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Book Review

Alberto Peruzzi, *Noema: Mente e Logica attraverso Husserl* (Collana di Filosofia). Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988. 201 pages. 20.000 lire.

The book consists of five chapters. In the first one, devoted to problems concerning meaning, Peruzzi emphasizes that Husserl sets meaning theory within the range of a general logic. This fact involves the impossibility of reducing meaning theory to grammar, owing to its essential link with the *a priori* categories which drive meaning directions. At the same time, through the underlining of the ties which, according to Husserl, the mind fixes on language, we are reminded of the difference between Husserl's position and the "linguistic turn" of analytic philosophy. To clarify Husserl's position, Peruzzi contrasts it with de Saussure's. Facing the question: "How can a thing represent another thing?", de Saussure answers emphasizing the role played by the System, and in so doing he puts himself on a totally intra-linguistic frame. Husserl, on the contrary, points to the meaning giving *act*. For him – and this, we could say, constitutes Brentano's legacy – syntactical and semantical frames must be arranged within an in principle wider and independent constituting activity. Shifting attention then to the relation with Frege, a subject which has been investigated a great deal in the relevant literature, Peruzzi observes that passing from Frege's *Sinn* to Husserl's *Noema* we pass from a thought-object to a thought (or, better: thinking)-content. This is what allows also an expression without a *denotatum* to signify. Consequently, in order to be able to found the objectivity of meaning and logic, Husserl must not make recourse to a *sui generis* existence of *sui generis* entities. Only in the intentionality of consciousness can we find the genesis of objective validity. Frege's *Gedanken* become for Husserl entities which cannot be considered independently of all cognitive structures, i.e., as entities *an sich*. On the contrary, they are intrinsically bound to those structures, to the judgement acts.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the most specific phenomenological subjects: the intentionality of consciousness, especially its ability to point out to something which can also not exist; the *epoché* and the notion of constitution; a focusing on the nature of the noema. The analysis involves reference to positions by Kant and neo-Kantian schools, Brentano, Meinong, Frege, O. Becker, Chisholm, Popper, Lorenz, Piaget, Gurwitsch, Føllesdal, Hintikka, Searle. We can only give a brief account of the arguments here:

a) Unlike Brentano's and Meinong's, Husserl's intentionality is a *peculiar* (as independent of the existence of the objects it aims to) relation to an *ordinary* object.
b) What Brentano failed to give is the analysis of the synthetic consciousness, i.e., of the possibility of variously referring to a same object and of picking out the same content with different degrees of intuitive evidence.
c) The transcendental conception of Husserl is more Cartesian than Kantian in nature, for it consists in a going back to the utmost sources of every cognitive frame. (As Peruzzi rightly warns, Husserl's use of the term

transcendental is reminiscent of the medieval sense of *transcategorial.*) A further point in which Husserl most significantly diverges from Kant is that from a phenomenological point of view not only the epistemic contents, but also the ways in which they are arranged partly depend on experience.

d) What Husserl calls noemata are the *cogitata qua cogitata*, the objective correlates of the noetic acts (meant as act-types, and not as act-tokens). While Frege's *Sinn*, owing to logical aims, tends to be hypostatized as an abstract entity which doesn't depend on someone actually thinking it, Husserl's noema on the contrary remains for epistemic reasons internal to the noetic act. Accordingly, for Husserl a sentence designates a state-of-affairs, and not, as for Frege, a truth-value. The meaning of a sentence *p* is for Husserl the peculiar object that-*p*, an idea that recovered strength recently from investigations by Bunge, Suszko, and Barwise.

e) The account given of the structure of the noema is very clear. Its components are (noematic) *sense* and *modality* (rather strangely, there is lacking here any comparison with Frege's pair sense/force). The first one is what every act having the same intentional object shares; the second one concerns the how different acts refer: through a recollection, a phantasy, a perception, etc. If a noema is what allows an expression to signify, it is thanks to the noematic sense that an expression can denote.

Chapter 4 focuses the role logic plays in Husserl's investigations (a subject to which a paper recently published by Peruzzi on this Journal is devoted), and the last chapter deals chiefly with positions held by A. Banfi and G. Preti, two of the most outstanding representatives of the Italian phenomenological movement (it is perhaps worth recalling that Peruzzi is one of the last pupils of Preti, whose wide range of interests he shares).

After this sketchy description of the content and structure of *Noema*, we have to emphasize that the main purpose of the book is not of a philological or exegetic nature. Rather, *Noema* can be seen as an attempt to develop (sometimes also with remarkable modifications) some of Husserl's most important themes into a more encompassing and satisfactory theory of meaning and of the mind's logical structure. It goes without saying that what *Noema* provides is no more than hints at such a theory, but they are enough to allow one to say that the coming theory, however deeply rooted in the Husserlian ground, will have a naturalistic bent, and above all it will be organized around concepts and thought-structures borrowed from category theory. As concerns this last point, the use of the notion of *sheaf* is highly revealing (as an explication, for example, of the eidos "Ego"), as is the frequent recourse to the glueing technique and the giving up of traditional pairs of opposition in favour of the categorial pairs global/local and external/internal. True, this kind of approach can seem to clash with Husserl's explicit statements. For Husserl thinks that any attempt at a mathematical treatment of transcendental phenomenology is stopped by the *non-spatial* character of the psychical phenomena. It is a conception which is still part of Brentano's legacy, and which is also rooted in Husserl's pre-Gödelian matching the notion of axiomatic mathematical theory with the concept of complete-

ness (which involves the closure of the corresponding domain or manifold). In spite of this, Peruzzi holds that this opinion is no longer tenable, not only because Gödel's results are fifty years old, but above all considering the prominance of the categorial notion of *topos* and the subsequently disclosed possibility of a geometric logic. The recourse to categorial tools typically appears with regard to the linguistic vs. extra- (or pre-)linguistic debate: the recovering of Husserl's conceptions and the underlining of the role of language must not involve an undermining of prelinguistic relations-to-objects. For we have to remember that language can operate only through the nested working of several cognitive frames: as, for example, handling, looking, etc. From this same position springs the rejection of the alternative between language and world: they are so strictly connected that it is impossible to determine which precedes which. Without doubt, we are here facing a kind of holism, but the main feature of Peruzzi's position consists in the imperative to focus this holism *locally*.

Analogously, Husserl's propensity to diminish the opposition within the question of whether language has conceptual priority over thought, or vice versa is developed by Peruzzi by showing that what we need is a dynamic description of the different relevant elements. It isn't enough to say, with Wittgenstein, that a linguistic game contains also extra-linguistic components. We have to put them within a theoretic framework. And if a *global* systematic theory is impossible, we will not limit ourselves to the displaying of a variety of models, but we will investigate modalities and phases of the constitution and of the mutual pasting of (*local*) semantical regions. Another subject which Peruzzi often dwells on is the *epoché*, the bracketing of reality and existence in order to gain a soil free from prejudices. As concerns logic, for example, this means the search for a *pure* (i.e., without individual or predicative constants), *intensional* (such that the meaning of every expression doesn't depend on its referential character), and *free* (from existential presuppositions) logic. What concerns Peruzzi, however, is the fact that the *epoché* can work only with regard to *local* regions, it being impossible to represent the space of every point of view. In terms of Neurath's famous image: on the ship (=our knowledge) we have tools (=the mind's moduli) to rearrange every part of the ship, but we cannot do so all at once. A *global* rationality doesn't exist: we can't approach the plan of the ship, and maybe it doesn't exist. What exists, and what we can picture to ourselves, is a string of local fields locally linkable together through partial glueing.

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Book Review

Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution.* Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Collected Works, Volume III). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989. xix + 439 pp. Dfl. 250, U.S. $134.00. (Paperback: Dfl. 50, U.S. $24,50).

The long-awaited English translation of *Ideas II*, the second volume of Husserl's *Ideas*, has recently been published by Kluwer to complete their three volume set of the English translation of the entire work. The book also contains an English translation of the German version of the "Author's Preface to the English Edition" to the first translation of the first volume of *Ideas*, a piece originally published in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* a year before the English edition actually appeared in 1931.

Overall, the translation of the published German version edited by Marly Biemel is excellent. It manages to be both technically accurate and clear and readable, which is sometimes a difficult balance to strike in translating Husserl. The translators have come up with an ingenious way to convey the distinction between the two German terms for body, *Körper* and *Leib*, which Husserl often plays on in his exposition: *Körper* is rendered as body and *Leib* is rendered as Body. The only problem is that the difference between the two terms can now be overlooked easily in a casual reading of the text. The convention adopted by David Carr in his translation of the *Crisis* of translating *Leib* as living body and *Körper* as physical body brings out the difference between them more clearly, I think. The translators have also had to face the same problem that has long bedeviled translators of Hegel: how to translate the German word "Geist." These translators simply translate it as "spirit," although, as they mention, the connection between *Geist*, spirit, and the *Geisteswissenschaften* or the human sciences is thereby lost – and this loss is a significant one, for the whole third section of the book centers on this connection. Perhaps the term human spirit might have proved a workable compromise. I want also to register my protest of the translators' translation of the German word "Mensch," which can be used for both men and women, as "man." In these days when most philosophers strive to use gender-neutral language, this choice clearly represents a step backward (although given the proliferation of terms for the human subject already pressed into use by Husserl, it is admittedly not easy to come up with an alternative).

The translators do a good job in their introduction of concisely summarizing the rather tortuous history of the composition of *Ideas II*. It was started in 1912 right after the completion of *Ideas I* and then added to, reworked and revised all the way up to 1928 when Husserl finally decided it was "not destined for publication."[1] This does not mean that Husserl repudiated the views expressed therein. Keep in mind that Husserl never produced or approved a German edition of his *Cartesian Meditations* in his lifetime either.

On the contrary *Ideas II* is a very important work of Husserl's, not least because it presents a side of Husserl's thought that up to now has been overlooked, particularly by North American commentators. Perhaps the appearence of this translation will bring this text more of the attention it deserves. Although long-overdue, it is nonetheless appearing at an auspicious time, since a spate of recent articles have focussed on the relation between Husserl's and Dilthey's positions on the differences between the natural and the human sciences and their respective philosophical foundations.[2] *Ideas II* is the only place Husserl gave this issue his sustained attention. *Ideas II* is also significant for the potential insights it gives into the overall development of Husserl's thought and the light it can shed on specific links between it and the works of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger.

This second volume is titled "Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution," which means that it analyzes specific ways that our experience of the world is structured and given meaning in consciousness. Yet, whereas *Ideas I* started out from the natural attitude and focussed mostly on the everyday perceptual world, *Ideas II* assumes a more theoretical standpoint and investigates the world that is the focus of the natural scientist, the biological scientist and the human scientist respectively. It presents thus, to use Husserlian terminology, three different regional ontologies.[3] The order in which Husserl analyzes these three different regions – material nature, animal nature and the spiritual world – mimics the order of priority assumed within a naturalistic world view: the physical is the foundation of the mental, which is in turn the basis of culture. But Husserl inverts this order of priority by the end.

Husserl's analysis of the constitution of material nature is notable for its stress on the role played by causality in determining material reality.[4] It is just such a careful analysis of the concept of causality presupposed by modern science that is missing from the *Crisis* and Husserl's insights here nicely supplement the so-called Galileo section there.[5] Husserl's treatment of natural science in *Ideas II* serves as good balance for the *Crisis* in another way as well. In the *Crisis* Husserl's critique of the modern-scientific world view is so emphatic that one easily loses sight of his avowed admiration of the accomplishments of the actual scientists themselves.[6] Husserl's approach in *Ideas II* reminds us that Husserl did not question the legitimacy of the practice of natural science. Indeed this section of *Ideas II* analyzes how the scientific conception of nature develops naturally out of more basic and essential aspects of perception.[7] It is only when the stance of the natural scientist is taken to be the only legitimate one and material nature is taken to be the primary reality that the state of affairs that Husserl decries in the *Crisis* arises.

There seems to be somewhat more of a conflict, however, between what Husserl says in the *Crisis* and views expressed in the second section of *Ideas II*, "The Constitution of Animal Nature." Natural science is not just physical science, Husserl confirms here: animals and humans are the subjects of scientific study too. Only in their case an additional level or strata of being is encountered: psychic reality or the soul. The task of this section then is to analyze how this region of being is constituted, or the meaning it has from a natural scientific standpoint.

Today, however, the question can be posed whether this region of being

is not a mythical one. The three sciences of this type that Husserl mentions are zoology, psychology and anthropology.[8] An entirely different approach to anthropology has evolved since Husserl's day, one that largely abstracts from subjective elements. Nor did Husserl foresee the development of behaviorism, though of course he would reject it. More importantly Husserl himself later attacked the idea that psychology is a natural science at all, as his critique of naturalistic psychology in the *Crisis* certainly shows.[9] The question here is not whether the psychic realm exists (this would be an absurd question for Husserl), but rather what place it has within the natural sciences. In any case, zoology remains as a science of animal nature, and certainly hypotheses about animals' subjective processes do have a place in this sort of research, as well as in neuropsychology generally.[10] Yet the region of being under consideration shrinks thereby alarmingly.

Husserl, however, spends the majority of this section discussing human psychic existence and the ambivalence about the true nature of human psychic reality that these passages betray is attributable to another important factor. Once Husserl has broken through to the level of psychic reality he has reached the home ground of phenomenology and thus to a certain extent transcended the natural scientific standpoint. Therefore much of what he says is equivocal. Nonetheless, the chapter entitled "The Constitution of Psychic Reality through the Body" contains fascinating passages which must have exerted an influence on Merleau-Ponty when he read the text in manuscript before beginning his *Phenomenology of Perception.*

Another interesting feature of this section is that it presents a capsule version of the account of the apperception of the other which subsequently appeared in the Fifth Meditation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations.* What is significant is that this account is offered explicitly as part of a consideration of "the constitution of man as he presents himself to a naturalistic point of view."[11] The implication that can be drawn from Husserl's placement of the precursor of the Fifth Meditation account in this section of *Ideas II* is that the way others are perceived according to this later work is a way of understanding others that results when one takes a natural scientific viewpoint towards them. Furthermore, Husserl's later condemnation of naturalistic psychology in the *Crisis* leads one to question whether this is an appropriate viewpoint to take towards other subjects at all.

It is also noteworthy that Husserl describes the experience of other subjects in a quite different way in the final section of *Ideas II*, "The Constitution of the Spiritual World."[12] Here he uses the analogy of our grasp of the printed words on a page to stress that the living body of the other is directly apprehended as expressing a certain mental or spiritual sense. He denies that there are two levels of experience, that of a soul founded on a body.[13] Since Husserl goes on to assert that the spiritual world is ontologically prior to the material nature, it would seem that this second account must present the more general and basic way that others are experienced.

In this third section, Husserl turns from considering the nature investigated by natural science to survey the human spiritual world that is the subject of human sciences such as history, sociology and cultural anthropology.[14] Unlike the transition from the first to the second section, the transition to the third section of *Ideas II* requires a major shift in attitude: a shift

from the naturalistic attitude to what Husserl calls the personalistic attitude. Yet the personalistic attitude is not originally a theoretical attitude at all.[15] Indeed it bears a definite resemblance to the natural attitude that is bracketed and then analyzed in *Ideas I*.[16] Whereas in the naturalistic attitude one is confronted by nature, in the personalistic attitude one finds oneself the "center of a surrounding world."[17] This surrounding world presents various themes of study which can be taken up from a more theoretical but still engaged point of view.[18] Such a radical shift of attitude requires the employment of the transcendental reduction, for the reduction reminds us that the viewpoint of the natural scientist is just that – one attitude among others – by revealing how nature is not absolute, but is itself constituted in consciousness.[19]

The surrounding world encountered in the personalistic attitude obviously has a close affinity with the life-world that Husserl uncovers as "the forgotten meaning-fundament of natural science" in the *Crisis*.[20] It is a world in flux, "always in the process of becoming," a practical world structured in terms of human purposes and values.[21] Events are connected together in terms of what Husserl calls motivation, rather than by strict causal laws. The connections that can be discerned between the third section of *Ideas II* and Part III A of the *Crisis* conclusively put to rest any suspicion that Husserl's turn to the life-world in the *Crisis* was an unacknowledged capitulation to the position taken by Heidegger in *Being and Time*.[22] These passages about the surrounding world stem from a manuscript written in 1913, before Husserl had even met Heidegger. In fact the question can be raised whether the situation was not precisely the reverse. The translators of the present volume mention that Husserl sent a copy of the manuscript to Heidegger in 1925, two years before Heidegger published *Being and Time*. However, Heidegger's elaboration of Being-in-the-World there differs in significant ways from Husserl's description of the surrounding world of the personalistic attitude. It is unquestionable that Husserl exerted a deep, though complex, influence on Heidegger's thought, in any case.

Perhaps the topic of greatest philosophical importance, and most central to any theory of the development of Husserl's thought is broached at the very end of the book. There, as I already mentioned, Husserl asserts the "ontological priority" of the spiritual world vis a vis material nature and thus correlatively the priority of the human sciences over the natural sciences. A great difficulty lies in interpreting just what Husserl means by ontological priority here, though.

On the one hand, the priority of the spiritual world can be understood along the lines of the claims that Husserl makes in the *Crisis*: science is itself a cultural product and, furthermore, the scientist never actually transcends the everyday world of perception, but in fact relies on it in making his/her measurements.[23] Yet Husserl devotes only one sentence to making this particular point, in addition to a footnote added after 1925, where notably the term 'life-world' is directly used.[24] Aside from these two places, the argument from the *Crisis* only surfaces briefly in one remarkably prescient paragraph at the very beginning of the third section.[25]

In this last chapter Husserl appears to be struggling to make a wholly different point, one that never becomes entirely clear. A first reading even

suggests that Husserl means that the spiritual world is ontologically prior in the strong or pre-transcendental sense of ontological. The naturalistic and personalistic attitudes are not here two mutually exclusive "modes of apprehension," as he stated earlier.[26] They eventually "enter *into relation* with each other," he asserts, and the point of convergence is the living body.[27] This conclusion leads Husserl to wrestle with a phenomenological version of the interaction problem generated by Cartesian mind-body dualism. He goes on in a very dense passage to argue against psycho-physical parallellism, the position that each mental event corresponds to a particular brain process on which it depends.[28] He concludes that the brain process is the necessary but not the sufficient condition for the mental event.[29] But why does Husserl take the trouble to argue against this position? The transcendental reduction suspends the claims of psycho-physical parallelism and thus renders the debate pointless. The implication is that the priority of the spiritual world is one that is evident even and perhaps only in the natural or pre-phenomenological attitude.

However, by the end of this chapter, it seems that the priority of the spiritual world only can be revealed by taking a transcendental point of view.[30] Nature is always relative to consciousness, Husserl argues, while the human spirit has its individuality in itself and can never be thought away or eliminated in a thought experiment the way that nature can be.[31] In a succinct expression of one of the major points of his phenomenology he states: "Subjects cannot be dissolved into nature, for in that case what gives nature its sense would be missing."[32] Now it seems that the spiritual world has a transcendental priority, or a priority revealed by and thus specifically for transcendental phenomenology.

The problem with this interpretation, aside from the fact that Husserl does not mention the transcendental reduction here, is that it leads to an eventual collapse of the human sciences into transcendental phenomenology, or vice versa, since the priority of the human spirit becomes equivalent to the priority of the transcendental ego. Husserl hints at such a development here and there in manuscripts (Hua IX, pp. 376–379, Hua VI, pp. 345–347). Yet as the last pages of the life-world section of the *Crisis* show, the irreducibly intersubjective nature of the human spiritual world and the practice of the human sciences always throw up an ultimate stumbling block to this development. Husserl chose again and again to turn to a suitably purified psychology as the preferred port of entry into transcendental phenomenology.

These claims Husserl makes for ontological priority at the end of the book certainly intrude into the spirit of harmonious pluralism that reigns at the beginning. Yet a lot hinges on how these claims for the ontological priority of the spiritual world are interpreted. If the ontological priority of the spiritual world over nature is one that is evident in the natural attitude, the consequence seems only to be that any sort of physicalist reduction is ruled out, which justifies ontological pluralism. If, alternatively, the human sciences have methodological priority because the surrounding world of the personalistic attitude or the life-world represents the more primary level of human experience, then a modified ontological pluralism still can be retained. It is true that certain human sciences, the history of science, say, or the history of ideas, can tell us more about natural science than natural

science can tell us about literature, for instance. But only natural science has the potential to give us real insight into nature.[33] If, however, the priority of the spiritual world is a transcendental one revealed by transcendental phenomenology, then any initial vision of ontological pluralism would prove to be ultimately illusory.

Obviously these are issues over which people can differ. But they are deeply important ones for any ultimate characterization of Husserl's thought, as well as for philosophy generally. That they are raised in the closing pages of this book only gives a further indication of its interest and significance.

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Notes

1. Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 15. These are Fink's words. See also p. 39 where Cairns reports how Husserl said that "a feeling of inadequacy to his task...made it impossible for him to finish the second volume of the *Ideen*."
2. See Ernst Wolfgang Orth, "The Problem of Generalization in Dilthey and Husserl" and John E. Jalbert, "'Nature' in the Human-Scientific Perspective: An Husserlian Response to Dilthey" in *Dilthey and Phenomenology*, Rudolf A. Makreel and John Scanlon, eds. (Washington, D C: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, 1987) and John E. Jalbert, "Husserl's Position Between Dilthey and the Windelband-Rickert School of Neo-Kantianism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (1988).
3. See *Ideas II*, p. 97, p. 221. Also see Ludwig Landgrebe, "Regions of Being and Regional Ontologies in Husserl's Phenomenology," in *Apriori and World*, W. McKenna, R.M. Harlan and L.E. Winters, eds. and trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 132–151.
4. See *Ideas II*, pp. 44–54.
5. "It was the new science of nature which first grasped this idea of strict identity in the absolutely determined and unequivocal dependencies of causality (an idea that has to be set off from any empirical apprehension)". *Ideas II*, p. 52.
6. See *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 53. Henceforth referred to as *Crisis*.
7. "... what natural science claims about a thing, namely that it is *constructed out of molecules and atoms*, is already pre-delineated as a possibility in the intuited thing, ..." *Ideas II*, p. 54.
8. See *Ideas II*, p. 133, p. 150, p. 184.
9. See *Crisis*, pp. 211–224.
10. See, for instance, *Ideas II*, p. 185–186 where Husserl describes the movements of a cat seen from the point of view of a scientist.
11. *Ideas II*, p. 151.
12. Paul Ricoeur also notes the difference between the two accounts and sees the second as a correction: "Husserl corrects his first interpretation of "animation" which he carried out in a very naturalistic way in Part Two, by way of a cultural

understanding." Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), pp. 74–75.

13. See *Ideas II*, pp. 248–256.
14. See *Ideas II*, p. 246.
15. "... the *personalistic attitude*, the attitude we are always in when we live with one another, talk to one another, shake hands with one another in greeting, or are related to one another in love and aversion, in disposition and action, in discourse and discussion." *Ideas II*, p. 192.
16. See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1980), p. 53.
17. *Ideas II*, p. 194.
18. See *Ideas II*, p. 230.
19. See *Ideas II*, p. 189–190.
20. *Crisis*, p. 48.
21. *Ideas II*, p. 196. See for comparison *Crisis*, pp. 104–105.
22. This suspicion is voiced by Nicholas Gier, for one, though there it is identified with Hans-Georg Gadamer. See Nicholas F. Gier, *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 118 and notes p. 241.
23. See *Crisis*, p. 126.
24. See *Ideas II*, p. 302.
25. See *Ideas II*, p. 193.
26. See *Ideas II*, p. 150.
27. *Ideas II*, p. 294.
28. See Ricoeur, p. 77 for a definition of this position, which is never clearly stated by Husserl.
29. See *Ideas II*, p. 310.
30. Theodore de Boer also makes this point, whereas John E. Jalbert contests it. See Theodore De Boer, *The Development of Husserl's Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), pp. 395–396 and John E. Jalbert, "'Nature' in the Human-Scientific Perspective: An Husserlian Response to Dilthey," pp. 42–43. Husserl does deny in a supplement to the present text that the transcendental reduction is necessary for the practice of the human sciences or even an understanding of their foundations, but that is a different issue. See *Ideas II*, pp. 377–382.
31. See *Ideas II*, p. 311, p. 313.
32. *Ideas II*, p. 311.
33. Husserl seems to adopt a position like this in a text published as a supplement to *Ideas II*: "Thereby, however, the natural sciences, as sciences, are enclosed within the human sphere. It is not nature itself that is encompassed by the objectivities of the human sciences, but rather that holds for the science of nature, the science of psychology, etc." *Ideas II*, p. 401–402.

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Book Review

James Richard Mensch, *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism*. Albany, New York: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1988. Paper: $14.95; Cloth: $44.50.

This book is a discussion of Husserl's treatment of the problem of intersubjectivity and his associated positions on the ego and identity. As the title implies, Mensch emphasizes Husserl's transcendental idealism.

But what is the problem of intersubjectivity, and what does transcendental idealism have to do with it? According to Mensch, the problem is "how, within an idealistic standpoint, do I acknowledge the independent existence of others – of fellow subjects" (p. 1). Since idealism is alleged to be integral to the problem, the introduction includes definitions of realism, idealism, and transcendental idealism. Realism is the thesis that objects have independently existing properties and essences. Knowing thus depends on being. Idealists, on the other hand, believe that being depends on knowing. Mensch does not distinguish between idealism and transcendental idealism:

> Transcendental idealism, then, is the doctrine that makes *knowing prior to being*...This is the doctrine of transcendental idealism that being depends upon knowing or – to speak more precisely – its position that an object's being depends upon its being-given to consciousness (pp. 2–3).

Mensch interprets Husserl's views in such a way that a solution to the problem is impossible. If the problem is to "acknowledge" the independent existence of other subjects, and idealism is the thesis that there is no such independent existence, then Husserl could not solve the problem of intersubjectivity from an idealistic standpoint. Mensch acknowledges this consequence of his interpretation very early: "Given this transcendental sense of the Other as unity of appearances, I cannot reduce his being to his being known or being given to me. I cannot because he himself is an embodiment of this priority of knowing to being" (p. 4). Transcendental idealism, according to Mensch, requires reducing being to being known.

The introduction offers an illuminating interpretation of Husserl's motivation for claiming both that phenomenological reduction is a necessary prelude to philosophy and that there is a pure subject. Husserl believed that epistemology must be independent of metaphysics because epistemology is the examination of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge about being. If epistemology involved any metaphysical commitments, a self-undermining skepticism would result. If the truth of a metaphysical proposition m were a precondition for knowledge, then we are faced with the question of how we know m is true. Either m is true or false. If m is false, then there is no knowledge. If m is true, then the argument for its truth would be question-begging. It could thus be doubted whether m or anything else is known. Besides, if m is a proposition about our biological constitution, then doubts about whether it precludes knowledge of things as they are immediately arise. This skepticism, however, is self-stultifying, since it undermines the claim to know that m is true (as opposed to seeming

to be true to any human). Epistemology must, therefore, begin by suspending judgment about metaphysical propositions. Epistemology must be metaphysically neutral. Epistemology must, in short, begin with phenomenological reduction.

But what of the knowing subject? If the epistemological subject is conceived as human – as a part of the world – then its biological constitution could prevent knowing things as they are. If the epistemological subject is a part of nature, then its alleged "truths" can be relativized to human capacities and sense organs, which would reintroduce a form of logical psychologism. Thus, if knowledge of truths (no scare quotes) is possible, then there must be a pure, transcendental subject.

Chapter one is devoted to Husserl's attempt to solve the problem of intersubjectivity in *Cartesian Meditations*. The major thesis of the chapter is that "...in phenomenologically accounting for Others, Husserl does violate the epoche. His evaluation of the evidence for positing Others makes use of a principle which assumes that the intersubjective world is already given" (p. 23). Mensch is alleging that Husserl begs the question at what he calls the descriptive and ontological levels of the problem of intersubjectivity.

> On the descriptive level, violation of the epoche concerns the givenness of the Other. Committing it involves my assuming that the Other is already given in analyzing the evidence for his givenness. Since, within the attitude of the reduction, being is reduced to being given, the assumption concerns not just the givenness but *also the being* of the Other. Thus, in committing it, I 'beg a principle' which implicitly assumes that my own being is already a being-with-Others. This means that in my analysis of the evidence for my existing Others, I already assume – as a hidden ontological principle – the being of the intersubjective world. Inadvertently, the latter, which is the correlate of such Others, has become part of my demonstration of these Others (p. 24).

I think that Mensch's allegation that Husserl begs the question is based on a misunderstanding of phenomenology in general and of the problem of intersubjectivity in particular, for his interpretation is based on the assumption that Husserl's problem is to establish the existence of others. Some respectable philosophers, including Ricoeur, Sartre and, at one point, Schuetz, also express this interpretation of Husserl's problem of intersubjectivity, but I beg to differ with all of them. The problem of intersubjectivity is not the problem of acknowledging, positing, or proving the existence of other subjects.[1] Mensch twice cites (on pages 3 and 23) a passage from the second meditation that is designed to show otherwise: "how, in the attitude of the reduction, other egos – not merely as wordly phenomena but as other transcendental egos – can become *positable as existing* and thus become equally legitimate themes of a phenomenological egology."[2] But Husserl emphatically marked this passage for deletion (CM, p. 31, n.1). Although it is not clear why Husserl marked the passage for deletion, the fact that he did so renders Mensch's appeal to it without explanation problematic. Besides, the context of the passage permits an interpretation that does not support Mensch's. The entire sentence is: "And yet it is quite impossible to

foresee how, for me in the attitude of reduction, other egos – not merely as wordly phenomena but as other transcendental egos – can become positable as existing and thus become equally legitimate themes of a phenomenological egology" (CM, p. 30/69).[3] It might be impossible to foresee positing the existence of other transcendental egos because that is precluded by phenomenological reduction.

Husserl believes that questions about the existence of things are not philosophical questions. Thus, Husserl's problem of intersubjectivity is not the problem of "acknowledging" the existence of others. Phenomenological reduction is the *suspension* of judgment about the thesis of the natural standpoint, scientific propositions, and all metaphysical theories about existence (including idealism). Any attempt to establish the existence of others, therefore, would be abandoning the phenomenological reduction, the context that defines the problem of phenomenology.

The basis for Mensch's belief that the problem of intersubjectivity is the problem of establishing the existence of other transcendental egos is the thesis that Husserl is an idealist – that phenomenological reduction is *the reduction of being to being-given* (p. 23, e.g.). The question of how other transcendental egos are "given" would thus be the question of their existence. Thus, if it is assumed (as Husserl must) that others are given (that is, experienced) in order to carry out his analysis of that experience, then Husserl would be presupposing the existence of others while attempting to prove their existence. This, obviously, is circular.

Something is awry with this interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology. In order to describe and analyze *any* experience of anything whatsoever, it must be presupposed that there is experience of the "object" in question. Therefore, if Mensch's interpretation were correct, every phenomenological description would be circular. Although Mensch does not explain what this "reduction" of being to being-given means, he seems to be claiming either that Husserl identifies the two or that statements about the existence of something can be derived from a set of statements about how that thing is experienced. This is phenomenalism, but phenomenology implies neither phenomenalism nor idealism.

Although chapter one is ostensibly devoted to Husserl's attempt to solve the problem of intersubjectivity in the fifth meditation, a substantial portion of it is a defense of the thesis that Husserl is an idealist. This is certainly understandable, since Mensch's evaluation of Husserl's efforts turns on that point. Although Husserl is undeniably an idealist in *some* (misleading) sense (after all, he calls himself an idealist), I do not think that he is the kind of idealist Mensch says he is – one who is opposed to realism. Consider this passage:

> I must not hesitate, however, to state quite explicitly that in regard to transcendental-phenomenological Idealism, I have nothing whatsoever to take back, that now as ever I hold every form of current philosophical realism to be in principle absurd, and no less every idealism to which in its own arguments that realism stands contrasted, and which in fact it refutes.[4]

Here's another: "But we also need to make clearly explicit the fundamental

and essential difference between Transcendental-phenomenological Idealism and that form of Idealism which in popular realism is opposed to it as its incompatible opposite" (*Ideas*, p. 14).

These passages are from the "Author's Preface to the English edition of *Ideas*," well after Husserl allegedly became an idealist.[5] And in these and other passages Husserl contends that he does not endorse a kind of idealism that is opposed to realism. Husserl even says that idealism is absurd in one of the passages. Mensch, however, interprets Husserl as claiming that realism is false because his idealism is true. These passages bear out my claim that Husserl's transcendental "idealism" is very different from what we ordinarily call idealism.

Although I disagree with the interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology as a form of idealism, it is only fair to note that Mensch is in good company, for Roman Ingarden and Paul Ricoeur believe that Husserl is an idealist. Moreover, Mensch cites passages in support of his view that Husserl is an idealist. At first glance some of the passages appear to be assertions that (traditional) idealism is true. However, I think that his argument is inconclusive, for Mensch overlooks one of the major alternative interpretations of those very passages. To quote Husserl as saying "the entire spatio-temporal world...is according to its sense merely intentional being" is not to settle the debate, for Harrison Hall has argued that that statement and others like it can be interpreted as not affirming idealism or repudiating realism.[6] Husserl simply does not remind us repeatedly that his statements are made after the phenomenological reduction. The epoche means that all "objects"[7] are treated as intentional – that is, treated solely in relationship to actual and possible consciousness. Intentional objects are not a special sort of object that is ideal rather than real. Quite the contrary, to designate an object as intentional is simply to talk about how it will be regarded, not to specify any of its properties. In particular, an intentional object need not be mind-dependent. Mensch's interpretation is mistaken, I think, because he misconstrues the reduction as involving a kind of reduction*ism*.

Mensch might reply that although he does not consider Harrison Hall's arguments, he does proffer an argument for the conclusion that Husserl's phenomenology is a form of metaphysical idealism. Mensch's argument is that once the "transcendental turn" has been taken, there is no way to distinguish the constitution of sense from the constitution (or creation) of being (pp. 44–45, 400–410, note 11). This means that Husserl is maintaining that consciousness creates its object. Thus, Richard Holmes's claim (one he shares with Harrison Hall) that "Husserl's focus is on sense, not being" is a distortion of Husserl's views.

In a way it is true that there is no way to distinguish the constitution of sense from the constitution of being, once the transcendental standpoint has been adopted. But its truth does not imply that Husserl advocates metaphysical idealism. The reason why it is true that the transcendental reduction amounts to disregarding questions about being entirely in order to devote exclusive attention to questions about sense. Because the sole subject matter of phenomenology is sense, there is no way for someone who has adopted the transcendental standpoint to talk about being as distinguished from sense. But that is not the same thing as identifying being with sense, as if

being were part of the subject matter of phenomenology to be identified with or distinguished from sense. Being is simply not at issue at all from the transcendental standpoint.

Now this fact about transcendental reduction and the subject matter of phenomenology still permits us to point out that Husserl's statements about sense do not imply that pretheoretical realism is false. The pretheoretical realism that characterizes the natural standpoint is part of the *sense* of the world that phenomenology can uncover but never alter, according to Husserl (CM, p. 151). As a philosopher Husserl clarifies, but neither affirms nor denies this pretheoretical realism. But Husserl thinks that so-called "philosophical realism" and "philosophical idealism" are both absurd.

To distinguish being from sense would amount to endorsing "philosophical" realism. Mensch infers from the fact that Husserl does not distinguish being from sense *philosophically* that phenomenology is a form of idealism. The conclusion would follow only if a false premise is presupposed, namely, that either Husserl endorses realism or its metaphysical opposite – idealism. That suppressed premise is a false dilemma, since a third alternative is to advocate neither realism nor idealism as a *philosophical* thesis.

But would the lack of a distinction between being and sense imply a serious shortcoming of phenomenology, even if it does not entail idealism? How can Husserl clarify the sense that the world has for us all from the natural standpoint if being is not distinguished from sense? The answer to this challenge is straightforward, for the transcendental attitude has room for distinguishing the *sense* of being from the sense of sense. Because the meanings are different, the different experiences in which they are constituted would be reflected in a phenomenological analysis.

Chapter two is about Husserl's concepts of the ego and thing. Since another subject is also an ego, it is necessary to be clear about what that entails. To this end, Mensch distinguishes between three concepts of the ego: real, personal, and pure. Since another ego is, in *some* sense, a thing, it is necessary to discuss some of Husserl's analyses of the concept of a thing and its subjective counterpart: constitution. Mensch distinguishes between numerical and unique singularity.

Because he believes that Husserl's positions on the ego, the *a priori*, and facticity can be depicted as reactions against Kant's, Mensch begins chapter three with a comparison and contrast of Kant and Husserl on those topics. Although Kant did not give the problem of intersubjectivity any special attention, Mensch tries to reconstruct a Kantian solution and compare Kant's approach and solution to Husserl's.

Mensch believes that Husserl's attempt to solve the problem of intersubjectivity presupposes the existence of a common world, which is precisely the point at issue. This difficulty stems from Husserl's attempt to solve the problem by analyzing and describing the perception of someone else. This, however, could only establish a pairing of empirical, embodied, and constitut*ed* egos. But the problem calls for a pairing of transcendental (constituting, not constituted) egos. It requires constitution of the world, which makes possible pairing between empirical, embodied egos.

The solution, according to Mensch, lies in abandoning Husserl's approach altogether. Mensch interprets constitution as a kind of creation.

Thus, if we begin with *numerically* singular constituting egos, there would be a "plurality of necessary and self-sufficient grounds of the world" (p. 178). Otherwise, we would have to postulate a number of disconnected worlds. The options are either the "contradiction" of one world with a plurality of self-sufficient grounds for its being or transcendental solipsism. Thus, the constitution of the world is not accomplished by numerically singular transcendental egos, but by something that is *uniquely* singular. "As creatively constituting, the absolute is uniquely singular" (p. 180). If the approach to the problem starts with this level – a level "below" the constitution of individual consciousnesses, then there is no foothold for a lack of harmony – for two or more worlds.

There is no foothold for a lack of harmony because Mensch is talking about a mere plurality of egos, rather than the identification of something as *another* ego.[8] If I address the problem of intersubjectivity, I must refer to the experiences in which I identify someone else as another subject. Therefore, to point out that the concept of consciousness implies the possibility of an indefinite number of consciousnesses is not to clarify the sense "other ego." Mensch knows that in order to talk about that relationship (which he calls "non-primal empathy"), it is necessary to talk in terms of individuals (pp. 289 ff.).

There are two propositions that together imply the thesis that a plurality of numerically singular constituting egos would yield the contradiction of one world that is many worlds. The propositions are: (1) constitution is a kind of creation; and (2) each constituting consciousness is self-sufficient. Proposition (1) is bolstered by a failure to distinguish existence simpliciter from the sense of existence (p. 45, e.g.). Husserl sets aside questions about existence for reasons Mensch gives,[9] among others. Husserl also believes that philosophy is, by definition, the most fundamental discipline, and existential propositions presuppose propositions about sense. Hence, existential issues are not sufficiently fundamental to be philosophy. Thus, constitution is not a kind of creation of being.

But is each constituting consciousness a sufficient ground of the world's sense, if not its being? Does Husserl think so? Here, too, I think that there is room to disagree with Mensch's interpretation. According to Husserl, part of the world's sense is its transcendence, its going beyond my actual and possible consciousness. The reference to what is beyond my possible consciousness is reference to other possible consciousnesses. Thus, Husserl does not think that any numerically singular consciousness is a sufficient ground of the world's sense, for the world's sense implies that it must be constituted by an open plurality of consciousnesses. Therefore, Mensch has not proven that there is a fundamental "contradiction" in approaching the problem of intersubjectivity from the standpoint of a numerically singular consciousness. My interpretation is controversial, of course, since Husserl repeatedly asserts that the sense "other subject" is constituted "in me."

To approach the problem in terms of numerically singular consciousnesses is to consider the (actual or possible) perception of another body. A shortcoming of the book is the repeated failure to distinguish a liv*ing* body from a liv*ed* body, and thus the treatment of any body as nothing but constitut*ed* and "in" the world.[10] Had Mensch recognized the concept of the lived body, his book would have been significantly different. Husserl is not

as Cartesian as Mensch's concept of the body implies. Rather, Husserl's views bear some resemblance to the writings of Merleau-Ponty.[11]

A final criticism. There is almost no discussion of the relationship between the problem of intersubjectivity and knowledge, especially phenomenological knowledge. I do not think that the problem, its importance, or its solution is fully intelligible without clarifying the fact that the problem pertains to Husserl's attempt to account for the possibility of phenomenology in phenomenological terms.

Although I disagree with many of the theses and interpretations in *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism*, Mensch has written a (mostly) clear, careful, scholarly, and illuminating book. There is room for reasonable disagreement here, and I think that Mensch has made a respectable case for an opposing viewpoint. So I am pleased to recommend it.

Peter Hutcheson
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Notes

1. I have argued for this position in "Husserl's Problem of Intersubjectivity," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 11 (1980): 144–162.
2. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), pp. 30–31, my emphasis. I refer to this work in the text as "CM."
3. On page 3 Mensch cites the passage and refers to page 117 of *Cartesianische Meditationen*, but the passage is on page 69 of Hua I.
4. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (London: Collier Books, 1962), p. 12. I shall refer to this work in the text as "Ideas."
5. Mensch allows that Husserl's *Logical Investigations* is not idealistic, but maintains that Husserl is a full-fledged idealist in *Ideas*.
6. Harrison Hall, "Was Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?" in Hubert Dreyfus, ed., *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1982), pp. 169–190. Hall has extended the interpretation in "Husserl's Realism and Idealism," in J. N. Mohanty and William R. McKenna, eds., *Husserl's Phenomenology: A Textbook* (Washington, D C: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1989), pp. 429–443.
7. "Object" here means only "that of which one can speak."
8. David Carr calls the indefinite number of egos implied by the concept of an ego "different egos," wheras he calls the product of the intentional relationship between me and someone else "other egos." David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 87–88.
9. See the arguments in this review, pp. 1–2.
10. See the passages on pages 31, 35, 36, 38, 47, 177, and 268.
11. I made a case for this interpretation in "Husserl's Fifth Meditation," *Man and World* 15 (1982): 265–284.