinated human beings. For much of human history, visions of the after-life were not understood as spurious wanderings of the imaginary. A life hereafter was meaningfully experienced as expectation or assurance, for which the life one knew to be living might itself be the inheritor or precursor, and for which death was thus neither destination or finality, but passage and transfiguration. Even today, when our greatest anxiety revolves around perpetually being left behind by the ever quickening identities and jagged rhythms of modern life, we still witness the revival of this most archaic yearning. Indefinite life-extension and “combat against aging” (the term “combat” bespeaks the antagonistic attitude of liquid modernity towards dying) have become in the past decades the mantra of digital elites and the gurus of Silicon Valley. In Don DeLillo’s apt remark in his novel *Zero K*, to «live the billionaire’s myth of immortality» bespeaks the «final shrine of entitlement».<sup>1</sup> Larry Page of Google has launched a company *Calico* with the explicit aim of developing research for the prolongation and enhancement of human life. The Russian-based *2045 Initiative* understands its ambition as «working towards creating an international research center where leading scientists will be engaged in research and development in the fields of anthropomorphic robotics, living systems modeling and brain and consciousness modeling with the goal of transferring one’s individual consciousness to an artificial carrier and achieving

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1 DE LILLO 2016, 117.

cybernetic immortality».<sup>2</sup> The ancient vision of the soul's departure in death has given way to the promise of "up-loading" our individual consciousness to "a more advanced non-biological immortal carrier." Framed by this desire to fabricate immortality in our age of digital reproduction, we see ourselves as ghosts in the shell, where the distinction between consciousness and embodiment becomes most clearly seen, or so it is hoped, in the artificial transposition of consciousness from its mortal coil to an immortal carrier. Through successive transfers from one "non-biological carrier" to another we might hope to exist without end, or exist in parallel carriers, each providing redundancy for a simultaneous existence of multiple immortalities. We would so hope to enjoy a continued life here-after not in or with others, but through a cybernetic incarnation that has embraced us. No longer created in the image of God or bound to having been created by others, we would become hyper-created in a digital awakening or, as in DeLillo's *Zero K*, await in cryogenic entombment our re-awakening to a future no longer freighted by want or need.<sup>3</sup>

Such visions of cybernetic and cryogenic immortality throw into sharper relief our enduring concern with surviving death in some form of perpetuated existence. In Ancient Greece, the soul (*psyche*) was commonly depicted as a winged-creature, "bird-soul," or ethereal apparition.<sup>4</sup> As Emily Vermeule observes, the distinction between body and soul was expressed for the Greeks most clearly at the instance of death, when a breath or winged figure would depart from a lifeless body.<sup>5</sup> This flight of souls attests to the substantial transformation of the animate body in the passage to death: breathing ceases, eyes are no longer responsive, and limbs become stiff. Visual and literary depictions of the soul's departure were frequently

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2 <http://2045.com/news/31968.html>.

3 As GROZDANOVITCH 2017, 135 also observes: «Il est assez significatif, si l'on y songe bien, que dans cette promesse d'immortalité brandie par les sectateurs californiens de Google, les animaux ne soient pas pris en compte».

4 On the figure of the bird-soul, see DODDS 2014, 141 ff.

5 See VERMEULE 1979, 9.



composed through different representations, as an image (*eidolon*), a shade (*skia*), or a dream-figure (*onar*, *opsis*). These complementary representations portray the after-life as various forms of appearance *for others*. In a red figured lekythos housed in the British Museum, a young boy stands next to a small winged figure, his *eidolon*, as it takes flight in a visible gesture of sorrow.<sup>6</sup> In its archaic meaning, *eidolon* referred to the soul of the departed that took flight from the corpse as its shadowy double. The *eidolon* is the double of a life now defunct which continues to haunt those who remain living. As an *eidolon*, the soul's enduring existence in Hades could be remembered by others or visited by inhabitants from the world above, as with the journey recounted in the Myth of Er in Plato's *Republic*. The *eidolon* is a shadow that might return, as with Patrocles' appearance to Achilles in his dream.<sup>7</sup> As Vermeule remarks, the soul's departure for the Underworld cannot be equated with the passage to immortality in the sense this notion would later acquire in the Christian world.<sup>8</sup> For once departed from the world, the soul in Hades became "uncreative" and "thoughtless," or, in a word, "dumb." Once the soul has been deprived of earthly existence, it can only «mourn its own lost body and the sunlight in a repetitive and uncreative way».<sup>9</sup> Souls of the departed are fated to an unyielding posture of mourning for lives once had, namely, their own. In a lekythos vessel painted by Achilles the Painter, the soul sits perched on the head of its own deceased body, "weeping and protesting with formal mourning gesture."<sup>10</sup>

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6 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/69716881@N02/8053112146>.

7 See VERNANT 1979, 110 ff.

8 For the transformation of the Greek figure of the bird-soul in Medieval art and visual representation, see BARASCH 2005, 13-28. As Barasch remarks: «Whatever the precise definition, the *eidolon* designates the soul after it has left the body. At least in Homer, then, the term *eidolon* refers only to the soul of the dead» (p. 17).

9 VERMEULE 1979, 8.

10 VERMEULE 1979, 9 (for the image: p. 10).

## 2.

Given these evocative representations of death and the after-life in Greek culture, it is not surprising that a concern with the after-life entered into Greek philosophical thought and, specifically, the inaugural thinking of Plato. The significance of Plato's incorporation of the after-life into philosophical thought, but likewise, the crystallization of the idea of philosophy around a concern with the after-life are not, however, without ambiguity. According to Patočka, this ambiguity centers on Plato's misconstrual of his own originality. For Patočka, Plato discovers eternity as the genuine orientation for the care of the soul. This discovery of eternity is synonymous with the discovery of philosophy itself in its essential form as the care of the soul. As Patočka remarks: «for the first time [*in Greek culture*] the soul [*with Plato*] is something that even in its fate after death is something that lives from within. Its fate after death becomes a component of its entire concern and care of itself».<sup>11</sup> The soul's concern for the after-life is "lived from within." An orientation towards eternity is anchored within the soul's care for itself *before* death, and not just a concern with securing the soul's continued existence *after* death. The soul's orientation towards eternity within its mortal existence is thus different in practice and concept from a vision of the soul's immortal endurance after death. With the latter, death represents a moment of separation, when the soul attains immortality for itself. With the former, caring for one's death in view of eternity allows for an orientation towards life from within life itself. Life attains a genuine form of individuation in shaping itself as the moving image of eternity. The soul does not take flight from its mortal existence, but, on the contrary, attains a perspective towards itself from the vantage-point of transcendence. As Patočka suggests, to live *in* eternity is to embrace life in a transcendence, or exposure, to something greater than life itself.

To be concerned with death and eternity is thus primarily not to care

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11 PATOČKA 2002, 126.

for how I shall be or should be remembered once I am departed nor a concern with how to shape in advance how I would want to be remembered. Confusion regarding the genuine meaning of eternity, as an aspiration towards something higher and more encompassing than life itself, as an aspiration for life in truth, is arguably one of humankind's most defining self-deceptions. In Plato's *Symposium*, Agathon's narcissism speaks with empty winged words meant to saturate the instance of his performance with his own immortal aura. In addressing his audience, he seeks to fashion for all posterity the image of his own remembrance, "the immortal memory of fame" (*kleos aphthiton*) so richly pursued by Greek poets. After his speech, Agathon mocks Socrates by exclaiming that there is nothing left to pronounce on the question of love. What remains is only to be eternally dumb-struck by Agathon's youthful beauty and poetical brilliance. With immortal fame, the soul of the departed would live forever in the after-glow of its own self-fashioning. Vanity is not so much an obsession with oneself, as a tyrannical demand towards others on how and that I should be remembered for all ages. In the figure of Aristophanes, Plato's *Symposium* offers yet another image of the soul's immoderate desire for immortality. In Aristophanes' strange mythical tale, our ancestors were circular-like beings who sought to usurp the power and status of the gods. Having been cut in two by Zeus' decree for their insolence, each half-creature sought its missing half and prospective wholeness. Finding their missing half, each pair pathetically clung to each other and starved to death. From a mixture of pity and desire for recognition, Zeus intervenes a second time and provides these hapless creatures with interior reproduction, thus producing the human species we know ourselves to be. We sexually differentiated human beings are compensated for our lack of immortality and godly power by the cyclical immortality of reproduction. Immortality is here granted in a trans-individual and generative form as a mortal reminder of the impossibility of achieving divine immortality for ourselves.

A genuine care for eternity is neither a desire for immortal fame nor

for godly power. The soul must not look outwards to others for unending recognition nor strive upwards for the limitless power of deathlessness. The eternity of the soul is lived from within, and not without, mortal life. And yet, even as Plato discovered the care of the soul in its constitutive orientation towards eternity, Patočka contends that Plato generated a falsification of his own discovery of eternity that would establish in its stead a metaphysical notion of immortality and stamp its mark on Plato's own after-life. On Patočka reading, Plato's dialogues offer conflicting images of the soul's aspiration to eternity, often confusing eternity with a notion of the soul's immortal existence. This conflation between eternity and immortality constitutes the axis of Plato's thought and its veritable philosophical legacy. Plato's discovery is thus double: his discovery of eternity is at the same time the obscuring invention of a metaphysical notion of immortality.

In Plato's dialogues, this eclipsing of eternity by immortality's promise nonetheless represents, for Patočka, an important transformation in Greek visions of the after-life. In contrast to images of the after-life as the soul's *eidolon* for others, what distinguishes a metaphysical notion of immortality, in its Platonic origin, is the soul's presumptive immortal existence *for itself* (namely, as a simple and incorruptible substance). This image of the immortal soul breaks with pre-Platonic understandings of the after-life as the soul's shadowy presence *for others* (as with the archaic meaning of the soul's *eidolon* after death) or as a generative process of trans-individual continuity (for example, with ancestor worship). With metaphysical immortality, the substrate or bearer of immortality is the soul as being-for-itself (as an individual); with pre-metaphysical immortality, the soul is conceived as being-for-others, or being in others, here understood as the generative community of one's ancestors and future progeny (as with Aristophanes' myth). As Patočka describes in the *Heretical Essays*, immortality in this form operates through an individual's inscription within an enduring generational continuity (the family, the tribe, etc.). This notion of immortality represents one of humankind's most archaic visions of the after-life in the earliest known forms of religious

consciousness.

Given that Plato's "mythical tales" of the soul's immortality obscure the genuine meaning of his own discovery of eternity and its embryonic significance for the care of the soul, Plato's historically influential arguments for the immortality of the soul are considered by Patočka to be "superficial" and "fantastical." Yet, as Patočka notes, myths of prenatal existence figure more prominently than myths of the after-life in Plato's discussions of immortality. In the Myth of Er, Plato's mythical narrative of the after-life centers on the focal meaning of *choosing* life. This emphasis on the care of the soul as a choice for life (choosing to be born before existing and choosing one's life again after death) attests to the freedom of the soul to shape its own life "in the alternative of good and evil, truthful and untruthful."<sup>12</sup> Eternity is this dimension of time defined by the weight of having to shoulder one's own life as a choice of absolute responsibility. Plato's insight centers on his conception of the soul as "self-movement" or "self-animation" (*auto heauto kinoun*). In the *Phaedrus*, Plato defines the soul as the first principle of motion (*kinêseôs archê to auto hauto kinoun*, 245d). As a first principle, the soul cannot come into being (*archê de agenêton*), since anything that comes into being must emerge from a first principle (*ex archês gar anangkê pan to gignomenon gignesthai*), while a first principle cannot in turn come from anything whatsoever (*autên de mêd' ex henos*, 245d).

In his own writings, Patočka gives an existential form to Plato's *auto heauto kinoun* by conceiving the self-animation of the soul in terms of *freedom* and genuine "historicity" (in the specific meaning of Patočka's third movement of existence). In his home-seminars *Plato and Europe*, we find one the clearest statements of Patočka's attempt to re-claim eternity from its modern oblivion through a disambiguation of Plato's original discovery. Patočka refashions Plato's tripartite model of the soul into his own ontological conception of the soul as existential self-movement. For Patočka, each part of the soul must be understood as an orientation in the world such that the care of the soul develops

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12 PATOČKA 2002, 137.

along three concurrent motions, or animations. As structured motions, the soul is a three-fold *ékstasis* of care: care for the world, care for the community, and care for the self. The cosmological orientation of the soul towards the world is expressed in the project of revealing, or coming to know, the truth of what is. The political orientation of the soul towards the world of human-beings is expressed in the communal project of living a life in truth with others. The third orientation towards eternity has the form of the soul's relation to itself through which the soul attains its own proper individuality. As Patočka remarks: «In relation to itself, the soul is the discoverer of eternity. The soul extends toward eternity, and its most proper problem – the problem of the status of its own being – is the problem of this constitutive relation to eternity: whether in its being it is something fleeting, or whether in its depths it is not something eternal».<sup>13</sup> Of these three “grand problematics” within Plato's thinking, Patočka considers the care for eternity as guiding the soul's authentic existence in terms of what binds the soul to itself as a whole. Crucially, the soul's care for eternity, around which its self-defining responsibility and freedom gravitate, is not an aspiration for immortal existence, but a “preparation for death” in the soul's acceptance, or respiration, of its own finite existence.

### 3.

In light of these critical considerations, is the question of the soul's immortality forever relegated to mythical tales and metaphysical confluents? Can immortality still enjoy an after-life, even as Patočka identifies eternity, and not immortality, as the proper concern of philosophical thinking? Surprisingly, even though Patočka argues for the philosophical recovery of eternity from its modern oblivion against metaphysical notions of immortality, in an unfinished text entitled *Phenomenology of Life After Death* [*Phénoménologie de la vie après la mort*],

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<sup>13</sup> PATOČKA 2002,125.

Patočka considers how the after-life might still retain and, indeed, *regain* philosophical relevancy.<sup>14</sup> These incomplete reflections – rare in the phenomenological literature – explore the significance of the after-life for the inter-subjective constitution of human existence. In contrast, on the one hand, to metaphysical notions of immortality and, on the other hand, to an aspiration towards life in truth for eternity, the after-life, or life after death, offers a rich, uncharted field of inquiry. Patočka's thesis is here that a phenomenological account of intersubjectivity cannot do without thinking about the after-life, not in metaphysical terms as immortality, but in genuinely phenomenological terms as manifestation. How do the departed continue to appear for us? This question is, in truth, two-fold. How do we bear the death of the Other – how do we survive the Other's death? How do we bear the Other in death – how does the Other survive in us? The after-life of departed souls is carried within us, the living, and thus given to the departed in our responsibility for the dead, but only because the departed have already borne us while alive, in carrying us to the world and beyond ourselves.

In keeping with his objections against Plato's "fantastical" arguments for the immortality of the soul, and mindful of Kant's theoretical destruction of the metaphysical notion of immortality, Patočka considers the distinction between soul and body to be a "metaphysical fiction." If the question of the soul's after-life is conceived in metaphysical terms as the continued existence of the soul *for itself* (its simple nature or identity) after death, this implies the kind of incorruptible substance which Kant compellingly dismantled in his celebrated critique of Mendelssohn's *Phaedon*. Patočka's rejection of a metaphysical after-life is not, however, just theoretical in motivation and conviction, but stems as well from an alternative alignment of the after-life as a phenomenon. In proposing a phenomenological orientation towards the after-life, Patočka takes his bearings from our

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14 PATOČKA 1995, 145-56. For a presentation of Patočka's text in the broader context of his phenomenological analyses of inter-subjectivity, the lived-body, and history (especially in relation to Patočka's treatment of immortality in *Heretical Essays*), see KARFIK 2008, 82-100.

experience of mourning and remembrance in considering the after-life as a modification of the Other's being for us. Death is not without phenomenological resonance. Mourning the death of Others attests to the resonating agency of the Other's absence within us. The living do not depart without leaving their own ghosts behind. These ghosts can at times haunt the living even before the advent of death itself, as with the portrait and personage of Kaiser Franz Joseph in Joseph Roth's *Radetzky March*, whose haloed presence presides over the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as an empire *already* long dead without yet knowing it.

When seen through the prism of mourning and remembrance, our living present becomes revealed as inhabited by ghosts of the dead. The after-life is in fact all around us. We are surrounded by the after-life of Others in rituals of mourning, places of remembrance, cherished photos, and those unseen words softly spoken to the departed in the silent hour of our deepest sorrow. Even though we are surrounded by the after-lives of others, it is curious that this phenomenon has rarely attracted philosophical consideration. This blindness for and lack of interest in the after-life might reflect the *weakness* of consolation when holding an image of the departed in our hands or when visiting funeral sites in remembrance. Death appears inconsolable, but not without subterfuge: we are taken in by a need, psychological as well as metaphysical, for a re-assurance that the departed continues to exist, not just within us, but outside of us, without us, and forever more. We would feel that the idea of the deceased as *only* living within our memories would cheat the Other of her life in apparently denying that life its proper unending due. A life upon which we depended when alive cannot be accepted, so it seems, as merely enjoying an after-life dependent on us when dead. The unacceptability of the Other's death is this burden of an after-life I would not *want* to bear within me, but must. I would want the Other to bear my own unbearability of their loss or have instead the Other returned to me, so as to relieve me of this impossible responsibility and impossibility of response which has been thrust into my hands and entrusted to me without asking.



The “soul” of the departed speaks to the ways in which the departed continues to appear within us. A phenomenology of the after-life must attest to the fragility as well as the robustness of the lives of others in us, of how the life of those departed continues to animate our own. Carried within us, the after-life of the departed remains fragile in its dependency on the finitude of our memory and strength of our surviving the death of the Other. The after-life of others would run again against an inevitable demise, for even those who remember the dead will themselves in turn one day perish. Carried within us, the after-life of the departed remains nonetheless robust as the challenge of our responsibility towards the dead in their remembrance. The after-life would thus attain an ethical significance, for there is no remembrance of the departed without a responsibility for the departed and gratitude for their having-once-been there for us.

In mourning and remembrance, the after-life of others resides *within us*. *Who* is this Other, who survives in me? In mourning and remembering the departed, who is this “object” of my consciousness, given that the Other is no longer actually given, or present, for me in the world? Given that I can no longer look upon the Other as a living, animate body, that I cannot address the Other in the expectation of any response, and that I cannot see myself afresh through the eyes of the Other, *who* still remains the veritable “object” of my consciousness? Is there a *noema* of the dead?

This noematic question of the departed cannot be separated from the noematic question of the living – *who* is “the object” of my consciousness when the Other stands before me in flesh and blood? When looking at the eyes of the Other, in whose presence do I stand? It has become a truism within phenomenology to insist on the inaccessibility of the Other’s own self-givenness for myself. The Other is present for herself in a manner that can never be present for me. The Other is absent for me, not as emptiness or lack, but as the fullness of a life other than my own which can never become mine or owned by me. The death of the Other further compounds this original absence of the Other’s own self-presence for me, rendering forever inaccessible what

was never accessible for me to begin with. In the wake of the Other's death, there would remain not a *who* marked by an essential absence, but a *what* marked by an essential absence of a who. Of the Other's presence, I would only retain my memories, photos, and tokens as images for my own keeping that would render more bearable the absence of the Other by finding another object of my attachment, to wit, these very images of the Other within me. Of the Other, I would only have a corpse, not a living-body before me, and yet even a corpse, as the anthropologist Robert Hertz demonstrated, is not just a thing among things, devoid of having once been a living-body.<sup>15</sup> Of the Other, I would only have their proper name, as a name that would still speak to me without being able to speak for itself and respond to my address, solicitation, and imploration. As Derrida proposes, we cannot address the Other by their proper name without knowing already, and, in this sense, already "remembering," that their proper name will survive, and indeed, *has already* survived, their own death.<sup>16</sup> To address the Other by her proper name is thus already to have the Other's memory, in her death, entrusted to me.

The question "who is the Other who survives in me" cannot be divorced from the question "who is the Other who stands before me in flesh and blood?" Each question is the flip-side of the other. One cannot understand the presence of Others in our lives without understanding the after-life of Others within us, once the Other has departed. Inter-subjectivity does not just extend over the scope of the living, but equally projects over those who were once alive and those who remain as yet unborn, such that the living and the dead weave together the fabric of inter-subjectivity which textures and situates our individual lives essentially.

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15 See HERTZ 1907, 48, 137. As Heidegger equally observes: «Das Nur-noch-Vorhandene ist 'mehr' als ein *lebloses* materielles Ding. Mit ihm begegnet ein des Lebens verlustig gegangenes *Unlebendiges*» (HEIDEGGER 1977, §47).

16 See DERRIDA 1988, 63 ff.

#### 4.

What it is for me to have a life is to be for-myself as well as for-others. A person, as an individual life unfolding in the world (as a *who*, not a *what*), is both self-constituting and constituted through the other. My life is not only given to me, but given to others as well, much as others have given life to me. We are not *thrown* into the world, but received – received by Others who are in turn received by us. Within this dual-form of self- and other-constitution, Patočka distinguishes different dimensions within the composition of an individual person: being-here-for-myself, being-there-for-myself, being-there-for-others, the-Other-being-there-for-me, and my being as such. These dimensions belong to an unified conception of the person as being-for-itself and being-for-others. To be a subject is to be inter-subjected to others as well as to myself.

In keeping with a central tenet of Husserlian phenomenology, my primordial sphere of “ownness” or “mineness” underpins being-here-for-myself. No other person can *be* who I am and take over the responsibility of my own existence. Existence is mine to forebear and to bear witness. Being-here-for-myself has the form of inner time-consciousness in which consciousness is given to itself. This primordial sphere of temporal self-givenness does not have the presumptive certainty of the Cartesian *ego cogito*. Being-here-for-myself is not defined in epistemic terms, but as a pre-reflexive self-awareness of myself as alive and temporal. I am not simply in time. I am myself temporal.

I am not only here-for-myself. I am also “there-for-myself” through different attitudes and judgments towards who I am. With such forms of self-objectification and reflection, I become “there” for myself in the sense of becoming an explicit theme of self-understanding and articulation. Given that “being-here-for-myself” is not characterized in terms of epistemic self-certainty, *who* I am for myself must constantly remain an issue of self-inquiry and self-interrogation, or, in other words, a matter of concern. I must continually objectify myself –

transform my implicit being-here-for-myself into an explicit being-there-for-myself – by adopting an attitude of self-interpretative responsibility towards myself. Being there-for-myself, as a possibility of self-objectification, is not only founded within my own inner time-consciousness. Patočka further anchors the possibility of being-there-for-myself within the lived-body. My body is here-for-me as well as there-for-me. In being there-for-me, my body is simultaneously there-for-the-Other. This two-fold nature of my body as “lived-body” (*Leib*) and “object-body” (*Körper*) underpins for Patočka the two-fold constitution of the person as self-constituting and other-constituted. The passage from being-here-for-myself to being-there-for-myself is thus already a passage towards the Other. To have a body is already to stand there as some-body for another.

Given the embodied condition of what it is to be a person, my own being-for-myself does not exclude an original manner of being-there-for-others. In Patočka’s thinking, each dimension of my existence is equally original, i.e., constitutive, of who I am. Being-there-for-others is a manner of being in which I am “outside myself” but is therefore no less original to who I am than my being-for-myself. The ways in which I am there for the Other represents an original manner of my existence which I cannot render objective, or “there,” for myself in the manner in which I am an object, or “there,” for myself. I do not hear myself speak as others hear me; hence, the strangeness of listening to my own recorded voice. I do not perceive myself as others perceive me; hence, my incredulity at the Other’s image of who I am. I cannot constitute for myself the ways in which I am perceived, judged, and understood by Others. I must therefore trust in others without being able to see directly (through their eyes, as it were) the Other’s image of myself. My own knowledge of my-being-for-others necessarily depends on the Other’s communication, direct as well as indirect, yet, however, much I come to understand how I am for the Other, my being-there-for-the-Other remains by default never constituted by me, but by the Other, whose own self-givenness, and hence power of constitution, remains inaccessible to me. The Other’s self-presence can

never be experienced by me in an original manner in the sense in which I experience my own self-presence as being-here-for-myself, although this inaccessibility does not make the Other inaccessible as such, since the Other is equally constituted by me in her being-there-for-me.

Even though this manner of being-there-for-others properly belongs to and expresses who I am, my being-there-for-others nonetheless inserts a distance within myself. Being-there-for-others represents a constituted dimension of who I am which exists outside of me in the sense that my being-there-for-others is not constituted by me, but by the Other. This distance between being-for-myself and being-for-others is the constitutive meaning of “inter” for inter-subjectivity. This spacing between myself and the Other is not, however, an interval *external to me*, as with space separating chairs in a room, but an interval within me. This inter-subjective spacing *is* me. As Patočka writes: «I am [...] the lived identity of this outside and inside».<sup>17</sup> Being-for-myself as well as being-for-others, *I am* this spacing of an inter-subjected person. The drama of our inter-subjective existence turns on the constant negotiation and navigation of my life *within* this inter-subjected spacing. I am at times frustrated that my own self-image contradicts how the Other perceives me or I am pleased that the Other perceives me as I perceive myself.

When considered abstractly, in isolation from concrete relations with the Other, what it is to be a person is held in suspense, as it were, across the span of being-for-myself and being-for-others. I am both without just being either. I cannot be either without being the other. I am (when so considered abstractly) suspended *above* being-for-myself and being-for-others. I am not yet *inserted into* being-for-myself and being-for-others. My life is held in suspense: I am neither for-myself nor for-others. To be born is to enter into this in-between that I am for myself and for others. We are not thrown into the world, but received *among* others.

As being-for-myself and being-for-others, who I am as a whole is

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<sup>17</sup> PATOČKA 1995, 154.

characterized by Patočka as “my being as such.” Strictly speaking, “my being as such” does not have the form of “being,” either in the sense of being-for-myself or being-for-others. “Being as such” encompasses both dimensions into a whole as animated by the creative *élan* of my freedom. Freedom names the ontological dimension of my being, its openness to the world, and an intrinsic self-responsibility for who I am. Freedom is not anything that I have. I *am* free, yet in a manner which, as the center around which my being-for-myself and being-for-others gravitates, perpetually exceeds any identification with any determinate sense given to my life, whether by others or myself. As Patočka writes in the *Heretical Essays*: «The responsible human as such is *I*. It is an individual that is not identical with any role it could possibly assume».<sup>18</sup>

This manifold characterization of what it is to be a person equally obtains for the Other. Inter-subjectivity is thus a double form of spacing: within me, within you. This double-form of spacing is not only rooted in our respective lives as being-for-myself and being-for-others. This double-structuring of inter-subjectivity has an essential temporal form of synchronization and reciprocity. We exist with each other at the same time, and, in this sense, “in” the same time, even though we are each our own time, namely, the temporality that is most mine to bear and to witness. Although the original temporality of our respective being-here-for-ourselves is mutually inaccessible, we nonetheless exist for each other in a synchronized temporality of reciprocity: I am there for the Other at the same time as the Other is there for me.

In pursuing this line of analysis, Patočka anchors inter-subjective reciprocity, with a nod to Kojève, in a *need* for the Other that defines each of us essentially and individually. As developed in his own existential manner, Kojève in his celebrated seminars echoes Hegel’s insight that what makes human desire genuinely human is that desire desires the desire of another human being. Human existence is necessarily inter-subjective (i.e., social in Hegel’s sense) only within a

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18 PATOČKA 1975, 107.

plurality of desires belonging to other human beings. What makes desire genuinely human, more specifically, is that we desire things of the world in order to gain recognition by others as possessors and desirers of those things. Desire is thus two-fold: for the desired thing and for the recognition as desiring. As Kojève remarks: «Pour être *humain*, l'homme doit agir non pas en vue de se soumettre une *chose*, mais en vue de soumettre un autre Désir (de la *chose*). L'homme qui désire humainement une chose agit non pas tant pour s'emparer de la *chose* que pour faire reconnaître par un autre son *droit* [...] sur cette chose, pour se faire reconnaître comme *propriétaire* de la chose».<sup>19</sup> As Kojève insists upon in an Hegelian manner, consciousness achieves self-consciousness in becoming aware of itself as desiring. In becoming conscious of desire, desire reveals itself as *my* desire.

In Patočka's thinking, being-there-for-myself springs forth from being-here-for-myself through an awareness of my own need for the Other, yet this fundamental form of reciprocity (the veritable meaning of "inter" in "inter-subjectivity") is not primarily construed in terms of action (acting in concert with others) or Hegelian recognition. Instead, Patočka speaks of a "need for the need of the Other." This need is not for the Other per se (and therefore not a form of desire). It is rather a need for the need that the Other has for me, and so, reciprocally, the Other's need is a need for my need of that Other's need. Rather than speak of an humanizing desire for the desire of the Other as a struggle for recognition, Patočka proposes an humanizing need for the need of the Other in a two-fold sense: we need the Other in order to achieve our own proper self-constitution *and* the Other needs us to likewise achieve her own self-constitution. Neither need (mine for hers, hers for mine) is prior to the other. The need of each for the Other's need is not mimetic, as either competition or rivalry, since neither is derived from the other, even as each is dependent on the Other. Instead, we might speak of the "hermeneutical circularity" of each need in need of the Other's need.<sup>20</sup>

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19 KOJÈVE 1967, 169.

20 KARFIK 2008, 85.

This reciprocal constitution takes the fundamental form of *participation*. Rather than a desire for the desire of the Other, we are animated by a need for *participation*: to participate *in* the lives of Others and to have Others participate in our own lives. In a reciprocal fashion, the Other participates in the constitution of my individuality, as different from others, much as I participate in the constitution of the Other, as different from me and all others. What I need of the Other is her need *for my participation* in her life as well as her need to have her participate in mine. I need the Other to participate in me, and need to be needed to participate in the Other's life. What binds together this dynamic of participation is a mutual interest in the Other's life as an investment of my own life. In this manner, we do not just live *with* Others, but, in those cases when we directly *participate* in the lives of Others, we come to live *in* the Other much as the Other comes to live *in* me. This reciprocity of "living-in" (taking an interest in the lives of Others as an *inter-esse* or "entering" into their being) does not represent an alienation of my freedom but, on the contrary, its authentic realization. The *élan* of our individual freedom would be sapped of its own vitality were it not propelled (as opposed to impelled) by the participation of Others in our lives.

The fulfillment of our need for the Other thus possesses a "singular character." With the Other's participation in my life, my need for the Other does not become fulfilled in any form of self-satisfaction or satiation. With the former, I would experience my participation in the Other's life as condescension or paternalism; with the later, I would arrive at a finality in my need for participation. Expressed in these terms, my need for the Other is not fulfilled in such a manner that an "empty intention" (i.e., my need) would be fulfilled through an intuitive presentation of the Other's existence (her generosity, her care, etc.) within me. Rather, the sense in which the Other's existence, in participating in my existence, fulfills my need is characterized by Patočka as a unique "fulfillment through the void." The fullness of the Other's participation in my life further intensifies my need of participation. My need becomes perpetually renewed through her



participation. The more the Other needs me to participate in her life, the more my need becomes sharpened to need the Other to participate in mine. Indeed, should this reciprocal movement of participation become arrested or inhibited, we would succumb to the illusion that our need has been fully satiated or suppressed. This instance of self-deception would make of me a person who presumably would no longer need the Other and no longer avail myself to the Other's need.

This conception of "living-in" circumscribes a tight orbit of relationships with Others, namely, with those others in whose lives we are directly invested and interested. This type of relationship – living in the Other rather than living with the Other – cuts across established classifications of "friendship" (though friendship can be understood in these terms) or "family" (though family can be thought in these terms) or "civic relationships" (for example, members of a football club). Wives, husbands, partners, children, friends, and companions – these are various forms in which the Other lives *in me*, as participating in the constitution of my own being (and likewise: I live in the Other). Evidently, not *every* relationship with others has this form of living-in. Indeed, the majority of our daily and professional dealings with others takes the form of living-with. When measured against the form of living-in, my relation with the cashier at the store, for example, is determined by an tangential reciprocity with regard to my own self-constitution. The cashier does not meaningfully participate in my life. But even if the majority of concrete relations with others never achieves an intense pitch of participation, my life remains nonetheless defined by a reciprocal need for the Other, even when that need remains inessential and fleeting to my self-constitution (as with the example of the cashier). Yet, it is only with those in whose lives I participated existentially, as it were, that their death still speaks to me long after they have departed.

## 5.

In his reflections, Patočka's guiding insight rests on the constitutive significance of participation in the formation of our individual lives within an inter-subjective nexus and his proposed distinction between "living-in" and "living-with" others. To be with others in the emphatic sense of living-in is to participate in their own respective self-constitution much as others participate in my own project of self-constitution. The death of the Other interrupts this reciprocity of constitution, leaving behind the resonance of the Other's constitutive agency as her after-life within me, in terms of which I might still come to discover who the Other was for me in the wake of her departure. The Other's departure "modifies" the way in which the Other is there for me. The temporal synchronization of reciprocity and participation which bound us together becomes disjointed, unhinged. The Other can no longer respond to my address; she no longer needs my participation; she can no longer give to me what I can not give to myself. This modification in how the Other is there for me can be expressed with three mutually implicating questions. How does the Other survive in me? How do I survive the Other's absence? How do I survive my own death in the Other?

Even if all other human beings, and especially those dearest to me, were to perish in some unfortunate cosmic cataclysm, miraculously sparing but me, my life would still *continue* to be essentially inter-subjectively constituted. I would still be haunted by the lives of Others. This imaginative destruction of the world, including all other human beings, motivates a methodological reduction that does *not* reveal an original sphere of ownness in the complete *absence or loss* of others. On the contrary, such a methodological reduction of the world reveals an original sphere of ownness *in which the Other* still lives within me, but likewise reveals an original loss of myself with the death of the Other. I carry the death of the Other in my soul much as my soul has been carried away with the Other's departure. "La mort dans l'âme" is here two-fold. There is no after-life of the Other within me without a

poignant sense of having myself died with the Other. Life after death is here doubled: mine and yours.

With the Other's departure, something essential of who I am, and still yet to be, has perished. As Patočka insightfully stresses, we experience this loss of the Other not just in terms of the Other's absence for us, but as a proper loss of ourselves, namely, our own possibility to be awoken to ourselves through the Other and, reciprocally, to awaken the Other to us. As Patočka remarks: "the non-existence of the Other becomes a *living as if we did not live*." We are not, thereby, primarily awoken of our own mortality (as, for example, with Augustine's experience of his friend's death in the *Confessions*), but, on the contrary, we are awoken to *having died* with the Other. I experience *myself* as no longer being. Something of my own life, as my own possibility of being, is taken along and away with the Other's death. This aspect of mourning my own death in the Other's departure, not, however, as a confrontation of my own being-towards-death, but as a loss of myself in the Other, is eloquently expressed in Pirandello's reflections on his mother's death:

But I am crying for another reason, mama! I cry because you, mama, cannot anymore give me a reality! A comfort, a support of my reality has been now destroyed. When you were there seated in that corner, I kept on thinking "If she is thinking about me, I am alive for her". And this sustained and comforted me.

Now that you are dead, I don't say that you're not living anymore for me; you live, as you lived before, with the same reality that I always gave you from afar, thinking about you, without seeing your body, and you'll always live until I will live; don't you see? This is actually what I won't be anymore for you! Because you cannot think about me as I think about you, you cannot feel me as I feel you! This is the reason why those who think of being alive, mama, they also think that they are crying for their deaths, but actually

they're crying their own death, a kind of reality that does not exist anymore in the feelings of those who passed away.

You'll have it forever in my feelings; but I won't have it anymore in you, mama.<sup>21</sup>

This "lived death" spans mine and yours. I must not only survive the absence of the Other. I must survive my own absence in the Other's departure. As Pirandello laments: «The shadow is now darkness in my room. I don't see me and I don't feel me».

In grieving, we mourn twice, for ourselves as well as for the Other. Given this dual implication, we become prone to succumbing to an intolerable oscillation between, on the one hand, guilt for and, on the other hand, anger at the Other's untimely departure. The experience of guilt and responsibility for the Other's death can here be characterized as an unhinged transfiguration of one pole (or side) within the inter-subjective reciprocity of participation, namely, the pole of *our* participation in the Other's existence. With the Other's passing, my surviving her death appears illicit and unworthy. My sense of responsibility remains internal to her death, as if, in participating essentially in her life, I could (or: should) have participated *more* by having prevented her from dying. This condition of responsibility is ontological and most acutely felt with the death of children, and, especially, one's own. The devastation wrought with the death of children resides with an unforgivable violation of what is sacrosanct in the ethics of creation: that the creating being should perish first, that the created being should live beyond its origin. With the death of children, creation would seem to be undone, rendered into some kind of mockery, with such a reversal in the order of being and becoming. Our sense of responsibility for the death of the Other is not an accountability for any possibility I could or could have not realized, but a responsibility *as such* for the Other's existence, given my

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21 PIRANDELLO 1915. My thanks to Alessandra Fussi for bringing Pirandello's text to my attention. Thanks as well to Marta Ubiali for this English translation. For the Italian text: [http://www.classicalitaliani.it/pirandel/novelle/16\\_238a.htm](http://www.classicalitaliani.it/pirandel/novelle/16_238a.htm).

existential participation in her life, which nonetheless (and must) remain powerless to save the Other from her inevitable departure. We are stricken with guilt without being guilty: no offense has been done against the Other. Our sense of guilt in surviving the Other's death is all to more poignant given its innocence.

Feelings of guilt can often swing to the opposite extreme of anger and resentment at the Other's presumptive abandonment of our lives. Landsberg speaks in this regard of the "resentment of infidelity" on the part of the surviving and the "tragic infidelity" of the departed.<sup>22</sup> This anger we might feel against the departed can be characterized as an unhinged transfiguration of the other pole (or side) within the inter-subjective reciprocity of participation, namely, the Other's participation in our existence. Insofar as the Other lives in us, through her participation in our lives, her sudden departure becomes resented as an essential failing on her part. We feel betrayed by her departure. Such anger is not without a feeling of being left alone to bear an experience, which, of all experiences in our lives, we would need, more than ever, the Other to participate in our lives. Paradoxically, we would seek to have the Other carry us in the hour of greatest need, and in failing to do so, we would, as paradoxically, come to resent the Other for having abandoned us to a despair that we cannot bear alone. Mortality, as Landsberg aptly remarks, is the condition of ontological infidelity.

Because we cannot bear to survive on our own the Other's absence, the inter-subjective rupture of death requires another subject – the third – to structure and carry the experience of mourning and remembrance for us both. This other virtual subject is ritual and ceremony. Rituals and ceremonies interject a supporting subject which allows us to bear what would otherwise remain unbearable, but also, in turn, gives witness to the death of the Other as an event within inter-subjectivity as such. When we stand speechless and find no words, when the experience becomes itself unbearable, ritual and ceremony, as expanding the circles of inter-subjective participation,

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22 See LANDSBERG 1951.

interject themselves in order to re-constitute the reciprocity of participation, not only more widely between us and those others who survive, but as crucially, between us and the departed.

## 6.

Who still survives in me, once the Other has departed from me? A familiar response to this question appeals to the extended presence of the Other in memory and remembrance. We have of the Other only what the power of our memories can still recall and provide. As Freud understood under the heading of the “work of mourning” (*Trauerarbeit*), an interiorized representation of the Other serves as a surrogate object for a displaced and mimetic libidinal attachment in lieu the Other’s defunct presence.<sup>23</sup> Such an interiorized *eidolon*, as a representation that sustains my mourning of the Other’s death, runs the risk, however, as Derrida cautions, of «ideally devouring and in a quasi-literal manner the body and the voice of the Other, her face and her person».<sup>24</sup> The interiority of memory retains the life of the Other

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23 As Freud writes in his short text *Transience*: «Mourning over the loss of something that we have loved or admired seems so natural to the layman that he takes it quite for granted. But for the psychologist, mourning is a great mystery, one of the phenomena that one does not explain oneself, but to which other obscurities may be traced back. We believe that we possess a certain capacity to love, called the libido, which is at the earliest stages of our development applied to our own ego. Later, though still from very early on, it turns away from the ego and towards the objects which are thus to an extent absorbed into our ego. If those objects are destroyed or if we lose them, our capacity for love (the libido) becomes free once more. It can take other objects as a substitute, or return temporarily to the ego. But we are at a loss to understand why this removal of the libido from its objects should be such a painful process, and we have at present no hypothesis to explain the fact. We see only that the libido clings to its objects and does not wish to abandon those which are lost even when a substitute is ready and available. That, then, is mourning» (see FREUD 1976, 3096).

24 DERRIDA 1988, 54. Without pursuing here in more detail and depth the course of Derrida’s reflections, it should be clear from what follows that Patočka’s unfinished reflections on life after death indicate another alternative to the question trenchantly posed in *Mémoires, pour Paul de Man*: «Quand nous disons ‘en nous’, ‘entre nous’ pour nous rappeler fidèlement ‘à la mémoire de’, de quelle mémoire s’agit-il, *Gedächtnis*,

within us, but only in the form of a sign, a representation, or a token, as sprawled fragments of an entire existence now departed. From such fragments of memory, we might seek to summon the person as a whole in their alterity, but only on condition of holding the Other within the immanence of our self-presence. Is this not the finality of death, that it brings to an end *any* living presence of the Other for me, that death makes of the Other an emptiness without end, which always haunts my internal portraits of the Other from the unreachable shore beyond the horizon of my own remembrance?

Is there a sense, however, in which the Other enjoys an after-life within us that does not have the form of memory and remembrance? Is there another form of presence, to wit, a veritable form of presence, in which the Other remains there for me? In a revealing comment, Patočka observes: “my dead father is *my father* and remains as such for me.” By evoking how “my father” still *remains*, Patočka hints at a more intimate sense of presence, or better: resonance, than with the kind of representations secured *in absentia* through memory and remembrance. Whereas for others, and, in fact, for the majority of others who knew him, Patočka’s father can only be remembered *in absentia* as a “teacher,” as “Mr. Patočka,” or as “the next door neighbor,” without any after-life within, Patočka’s evocation of “my father” suggests a different sense of “within me” than the interiority of memory and remembrance. This other, more intimate form of presence is likewise no longer simply “in” me, held before me as an internal album of memories without any outward traces in the world. For if, in searching for a more intimate sense of how the Other appears within me, we might readily speak, in creditable phenomenological terms, of the “soul” of the Other’s after-life, this presence of the Other is just as much “in” me as it is “in” the world: the world as such, in its form of appearance for me, has changed, for I can no longer look onto the world without also seeing the presence of the Other’s departure *out there*. As Pirandello evokes this topology of the Other’s departed presence:

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*Erinnerung?*» (DERRIDA 1988, 55).

I could still – whether for a sense of pity this would have been hidden to me – ignore the fact of your death, and I still could imagine you, alive, in that corner on the usual chair in that usual corner, little as you are, with all the grandchildren around you, or maybe busy with something familiar. I could keep on imagining you this way, with a reality of life that couldn't be bigger: that reality of life that for so many years, when I was so far from you, I always attributed you because I knew that you were actually seated in that usual corner.<sup>25</sup>

In his reflections, Patočka proposes that this intimate presence of the Other, other than in the form of memory and remembrance, is the manifestation of the “metaphysical quality” or “core” of their singularity. This manifest “quality” of the Other’s presence is, as Patočka further suggests, “something analogous” to Ingarden’s notion of “metaphysical quality” in *The Literary Work of Art*. In addition to aesthetics qualities such as color, line, and shape (i.e., sensible qualities of perception), Ingarden attributed to works of art a “metaphysical quality.” Metaphysical qualities are manifest in the same manner (“have the same mode of existence”) as aesthetic qualities. Both qualities structure the appearance and form of an art-work. Unlike the aesthetic qualities of the objective features of an art-work or the psychological qualities of subjective reactions to an artwork, the metaphysical quality of an artwork represents what Ingarden terms the “aesthetically most active or salient dimension” of an art-work. This salient dimension is strictly speaking neither an objective property nor a subjective response. It is, in this sense, “invisible,” even as it must be manifest through the visible qualities of the art-work. Ingarden characterizes metaphysical qualities as “atmospheric” and as “hovering over the men and things contained in the situations”

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25 PIRANDELLO 1915: [http://www.classicitaliani.it/pirandel/novelle/16\\_238a.htm](http://www.classicitaliani.it/pirandel/novelle/16_238a.htm).



depicted or represented in an artwork.<sup>26</sup> As Ingarden's list of such qualities is meant to show ("the dreadful, the tragic, the dramatic," etc.), metaphysical qualities are the revealed dimension of an artwork's meaningfulness. Being struck by meaningfulness is affective as well as global; meaningfulness envelopes the artwork as a whole while inhering within its distinctive aesthetic qualities.

Although Patočka does not unfold Ingarden's ideas further, this notion of an art-work's "metaphysical quality" goes hand in hand with Ingarden's rejection of the thought that artworks could be bearers of truth, given that truth remains bound to a structure of judgment and predication. As Ingarden argues: «no sentence in a literary work of art is a 'judgment' in the true sense of the word».<sup>27</sup> Artworks cannot be considered as either as "true to reality" or as bearers of truth, since artworks cannot enter into a relationship of correspondence between "a true judicative proposition and an objectively existing state of affairs." Artworks are thus neither faithful reproductions of reality nor distorting illusions of reality. But even as artworks are neither "true" or "false" in terms of any correspondence to reality, artworks can nonetheless be truthful towards their depicted themes. Considered thus, the truthfulness of a portrait towards its subject, for example, is thus not a matter of verisimilitude or pictorial accuracy. Caricatures can be more truthful of a person's character than a photograph. Since metaphysical qualities are not aesthetic qualities (although they cannot be separated from these), the truthfulness of an artwork remains irreducible to an artwork's objective properties as well as our merely subjective responses. Such metaphysical qualities reveal what Ingarden calls "essentialities" (*Wesen-heiten*).<sup>28</sup> Metaphysical qualities manifest the *truthfulness* of artworks to their subject-matter.

In a similar vein, Patočka considers the resonance of others within us, of those others in whose lives we participated intimately, and who, in turn, participated in ours, to be animated by such a metaphysical

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26 INGARDEN 1973, 291.

27 INGARDEN 1973, 300.

28 See INGARDEN 1925.

quality. This metaphysical quality is “independent of the actual existence of the other,” since it resides and remains within us, yet is not identical with our memories of the Other. Much as, for Ingarden, metaphysical qualities inhere in aesthetic qualities without being reducible to such manifest modes of sensible appearance, by the same token, the metaphysical quality of the Other, as encapsulating the singular meaningfulness of her existence for me, inheres in our remembrance. But whereas memories, strictly speaking, mark the absence of the Other and the irretrievable distance between the now of remembrance and the remembered past, with the manifestation of the Other’s metaphysical quality, something essential of her presence abides in me as present. And whereas memories may or may not be “true,” the manifestation of the Other’s metaphysical quality bespeaks a truthfulness of what her life meant for me. This metaphysical quality does not, therefore, contain and reflect the *identity* of the departed nor reveal the person as whole. It is rather «a characteristic trait which contains implicitly the entire individual essence of the departed: his look, his voice with accent, his gait, the way he holds his head».<sup>29</sup> Such singular traits might have passed us by or gone unnoticed in our daily interactions with the Other during our shared life together. Such traits might have never been genuinely perceived or appreciated while the Other was alive, but only come into their essential meaningfulness, as truthful expressions of who the Other was, and thus still is, for me. What we take for granted of the Other – the meaningfulness of her life for me – we now recognize as their *eidolon*, or metaphysical singularity, in the acute lucidity of their departure. Such a metaphysical quality stands in a metonymic relationship with the Other’s life as a whole. It is not a particular trait that *encompasses* her life as whole (its meaningfulness for me), but rather a trait that expresses something singular about the Other’s essentiality as *more than* the whole, such that no summation or summoning of her life in its entirety could do justice, or speak the truth, of what, truthfully, her life *still* means for me.

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29 INGARDEN 1925.

In Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, this metaphysical quality, or "essentiality," is reminiscent of Marcel's parting image of his friend Robert de Saint-Loup as he emerges from Jupien's brothel prior to his return to the front and eventual death. Not expecting that his friend would be found at such an establishment, and approaching the brothel's entrance in "profound darkness," Marcel dimly perceives "an officer hurriedly leaving it." Marcel does not explicitly recognize Saint-Loup as this ghostly departure from this illicit brothel, yet nonetheless apprehends, in a manner both distinct and fleeting, "the species of ubiquity" that characterizes his metaphysical singularity, and which would forever and there-ever remain in him, as the *eidolon* of his departed friend.

Something about him struck me, all the same; it was not his face, which I did not see, nor his uniform, which was concealed under a heavy greatcoat, but the extraordinary disproportion between the number of different points through which his body passed and the small number of seconds it took for him to effect this exit, which looked like an attempted dash for safety on the part of somebody under siege. So that I was reminded, even if I did not actually recognize him [si je ne le reconnus pas formellement] – I will not say exactly of the frame, or the slenderness, or the gait, or the speed of Saint-Loup – but of the sort of ubiquity which was so peculiar to him [mais a l'espèce d'ubiquité qui lui était si special].<sup>30</sup>

This "sort of ubiquity" so singular to Saint-Loup's movement of existence pervades his presence entirely without being a quality or essence directly recognized or perceived. This singular presence inheres in particular traits (his gait, his speed) without, in turn, being reducible to these very traits, as so many different points, through which Saint-Loup's existence transpires. What Proust here describes as

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30 PROUST 2003, 119.

Saint-Loup's "ubiquitous species," or "essence (*espèce*), expresses the meaningfulness of Saint-Loup's existence for Marcel's life. Unlike an involuntary memory that recalls and retrieves a past which once was, Marcel is here struck by a recognition without a past: it is more akin to an *anamnesis* that opens a space of remembrance in revealing, in a living presence, the metaphysical singularity of the departed. As a form of immemorial remembrance, the *meaningfulness* Saint-Loup's life for Marcel is suddenly revealed, as would be a secret that was known all along without ever having been known *or* suspected. Some days later, Marcel receives the news of Saint-Loup's death at the front, killed "while covering the retreat of his men." For several days thereafter, Marcel remains in his room in grief and morning, thinking about his friend (*pensant à lui*) and remembering "the special being" Saint-Loup had been for him. Marcel recalls Saint-Loup's generosity and grace in calling to mind various memories: the cavalry barracks at Doncières, the café at Rivebelle, Balbec, and the house of the Princesse de Guermantes. These recollections delineate for Marcel «a sharper, more vivid picture of his life, and a clearer sense of grief at his death, than often one has for people more dearly loved but so regularly seen that the image we retain of them is no more than a sort of vague composite of an infinite number of subtly different images». Marcel evokes the meaningfulness of Saint-Loup's existence for him, and for which these pages of time regained from the *Recherche* constitute the cathedral of words in which Saint-Loup's singular essence remains eternally remembered. «In the people we love», Proust writes, «there is, immanent within them, a dream which we cannot always perceive but which haunts us»<sup>31</sup>. Paradoxically, it is only with the Other's departure from our lives that this innermost dream – her soul or *eidolon* – comes to find its fitting and final resting place within us. Just as paradoxically, it is only because the souls of the departed can only find their proper place of rest in us, that we ourselves can never experience our own lives as complete – a completion that only comes to rest in the Other.

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31 PROUST 2003, 147.

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# Scheler on Shame: A Critical Review<sup>\*</sup>

*Daniel O. Dahlstrom*

Boston University<sup>\*\*</sup>

[dahlstro@bu.edu](mailto:dahlstro@bu.edu)

*ABSTRACT.* This paper presents a critical review of Scheler's analysis of shame's structure, dynamic, and affectivity, and his explanation of phenomena of shame. This first part of the paper examines Scheler's accounts of shame's basic condition, the law ultimately governing its origin, and its basic dynamic. The second part of the paper turns to his general descriptions of what we feel when we feel shame and his analyses of two distinct forms of shame. The conclusion attempts to draw these aspects of his account of shame together to illustrate why, according to Scheler, we feel shame. Throughout the paper, some basic criticisms of Scheler's account are advanced. At the same time the paper attempts to demonstrate the virtues of his highly differentiated descriptions of experiences of shame and his attempt to weave these descriptions together into a general theory.

*KEYWORDS.* Scheler; Shame; Affectivity; Values.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> *Correspondence:* Daneil O. Dahlstrom – Boston University, Department of Philosophy, Commonwealth Avenue 745, Boston (US).





*So ist die Scham gleichsam die Puppenhülle,  
in der die Geschlechtsliebe bis zu jener Reife  
wächst, in der sie die Scham durchbricht.*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Scheler's 1913 essay on shame is largely overlooked today.<sup>2</sup> Its at times outright sexist and chauvinist speculations, together with an ominously racist rhetoric, provide reason enough for some contemporary scholars to be wary of the value of devoting precious research time to it.<sup>3</sup> For Anglophone scholars, the lack of a readily available, contemporary translation of the essay also undoubtedly contributes to its neglect today.<sup>4</sup> Some of Scheler's observations, moreover, are bound to appear puzzling, thanks to differences in languages and eras. The fact, for example, that *Scham*, the word for shame in German, can stand for genitalia as well as for a feeling of shame, introduces a bevy of word-associations and word-combinations, the likes of which are not to be found in contemporary English. A Brit's experience of shame today may differ markedly from what a contemporary of Oscar Wilde or D. H. Lawrence understood as a shameful experience, let alone what Scheler understood by a «feeling of shame» (*Schamgefühl*) around the same time.<sup>5</sup> Along with today's

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1 SCHELER 1957, 130.

2 The list of secondary literature on Max Scheler since 2000, compiled by the Max Scheler Gesellschaft, contains 288 entries, only two of which (BERNET 2003, TEDESCHINI 2012) are devoted to Scheler's essay on shame. For an earlier essay in English on Scheler's essay, see EMAD 1972; for a more recent treatment in English, see ZAHAVI 2010. Scheler's essay is often cited (BROUCEK 199, 111-4; TAYLOR 1985, 60f; LANSKY & MORRISON, 253, 256; WILLIAMS 1993, 220; NUSSBAUM 2004, 174, 186; DEONNA ET AL., 2011, 150f), but rarely studied.

3 For a single passage that puts all these tendencies on display, see SCHELER 1957, 131f.

4 Manfred Frings' translation of the essay as «Shame and Feelings of Modesty» (see SCHELER 1987, 1-85) is currently out of print.

5 Wilde, *The Young King*: «Through our sunless lanes creeps Poverty with her hungry eyes, and Sin with his sodden face follows close behind her. Misery wakes us in the morning and Shame sits with us at night». Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*: «And once, or twice, to throw the dice is a gentlemanly game, But he does not win who plays with Sin in the

ever-fading sense of «sin» (freely associated with shame by Scheler and Wilde alike), a century of psychological, sociological, and ethnological research separates us from Scheler's observations. In certain respects at least, considerably more is known today about the phenomena associated with shame than was known when Scheler penned *Scham und Schamgefühl*.

Yet, for all its outrageous speculations and outdated claims, Scheler's essay on shame remains a classic study of the subject. As I hope to show, it is worthy of close scrutiny, in part for its highly differentiated descriptions of experiences of shame and for its attempt to weave these descriptions together into a general theory. In that theory he lays out what he takes to be shame's basic precondition, its structure and fundamental dynamic, and the law ultimately governing that dynamic. He also identifies its affective character and basic forms. The result is a formidable account of the scope of shame-phenomena that is as brash and controversial as it is untimely today. The following paper is an attempt to review Scheler's analysis of shame under four aspects. I aim to identify both its potential contributions to understanding shame and some basic difficulties besetting the analysis.<sup>6</sup>

The four aspects of shame concern the structure, dynamic, affectivity, and explanation of shame, according to Scheler's account. By the *structure* of shame, I mean its make-up, including the components and relations that enter into the experience. By the *dynamic* of shame, I have in mind how it takes place and the principle governing that process. By the *affectivity* of shame, I have in mind the answer to the question of what it feels like to feel shame (as well as whether it is a basic sort of feeling or made up of more basic sorts of

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secret house of shame».

6 The paper is thus undertaken with the conviction that critical investigation of Scheler's analyses and inferences, particularly where they are controversial, has the potential to draw us closer to core features of the phenomena, across eras and linguistic cultures. But the paper by no means provides a full-scale critical investigation of this sort. Its aim is the more modest one of preparing the way for that sort of investigation by reviewing some basic strengths and weaknesses (including ambiguities and discrepancies) of his account.

experience or feelings). By the *explanation* of shame, I mean answers to questions of why we feel shame at all. Addressing these aspects and answering the relevant questions are not peculiar to Scheler's examination of shame, but his approach to them is distinctive (and, indeed, in one crucial respect largely counter-intuitive).

The following review begins with (1) Scheler's accounts of shame's basic condition, the law ultimately governing its origin, and its basic dynamic. This first part of the paper accordingly addresses the structural and dynamic aspects of shame, on his account. The paper then turns to (2) his general descriptions of what we feel when we feel shame and his analyses of two distinct forms of shame (and how the latter correspond to two of the four distinct species of feelings that he identifies).<sup>7</sup> This second part of the paper addresses the affective aspect of shame. In conclusion, I attempt to draw these aspects of his account of shame together to illustrate why, according to Scheler, we feel shame and how his account contributes to a broader discussion of issues surrounding the phenomenology and explanation of shame.

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7 There are several aspects of Scheler's account that, in the interest of economy, I can no more than signal here, including his loose speculations about shame's preconditions (SCHELER 1957, 70-4), his comparisons and contrasts of shame with related feelings such as pride, humility, and disgust (SCHELER 1957, 81-88) as well as emotions with which it is often confused, such as prudery, cynicism, obscenity (SCHELER 1957, 93-6), his account of both the functions of the feeling of sexual shame (SCHELER 1957, 106-44) and the differences between the feeling in females and in males (SCHELER 1957, 145-7). The central precondition is individualization (individual preservation and valuation) that – hand in hand with sexual differentiation and drives – supersedes functions identifiable solely with reproducing the species. Noting the difference, even anatomically, of the place of the reproductive parts of plants and animals (the more hidden placement of the latter), Scheler further links this aspect to the subordination of sexuality to the whole of a life, adding that this subordination might even be designated « an objective phenomenon of shame » (SCHELER 1957, 74). As for the functions of the feeling of sexual shame, its *primary* function is to inhibit autoeroticism, while promoting sympathetic, other-related sexual feelings; its *second* function is to postpone satisfaction, thereby allegedly enabling racially optimal, noble offspring as well as an intensification of the sex drive and its satisfaction; and its *third* function is to contribute to the sexual act itself.

## 1. Shame's basic condition, the ultimate law of its origin, and its basic dynamic

Shame is an individual, paradigmatically human experience. There is, Scheler declares, «no clearer, no sharper, and no more immediate» expression of the human condition, situated as it is between the divine and the brute. Shame is inherent to being human precisely because human beings are the bridge (the transition, the point of contact) between the essential and the actual.<sup>8</sup> Inherent to this human position midway between God and other animals is «the *basic condition* of the essence of the feeling of shame»: a consciousness that is luminous – i.e., that represents a surplus phenomenon opposite all life's needs and is freed from merely illuminating vital reactions to the environment – yet bound to the life of an organism.<sup>9</sup>

Having outlined this basic condition of shame, Scheler identifies the law ultimately governing its origin, across all its forms. Shame is possible whenever the attention of someone immersed in an activity that is not purely biological (e.g., art, love, mathematics) suddenly turns back to the body that obscurely accompanies that activity. Since our attention can obviously turn from the activity to our bodies without us feeling shame in the process, this experience is not itself shame but opens up a sphere in which shame can occur. The sphere is one of conflict (*Widerstreit*) – the conflict of an act's *essential* claim and genuine meaning with the concrete and actual manner of its *existence* (again, reflecting the underlying condition in the case of shame). A specific form of this experience of conflict is the root of «that obscure and remarkable feeling of shame» and its attendant experiences of bewilderment (*Verwunderung*), confusion (*Verwirrung*), and that of opposition between what ideally ought to be and what factually is the case. An unbalanced and unharmonious relation between bodily

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8 Shame is tied to the essentially human feeling of being a bridge between two orders of reality (*Sein und Wesen*); «No God and no animal can feel shame» but, precisely as this *Übergang*, human beings must (SCHELER 1957, 69).

9 SCHELER 1957, 67.

neediness and claims not confined to bodily needs is, he iterates, an inherent part of « the basic condition of the origin of this feeling».<sup>10</sup> As Scheler puts it, because we're more than our bodies, we *can* feel shame; but because we are bodies we *must* feel shame.<sup>11</sup>

These observations, lifted from the opening remarks of Scheler's essay, begin to provide answers to the questions of the *structure* and *process* of shame. The basic condition of the experience of shame is the human bridging of two distinct, equally inherent yet conflicting levels of living. Shame is based, in other words, on the structural difference between some pursuit or behavior and its underpinnings. Those underpinnings are purely biological in the case of sexual shame, as well as in instances of non-sexual shame, such as child's shame in soiling her pants (encopresis). Equivalently (not identically), the contrast is between a higher, more differentiated, and individualized activity or state and a lower, less differentiated, and more generic activity or state. The dynamic of feeling shame is a sudden shift in awareness from the former to the latter, tantamount to a shift from a sense of what ought to be (or at least what someone individually strives for) to a sense of what is (as part of the same individual's generic condition). A person may feel shame, for example, upon realizing that she is «putting on airs», thereby violating the authenticity to which she aspires. Herein lies the dynamic of shame, how it takes place and the principle – Scheler calls it the «law» – governing the process.

Throughout his account, Scheler exploits the double meaning of «shame» which refers at once to the experience or «stirring» as a feeling and to the distinctive intentionality or directedness of the

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10 Scheler speaks of a disharmony between the sense and claim of the human being's «spiritual person and his bodily neediness» (*seiner geistigen Person und seiner leiblichen Bedürftigkeit*) (SCHELER 1957, 69). However, since he subsequently distinguishes bodily shame from spiritual shame, this formulation appears to overreach, though it is admittedly made by way of introduction.

11 Thus, human beings in some cultures cover up their genitals even when the weather does not require that they do so. As Scheler puts it, «the most primitive form of clothing» arises from shame and not vice versa (SCHELER 1957, 75).

feeling.<sup>12</sup> He has in mind the German equivalent to the difference between feeling ashamed and feeling ashamed of or for something.<sup>13</sup> But the intentionality of shame is by no means indiscriminate; that is to say, it is not directed at just anything. A further marker of feelings of shame (at once structural and dynamic) is the fact that they belong to the sphere of self-directed feelings. «In all shame, an act occurs that I would like to call *a turning back to the self*».<sup>14</sup> The feeling calls our attention back to some aspect of ourselves (or, as we shall shortly see, some self), particularly after we have been immersed in some activity. Scheler gives the helpful example of a lover who, having been caught up in acts of expressing his love to his beloved, finds himself abruptly taken aback with shame when his body makes him all too aware of his purely sensual intentions. Another one of Scheler's oft-cited examples is that of a model who, in the course of posing in the nude, detects what she takes to be the painter's lustful glance, a prompt that suddenly makes her aware simply of her body.<sup>15</sup> Her shame is a feeling of protecting herself, her value as an individual, from urges that are all too common, i.e., universal and vulgar (*allgemein* and *gemein*).<sup>16</sup>

As long as the model considered herself merely as a model and not as an object of desire, she would not feel shame. So, too, if she felt

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12 Scheler criticizes positivist thinkers for confusing the forms of the expression of shame with the feeling itself (SCHELER 1957, 76). But this distinction is also not the same as the distinction between the stirring of the feeling and the self to whom it is directed. While shame requires both the stirring and that directedness, it can be directed at oneself (when we are ashamed of ourselves) or the self of someone else (when we are ashamed for someone else).

13 Scheler may have mind the fact that we can feel ashamed without automatically knowing what it is about or for whom we feel shame. In those cases, we may, upon reflection, come to see for whom we feel shame. But Scheler's point seems to be that, explicitly or not, shame is directed at a personal self, usually but by no means invariably, one's own personal self. In this sense at least, shame is inherently intentional.

14 SCHELER 1957, 78.

15 SCHELER 1957, 78-9. Other examples: a patient who feels no shame as long as she considers herself to be regarded by the physician as a token of a type and not as an individual; a lover who reacts with shame to the beloved's declaration «you are a beautiful woman», which she takes to be comparing her to others (though context may well dictate whether she takes it as signaling her individuality).

16 For justification of this *double entendre*, see SCHELER 1957, 131.

herself merely as an object of desire, there would be no shame. As noted above, the feeling of shame requires, as its basic structural condition, a conflict between two levels of living; for example, one confined to the body and its needs, and another that is not. But the conflict must be lived; it is a dynamic process. Shame sets in, not when one is regarded either as something generic or as an individual, but when, in the face of one of these ways of being regarded, one turns back to oneself as someone who can rightly be regarded in the opposite way.

Shame begins in the dynamic of that *turning back* to the self that enters neither if one knows oneself *given* as something universal nor if one knows oneself *given* as something individual. Instead, that turn back to the self makes its appearance if the palpable intention of the other *oscillates* between an individualizing and universalizing view [*Meinen*] and if one's own intention and the experienced counter-intention, with respect to this difference, move, not in the same, but in opposed directions.<sup>17</sup>

Consider, once again, Scheler's example of the model. She feels that she is given to the painter both as an individual (indeed, a unique subject) and as something universal (or, more to the point, as something quite common); his intentions are palpable to her. At the same time, as his intentions swing in one direction, hers swing in the opposite direction. The moment he regards her not as an individual but as something common, she feels herself (her value) as an individual threatened. That feeling is a feeling of shame. To illustrate this point further, Scheler notes how, «in a completely analogous way», we already feel a kind of «gentle shame» the moment we characterize one of our own, individual experiences in general terms such as «sympathy» or «love», thereby lending our consciousness a kind of publicity «to which those completely individual experiences belong

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<sup>17</sup> SCHELER 1957, 79.

just as little as our private lives belong in the newspapers».<sup>18</sup>

Shame, so conceived, is by no means limited to or even originating in sexual life, despite being deeply intertwined with sexuality. Indeed, sexual life is in a sense paradigmatic for shame precisely because it is at once the most general aspect of our lives (shared with animals, with everything alive) yet also the most highly individual aspect «insofar as [...] there is no judge of any sort other than the sentiment [*Empfindung*] itself».<sup>19</sup> Sexual shame accordingly presents itself as a consequence of two basic movements: a movement of the generic, purely sensuous sex drive and a movement of love on some level, at once individualized, value-directed, and – perhaps above all – devoted to the beloved. Here, once again, for shame to occur, one has to be capable of both movements and the «experienced *tension*» between them. The tension is present since the move to one side remains accompanied by «a strong undercurrent of *attraction* to the matter against which it strives».<sup>20</sup> The experience of this tension, inherent in the feeling of shame, flags its complexity (a point further addressed below).

Scheler further underscores the point that shame is not exclusively sexual by calling attention to the fact that it is not even exclusively social. To the extent that the ultimate judge is the individual's sentiment itself (as noted above), the presence of others is obviously dispensable. Indeed, the experience of feeling shame in private, i.e., apart from the actual presence of other people, is hardly a rarity. As Scheler puts it, shame in our own eyes – «in the face of» (*vor*) ourselves – is no less basic than shame in the face of others. Yet the fact that a person privately experiences shame hardly diminishes its dependence upon some sort of real or imagined interaction. In such cases, the individual is simply taking the place of others. Scheler's own examples – an adolescent ashamed of her body parts, a person shamefully using discretion to pry into someone's secrets – confirm this intersubjective dimension, as does his description of the painter's «palpable [*fühlbare*]

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18 SCHELER 1957, 79f.

19 SCHELER 1957, 80.

20 SCHELER 1957, 84.



intention», palpable, that is, to the model. The preposition *vor* (“in the face of,” “before”) expresses a duality in the structure of shame, a difference between the one who is ashamed and the one before whom she is ashamed. Scheler could have expressed himself more clearly on this point but the gloss presented here is consistent with his insistence that without love (sexual or spiritual), i.e., intersubjectivity in some sense, there is no shame («one of the profoundest and the most natural *aides to love*»).<sup>21</sup>

Shame is intentional in two senses; it is directed at both the object of the feeling and the basis for the feeling (more clumsily, why the shame is felt, for what or about what I feel shame). Sometimes these two senses are collapsed into the same expression. In some uses of the locution «I am ashamed of myself», for example, the genitive (*of*) can indicate that I am the object and the basis of the shame. In that case, something about me is the basis of the shame, i.e., for what I am ashamed. But these two senses can also be expressed in a way that differentiates them, as in the locution «I am ashamed of myself for being a certain way or doing something», e.g., for boasting, exaggerating. (Scheler also recognizes that there is an aboutness built into a derivative feeling of shame, what he deems «repentant shame», discussed below.<sup>22</sup>) Another sort of the dual intentionality is, it bears adding, already present in the structural condition and dynamics of shame, since shame involves turning to oneself precisely – indeed, alternately – as an individual and as something generic.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, as already mentioned, shame remains a self-directed feeling (*Selbstgefühl*). Scheler points out, however, that it need

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21 SCHELER 1957, 82, 97, 137. SCHELER’S remark about publicity and the newspapers, cited above, strongly suggests that, in his view, something of this sort, i.e., some level and mode of intersubjectivity, is inherent to the experience of shame. My gloss on this point differs from both Emad’s and Zahavi’s interpretations (EMAD 1972, 362; ZAHAVI 2010, 216f; ZAHAVI 2017, 215).

22 SCHELER 1957, 141.

23 Scheler does not himself draw out this dual intentional aspect and his invocation of the feature expressed by the «about» (*über*) is ambiguous. To this extent, since these features of shame seem to be common to the feeling, I am trying to give a generous interpretation of his account in this respect.

not refer to the individual self of the one who is ashamed.<sup>24</sup> We can also be ashamed *of* others and, in a different way, *for* others. Perhaps the most typical experience of being ashamed of others involves some shared identity with them. We regard what they did, for example, as demeaning of the group to which we both belong. We might say, for example, «I am ashamed of you as a member of our team», meaning that their activity brought dishonor upon the team. In such a case, we may be submitting that the person ought to feel shame even if she does not. The situation is different when we feel shame for someone else with whom we do not identify. Here, too, the person may or may not experience the shame herself. Indeed, we may or may not expect the person to feel shame. To illustrate this sort of scenario, Scheler gives the example of feeling shame and blushing if an off-color story is said in the presence of a lady but feeling no such thing if it is told in her absence. The shame is *for* her, even if she has no such feelings.

From Scheler's interpretation of this fact, he makes two important and controversial inferences. He infers first that shame is generally directed at a self, indeed, any self. Here one might hesitate to accept this conclusion since it appears to rule out the commonplace of being ashamed of a collective (e.g., a nation, a political party or movement, a group or team). He also infers – no less controversially – that shame is not «a quality of feeling that attaches to the ego». His point is that I do not experience the feeling of shame as something related to me (*Ichbezogenheit*) in the way that I experience and can perhaps share the experience of melancholy or joy. In contrast to suffering or delighting, we do not empathize with others (or at the very least not in the same way) when it comes to shame. The feeling of shame about something makes a demand quite independently of such an individual condition of the ego (*individueller Ichzustand*).

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24 Scheler takes note of «shame before oneself» (*Scham vor sich selbst*) and «being ashamed of oneself» (*Sichschämen vor sich selbst*) (SCHELER 1957, 78). Presumably, he means something like the following. We may experience shame directed at ourselves (e.g., someone else being ashamed of us or our recognition that something about ourselves is an object of shame, even if we are not ashamed) or we may be ourselves ashamed of ourselves.

The basic phenomenon lies rather in being ashamed that is always a being ashamed *about something* and is related to a *state of affairs* that “demands” it of itself and completely independently of the condition of our individual ego. This “being-ashamed” is an emotional movement of a sui generis sort that does not entail being ashamed *of oneself*, that is to say, it does not entail any experience of being related, in the feeling, to the I, let alone the fact that I am ashamed “about” myself.<sup>25</sup>

This detachment from how I otherwise feel personally, i.e., from the condition of my ego, explains why, Scheler adds (quoting Petrarch), the feeling of shame uniquely «wells up» and «overcomes» us.

This second inference seems to overreach, though it is hard to deny that Scheler has his finger here on something distinctive if elusive about shame. He is certainly right to claim that I can feel shame for someone else in the sense he describes without feeling ashamed of myself in the same way. But is shame then as impersonal as his gloss suggests? Is that feeling of shame not vicarious in some sense, such that it could be shared empathically with someone else? In the setting described above, isn't the feeling sometimes as contagious for others (including the lady herself) as the blushing? And don't feelings of joy and melancholy well up in us just as much as shame does before we manage, if at all, to get a handle on them?

## 2. Shame's complexity and basic forms

According to Scheler, shame is a not a sensation (*Empfindung*) like seeing or hearing, but a feeling (*Gefühl*). In general, feelings are

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25 SCHELER 1957, 81. The observation about the necessity of being «about something» in this passage further supports the claim, made above, that shame is intentional in two respects, being directed at some self as its object and at some basis (being ashamed for or about something).

experiences that are far more intimately bound up with the person having the experience than are experiences of sensing, imagining, thinking, or willing (presumably even if in the case of shame, as he claims, the feeling is also impersonal, i.e., detached in a certain sense from the condition of the ego). What someone feels is as much a part of her as the act of feeling, something that cannot be said for what she sees (or thinks) and the act of seeing (or thinking). Because a person lacks this distance from her feelings, she is accordingly less able to control or manage her feelings at will (Scheler 1921, 344f).

The complexity of the affective character of shame, as Scheler interprets it, presents two sorts of phenomenological difficulties. In this section I address (2.1) this complexity and the challenges introduced by it, before turning to (2.2) Scheler's differentiation of the two basic forms of shame in terms of his taxonomy of feelings.

### *2.1 The complex affectivity of shame*

The basic condition of shame is, as noted, a conflict between two levels of living, a conflict that is experienced as a tension, pulling us in two directions at once. Given this tension and the ways of feeling it, the affective character of shame is complex to the point of challenging the notion that shame can be described as a single specific or unified phenomenon. Scheler makes four relevant observations that underscore the complexity of shame. He describes the feeling of shame as (1) an individual's feeling of protecting herself (*Schutzgefühl*) and her «individual value against the entire sphere of the universal» (Scheler 1957, 80). The idea that shame is a protective feeling corresponds to the notion that it has a certain potency, capable of rising – to a degree – above the tension. Thus, it is «passionate» and powerful enough at times to put up resistance against «lower» urges, i.e., inclinations to act in purely generic ways and thereby surrender strictly personal (individual) meaning and value (a process patently recognizable in both bodily and spiritual shame).<sup>26</sup> It is even a

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26 SCHELER 1957, 124, 130, 132. Williams inherits this account of shame as « an emotion of

commanding feeling, i.e., a source of commands, enjoining us against succumbing to those urges.<sup>27</sup> So, too, Scheler refers to its «restraining force», capable of inhibiting or curbing various appetites until, as he colorfully puts it, love breaks through.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, the impulse to protect entails a sense of something worthy of protection. Shame accordingly also involves (2) a feeling of the value of oneself (*Selbstwertgefühl*), a feeling akin to (but, nonetheless, distinct from) the related feeling of honor (*Ehrgefühl*).<sup>29</sup> Shame, on this account, includes an individual's feeling of her own unique value combined with the feeling of safeguarding – and being able to safeguard – herself and this value against the threat of being solely defined by the very same universal (generic, public) characteristics that admittedly co-define who she is.

In keeping with the basic condition of shame and the ultimate law of its origin, we have the feeling of protecting ourselves precisely because we also have feelings that identify us with the universal (including the connotation of the common or vulgar). As a result, we have every reason to be fearful or anxious of the prospect of losing ourselves, our value as individuals, to the universal dimensions that we – quite literally – embody. Scheler accordingly also characterizes shame as (3) an individual's feeling of something «akin to anxiety» (*gleichsam Angst*) about sinking down into lower values. As such, shame is the feeling that comes of the «reaction against» (*Gegenreaktion*) the universal and generic.<sup>30</sup>

Those universal and generic elements are, it bears stressing, felt by

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self-protection » from Taylor who appropriates it from Scheler's notion of *Schutzgefühl*; SCHELER 1957, 80; WILLIAMS 1993, 220f; TAYLOR 1985, 60f. Williams does not use the expression «negative feeling», but he does regard it as a reaction to a consciousness of a loss of power, as viewed by an internalized viewer or witness, a reaction that presumably (in contrast to guilt) need not involve fear at the internalized viewer's anger.

27 SCHELER 1957, 140.

28 SCHELER 1957, 130; see, too, the opening quotation of the present essay.

29 SCHELER 1957, 82.

30 While likening shame to *Angst*, Scheler also distinguishes it from *Angst*, albeit – in contrast to the difference between shame and fear (*Furcht*) – without explaining the distinction in detail; see SCHELER 1957, 80, 88.

the individual as hers no less than the feelings she deems and values as uniquely hers. The individual is, in that sense, accountable for those feelings – the very feelings against which she seeks to protect herself. In view of this last consideration, it is not surprising to find Scheler characterizing the feeling of shame as (4) an individual's feeling of accountability (*Schuldgefühl*).<sup>31</sup> One could also translate *Schuld* as «guilt» but guilt suggests responsibility that may, but need not, accompany shame. I am not responsible for my sexual urges (i.e., I did not choose to have them), even though I am accountable for them (i.e., they are mine).

The characteristically anxious, and accountable feeling of shame, strongly protective of the worth of the self to whom it is directed, is apparent in sexual shame. Sexual shame is anxious about protecting the individual value of love from succumbing to purely sensual, common desires, for which the individual herself is nonetheless accountable. As Scheler aptly puts it, shame is «love's conscience».<sup>32</sup> To be sure, how these different aspects come together into one feeling of shame is by no means obvious. Feeling the value of ourselves and feeling protective of it are one thing, feeling anxious and accountable, quite another. At best, if we countenance these different feelings and their role in shame, it seems that shame is a complex, episodic feeling that runs the gamut of feelings of strength and worth, anxiousness and accountability.

A further difficulty arising from Scheler's account of shame's affective character is his contention that, far from being a negative feeling, it is a «positive feeling of the value of oneself» which it shares with pride. Scheler is not speaking simply of the meaning or import of shame, but of the feeling itself.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to humility, for example, in shame an individual's «positive worthiness» is given to him. Does that mean a feeling that is closer to something joyful and uplifting than feelings of sadness and dejection? Scheler does not say as much but if

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31 SCHELER 1957, 81.

32 SCHELER 1957, 124.

33 Thus he chides educational theories for attributing only a negative meaning to shame (SCHELER 1957, 98).

so, his account differs from most standard, contemporary treatments and, indeed, definitions of shame.<sup>34</sup> Scheler himself distinguishes shame from repentance (*Reue*), a negative feeling, directed at some loss of value (some negative value), which seems, indeed, to coincide with those standard conceptions of shame.

Matters in this regard are complicated, however, since Scheler himself recognizes the existence of an intermediate sort of shame that often combines with the feeling of the repentant. Recalling the double sense of «shame». i.e., signifying both the stirring of the feeling and the object/direction of the feeling (e.g., one's own self or that of someone else), he notes how being ashamed of oneself can coincide with a sense of being repentant. A person experiences this intermediate shame when, for example, she feels the disgracefulness (*Schande*) of lying. Although repentance is directed at some negative value, the latter can apparently coincide with an intermediate form of shame, presumably in the sense that she can feel ashamed and repentant for something she did because she also feels her self-worth and the need to be protective of it. Why call it «intermediate»? Perhaps because pure shame is the feeling that she is better than that, i.e., better than what the object of repentance and intermediate shame indicates.

Still, the very idea that shame in some genuine or pure form is a positive feeling has to strike contemporary readers as counterintuitive. «Feelings of shame» typically designate unpleasant experiences, even if those experiences in some sense suppose a positive sense of our worth as individuals. Moreover, even though, as discussed in the next section, pleasure and pain belong to a class of feelings different from feelings of shame, Scheler does not shy away from characterizing the feeling of shame in these terms. Thus, he distinguishes the extremely painful, «burning shame» that accompanies repentance from the «warm and often even pleasure-accentuated» experience of shame as

34 According to OED, shame is «the painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonoring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's conduct or circumstances [...], or of being in a situation which offends one's sense of modesty or decency». See, too, GIDDENS 1991, 64; TRACY & ROBINS 2007, 13.

the immediate, protective, and anticipatory feeling we have in relation to a sexual coupling «not guided by a decided love». Penitential shame (*Schamreue*) consists in «looking back and seeing a transgression of what the feeling of shame in the latter [more positive] sense had forbidden».<sup>35</sup>

Yet the example of an experience of shame colored or accentuated in a pleasant way (*lustbetont*) provides an important clue to Scheler's otherwise counter-intuitive claim about the positive character of the feeling of shame. Genuine sexual shame – not to be confused with prudery, coyness, or coquetry – amplifies a sense of well-being, precisely by contributing to the possibility and anticipation of sexual love. The climactic yet lasting joy of that love, a joy that is global and shared, bringing two entire bodies and lives together, requires the restraint that is joyful because, though the love is still undecided, the shame beckons to it. Scheler seems to have this sort of experience in mind when he claims that «genuine shame is constantly built upon the sensation of a positive value of oneself».<sup>36</sup> Yet even if this interpretation of sexual shame is countenanced, the question of its generalizability remains.

## 2.2 *The forms and feelings of shame*

Scheler introduces two forms of shame – bodily shame and soulful shame – corresponding to two different sorts of feelings – a vital feeling and a spiritual feeling – respectively. In *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (drafted roughly the same time as the study of shame), he uses similar terminology in the course of differentiating four irreducible sorts of feelings:

- (1) sensory feelings (*Empfindungsgefühle*);
- (2) vital feelings (*Lebensgefühle*) or, perhaps more informatively, feelings of being alive, feelings of vitality or,

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<sup>35</sup> SCHELER 1957, 83, 140.

<sup>36</sup> SCHELER 1957, 100.



- equivalently, someone's feelings of her body as a whole (*Leibgefühl*) and of herself as a body (*Leiblich*);
- (3) soulful feelings (*seelische Gefühle*), i.e., feelings pertaining to someone's psyche or, alternatively, feelings someone has of herself as an ego (*Ichgefühle*); and
  - (4) spiritual feelings (*geistige Gefühle*).

Vital feelings stand for Scheler in sharp contrast to sensory feelings.<sup>37</sup> A sensory feeling – e.g., pain (*Schmerz*), not to be confused with suffering (*Leid*) – is a mere condition of a part of the body. As such, it is both localized and transient, completely absorbed in the present. Unlike functions or intentional acts, it is not itself meaningfully related to anything beyond itself. By contrast, in addition to being neither transient nor confined to a particular part of the body,<sup>38</sup> vital feelings are wrapped up in a nexus of meaning and value involving the past and future (memories and anticipations) as well as relations to (feelings for) other things (in the case of bodily shame, relations to others).<sup>39</sup> Vital feelings (e.g., contentment, weariness, vigor), moreover, are directly personal (clinging to the ego) in a way that cannot be said for sensory feelings, a fact that also explains why, Scheler adds, sensory feelings are more subject to control (e.g., by removing the relevant stimulus). Vital feelings cannot produce or eliminate sensory feelings, but they can control or inhibit them. Thus, the vital feeling of sexual shame curbs purely sensory, sexually gratifying feelings.<sup>40</sup>

Vital feelings are at the same time bodily feelings. That is to say, part of their make-up is a consciousness of oneness with our body (*jenes einheitliches Bewußtsein unseres Leibes*). The same cannot be said for soulful feelings, such as sadness, grief, or joy.<sup>41</sup> These soulful feelings

37 On the non-intentionality of *Empfindungsgefühle*, see STUMPF 1997 (1907).

38 In English as in German, we do not ask where the shame is in the way that we ask where it hurts.

39 SCHELER 1921, 353: «Was aber von ganz besonderer Bedeutung ist, ist die Tatsache, dass schon das Lebensgefühl, *nicht* erst die geistigen Gefühle, der Funktion des Nachfühlers und Mitfühlers teilhaftig ist».

40 SCHELER 1957, 107.

41 SCHELER 1957, 106. This sense of oneness is not to be confused with a fusion

pertain not to the ego as a body, but to the ego simply, albeit to varying degrees. This «layer» of feelings can combine, to be sure, with different layers and degrees of sensory and bodily feelings, but without surrendering – short of mental illness – its *sui generis* status. For example, only someone out of kilter would consistently confuse being sad with being weary.

«Spiritual feelings», the final category of feelings, designate feelings such as serenity or despair. These sorts of feelings differ from soulful feelings precisely by superseding the realm of anything given to the ego, for which (or for the value of which) the ego is in some sense responsible. They take such complete possession of someone that it is a misnomer to say that she experiences them in the way she experiences pain or sadness. Their value is the absolute value of the person herself, not a value relative to or dependent upon something the person knows or does.<sup>42</sup>

Lining up Scheler's account of shame's basic forms with this taxonomy of feelings presents a problem. Whereas Scheler understands bodily shame as a vital feeling, he characterizes the other form of shame in terms that cut across the last two sorts of feelings. Thus, he differentiates bodily shame from shame that he describes as *soulful* and *spiritual*. However, as should be evident from his account of the latter sort of shame, he seems to regard it as a kind of soulful (not spiritual) feeling.

In any case, both forms of shame suppose its pre-condition, a conflict between higher, value-determining and lower, value-indifferent functions, and they are alike experiences of the tension of the unresolved character of that conflict. So, too, each form exists solely within a sphere in which someone shelters her self-worth as an

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(*Verschmelzung*) of sensory feelings and sensations, Scheler contends, not least since a positive vital feeling can be combined with negative sensory feelings (SCHELER 1921, 352).

42 Forming the correlate of the ethical value of the person's very being itself (beyond any relation to community, friends, state, and so on), these feelings are «metaphysical and religious self-feelings» (SCHELER 1921, 356). The role of clothing is accordingly based upon shame, since the genitals remind him of his body and his sexual functions when he aspires to more.

individual, protecting it from absorption into any purely generic or universal dimension, where she is nothing more than a token of type.<sup>43</sup>

The difference between the two forms – bodily shame and spiritual shame – lies in the composition of the sides making up their respective conflicts. Bodily shame is the index of the tension between “value-selecting vital love” and sensory feelings of pleasure. The strongest, most compelling sort of bodily shame is sexual shame, where the conflict is between sexual *love* (*life-drive*) and the sex *drive* (*sensuous drive*) or, equivalently between a vital feeling of love (not to be confused with a spiritual feeling) and a sensory feeling of pleasure.<sup>44</sup> A person experiences sexual shame when she finds her desire for sexual pleasure to be at odds with her aspiration to sexual love.<sup>45</sup> Spiritual shame is, by contrast, the index of the tension between spiritual love and the basic vital drive of preserving or augmenting the power of living. The capacity for spiritual shame is confined to persons, i.e., those who have the spiritual capacities of loving, willing, and thinking.

Summing up the contrast between the two basic forms of shame, Scheler writes:

Since the feeling of bodily shame presupposes only the stratification of sensory and vital drive and feeling, but the feeling of soulful shame presupposes the composition of a spiritual person, the former [i.e., bodily shame] is also universally on hand, without exception, in human beings and at every period of their development. Indeed, traces of it, while difficult to discern, are already present among higher animals. By contrast, the feeling of soulful shame is

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43 SCHELER 1957, 90.

44 Sexual love is the central, defining expression of the life-drive; hence the distinction between them. Since even sexual love is selective and value-driven, it is distinct from expressions of needs and pursuits of fulfilling needs that are common to the species. In Scheler’s view, spiritual love is on a different level altogether.

45 Scheler gives a detailed, speculative account of the emergence of these conditions for sexual shame. The fundamental condition, specified by the other conditions, is a turn toward individual over species-specific prioritizing.

certainly not universally human, let alone on hand at every stage of development of individuals and peoples.<sup>46</sup>

This text reminds us that Scheler prefaces his account of the pre-conditions of bodily shame with speculations on the development of the life-world (*Lebewelt*) in general, with musings about the differences between plant and animal forms of propagation as well as the decisiveness of sexual differentiation.<sup>47</sup> In this way, he argues for the naturalness and universality of the phenomenon of bodily shame. This claim is certainly not above controversy, depending – not least – upon how that shame is conceived and how the criteria for identifying traces of it in the animal kingdom are determined. But what is even more controversial is the apparent denial in this text of the presence of spiritual shame across peoples. Given the superior value that he attaches to the capacity for spiritual love and shame, it is hard to see how this denial, unsupported as it is, does not amount to a chauvinist rant.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Scheler's differentiation of the two basic forms of shame, corresponding to two different sorts of feelings, undoubtedly captures a basic gradient of feelings of shame, ranging from types of bodily shame to types of spiritual shame. The former are feelings unmistakably rooted in our sense of being more and, indeed, being more *for others* than our bodies alone can reveal. The latter are feelings of shame that spring from a sense of being more than our lives alone can reveal. It is one thing to feel ashamed for making an untoward sexual advance, quite another to feel ashamed for willfully betraying a friend's confidence.

### 3. Explaining shame: summing up Scheler's model

According to Scheler, shame is a feeling that is directed at some self for

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46 SCHELER 1957, 91.

47 SCHELER 1957, 70.

being or acting a certain way. The self at which it is directed may be myself or someone else (I am ashamed of myself or for (*für*) someone else), but always (a) as someone individual and yet universal, and (b) in the face of (in the eyes of, *vor*) myself and/or others.<sup>48</sup> The feeling itself is born of the tension between two inherent but conflicting aspects of the self in question, i.e., a value-directed aspect and value-indifferent aspect – the former an individual property of someone capable of love, the latter a generic property. The feeling combines a positive feeling of the worth of the self as an individual and thus capable of love, a feeling of the need and capacity to protect that worth, and an anxiousness – at times even pleasant anxiousness – about the undecided outcome of the person's conflicted state. The feeling takes place precisely when attention shifts back from some common behavior or generic aspect of a person to her worth as an individual, capable of love.

Why do we experience shame? We experience shame to protect ourselves from ourselves or, to put it less paradoxically, to safeguard our better selves from our lesser selves. Shame is the feeling born of anxiety of losing ourselves (and thus a capacity to love) to what is not uniquely ours, whether in the form of generic, biological urges, common to every animal, or in the form of social institutions and practices that we have not made our own.

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48 Shame can be broken down structurally into four components: (1) the act of feeling or being ashamed, (2) the object of the shame (myself or someone else), (3) the reason for the shame (i.e., for being or acting in ways that conform to my generic, value-neutral status at the cost of my individual, value-centered status), and (4) those in whose eyes the reason is shameful. (2) and (3) correspond to what I have construed as the dual intentionalities of shame.

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# The Existential Dimension of Right

Individuality, Plurality and Right in Fichte and Arendt\*

*Emily Hartz*

Copenhagen Business School\*\*

[emily.h.hartz@gmail.com](mailto:emily.h.hartz@gmail.com)

*ABSTRACT.* The following article paves out the theoretical ground for a phenomenological discussion of the existential dimension of right. This refers to a dimension of right that is not captured in standard treatments of right, namely the question of whether – or how the concept of rights relates to the ontological and existential question of how we come to express ourselves as individuals in a plural world. While this question is phenomenological in nature, it is not treated within the otherwise diverse field of phenomenology of law. The author therefore looks outside this tradition and develops a framework for discussing the existential dimension of right by bringing central parts of Fichte’s and Arendt’s work into dialogue. By facilitating this – admittedly unusual – dialogue between Fichte and Arendt the author explicates how, for both Fichte and Arendt, the concept of right can only be adequately understood as referring to the existential condition of plurality and uses this insight to draw up a theoretical ground for further phenomenological analysis of right.

*KEYWORDS.* Fichte; Arendt; Right; Plurality; Individuality.

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\*\* *Correspondence:* Emily Hartz – Copenhagen Business School, Department of Organization, Solbjerg Pl. 3, 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark.





*Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world*

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

*The human being ... becomes a human being only among human beings; and since the human being can be nothing other than a human being and would not exist at all if it were not – it follows that, if there are to be human beings at all, there must be more than one*  
Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*

## 1. Introduction

In the following article I explore a topic that has received little attention in recent phenomenological discussions of intersubjectivity namely the topic of *right*. I argue that we cannot adequately understand the concept of right without explicating the existential dimensions of right. The existential dimension of right refers to a dimension of right that is not captured in standard legal or philosophical discussions on the nature of right, namely the question of whether – or how the concept of rights relates to the ontological and existential question of how we come to express ourselves as individuals in a plural world.

One might expect to find relevant discussions of the existential dimension of right in the field of phenomenology of law. However, the diverse field of phenomenology of law<sup>1</sup> can instead be characterized roughly by the general questions of how law appears *for a*

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1 LOIDOLT 2010.

consciousness<sup>2</sup> or how legal entities are generated by social acts<sup>3</sup>. In order to map out the theoretical terrain for a phenomenological investigation of the existential dimension of right we therefore have to look outside the field of phenomenology of law. In the following I suggest a vantage point for doing so by bringing Fichte's transcendental deduction of right, as presented in the *Foundations of Natural Right*, into dialogue with Hannah Arendt's phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity, plurality and self in *The Human Condition* and her discussion of a right to have rights in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.<sup>4</sup> By bringing Fichte's analysis of right into dialogue with Arendt's work I hope to pave the ground for further phenomenological analysis of the existential dimension of right.

I am aware that reading Arendt with Fichte is not just unusual but also controversial since their engagement with the notion of right seems to point in opposite political directions. The two thinkers might come together in their emphasis on the importance of laws "which protect and make possible it's [a people's] political existence".<sup>5</sup> But Fichte's unreserved celebration of the necessity of the rights pertaining to a modern *Rechtsstaat* sits uneasily with Arendt's emphasis on the "frailty of human institutions and laws" in general and the contingency of any such set of laws in particular.<sup>6</sup> Importantly this difference cannot just be set aside as a superficial difference of emphasis. Instead, it seems to be an inherent consequence of their

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2 HUSSERL 1973; SCHÜTZ 1932.

3 REINACH 1983. Hirvonen and Maihofer's Heidegger-inspired discussions of law constitute two important but rare exceptions to this general tendency: HIRVONEN 2015, MAIHOFFER 1954.

4 In the following, I will refer to these three works as FNR (*Foundations of Natural Right*), HC (*The Human Condition*) and OT (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*).

References to FNR are to the English translation by Michael Baur (Cambridge University Press). In square brackets are added references to the I. H. Fichte edition published in *Johan Gottlieb Fichtes sämtliche Werke*, vol. 3, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1845/46), and reprinted in *Fichtes Werke*, vol. 3, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1971).

5 HC, 191.

6 HC, 191.

different methodological strategies. In Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* [*Grundlage des Naturrechts* 1796] he explicitly investigates the formal structure of right in the modern *Rechtsstaat* as a transcendental condition for realizing the kind of human relations that conditions our very existence as self-conscious beings. This bold commitment to the necessity of the modern *Rechtsstaat* stands in stark contrast to Arendt's phenomenological investigation of the right to have rights which explores the vulnerability of any system of rights and is motivated by the shocking impotency of rights – both at the national and international level – to provide any kind of meaningful protection to the massive numbers of stateless refugees after the Second World War. The present attempt to read Arendt with Fichte might therefore be accused of misunderstanding the very tenor of Arendt's project.

When I venture into this attempt in spite of such important cautions it is because Fichte's account of how the analysis of the self translates into a conception of right constitutes one of the most systematic attempt at explicating the existential meaning of right.<sup>7</sup> Therefore this analysis constitutes an important heuristic tool that can be used to bring certain important – but mostly overlooked – phenomenological and existential aspects of Arendt's analysis of the right to have rights into focus. The point of reading Arendt through Fichte is therefore not that the political and legal thinking of Fichte and Arendt can – or should ever be – reconciled, but that Fichte's theory of right helps explicate the existential dimensions at stake in Arendt's treatment of rights. It also helps clarify important connections between her phenomenological discussion of the human condition in *The Human Condition*, on the one hand, and her political discussion of the importance of a right to have rights in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, on

7 When I venture to look at Fichte's rather than Hegel's discussion of recognition and right it is because Fichte initially links recognition and right in a more direct way than does Hegel. However, Fichte and Hegel's discussion of recognition and right have much in common and a first analysis of the phenomenological thematic in Fichte's theory of right could pave the way for also integrating Hegelian analysis of recognition in a phenomenological analysis of right (HEGEL 2013). For an introduction to Hegel's discussion of right that focuses on relating Hegel's discussion to current discussions of subjectivity see HARTZ & NIELSEN 2014.

the other hand.

To make this argument, I first (1) explicate the central steps in Fichte's transcendental deduction of the concept of right. I then (2) proceed to argue that there are important (and unnoticed) structural similarities between Fichte's and Arendt's inter-subjective understanding of the ontology of the self. Finally (3) I argue that these similarities can be engaged to reveal structural relations between Arendt's existential analysis of the self in *The Human condition*, on the one hand, and her discussion of rightlessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, on the other hand. This paves the ground for integrating discussions of the existential dimensions of right in phenomenological investigations of intersubjectivity.

## 2. Fichte's Transcendental Deduction of Right

Fichte's aim in the *Foundations of Natural Rights* is to perform a deduction of the transcendental conditions of self-consciousness and reveal the concept of right as such a condition. He claims that at the end of the text he will have "derived and determined" this concept of right as well as guaranteed its application in accordance with the principles of a real science.<sup>8</sup>

This, of course, is no little mouthful to swallow for the average reader who might have a hard time reconciling the investigation of human consciousness – as such consciousness appears to itself – with Fichte's commitment to mapping out in painstaking details the necessary structure of the modern *Rechtstaat*, including property-rights of single women<sup>9</sup>, the design of identity cards<sup>10</sup> and rules for the earmarking of cows<sup>11</sup>. Before delving into Fichte's argument, we need therefore to contemplate the possible meaning and purpose of such

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8 FNR, 12 [11].

9 FNR, 301 [348].

10 FNR, 257 [295].

11 FNR, 197 [225].

transcendental deduction.<sup>12</sup>

In the introduction to the *Foundations of Natural Rights*, Fichte explains the meaning of a transcendental deduction of right noting «that a certain determinate concept [i.e. ‘right’] is originally contained in reason and given through it, can mean nothing other than that the rational being, just as certainly as it is a rational being, acts necessarily in a certain way».<sup>13</sup> He goes on to explicate that: «The philosopher’s task is to show that this determinate action is a condition of self-consciousness, and showing this, constitutes the deduction of that concept».<sup>14</sup> Fichte therefore makes clear from the beginning that the purpose of the work is to deduce right as a transcendental condition of self-consciousness. This purpose seems to advance an understanding of the I as the self-explanatory ground of everything that there is, thereby giving the I an elevated position as the ground from which everything else can be derived, a position that is often ascribed to Fichte.<sup>15</sup>

This interpretation of the meaning of the transcendental deduction is certainly legitimate. However, in order to bring Fichte’s analysis of right into dialogue with the phenomenological tradition it is more constructive to investigate a slightly different and equally warranted interpretation of the meaning of Fichte’s transcendental deduction.<sup>16</sup> This second interpretation gives heed to Fichte’s repeated claim that the I *finds* itself (rather than claiming that the I is constituted).<sup>17</sup> The emphasis on the I’s finding of itself relates intimately to phenomenological investigations of self-consciousness. Both focus on the question of how, when and why the I comes to appear to itself as an I.

According to this second interpretation, the purpose of the

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12 For a thorough discussion of Fichte’s method in this work, I recommend BREAZEALE 2006.

13 FNR, 8 [7].

14 FNR, 9 [8].

15 HENRICH 2003, 10.

16 This account follows Allen W. Wood’s interpretation of *Foundations of Natural Rights* (WOOD 2006).

17 See e.g. FNR, 9 [9].

transcendental deduction is not so much to prove the necessity of a certain concept (e.g. right) but instead to investigate the conditions for self-conscious itself with the purpose of revealing *what needs to be thought* in order to think the concept of self-consciousness.

Fichte's emphasis on the I's finding itself underscores the need to abstain from thinking self-consciousness as an entity. Instead, Fichte argues, we are to think of self-consciousness as "pure activity" and similarly the concept of right is to be thought of as a necessary condition for this activity to take place and hence for an I to think itself as an I: «The transcendental philosopher derives – and thereby "proves" – his "concepts" by grounding them in pure observations (intuitions) of something that is not a concept at all: the series of those necessary acts by means of which the I constitutes itself *as* and I, for itself». <sup>18</sup>

While the two interpretations of the transcendental deduction are in many ways similar, they are different in at least one important way. On the second interpretation, self-consciousness is not elevated as the ground of everything that there is. Instead, self-consciousness is revealed as necessarily grounded in and dependent on the I's immersion in a material and intersubjective world. This implies that the purpose of the transcendental deduction cannot be to derive everything from the I, but instead to reveal the self-conscious I as fundamentally determined and conditioned by an external and intersubjective world.

The difference between the two interpretations can also be explicated in another way: While the first interpretation presents the transcendental deduction as an answer to skepticism, the second interpretation understands the transcendental deduction as a more humble investigation of self-consciousness which is captured by the question «What else does any rational subject (that is, any finite I) – have to think in order to "think the I?"». <sup>19</sup> As Wood argues: «For transcendental philosophy the real point was never merely to have an

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18 BREAZEALE 2006, 118.

19 BREAZEALE 2006, 120.

answer to skepticism, but rather to use this way of answering skepticism in order to provide insight into the nature of the fundamental concepts about which we are inquiring, and developing a new and revolutionary theory of the relationships between them».<sup>20</sup> It is this understanding of the transcendental deduction that will guide the following interpretation of Fichte's analysis of the concept of right.

The *Foundations of Natural Right* is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with theoretical questions regarding the foundation of natural right. The second part deals with the practical dimension of developing positive law in accordance with the principles of natural right that have been deduced in the first part. The second part constitutes a detailed discussion of the laws needed to regulate the modern state in accordance with the principle of right. This second part leads Fichte to develop concrete suggestions for the regulation of all kinds of aspects of the modern state. For the purpose of this article, the first part is the most interesting, because this is where he articulates the existential dimensions of right and thereby (or so I will argue) paves the ground for the future integration of phenomenological discussions of this dimension of right. However, the fact that Fichte presents this first part together with such detailed analysis of concrete legal regulation illustrates the extent to which Fichte is committed to an understanding of right as something that is mediated in concrete and empirically given institutionalized structures.

As it has been pointed out by many commentators, the details in the first part of the work are extremely difficult to follow and «it is not clear whether the concept of self-consciousness invoked in the beginning of the deduction is precisely the same concept at work in its conclusion».<sup>21</sup> However, what is interesting about Fichte's transcendental deduction of right in relation to phenomenological discussions of intersubjectivity is not whether or not he actually manages to deduce right as a necessary condition of (some form of)

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20 WOOD 2006, 68.

21 NEUHUSER 2000, xvi.

self-consciousness. What is interesting is his reflection on *what needs to be thought* in order to think the concept of self-consciousness. That is, his reflection on what is implicit in the very concept of self-consciousness. This reflection leads him to an understanding of self-consciousness as something that is never simply given, but something that must be *realized*. He further argues that such realization of self-consciousness presupposes relations of recognition that structures an inter-subjectively shared world. Thus, the enduring significance of Fichte's theory lies in the move towards intersubjectivity that defines the development of his argument.

Fichte flags this move towards intersubjectivity from the beginning of the work where he makes clear that the concept of right «acquires necessity through the fact that the rational being cannot posit itself as a rational being with self-consciousness without positing itself as an *individual*, as one among several rational beings that it assumes to exist outside itself, just as it takes itself to exist».<sup>22</sup> Several points are at stake in this dense remark. First of all, Fichte makes clear that his deduction is aimed at explicating the conditions for finding oneself as an *individual*. For Fichte, the term “individual” signifies not just a numerical quality, but a spatiotemporal existence in the empirical world. Thus, with the term “individual” Fichte explicates that the deduction of right is about explicating the conditions for a finite, empirical self-consciousness. Furthermore, Fichte links individuality to plurality, that is, he points out that what needs to be proven is that a rational being can only become aware of herself as a rational being (posit herself) if she becomes aware of herself as one among several rational beings. To prove this point, he undertakes a deduction of the concept of right by providing the proof of a number of successive theorems.

The first theorem Fichte sets out to prove is that «A finite rational being cannot posit itself without ascribing a free efficacy to itself».<sup>23</sup> What this theorem says is that a finite rational being cannot reflect

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22 FNR, 9 [8].

23 FNR, 18 [17].



upon itself (posit itself) without reflecting upon itself as a practical being.

It is of crucial importance to note that the self-consciousness at issue in Fichte's analysis is a *finite* self-consciousness. What Fichte is interested in here is not the conditions for the notion of consciousness as such or the development of a concept of absolute consciousness. What he is interested in is instead «the genetic conditions under which a real subject with a spatiotemporal existence first comes to an awareness of itself as a self-positing subject».<sup>24</sup> It is this ambition that guides Fichte's formulation of the problem to be solved in order to prove the deduction's first theorem:

The activity [consciousness] we are seeking can be posited [reflected on] by the rational being in opposition to the world, which would then limit the activity; and the rational being can produce this activity in order to be able to posit it in opposition to the world; and if such an activity is the sole condition of the possibility of self-consciousness (and self-consciousness must necessarily be ascribed to the rational being, in accordance with its very concept), then what is required for such self-consciousness must occur.<sup>25</sup>

The meaning of Fichte's – admittedly cryptic – formulation becomes clearer if we think about it as an attempt to explicate the problem of self-consciousness in terms of a finite or worldly self-consciousness. What Fichte expresses in the first part of the sentence is that we must seek a consciousness that can be reflected upon *in opposition* to the world, that is, as *limited and determined by* the external world. However, limitation in and by itself is not enough for consciousness to become aware of itself *as* consciousness, that is as a free or self-positing activity. This is why Fichte goes on to emphasize that the rational being must be able to *posit its activity* in opposition to the world. Thus,

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<sup>24</sup> NEUHOUSER 2001, 45.

<sup>25</sup> FNR, 19 [18].

it is not enough that the rational being experiences the world as limitation (as it does in theoretical intuition). What is to be intuited by consciousness is instead it-self, that is a self-positing (and therefore unlimited) activity. In other words, the problem to be solved «is how the subject can be aware of itself as both finite (constituted by its relation to something other) and self-determining (constituted by nothing other than its own activity)».<sup>26</sup>

Once we understand that this is the problem to be solved, the first theorem follows more or less immediately: what the theorem says is that we first become aware of ourselves as simultaneously limited *and* free in *action*. And Fichte's point in the first theorem is exactly that it is only in action that we perceive of ourselves immediately as both free and bound.

He explicates this through the notion of the concept of an *end*, which describes as «the *act of forming* the concept of an intended efficacy outside us»<sup>27</sup> and argues that the act of forming an end is «an efficacy directed at objects» and therefore limited, while – at the same time – it is also «an efficacy that follows immediately from the concept of an end». This means that the I is both limited (by the object at which it is directed) and unlimited (in that it has its ground purely in consciousness itself).<sup>28</sup> In this way, according to Fichte, we become conscious of ourselves in and through our actions.

According to Fichte, we could not reach such self-consciousness through a purely theoretical conception of the world since «by its very concept, [...] it [theoretical intuition] is not supposed to have the intuiter as its object, but rather something outside and opposed to the intuiter; namely, a world».<sup>29</sup> Therefore Fichte's first theorem is also another way of saying that practical reason has primacy over theoretical.<sup>30</sup> As noted by Wood: «For me, my individuality consists not merely, and not fundamentally, in *facts* that distinguish me from

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26 NEUHOUSER 2001, 44.

27 FNR, 20 [19].

28 FNR, 20 [19].

29 FNR, 19 [18].

30 NEUHOUSER 2000, xiv.

others but in *possibilities of acting* through which I actively determine who I am. In other words, the awareness of my individuality must be fundamentally *normative*.<sup>31</sup>

Fichte confirms this in the first corollary to this theorem where he directly states that:

What is being claimed [in the first theorem] is that the practical I is the I of original self-consciousness; that a rational being perceives itself immediately only in willing, and would not perceive itself and thus would not perceive the world (and therefore would not even be an intelligence), if it were not a practical being.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, while Fichte initially emphasizes that the finite consciousness is to be posited in opposition to the world and therefore seems to articulate an understanding of such consciousness as something fundamentally different and unrelated to the world, his argument ultimately aims to reveal that such opposition and limitation expresses instead a fundamental *relation* to the world. This relation comes to expression in the insight that the limitation of consciousness is also what *delimits* consciousness and enables consciousness to articulate itself as a spatiotemporal existence: as an individual self in the empirical world.

The truly groundbreaking move in this first step of Fichte's transcendental deduction of right is the development of an understanding of consciousness that reconciles subject and object by explicating consciousness not as something that is mysteriously and problematically *projected* into an external world, but as something that realizes itself as activity *in* the world. In other words, Fichte articulates a notion of the self that is crucially tied to the world, not only in the negative sense that such consciousness is fundamentally limited by its

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31 WOOD 2006, 72, emphasis in original.

32 FNR, 21 [20].

worldly existence, but also in the more affirmative sense that this limitation constitutes the conditions for the articulation of consciousness as a free being.<sup>33</sup>

With this description of the self as an activity *in* the world Fichte can be said to anticipate later phenomenological analysis of the self in terms of *existence* or *enactment* (*Vollzug*). This becomes even clearer in a later passage where he explicitly explains the idea of consciousness as a kind of substratum as the product of our imagination:

As soon as we hear of the *I* as active, we do not hesitate to imagine a substratum that is supposed to contain this activity as a bare capacity. This is not the *I*, but rather a product of our own imagination, which we construct in response to the demand to think the *I*. The *I* is not something *that has capacities*, it is not a capacity at all, but rather is *active*; it is what it does, and when it does nothing, it is nothing.<sup>34</sup>

Many years later Sartre poetically captures the same point by noting:

If, impossible though it would be, you could enter “into” consciousness you would be seized by a whirlwind and thrown back outside, in the thick of the dust near the tree, for consciousness has no “inside”. It is just this being beyond itself, this absolute flight, this refusal to be a substance which makes it a consciousness.<sup>35</sup>

What is essential in Sartre’s, Arendt’s as well as other phenomenological understanding of the self as enactment is that the self must be understood as a being that is *realized* or *happens* in the world rather than something that simply *is*.<sup>36</sup> The initial move that

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33 DE KOCK 2016, 12.

34 FNR, 23 [22].

35 SARTRE 1970, 5.

36 LOIDOLT 2017, 87; see also HEIDEGGER 1967; SARTRE 2012; ARENDT 1998.

Fichte makes in his deduction of right seems to be driven by the same kind of intuition, namely that the self cannot be understood as something static that can exist in isolation from an external world in which it is constantly realized, it must instead be understood as an activity that is directed *at* the world and that reverts into itself *through* the world.

The second theorem Fichte sets out to prove is the theorem that: «The finite rational being cannot ascribe to itself a free efficacy in the sensible world without also ascribing such efficacy to others, and thus without also presupposing the existence of other finite rational beings outside itself».<sup>37</sup>

The claim Fichte is making here is that «ascribing to oneself free efficacy (or agency) in the sensible world requires ascribing the same capacity to other rational beings».<sup>38</sup> From the first theorem we know that (according to Fichte) the finite rational being perceives itself first in action. However, this leads to a new problem for Fichte: How should it be possible that an individual spontaneously decides to exercise its efficacy when it is not yet aware of itself as self-determining and free? And even if it were thinkable that the individual was able to spontaneously exercise efficacy on the external world, how would it then recognize this efficacy as spontaneous and free? Would the results of its efficacy not appear to it with the same kind of determinate existence as any other external object in the world?<sup>39</sup> Thus, it seems, there is no way we could be able to realize our capacity for freedom and, therefore, no way we could come to initiate action in the first place.<sup>40</sup>

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37 FNR, 29 [30] original emphasis omitted.

38 NEUHOUSER 2000, xv.

39 HONNETH 2001, 68–69.

40 Note that the problem arises in this way only because the individual is to become aware of herself as a finite individual; that is as a consciousness that is limited and determined by an outside world. This is why consciousness cannot find itself as determining itself to be self-active. Such pure self-determination would evade any kind of relation to an external world; it would posit consciousness as a pure or absolute inwardness. But this is not what is at issue in Fichte's deduction of right. He is specifically after the conditions for becoming conscious of ourselves as finite individuals. Thus, what he is after is a

To solve this problem, Fichte argues, we must determine a way in which the rational being's free efficacy can *itself* become an object for the rational being.<sup>41</sup> This is possible «only if it is assumed that *the subject's efficacy* is synthetically unified with the *object* in one and the same moment, that the subject's efficacy is itself the object that is perceived and comprehended, and that the object is nothing other than the subject's efficacy (and thus that the two are the same)».<sup>42</sup>

What is demanded is that the subject's free efficacy becomes an object for the subject itself. Thus, somehow, the subject must become aware of itself as being in one and the same moment constrained (object) and absolutely free and self-determining (subject).

Fichte's solution to this seeming antinomy is to propose that external evidence of one subject's agency is provided by another free subject who summons us to exercise our freedom.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Fichte argues, the subjective and objective nature of consciousness can only be synthesized «if we think of the subject's being determined as its *being-determined to be self-determining*, i.e. as a summons [*eine Aufforderung*] to the subject, calling it to exercise its efficacy».<sup>44</sup>

The move that Fichte is describing here is a move where *I come to be an object for myself by being an object for another rational being*. Thus, my awareness of myself as free is conditioned on this freedom being given as an object to someone other than myself. In Fichte's terms this means that my freedom must be experienced as a limit on the freedom of another. It turns out to be exactly this limitation that is confirmed in the summons.

To understand the complexity of this reciprocal relation we must first understand what it means to say that I am an object for another rational being. The summons is supposed to be directed at me, as a rational being. That is another way of saying that I am the intended object of the summons. Thus, through the summons, I am first posited

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consciousness that reveals ourselves as free beings *in* an external world.

41 FNR, 31 [32].

42 FNR, 31 [32].

43 NEUHOUSER 2000, xv.

44 FNR, 31 [32].

as an object. To be posited as an object for another thus means that the other perceives me as a *limitation* on her being.<sup>45</sup> In other words: in order for the other rational being to have *me* (the conscious, free *I*) as the intended object of such a summons, the other must perceive me as something that poses a limitation on her freedom, otherwise I would not constitute an object for the other. Thus, I come to appear for myself and for another not first and foremost through my physical appearance, but through the other's positing of my freedom as something that limits the freedom of the other. What Fichte describes here is the structure of recognition in terms of a radical duality of self-consciousness: self-consciousness and freedom is realized through a reciprocal relation where we become conscious of ourselves by realizing the objective reality of our own freedom.

An important objection could be raised against Fichte's argument at this point. One might argue that what he has proven is that we need to stand in some relation of recognition in order to *first* become conscious of ourselves as consciousness and realize ourselves as free beings, but he does not seem to have proven that we necessarily need to continue to be in such relations once we have come to realize our own freedom. Thus, it might seem that Fichte has neither provided sufficient proof for the move from one specific instance of recognition to a full-blown *structure* of recognition, nor for the move from the duality of recognition to the plurality of a shared inter-subjective world. However, this objection flows from a specific interpretation of Fichte's transcendental project. If we grant that what Fichte has shown is not *how* self-consciousness comes into being, but *what needs to be thought* in order to think ourselves as conscious the objection can easily be refuted. Then, Fichte's point appears not to be that we come into being as self-conscious *I*s by being summoned, but instead that we always *find* ourselves *as* summoned, or – to use a much later expression – we find ourselves as always already summoned. In this sense, Fichte is arguing that we cannot become aware of ourselves as conscious beings outside the structure of the summons. When we experience another

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45 FNR, 31 [32].

conscious being's normative demand on us, we are always already summoned. No specific instance of normative demand could in and by itself produce that structure. On the contrary, we become aware of such normative demand as a limitation on our I only as already embedded in the structure of the summons.

Fichte's transcendental deduction of other conscious beings is parallel to his transcendental deduction of the material body in connection with which he states that «experience could not teach us that we have a body. That we have a body and that it is ours is something we have to know in advance, as a condition for the possibility of experience».<sup>46</sup> Just like no particular experience could teach us that we have a body, no particular summoning could make us aware of ourselves as conscious and free beings and as answerable to such summons. Once we find ourselves, we always find ourselves *as* summoned. In Wood's words: «The recognition that a summons is necessary for individual self-consciousness means that the mental states of others, as perceived by someone other than the I whose states they are, are as transcendently necessary to the self-consciousness of an I as are its own states».<sup>47</sup>

This is why Fichte is able to conclude that: «If there is any human being at all, then there is necessarily a world as well, and certainly a world such as ours, one that contains both non-rational objects and rational beings within it».<sup>48</sup> This also explains the move from the dual structure of recognition to the plural structure of intersubjectivity that emerges from the summons. Any dual instance of being summoned by a concrete other presupposes the transcendental condition of the summoning, which is nothing but the condition of being always already immersed in a shared world.

Importantly, this does not imply that the question of *how* we are integrated into such a shared world becomes irrelevant, but it means that the transcendental deduction of intersubjectivity is not dependent

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46 Fichte cited in WOOD 2006, 70.

47 WOOD 2006, 73.

48 FNR, 38 [40].



on any explanation of how this happens. Fichte's answer to this other question, the question of how we come to be immersed in a shared world, is "up-bringing": «The summons to engage in free self-activity is what we call upbringing. All individuals must be brought up to be human beings, otherwise they would not be human beings».<sup>49</sup>

Fichte notes that, by tying the summons, to upbringing he raises a problem of an infinite regress: the question arises: «who brought up the first human couple?».<sup>50</sup> Fichte solves this problem by arguing that «a spirit must have taken them [the first human beings] into its care» and by referring to «an old, venerable document [*Genesis*] that generally contains the deepest and most sublime wisdom and presents results that all philosophy must return to in the end».<sup>51</sup> While this solution will probably sit rather uneasily with most readers today, phenomenological discussions of selfhood have long since made us accustomed to accept the structure of the "always-already" without having to enquire into a first beginning. Further, it is important to note that even if the notion of a summons did create a problem of regress, it would not alter the fact that when we find ourselves as conscious beings we find ourselves as already part of a common world, that is, as always already summoned.

A consequence of Fichte's view on self-consciousness is that we can never understand the I as something that simply *is*, the I is realized through a summons that *calls it to act*.<sup>52</sup> As a consequence, a rational being «acquires the concept of its own free efficacy, not as something that *exists* in the present moment, [...] but rather as something that *ought* to exist in the future».<sup>53</sup> Fichte moves on to conclude that «all

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49 FNR, 38 [39].

50 FNR, 38 [39].

51 FNR, 38 [39].

52 As noted by Honneth, the summons is not to be understood only in terms of a direct request of another, every address that is directed at another person has the structure of a summons in so far that it implicitly presupposes the other as a free being capable of answering the address. We do not address stones or benches, we only address other people and an address is always also a summons calling the other to respond as a free being (HONNETH 2000, 76).

53 FNR, 32 [33].

animals are complete and finished; the human being is only intimated and projected [*angedeutet und entworfen*]» and «every animal is what it is: only the human being is originally nothing at all. He must become what he is to be: and, since he is to be a being for himself, he must become this through himself».<sup>54</sup>

What Fichte describes is a self that is radically given over to the other in the sense that our first-hand perspective on ourselves is mediated through the perspective of the other: what we become aware of, when we become aware of ourselves, is ourselves as constituting an object for the other, but an object whose objective reality consists in its complete self-determination. Thus Fichte's conclusion is that the other is always implicit in our self-consciousness: finite rational beings can only become aware of themselves as given over to – or responding to the other. This, it turns out, is the full meaning of Fichte's corollary cited above. To say that «the human being [...] becomes a human being only among human beings»<sup>55</sup> is to say that the first-hand perspective we have on ourselves is an inter-subjective perspective: we become aware of ourselves not just *by being summoned*, but *as summoned*.

The third and final claim that Fichte sets out to prove in his transcendental deduction of the concept of right is that: «The finite rational being cannot assume the existence of other finite beings outside it without positing itself as standing with these beings in a particular relation, called a relation of right».<sup>56</sup>

It is this final theorem that completes Fichte's deduction of right by revealing relations of right as «an original concept of pure reason»<sup>57</sup> that is, as a transcendental condition of the possibility of the I. The work that goes into proving this third and final theorem is carried out first and foremost through explicating what it means to posit other

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54 FNR, 74 [79], again Fichte's notion of a summons leads to an understanding of the *I* that strongly anticipates later existentialist descriptions of the self in terms of enactment *Vollzug* see supra p. 9.

55 FNR, 37 [39].

56 FNR, 39 [41].

57 FNR, 9 [9].

free beings outside ourselves. Fichte ends up explicating this meaning in terms of the structure of recognition arguing that «one [free being] cannot recognize the other if both do not mutually recognize each other; and one cannot treat the other as a free being, if both do not mutually treat each other as free».<sup>58</sup>

Fichte's point here is that if I am to become aware of myself as a free being through the other's summoning of me, then I can only become aware of myself as free by responding to the summons *as* a summons, that is, as a demand on me expressed by another free being. Implicit in the understanding of the summons is therefore a recognition of the other as a free being like myself. As a consequence, the relation of right that Fichte sets out to establish in this third theorem turns out to be implicit in the intersubjective conception of self-consciousness that he develops in order to prove the second theorem: positing another free being outside myself implies positing the other as free, which means that «*I must limit my freedom through the concept of the possibility of his freedom*» and this, Fichte argues, is what is to be called «a relation of right».<sup>59</sup>

It is important to note is that this understanding of right cannot be reduced to the abstract recognition of the other's freedom. We cannot understand the concept of right simply as a question of perceiving or thinking about the other in a certain way. What is required by the concept of right is instead that that I recognize the other in «a manner that is valid for both *him* and *me*».<sup>60</sup> This, Fichte argues, implies that I actually *treat* the other as a rational being «*for only in action does there exist such a recognition valid for both*».<sup>61</sup>

What, according to Fichte, is at stake in relations of right is not a moral understanding of our duties towards the other but instead the demand implicit in the concept of right namely «that my free agency acquire a real and protected existence in the external world».<sup>62</sup> Fichte

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58 FNR, 42 [43].

59 FNR, 49 [52].

60 FNR, 44 [47].

61 FNR, 44 [47].

62 NEUHOUSER 2000, xvi.

underscores this point repeatedly noting:

Rational beings enter into reciprocal interaction with one another only through actions, expressions of their freedom, in the sensible world: thus the concept of right concerns only what is expressed in the sensible world: whatever has no causality in the sensible world – but remains inside the mind instead – belongs before another tribunal, the tribunal of morality.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, Fichte's point is that we cannot find ourselves as finite self-conscious beings if we do not find ourselves within a relation of right, and this relation of right must be actual and real. It is at this point in the argument, that the radicality of Fichte's thesis becomes most explicit and probably also difficult to accept. What he claims to be doing is nothing less than deducing the existence of a (more or less specific) formal system of right as a transcendental condition for self-consciousness.

The idea of deducing a formal system of right from self-consciousness is obviously a lot to swallow for the average reader who is accustomed to think of any legal system as an archetypical example of a contingent empirical fact. However, before dismissing Fichte's point as outrageous it is worthwhile to try to understand the meaning of Fichte's claim. What he is saying is *firstly* that for a conscious being to find itself as conscious and free it must be able to realize its actions in the empirical world, and *secondly*, that outside an empirically realized formal system of right, the actions of a conscious being cannot be realized *as* actions. This claim might seem counter-intuitive, but once one starts to contemplate what an action actually means, Fichte's suggestion is not as far-fetched as it appears at first.

Recall that Fichte defines the actions of conscious beings as «expressions of their freedom, in the sensible world».<sup>64</sup> Intuitively we

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63 FNR, 51 [56].

64 FNR, 51 [56].

tend to think of such actions in terms of those manipulations on the external world that I can perform immediately by using my physical body. But it is worth noting that the actions that actually come to define who we take ourselves to be are in fact mostly actions that can only be realized through formal legal categories. While I might be able to pass the salt without depending on a formal legal category, I would not be able to undertake actions such as marrying, adopting, selling, buying or entering into any kind of contract outside the framework of a shared formal system of legal norms.

The point of this observation is not simply a practical one, namely that if there was no legal system, there would be no physical force to hold me to the promise inherent in all these different types of action. On the contrary, the point is not practical at all but *ontological*: outside a formal system of norms there is simply no *form* which such actions could take. Outside a formal system of norms there is no shared space within which my actions can acquire any real existence *as* actions. That does not mean that I cannot perform the measures that are expected to belong to certain formal categories. For instance, I might be such a person, who keeps my promises and am true to the person I love. But this moral behavior does not, indeed *cannot*, make the act of marrying real. If there is no shared formal space where such a promise can be recognized as the act of marrying, the act of marriage itself is not possible to perform. In that case, the act of marriage is not part of an external world and does not constitute a shared reality. Thus, once I am outside any relationship of right, I cannot find myself as summoned to anything particular, because there is simply no *form* such action could take.

To be outside of a formal relation of right therefore, for Fichte, amounts to be outside the structure of a summons. While I might arguably still find myself as summoned in a very limited sense (e.g. to pass the salt), I could not find myself as summoned in any significant way (e.g. to manifest my freedom as meaningful and significant actions in a shared world), since there are no shape that these actions could take. Therefore, whether or not we accept all the steps in Fichte's

transcendental deduction, Fichte's analysis of right draws attention to an important and often overlooked dimension of right, namely the inherent existential dimension of any formal system of law.

However, even if we grant Fichte that there seems to be an existential dimension to any formal system of right, it seems that such existential understanding is still vulnerable to a very simple and straightforward objection: there are indeed many empirical examples of individuals who have been deprived of access to rights and such individuals are undeniably still conscious beings. Thus, it seems, there must be something fundamentally wrong with Fichte's existential approach. However, while there is no empirical evidence to support the extreme claim that the loss of rights results in a complete loss of self-consciousness, there are many empirical studies documenting how individuals in vulnerable situations perceive deprivations of formal rights not just on a material level, as obstacles to fulfilling basic needs, but also on an existential level as an experience of radical exclusion and loss of meaning.<sup>65</sup> No one has expressed this better than Arendt: a deprivation of rights manifests itself «first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective».<sup>66</sup> The critical question that arises out of Fichte's transcendental deduction is therefore the question of what happens to the self in conditions of rightlessness where individuals have no access to realize themselves through a shared normative framework constituted by law.

Fichte does not take up this critical discussion in the remaining part of the *Foundations of Natural Right*. Instead the further development of his analysis of right leads him away from the existential issues and deep into a detailed planning of «how the empirical world is to be ordered if the concept of right is to be realized within it».<sup>67</sup> While the first part of his work opens up towards a reflection upon the vulnerable condition of the individual in the modern state, the second

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65 GÜNDOĞDU 2015; OLSEN 2013; PRINTZLAU 2012, SARAT 1990.

66 OT.

67 NEUHOUSER 2000, xix.

part ends up closing this opportunity and instead reads like an unqualified celebration of the modern *Rechtstaat*. Therefore, if we want to develop the existential understanding of right further we must look elsewhere for a theoretical framework that can elucidate the existential meaning of right in terms of the fundamental vulnerability inherent in any system of right. This is what I intend to do in the remaining part of this article where I draw on Arendt's discussion of rightlessness in order to explore the potential for developing Fichte's ontological and existential understanding of right into a phenomenology of right that is able to capture this fundamental vulnerability.<sup>68</sup>

### 3. From Fichte to Arendt

In order to bring Fichte's transcendental deduction of right into dialogue with Arendt's analysis of plurality and right it must first be established that Fichte's and Arendt's conception of the constitutive relation between individuality and intersubjectivity can reasonably be compared.<sup>69</sup> While such comparison of Fichte and Arendt has rarely – if ever – been suggested in the existing literature the structural relations between the two thinkers' approaches are actually quite striking.

First of all, Arendt is committed to an understanding of the individual conscious being which takes seriously the appearance of this being in a common world as an ontological fact. Thus the I – or the *who* which is Arendt's preferred term – is not to be understood as an isolated subjective reality that is then somehow projected into a common world. On the contrary, the *who* emerges *in* and *through* its

<sup>68</sup> Importantly I do *not* intend to argue that Arendt was in any way inspired by Fichte's conception of individuality or personhood. She developed her phenomenology of plurality quite independently from any influence from German Idealism. The only point I aim to argue is that, in spite of the independent developments of both Fichte's and Arendt's conceptions of the self, there are quite striking similarities between them.

<sup>69</sup> Please note that I will be focusing on Arendt's concept of *right* and not on Arendt's understanding of law in general. For a thorough assessment of Arendt's understanding of law in general see BREEN 2012.

engagement with the world and cannot be thought in isolation from it.<sup>70</sup>

This emphasis on appearance as an active realization of the self is also central to Fichte's understanding of the self. Thus, in the *Foundations of Natural Right*, he argues that it is in and through its concrete engagement with the world, that the I comes to be what it is. For Fichte, like Arendt, any thought of an I that exists prior to or behind its activity is a meaningless abstraction.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike Fichte, Arendt's claim is not that subjective consciousness itself is conditioned upon this worldly appearance of the *who*. Her claim is that this worldly *who* cannot be understood as a function of the isolated subjective experience of consciousness.<sup>72</sup> This is why Arendt emphasizes the worldly character of the self, underscoring that «*we are of the world and not merely in it*».<sup>73</sup> Thus, for Arendt, being a self not only includes a narrative dimension – a thesis that has often been underscored by Arendt scholars – but fundamentally «*our immediate, non-reflective, non-objective worldly self-appearance*».<sup>74</sup> This appearance of the *who* in the world is not first and foremost an appearance *for myself* but instead an appearance *to others*. And this appearance to others «is what makes myself “real,” not as an object in space and time alone, but as “appearing mineness”».<sup>75</sup>

Arendt's concept of “appearing mineness” arguably resembles Fichte's concept of individuality in important ways.<sup>76</sup> For both Fichte and Arendt, the appearance of the individual (Fichte) or the *who* (Arendt) in the world is always a *plural* event, that is, it is an event conditioned on an intersubjective shared world. To explain the ontological meaning of plurality Arendt distinguishes between “distinctness” and “otherness” and uses this distinction to explicate

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70 HC, 9.

71 FNR, 23 [22].

72 FNR, 280 ff.

73 LM, 22.

74 LOIDOLT 2017, 75 internal references omitted.

75 LOIDOLT 2017, 70.

76 See *supra* p. 6 ff.



the difference between multiplicity and plurality:

Otherness in its most abstract form is found only in sheer multiplication of inorganic objects, whereas all organic life already shows variations and distinctions [...]. But only man can express this distinction and distinguish himself, and only he can communicate himself and not merely something – thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear.<sup>77</sup>

Plurality cannot be reduced to the numerical fact of there being more than one human being; the condition of plurality is a *relational* condition which has «the twofold character of equality and distinction».<sup>78</sup> “Equality” corresponds to the recognition of the other as a rational and free being like myself; “distinction” corresponds to the fact that I distinguish myself in plurality by communicating myself, that is by being seen and heard by others not simply as a physical appearance but as a *who*.<sup>79</sup> This is why «plurality is not something that simply is, but essentially something we have to take up and do»<sup>80</sup>: through our actions we do not only distinguish ourselves as selves but also in the same move confirm the others as human beings like ourselves. Thus, for Arendt, as for Fichte, the I cannot find itself unless it finds itself already in a shared world (Arendt) summoned to act (Fichte). For both, this means that the self comes to appear for itself through its appearance for others. This is the ontological meaning of Arendt’s strange claim that:

It is more likely that the “who,” which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimōn* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to

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<sup>77</sup> HC, 176.

<sup>78</sup> HC, 175.

<sup>79</sup> HC, 176.

<sup>80</sup> LOIDOLT 2017, 2.

those he encounters.<sup>81</sup>

While this quote is often interpreted in the secondary literature on Arendt, standard interpretations often fail to capture «the radicality of Arendt's ontological commitment to plurality» which implies that the self cannot be thought in isolation, that the self is ultimately a worldly self, a *who* in a shared world.<sup>82</sup> Thus, like Fichte's individual I, Arendt's *who* turns out to be a radically inter-subjective *who* in the sense that it is realized in action and that action takes place *in-between* people. This means that the *who* we are cannot be understood, indeed would not make sense, outside of the “web of relationships” with other human beings in and through which it comes to be.<sup>83</sup>

For Fichte, this ontological commitment to plurality translates into a specific relation of right. For Arendt, the ontological commitment to plurality translates instead into an understanding of human existence as something that is realized in speech and action.<sup>84</sup> Action, for Arendt, means to «take initiative, to begin [...] to set something in motion».<sup>85</sup> Unlike Fichte, she does not tie the possibility of action to any formal legal order. On the contrary, the transformative power of action seems rather to be in tension with– and sometimes even even contrary to law. As noted by Barbour:

Arendt does not believe that action can emerge only within the bounds of a formally constituted legal order. And, quite clearly, her conception of action is designed to repudiate this kind of institutionalism, or any suggestion that only citizens can engage meaningfully in politics. Rather, on Arendt's account, action constitutes a public world, or is coextensive with a public world, while the law encircles it, or establishes the boundaries that, almost by definition, the

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81 HC, 180.

82 LOIDOLT 2017, 155.

83 HC, 181 ff.

84 HC, 179.

85 HC, 177.

'boundlessness' and 'unpredictability' of action is bound to challenge again.<sup>86</sup>

However, while Arendt portrays action as a power that has the ability to transcend the boundaries of law, she also describes action as a power that presupposes plurality and thereby the reality of other free beings like myself. This places the idea, that I am conditioned on the freedom of the other, as an inherent condition in the very concept of action. While Arendt does not portray this inherent condition as a formalized (or even formalizable) relation of right, she would probably agree with Fichte that «positing another free being outside myself implies positing the other as free» which is the ontological meaning of Fichte's concept of right.<sup>87</sup> There is therefore an important affinity between Arendt's notion of plurality, which she describes as «the basic condition of both speech and action»<sup>88</sup> and Fichte's notion of a relation of right, which he expresses in the demand that «*I must limit my freedom through the concept of the possibility of his freedom*»<sup>89</sup>. Both notions entail the «twofold character of equality and distinction»<sup>90</sup> which enables the self to appear in a shared world. In the following, I suggest that we might use this affinity between Arendt's concept of plurality and Fichte's concept of right as a heuristic tool to interpret the ontological and existential meaning of Arendt's famous claim that that the most fundamental right is «a right to have rights».<sup>91</sup>

#### 4. An Existential Perspective on the Right to have Rights

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt discusses what she calls «a

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86 BARBOUR 2012, 311.

87 See supra p. 14.

88 HC, 175.

89 FNR, 49 [52], see also supra p. 14.

90 HC, 175.

91 OT, 297.

right to have rights» under the heading *The Perplexities of the Rights of Man*.<sup>92</sup> Here, she famously claims that «the fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective».<sup>93</sup> While this passage has received much attention in the secondary literature, the meaning of Arendt's claim is still subject to much debate.<sup>94</sup> In the following I add to this complexity by arguing that we should understand this passage not simply as a point of political philosophy, but as part of her phenomenological investigation of the human condition of plurality. For this purpose, I draw on Arendt's phenomenological understanding of plurality as well as on Fichte's transcendental deduction of right in order to explicate the possible ontological and existential implications inherent in Arendt's claim.

Before venturing into such an interpretation it is of course important to note that *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was written six years prior to *The Human Condition* and at no point does it refer to Fichte.<sup>95</sup> For this reason a reading of *The Origins* that draws on the framework of Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* and *The Human Condition* can of course not be an exegetic project. The purpose of reading *The Origins* through Fichte and through the phenomenological framework of *The Human Condition* is instead to pave the ground for developing a theoretical framework for an existential perspective on right.

For Fichte, the condition of recognition translates directly into a formal concept of right, which he develops into an argument in favor of the modern *Rechtsstaat*. For Arendt, in contrast, it is the fleeting relations of speech and action, that make plurality real and she explicitly abstains from conditioning plurality on any kind of (historically contingent) institutionalized framework of formalized

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92 OT, 290 ff.

93 OT, 296.

94 For a good overview of the different approaches to interpreting Arendt's claim about a "right to have rights" see Part IV of 2012 anthology *Hannah Arendt and the Law* (GOLDINI & McCORKINDALE 2012).

95 To the best of my knowledge Arendt does not refer to Fichte anywhere in her work.

recognition.<sup>96</sup> Thus, while a central part of Fichte's project in *Foundations of Natural Right* is to explicate the formal legal framework needed for realizing a relation of right, Arendt's project in *The Perplexities of the Rights of Man* is instead to investigate what happens at the margins of such legal frameworks in zones of legal transition where people's legal status is negotiated, changed or ultimately completely dissolved. In contradiction to Fichte, Arendt's investigation of rights thus starts by recognizing that the existential significance of a formal framework of rights is revealed most clearly in its absence: «We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights [...] and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political situation» (OT, 296 f.).

Arendt makes this observation in relation to the vast number of stateless refugees in the wake of the Second World War. What was revealed in this crisis, according to Arendt, was the impotency of any framework of human rights to provide protection to the growing number of stateless people. According to Arendt, what these people had lost was not just the instrumental access to «those benefits deemed essential for individual well-being, dignity, and fulfilment», which human rights are supposed to protect.<sup>97</sup> Instead what was at stake was «the loss of an organized community where one's actions, opinions, and speech are taken into account».<sup>98</sup>

The existential dimension at stake in this loss is apparent in Arendt's emphasis that:

The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifest first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective. Something much more fundamental than freedom and justice, which are rights of citizens, is at stake when

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<sup>96</sup> HC, 199.

<sup>97</sup> OT, 295 and HENKIN 1996, 2.

<sup>98</sup> GÜNDOĞDU 2015, 95.

belonging to the community into which one is born is no longer a matter of course and not belonging no longer a matter of choice, or when one is placed in a situation where, unless one commits a crime, his treatment by others does not depend on what he does or does not do. This extremity, and nothing else, is the situation of people deprived, not of the right to freedom, but the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but the right to opinion.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, for Arendt, the loss of the right to have rights must be understood as an existential loss; as a loss of the possibility to realize oneself *as a self* in a common world. According to Arendt it is this “loss of an organized community” which is the real predicament of the stateless people. On Arendt’s view, this predicament cannot adequately be expressed in terms of human rights because human rights are specifically intended to articulate rights as something that «spring immediately from the “nature” of man [...]».<sup>100</sup> Therefore, any framework of human rights ultimately depends on a conceptualization of human beings as isolated individuals: «The decisive factor is that these rights and the human dignity they bestow should remain valid and real even if only a single human being existed on earth; they are independent of human plurality and should remain valid even if a human being is expelled from the human community» (OT, 298).

While this is obviously also a political point, it is first and foremost an ontological and existential point about the inadequacy of human rights to capture the fundamental human condition of plurality. Thus, Arendt continues:

The paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such a loss coincides with the instant when a person becomes a human being in general—without a profession,

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99 GÜNDOĞDU 2015, 296.

100 OT, 297.

without a citizenship, without an opinion, without a deed by which to identify and specify himself—and different in general, representing nothing but his own absolute unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common world, loses all significance. (OT, 302)

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt thus explicates the human condition of plurality negatively as that which is lost when human beings become deprived of rights. Importantly, no specific right can compensate for this loss, on the contrary any attempt to solve this problem in terms of guarantees of specific rights instead hides the existential predicament which is really at stake:

Not the loss of specific rights, then, but the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever, has been the calamity which has befallen ever-increasing numbers of people. Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as man, his human dignity. Only the loss of a polity itself expels him from humanity. (OT, 297)

This is why Arendt argues that this kind of loss can only be captured as «a loss of the right to have rights», which she defines as the right «to live in a framework where one is judged by ones actions and opinions».<sup>101</sup>

How is this critique related to Fichte's transcendental deduction of right? It is related because with the notion of a "right to have right" Arendt expresses right in terms of a fundamental relation that conditions the appearance of the self as a self in a common world. Thus, for Arendt, any meaningful notion of right ultimately depends on an ontological condition of plurality. The problem of human rights is exactly that it overlooks or hides this ultimate condition which

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101 OT, 296 f.

transcends law itself. While this ontological claim is visible at many points in Arendt's own text, her observations have often been interpreted as political philosophy rather than phenomenological investigations of subjectivity. Fichte's transcendental deduction of right helps us focus on the ontological dimensions by explicating the extent to which the condition of plurality emerges as an inherent condition of the individual and finite *I*'s consciousness of itself in the world, what Arendt calls "appearing mineness".

As noted by Barbour, we should avoid «the error of thinking that, for Arendt, a right is something like a property or possession, rather than a capacity to act». <sup>102</sup> This is why the right to have rights cannot be reduced to a formal right to belong in a political community. Such understanding would overlook «the sense in which 'the right to have rights' is also an enactment of equality—something that exists only in as much as it is practiced, or asserted or performed». <sup>103</sup>

This leads Barbour to interpret Arendt's notion of a right to have rights as disconnected from any formal systems of law. «But it seems to me», he argues, «that when Arendt talks of "the right to have rights", she is referring precisely to the possibility of action and politics that remains *after* one has been expelled from a particular legal order – the capacity to act remains, as it were, outside of the legal order, or on the border in-between law and lawlessness». <sup>104</sup>

While I agree with Barbour that Arendt does not exclude the possibility of enacting a right to have rights outside of any formal legal framework, I think he overlooks the enabling and mediating power of the formal legal systems from which the stateless were excluded. The right to have rights is exactly something that is lost for the stateless, that is, it is something that they had access to before. And this something was the ability to appear in speech and action in a common world.

While no law can guarantee this ability, it is important to note how

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102 BARBOUR 2012, 314.

103 BARBOUR 2012, 314.

104 BARBOUR 2012, 315.



law in the modern state functions as a medium through which action is realized. This is why, for Fichte, the ontological investigation of right cannot be detached from the practical application of the concept of right. Fichte's point is that outside such formal legal structure our actions cannot have reality, in the sense that they present limitations on ourselves and other subjects. If there is no shared formal space of action, then action is reduced to intention. I can give you this horse, enter this agreement or pass this decree but if there is no formal structure of ownership or authorization, my action is reduced to mere intention; it has no reality beyond the gesture which in and by itself is meaningless. Therefore, for Fichte, a formal system of law functions as a necessary medium that conditions actions because it is through the formal categories of law that we come to articulate ourselves *as selves* in a common world.<sup>105</sup> On Arendt's account, «action is never localized in a single sphere or realm but enigmatically conditions and threatens every such realm – being the effect not of a secured legal order, but of what Arendt calls “natality”, or the new beginning that, before everything else, each human already “is”».<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, her emphasis on the loss of a right to have rights as a *loss* suggests that we must think of this right not simply as a capacity to act outside a formal system of law but also as a capacity that can be mediated by law and that comes under threat particularly in zones of legal transition where people's legal status is negotiated, changed or ultimately completely dissolved. Therefore, while Arendt is much more acutely aware of the paradoxical inclusion-exclusion

105 Note that this reasoning is not equivalent to standard interpretations of Hobbes' contractual argument namely that we need the physical threat of a sovereign to make such an agreement real. What Fichte is arguing is not simply that our common world must be supported by the physical power of a sovereign. What he is arguing is instead that we need to belong in an intersubjective world where an agreement has a specific and shared meaning so that such an agreement poses real and specific limitations on our I. For Fichte, these limitations are real because we recognize and experience them as limitations on our freedom. We recognize and experience them as limitations because we find ourselves in a shared world, not because the limitations are transformed- (or rather reduced to) a material limitation expressed in the sovereign's legitimate use of physical force.

106 BARBOUR 2012, 318.

mechanisms in the modern concept of right than Fichte, she also emphasizes that «the basic actualization of plurality *should be* or even *has to be institutionalized* in order to survive and persist at all: because its status is always ontologically fragile». <sup>107</sup> Institutional structures lend stability and continuity to the fleeting space of actions and when this institutional stability is lost plurality is always in danger of collapsing into sheer multiplicity.

While Fichte employs the existential dimension of right to explicate the importance of the legal structures in the modern *Rechtsstaat*, Arendt instead invokes this existential dimension to point to a certain and implicit vulnerability produced in the modern state system: because human togetherness is structured through relations of right, human existence is always implicitly at risk of being radically diminished through the lack of access to manifest oneself through these structures.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to draw up a theoretical ground for further phenomenological reflections on the existential dimension of right. As I argued in the beginning of the article, one has to look outside the traditional canon of legal phenomenology in order to find such an existential reflection on the concept of right. I did this by bringing Fichte's transcendental deduction of right into dialogue with Arendt's phenomenological discussion of plurality and the right to have rights.

Fichte's transcendental deduction of right represents one of (if not *the*) most thorough attempts to systematically think through these existential dimensions of right. His transcendental deduction therefore helps us bring these dimensions into focus in Arendt's work as well and while we might dismiss Fichte's dedication to the specific formal structure of the modern *Rechtsstaat* as unwarranted and excessive, the

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<sup>107</sup> LOIDOLT 2017, 135.

enduring significance of Fichte's theory of right lies in his commitment to articulate right as a structure that has an unavoidable existential significance as one (important but maybe not exclusive) medium through which we gain access to the kind of shared normative space within which we actualize ourselves as individuals.

The point of reading Arendt through Fichte was not that the political and legal thinking of Fichte and Arendt can – or should ever be – reconciled but that Fichte's theory of right constitutes an important heuristic tool that can be used to bring certain important, but mostly overlooked, phenomenological and existential aspects of Arendt's analysis of the right to have right into focus. The exercise of reading Arendt through Fichte revealed an existential and phenomenological dimension in Arendt's discussion of right and rightlessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that is much closer linked to her analysis of self, intersubjectivity and plurality in *The Human Condition* than is usually recognized. As a consequence, the exercise of reading Arendt through Fichte ended up revealing Arendt's discussion of right not as a version of Fichte's bold confirmation of the modern *Rechtsstaat*, but instead as an existential reflection on the paradoxical vulnerability in the very structure of the modern state where law mediates individual existence on the one hand but also- or rather simultaneously forces individual existence into a specific shape on the other.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, what we learn from both Fichte and Arendt is that we miss an important point if we conceive of a formal system of right simply as an instrument or tool by which we realize our intentions. By paying heed to the ontological and existential dimensions of right we come to recognize that a formal system of right always also expresses and mediates – or fails to express and mediate – our individuality in a common world.

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108 MENKE, 2015. Arendt's existential reflection on the human vulnerability inherent in the modern notion of right also suggests a further link between discussions of right within phenomenology and critical theory (a project that will have to wait for another article).

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# Il riconoscimento e la possibilità del dire in E. Levinas

Julia Ponzio

Università di Bari\*

[iulia.ponzio@uniba.it](mailto:iulia.ponzio@uniba.it)

*ABSTRACT.* According to Levinas, answering the question concerning the relation between recognition and intersubjectivity implies a critique of ontology. Indeed, from an ontological perspective, recognition reduces alterity to the self. The whole philosophical research undertaken by Levinas consists in investigating what ontology presupposes, that is to say an inquiry on what transcends ontology as well as constitutes its condition of possibility. This paper seeks to show how Levinas, through the critic of ontology, tries to solve the contradiction between the recognition of the other as singularity and the other as identity, and how this attempt implies a reflection on the concept of forgiveness.

*KEYWORDS.* Hegel; Levinas; Forgiveness; Responsibility.

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\* *Correspondence:* Julia Ponzio – Università degli Studi “Aldo Moro” di Bari, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Piazza Umberto 1-70122 Bari.





## 1. Introduzione

In *Totalità e infinito* Levinas definisce l'ontologia come «una riduzione dell'Altro al Medesimo, in forza dell'imposizione di un termine medio e neutro che garantisce l'intelligenza dell'essere<sup>1</sup>». L'ontologia consiste dunque in un'operazione di "riconoscimento" dell'altro da parte di un medesimo che si auto-riconosce. L'ontologia è il riconoscimento dell'altro che lo riduce al suo ruolo sociale, alla sua identità, alla sua funzione; è la riduzione dell'altro a generalità sostituibile e l'obliterazione della sua insostituibile singolarità. L'ontologia consiste dunque, per Levinas, nel riconoscimento dell'altro in quanto "tema" e "oggetto" di un soggetto autosufficiente, che ne neutralizza l'alterità e lo riconduce al medesimo. Scrive Levinas:

La relazione con l'essere, che si esplica come ontologia, consiste nel neutralizzare l'ente per comprenderlo o per impossessarsene. Non è quindi una relazione con l'Altro in quanto tale ma la riduzione dell'altro al medesimo<sup>2</sup>.

Tutta la problematica levinasiana del riconoscimento consiste nella domanda se sia possibile riconoscere l'altro nella sua alterità, senza che questo riconoscimento lo riconduca al medesimo. La questione del rapporto fra riconoscimento e intersoggettività coincide dunque, nel pensiero di Levinas, con la critica dell'ontologia, in cui il riconoscimento, invece che stabilire un rapporto con l'alterità, consiste nell'annullamento della possibilità di questo rapporto.

Tutto il lavoro filosofico di Levinas consiste nella ricerca dei presupposti dell'ontologia, nella ricerca di ciò che, al contempo, trascende l'ontologia e ne costituisce la condizione di possibilità. Questa trascendenza è ciò che Levinas in *Totalità e infinito* chiama *volto*. L'idea di *volto* è l'idea di un senso «anteriore alla mia *Sinngebung*»<sup>3</sup>. Il

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1 LEVINAS 1980, 41.

2 LEVINAS 1980, 43.

3 LEVINAS 1980, 49.

*volto* introduce, all'interno della filosofia di Levinas, l'idea di un riconoscimento a partire dalla trascendenza, di un riconoscimento che non è dell'altro ma è dall'altro, a partire dall'altro. Solo in questa prospettiva, secondo Levinas, è possibile lavorare sul nesso tra riconoscimento e intersoggettività e su quello che ne costituisce uno dei principali nodi, ossia la contraddizione fra il riconoscimento intersoggettivo ed il riconoscimento all'interno della comunità socio-politica, tra il riconoscimento dell'altro come singolarità e il riconoscimento dell'altro nel suo ruolo sociale, nella sua identità. Levinas lavora, come cercherò di mostrare nel corso di questo saggio, alla ricomposizione di questa contraddizione attraverso la tematica del perdono.

## 2. L'attraversamento levinasiano della questione del riconoscimento in Hegel

In *Di Dio che viene all'idea*, Levinas cita tra i momenti più importanti in cui la storia della filosofia abbandona l'ontologia per volgersi verso la trascendenza, «la ricerca del riconoscimento attraverso l'altro uomo in Hegel»<sup>4</sup>. Questa sorprendente affermazione è in contrasto con l'atteggiamento critico che Levinas assume nei confronti della maniera in cui Hegel affronta la questione del riconoscimento nella parte della *Fenomenologia dello spirito* dedicata alla dialettica servo-signore. Tale atteggiamento critico si trova già delineato all'interno del saggio *Libertà e Comandamento* del 1953<sup>5</sup>, in cui Levinas contesta il modello hegeliano che fonda il riconoscimento sulla violenza e sul bisogno, sulla guerra e sul lavoro<sup>6</sup>. In questo testo del 1953, proprio attraverso la critica del modello hegeliano del riconoscimento nella dialettica servo-signore, Levinas definisce l'altro non come colui che mi si oppone, non come colui che mi nega, ma piuttosto come colui che mi fa resistenza.

4 LEVINAS 1983, 145.

5 Cfr. LEVINAS 2002.

6 Cfr. a questo proposito, CAYGILL 2002, 74 e segg.

Scrivi al riguardo Levinas:

L'opposizione del volto, che non è l'opposizione di una forza, non è un'ostilità. È un'opposizione pacifica ma dove la pace non è affatto una guerra sospesa, una violenza semplicemente trattenuta. La violenza consiste, al contrario, nell'ignorare questa opposizione, nell'ignorare il volto dell'essere, nell'evitare lo sguardo, e nel trovare il verso per il quale il *no* iscritto sulla faccia, ma iscritto sulla faccia per il fatto stesso che essa è una faccia, diviene una forza ostile o sottomessa<sup>7</sup>.

Questa differenza fra opposizione e resistenza, tra negativo e trascendenza, che viene ripresa in *Totalità e infinito*<sup>8</sup>, è una critica radicale dell'idea hegeliana del riconoscimento, poiché pone la relazione con l'alterità su tutt'altro piano. L'altro non è ciò che contraddice il medesimo, ciò che lo nega. Il negativo, dice Levinas in *Totalità e infinito*, è incapace di trascendenza<sup>9</sup>. Pensare il rapporto con l'altro nei termini della trascendenza e non in quelli della negatività significa, in *Totalità e infinito*, pensare a un rapporto con l'altro che non riconduce al Medesimo, pensare ad una relazione senza sintesi, senza pacificazione, senza annullamento delle distanze.

In *La morte e il tempo* Levinas scrive, a proposito della maniera hegeliana di considerare l'alterità:

Per Hegel l'etica è sempre universale. La persona è sempre pensata in virtù dell'universalità della legge; su questo punto Hegel è kantiano. La persona in quanto individuo non è Spirito e non ha etica. In questa nostra indagine la persona è individuo altro, ed ogni universale deve partire da qui. Nell'idealismo tedesco la persona è invece

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7 LEVINAS 2002, 75

8 Cfr. LEVINAS 1980, 38 e segg.

9 Cfr. LEVINAS 1980, 39.

l'universale<sup>10</sup>.

Nella dialettica servo-signore, il riconoscimento avviene attraverso il lavoro e la guerra, in cui la sintesi pacifica momentaneamente l'inquietudine del negativo e prospetta la risoluzione del singolare nell'universale. Essa, dunque, appartiene per Levinas, alla storia dell'ontologia, essendo incapace di trascendenza, incapace di interrompere il movimento che riconduce l'altro al medesimo.

Dunque, se non si tratta della dialettica servo-signore, in quale momento la teoria hegeliana del riconoscimento abbandonerebbe l'ontologia per aprirla alla trascendenza, in quale momento la negatività nel pensiero hegeliano si convertirebbe in quella che Levinas in *Totalità e infinito* chiama "metafisica"?

In un suo saggio intitolato *Hegel and Levinas. The possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation*<sup>11</sup>, R. Bernasconi ipotizza che questo momento in cui, secondo Levinas, il pensiero hegeliano, trascende la dimensione dell'essere, si trovi, nella *Fenomenologia dello spirito*, qualche pagina oltre la dialettica servo-signore, e cioè nel momento in cui il riconoscimento viene trattato nell'ultima parte della sezione dedicata allo Spirito, intitolata *Il Male e il suo perdono*<sup>12</sup>.

In questa fase della fenomenologia, la coscienza ha acquisito quella che Hegel chiama "convinzione morale". Essa è, cioè, ormai certa di avere in sé l'universalità del dovere. L'azione morale è in questa fase ciò che permette alla coscienza, certa di avere in sé il dovere morale, il superamento della contraddizione fra singolarità della coscienza e universalità del dovere. L'azione morale è, inoltre, ciò che introduce la possibilità del riconoscimento. La coscienza agente riconosce se stessa come ciò che, attraverso l'azione morale, rende effettivo il superamento della contraddizione fra dovere morale e coscienza singolare. A partire dunque dall'azione morale, la coscienza agente è capace di auto-riconoscimento. Questo auto-

10 LÉVINAS 1999, 134.

11 BERNASCONI 2005, 57 e segg.

12 Cfr. HEGEL, 1995, 875 e segg.

riconoscimento, inoltre, diviene universale ed effettivo attraverso il linguaggio: la coscienza certa di avere in sé il dovere morale e che si riconosce come ciò che, attraverso l'azione, lo realizza, "dice" questa connessione, cioè dice il proprio riconoscimento, si definisce<sup>13</sup>.

Ma a questo punto, nel discorso hegeliano, interviene una contraddizione ulteriore che riguarda la giustificazione di tale auto-riconoscimento. La domanda circa la giustificazione o la fondazione dell' auto-riconoscimento viene da quella che Hegel chiama la "coscienza giudicante", ossia da un'altra coscienza che la coscienza agente si trova improvvisamente di fronte. La coscienza agente che ormai riconosce se stessa, incontra l'altro come colui che domanda giustificazione dell'ottenuto auto-riconoscimento. La coscienza che dice di riconoscersi attraverso l'azione morale è così sottoposta a giudizio da parte di un'altra coscienza. In questa fase il problema non è più la contraddizione di universale e individuale, si tratta invece dell'opposizione di due singolarità che si trovano faccia a faccia.

La coscienza giudicante, l'altro, mette in dubbio l'universalità del riconoscimento a cui la coscienza agente è faticosamente giunta. La prima – la coscienza agente – dichiara, dice la propria universalità, riconoscendosi in essa, e la seconda – la coscienza giudicante – domanda giustificazioni per esprimere un giudizio e, fino a che queste giustificazioni non siano state date, rifiuta di riconoscere la coscienza che ha già riconosciuto se stessa. La coscienza agente ha riconosciuto se stessa nella moralità dell'azione, ma la coscienza giudicante non le accorda ancora alcun riconoscimento.

All'interno del discorso di Hegel la stessa singolarità della coscienza, che genera quest'ultima contraddizione del riconoscimento, dovrebbe essere anche, allo stesso tempo, ciò che consente il superamento definitivo di ogni contraddizione. La singolarità che separa le coscienze, che impedisce loro, in prima battuta, di riconoscersi reciprocamente, è infatti anche ciò che esse hanno in comune. Riconoscere la singolarità come elemento accomunante è ciò che consentirebbe finalmente il riconoscimento reciproco.

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13 Cfr. HEGEL 1995, 865 e segg.

La coscienza agente dunque, dice Hegel, in virtù della sua stessa singolarità, riconosce se stessa nella coscienza giudicante, riconosce una comunione, sulla base dell'essere entrambe coscienze singole. A questo punto la coscienza agente confessa la propria singolarità, sperando che la coscienza giudicante riconosca se stessa in ciò che è confessato, riconosca attraverso questa confessione la propria singolarità come elemento proprio e insieme elemento accomunante. Questo, nel "racconto" di Hegel non succede.

La coscienza giudicante non riconosce se stessa in ciò che è stato confessato, non riconosce la singolarità come elemento comune. Essa risponde, dice Hegel, *a cuore duro*, con il silenzio<sup>14</sup>.

Perché questo silenzio improvviso?

La coscienza giudicante aveva chiesto alla coscienza agente di giustificare la propria universalità, l'universalità che essa aveva già auto-riconosciuto a se stessa, di giustificarla affinché la coscienza giudicante potesse riconoscerla. La coscienza agente risponde, in una sorta di colpo di scena, confessando la propria singolarità. La confessione della propria singolarità è la confessione dell'impossibilità della giustificazione del proprio auto-riconoscimento. La confessione è dunque una reazione alla domanda della coscienza agente, ma è il contrario della risposta a questa domanda. È la dichiarazione dell'impossibilità di questa risposta. Ecco perché in prima battuta la coscienza giudicante risponde con il silenzio, tace spiazzata davanti ad una risposta che non si aspetta, che improvvisamente piega il discorso in una direzione completamente diversa da quella che la coscienza giudicante si aspettava. Improvviso, a rompere questo silenzio che potrebbe durare per sempre, come un secondo colpo di scena, arriva il perdono: la coscienza giudicante perdona la coscienza agente, perdona la singolarità confessata.

In questo scambio asimmetrico di confessione e perdono (solo la coscienza agente confessa e solo la coscienza giudicante perdona) si realizza, finalmente, il mutuo riconoscimento. Confessione e perdono sono il luogo in cui le due coscienze che si trovano faccia a faccia

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<sup>14</sup> Cfr. HEGEL 1995, 881 e segg.

realizzano un dialogo autentico, ossia un dialogo in cui la risposta è assolutamente inaspettata, non è già contenuta nella domanda. Confessione e perdono sono infatti risposte eccedenti ogni possibilità di previsione e di calcolo dell'andamento del discorso, due colpi di scena, come abbiamo detto. Il mutuo riconoscimento, nel discorso hegeliano si realizza proprio attraverso questo dialogo in cui la risposta non è mai quella che ci si aspetta, in cui la risposta trascende e spiazza chi pone la domanda. Confessando e perdonando la propria singolarità, dice Hegel, le coscienze superano le proprie differenze senza cancellarle. La singolarità stessa, confessata e perdonata, viene riconosciuta come fondamento della intersoggettività.

Nell'atto del perdono, ciò che è perdonato – la singolarità, la colpa – è riconosciuto sia da chi chiede perdono sia da chi lo concede. Sia colui che chiede perdono che colui che perdona riconoscono ciò che deve essere perdonato. Inoltre ciò che è perdonato, nell'atto del perdono, viene al tempo stesso riconosciuto e superato, trasceso. Il perdono è ciò che consente insieme il riconoscimento della singolarità e il riconoscimento di se stessi nella possibilità di trascendere la singolarità stessa. Il riconoscimento è dunque, in questo meccanismo complesso che Hegel descrive, ciò che consente la trascendenza, il superamento.

Anche se Levinas non cita mai direttamente queste pagine della *Fenomenologia dello Spirito*, l'ipotesi di Bernasconi è interessante perché mette l'accento sulla connessione che Hegel stabilisce tra riconoscimento, perdono e trascendenza, connessione che costituisce uno degli assi portanti del pensiero levinasiano. Attraverso questa connessione la questione del riconoscimento viene disconnessa dal discorso dell'ontologia e collegata all'idea della trascendenza. Il perdono è un riconoscimento che trascende.

Il perdono si caratterizza come un riconoscimento che non si ferma al riconosciuto, ma che piuttosto lo trascende, lo utilizza come segno, come traccia di qualcos'altro. Il perdono, come forma di riconoscimento, ha una doppia direzione: nell'atto del perdono si riconosce ciò di cui si chiede il perdono come traccia di ciò verso cui è

possibile trascenderlo e si riconosce allo stesso tempo se stessi in questa possibilità di trascendenza.

Connettere riconoscimento e perdono, così come fa Hegel in quelle pagine della *Fenomenologia dello Spirito*, vuole dire stravolgere l'idea stessa del riconoscimento, poiché questa connessione permette di pensare a un riconoscimento la cui condizione di possibilità non sta nella capacità del riconosciuto di auto-justificare il proprio riconoscimento. La connessione tra riconoscimento e perdono permette di pensare a un riconoscimento la cui condizione di possibilità, al contrario, sta nell'impossibilità di questa auto-justificazione.

Nel discorso hegeliano la coscienza giudicante chiede alla coscienza agente di fondare il proprio auto-riconoscimento, la propria universalità. La coscienza giudicante richiede alla coscienza agente di avere in sé gli elementi del proprio riconoscimento, di mostrare ciò che rende questo riconoscimento universalmente dovuto. Quello che la coscienza agente confessa, invece, è di non avere in sé la possibilità della giustificazione del proprio riconoscimento. Quello che la coscienza agente confessa è che il proprio auto-riconoscimento non è solo apparentemente ingiustificabile, ingiusto, ma lo è veramente: non ci sono ragioni da addurre in sua difesa, non c'è niente da comprendere.

Nel silenzio che segue la confessione, prende forma un'altra idea del riconoscimento: la coscienza agente perde il ruolo di ciò che deve essere giustificato e, nello stesso tempo, la coscienza giudicante perde il ruolo di ciò che deve riconoscere giudicando e giustificando. Non si tratta più di riconoscere il dovuto, né del riconoscere nel senso dello smascherare.

Il silenzio che segue la confessione all'interno del testo hegeliano è l'apparire della possibilità di un *altro riconoscimento*: è possibile il riconoscimento di ciò che non ha in sé la giustificazione del riconoscimento stesso?

Il perdono che prelude, nel testo hegeliano, al mutuo riconoscimento è la risposta affermativa a questa domanda: non solo è possibile il



riconoscimento di ciò che non ha in sé la giustificazione del riconoscimento, ma questo riconoscimento ingiustificato è l'unica forma non contraddittoria di riconoscimento, l'unica possibilità di superamento, di trascendenza dell'autoreferenzialità dell'identità, l'unica possibilità in cui il riconoscimento intersoggettivo non consiste nella riduzione al medesimo e dunque nella negazione della intersoggettività.

### 3. Riconoscimento, perdono, trascendenza

La questione del riconoscimento in Levinas è la questione di quest'altro riconoscimento, di un riconoscimento in cui il perdono costituisce la possibilità della trascendenza che non ritorna al medesimo. In quest'altro riconoscimento la questione del perdono ha un ruolo fondamentale, poiché Levinas situa tale questione nel punto cruciale in cui si istituisce il rapporto tra riconoscimento interpersonale e riconoscimento all'interno della comunità socio-politica.

La teorizzazione levinasiana del perdono si trova già all'interno dai suoi primi scritti importanti dell'immediato dopoguerra, ossia in *Dall'esistenza all'esistente*<sup>15</sup> e *Il tempo e l'altro*<sup>16</sup>. In questi testi il perdono appare in relazione alla questione del *presente*. Sin da questi primi testi, il presente è, per Levinas, fondamentale all'interno del processo di riconoscimento. All'opera nei testi sopra menzionati è l'idea secondo cui il presente è il momento in cui l'interiorità riconosce se stessa separandosi dall'*il y a*, che è l'esistenza muta, che non riconosce se stessa<sup>17</sup>.

All'interno del pensiero di Levinas, il presente è considerato come ciò che è "a partire da se stesso", come ciò che non proviene da un'origine che possa giustificarlo. In *Dall'esistenza all'esistente*, il

15 LEVINAS 1986.

16 LÉVINAS 1993.

17 Levinas sviluppa la nozione di *il y a* in *Dall'esistenza all'esistente*, Cfr. LEVINAS 1986, 51 e segg.

presente, che spezza l'anonimato dell'esistenza, è la possibilità di ciò che Levinas chiama in questi testi la *posizione*. Il presente è questo imprevisto "salto" dall'"esposizione" alla "posizione", questa imprevista presa di posizione in cui il fluire anonimo dell'esistenza si arresta, e in cui la durata si spezza e si riannoda<sup>18</sup>.

L'improvviso apparire del presente, all'interno del quale emerge un'interiorità posizionata, è ciò che Levinas chiama l'*ipostasi*, ossia il passaggio in cui l'esistenza pura e anonima diviene l'esistenza di qualcuno. Nel momento dell'apparizione immotivata del presente, l'interiorità si è costituita e riconosce se stessa. Il riconoscimento di una sfera di proprietà in cui c'è una parte dell'esistenza che è la *mia* esistenza è, per Levinas, precedente e necessario alla costituzione dell'identità.

Il problema che attraversa la filosofia di Levinas a partire dagli scritti del dopoguerra è che, subito dopo il suo sorgere, il presente perde la propria libertà, perde la caratteristica di essere "a partire da se stesso". Esso, infatti, una volta sorto immotivatamente, è condannato all'essere, a fluire come passato nella coscienza<sup>19</sup>. A partire dalla posizione il presente diviene il *mio* presente, e l'esistente diviene, dice Levinas, il soggetto del verbo essere. Il presente è posizione in un duplice senso: in primo luogo, in quanto esso è il momento in cui l'interiorità non è più assolutamente esposta all'esistenza, in secondo luogo poiché esso dopo il suo imprevisto sorgere, si *posiziona* rispetto agli istanti che lo precedono e lo seguono, venendosi così a trovare connesso, incastrato, in un legame insolubile fra passato e futuro. In questa connessione con il passato e il futuro dell'esistente, l'istante della posizione si trova "giustificato", ossia inserito all'interno del tempo lineare in cui il presente è sempre *economicamente* connesso al suo passato e al suo futuro. Quello che Levinas in questi anni chiama il "tempo economico" è il tempo in cui il presente è sempre giustificato dal suo passato e, a sua volta, giustifica il futuro.

In questa situazione il presente non è più *esposto*. Il termine

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18 Cfr LEVINAS 1986, 67.

19 Cfr LEVINAS 1986, 71-2.

*esposizione* che è molto importante nel pensiero di Levinas, si trova per la prima volta in *Dall'esistenza all'esistente*, riferito alla situazione dell'*il y a*. Levinas dice che nell'esistenza senza esistente «Siamo esposti. Il tutto si apre su di noi. Lo spazio notturno non è un mezzo per arrivare all'essere, esso ci apre all'essere»<sup>20</sup>. L'esposizione consiste in una strana e paradossale apertura: strana e paradossale poiché nella situazione di esistenza assoluta, così come Levinas la descrive, non c'è ancora alcun soggetto di questa apertura. La posizione pone fine a questa situazione di esposizione assoluta e paradossale.

In *Dall'esistenza all'esistente*, il perdono appare proprio in questa situazione in cui la posizione dell'esistente e l'esposizione all'esistenza sembrano porsi in contraddizione. Il perdono appare qui come la possibilità, dopo la costituzione dell'interiorità, di restituire al presente la propria originaria libertà, il proprio "essere a partire da se stesso". Il perdono restituisce al presente la propria originaria libertà, non tornando indietro all'assoluta esposizione all'esistenza, ma facendo saltare la contraddizione fra posizione ed esposizione. Il perdono riesce a fare saltare la contraddizione fra posizione ed esposizione in quanto esso mostra che l'interiorità posizionata è esposta.

Levinas scrive:

Raggiungere "altri" non è un fatto che trova in se stesso la propria giustificazione, non scuote la mia noia. Ontologicamente è l'evento della rottura più radicale delle categorie stesse dell'io, poiché per l'io, questo evento è non essere in sé, essere altrove, essere perdonato, non essere un'esistenza definitiva<sup>21</sup>.

Levinas definisce il perdono già a partire dagli scritti del dopoguerra, come ciò che è capace di interrompere la definitività della presenza. Il perdono si presenta in Levinas come una particolarissima forma di riconoscimento: esso, proprio come nel passaggio hegeliano

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20 LEVINAS 1986, 56.

21 LEVINAS 1986, p. 77.

della *Fenomenologia* di cui abbiamo parlato, è il riconoscimento di ciò che non ha in sé la propria giustificazione, di ciò che non può auto-riconoscere se stesso. È un riconoscimento che non è giustificato dal “posizionamento” dell’atto, dal posizionamento del presente fra un passato che lo giustifica e un futuro che lo compensa. Il perdono è un riconoscimento che non è determinato da una giustificazione ma da un’esposizione e, allo stesso modo, non produce una giustificazione ma un’esposizione.

Riprendendo la questione del perdono in *Totalità e infinito*, Levinas dice:

(...) il perdono si riferisce all’istante trascorso, esso permette al soggetto che si era compromesso in un istante trascorso di essere come se l’istante non fosse trascorso, di essere come se il soggetto non si fosse compromesso. Attivo, in un senso più forte dell’oblio, che non riguarda la realtà del fatto dimenticato, il perdono agisce sul passato, ripete in qualche modo il fatto purificandolo. Ma, d’altra parte, l’oblio annulla le relazioni con il passato, mentre il perdono conserva il passato perdonato nel presente purificato. L’essere perdonato non è l’essere innocente<sup>22</sup>.

Perdonare non significa scusare, ossia giustificare l’atto, ma non significa nemmeno cancellarlo come se esso non fosse mai avvenuto. Il perdono non reimmerge l’atto nell’anonimia dell’esistenza. Non ne elimina il nome. Non elimina il fatto che un atto abbia avuto luogo. Il perdono non elimina la posizione dell’interiorità, ma la *espone*. Nell’atto del perdono l’interiorità si trova, al contempo, posizionata ed esposta. In questo senso il perdono restituisce al presente la sua originaria libertà, lo espone a un riconoscimento di cui non ha in se stesso la giustificazione. L’atto è ingiustificatamente perdonato proprio perché se ne riconosce l’ingiustificabilità.

Il presente che è esposto al perdono è dunque, in generale, il

22 LEVINAS 1980, 293.

presente, ormai passato, in cui si è compiuto un atto, ma anche e soprattutto il presente in cui una interiorità si è costituita e si è auto-riconosciuta, attribuendosi una sfera di proprietà, assumendo una posizione e riconoscendo la propria identità. Il presente che è esposto al perdono è, cioè, il presente in cui l'interiorità ha preso la parola facendosi soggetto della propria esistenza, iniziando a raccontare la propria storia come ciò che giustifica il proprio posto nel mondo e come ragione del proprio riconoscimento.

Una volta che il presente è catturato nel tempo economico, l'interiorità è sicura di avere in se stessa la giustificazione del suo stesso riconoscimento. In questo caso il riconoscimento altrui è una sorta di ratifica dell'auto riconoscimento, in questo caso, cioè, la domanda di riconoscimento è una domanda retorica. L'interiorità che racconta la propria storia ha già in sé la giustificazione del riconoscimento che l'altro deve solo ratificare. Non vi sono "colpi di scena". Il riconoscimento è in questo senso la ratifica, la presa d'atto di ciò che è.

Il perdono, al contrario, comporta da parte di colui chiede perdono, il riconoscimento dell'assenza di giustificazioni dell'atto: ciò che rende possibile il perdono, dice Levinas in *L'io e la totalità*<sup>23</sup>, è, da una parte, il riconoscimento della colpa e, dall'altra, il riconoscimento dell'ingiustificabilità della colpa stessa. A questo riconoscimento, al riconoscimento che non c'è alcun racconto con cui sia possibile giustificare l'atto per il quale si chiede perdono, corrisponde, da parte di chi perdona, un atto altrettanto ingiustificato, che riconosce l'atto per il quale viene chiesto il perdono, riconosce la sua totale ingiustificabilità e ingiustificatamente lo perdona. Nell'atto del perdono il riconoscimento, esattamente come nel passo della *Fenomenologia* hegeliana, è sempre un colpo di scena, la richiesta di riconoscimento non è una domanda retorica e il riconoscimento non è un semplice atto di ratifica. Il perdono è centrale nella questione levinasiana del riconoscimento in quanto è un atto di riconoscimento in cui l'intersoggettività non viene negata, in cui il medesimo non

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23 LEVINAS 1998.

prende il sopravvento, in cui l'identità non cancella il volto.

Il perdono è l'ingiustificato riconoscimento dell'ingiustificabile, esso è del tutto al di là della logica della giustificazione e della giustizia. Il perdono lascia riemergere, in questo modo, un presente non vincolato al proprio passato e al proprio futuro, senza fondamento, direzione o finalità: esso lascia emergere dunque un presente *esposto* o *sospeso*.

Questo particolare tipo di riconoscimento che ha luogo nel perdono, cioè il riconoscimento di ciò che non ha in sé le ragioni della propria giustificazione, è possibile soltanto, però, dice Levinas in *L'io e la totalità*, nell'*entre nous*. In questo saggio Levinas definisce la dimensione dell'*entre nous* come il luogo in cui il perdono è possibile. Il perdono è unicamente possibile in una società a due, in una società intima, in una società che di fatto esclude i terzi<sup>24</sup>. Il perdono, dice Levinas, diviene impossibile quando il terzo irrompe nello spazio intimo che in *Totalità e infinito* è lo spazio della dimora, chiedendo la giustificazione del posto che l'interiorità occupa nel mondo. Ciò che Levinas chiama "il terzo" è la dimensione storico-sociale, che si sovrappone al rapporto intersoggettivo.

Lo spazio della dimora, unico luogo in cui il perdono è possibile, è la dimensione del *femminile*<sup>25</sup>. In una conversazione con Bracha Lichemberg-Ettiger Levinas spiega molto chiaramente cosa egli intenda con "femminile":

Il femminile è questa differenza, il femminile è questa cosa inaudita nell'umano per la quale si afferma il fatto che *senza di me il mondo ha un senso*<sup>26</sup>.

Levinas definisce dunque il femminile come una possibilità dell'umano senza metterlo in relazione con una differenza sessuale biologica. In tal senso, il perdono segna, all'interno del pensiero di Levinas, il confine fra la relazione all'Altro come femminile e all'Altro

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24 Cfr. LEVINAS 1988, 47.

25 Cfr. LEVINAS 1980, 155 e segg.

26 LEVINAS 1997, 17 (traduzione mia).

come terzo.

Si può dire che l'Altro ha nella filosofia di Levinas un doppio ruolo: da una parte, nell'*entre nous*, esso è il femminile, che è la possibilità stessa del perdono; dall'altra parte esso è il terzo che costituisce la "società reale" chiedendo giustificazioni e giustizia. L'Altro come terzo rompe il silenzio dell'*entre nous* con la sua richiesta: il terzo chiede all'interiorità di giustificarsi, di raccontare una storia in cui essa si situi nel tempo economico in modo che il suo posto, i suoi diritti, il suo ruolo, la sua proprietà, ma anche la sua colpa, possa essere giustificata. Costituendo la "società reale", dice Levinas in *L'io e la Totalità*, l'Altro come terzo determina l'impossibilità del perdono:

Per essenza il terzo uomo turba questa intimità: il mio torto verso di te che io posso riconoscere interamente partendo dalle mie intenzioni, si trova interamente falsato dai tuoi rapporti con *lui*, che mi restano segreti, poiché io, a mia volta sono escluso dal privilegio unico della vostra intimità. Se riconosco i miei torti verso di te, posso, persino col mio pentimento, ledere il terzo<sup>27</sup>.

Per essere perdonato io devo riconoscere la mia colpa, riconoscerla come mia, ma in una società reale, in una società che non è fatta di sole due persone, dice Levinas, l'Altro, il terzo, può essere una vittima indiretta di un mio atto, che mi sfugge e non riconosco più come mio: in una società reale io posso essere colpevole nei confronti di qualcuno il cui volto non ho mai visto.

Il terzo determina quindi una separazione fra l'intenzione dell'atto e il suo risultato oggettivo. Se il risultato oggettivo dell'atto si discosta da quelle che erano le mie intenzioni, esso non è perdonabile, esso non appartiene all'ordine del perdono. Il presente dell'atto che produce un effetto al di là della mia intenzione è un presente in cui io divengo soggetto di un'esistenza che non è mia, in quanto è al di là del mio controllo e del mio potere. Lo sguardo del terzo fa sì, dunque, che il

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27 LEVINAS 1998, 47.

presente divenga, nella società reale, qualcosa che sfugge al mio volere a alla mia responsabilità. Nella società reale, dice Levinas:

[...] io non sono più, propriamente, un *io*, porto una colpa che non si riflette nelle mie intenzioni. Io sono oggettivamente colpevole e la mia pietà non può purificarmi<sup>28</sup>.

Per questo motivo la colpa di cui sono accusato dal terzo, è fuori dalla sfera del perdono: io non posso – dice Levinas ne *L'io e la totalità* – chiedere perdono per ciò che non era nell'intenzione dei miei atti ma che, tuttavia, ha provocato ripercussioni indirette. Per questi atti io posso solo scusarmi o essere scusato.

Nel momento in cui, in seguito all'entrata in campo del terzo, al presente ingiustificato si sostituisce la Storia, in cui tutto ha una giustificazione, nel momento in cui la Storia giustifica la mia posizione, il mio ruolo e i miei atti e limita la mia responsabilità, il perdono diviene impossibile, perché i miei atti non sono più miei. La Storia, la Totalità, l'Essere è lo spazio in cui l'interiorità è ridotta a epifenomeno, sostiene Levinas in *L'io e la totalità*, lo spazio in cui, come dice in *Totalità ed infinito*, la totalità esercita sull'interiorità una tirannia.

#### 4. Il nesso tra perdono e giustificazione

Il problema del rapporto fra perdono e giustificazione, fra etica e giustizia è anche il problema del rapporto fra l'Altro come femminile e l'Altro come terzo. Il problema di questo rapporto è affrontato da Levinas nella parte di *Totalità e infinito* dedicata a "La dimora"<sup>29</sup>. La questione della "Dimora" è importante perché "incarna" l'idea hegeliana del perdono, ossia la connette alla questione del corpo come vulnerabilità. In *Totalità ed infinito* la "dimora" è la metafora

28 LEVINAS 1998, (traduzione da me leggermente modificata).

29 LEVINAS 1980, 155 e segg.



dell'interiorità esposta, la metafora dell'assumere una posizione, dello stabilirsi, del tracciare i confini fra ciò che mi appartiene, ciò che è dentro, e ciò che non mi appartiene, ciò che è fuori.

La dimora, dice Levinas, è ciò che rompe la totalità dell'elemento, essa è l'emersione dell'interiorità dalla esistenza anonima<sup>30</sup>. La dimora è la costituzione all'interno dell'*il y a* di uno spazio di appartenenza e di uno spazio di non appartenenza. Lo spazio di appartenenza, di cui l'esistente è soggetto, è il "segreto della dimora". Ma la dimora non è solo il suo segreto e il suo esterno chiuso fuori. A tenere insieme questa apparente contraddizione tra dentro e fuori vi sono le sue mura, i suoi "beni al sole"<sup>31</sup>.

Le pareti della dimora non racchiudono solamente un interno, ma anche, espongono all'esterno; espongono, cioè, alla possibilità della venuta del terzo, che a quelle pareti bussa per chiedere di giustificare la posizione e il possesso di quella parte dell'esistenza. La dimora è dunque la metafora dell'interiorità esposta tramite la propria pelle, tramite propria sensibilità. In quanto posizione esposta, la dimora, metafora dell'interiorità, ha dunque il perdono come sua condizione di possibilità. Per questo motivo l'interiorità non può essere da sola nella dimora. La dimora, come posizione esposta, dice Levinas, «richiede che io sia stato in relazione con qualcosa di cui io non vivo. Questo fatto è la relazione con Altri che mi accoglie nella Casa»<sup>32</sup>.

Lo spazio di accoglienza, e non di chiusura, che la dimora rappresenta in quanto posizione esposta ha come sua condizione di possibilità un'accoglienza originaria, ossia ha come condizione di possibilità il riconoscimento ingiustificato dell'ingiustificabile che è il perdono. Quest'accoglienza originaria è ciò che in *Totalità ed infinito* Levinas chiama *femminile*. Il *femminile*, dice Levinas, è l'accoglienza in quanto tale, è la condizione della separazione nella dimora, la condizione di possibilità dell'interiorità. Il riconoscimento come perdono, che il femminile rappresenta, è ciò che "mette al rovescio"

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30 Cfr. a questo proposito, PETROSINO 2007, 147 e segg.

31 Cfr. PETROSINO 2007, 147 e segg.

32 LEVINAS 1980, 173-4.

l'interiorità, che la espone.

Dice Levinas in *Totalità e infinito*:

Esiste, così sembra, una differenza più profonda fra le diverse superfici: quella del diritto e quella del rovescio. Una superficie si offre allo sguardo e si può rivoltare un vestito come si fa rifondere una moneta<sup>33</sup>.

Questa "messa a rovescio" dell'interiorità, che l'atto del perdono determina, è l'esposizione della posizione. L'interiorità mostra il suo rovescio, si espone attraverso i suoi "beni al sole" e, attraverso la sua pelle, si rovescia in sensibilità esposta.

Levinas descrive lo spazio dell'interiorità, lo spazio *dell'entre nous*, come un luogo silenzioso, in cui ancora non è apparsa la parola. Tuttavia, in questo spazio, dice Levinas, il presente è già *ritenuto* nel flusso del tempo, anche se non è ancora raccontato, non è ancora rimemorato. In *Altrimenti che essere* Levinas usa la differenza husserliana tra ritenzione e rimemorazione per mostrare come non ci sia bisogno del linguaggio verbale perché il presente sia agganciato, incastrato tra il passato e il futuro. Nel silenzio dell'interiorità, dice Levinas in *Altrimenti che essere*, c'è già *essenza*, o *essanza*, come la chiama in questo testo, c'è già, cioè, l'identità nel suo modificarsi. Questo significa che prima della Totalità, della giustizia, della storia, prima dell'arrivo del terzo nello spazio intimo della dimora, c'è già *essenza*, c'è già l'essere, c'è già in atto, cioè, quel processo in cui il presente è catturato, giustificato, tra passato e futuro. Ciò che sfugge all'essenza, al meccanismo in cui il presente è catturato dalla connessione con il passato e il futuro e perde la possibilità di essere per se stesso, non è il segreto della dimora, non è la chiusura nell'interiorità, ma il fatto che questa interiorità ha come suo presupposto il riconoscimento dell'irricongoscibile, ha come presupposto il perdono, e dunque il fatto che questa interiorità è già "al rovescio", è già esposta all'altro.

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33 LEVINAS 1980, 196.

La *posizione esposta* non è dunque l'individualità chiusa in se stessa, poiché è costituita dalla relazione con l'altro. L'interiorità appare dunque in *Altrimenti che essere*, come il flusso di coscienza "messo al rovescio", "rovesciato", come si fa per un tessuto di cui si scopre l'ordito. Ciò che appare in questo rovesciamento della temporalità della coscienza, è la passività della temporalità del corpo, in cui il tempo sfugge e segna, in cui il tempo, come Levinas dice in *Altrimenti che essere*, diviene senescenza<sup>34</sup>.

Esposta e messa a rovescio, l'interiorità si mostra come sensibilità, passività assoluta, pazienza, vulnerabilità. La temporalità del corpo è lo "sconvolgimento" provocato nell'interiorità dall'interferenza dell'alterità, "sconvolgimento" che tuttavia ogni volta rientra subito nell'ordine dell'essenza, nell'ordine della modificazione della propria identità. Il corpo è al contempo il presupposto di questo sconvolgimento, la condizione di possibilità del presente assoluto e lo spazio "risonante" il cui il presente viene catturato dal tempo economico.

Attraverso questa figura della *posizione esposta*, Levinas elimina l'opposizione, l'alternativa tra il terzo e il femminile, tra la giustizia e l'etica, tra il riconoscimento intersoggettivo e il riconoscimento all'interno della comunità socio-politica. La *posizione esposta* permette infatti di concepire la relazione etica come *sensibilità della giustizia*, ossia come la giustizia messa al rovescio. In questo rovesciamento il riconoscimento all'interno della comunità socio-politica non è più il riconoscimento dell'identità, l'assunzione di un ruolo, l'apparizione di un soggetto astratto, non è più, dice Levinas, la riduzione dell'interiorità ad un *egli*.

La corporeità in cui si rovescia la coscienza interna del tempo, in cui il fluire della temporalità della coscienza diviene senescenza, invecchiamento, è già significazione è già, dice Levinas in *Altrimenti che essere*, dire prima del detto. La corporeità, in cui si rovescia l'interiorità è l'impossibilità dell'auto-riconoscimento, in quanto è già un non essere in sé. Questa esposizione dell'interiorità, che il

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34 Cfr, LEVINAS 1983, 77 e segg.

femminile attraverso il perdono come riconoscimento dell'ingiustificabile determina, è in Levinas la condizione di possibilità della libertà di parola, la condizione di possibilità del dire al di là del detto.

Il giudizio virile della storia, dice Levinas, «è crudele»<sup>35</sup>, toglie la parola, riduce l'interiorità ad un egli. L'interiorità, in questa situazione dimentica la propria esposizione che è al contempo la propria apertura e la propria vulnerabilità. Essa, dice Levinas, «Vive, allora, riflessa dall'ordine pubblico, nell'eguaglianza che le è garantita dall'universalità delle leggi. Esiste allora come se fosse morta»<sup>36</sup>. Pensare l'interiorità senza il suo rovescio, senza la sua vulnerabilità significa negare anche la libertà di parola, poiché ogni dire diviene già detto, poiché ogni domanda di riconoscimento è una domanda retorica, un auto-riconoscimento, che l'altro deve solo ratificare. Il riconoscimento, dimenticato il perdono, diviene solo scusa, fissazione di un posto, identificazione in un ruolo, impossibilità della relazione intersoggettiva. In questo spazio il riconoscimento autoreferenziale nega se stesso in quanto rende impossibile il rapporto con l'altro, rende impossibile una presa di parola che non sia che ripetizione del già detto. Il nesso profondo che Levinas stabilisce, invece, tra riconoscimento e perdono, rende il riconoscimento un atto in cui si accede al dire al di là del detto, ed in cui la posizione si espone all'altro.

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# **The Paths of Method**



# Eugen Fink e la fenomenologia dell'irrealità

*Nicola Zippel*

Independent researcher\*

[nicola.zippel@gmail.com](mailto:nicola.zippel@gmail.com)

*ABSTRACT.* After being discussed in 1929 with Husserl as referent and Heidegger as co-referent, Eugen Fink's *Dissertation "Vergegenwärtigung und Bild"* (Presentification and Image) has been published in 1930 on the "Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung". In his study, Fink works out a careful and methodic inquiry of basic notions of Husserlian thought regarding the time-consciousness. The paper analyzes the main theses of *Dissertation*, paying particular attention to the first and wider part devoted to presentification, a concept that means all mental processes, which make present what belongs to the sphere of the past, the future, or the possible: memory, expectation, imagination, and dream. Through a comparison with the investigations that Husserl himself addressed to the topic of not-presence and unreality, we aim at casting light on the radical detailed analyses introduced by Fink, with special focus on the original changes concerning the phenomenological status of dreaming.

*KEYWORDS.* Unreality; Presentification; Time-consciousness.

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\* Nicola Zippel – Via Giarabub 16/B – 00199 Roma, Italia.





...l'immaginazione non è una qualche facoltà separata  
della mente: è la mente stessa, nella sua interezza...  
Gianni Rodari, *Grammatica della fantasia*

Nelle pagine introduttive al suo lavoro di dottorato, Fink precisa fin da subito che le analisi che seguiranno si limiteranno allo studio dei vissuti, quella che chiama «l'analitica costitutiva dei vissuti stessi»<sup>1</sup>, la quale ha il compito di introdurre alla tematica, ben più vasta, della "mondanizzazione" (*Mundanisierung*) del soggetto trascendentale.<sup>2</sup>

Sebbene la seconda parte non verrà mai pubblicata, già il testo della *Dissertazione* assume la correlazione Io-mondo come fondamento delle riflessioni svolte, ciò che costituisce un'importante differenza rispetto alle *Lezioni* sulla coscienza del tempo di Husserl, costante riferimento dello scritto finkiano. D'altra parte, negli anni delle *Lezioni* Husserl non aveva ancora sviluppato una compiuta elaborazione della nozione di Ego, né una altrettanto matura riflessione sul concetto di mondo; il testo di Fink, la cui gestazione risale al biennio '29-'30, per quanto rinvii esplicitamente alle *Lezioni* sul tempo appena pubblicate (nel 1928 a cura di Martin Heidegger), accoglie implicitamente tutto il corso delle indagini husserliane sviluppatasi nei due decenni seguiti all'effettiva realizzazione delle *Zeitvorlesungen*. Indagini complesse e variegate (in costante e laborioso divenire ancora sulla soglia degli anni '30) in cui Husserl definisce i principi teoretici della fenomenologia della temporalità: riduzione trascendentale,<sup>3</sup> soggettività,<sup>4</sup> presente vivente,<sup>5</sup> presentificazione,<sup>6</sup> sintesi passive,<sup>7</sup>

1 FINK 2010, p. 58.

2 Il concetto di "mondanizzazione" verrà ripreso da Fink nella rielaborazione delle *Meditazioni cartesiane*. Cfr. FINK 2009, pp. 109-133. Cfr. in merito anche VAN KERCKHOVEN 1998; LUFT 2002.

3 HUSSERL 1959; HUSSERL 1981; 2002a; 2002c.

4 HUSSERL 2002a.; HUSSERL 2002b; HUSSERL 2001.

5 HUSSERL 2006.

6 HUSSERL 1980.

7 HUSSERL 1993.

materia.<sup>8</sup> La rilevanza, nella fenomenologia di Fink, del concetto di mondo<sup>9</sup> è di certo rintracciabile nell'influsso di Heidegger, correlatore della tesi di dottorato e di cui era stato da poco edito *Essere e tempo*,<sup>10</sup> che Fink aveva letto in maniera approfondita durante la stesura della *Dissertazione*.<sup>11</sup>

Pur considerando, quindi, questo sfondo complessivo dello studio di Fink, terremo principalmente presente il confronto con le *Lezioni*, con qualche necessario riferimento al volume sulla presentificazione.<sup>12</sup>

## 1. Il metodo fenomenologico come via di accesso all'irrealtà

Dopo aver delimitato il campo delle sue riflessioni, Fink precisa che è la riduzione fenomenologica a rendere possibile l'accesso alla sfera dei vissuti, intesi come vissuti dell'Ego trascendentale «assunto nella sua concretezza con tutte le sue cogitationes e i cogitata in esse racchiusi».<sup>13</sup> Guidato, in una prospettiva autenticamente fenomenologica, dalla «datità originale di un vissuto intenzionale», che funge come «unica istanza dell'interpretazione analitica»,<sup>14</sup> Fink apre la trattazione vera e propria iniziando con la distinzione basilare tra «atti presentanti», che offrono l'oggettualità in carne ed ossa, avendo in essi luogo «un originario, invariato esser-dato in se stesso di un essente», e «atti presentificanti», in cui l'elementarità della presentazione si complica nella modificazione intenzionale «di un duplice presente di vissuti costituente: da un lato il presentificare

8 HUSSERL 2001; HUSSERL 2002b; HUSSERL 2006.

9 Nozione sempre presente (cfr. ad es. HUSSERL 2002b), ma mai centrale in Husserl, se non nella riflessione sulla *Lebenswelt* (cfr. HUSSERL 1961; HUSSERL 2008).

10 HEIDEGGER 2003.

11 Cfr. BRUZINA 2004, 10. Negli anni successivi, Fink troverà in Kant un riferimento privilegiato per la riflessione sulla questione del "mondo". Cfr. BRUZINA, 2004 174-205; LAZZARI 2009, in particolare 112-212.

12 HUSSERL 1980.

13 FINK 2010, 64. Un riferimento alla concretezza dell'Io, su cui si dovrà tornare.

14 FINK 2010, 71.

presente, dall'altro il "percepire" immaginato. [...] A questo duplice presente di vissuti corrisponde correlativamente nel noema un rinvio a un noema originario, ossia il presentificato si dà in se stesso come modificazione di un altro». <sup>15</sup> Assumendo *tout court* la terminologia incentrata sulla correlazione noesi-noema di *Idee I*, cui dedicherà analisi approfondite nel saggio su fenomenologia e neokantismo del 1933, <sup>16</sup> Fink è in grado di mostrare sinteticamente quella complicazione intenzionale che avviene nel passaggio dalla presentazione alla presentificazione, la quale, riproducendo un'esperienza coscienziale passata, ne duplica altresì l'interna struttura di vissuto, a partire dal presente in cui originariamente è stato esperito il fenomeno presentificato. A tale presente, tuttavia, si sovrappone il presente dell'atto presentificante, ciò che induce Fink a elaborare l'immagine di un «duplice presente (*doppelte Gegenwart*)». <sup>17</sup>

Fink inizia la trattazione della presentificazione con il concetto di rimemorazione (§ 10), di cui mette in rilievo non solo il carattere di "ridestamento" di un'esperienza passata, ma altresì la "motivazione" che presiede a tale atto rivolto al passato e che si sviluppa nell'ambito egologico dove si compie effettivamente il presentificare. L'io, nell'attuare la rimemorazione, è *già* guidato da una motivazione, la quale «determina radicalmente il modo in cui il passato dell'io deve essere a lui stesso svelato. Il rammemorare [...], sempre e costantemente guidato da un interesse, ha in anticipo il suo scopo, già come intenzione introdotta senza un contenuto». <sup>18</sup> Mosso in maniera determinata, nel ricordare l'io attuale non si volge quindi genericamente al proprio passato, ma mira consapevolmente a una precisa esperienza trascorsa, riportandola alla luce del presente e inquadrandola di nuovo, in tal modo, nella temporalità originaria, in cui ha luogo il ricordare stesso, secondo quella duplicità del presente

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15 FINK 2010, 72-73.

16 *La filosofia fenomenologica di Edmund Husserl nella critica contemporanea*, in FINK 2010, 141-237.

17 La nozione di *doppelte Gegenwart* compare in Husserl nel Manoscritto C 7 del 1932. Cfr. HUSSERL 2006, 127-135.

18 FINK 2010, p. 80.

messa in rilievo da Fink nelle pagine sopracitate.

Tale intreccio con il presente, teatro di realizzazione della riproduzione di un'esperienza non presente (passata o possibile), caratterizza tutte le presentificazioni; solo la rimemorazione, però, è in grado di dare «qualcosa in se stesso, e precisamente nel modo della determinatezza». <sup>19</sup> Questa datità determinata, precisa subito Fink, non va confusa con quella offerta dalla presentazione, l'unica dotata dei tratti dell'originarietà, ma va intesa come «una medesimezza (*Selbstheitlichkeit*) di tipo particolare, ossia il darsi in se stesso dell'oggetto come oggetto passato. In altri termini, una rimemorazione è un'esperienza di ciò che era realmente». <sup>20</sup> Questo ancoraggio alla realtà di un vissuto passato, se, da una parte, fa della rimemorazione l'unica forma di presentificazione che può aspirare a una dignità gnoseologica fondata, dall'altra parte la vincola a quella stessa determinatezza esperienziale, di cui la rimemorazione può solo assumere, modificandoli, i tratti già stabiliti in sede di passato. La ripresa rammemorante di un evento trascorso riproduce bensì il dato originario, e tale riproduzione è una modificazione, una variazione sul tema originale, di cui eredita i tratti di realtà ad esso attinenti; modificare, riprodurre, però, non significano ri-determinare, poiché la rimemorazione «è in sé impotente, non è in grado di dotare l'oggetto di nuove determinazioni, ma l'oggetto viene inteso dalla rimemorazione come già determinato». <sup>21</sup> Secondo questa prospettiva, Fink, come già Husserl, sottolinea il carattere "ri-costitutivo" della rimemorazione, là dove il tratto ripetitivo della costituzione non indica una mera copiatura (l'oggetto ricordato nella rimemorazione, come tale, è diverso dallo stesso oggetto originalmente esperito nell'impressione percettiva); e tuttavia, in quanto ri-costituzione, essa non può che operare su un materiale già dato, ossia già in qualche modo esperito (nel riprodurre l'esperienza dell'ascolto di una melodia, modifico sia la modalità di accesso alla melodia – ricordo e non più

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<sup>19</sup> FINK 2010, 82.

<sup>20</sup> FINK 2010, 82.

<sup>21</sup> FINK 2010, 82-83.

impressione –, sia il tratto noematico di essa – ricordata e non più percepita –, ma non ne modifico l'originario manifestarsi, il quale, anzi, proprio nel rimanere intatto garantisce la veridicità e la realtà del mio ricordo, delimitandone al contempo la capacità riproduttiva).

Ritornando sul carattere “motivato” della rimemorazione (§ 12), Fink sottolinea il contesto ambientale di una tale motivazione, che esprime mediante il concetto fenomenologico di “dimensione mondana” (*Weltlichkeit*) del ricordo. Essa indica l'essere localizzato in un mondo ambiente (*Umgebung* o *Umwelt*) da parte dell'Io che ricorda, il quale trae la stessa motivazione non dal mondo che sceglie di ricordare (il mondo del ricordo), ma da quello in cui vive attualmente nel momento in cui ricorda (il mondo presente). «Il mondo del ricordo – spiega Fink – ha una significatività, che non gli compete in sé, ma gli deriva unicamente dalla situazione presente dell'Io attuale». <sup>22</sup> Sulla base della motivazione che spinge l'Io attuale, l'Io del mondo del presente, a ricordare, ossia a inoltrarsi nell'oscurità del proprio passato riportando in vita – presentificando – una parte di esso, l'Io del mondo del ricordo, che vive proiettato nella situazione passata, apre un campo di presenza che si sovrappone a quello attuale e che, essendo frutto di una scelta consapevole e non di un'impressione spontanea, si costituisce secondo connessioni intenzionali differenti da quelle che co-determinano il presente attuale. «Questo non deve significare, – precisa Fink ribadendo ciò che aveva esposto nei paragrafi precedenti – che il ricordo sarebbe in grado di costituire nuovi momenti della determinatezza oggettuale, ma che può essere “costitutivo” nella misura in cui mette in risalto in modo particolare ciò che allora era rimasto ignorato, ciò a cui non si era prestata attenzione». <sup>23</sup> D'altra parte, questa ri-costituzione (ri-presentazione) di un senso già costituito, solo rivisto secondo un'attenzione mutata, sorge pur sempre in riferimento a e in funzione dell'attualità, poiché ciò che è ricordato, rammemorato, è «a partire dalle connessioni esperenziali del presente, [che] riceve una significatività e quindi un riconoscimento

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<sup>22</sup> FINK 2010, 85.

<sup>23</sup> FINK 2010 pp. 85-86.

attenzionale». <sup>24</sup>

L'aggiunta della dimensione mondana nella definizione della presentificazione rammemorante rappresenta un'originale quanto fondamentale complicazione intenzionale del fenomeno della rimemorazione (e della presentificazione in generale), operata da Fink rispetto a Husserl. Essa va di pari passo con l'accentuazione del tratto egologico, soggettivo del presentificare, e ancora le riflessioni finkiane alla concretezza esistenziale della coscienza, taciuta nelle analisi, più formali, delle *Lezioni* del 1905 di Husserl.

Ora, invece, è opportuno rimarcare l'assonanza tra Husserl e Fink, là dove anche quest'ultimo, sulla scorta dell'analisi della motivazione sottolinea il tratto "libero" della rimemorazione: «"Io potrei" proseguire nel ricordo oppure, meglio, allora avrei potuto continuare, ma poi ho lasciato perdere. Le potenzialità appartengono al mondo del ricordo più di quanto appartenessero una volta al mondo presente reale». <sup>25</sup> La libertà dell'Io che ricorda deriva, come in Husserl, nello stare in rapporto indiretto con l'originarietà del momento presente rammemorato; la libera modificazione dell'esperienza originaria nella ri-presentazione investe anche il contenuto stesso di ciò che è ricordato, non solo nel renderlo di nuovo presente, ma anche nel riprodurlo secondo modalità possibili che, nel passato, non si sono verificate («allora avrei potuto continuare, ma poi ho lasciato perdere»). In tal senso, la rimemorazione tende a scivolare continuamente in una fantasia. D'altra parte, la libertà si esprime anche rispetto al lato noetico del ricordare, ossia nella capacità, per l'Io che ricorda, di selezionare non soltanto ciò che deve essere ricordato, ma altresì i modi e i tempi del ricordare: «possiamo "indugiare in un pensiero" e dirigerci nel modo del ricordo, in un'esclusività attenzionale, su una determinata oggettualità». <sup>26</sup> Rispetto all'impressione percettiva, che, sperando nell'immediatezza dell'originarietà fenomenica, è continuamente investita (affetta) da

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24 FINK 2010, 86.

25 FINK 2010, 86.

26 FINK 2010, 86.

molteplici dati sensibili concomitanti, che le permettono di controllare solo in minima parte il processo costitutivo intenzionale, la rimemorazione (come già in Husserl) compensa il deficit di originarietà con una pressoché totale libertà esperienziale, se non nella costituzione (che è sempre ri-costituzione), quantomeno nella sua modalità di realizzazione.

Per quanto libero di rapportarsi al proprio passato mediante rimemorazioni, l'Io che ricorda, oltre ad essere vincolato alle determinazioni oggettuali costituite nella sede impressionale originaria (nel presente passato), conosce un altro limite invalicabile per la sua azione ri-produttiva, quello rappresentato dall'impossibilità di ricordare il proprio passato nella sua totalità. Irrecuperabile, non riscattabile (*einlösbar*), il passato è infinito, in tal senso "oscuro", e come tale limita non solo l'attività presentificante dell'Io, ma svela così, e più in generale, la finitezza congenita della soggettività trascendentale, che non è quindi in grado di dare un senso (ri-costituire) all'intera vita trascorsa, di cui rimane sempre un fondo non più tematizzabile, non più ri-proponibile.<sup>27</sup> Tuttavia, per comprendere la portata di quest'ultima considerazione, Fink rinvia alla teoria della mondanizzazione<sup>28</sup> del soggetto, ossia alla seconda parte del suo lavoro, rimasta incompiuta.

Il testo prosegue nell'analisi delle altre forme di presentificazione, e precisamente con il concetto di "ricordo anticipante" (*Vorerinnerung*). Rivolto in direzione contraria rispetto alla rimemorazione, il ricordo anticipante si riferisce al futuro: «ciò che esso può e deve svelare non è un essere finito e in qualche modo già determinato; è invece lo svelamento di una possibilità».<sup>29</sup> Relazionandosi a ciò che deve ancora accadere, il ricordo anticipante è privo di determinazioni oggettuali già date, come nel caso della rimemorazione; esso rende presente qualcosa che ancora non c'è, e lo rende presente nella forma di una possibilità anticipata, traendo «dal progetto protensionale del futuro

27 Cfr. FINK 2010, 92-92.

28 «Il soggetto trascendentale accoglie necessariamente in sé la finitezza dell'uomo (una necessità che, tuttavia, è riferita correlativamente a un mondo essente)», FINK 2010, 65.

29 FINK 2010, p. 94.

ciò che risiede in esso come predatità di ciò che è a venire». <sup>30</sup> Come è possibile, tuttavia, ri-presentare qualcosa che non ha avuto luogo? Qual è, in questo caso, il senso della presentificazione? E perché, infine, tale anticipazione presentificante assume le forme di un ricordo? Alla prima domanda si può rispondere seguendo ancora le riflessioni di Fink, il quale sposta il carattere di realtà dal piano dell'essere a quello del tempo: «Ciò che è a venire, fintanto che è futuro, in generale ancora non "è", bensì è solo in quanto *viene temporalizzato* in una costituzione originale nel presente reale». <sup>31</sup> La possibilità di rendere presente ciò che non solo non è presente, ma ancora non lo è stato (e, forse, non lo sarà mai), è data dal processo di temporalizzazione che avviene nella realtà attuale, in cui l'avvenire ha l'unica forma di esistenza che può competergli, quella appunto di un che di futuro; l'essere futuro non indica un'esistenza reale, ossia presente, ma un'esistenza possibile, appunto futura, ancora irreal se riferita all'attualità presente, ma "possibilmente" reale se riferita all'attualità futura. Prima di essere effettivamente, realmente (*wirklich*), il possibile esiste come ontologicamente irreal (*unwirklich*), ma temporalmente già dato appunto in quanto possibile (*möglich*) <sup>32</sup>. In tal senso, Fink suggerisce che la possibilità (temporalizzata) precede la realtà (essente); d'altra parte, poiché la temporalizzazione (presentificazione del possibile) del futuro avviene nella realtà del presente (progetto protensionale), la realtà a sua volta è condizione della possibilità.

Come va letta, a questo punto, la relazione realtà/possibilità? Come un circolo, o, piuttosto, come una compenetrazione reciproca di due dimensioni co-originarie. Solo perché temporalizzata nel presente, la possibilità futura può essere anticipata, contaminando così il reale di ciò che lo sorpassa, lo supera, lo trascende e insieme lo apre al futuro.

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30 FINK 2010, 94.

31 FINK 2010, corsivo nostro.

32 Nei suoi appunti relativi alla dissertazione, Fink scrive: «L'intenzionalità temporale della presentazione concorre a identificare la realtà dell'oggetto: realtà e possibilità primariamente non sono modi dell'oggettualità, ma della temporalizzazione. Tempo reale: passato – presente – futuro. Tempo irreal: possibilità», FINK 2006, 289.



Il senso della presentificazione, allora, diventa quello di colmare intenzionalmente il vuoto costitutivo che circonda il presente attuale *a parte ante*, di fornire alla realtà corrente, e all'Io che la abita, una prospettiva, una direzione verso cui tendere, un senso da raggiungere.

Per quanto apertura al futuro, al possibile, Fink caratterizza tale anticipazione come "ricordo"; il perché di questa scelta apparentemente paradossale, può essere rinvenuto non solo nella struttura intenzionale della coscienza del tempo, in cui qualsiasi richiamo al futuro è ipso facto un richiamo a un presente futuro, e, quindi, a un qualcosa che sarà poi ricordato (a un ricordo futuro). In tal senso, il ricordo anticipa se stesso, ossia rende presente un decorso futuro che, come tale, defluirà nel passato e, quindi, nel ricordo che se ne avrà: «Come la rimemorazione, anche il ricordo anticipante è in un costante rapporto di orientamento verso il presente attuale, in modo tale che il passato del presente del mondo del ricordo anticipante coincida con il futuro del presente attuale e con tutto il suo passato». <sup>33</sup> Radicandosi nell'attualità presente, anche il ricordo anticipante apre quella serie di coincidenze che caratterizzano l'atto rammemorante, e che culminano nell'incontro tra l'Io che vive nell'anticipazione del futuro e quello che vive nell'impressione del presente; il futuro è atteso, è anticipato in funzione di questo incontro, e anticipato quindi è anche il ricordo cui tale futuro, una volta realizzatosi, sottostarà. Secondo questa prospettiva, il ricordo anticipa una possibilità futura che sarà vissuta (percepita) e quindi ricordata, poiché una possibilità futura è come tale una possibilità ricordata, e proprio nel ricordo che se ne avrà si annuncia la coincidenza identitaria tra le due espressioni egologiche del presente e della presentificazione: «[...] il futuro remoto del soggetto attuale e tutto il futuro del soggetto del mondo del ricordo anticipante coincidono». <sup>34</sup>

Ma il ricordo è anticipante anche in un altro senso, più profondo, legato alla nozione stessa di *Er-innern*, ovvero, come scrive Derrida, di «un'anamnesi interiorizzante (*Erinnerung*), un raccoglimento del

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<sup>33</sup> FINK 2010, 95.

<sup>34</sup> FINK 2010, 95.

senso»;<sup>35</sup> questo richiamo all'interiorità, già presente in Hegel<sup>36</sup>, è riscontrabile anche nella derivazione etimologica del vocabolo italiano dal latino *re-cordare*, proveniente da *cor*, *cordis*, là dove si riteneva che il cuore fosse la sede della memoria, ciò che conferma la forte ascendenza *agostiniana* della teoria fenomenologica della coscienza del tempo, presente in Husserl ed ereditata da Fink.<sup>37</sup> Come interiorizzazione intenzionale di un evento futuro, l'anticipazione è un ricordo, ossia è il modo in cui l'Io si rende presente (presentifica) un'eventualità esistenziale, la vive immaginandone tutte le molteplici realizzazioni, la aspetta e, nell'attesa, ne costituisce un senso possibile. Qui i due sensi in cui abbiamo letto il concetto di ricordo anticipante arrivano a coincidere: il futuro "ricordato", ossia anticipato come ciò che sarà ricordato, è un futuro "interiorizzato". Così inteso, la nozione di *Vorerinnerung* deriva dalla più ampia nozione husserliana di *Vorerleben*, che esprime in generale l'esperienza coscienziale del futuro: «ciò che è futuro scorre in anticipo nell'esperienza anticipante che se

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35 DERRIDA 1997, 346.

36 «L'intelligenza, ricordando dapprima l'intuizione, pone il contenuto del sentimento nella sua interiorità (*Innerlichkeit*), nel suo spazio proprio e nel suo proprio tempo. [...] l'intelligenza della sensazione determinata e della sua intuizione è interiore a sé (*sich innerlich*), e la conosce come ciò che è già suo; [...] Questa sintesi dell'immagine interna (*innerlich*) con l'esistenza ricordata, è la vera e propria rappresentazione; – giacché l'interno (*das innere*) ha ora la determinazione di poter esser situato innanzi all'intelligenza, ed avere in questa la sua esistenza», HEGEL 1967, 413 e 414. Cfr. anche le pagine conclusive della *Fenomenologia dello spirito*: «Poiché la perfezione dello Spirito consiste nel *sapere* perfettamente ciò che *esso è*, nel sapere la propria sostanza, ecco allora che questo sapere è la sua *introiezione* (*Insichgehen*), nella quale lo Spirito abbandona la propria esistenza e ne affida la figura al ricordo. [...] L'interiorizzazione rammemorante (*Er-Innerung*) [...] ha conservato tali spiriti [anteriori], e costituisce l'Interno e la forma, di fatto più elevata, della sostanza. [...] La via che conduce alla *meta* – al sapere assoluto, cioè allo Spirito che si sa come Spirito – è il ricordo degli spiriti come essi sono in se stessi e compiono l'organizzazione del loro regno», HEGEL 2001, 1063 e 1065.

37 «Avrebbe potuto forse il mio cuore evadere da se stesso? Dove allontanarmi da me? Dove il mio io non mi avrebbe seguito? [...]. Se n'è partito dai nostri occhi affinché rientrassimo in noi stessi (*redeamus ad cor*) e ivi lo trovassimo [...]. O Signore, che hai voluto questo ricordo e questa mia confessione, guarda al mio cuore!», AGOSTINO 1998, 179, 187, 259.

ne ha (*das Künftige im voraus abläuft in einem voraus Vorerleben*)». <sup>38</sup>

Come attesa di ciò che deve ancora essere vissuto, e che, forse, non lo sarà nei modi immaginati, presentificati, o, ancora, che non lo sarà mai, il ricordo anticipante assume le forme di una peculiare *nostalgia*, in cui la mancanza di ciò che è assente affonda le radici in ciò che ancora non è presente e che si fa ritornare, rientrare (re-cordare) in se stessi nelle forme di un presente possibile. Non avendo un dato reale da ricordare (l'interiorizzazione non è un'oggettivazione), neanche nelle forme già determinate di cui dispone la rimemorazione, il ricordo anticipante non rende presente qualcosa per mezzo di una ricostituzione, bensì di una "proto-costituzione". <sup>39</sup>

Alle riflessioni sul ricordo anticipante seguono le considerazioni su un'altra figura fondamentale di presentificazione, il "ricordo nel presente" (*Gegenwartserinnerung*), che viene introdotta da un'osservazione volta a rimarcare la correlazione Io-mondo, decisiva specialmente per la comprensione di questa peculiare forma di coscienza: «Nell'analisi precedente abbiamo parlato continuamente di *mondo* del ricordo, senza metterne analiticamente ed espressamente in risalto questo carattere mondano. Ciò è ora in qualche modo necessario al fine di poter discutere della possibilità del ricordo nel presente e del suo rapporto con le altre presentificazioni». <sup>40</sup> È necessario, perché il ricordo nel presente denota quel momento particolare della vita della mente, in cui il soggetto si immagina di vivere, in quello stesso momento, un'esperienza dislocata altrove. L'altrove, tuttavia, è posto sempre nel mondo del presente, condividendo l'Io del mondo del ricordo *nel* presente lo stesso mondo dell'Io del mondo attuale (*del* presente): «Il mondo del ricordo nel presente è manifestamente il medesimo di quello della presentazione, "solo da un altro luogo"». <sup>41</sup> Essendo lo stesso il mondo, lo stesso è anche il tempo. Nel caso della rimemorazione e del ricordo

38 HUSSERL 1980, 295. Per un'analisi minuziosa e analitica della nozione di "Vor-Erleben" cfr. CONRAD 1968, 42-56.

39 FINK 2010, 97.

40 FINK 2010, 97.

41 FINK 2010, 100.

anticipante, sebbene si dia un'identità mondana tra Io presentificante e Io attuale, giacché il primo compie il rendere presente collocandosi anch'egli nella dimensione originaria della presenza impressionale del secondo, tale identità viene meno tra Io presentificato e Io attuale, poiché il mondo rimemorato o anticipato sta su un differente livello costitutivo-coscienziale, quello dell'orizzonte di passato o dell'orizzonte di futuro. Laddove, invece, con il ricordo nel presente sia l'Io presentificante che l'Io presentificato si situano nel mondo e nel tempo dell'Io del presente, in una simultaneità fondata su quella che Fink definisce la «peculiare relazionalità temporale del reale in generale con il tempo soggettivo», in base alla quale la «presenzialità del reale, in ultima istanza, è quella che si lega alla presenzialità del soggetto».<sup>42</sup> E tuttavia, non si tratta dello stesso presente, poiché con il ricordo nel presente si ha un presente presentificato, immaginato, e quindi irreali, che si sovrappone al presente attuale. Tale sovrapposizione avviene mediante un "vagare" (*wandern*) da parte dell'Io presentificante "all'interno" (*hinein*) del proprio orizzonte temporale, costituendo così il senso di un'esperienza possibile, di un possibile trovarsi in quel momento in un altro luogo, immaginarsi, ad esempio, di stare sulle montagne. D'altra parte, però, questo carattere di immaginazione dislocante contemporanea al presente si vive anche nel caso della rimemorazione o del ricordo anticipante: potrei infatti ricordare come *era* la vista dalle montagne, oppure anticipare come *sarà* la vista dalle montagne. Se questa somiglianza spiega l'apparente scivolare del ricordo nel presente verso il passato o verso il futuro, essa non riesce tuttavia a dar conto dell'identità *spaziale* di mondo e tempo tra Io del ricordo nel presente e Io del presente. Immaginandomi in questo momento "sulle montagne", rendo presente una situazione possibile non solo in questo tempo, ma anche in questo mondo, il cui essere visto (costituito nel suo senso) "da un altro luogo" non significa che sia anche posto in un altro luogo. Il mondo presentificato dal ricordo nel presente è modificato nella sua stessa attualità, non nel suo passato o nel suo futuro; esso è una possibilità attuale, pensata nello

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42 FINK 2010, 97-98.

stesso spazio della realtà attuale. L'Io presentificato dal ricordo nel presente è altrove senza esservi realmente, ma anche senza esservi mai stato (rimemorazione) né immaginando di potervi stare in futuro (ricordo anticipante). Il vagare interiore del ricordo nel presente è un'altra forma di *nostalgia della coscienza*, un'interiorizzazione (*Er-Innerung*) di ciò che non posso realmente mai vivere, se non come "ricordo". La "spazialità del mondo", osserva Fink, è ciò che "rende possibile" il ricordo nel presente, operando come "momento strutturale" già nella rimemorazione e nel ricordo anticipante.<sup>43</sup> Nel ricordo nel presente, tale spazialità è la struttura portante di questo caso speciale di presentificazione, che si può autenticamente comprendere solo chiarendo la cifra temporale che a sua volta determina il senso di tale spazialità. Si dovrà tornare sulla rilevanza fondamentale di tale spazialità.

## 2. Presentificazione e depresentazione

Come è possibile, tuttavia, il passaggio dalla presentazione alla presentificazione? In che maniera ciò che non è più (rimemorazione), ciò che non è ancora (ricordo anticipante), ciò che non è attualmente (ricordo nel presente) si rendono presenti? Perché un tale fenomeno possa aver luogo deve crearsi uno iato, una distanza tra presenza attuale e presenza riprodotta, un evento coscienziale che interrompa il corso dell'attualità (della realtà) creando le condizioni per il costituirsi – rendersi presente – dell'inattualità (dell'irrealtà). Fink individua questo momento interno alla coscienza del tempo in due figure classiche della fenomenologia husserliana: la ritenzione e la protensione<sup>44</sup>. Laddove Husserl, però, pur inscrivendole nel campo della temporalità originaria in quanto diramazioni congenite dell'impressione percettiva, non aveva dotato ritenzione e protensione

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<sup>43</sup> FINK 2010, 101.

<sup>44</sup> FINK vi aggiunge la nozione di "appresentazione", sulla cui centralità tratteremo in seguito.

di una loro autonomia costitutiva, riducendole quindi a espressioni derivate della presentazione,<sup>45</sup> Fink va ben oltre la lezione del maestro, asserendo come esse non siano «presentazioni né presentificazioni; le definiamo, con un linguaggio audace, de presentazioni».<sup>46</sup>

La de-presentazione (*Entgegenwärtigung*) è un concetto elaborato da Husserl negli scritti degli anni '30,<sup>47</sup> ossia nel periodo dell'assistentato di Fink, e non compare dunque nelle *Lezioni* sul tempo; così come vi appare solo occasionalmente<sup>48</sup> l'altra nozione citata nelle righe successive da Fink, quella di "presente vivente" (*lebendige Gegenwart*), nella cui costituzione già «troviamo quelle intenzionalità che abbiamo indicato con il nome di de-presentazioni».<sup>49</sup> Anche l'espressione del presente vivente diventerà centrale definendosi concettualmente in

45 In un testo del 1910 si legge che nella «sfera originaria in senso ampio [si hanno] i modi non indipendenti della ritenzione, della presentazione e della protensione [...]», HUSSERL 1980, 290.

46 FINK 2010, 74.

47 Cfr. HUSSERL 1961, 212; HUSSERL 2006, 134. Del termine si ha una ricorrenza anche in Heidegger, per indicare la «temporalità della storicità autentica» che «in quanto attimo ripetente-anticipante, è una de-presentazione dell'oggi e una disabitudine alla quotidianità del Si», HEIDEGGER 2003, 468. Iso Kern, nel suo complesso e articolato studio sulla teoria della ragione, parla di una diade presentificazione-de-presentazione che interviene quando si incontrano due momenti coscienziali distinti: «Nel ricordo *trascendo* il mio presente percettivo spaziotemporale (la mia "prospettiva mondana" concreta e sensibile), per così dire *mi trasferisco* (*versetze mich*) dalla mia situazione presente in quella passata, presentificando mi de-presento». Secondo questa caratteristica universale della vita mentale «ogni coscienza di coscienza può essere descritta come presentificazione-de-presentazione (de-presentazione nella presentificazione o, il che è lo stesso, presentificazione mediante de-presentazione», KERN 1975, 58). Per la nozione di "Versetztseinserlebnis", dell'esperienza di trasferimento o dislocazione infra-coscienziale, cfr. le fondamentali analisi di CONRAD 1968, 1-41.

48 Per la precisione compare tre sole volte, due delle quali con una connotazione "attimale", coincidente con il momento attuale come termine di una riproduzione rammemorante («Naturalmente, è il tutto a venir riprodotto, non solo l'antico presente di coscienza col suo flusso ma, *implicite*, l'intera corrente della coscienza fino alla presenza vivente», HUSSERL 1998, 85, passaggio ripetuto in maniera pressoché identica in un testo del 1907-1909. Cfr. HUSSERL 1998, 303); solo nel terzo caso, in un passo risalente al 1911, la nozione di "lebendige Gegenwart" assume i contorni di un processo coscienziale esteso nel tempo, sebbene esprima la durata oggettuale e non coscienziale: «Esso [*scil.* l'oggetto che dura] appare costantemente ma, appunto, nella forma di una *durata* che si svolge come presenza vivente», HUSSERL 1998, 353.

49 FINK 2010, 74.

maniera sempre più precisa solo nei tardi scritti husserliani,<sup>50</sup> a testimonianza di come Fink, nella *Dissertazione*, per quanto si confronti esplicitamente con le *Lezioni*, abbia come riferimento più immediato le riflessioni che Husserl andava sviluppando nel costante dialogo con il suo allievo.<sup>51</sup>

Ciò che distingue eideticamente le depresentazioni sia dalle presentazioni che dalle presentificazioni è il carattere sì intenzionale, ma non di atto; esse, spiega Fink, non sono atti autentici, poiché non costituiscono alcuna oggettività, né presentata né ri-presentata. La loro intenzionalità, allora, assume la forma di una sottrazione di presente in direzione del passato e del futuro, di uno sprofondare e di un tendere, che nel loro costante accadere aprono i «vasti orizzonti del prima e del dopo».<sup>52</sup> Nella loro funzione strutturalmente *negativa* (*Ent-*), ritenzione e protensione esprimono l'unica forma autentica di *irrealtà* all'interno del processo coscienziale, determinando il passaggio della presenza attuale/attimale in una radicale, temporanea quanto costante, non-presenza. Diversamente dalle presentificazioni, che significano una non-presenza resa presente, una paradossale irrealtà reale, e che come tali costituiscono una datità (rimemorata, anticipata, immaginata), le depresentazioni non riproducono alcuna forma di presenza, ma, depotenziando continuamente il presente, pongono le *condizioni* per la formazione di un nuovo presente. In base a questa prospettiva, che amplia e complica la concettualità husserliana, Fink può descrivere la ritenzione, concepita da Husserl come forma intenzionale del ricordo, un «*dimenticare*, essendo nella sua modalità più autentica uno spostarsi di ciò che è conscio al livello impressionale verso il suo orizzonte di passato. Allo stesso modo, la protensionalità è in primo luogo un *tener lontano*».<sup>53</sup>

L'una passando dall'essere una modalità primaria del ricordare a

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50 Il termine compare anche nei manoscritti di BERNAU del 1917/18, senza tuttavia essere sviluppato con una riflessione particolareggiata. Cfr. HUSSERL 2001, 274.

51 Husserl, in una corrispondenza privata, definì Fink «un co-pensatore (*Mit-Denker*) incomparabilmente intenso». Cfr. BRUZINA 2004, 52.

52 FINK 2010, 75.

53 FINK 2010, 75-6. Secondo corsivo nostro.

espressione originaria del dimenticare, l'altra trasformandosi dal rappresentare una tensione indeterminata verso il futuro a mantenimento di una distanza dal futuro, la *Retention* e la *Protention* con il discorso finkiano non subiscono un semplice capovolgimento teoretico-lessicale, ma assumono una portata enorme nel processo di costituzione della coscienza del tempo interno, e quindi nella vita mentale del soggetto, svolgendo il ruolo decisivo dell'apertura degli orizzonti temporali *in cui* è ogni volta possibile la relazione tra presenza attuale e presenza presentificata. Solo perché si dimentica, si può in seguito ricordare, solo perché si traccia una distanza, si può in seguito percorrerla. Se si visse in un eterno presente sempre attuale, privo di alcuna sottrazione o diminuzione, non si avrebbe ragione prima ancora che possibilità di rendere qualcosa di nuovo (o *ex novo*) presente; d'altra parte, se non si desse ogni volta uno scarto tra la presenza e la sua riproduzione in forme differenti, quest'ultima ancora non avrebbe ragion d'essere. Si ritorna sul proprio passato, si anticipa il proprio futuro, o, detto in altri termini, si ri-costituisce il passato e si proto-costituisce il futuro solo se *in precedenza e sempre già* si sono aperti e mantenuti gli *orizzonti* di passato e di futuro. Tale apertura e tale mantenimento degli orizzonti, spiega Fink, sono figure originarie della "temporalizzazione" (*Zeitigung*.) della coscienza, le quali, emergendo «sempre in maniera non autonoma con la presentazione di un vissuto», hanno «il carattere di un'essenziale latenza, che è difficile descrivere in termini fenomenologici».<sup>54</sup> Appunto in quanto concomitanti alla manifestazione impressionale di un evento psichico, questi orizzonti, aprendosi e mantenendosi (*aushalten*), *mediano* come autentica fase *irreale* (non-presente) del processo costitutivo la rappresentazione di ciò che, nelle diverse forme, non è reale/presente: «Una presentificazione non è altro che un inoltrarsi in questi orizzonti, è la presentazione di un che di depresentato. [...] Il carattere del "come se", assunto per classificare la presentificazione, si fonda in ultima analisi sul fatto che una presentificazione è possibile solo sul

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54 FINK 2010, 76.



fondamento di una depresentazione».<sup>55</sup> La struttura di orizzonte, medium fondante la relazione tra presente attuale e presente presentificato (potendosi parlare di non-presente, a rigore, solo per le depresentazioni), rendono la ritenzione e la protensione dei vissuti non autonomi, dipendenti da ciò di cui sono condizione, sia esso il presentificare o la datità presentificata. Proprio la mancanza di autonomia, d'altra parte, determina la loro forza costitutiva, poiché le colloca in ogni momento della vita di coscienza, essendo la presentazione impressionale impensabile (e in-attuabile) senza il suo orizzonte di passato e di futuro, così come inconcepibile (ossia non ri- o proto-attualizzabile) è la presentificazione senza gli orizzonti passati e futuri dove inoltrarsi. Questo ruolo fondativo, condizionante, rappresenta la positività insita nella funzione negante della depresentazione, una sorta di contraltare alla sottrazione di presente, essendo ritenzione e protensione ciascuna «un modo temporale della stessa temporalità originaria»;<sup>56</sup> che cosa questo significhi per la concretezza della vita intenzionale, lo si evince da un'ulteriore citazione del testo: «A un ora attuale non segue semplicemente una ritenzione, a questa di nuovo una ritenzione e così via, di modo che solo mediante il processo di oscuramento di questa serie verrebbe costituito un passato. Un passato è piuttosto temporalizzato nella depresentazione corrispondente in quanto fenomeno unitario-orizzontale, e precisamente in maniera tale che ottiene il carattere essenziale dell'oscurità, sul cui fondamento possono mostrarsi in misura maggiore o minore articolazioni affettive».<sup>57</sup>

A questo punto dell'analisi, è opportuno tracciare lo schema della coscienza del tempo, inserendo le fondamentali modifiche operate da Fink rispetto a Husserl, nelle quali si annuncia il carattere innovativo della sua concezione della temporalità intenzionale:<sup>58</sup>

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55 FINK 2010, 77-7.

56 FINK 2010, 77.

57 FINK 2010, 78.

58 «[...] lo spostamento dell'attenzione sulle modificazioni derivate, con il minuzioso lavoro di scavo sulle presentificazioni che ne consegue, consente al giovane assistente di mettere a segno alcuni colpi ben assestati a quello che sarà successivamente individuato

SCHEMA 1

Presentazione

ritenzione

impressione

protensione

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Depresentazione

Presentificazione

Depresentazione

rimemorazione

ricordo nel presente

ricordo anticipante

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(e criticato) come lo schema operativo fondamentale della fenomenologia del maestro»,  
BANCALARI 2011, 21.

A questo schema è utile accostare la seguente suddivisione:

*SCHEMA 1bis*

Presentazione (*Gegenwärtigung*) – Sfera della passività/necessità/spontaneità:

- impressione percettiva (*Urimpression*)

Depresentazione (*Entgegenwärtigung*) – Sfera della passività/necessità/spontaneità:

- ritenzione / protensione (*Retention / Protention*) – orizzonti passato/futuro

Presentificazione (*Vergegenwärtigung*) – Sfera dell'attività/libertà/possibilità:

- rimemorazione (*Wiedererinnerung*)
- ricordo anticipante (*Vorerinnerung*)
- ricordo nel presente (*Gegenwartserinnerung*)

La depresentazione indica la *soglia* del continuo passaggio dalla necessità/passività della presentazione alla possibilità/attività della presentificazione. In sé, è la *necessaria* condizione di *possibilità* di tale passaggio, cuore pulsante della coscienza di tempo.

### 3. Presentificazione e vita dell'Io

Il § 22 della *Dissertazione*, fin dal titolo,<sup>59</sup> rinvia al ruolo fondamentale del soggetto nel compimento delle presentificazioni, per quanto «ciò che è specificamente egologico» sia «ancora lungi dall'essere il passaggio a ciò che è costitutivo».<sup>60</sup> Solo chiarendo la base temporale del vivere soggettivo, si può comprendere il reale funzionamento di questo vivere. Tuttavia, anche al livello provvisorio delle analisi proposte nella *Dissertazione* è possibile quantomeno porre in rilievo «il peculiare momento della libertà dell'Io puro» nel rivolgere l'attenzione all'ambiente esperienziale circostante. «Un Io puro può non solo prestare primariamente attenzione, in una sfera d'atti, ora a questo ora a quell'oggetto; esso è in grado altresì di vivere allo stesso tempo in sfere d'atti differenti».<sup>61</sup> Pur muovendosi su uno sfondo "passivo-associativo" che ne determina il contesto affettivo di volta in volta predominante in un particolare momento di esperienza, l'Io ha la possibilità di concentrare la propria attenzione sui diversi aspetti di tale esperienza, teoretici, emotivi, desiderativi, secondo quel «fenomeno di intenzionalità multiradiali e simultanee, che si "polarizzano" tutte nell'Io puro».<sup>62</sup> Nella gestione da parte dell'Io dei

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59 *I modi di realizzazione egologici delle presentificazioni.*

60 FINK 2010, 106.

61 FINK 2010, 108.

62 FINK 2010, 108. Nelle ricerche di Bernau, materiale sulla cui riorganizzazione Fink lavorò intensamente su incarico di Husserl (cfr. BRUZINA 2004, 258-287), emerge con chiarezza la nozione di Io-Polo (*Ich-Pol*): «Ciò che noi soprattutto non abbiamo nel flusso di vissuto è l'Io stesso, il *centro identico*, il *polo*, a cui è riferito tutto il contenuto del flusso di vissuti; l'Io, che viene affetto da questo o quel contenuto, e che in seguito a ciò sta in maniera attiva rispetto a tale contenuto in questo o quel modo e attivamente gli dà, in un modo o in un altro, una forma»; l'Io «è il polo di tutte le serie temporali e, come tale, è

diversi ambiti attenzionali si intreccia il livello presentante con quello presentificante, in «un rapporto reciproco di attenzione o di omissione» che determina la «vita *concreta* della soggettività», il cui studio riguarda «le grandi questioni fenomenologiche che qui emergono con il nome di motivazione e associazione e che richiedono un'analisi delle strutture eidetiche della *personalità*». <sup>63</sup> Di nuovo, Fink allude alla direzione finale delle sue indagini miranti alla comprensione dell'essenza della concretezza esistenziale di un soggetto; e di nuovo, però, si limita ad accennarvi, perché in questa sede è possibile solo porre le basi per ricerche molto più ampie e approfondite nel campo fenomenologico.

Porre le basi, tuttavia, significa illuminare i fondamenti elementari di analisi più complesse, e pertanto Fink ritorna alla questione – basilare – della “libertà” dell'Io nello svolgimento della sua vita personale, una libertà che, per quanto si esprima nella relazione tra presentazione e presentificazione, non ha la stessa rilevanza in entrambe. Nel flusso dell'impressione originaria, cuore dell'esperienza presente, l'Io «è in certo modo affidato (*überantwortet*) alle sue percezioni, la sua libertà trova i propri limiti nell'affezione elementare delle unità associative». <sup>64</sup> Il comportamento “libero” dell'Io, in questo contesto originale, consiste in mere reazioni all'ambiente circostante, i cui stimoli continui e concomitanti possono essere al massimo evitati, rifiutati mediante rudimentali gesti corporei, quali “chiudere gli occhi” o “tapparsi le orecchie”. Ad altro l'Io non può aspirare rispetto alla temporalità di coscienza che costituisce ogni volta la vita ambientale presente, poiché il «carattere fondamentale della costituzione originaria del mondo già dato nelle percezioni è la passività, la quale per prima fornisce il terreno (*Boden*) per la libertà condizionata dell'Io. Questa costituzione

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necessariamente “sovra”-temporale; l'Io, per il quale il tempo si costituisce, per il quale c'è una temporalità, un'oggettualità individualmente singolare nell'intenzionalità della sfera di vissuti, l'Io che però, in se stesso, non è temporale. In questo senso esso non è quindi “essente”, bensì la controparte di ogni essente, non è un *oggetto*, ma il *soggetto originario (Urstand)* di ogni oggettualità», HUSSERL 2001, 277. Primi due corsivi nostri.

63 FINK 2010, 108-9. Corsivi nostri.

64 FINK 2010, 109.

originaria è sottratta (*entrissen*) alla volontà dell'Io». <sup>65</sup>

Occorre tenere bene a mente quest'ultima affermazione di Fink, in particolare l'immagine della volontà soggettiva cui è "sottratta" la costituzione originaria in quanto passiva, o passivo-associativa. <sup>66</sup> Questa figura della "sottrazione" ritornerà infatti più avanti, quando Fink tratterà del sogno.

Per ora, tuttavia, continuiamo a seguire il ragionamento finkiano, che introduce la diversa libertà nell'esperienza presentificante, dove «il discorso sembra essere del tutto differente. L'Io puro ha manifestamente la libertà della messa in scena delle presentificazioni», poiché, sebbene sia «vincolato alla ritenzionalità e protensionalità [...] sembra comunque libero, se vuole in generale ricordare». <sup>67</sup> Una volta, poi, che ha deciso di riprodurre una porzione della propria vita passata, la libertà di cui gode in ambito presentificante permette all'Io di stabilire altresì il "ritmo" (*Tempo*) della ri-presentazione, ciò che non gli è possibile nella fruizione presente di un evento. Il ritmo della presentificazione, se da una parte non coincide con il tempo del presente, non appartiene neanche al presentificare, che, «in quanto vissuto [...] ha infatti lo stesso ritmo delle percezioni che gli coesistono simultaneamente, essendo esso stesso, anzi, un atto del tempo originario. Né appartiene al tempo del mondo della presentificazione, poiché questo è piuttosto "un flusso temporale originario" presentificato». <sup>68</sup> Generato dall'incontro tra "tempo del ricordare" e "tempo del ricordato", il ritmo della presentificazione scardina qualsiasi paragone si voglia impostare tra tempi "diversi", dal momento che non rispetta, per essenza, il normale decorso temporale della coscienza. Anche in questo caso, tuttavia, Fink rinvia l'analisi della nozione di ritmo alla seconda parte del lavoro, dovendo la prima

65 FINK 2010, 109.

66 Si tratta della passività originaria del flusso di coscienza, definita significativamente da Husserl ciò che avviene «senza un agire dell'Io (*ohne Tun des Ich*), si abbia anche un Io desto ossia agente; il fluire accade, il flusso non nasce da un fare dell'Io (*nicht aus einem Tun des Ich*), come se questi fosse diretto a realizzarlo, come se il flusso si realizzasse in virtù di un fare», HUSSERL 2002c, 179.

67 FINK 2010, 109.

68 FINK 2010, 110.

concentrarsi anzitutto sui “compiti descrittivi” e dovendo ancora esaminare un terzo stato di condizione soggettiva di esperienza, accanto a quelle già studiate dell’attenzione e della disattenzione (omissione di attenzione), e della regolazione del ritmo presentificante.

Questo terzo caso di relazione egologica alla realtà circostante costituisce la base per il superamento radicale da parte di Fink della teoria delle presentificazioni husserliana, superamento che si compirà nel paragrafo dedicato al sogno.

Oltre ai casi già analizzati, spiega Fink, dobbiamo considerare «i modi dell’esser desto e dell’essere profondamente assorto (*Versunkenheit*) i quali non coincidono affatto con il livello attenzionale». <sup>69</sup> Se, come pensa Husserl, la cifra caratterizzante il vissuto di presentificazione è il “contrasto” con la realtà “consapevolmente” esperito dall’Io presentificante, allora solo lo stato “desto” è quello in cui è possibile attuare un’autentica rappresentazione. Tuttavia, si chiede Fink con una domanda storicamente innovativa rispetto all’idea husserliana di presentificazione (e di fenomenologia in generale, ci azzarderemmo a dire), è giusto sostenere che il «senso fenomenologico dell’ “irrealtà” dell’immaginazione si determina solo sulla base del contrasto dell’intuitività immaginativa con quella originaria?». <sup>70</sup> Se anche accettassimo questo contrasto («il cui significato è discutibile», interpone Fink con un’aggiunta che eleva a valenza generale un dissenso personale), esso «l’abbiamo però solo in quelle presentificazioni nella cui realizzazione l’Io è desto, ossia è aperto al suo originario mondo del presente entro cui esperisce mediante percezioni». <sup>71</sup> Solo in questo caso, dove la presentificazione avviene simultaneamente alla percezione, si esperisce una situazione contrastante, conflittuale tra i diversi livelli di prestazione coscienziale. E solo in questo caso, quindi, «i ricordi simultanei si caratterizzano come esperienze nel modo del come-se, le fantasie come “semplici”

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<sup>69</sup> FINK 2010, 111.

<sup>70</sup> FINK 2010, 111.

<sup>71</sup> FINK 2010, 111-2.

fantasie».<sup>72</sup>

Tuttavia, prosegue Fink, esiste anche uno stato "contrario" a quello desto, lo stato dell'assorbimento profondo, in cui nel percorso di riempimento intuitivo consapevolmente vissuto dall'Io emerge dalla sterminata vita di coscienza un frammento dalla carica affettiva così forte che l'Io «dimentica completamente il suo presente originario, si isola da tutte le tendenze che ne fuoriescono e vive primariamente e principalmente nel ricordare».<sup>73</sup> Questo stato soggettivo di assorbimento, spiega Fink, riveste un'importanza fondamentale per comprendere come l'esser desto *non* esaurisca affatto la gamma delle possibili esperienze presentificanti, rappresentando solo il caso in cui il presentare rimane ciò che determina esplicitamente il tratto immaginativo (del come-se) del presentificare; là dove, però, l'Io si immerge gradualmente ma inesorabilmente nel suo mondo presentificante, ad esempio in una fantasia patologica o in un'ossessione, il presentare si eclissa all'attenzione soggettiva e il presentificato appare sempre meno qualcosa di semplicemente immaginato. Se si accetta questa nuova impostazione, sostiene Fink, occorre mutare alla base la stessa analisi fenomenologica delle presentificazioni, che a questo punto «deve liberarsi proprio dal vedere nel "come-se" così inteso il carattere fondamentale determinante per la classificazione. Piuttosto, il come-se è solo il carattere fondamentale descrittivo di tutte quelle presentificazioni che sono realizzate da un Io *desto*, ossia aperto al suo presente impressionale [...]. Solo nell'esser desto di un Io attuale emerge, in contrasto con l'intuitività degli oggetti realmente esperiti, il presentificare come un quasi-esperire e si forma per l'Io quel carattere del come-se. Solo nell'atteggiamento dell'esser desto, quindi, si ha anche esperienza di ciò che è immaginato *in quanto* immaginato, dell'irrealtà come irrealtà».<sup>74</sup> Tuttavia, l'introduzione della nozione di "Io assorto" come *altro* caso di *presentificazione*, permette quella

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72 FINK 2010, 112.

73 FINK 2010, 112.

74 FINK 2010, 112-3.



liberazione concettuale che porterà la fenomenologia di Fink a mutare nel profondo l'idea stessa di coscienza del tempo.

Se si considera la "realtà" dell'esperienza il criterio per determinarne l'originarietà, allora solo la coscienza "presentante" assurge a tale originarietà, da cui sono esclusi tutti i modi di presentificazione. D'altra parte, è possibile contraddistinguere questa forma di originarietà come "primaria", ampliando la nozione stessa di originario «in modo da utilizzarlo per ogni tipo di coscienza in cui si mostra qualcosa come tale [...] sia esso un orizzonte, un che di irrealo o un che di possibile». <sup>75</sup> In questa nuova prospettiva, anche le presentificazioni vengono dotate di una forma di originarietà, "secondaria", che riguarda l'accesso "agli orizzonti temporali" del passato e del futuro.

Si può quindi delineare uno schema della coscienza del tempo elaborata da Fink secondo due livelli di originarietà:

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<sup>75</sup> FINK 2010, 116.

SCHEMA 2

presentazione

impressione percettiva

I originarietà (sfera della necessità/passività)

depresentazione

ritenzione, protensione

medium tra la I e la II originarietà (sfera della necessità/passività)

presentificazione

rimemorazione, ricordo anticipante, ricordo nel presente, fantasia

II originarietà (sfera della libertà/attività)

Come “dimenticare” e “tener lontano”, ritenzione e protensione depotenziano il presente e racchiudono in sé ciò che è trascorso e ciò che è possibile, mantenendoli intenzionalmente vivi nella dimensione motivazionale e progettuale dell’orizzonte di coscienza. Ciò che è così mantenuto, non appartenendo più all’esperienza presente né (ancora) a quella presentificante, «in un certo modo viene sottratto (*entzogen*) all’Io presente», il quale, tuttavia, «può impadronirsi nuovamente di ciò che gli è stato sottratto, nel momento in cui, presentificando, si inoltra negli orizzonti de presentanti».<sup>76</sup> Ogni presentificazione, allora, denota l’atto che permette all’Io di riappropriarsi di ciò che, di diritto ma non di fatto, gli appartiene: il proprio passato e il proprio futuro, ovvero la vita concreta al di qua e al di là del momento presente. Mediante la rimemorazione, l’Ego riprende possesso di ciò che ha già vissuto e decide di riviverlo secondo un ritmo diverso; con il ricordo anticipante, interiorizza ciò che potrà esperire, delineandolo in forma progettuale. Il ricordo nel presente gli consente di vivere una simultaneità irreal.

A questo punto, è opportuno mettere in risalto la struttura teoretico-semanticamente della presentificazione, al fine di mostrarne chiaramente l’essenza *memorativa*:

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76 FINK 2010, 116. Il verbo tedesco *entreißen* è traducibile anche con “strappare”, “estorcere”, “rapire”, “portare via”; si è scelta la resa più *soft* di “sottrarre”, poiché essa racchiude l’ambiguità del “sottrarre” nel senso di “salvare da”, altro significato contenuto in *entreißen*. È come se la passività, privando l’Io del suo arbitrio, lo “salvi” da una responsabilità troppo grande, quella di determinare l’originaria dimensione dell’esistenza, dotandolo della responsabilità “secondaria” di recuperare ciò che gli è stato *sottratto* e da cui – in un primo, originario tempo – è stato *salvato*.

SCHEMA 2bis

Ri-memorazione *Wieder-Erinnerung* Ri-costituzione

Ri-cordo anticipante *Vor-Erinnerung* Proto-costituzione

Ri-cordo nel presente *Gegenwarts-Erinnerung* Co-costituzione

Le tre forme in cui si sviluppa la presentificazione (ognuna delle quali viene diversamente contaminata dalla fantasia), sono tutte forme memorative, ossia costitutive: il ri-cordo, la *Er-Innerung*, è l'interiorizzazione intenzionale del soggetto, è l'atto mediante il quale l'Io riprende possesso delle sue possibilità di vita, esperite originariamente solo nella forma passivo-associativa dell'impressione (prima sottrazione) e in seguito nel passaggio, anch'esso passivo, alla depresentazione (seconda sottrazione). Solo dopo questa duplice sottrazione alla propria volontà (ma altresì *sulla base* di tale sottrazione), l'Io ha l'opportunità di riprendersi ciò di cui è stato privato, per viverlo finalmente in libertà (condizionata). Questa nuova esperienza assume le forme peculiari del ricordo intenzionale, ossia costitutivo, nella sua triplice declinazione di rimemorazione, ricordo anticipante e ricordo nel presente. Essa, d'altra parte, riflette la triplice struttura della coscienza del tempo di ritenzione-impressione-protensione; tale riflesso, però, se in Husserl avveniva secondo un passaggio diretto dal presentare al presentificare, in Fink è mediato dalla figura fondamentale della depresentazione: il medium dell'orizzonte di passato (ritenzione) permette l'inoltrarsi costitutivo-memorativo (interiorizzante) della rimemorazione, il medium dell'orizzonte di futuro (protensione) consente il progettare costitutivo-memorativo (interiorizzante) del ricordo anticipante.

Come stanno le cose, però, con il ricordo nel presente? Qual è il medium di orizzonte che ne rende possibile l'effettuazione? Nel paragrafo in oggetto, Fink ne parla come l'orizzonte «ancora problematico e velato del co-presente». <sup>77</sup> Qualcosa di più, tuttavia, aveva detto in merito nei paragrafi dedicati proprio alla *Gegenwartserinnerung*, su cui adesso, prima e in funzione della trattazione del sogno, dobbiamo ritornare.

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<sup>77</sup> FINK 2010, 116.

#### 4. *Worin*: la terza deprezentazione

Nell'ultima parte del § 18, introduttivo al problema del ricordo nel presente, Fink propone di attuare una riduzione che compia «una differenziazione metodologica, di cui Husserl ha parlato in altri contesti problematici: ossia la riduzione del mondo ambiente intenzionale all'esperienza che presenta nell'originale». <sup>78</sup> Essa consente di osservare solo quei fenomeni che si mostrano nel contesto percettivo, nel puro presente, escludendo le ramificazioni deprezentanti del passato e del futuro. Anche così, tuttavia, non si ottiene una serie di momenti solo presenti, ossia *visibilmente* presenti, si ha un campo presente, ma che non rientra *interamente* nell'ambito percipiente. Ciò che si mostra, spiega Fink, appare «secondo una necessità eidetica sempre solo in prospettive e adombramenti»; <sup>79</sup> quel che rimane in ombra è presente nella peculiare modalità intenzionale della "co-presenza" (*Mit-Gegenwart*), della presenza attuale ma comunque di sfondo, di secondo piano, coglibile soltanto in movimenti percettivi quali il "girare intorno" e simili. Al co-presente, al presente secondario, appartengono quelle "potenzialità" esperienziali che pur non essendo oggetto di primaria attenzione concorrono alla costituzione complessiva del momento presente, su cui "danno informazioni" (*mitteilend*). Sebbene in tal modo esse fungano «manifestamente nel medesimo senso delle stesse percezioni», rimane aperta una questione di importanza fondamentale per l'intera teoria della presentificazione: «fin dove arriva l'intenzionalità della presentazione, che offre ciò che è presente, e della motivazione appresentante, racchiusa in essa?». La rilevanza di questa domanda emerge perentoriamente nella seconda parte formulata subito dopo da Fink: «Appartiene forse al senso più proprio dell'esser presente che esso *implichi a sua volta un'orizzontalità* rispetto alla quale è

78 FINK 2010, 98. Fink si riferisce qui implicitamente alla riduzione primordiale della *Quinta meditazione cartesiana* (HUSSERL 1997, 116 sgg.); in un manoscritto dei primi anni '30 (ms. C 16) Husserl elabora anche un'articolata riduzione alla sfera del presente vivente (HUSSERL 2006, 342 sgg.)

79 FINK 2010, 99.

in un rapporto analogo a quello del ricordo con il passato e del ricordo anticipante con il futuro?».<sup>80</sup> Quel che Fink intuisce è che solo ipotizzando una terza dimensione depresentante, che sia *tra* la ritenzione e la protensione così come il presente è *tra* il passato e il futuro, diventa possibile comprendere non solo il modo in cui già nell'impressione percettiva siamo in rapporto a un mondo ambiente, ma altresì *come* questo mondo ambiente si costituisca nel costante intreccio di presenza e co-presenza. Il momento presente, quindi, si depotenzia non soltanto nelle direzioni di passato e futuro, ma sempre anche nell'apertura di un orizzonte concomitante, simultaneo, nel cui ambito è possibile pensare il formarsi di un atto presentificante così peculiare quale il ricordo *nel* presente. La simultaneità, in questo caso, di presentazione e presentificazione sembra confondere i confini che separano i due atti di coscienza; Fink ne è consapevole al punto da precisare che qui non si vuole «fare della presentazione una presentificazione», trattandosi invece di «una problematica molto più originaria che noi, data la limitatezza della nostra finalità, non possiamo far altro che indicare come il problema tradizionale della “facoltà immaginativa trascendentale”». <sup>81</sup>

Proprio all'inizio della trattazione delle presentificazioni Fink aveva accennato al ruolo fondamentale svolto dall'immaginazione nell'attuazione della coscienza ripresentante, definendola «una modificazione universale della vita esperienziale nel suo complesso. *I modi fondamentali dell'immaginazione [...] si articolano secondo la molteplicità degli orizzonti temporali nei quali si trova a priori la vita degli atti presentanti*». <sup>82</sup> Accanto, o, più precisamente, tra la rimemorazione e il ricordo anticipante, il ricordo nel presente è il terzo modo fondamentale di immaginazione che si articola secondo il terzo orizzonte temporale mediano tra ritenzione e protensione, quello del co-presente. La medietà del co-presente rinvia significativamente alla figura di uno “spazio”, di un “varco” di non-presenza già nel presente;

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80 FINK 2010, 99. Corsivi nostri.

81 FINK 2010, 99.

82 FINK 2010, 73.

ed è appunto allo spazio che Fink si appella per dare una qualche immagine di questa terza deprezentazione: «“Spazio”, per dirla a mo' di tesi, non è primariamente un momento degli oggetti, bensì, in quanto luogo (*Worin*) della loro possibilità, è l'orizzontalità del presente». <sup>83</sup>

Il *Worin*, apertura della terza deprezentazione, è l' "in cui" della costituzione interiorizzante della possibilità di un *altro* presente *nel* presente attuale, è il luogo dove la soggettività può dis-locarsi in parallelo al proprio insuperabile *hic et nunc*.

Occorre, sulla base delle ultime considerazioni, riscrivere con le opportune modificazioni gli schemi della coscienza del tempo elaborata da Fink:

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83 FINK 2010, 99. In un appunto del 1930, Fink annota: «In luogo dei tradizionali tre orizzonti temporali, io ne concepisco *cinque*: presente, passato, futuro come tempo della realtà, con lo spazio come quarto orizzonte. Quindi la «possibilità» come quinto orizzonte temporale», FINK 2008, 47.



## SCHEMA 3

Presentazione (I originarietà)

impressione

ritenzione

appresentazione

protensione

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 De-presentazione

De-presentazione

De-presentazione

Presentificazione (II originarietà)

rimemorazione

ricordo nel presente

ricordo anticipante

SCHEMA 3bis

Presentazione (*Gegenwärtigung*) – Sfera della passività/necessità/spontaneità:

- impressione percettiva (*Urimpression*)

Depresentazione (*Entgegenwärtigung*) – Sfera della passività/necessità/spontaneità:

- ritenzione/appresentazione/protensione
- (*Retention/Appräsentation/Protention*) – orizzonti passato/co-presente/futuro

Presentificazione (*Vergegenwärtigung*) – Sfera dell'attività/libertà/possibilità:

- rimemorazione (*Wiedererinnerung*)
- ricordo nel presente (*Gegenwartserinnerung*)
- ricordo anticipante (*Vorerinnerung*)
- [fantasia (*Phantasie*)]

## 5. Il sogno

Fink apre il paragrafo dedicato alla trattazione del sogno<sup>84</sup> con una dichiarazione che invita alla prudenza, rinviando l'eventuale dimostrazione della sua validità ad analisi più approfondite in direzione della coscienza del tempo: «Questo paragrafo, nel quale il sogno viene considerato come una presentificazione, non è in grado per il momento di dimostrare questa tesi. Esso ha quindi solo la funzione di accennare al problema almeno quanto basta se non altro per poterlo porre nella seconda parte, dopo il preliminare chiarimento della temporalità (*Temporalität*) del flusso di vissuti trascendentale».<sup>85</sup> Una seconda parte che, come sappiamo, non sarà mai scritta.

Stabilito in via preventiva il carattere provvisorio dell'argomentazione, Fink sviluppa un discorso che, nelle sue linee guida, è tutt'altro che aleatorio, dimostrando al contrario di avere alle spalle profonde e radicate riflessioni.

Dopo aver annoverato il sogno tra le modalità della fantasia, riconoscibile per lo stato profondamente assorto che lo caratterizza, Fink precisa che lo stato "estremo" di tale essere assorto rende il sogno qualcosa di distinto da una fantasia. Da una parte, questa condizione dell'Io sognante pone serie difficoltà all'elaborazione di un'analisi fenomenologica del sogno, considerando come questa si fondi su operazioni di un Io desto; dall'altra parte, però, escludere il sogno da una possibile analisi filosofica presuppone comunque una qualche concezione di che cosa sia il sogno. Allora, sostiene Fink, occorre sì riconoscere onestamente le aporie che emergono dinanzi alla nozione di sogno («"fase temporale mancante" nel corso unitario della costituzione del mondo», «"frattura irrazionale" incomprensibile», «oscura pausa della vita esperiente»), senza dimenticare, però, «di

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84 Trattazione preceduta da un'articolata e complessa considerazione delle presentificazioni "signitive" – ossia prive di un riferimento "sensato", confinate al "semplicemente pensabile", per quanto anch'esse dotate di una complessità concettuale degna di essere indagata. Sulla loro rilevanza si vedano le osservazioni di Bruzina in FINK 2006, XXXVIII-XLI.

85 FINK 2010, 121.

interpretare in maniera adeguata il senso costitutivo della “mancanza di mondo” (*Weltlosigkeit*) del dormiente. La “mancanza di mondo” è a sua volta un modo determinato dell’avere il mondo: è l’avere il mondo nel modo estremo dell’essere profondamente assorto (*Versunkenheit*)». <sup>86</sup>

Trasformato repentinamente da fenomeno inaccessibile a pietra angolare di uno studio fenomenologico, Fink delinea i contorni che definiscono un’analisi del sogno, che si disegnano appunto seguendo la natura presentificante di questo particolare stato mentale del soggetto; non solo: la sua natura presentificante è così profonda e alternativa rispetto alla presenzialità (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) dell’Io sognante, da rendere il sogno una presentificazione tale «che in essa non si possano costituire altri “vissuti” che non siano solo, appunto, presentificazioni. Ogni altro vissuto presentante rimuoverebbe almeno parzialmente il sonno. [...] Il sogno mostra tutte quelle strutture che abbiamo messo in risalto nelle presentificazioni». <sup>87</sup>

La distanza dalla posizione husserliana in merito non potrebbe essere più ampia, non solo per l’iscrizione del sogno nel novero delle presentificazioni, ma anche e soprattutto perché nell’esperienza del sogno emerge quel secondo stato egologico, lo stato “assorto”, che per Fink è valido quanto quello “desto” (l’unico preso in considerazione da Husserl) per determinare la relazione dell’Io al mondo presente. In tal modo, Fink aggira l’obiezione alla teoria del sogno come presentificazione, che si basa sull’assenza del contrasto con il momento presente e che per Husserl era la prova più esplicita dell’impossibilità di considerare il sogno una presentificazione; se, infatti, consideriamo la relazione “assorta” all’ambiente circostante, essa non necessita di sviluppare un conflitto consapevole con la realtà corrente; anzi, più aumenta lo stato di assorbimento, più si amplia il terreno su cui costruire una realtà alternativa a quella presente. Appunto in questa prospettiva, il sogno viene inteso da Fink come quel fenomeno della vita di coscienza che racchiude in sé “tutte le

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86 FINK 2010, 122-3.

87 FINK 2010, 123-4.

strutture" riscontrabili separatamente nelle altre presentificazioni.

La distinzione, che Fink nel prosieguo del paragrafo istituisce tra sogno e fantasia, non può allora fondarsi sul criterio presentazione/presentificazione elaborato in seno al discorso husserliano, ma viene operata in riferimento al grado di libertà egologica esperita nei due vissuti: per quanto sia nel mondo di fantasia che in quello onirico l'Io si muova su un fondo di passività («in un'originaria costituzione passiva»), Fink precisa che «mentre lì il mondo di fantasia è la libera creazione dell'Io fantasticante, consegnata interamente al suo arbitrio, nel grado crescente dell'essere profondamente assorti si riduce sempre più la libertà di questa messinscena. L'Io profondamente assorto, sottratto (*entrissen*) alla sua propria volontà, produce in una passività nascosta».<sup>88</sup>

Occorre porre questo passaggio nella giusta rilevanza, poiché in esso si attua l'ultimo fondamentale cambiamento apportato da Fink all'idea di coscienza di tempo. Come presentificazione, il sogno dovrebbe iscriversi nella sfera della II originarietà, coniugando libertà e attività, altro ambito della possibilità, accanto alle presentificazioni già esaminate (e che in esso si producono costitutivamente). Tuttavia, la modalità attuativa del sogno se, per un verso, esprime una *possibile* esperienza soggettiva che schiude una peculiare dimensione *irreale*, per un altro verso assume le forme di una produzione *passiva* ossia *sottratta alla volontà dell'Io*. Forme, che Fink aveva già messo in rilievo nella descrizione *non* delle presentificazioni, bensì *delle presentazioni*, in riferimento alle quali utilizzava *la stessa identica espressione*: «Questa costituzione originaria [*scil.* della presentazione] è sottratta (*entrissen*) alla volontà dell'Io».<sup>89</sup>

Il sogno, allora, non unisce possibilità e attività, come le altre presentificazioni (di cui comunque non solo è parte, ma ne è in

88 FINK 2010, 124. Nel suo recente studio sulla "fantasia debole", dimensione peculiare della vita mentale del soggetto, Dieter Lohmar individua una passività originaria (*Selbstaffektion*) nel caso dei sogni ad occhi aperti (unica realtà accessibile a un'indagine fenomenologica), che di regola non accadono volontariamente, ma s'impongono e a cui possiamo opporre una difficile resistenza. Cfr. LOHMAR 2008, 163.

89 FINK 2010, 109.

qualche modo l'espressione più autentica e radicale), ma coniuga possibilità (tratto presentificante) e passività (tratto presentante), aprendo così un *terzo* livello di originarietà, anello di congiunzione tra la vita presentante e quella presentificante dell'Io.

Lo schema della coscienza del tempo elaborata da Fink deve quindi essere nuovamente aggiornato:

## SCHEMA 4

Presentazione (I originarietà)

impressione

ritenzione

appresentazione

protensione

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 Depresentazione

Depresentazione

Depresentazione

Presentificazione (II originarietà)

rimemorazione

ricordo nel presente

ricordo anticipante

Presentificazione (III originarietà)

sogno

SCHEMA 4bis

Presentazione (*Gegenwärtigung*) – I Originarietà

Sfera della passività/ necessità /spontaneità:

- impressione percettiva (*Urimpression*)

Depresentazione (*Entgegenwärtigung*) – Medium tra I, II e III Originarietà

Sfera della passività/necessità/spontaneità:

- ritenzione/appresentazione/protensione
- (*Retention/ Appräsentation/ Protention*) – orizzonti passato/co-presente/futuro

Presentificazione (*Vergegenwärtigung*) –

Sfera dell'attività/libertà/possibilità II Originarietà:

- rimemorazione (*Wiedererinnerung*)
- ricordo nel presente (*Gegenwartserinnerung*)
- ricordo anticipante (*Vorerinnerung*)
- [fantasia (*Phantasie*), presentificazioni signitive]

Sfera della possibilità/passività: III Originarietà

- sogno (*Traum*)



Se fantasia e sogno differiscono per il grado di passività cogente e, nel caso del sogno, determinante nella manifestazione del vissuto, sono d'altra parte accomunati dall'essere entrambi iterabili, appunto in quanto presentificazioni e non presentazioni (sebbene tale iterabilità, nel caso del sogno, sia sottratta all'arbitrio dell'Io che sogna). La comprensione della "presenza" rimane centrale per la determinazione della presentificazione (appunto come ri-presentazione) anche in Fink, il quale conclude la riflessione sul sogno proprio con un preciso riferimento alla dimensione presente, rispetto alla quale si determina, nei modi variegati di cui si è discusso, ogni presentificazione: «La suggestiva domanda se alla fine anche il presentare sarebbe un sogno da cui io possa "destarmi" è un'assurdità di principio. Finché non siamo in grado di interpretare la presenzialità del sonno, non possiamo impostare in merito una dimostrazione fenomenologica».<sup>90</sup>

Se il sogno rappresenta una presentificazione sui generis, tale da costituire un terzo livello di originarietà, qual è la depresentazione che gli offre l'orizzonte in cui inoltrarsi? Fink non pone né tantomeno risolve tale questione; tuttavia, sulla base delle sue analisi è possibile formulare un'ipotesi: dato il legame strutturale con la presenzialità dell'Io dormiente («il sogno è una presentificazione che si realizza nella presenzialità dell'Io dormiente e quindi sognante»<sup>91</sup>), l'Io sognante (presentificante) realizza i propri vissuti onirici in quel "luogo" della coscienza (*Worin*) che si apre ogni volta che l'irrealtà (non-presenza) irrompe *simultaneamente* alla realtà (presenza). Come nel caso di un ricordo nel presente (e di una fantasia) il sogno è una presentificazione che scorre *in concomitanza* alla vita attuale, ma in relazione allo stato assorto dell'Io (mancanza di mondo).

Ospitando in sé solo altre forme di presentificazioni, il sogno in qualche modo si rapporta anche agli orizzonti di passato e di futuro e quindi alle relative depresentazioni, le quali a loro volta possono essere reali o meramente sognate: «[...] un ricordo nel sogno è, da un lato, un ricordo reale che l'Io del mondo onirico ha del suo percepire

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90 FINK 2010, 124.

91 FINK 2010, 123.

appena passato nel tempo del mondo onirico, oppure, dall'altro lato, è un ricordo sognato, che altro non è che un nuovo sogno il cui mondo viene portato in una relazione di passato con un altro mondo onirico». <sup>92</sup> Per quel che riguarda, però, la possibilità di attuazione, è lo "spazio" (*Worin*) che si apre *nel* presente a permettere all'Io dormiente (presentante in potenza, ma di fatto mancante il mondo) di vivere l'attualità nei modi dell'in-attualità, di stare nel reale immerso nell'irreale, di esperire il mondo *da* un mondo altro. La terza de-presentazione è la condizione di possibilità della terza originarietà presentificante.

In un certo senso, il *Worin* è la nozione fenomenologica che esprime la forma più radicale ed autentica di irrealtà, poiché in esso non c'è neanche lo scarto de-presentante che si ha nelle aperture ritenzionali e protensionali, ma indica un'irrealtà *nel* (*worin*) reale. Esso crea una sorta di cortocircuito spazio-temporale *interno* alla vita di coscienza, ciò che Fink mostra esplicitamente quando, parlando della comprensione di cosa sia il ricordo nel presente, scrive della «spazialità del mondo che lo rende possibile», la quale a sua volta è «interpretabile solo in una radicale analisi temporale». <sup>93</sup>

L'importanza basilare del ruolo svolto dalla dimensione del *Worin* nella costituzione dell'irrealtà è significativamente confermata dalle pagine della seconda parte della *Dissertazione* riferite alla coscienza di immagine (*Bildbewusstsein*). Senza ripercorrere le sintetiche quanto complesse analisi concernenti questa peculiare dimensione estetica della vita mentale, ci limiteremo a citare un breve passaggio (§ 29), in cui Fink spiega come gli atti della coscienza d'immagine siano "mediali" (*medial*), intendendo «così riferirci al loro modo singolare di mantenere libero, per così dire, un medium reale per l'apparire e il poter-mostrarsi di un' "irrealtà". [...] un medium, che mantiene libero uno spazio (*Worin*) per un'irrealtà [...]». <sup>94</sup> Anche nel caso dell'esperienza estetica, forma presentante e non presentificante della

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92 FINK 2010, 124.

93 FINK 2010, 101.

94 FINK 2010, 133.

coscienza,<sup>95</sup> l'irreale (mondo dell'immagine) esiste *nel* reale (la tela del quadro, lo specchio d'acqua) in virtù dell'apertura di un varco, della creazione di uno spazio (*Worin*) ad opera della coscienza, un "in cui" mentale (intenzionale e trascendentale)<sup>96</sup> che rende possibile la coesistenza di presenza e non-presenza: «Una percezione d'immagine è un atto mediale, ossia una modalità di esperienza che costituisce *in se stessa* lo spazio originario (*originäres Worin*) di un' "irrealtà"». <sup>97</sup>

## 6. Conclusione

Questo scritto, che qui si conclude, vuole essere un tentativo provvisorio e indeterminato di riprendere e sviluppare alcune delle suggestioni e intuizioni offerte da Fink nel suo illuminante scritto giovanile, in cui si celano le premesse per lo sviluppo di una teoria fenomenologica dell'irrealtà.<sup>98</sup> Il concetto di sogno è stato analizzato storicamente da altri eminenti fenomenologi come Sartre, Conrad, Héring, Patočka,<sup>99</sup> e ripreso più di recente da studiosi attenti come Hans Rainer Sepp e Nicolas De Warren;<sup>100</sup> nell'interpretazione come

95 Cfr. FINK 2010, 127-8.

96 Fink accenna esplicitamente alla necessità di sviluppare una "estetica trascendentale" in riferimento a Husserl e Kant. Cfr. FINK 2010, 69 e 133.

97 FINK 2010, 137. Corsivo nostro. Lo "spazio irreal" dell'immagine è messo in rilievo già da Husserl, come spiega con la consueta chiarezza Eduard Marbach: «Il carattere di irrealtà dell'immagine non è invece il risultato di un contrasto di diverse tendenze di credenza, ma riposa sul fatto che io inserisco fantasticando in qualcosa che appare percettivamente qualcosa che non è affatto presente immediatamente: l'immagine non "appare" propriamente nell'unità della realtà, "ma in uno spazio (*Raum*) proprio, che non ha in sé alcun rapporto diretto con lo spazio reale"», BERNET, KERN, MARBACH, 1992, 198.

98 Oppure, nei termini di Stefano Bancalari, una «fenomenologia del non-originario», che si concentra «su quei vissuti che *non* rientrano nella classe di quelli identificati da Husserl quale luogo privilegiato della manifestazione, ossia i "vissuti presentanti"», BANCALARI 2011, 21.

99 SARTRE 1948; CONRAD 1968, 57-72; HÉRING 1946; HÉRING, 1947; PATOČKA 1991.

100 SEPP 2001; SEPP 2010; DE WARREN 2010. Sorprende, invece, la svista di van Kerckhoven che, nel suo scrupoloso e oltremodo documentato lavoro sugli scritti giovanili di Fink, quando elenca i tipi di presentificazione elaborati nella *Dissertazione* omette del tutto il

presentificazione proposta da Fink, esso rappresenta il complesso intreccio coscienziale di passività e possibilità, luogo (*Worin*) autentico per la costituzione di un'esperienza dell'irreale.

In Husserl, il sogno manca di un reale contrasto con la presenza, laddove fantasia, ricordo e attesa sono esperienze assimilabili proprio per il loro svolgersi in contrapposizione alla sfera presente. Seguendo Fink, secondo cui il sogno come presentificazione si realizza senza istituire una situazione conflittuale con il presente, ma, invece, rinunciando proprio a questo conflitto,<sup>101</sup> diventa allora possibile pensare la natura del rapporto al mondo presente (e quindi della presentificazione) non in base a un'idea dell'irrealtà (non presenza) come consapevolezza della distanza dalla realtà (presenza), ciò che avviene sia nel ricordo e in parte nella fantasia assorta ma comunque talvolta controllata, desta. In questa nuova prospettiva, la presentificazione assumerebbe invece la forma di un'esperienza estrema di tale distanza dalla realtà/presenza, secondo una linea di progressivo *estraniamiento* che inizia dalla rimemorazione – libera relazione con il presente – passando per il ricordo anticipante e il ricordo nel presente – esperienze consapevoli, ma che già vivono una diacronia nello spazio e nel tempo destabilizzante rispetto al presente – e, attraversata la fantasia, sorta di sogno solo in parte controllabile, giunge fino al sogno, summa delle presentificazioni.

Seguire tale strada significherebbe vedere la presentificazione come un'esperienza gradualmente sempre più inconsapevole<sup>102</sup> del presente,

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riferimento al sogno. Cfr. VAN KERCKHOVEN 1998, 97.

101 «Qui bisogna svolgere ricerche esaurienti sul senso e la possibilità del ritornare-in-se stessi, della chiusura dell'io attuale nei confronti del suo mondo originario, sullo svanire dei campi sensibili, sui problemi cinestetici del «chiudere gli occhi» ecc.», FINK 2010, 123.

102 Lohmar esclude la possibilità di indagare il sogno notturno in quanto fenomeno "irrazionale", "temporalmente disordinato", quindi "cifrato" per una descrizione fenomenologica e accessibile solo a un'interpretazione psicoanalitica. Cfr. LOHMAR 2008, 160. Noi, al contrario, riteniamo che la concezione del sogno come presentificazione elaborata da Fink apra lo spazio per una fenomenologia del sogno, appunto per una *descrizione*, e non una psicanalisi ossia un'interpretazione dei sogni, trattandosi nel nostro caso non del *significato* del sognare, bensì del suo *svolgimento* come vissuto di coscienza. Per una recente indagine sul concetto fenomenologico di sogno, ci permettiamo di rinviare a ZIPPEL 2016.

un'esperienza in cui il flusso passivo della vita di coscienza determina i modi della non presenza/irrealità come quelli che costituiscono alla radice il nostro rapporto con il mondo reale.

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## **Reviews & Comments**



# Il soggetto parlante tra strutturalismi e fenomenologie

Recensione a M. De Palo, *Saussure e gli strutturalismi. Il soggetto parlante nel pensiero linguistico del Novecento*, Carocci 2016 (pp. 344)

*Simone Aurora*

Università di Padova\*

[simoneaurora86@hotmail.it](mailto:simoneaurora86@hotmail.it)

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\* *Correspondence:* Simone Aurora– Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia Applicata (FISPPA), Università di Padova, 35139 Padova, Piazza Capitanato 3, Italy.



Quest'ultimo lavoro di Marina De Palo costituisce, senza dubbio, un'opera importante. Stupisce, innanzitutto, la ricchezza dei percorsi teorici che animano le sue pagine e la vastità di autori che vi vengono convocati. Se, infatti, è certamente il pensiero linguistico l'indiscusso protagonista delle analisi condotte dall'autrice, il lettore si trova nondimeno a doversi misurare con incursioni storico-teoriche in diversi campi disciplinari – all'interno dei quali De Palo si muove con estremo rigore e grande naturalezza – che della linguistica rappresentano i più classici "dirimpettai": semiotica, filosofia, psicologia, sociologia, antropologia e psicoanalisi.

L'ampiezza del quadro prospettico in cui si muove l'autrice, fa sì che il testo si articoli secondo una struttura stratificata, peraltro ben riassunta nel titolo del volume; a seconda del punto di vista adottato, infatti, il testo può essere letto come 1) una storia della ricezione dell'opera di Saussure nel pensiero linguistico europeo del Novecento; 2) una storia dello strutturalismo linguistico o, più precisamente, degli strutturalismi linguistici costruita sul rifiuto della "mitologia di uno strutturalismo monolitico come *mainstream* delle scienze umane" (secondo la formula utilizzata da Emanuele Fadda in una recente recensione al testo<sup>1</sup>); 3) una disamina storico-critica del problema del «ruolo dell'individuo nel linguaggio» (p. 14) all'interno del pensiero linguistico (e non solo) del Novecento; 4) una ricostruzione – per usare le belle parole di Tullio De Mauro, autore della prefazione al volume – del sentiero «che fa da confine tra due grandi idee di lingua che si incontrano e scontrano nel corso del Novecento. Da una parte [...] l'idea di lingua come una *machine à parler*, un dispositivo che ci permette di dire e capire frasi senza aver avuto parte nella sua costruzione e senza sapere come è fatto [...]»; dall'altra «l'idea che vede le lingue come risultanze del convergere e divergere dell'esprimersi dei parlanti» (p. 13).

È quest'ultimo punto a costituire l'angolo prospettico dal quale si cercherà, perlopiù, di accedere al testo in questa sede. Ciò è

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1 FADDA 2016.

giustificato, oltre che dagli interessi e dalla formazione di chi scrive, anche dal fatto che tale punto di vista permette, a mio modo di vedere, di porre maggiormente in risalto la posta in gioco essenziale che sostiene e informa il percorso sviluppato dall'autrice, ovvero la questione che concerne la determinazione della natura del linguaggio che, nel testo, assume la forma di una domanda, tanto banale quanto complessa: «*chi parla*»? (p. 21).

A tale domanda sono state date molteplici risposte che, tuttavia, possono essere raggruppate a partire da quelle due grandi idee di lingua su cui si è diviso il pensiero linguistico del Novecento – quantomeno nelle sue direttrici fondamentali – ovvero l'idea di lingua che fa capo alle varie versioni dello strutturalismo – la lingua considerata, seppur con diverse sfumature opportunamente valorizzate da De Palo, come «un tutto conchiuso, coerente, monolitico, che si impone ai parlanti venendo dalle latebre della mente e della storia naturale della specie» (p. 14) – o che rimanda a concezioni che si possono definire, al netto di differenze anche sostanziali, di matrice fenomenologica. Leggeremo quindi il volume di De Palo – tra le varie possibilità offerte al lettore – come una ricostruzione storico-critica delle diverse concezioni del linguaggio e del ruolo del soggetto parlante tra strutturalismi e fenomenologie.<sup>2</sup> Tale ricostruzione, come vedremo, non presenta – come vorrebbero le consuete ricostruzioni manualistiche – soltanto opposizioni o incompatibilità tra le varie declinazioni assunte dalle riflessioni strutturaliste e fenomenologiche sul linguaggio ma, in maniera forse ancora più interessante, restituisce alcuni importanti snodi, tanto di carattere storico quanto di natura teorica, attorno ai quali si articolano effetti di contaminazione tanto produttivi quanto, forse, inaspettati.

Se alla necessità di riferirsi, al plurale, a una molteplicità di strutturalismi si è già avuto modo di accennare, un'analogha considerazione andrebbe fatta anche per quel che riguarda la riflessione fenomenologica sul linguaggio; «si profilano [...]», scrive

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2 Per una lettura più generale del libro di De Palo si veda, oltre a FADDA 2016 e CAPUTO 2016, anche la densa e circostanziata recensione di Lorenzo Cigana (CIGANA 2017).

infatti De Palo, «due modi di concepire e praticare la fenomenologia del linguaggio: o come una filosofia trascendentale della coscienza», per la quale essenziale risulta essere il ruolo del soggetto parlante, la cui centralità viene fondata, in termini saussuriani, «sulla priorità della *parole* sulla *langue*», oppure come «fenomenologia logicizzante», ovvero «come metodo di descrizione teso a identificare le caratteristiche invarianti dei fenomeni» (p. 201), per la quale essenziali risultano invece essere le *forme* e che afferma la priorità della *langue* sulla *parole*. All'origine di queste due opposte tendenze vi sarebbero, secondo De Palo, due diverse fasi della produzione husserliana: una prima fase, più "logicizzante" appunto, avrebbe nelle *Ricerche logiche* il proprio testo fondativo; la seconda, più attenta al «ruolo dell'individuo nel linguaggio», sarebbe invece riconducibile ai testi più maturi di Husserl e, in particolare, alle *Meditazioni cartesiane*. Se ciò è certamente vero per quel che riguarda le linee generali della ricezione primo-novecentesca di Husserl, credo tuttavia che, se si rimane ai testi husserliani, l'opera di Husserl presenti un carattere fortemente e coerentemente unitario. L'opera filosofica di Husserl può essere, infatti, descritta in termini evolutivi e, più precisamente, nei termini di un progressivo ampliamento del campo di indagine. Se inizialmente il tentativo husserliano è, infatti, quello di giungere a una fondazione della matematica attraverso la descrizione dei processi psicologici che sono all'origine dei suoi concetti (*Filosofia dell'aritmetica*), successivamente egli si dedica a ricerche che mirano a costruire una logica *pura* – impermeabile dunque a quei metodi di indagine propri della psicologia e in grado di servire da presupposto fondativo dell'intero edificio del sapere scientifico (*Ricerche logiche*) – per poi rivolgere i propri sforzi alla definizione di una scienza generale dell'esperienza capace di rendere conto dell'intero campo dell'esperienza possibile, ben al di là dunque dei confini delle scienze cosiddette esatte e in direzione di quel mondo-della-vita che diverrà elemento fondamentale delle analisi husserliane più mature. Vero è, tuttavia, che ciò che più muta all'interno dell'edificio filosofico husserliano – nonostante la sua sostanziale uniformità – è la teoria del

significato, evidentemente di importanza cardinale per la definizione di una fenomenologia del linguaggio: è proprio a partire delle diverse teorie del significato sviluppate da Husserl, infatti, che si differenziano, seguendo vie spesso tortuose, le varie fenomenologie del linguaggio identificate da De Palo.<sup>3</sup>

Il volume si apre con una densa introduzione (*Introduzione: ripensare la storia degli strutturalismi linguistici*) che presenta criticamente l'orizzonte che fa da sfondo alla questione centrale attorno alla quale si concentrano le analisi di De Palo, ovvero – come già ricordato – il tema del «soggetto parlante» (p. 17), del ruolo dell'individuo nel linguaggio. Queste prime pagine sono importanti nella misura in cui segnalano i limiti delle consuete ricostruzioni storiche dello strutturalismo e rimarcano la necessità di comporre una «nuova mappa [che] contribuisca ad abbozzare una sorta di controcanto e di riscrittura del cosiddetto strutturalismo classico» (p. 25). Come il lettore avrà modo di verificare, questa “nuova mappa” si rivela molto più complessa e intricata rispetto alle rappresentazioni canoniche dello strutturalismo e mostra come – ben al di là del mito di uno strutturalismo monolitico – i sentieri, spesso interrotti, che la solcano siano sovente percorsi da “autori di frontiera”, posti all'incrocio di varie tradizioni, tra cui spicca senz'altro la fenomenologia di matrice husserliana.<sup>4</sup> Due di queste figure vengono opportunamente introdotte – seppur in via preliminare – già nell'ultima sezione dell'*introduzione*: si tratta di Karl Bühler ed Émile Benveniste che, come si vedrà, assumono un'importanza strategica nell'economia del ragionamento dell'autrice.

È tuttavia Saussure, per motivi che paiono ovvi, ad aprire il percorso tracciato da De Palo, che dedica al linguista ginevrino l'intero primo capitolo (*Saussure: il soggetto parlante*). Le analisi quivi condotte, come ben sottolineato da Fadda, si inseriscono «a pieno nella Saussure-renaissance degli ultimi 15-20 anni, non solo perché [tengono] conto

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3 Sull'evoluzione della teoria del significato nell'opera di Husserl, in particolare, e all'interno della tradizione fenomenologica, più in generale, cfr. CHRUDZIMSKI 2002.

4 Per una analisi dei diversi modelli di ricostruzione della storia dello strutturalismo, da quello più classico e lineare a quello più solidale con la prospettiva espressa da De Palo, cfr. FLACK 2016.



degli ultimi ritrovamenti, dei manoscritti e della letteratura specialistica su tali testi, ma perché abbozza[no] una rilettura complessiva di Saussure sotto la chiave dell'atteggiamento nei confronti del soggetto parlante». <sup>5</sup> In questo lungo capitolo – peraltro ricco, come tutti, di molte e proficue incursioni in altri campi disciplinari (si vedano, ad esempio, le pagine dedicate a Broca e Wittgenstein) – l'autrice ripercorre tutti i principali snodi della teoria saussuriana denunciando le semplificazioni e le forzature che ne hanno caratterizzato la ricezione all'interno della *vulgata* strutturalista e, in particolare, contestando – o, per meglio dire, ri-problematizzando – la supposta «svolta antipsicologista» che Saussure avrebbe imposto alle scienze del linguaggio (p. 35). Come sostiene De Palo, infatti, «la svolta linguistica saussuriana non stabilisce», in realtà, «una scissione della lingua (*langue*) dal soggetto (psicologico, biologico, neurologico) e si concentra», invece, «sul rapporto tra linguistica e psicologia» (p. 43); anzi, scrive ancora l'autrice, «Saussure si trova proprio a svolgere [il] passaggio dall'*io trascendentale* all'*io empirico* con tutte le implicazioni psicologistiche che questo passaggio impone» (p. 44). Interessante a questo proposito – soprattutto per il tipo di lettura che si sta cercando di offrire – quanto l'autrice scrive a proposito di Bühler, «psicologo influenzato da Husserl» (p. 41), «il quale critica la psicologia associazionistica e lo psicologismo di Saussure [...] È questa», continua De Palo, «la critica della fenomenologia di matrice husserliana» (p. 44). Avremmo dunque – in un'inversione apparentemente paradossale delle rispettive *vulgate* e a testimonianza della complessità, sovente ignorata, della storia del pensiero linguistico del Novecento e, in particolare, dei rapporti tra strutturalismi e fenomenologie – un pensiero linguistico radicalmente antipsicologista riconducibile allo Husserl padre della fenomenologia e, d'altra parte, un pensiero linguistico a tinte psicologistiche riconducibile al Saussure padre dello strutturalismo.

Il secondo capitolo (*La logica dei sentimenti: dall' homo duplex all' uomo*

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5 FADDA 2016: 95. Tale rilettura costituisce, peraltro, l'obiettivo specifico di un recente volume di Beata Stawarska, citato nel testo; si tratta di STAWARSKA 2015.

*totale*) analizza la trattazione del tema del soggetto parlante all'interno della cosiddetta "scuola di Ginevra" e, più specificamente, si concentra sulla figura di Charles Bally che, com'è noto, succede a Saussure alla cattedra di linguistica generale dell'università di Ginevra. Se nel capitolo dedicato a Saussure il tema della soggettività veniva indagato alla luce del complesso rapporto che in Saussure intrecciava teoria linguistica e scienze psicologiche, in questa sezione ciò che viene messo a tema è, invece, «l'intricato rapporto tra psicologia e sociologia, tra dimensione individuale e collettiva», ovvero la «dimensione psicosociale dei fatti linguistici» (p. 80), l'essenza doppia del linguaggio, sempre e insieme, come sostiene Bally sulla scia di Ribot, «affettivo» e «intellettuale» (p. 80). L'autrice ricostruisce nel dettaglio lo sviluppo che il tema subisce nelle teorie linguistiche di Bally, mettendo in luce potenzialità teoretiche e risvolti aporetici e ristabilendo, inoltre, alcune "linee teoriche" che confluiscono nell'opera di Bally (in particolare la psicologia dei sentimenti di Ribot) e nella sociologia francese a lui contemporanea (qui il riferimento è invece all'opera di Durkheim e Mauss).

Il terzo capitolo (*Epistemologia del senso e soggettività in Karl Bühler*) è interamente dedicato ad uno di quegli "autori di frontiera" cui si è già avuto modo di accennare, Karl Bühler; esso è di particolare importanza nell'ottica della lettura che del libro di De Palo si sta provando a restituire poiché, secondo l'autrice, lo psicologo e filosofo tedesco può essere forse considerato «come il migliore rappresentante dei rapporti tra fenomenologia e strutturalismo» (p. 104). Queste pagine hanno peraltro il merito di richiamare l'attenzione su una figura fondamentale del pensiero del Novecento, spesso trascurata o «relegat[a] [...] al ruolo di mero anticipatore della teoria delle funzioni di Jakobson» (p. 103). Di Bühler vengono considerati, in particolare, la *Teoria del linguaggio* del 1934, il modello strumentale del linguaggio e la teoria dei due campi, con la distinzione tra *campo indicale* e *campo simbolico*.

Nel quarto capitolo (*Il soggetto nella linguistica strutturale*), De Palo rivolge, invece, la propria attenzione allo "strutturalismo classico" che,

fondamentalmente, viene ricondotto all'attività scientifica dei circoli linguistici di Praga e Copenhagen. In queste pagine, prendendo le mosse da un'analisi del «ruolo della nozione di *funzione* nell'avvio della prospettiva strutturale» (p. 139), l'autrice individua due diverse traiettorie fondamentali: da una parte, «una prospettiva funzionale al centro della quale sta il parlante» con le sue «intenzioni» (pp. 141-142) e che è riconducibile ad una linea teorica che da Bréal e Bühler porterebbe fino a Prieto attraverso la mediazione fondamentale dei praghesi e, soprattutto, di Jakobson; dall'altra, una tendenza – riferibile alla scuola danese e, in particolare, all'opera di Hjelmslev – che invece «si concentr[a] sulla messa in valore del principio di immanenza che determin[a] un allentamento del legame tra lingua e soggetto» (p. 161). L'appartenenza a questa seconda tendenza farebbe di Hjelmslev «il più estremo degli strutturalisti perché avrebbe elaborato una linguistica formalista e platonizzante» (p. 157). In realtà, diversi studi recenti, che De Palo non manca di richiamare, hanno dimostrato, complicando produttivamente le letture più immediate della teoria glossematica, come la consueta attribuzione a Hjelmslev di una teoria linguistica radicalmente “formalista e platonizzante” debba essere problematizzata. È importante, in questa sede, sottolineare come le due tendenze appena richiamate possano essere indagate alla luce del diverso rapporto che esse intrattengono con l'orizzonte fenomenologico e, in particolare, con l'opera di Husserl: la prima dialogherebbe con una fenomenologia del linguaggio più attenta al ruolo del parlante e alle sue “intenzioni” e avrebbe nella *Prima ricerca logica* dedicata ai concetti di espressione e significato e nelle opere del secondo Husserl i propri punti di riferimento; la seconda, invece, mostrerebbe diversi punti di contatto – che tuttavia non impediscono di rilevare altrettante incompatibilità – con la “fenomenologia logicizzante” sviluppata da Husserl soprattutto nella *Terza* e nella *quarta ricerca logica*, di cui diversi studi recenti hanno ormai dimostrato, non a caso, l'importanza per lo sviluppo della teoria glossematica.

Questo intreccio tra strutturalismi e fenomenologie si rivela

estremamente complesso allo sguardo dello studioso che intenda avvicinarvisi. Non è un caso, allora, che l'autrice vi dedichi un intero capitolo, il quinto (*Strutturalismo e fenomenologia del linguaggio*), centrale non solo e non tanto per la sua collocazione all'interno del testo ma, soprattutto, per l'economia generale dell'argomentazione sviluppata dall'autrice. «In questo capitolo», scrive De Palo, «si intende indagare il ruolo giocato dall'innesto della fenomenologia nello strutturalismo linguistico novecentesco» (p. 179). Numerose sono le figure cui l'autrice, in queste pagine, rivolge il proprio sguardo, tra le quali è necessario ricordare Jakobson, Bühler, Benveniste, Špet – allievo di Husserl e tra i primi animatori del circolo linguistico di Mosca – Pos e Merleau-Ponty. Sono questi ultimi, tuttavia, i due nomi cui De Palo dedica maggiore spazio in questa sezione. Hendrik Pos – al pari e forse più di Bühler studioso spesso colpevolmente trascurato benché tenuto in grande considerazione da autori del calibro di Jakobson e Merleau-Ponty – riveste un'importanza strategica in quanto avrebbe contribuito in maniera fondamentale «alla creazione [insieme] di una fenomenologia del linguaggio e di una teoria della linguistica strutturale» (p. 182). Dal canto suo, il contributo di Merleau-Ponty, che fa tesoro della lezione di Pos, è fondamentale nella misura in cui si colloca all'«incrocio della fenomenologia con la psicologia gestaltica e la lettura di Saussure» (p. 199). Secondo De Palo, quindi, «i legami tra strutturalismo e fenomenologia possono essere rintracciati nella ricerca comune di un ancoraggio soggettivo del linguaggio» (p. 200) che rifugge tuttavia, allo stesso tempo, ricadute in forme ingenuie di psicologismo soggettivista, da un lato, e derive formaliste e logiciste, dall'altro.

Il Sesto capitolo (*“L'uomo nella lingua”: deissi ed enunciazione*) pone a tema proprio tale questione che viene affrontata attraverso il riferimento all'opera di Husserl e Bühler – il quale proprio «sotto l'influenza delle *Ricerche logiche* [...] insorge contro la concezione psicologista della logica nell'intento di epurare la connotazione psicologica delle nozione di *langue* e *parole* in Saussure» (p. 204) – e, soprattutto, di Benveniste, la cui trattazione occupa la quasi totalità del

capitolo. Fondamentale risulta, a questo proposito, «la distinzione tra *semiotica* (che considera la lingua come sistema di segni) e *semantica* (che si colloca invece nel mondo dell'enunciazione e nell'universo del discorso)» (p. 208), attorno alla quale l'autrice organizza il proprio attraversamento del complesso pensiero linguistico di Benveniste, la cui soluzione al problema della definizione del «ruolo dell'individuo nel linguaggio» consiste, in estrema sintesi, nella affermazione della tesi secondo la quale «il linguaggio non traduce una soggettività preesistente ma la costituisce» (p. 209).

Il settimo capitolo (*La storia dello strutturalismo linguistico tra psicologia, antropologia e filosofia*) ripercorre alcune tappe fondamentali della storia dello strutturalismo linguistico a partire dai rapporti che esso intrattiene con altre discipline, segnatamente la psicologia, l'antropologia e la filosofia. In riferimento a quest'ultima, l'attenzione è rivolta, in primo luogo, alla filosofia delle forme simboliche di Cassirer e al suo celebre saggio sullo strutturalismo del 1946, si sposta, quindi, sui lavori di Eco, per poi soffermarsi, brevemente, sull'opera di Greimas; per quel che riguarda la psicologia, invece, la penna dell'autrice indugia sull'opera di due autori fondamentali come Piaget e Vygotskij; in relazione all'antropologia, infine, sono l'opera di Lévi-Strauss e il dibattito che l'antropologo francese intrattiene con Ricœur ad essere oggetto delle considerazioni di De Palo.

Nel penultimo e breve capitolo (*Soggettività, psicoanalisi e differenza*), ricopre invece un ruolo centrale il confronto tra Saussure e Freud. L'attenzione al tema della significazione, secondo De Palo, costituisce una delle cifre più peculiari della psicoanalisi che, proprio per questo, si colloca in una posizione peculiare all'interno delle scienze psicologiche. «Questa vocazione al senso», leggiamo in queste pagine, costituisce la «cifra che accomuna la psicologia freudiana e la linguistica saussuriana» (p. 260). La psicoanalisi di Lacan, giudicato più come un poststrutturalista che come un esponente dello strutturalismo vero e proprio, non viene invece presa in considerazione, dal momento che – così De Palo – «Lacan pone la faccia del significante in una posizione dominante e relega a un ruolo

secondario il significato» (p. 254), così da produrre uno spostamento di prospettiva che «elud[e] la nozione di soggetto parlante di Saussure per approdare a una nozione di *soggetto più parlato che parlante*» (p. 260). Il capitolo si chiude, quindi, con una breve sezione dedicata alla semiologia di Julia Kristeva.

*Saussure, Croce e la scuola romana* è il titolo dell'ultimo capitolo che, insieme ad una breve sezione conclusiva (*Due parole conclusive: morte dell'uomo?*), chiude il volume mettendo in luce la ricezione delle idee saussuriane e dello strutturalismo praghese nel panorama linguistico italiano. Nell'ultimo "vocalizzo" di questo controcanto alla storia dello strutturalismo, l'autrice intende così contrastare la tesi, molto diffusa per quanto inesatta, secondo la quale «la linguistica italiana sino alla Seconda guerra mondiale sarebbe stata [...] isolata e addirittura refrattaria a questo indirizzo», giacché «doveva confrontarsi con una tradizione teorica di impronta individualistica nell'ambito della quale una nozione astratta come quella di *langue* sembrava trovare poco spazio» (p. 273). È invece possibile dimostrare, argomenta De Palo, come sia in realtà esistita «una linea teorica risalente a Pagliaro e alla scuola romana che discute e innesta nella riflessione linguistica le idee saussuriane e i modelli strutturalisti» (p. 273). Dopo aver presentato i tratti fondamentali della ricezione di Saussure all'interno del neo-idealismo italiano – con particolare attenzione all'opera di Croce – l'autrice si sofferma quindi sugli esponenti più importanti della scuola romana, Pagliaro, Belardi e, soprattutto, De Mauro.

Per la ricchezza dei suoi contenuti e il rigore delle sue analisi, questo volume di Marina De Palo si configura, senza dubbio, come un punto di riferimento imprescindibile per ogni ricerca futura sullo strutturalismo e la sua storia, così complessa e stratificata. Peraltro, vista l'ampiezza del punto prospettico e la densità dei rimandi storici e teorici, il libro non si rivolge solo allo specialista – per il quale costituisce un utilissimo strumento di consultazione e un "inventario" di possibili percorsi di ricerca, tanto proficui quanto, spesso, ignorati – ma anche al semplice appassionato o allo studente universitario che, grazie allo stile asciutto ed essenziale della scrittura di De Palo, può

agevolmente affacciarsi sul composito panorama offerto dalla storia degli strutturalismi. Inoltre, il testo si inserisce proficuamente – come esito e, insieme, come ulteriore stimolo – all’interno di un contesto di ricerca che, negli ultimi anni, ha riaccessi i riflettori sullo strutturalismo e la sua storia con l’obbiettivo dichiarato di restituirne una rappresentazione più fedele e meno schematica ravvivandone, inoltre, le potenzialità teoriche che derivano, anche e soprattutto, dal dialogo che esso ha intrattenuto, e ancora intrattiene, con altre tradizioni di pensiero e, in particolare, con le varie articolazioni assunte dal pensiero fenomenologico.

Una possibile debolezza, quasi fisiologica per un’opera così ambiziosa e dal raggio tanto ampio, risiede nel rischio di perdere un po’ di coerenza espositiva, dando l’impressione, in alcuni punti, di dare forma più a un *collage* che non a un quadro nitidamente definito; detto in altri termini, non è sempre agevole connettere i vari capitoli che compongono il volume all’interno di un discorso organico, tanto che a volte si può avere l’impressione di essere di fronte più ad una raccolta di saggi che non a un lavoro monografico. Infine, vista l’importanza assunta dalla tradizione fenomenologica e, in particolare, dal pensiero di Husserl all’interno del volume – come, in questa sede, si è cercato di mettere in evidenza – a chi scrive sarebbe parso forse opportuno includere all’interno del percorso proposto un capitolo esplicitamente dedicato al filosofo tedesco.

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