

## **Reduction and Reflection after the Continental-Analytic Divide**

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In this chapter, I discuss some lesser-known aspects of Husserl's concept of the phenomenological reduction in relation to his use of the notion of reflection, and indicate how these topics connect to concerns in contemporary philosophy after the analytic-continental divide.<sup>1</sup> While closely tied, the terms are not synonymous. "Reduction" has a narrower, technical meaning, as the core component of the phenomenological method, and a wider meaning which Husserl sometimes equates with the method of his phenomenology altogether. Husserl also uses "reflection" with a rather broad meaning according to which phenomenology in general is a "reflective enterprise," but also in a more circumscribed way under the guise of what he calls "radical reflection." My primary focus in this chapter is the narrower, more technical sense of each term. The reduction explicitly opens up the unique dimension of phenomenological analysis, and the radical reflection that occurs within this dimension reveals the subject as historical, social, and embodied.

### **I. Radical Reflection and the Reduction as Method**

Husserl's frequent appeal to reflection should not be understood—as, e.g., in Gadamer's critique of "reflective philosophy" (Gadamer 1989, 335ff)—as the attempt to reflect oneself out of one's circumstances or the historical setting of one's lifeworld to focus instead on a Cartesian,

individual, and ahistorical subject. Rather, as I show below, it was Husserl's intention, especially in his later work, to explicitly clear the path for an investigation of our setting as historical and social creatures.

Reflection in Husserl's sense is not a lofty, abstract, theoretical enterprise, but nor is it simply a *procedure* or *operation*; it is rather the central activity of a concrete *method*, centered on the concept of the reduction, that defines phenomenology. While we can describe this method for others, we cannot actually undertake it for them; nor can we rest content to provide others with its "results," like the head scientist of the laboratory who summarizes her findings for the general public. One cannot undertake reflection or the reduction *for another*. This point is made both by Husserl (2002a, 320) and by Fink, in the context of his problematization of phenomenological language:

Phenomenological sentences can therefore only be understood in any moment [*aktuel*] if the *situation of giving sense* to the transcendental sentence is always *repeated*, that is, if the epoché as the withholding of the usual worldliness is actively sustained and if the predicative explicating terms are always confirmed again by transcendental *phenomenologizing intuition* in the moment [*aktuel*]. There is thus no phenomenological understanding that comes simply by reading reports of phenomenological research; these can only be 'read' at all by actually re-performing the reduction itself and the investigations themselves in it. Whoever fails to do that just does not read *phenomenological* sentences; he reads queer sentences in natural language, taking the mere reflection [*Reflex*] of transcendental theory in the natural world for the thing itself to his own self-deception. (Fink 1995, 92, Husserl's alterations inserted, translation modified.)

The reduction is part of a transcendental method that takes *giving or making sense* as the paradigmatic activity of the subject; to perform the reduction is to reflect on the conditions through which we make sense of experience—to reveal the world as first and foremost a world of meaning. And the phenomenological investigator has to re-perform the reduction or actively sustain it moment to moment: she cannot simply live in it or accomplish it once and for all (Luft 2003, 199).

But Husserl conceives this performance as more than an act of reflection in the ordinary sense. The reflection involved in the phenomenological reduction is different *in kind*, and is associated with “transcendental *phenomenologizing intuition*,” not mere natural intuition.<sup>2</sup> The phenomenological reduction names the radical form of reflection through which we come to recognize the natural attitude—and its corresponding, merely natural type of reflection—as an attitude by stepping outside of it and reflecting on it ever anew (Cf. Jacobs 2013). We bracket metaphysical commitments implicit in the natural attitude and instead carry out acts of reflection that highlight those otherwise unnoticed commitments, thereby focusing on the underlying process of constitution or sense-making in experience.

To step outside the natural attitude is *not*, however, to remove all considerations of one’s circumstances, historical setting, or lifeworld; since this sort of reflection *ipso facto* preserves the meaning of experience, Husserl insists that, in the reduction, “we have actually lost nothing but acquired the complete, absolute being that, correctly understood, contains every instance of worldly transcendence in itself, ‘constituting’ them in itself” (Husserl 2014, 91). The method of phenomenological reduction thus allows us to understand the world as a horizon of possibly constituted meanings for the subject—meanings whose constitution is irreducibly intersubjective and historical.

Such radical, ongoing reflection would even seem to demand the reconsideration of the meaning of the *reduction itself*, in light of changing historical-philosophical context (Husserl 2002, 59; cf. Jacobs 2013, 361). It is thus not only open to us, but indeed required of us, in the very spirit of Husserl's conception of phenomenology as method, to update our conception of the reduction in light of the different situation in which we find ourselves as philosophers today.

Interpretations of the reduction in Husserl in the secondary literature are extensive and complex, and in this chapter I will not attempt to survey them or to rehash longstanding debates.<sup>3</sup>

However, it will be useful to briefly note Iso Kern's (1962) now-canonical positing of three different "ways into" the reduction: the "Cartesian," the "psychological" and the "ontological." For Kern, these different ways into the reduction are more or less prominent at different points in the development of Husserl's thinking, but the latest-developing and least problematic is the ontological way—the way that is most fully developed alongside Husserl's conception of the lifeworld, as discussed prominently in later writings such as the *Crisis*.

An obvious place to start with an updated account of the reduction is thus in Husserl's *Crisis* period, where his own radical reflections suggest that the phenomenological reduction would need to be applied to the method of philosophizing itself, not only for a higher-level self-critique of phenomenology, but also to transcend our particular historical circumstance and to extend our analysis from the individual ego-subject to the community. In that text Husserl describes transcendental phenomenology, with its method of phenomenological reduction, as "incipient philosophy of ... phenomenological-transcendental radicalism." This radical philosophy "possess[es] no formed logic and methodology in advance and can achieve its method and even the genuine sense of its accomplishments only through ever renewed self-reflections" (Husserl 1970, 182). Taken at face value, this radical methodological claim should even lead us to ask

whether there can really be such a thing as *the* phenomenological reduction at all, as opposed to a continuous process of radical reflection and self-reflection.

In light of this, in what follows I do not claim to give an exhaustive account of the reduction as a technical aspect of Husserl's method. Instead, I focus on some interrelated aspects of the reduction of special relevance for issues of contemporary interest in theoretical philosophy. The paradigmatic as well as problematic presupposition identified for reduction in Husserl's *Crisis* is a characteristically Modern scientific naturalism that seeks to explain all phenomena in mathematizing terms. This tendency persists, but we can now see, with hindsight, that two other complexly intertwined preconceptions dominated alongside naturalism in the twentieth century: the turn to language, and the focus on the isolated subject as the source of knowledge. Thus, if we are to update our conception of the reduction for a changing twenty-first century philosophical landscape that is not only wary of a default naturalism<sup>4</sup> but also beginning to question long-held presuppositions related to the analytic-continental divide, we should expect our renewed conception of the reduction to single out not only scientific presuppositions, but also linguistic ones (the focus of Section III), and to focus not merely on individual, I-subjectivity, but also we-subjectivity (the focus of Section IV). These correspond to the two problems of sense that Husserl argues, in the *Crisis*, must be dealt with in order that "the transcendental reduction is brought to realization": language taken over from the natural attitude; and the "essential ego forms" of subjects and communities of subjects through which meaning is constituted (Husserl 1970, 174). In both cases, the need to make sense of the philosophical landscape anew is bolstered by recognition of the important problematic of historicity, from which perspective all of these presuppositions appear as products of a particular period of philosophical consciousness (the focus of Section II).

## II. The Reduction and the Problem of Historicity

As Husserl further developed the program of his transcendental philosophy in the twenties and into the thirties, alongside the recognition of a distinct genetic dimension to phenomenology, he began to recognize the need to account for the historical situatedness of consciousness itself. The products of consciousness in, e.g., natural scientific theorizing (in the naturalistic attitude), are not *falsifications*, but they are, to an important degree, contextually pre-determined by intersecting intentional horizons of possible meaning arising from particular historical circumstances, prejudices, and interests—products of the lifeworld understood as a horizon of horizons (Luft 2003, 203). If the phenomenological reduction names the form of radical reflection through which we come to recognize the natural attitude *as* an attitude by stepping outside of it and reflecting on it ever anew, a specifically historical version of the reduction amounts to a radical reflection focused on the historical developments of consciousness as historically situated (Carr 1974, 241) and even—in more contemporary terms—theory laden. Husserl's treatment of historicity in relation to the phenomenological reduction in later works such as the *Crisis* at once raises the sophistication of his account, extends the scope of the notion of the reduction, and foregrounds a problematic tension between the reduction and another important component of his method: its eidetic pretensions.<sup>5</sup> Once we admit that consciousness and its constitutional correlates are themselves historical structures (at least to the extent that they arose in the course and context of a history), we can no longer understand the phenomenological reduction as an unproblematic revealing of a- or omni-temporal essences. At the same time, in order to guard against a lapse into historical relativism or mere

*Weltanschauungsphilosophie*, it seems, the historical reduction must be grounded via some fixed (if necessarily historical) substratum, some *a priori of history* (Husserl 1970, 349-50). The underlying precondition for historical sedimentations of meaning revealed via the historical reduction is a part of what Husserl came to call the lifeworld.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Crisis*, where the notion of the lifeworld is most fully developed, Husserl's paradigm example of an historically situated attitude toward the world that needs to be revealed as such is that of mathematizing natural science, beginning with Galileo and developing in the Modern period. Since Kant represents the first attempt at "a truly universal transcendental philosophy meant to be a rigorous science," Husserl contrasts his own attempt to provide an objective grounding for the natural sciences with that of the first *Critique*. His claim is not that Kant completely *failed* to objectively ground the sciences, but that Kant's grounding missed the deeper, ultimately embodied and intersubjective "sense fundament" [*Sinnesfundament*] of the lifeworld (Husserl 1970, 48-53, 123-6 , translation modified). When we ask what was still taken for granted in Kant's account, and recognize in these presuppositions

their own universal and theoretical interest, there opens up to us... an infinity of ever new phenomena belonging to a new dimension, coming to light only through consistent penetration into the sense- and validity-implications of what was thus taken for granted—an infinity, because continued penetration shows that every phenomenon attained through this unfolding of sense, given at first in the life-world as obviously existing, itself contains sense- and validity-implications whose exposition leads again to new phenomena, and so on. These are purely subjective phenomena throughout, but not merely facts involving psychological processes of sense-data; rather, they are mental processes which, as such,

exercise with essential necessity the function of constituting forms of sense [*Sinnesgestalten*]. (Husserl 1970, 112, translation modified)

It is only by uncovering this deeper layer of meaning, Husserl believes, that we can see the results of scientific theory not merely as empirical facts but also as historical products of consciousness systematically constituted as meaningful for and by the subject. This uncovering of the lifeworld's constituting forms of sense as historically developed is presented as the antidote for the crisis of the loss of meaning that Husserl felt characterized his age, a crisis resulting from the fact that mathematizing modern preconceptions, while not false, no longer have the "dignity of actual self-evidence" in intuition (Husserl 1970, 174).

This critique from the *Crisis* is already presaged in the more ego-oriented presentations of the reduction via what Kern called the "Cartesian way" in *Ideas I* and *Cartesian Meditations*. In both works, Husserl notes that, in attempting to account for the role of the mental in human life, natural reflection tends to begin problematically with "sensualism" or sense-data theory, according to which the data presented in the natural attitude are taken as naturally existing givens (Husserl 1960, 38f).<sup>7</sup> On such views, the data are *simply there*, independent of consciousness in what is conceived as an exclusively external perception and only subsequently represented in an internal perception that is itself interpreted from within the natural attitude.<sup>8</sup> A supposedly inner psychological process—still on the explanatory model of natural science—is then posited as providing form to merely factual matter, thus accounting for our consciousness of a meaningful world as the mere re-presentation of something that was already present independent of consciousness or intentionality.

While these sensualistic accounts are arrived at via reflection, Husserl insists that such reflection is not *radical*; the ego may take a stance that is *disinterested* with regard to the world, but it still



reflects from a standpoint that *participates in it* and does not take the world itself to be at issue (Husserl 1960, 33ff). Put differently, for sensualistic or sense-data theories, the mind merely represents the world that it supposes to exist independently of intentionality, and the nature of our representations of it—despite the fact that the latter are bearers of intentionality—are themselves assumed to be explainable in those same worldly, ultimately non-intentional terms.

Representations are thus accounted for without the radical reflection required to suspend the natural attitude. This implicit critique of *representationalism* is one respect in which Husserl's account of reduction and reflection anticipates more recent philosophical concerns.<sup>9</sup>

For Husserl, radical reflection, by contrast, “has before it no such data... except perhaps as prejudices. Its beginning is the pure—and, so to speak, still mute [*noch stumme*]—psychological experience, which now must be made to utter its own sense [*Sinn*] with no adulteration” (Husserl 1960, 38-39/ 1973, 77). Traditional, merely naturally reflective theories of consciousness have missed the “work of uncovering and describing” (ibid) what occurs at this constitutional level—a level that, on Husserl's account, as his later analyses of the lifeworld show, is always already intentional, always already imbued with “the function of constituting forms of sense” (Husserl 1970, 112; cited above) but which is only revealed as such via phenomenological reduction.

Thus only radical reflection can reveal the ultimate foundation of “self-evidence” that makes the very meaningfulness and validity of natural-scientific claims possible (Husserl 2002b, 226). In this light, Husserl's reduction via the appeal to historicity in the *Crisis*, though it holds to a very different thesis, anticipates later twentieth-century critiques of positivism and scientific methodology from philosophers of science such as Kuhn and Feyerabend. It also anticipates, in its notion of the intersubjective reduction (discussed in section III), the radical social-scientific critiques of later Continental figures such as Foucault and Bourdieu.<sup>10</sup>

### III. The Reduction as Method of Uncovering Sense

Husserl's above-cited discussion of an experience possessing a sense that is unadulterated but "still mute" reveals another aspect in which the historical reduction is even more at odds with dominant philosophical trends of the twentieth century, an aspect that anticipates contemporary philosophical concerns more broadly: Husserl held to a more radical conception of meaning vis-à-vis language and never fully took the linguistic turn (Rump 2017). The question of the role of language in the reduction was taken up by later phenomenologists such as Heidegger, hermeneuticists such as Gadamer, and deconstructionists such as Derrida in the Continental tradition, where the emphasis tended to be on meaning in terms of expression, signification, and discourse.<sup>11</sup> And after the linguistic turn, Husserlian accounts of reflection and reduction were treated in the analytic tradition—if at all—via a linguistically and conceptually oriented analysis of intentionality against the backdrop of broadly Fregean assumptions in the theory of meaning.<sup>12</sup> However, the relevance of the historical reduction for more recent philosophical concerns does not fit neatly into either of these previous paradigms, since that relevance is not adequately accounted for via analyses focused on linguistic meaning.

While it does not neglect such linguistic considerations, Husserl's later work takes the project of historical reduction to call for "the genetical tracing of predicative evidences back to the non-predicative evidence called experience" (Husserl 1969, 209), and careful analysis of the relevant texts shows that this non-predicative domain is not taken by Husserl to be exclusively linguistically mediated (Rump 2017). Language is part of the "crust" of sedimentation to be broken through in order to reach the "original lifeworld," which has been covered over by the "garb of ideas" of mathematizing natural science. This well-known image from the *Crisis* is also

cited in the introductory section of *Experience and Judgment*, in the context of introducing the task of the analysis of the origin of judgment in prepredicative experience (Husserl 1973). Here, the “garb” consists not simply in natural-scientific idealizations, but in the more general historical sedimentations of linguistic form (in a critique closely related to that of representationalism, as noted above).<sup>13</sup> Husserl thus at once recognizes the crucial insight of the linguistic turn—that language unavoidably influences not only expression, but our very judgments, thought, and experience of the world—and at the same time seeks to move beyond this insight via a more radical reduction not to language but to *meaning as such*. The version of the reduction that appears in Husserl’s later work does this by uncovering another missed aspect of the lifeworld: in order to “trace the historicity already deposited in it to its source,” we must analyze a level of experience prior to the level of predicative judgments (Husserl 1970, 51; 1973, 45, 47).<sup>14</sup>

Husserl says that the intentionality operative at this level “does not lie open to the view of reflection but is only *implied* in the sedimentations which refer to it” (Husserl 1973, 48; Cf. Carr 1974, 224-31). There is a sense in which, as reflecting phenomenologists, we cannot escape the mediation of lifeworld sedimentation, just as we cannot describe the lifeworld without the use of language or some other mode of representation. But this is not because, once we have accomplished the reduction, we can never stop reflecting. Though the reduction reveals reflection as a necessarily condition for the ego (Husserl 2002b, 193, 221, 225), that condition need not and indeed cannot be continually in operation.<sup>15</sup> It is not as if, post-reduction, I maintain a fully reflective stance for the rest of my life without ever returning to my pre-reflective life or to the natural attitude (Jacobs 2013, 360). What the reduction to prepredicative experience in its historical guise reveals is rather the *founding role* of sense for sedimentations of predicative

meaning (Husserl 2002b, 221-22; 1970, 111ff), even as this experience itself is understood to be unmediated by the “cognitive activity [*Erkenntnisbetätigung*]” of reflection and thus not directly (thematically) available to phenomenological description (Husserl 1973, 52).

It also follows from this that the constituting forms of sense revealed via such a radical phenomenological reduction to the prepredicative need not be limited to the *terms of the reflective operation* through which those forms are discovered, thematized, or described. Even if, on the basis of the close relationship Husserl posits between reflection and thematization, we assume that reflection necessarily involves language, we err if we take this to further imply that the content revealed by all subsequent phenomenological analysis will be limited to the reflective register of a theoretical interest (Husserl 2002b, 227), or even that the senses made thematic in reflection must be themselves predicatively or linguistically mediated.<sup>16</sup> (This mistaken further inference is, in a nutshell, the error of the linguistic turn, from which much of contemporary philosophy is currently struggling to extricate itself.)

The fact that he does not make this further inference explains how Husserl can say, in the passage from *Cartesian Meditations* cited above, that pure experience is reflectively available only in a “mute” way; if reflection is intimately tied to language, then a pure experience is *not* directly available to reflection as something thematized and expressed. We can only arrive at it reflectively via “sedimentations which refer to it.” Husserl’s call for such experience “to utter its own sense [*Sinn*] with no adulteration” is, thus, one that we cannot fully achieve—at least at the level of reflective phenomenological description—since no such utterance can be fully unadulterated. However, despite this reaching beyond the limits of reflection, we can still take this regressive “dismantling” [*Abbau*] (Husserl 1973, 47) or stripping away of the historical sedimentation left by language to constitute a specifically historical form of the

phenomenological reduction in that it unearths, as phenomenological residuum, a founding layer of the lifeworld.

#### **IV. The Intersubjective Reduction**

In accessing this layer via a “regressive inquiry which goes from the life-world to the subjective operations from which it itself arises” we also recognize the founding role played by basic, embodied aspects of lived experience such as “affective experiences,” “manual activity,” and “evaluating”—the latter a term Husserl explicitly contrasts with higher-level, reflective, cognitive activities such as judgment and explication: “this commonplace, familiar, and concrete sense of the word ‘experience’ points much more to a *mode of behavior* which is practically active and evaluative than specifically to one that is cognitive and judicative” (Husserl 1973, 50-52). This contrast presages critiques of *cognitivism* in the philosophy of mind in recent decades,<sup>17</sup> and is yet another respect in which Husserl’s views anticipate recent trends. In its emphasis on the role of our embodied ways of being in the world, it also demonstrates the falsity of persistent caricatures of Husserl’s phenomenology as “introspectionism”—critiques that arise from an over-emphasis on the “Cartesian way” into the reduction.

From the standpoint of the natural attitude, the above characterization of sense-making in terms of behavior, affect, and activity would amount to a form of *behaviorism*. But from the more radically reflective standpoint of the phenomenological attitude, an analysis of behavior cannot be read as the interpretation of data sets representing natural-scientific bodies from a third-personal, objective standpoint, in line with the sort of sensualism critiqued above; it instead points toward the crucial role played by habits of the *lived body* in the historical process of sense-constitution, from the first-person standpoint of the subject. From this perspective, the

body is not simply a physical object whose movements can be represented in data sets for further inferences to the best (naturalistic) explanation, but always also a constituting subject of “living, not logicio-mathematical” spatiotemporality available for phenomenological description (Husserl 1970, 168). It is at this embodied level, outside of our language, that experience can be said to utter *its own* sense. Husserl’s later work suggests, for example, that this form of sense-making is accessed directly and non-reflectively via habitualities of bodily movement or kinaesthesia (Rump 2017). This helps to explain the insistence, noted in Section I above, that the reduction must be undertaken for oneself: while not a form of introspectionism, the radical reflection which reveals my own embodiment as a form of sense-making cannot be outsourced to another, any more than I can ask someone else to learn how to ride a bike for me. Though expressed in a different idiom, this is a familiar point from contemporary anti-intellectualist discussions of the epistemology of knowing-how: another may describe the procedures of successful bike-riding for me, but mastery of this shareable, propositional knowledge is phenomenologically distinct from my first-personal knowledge-how.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, if at least some of the sense-constituting habitualities of the lived body outside of language can be taken to be a-historical, this may also help to address the tension between Husserl’s concern for historicity and his eidetics, and thus speak to the above-noted issue of the a priori of history (further discussion of these points is beyond my scope here).

But Husserl’s reappraisal of the reduction in light of the lifeworld not only shows how meaningful experience has a temporal-historical structure arising from the lived body; it also implies that that structure is in large part *communal*. If the phenomenological reduction thematizes consciousness via intentionality and constitution—via the experience of the world as a product of sense-making—then it must be clarified that the world as experienced is not just the

private world of *my* experience: we live in a communal world that we make sense of in large part collectively, through contributions in the form of culture, civilization, and its various “cultural predicates” (Husserl 2019, 377) and in which these are produced according to certain shared interests and values. Consequently, a radically reflective transcendental analysis, from the perspective of the phenomenological rather than the natural attitude, shows that that consciousness which constitutes the world in the fullest sense cannot be an exclusively individual consciousness. The subjectivity that constitutes the lifeworld in its full complexity is inter-subjectivity.<sup>19</sup>

Although the notion of the intersubjective reduction is emphasized in Husserl’s later lifeworld phenomenology, the roots of this idea are present as early as 1910/11—three years before his programmatic *Ideas I* (1913).<sup>20</sup> It is the *Ideas* that are primarily responsible for the “Cartesian” reading of phenomenology, and Kern and others have suggested that there is no reaching of legitimate intersubjectivity via the Cartesian path to the reduction (1977, 131a). Much of Husserl’s philosophy *after Ideas I* can be read as striving to rebuff the misunderstanding of phenomenology as a form of solipsism that resulted largely due to the reception of that work, while holding on to important developments in, e.g., his theory of intentionality.

This increasing turn toward intersubjectivity after the *Ideas* has been seen by some commentators to mirror (and indeed anticipate) the highly influential mid-century shift in the history of analytic philosophy marked by the later Wittgenstein’s pronouncements against the notion of a private language. Since, from a phenomenological perspective, the lifeworld is “always already” a shared world, just as there can be no private language according to Wittgenstein, there can be no private lifeworld for Husserl (Cf. Cunningham 1976, 19ff).

It is certainly clear that Husserl takes intersubjective considerations of the reduction to include considerations of shared language:

The problem of constitution is again broadened when we recall that verbal expression, which we excluded from our considerations of logic, is an essential presupposition for intersubjective thinking and for an intersubjectivity of the theory accepted as ideally existing; and that accordingly an ideal identifiability of the expression, as expression, must likewise raise a problem of constitution. (Husserl 1969, 188).

This appeal to language as an intersubjective structure is closely intertwined with Husserl's growing historical preoccupations as discussed in Section II. Language, *qua shared* and *historical* system of meaning, plays a special role in the reduction: as Reeder notes, "since each moment of reduced experience is embedded in the *Erlebnisstrom* through temporal horizontality, each moment provides a pragmatic check on how words were used before. [...] Although the reduction alters all naive metaphysical commitment and results in the intuition of essential structure, language-use under the reduction is still subject to intersubjective verification" (1979, 43). Spiegelberg has similarly argued that an analysis of linguistic usage, while it cannot replace phenomenology, should lead phenomenologists to shift focus from an exclusively "I"-based conception of consciousness and its phenomena to one based in a generic "we," and to recognize the ways in which these phenomena are themselves historically situated (1975, 225f).

Cunningham, Reeder and Spiegelberg are right about the importance of language for a conception of the intersubjective reduction, but Section III above showed that a radically reflective, transcendental-phenomenological analysis covering the full breadth of phenomena that make up the historicized lifeworld will also demand looking beyond the level of language. In line with Husserl's above-noted rejections of representationalism, cognitivism, and behaviorism



and his turn to a notion of sense as undergirding linguistic meaning, his analysis of the lifeworld's shared meaningfulness contains but is not limited to an analysis of shared language or social patterns of linguistic usage; it extends more broadly to our shared, sense-constituting habitualities as embodied subjects.<sup>21</sup> If experience can be analyzed as “a *mode of behavior* which is practically active and evaluative” (Husserl 1973, 50-52, cited above), then the move from I to We occurs not only at the level of language, but also at the level of shared embodied practices (Carr 2019; De los Reyes Melero 2013). In this sense, Husserl's conception of we-intentionality or “intentionalities of a higher order” (Husserl 1960, 132) as a structure revealed by the phenomenological reduction anticipates the current burgeoning interest in collective intentionality.<sup>22</sup>

In a discussion of intersubjectivity from the *First Philosophy* lecture course, Husserl makes this point with regard to what analytic philosophers traditionally refer to as the “problem of other minds”:

How do things stand, now, concerning the alien conscious life and its expression in alien lived-bodies? To pose the question already means answering it. The alien lived-bodies are, as things, realities for me, and are such so long [as they exist], so long as they are indubitable certainties for me, never to be surrendered, the experiential style predelineates the concordant courses [of experience] and the continual course of this style. [...] I have, together with my universe of living appearances encompassed in the title *Ego Cogito*, mediately co-experienced [*miterfahren*] in the indication of empathy [*Einfühlung*] a *second transcendental life*, and so in general many other [transcendental lives]. The transcendental reduction, accordingly, yields directly my *Ego*, mediately this *alter Ego*, and, as such, in

general, an open manifold of alien subjects indicated or to be indicated through experienceable lived bodies. (Husserl 2019, 281, translator's interpolations altered)

To ask the question of alien conscious life is already to recognize it *as* conscious life; from the phenomenological standpoint, other minds are not so much a “problem” to be solved as a source of phenomenological evidence for the fact that the “concretely full and true sense” of the lifeworld is always already intersubjectively constituted (Husserl 2019, 280, translation modified). This is not just a shift to a deeper level of meaning, but a shift in the entire way that we conceive meaning with regard to our supposedly interior mental lives—a form of radical reflection.

Interpreted in this way, with an emphasis on embodiment, the intersubjective reduction not only anticipates recent work on collective intentionality; Husserl's own accounts of intersubjectivity—even prior to *Ideas I*—already suggest that reconceptualizing the reduction at an intersubjective, embodied level can only occur against the backdrop of a recognition of *empathy* as a fundamental component of our lived experience as social creatures—empathy based not primarily in what others *say*, but in what and how they as embodied beings *do*.<sup>23</sup> This phenomenological conception of empathy as further developed in later works of Husserl, especially the fifth Cartesian Meditation (1960/1973) and later refined by Edith Stein and Max Scheler, has been increasingly important in the resurgence of interest in empathy in recent post-divide philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Empathy, collective intentionality, non-representationalism, non-cognitivism, and the focus on the lived body as a source of sense-making and knowing-how are not simply different domains

in which Husserl's conception of the reduction anticipates recent philosophical trends after the analytic-continental divide. They are also interconnected parts of a larger whole; a unified vision that arises from the phenomenological reduction when we reflect radically on experience in its full breadth—an embodied phenomenon, both historical and communal—as the key to understanding ourselves and our ways of making sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Sebastian Luft, David Carr, and Hanne Jacobs for comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> The term “phenomenologizing intuition” appears in Fink’s original text of the passage cited above. Husserl adds the modifiers “transcendental... in the moment” (my translation), reinforcing the distinction I emphasize here.

<sup>3</sup> For a useful recent overview and taxonomy, see Perkins 2017.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the essays collected in De Caro and MacArthur 2008.

<sup>5</sup> See the essay from Rochus Sowa in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> There is a remaining problem concerning the exact status of the most basic and presumably non-historically relative level of the lifeworld, which Husserl seems to recognize with a distinction between the “pre-given” lifeworld and an “original” life-world that is prior to all sedimentation and the idealizations of science (see Carr 1974, 225ff, 240; Rump 2017). The issue of the adequacy of reflection for accessing this most basic level is closely related to the issues discussed here, but exceeds the scope of this essay.

<sup>7</sup> Compare the critique of sensualism in *Ideas I*: “Consciousness is thus *toto coelo* different from what sensualism would only have us see, from the material that is in fact in itself senseless, irrational—yet accessible, to be sure, to rationalization. (Husserl 2014, 169).

<sup>8</sup> See Husserl’s critique of such a view as resulting from Locke’s theory of abstraction in Husserl 2019, 137f.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, the essays collected in Locatelli and Wilson 2017.

<sup>10</sup> For recent discussions of Husserl’s influence on the philosophy of science across these traditions, see the essays collected in Hyder and Rheinberger 2009.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed overview, Colebrook 2010. For the linguistic turn with the phenomenological tradition more specifically, see Langsdorf 1983, 167-68 and references therein.

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<sup>12</sup> E.g., in the interpretations of Husserl's noema in Dagfinn Follesdal and David Woodruff Smith and Ronald MacIntyre.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that these opening sections of *Experience and Judgment* bear the heavy editorial hand of Ludwig Landgrebe, and the attribution of some of the claims of this section of the text to Husserl is contested.

<sup>14</sup> Nor is this idea unique to this last period of Husserl's thought: the account of the reduction's opening up of the transcendental field in the 1923/24 *First Philosophy* lectures also uses the phrase "undressing my empirical-objective cloak" to explain the turn to a more originary or unmediated access to lifeworld experience (Husserl 2019, 282).

<sup>15</sup> See the translators' introduction to Husserl 2019, liii.

<sup>16</sup> This is this is one way of characterizing the Derridean critique of Husserl: for Derrida, there is no "pure" experience. For a defense of Husserl along the lines sketched in this essay, see Rump 2017.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Descombes 2001.

<sup>18</sup> For a helpful recent discussion, see Farkas 2018.

<sup>19</sup> It might be thought that this claim is in tension with the emphasis on the necessarily first-personal nature of knowledge of embodied sense-making expressed in the previous paragraph with reference to contemporary work on knowing-how. But the claim that sense-making revealed by the reduction is largely intersubjective is not equivalent to the claim that all specific acts of sense-making are communal acts. While my learning how to ride a bike is a necessarily individual accomplishment of embodied knowing, such accomplishment is made possible and made meaningful in large part by the shared, sense-constituting habitualities of a community of embodied subjects. While it is true that I must learn for myself, e.g., when to rise off the seat when pedaling and how to lean into curves, I am able to learn how to do these things only in the context of my experience of the embodied practices of others. I am not simply told about those practices; I co-experience them and later enact them (see Husserl's discussion of co-experience [*Miterfahrung*] and "experiential style" in the passage from *First Philosophy* cited below).

<sup>20</sup> Husserl 1969, 243, note; Cf. Husserl 2019, 375, note 1.

<sup>21</sup> My analysis in the following paragraphs parallels the two levels of the intersubjective reduction identified by Depraz, the first being explicitly "verbal," the second of which can be non-verbal or more "directly" embodied (1999, 108).

<sup>22</sup> For an overview, see Schweikard and Schmid 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Depraz: "If our flesh is our original praxis, this means that we are always working on it and that it is on this basis in us we practise the activity of reflective conversion, of a transcendental epoche and even of eidetic variation. It is also on the basis of this primordial practical incarnation that a possible intersubjective sharing of the reductive act becomes meaningful" (1999, 106).

<sup>24</sup>For an overview with close attention to contemporary debates in social cognition, see Overgaard 2019.