Husserl on Other Minds

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Abstract

Husserlian phenomenology, as the study of conscious experience, has often been accused of solipsism. Husserl's method, it is argued, does not have the resources to provide an account of consciousness of other minds. This chapter will address this issue by providing a brief overview of the multiple angles from which Husserl approached the theme of intersubjectivity, with specific focus on the details of his account of the concrete interpersonal encounter – "empathy." Husserl understood empathy as a direct, quasi-perceptual form of intentionality through which the sense of the Other is constituted. Furthermore, his account of empathy is holistically integrated with his overall theory of intersubjectivity, including his discussions of the objectivity of nature, and the social, historical, and communal aspects of subjectivity. Husserl's theory of empathy continues to cast a long shadow, influencing both the analytic and continental approaches to the problem of other minds, as well as contemporary account of social cognition in the cognitive sciences.

1. Introduction

Husserlian phenomenology, as the study of conscious experience, has often been criticized (or misunderstood) as solipsistic, and thus lacking the resources to provide an account of our awareness of other minds. Philosophical accounts of awareness of other minds involve both the narrower issue of how the other is constituted in consciousness in the second-personal mode (the face-to-face encounter with the other), as well as broader issues regarding how the natural and cultural world have distinctively intersubjective meaning for us. In this chapter I will discuss the former in terms of "empathy" and the latter in terms of "intersubjectivity." While acknowledging some of Husserl's shortcomings, I aim to distill and clarify Husserl's wide-ranging investigations into empathic and intersubjective forms of experience.

As several commentators have noted in recent years, since the publication of Husserl's *Nachlass* manuscripts on intersubjectivity, it is no longer tenable to paint Husserl as a Cartesian methodological solipsist "who sought to reduce the entire meaningful world to the activity of the *solus ipse*" (Moran 2016, 108). While the contents of these manuscripts do indeed have far-ranging implications for Husserl scholarship, a comprehensive discussion of these texts exceeds what is possible in this short chapter.[1] Thus, I will focus primarily on Husserl's most focused treatment of the topic in the Fifth Meditation of his *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960), along with some of the

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[1] For more comprehensive discussion of these manuscripts, see Mensch (1988), Zahavi (1996), and Kern (2019).

material that was posthumously published as the second book his *Ideas* (Husserl 1989). I begin by establishing the historical context from which Husserl's account arose in the early 20th century, specifically Lipps's introduction of the term empathy into theorizing about social cognition and Scheler's phenomenological critique (§2). For Husserl, empathy was not just some special application or curiosity for phenomenological investigation. On the contrary, his theory of empathy was central to his understanding of phenomenology as transcendental philosophy. Accordingly, before laying out the technical details of his account of empathy (§4), I will first situate the concept of empathy within Husserl's bigger picture of intersubjectivity (§3). The account of empathy opens upon broader theoretical horizons concerning the objectivity of natural science, socio-cultural and historical meaning, and Husserl's notion of the lifeworld. Finally, I will conclude by briefly outlining Husserl's legacy in this area (§5), both in recent work in analytic philosophy of mind and cognitive science on "social cognition," and the broader tradition of continental phenomenology.

2. Historical context

It is difficult to pin down a univocal concept of empathy that ranges over contemporary accounts of social cognition in psychology, cognitive science, and philosophy. At times it refers to the relatively sophisticated cognitive ability to imaginatively transpose oneself into someone else's shoes, and thus understand what it would be like to be them.[2] In other contexts, it refers to the ability to recognize the body language and facial expressions of others as expressive of specific mental states, such as anger or joy.[3] And in still other contexts it refers to an even more basic capacity to distinguish the animate from the inanimate, or the minded from the non-minded, in one's perceptual field.[4] In the philosophical framework of the classical "problem of other minds," talk of empathy often has specific epistemological connotations regarding evidence and justification for beliefs about the mental states of others.[5] For moral philosophers, empathy often involves not only understanding but caring about the other.[6]

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[2] This way of understanding empathy arguably goes back to Adam Smith's original discussions of 'sympathy' (Smith, 1853). See also, Goldie (2000); Coplan (2011).

[3] Lipps (1907) originally focused heavily on facial expressions and imitation. This understanding of empathy is particularly salient in the literature on mirror neurons; see also, Gallese (2001); Gallese and Goldman (1998).

[4] Studies of perceived animacy or intentional behavior go back to at least Heider and Simmel (1944) and Michotte (1963); see also, Gallagher and Miyahara (2012); Walsh (2014).

[5] Goldman (2002); see Stueber (2006) for discussion.

[6] Darwall (1998); Hoffman (2000); Slote (2010).

Husserl would, no doubt, be frustrated by the lack of conceptual rigor in this contemporary milieu, just as he seems to have been in his own time. One can detect his suspicion of the concept in *Cartesian Meditations*, as he characterizes his discussion of "a *transcendental theory of experiencing someone else* [*Fremderfahrung*]" as a theory of "so-called 'empathy'" (Husserl 1960, 92). As Zahavi notes, *Fremderfahrung* was Husserl's preferred term, although he still used *Einfühlung* frequently (Zahavi 2014, 114). The term itself originated in the German aesthetics tradition, and was first used in the context of social cognition by Theodore Lipps. The American psychologist Edward Titchener then translated *Einfühlung* as 'empathy' (Stueber 2019). Lipps was an influential figure in philosophy and psychology in Munich in the early 20th Century. Though ultimately critical of Lipps, Husserl, along with other early phenomenologists such as Edith Stein and Max Scheler, effectively agreed with his critique of John Stuart Mill's inference from analogy account of empathy (Lipps 1907). The inference from analogy account, briefly stated, argues that one's awareness of other minds is based on drawing an inference from the similarity of the observed behavior of the other to one's own behavior. That is, upon seeing the other's body move a certain way – say, lips turned upward – I judge her to be happy by inferring that this behavior is caused by the same mental state that causes similar behavior in my own case.

Lipps criticized Mill's inference from analogy for assuming what it sets out to prove. The inference is only valid on the assumption that other is psychologically similar to me in the first place. Lipps's own solution, which foreshadows some features of contemporary simulation theory (see §5 below), was to conceive of empathy as a kind of instinctual and direct mirroring or resonance between minds. More precisely, for Lipps, one's grasp of the other's mental life does not arise from a sophisticated multi-step cognitive procedure (as in the inference from analogy), but rather from a kind of of automatic *inner imitation* of the other's mental state, which is *projected* onto her observed behavior. Among phenomenologists, Scheler offered the most detailed rejection of Lipps's imitation-plus-projection model (Scheler 2008). A major point of Scheler's critique was that Lipps's account still operated on the assumption that we do not have access to the psychic life of the other, only to her physical behavior. But this does not do phenomenological justice to how we actually experience others. As Scheler, Husserl, and Stein all argued, the primary data of the experience of others is *expressive* phenomena. That is, we encounter the joy of the other *in* her laughter. We are directly acquainted with the anger of the other *in* her furrowed brow. While it is true that the mental states of the other are not experienced in the same modality as one experiences one's own mental

states, this does not preclude them from being given *directly* in our experience of the other. In other words, we should not conflate the *directness* versus *indirectness* of access to mental states with *first-personal* versus *third-personal* modality of experiencing those mental states (Zahavi 2014, 130). I cannot experience the other's anger in the first-person modality in which she experiences it, but this does not mean that the other's anger is not directly there before me as I look at her. As Husserl succinctly puts it, "Quite rightly, therefore, we speak of *perceiving* someone else" (Husserl 1960, 124).

3. Intersubjectivity, broadly construed

Reconciling the directness with which other minds are given with the fact that they ultimately transcend that givenness occupied Husserl throughout his entire career. The fifth chapter of *Cartesian Meditations* is Husserl's most focused articulation of how the other is constituted in consciousness. A striking feature of this text is Husserl's clear insistence that a theory of empathy is not a special problem or merely marginal issue. Rather, the account of how the other is constituted in experience is central to phenomenology's aims as transcendental philosophy. The account of empathy is central to the account of how the objective world of nature as well as the socio-cultural world of history are constituted.

3.1.   *Transcendental Intersubjectivity and the Objectivity of Nature*

First, consider what it means to experience the natural world as "objective" or "out there, independent of my experience of it." For Husserl, the natural world is constituted as objective in virtue of one's experience of it as something *intersubjectively available*. Even after performing the phenomenological epoché, whereby one brackets any position-taking on the existence of the world, one still experiences an *objective* world:

> In any case then, within myself, within the limits of my transcendentally reduced pure conscious life, I *experience* the world (including others) – and, according to its experiential sense, *not* as (so to speak) my *private* synthetic formation but as other than mine alone, as an *intersubjective* world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone. (Husserl 1960, 91)

We do not experience the world as wholly and truly mind-independent until the world is experienced as there for others. Accordingly, "*the intrinsically first other* (the first 'non-Ego') *is the other Ego*" (Husserl 1960, 92). The constitution of the other in empathic experience thereby "makes

constitutionally possible a new infinite domain of what is 'other': an *Objective Nature* and a whole Objective world" (Husserl 1960, 107). The constitution of the world as objective is not possible if that constitutive activity is limited to all of *my* possible conscious acts. Rather, the objectivity of the world obtains in virtue of it being the possible correlate of constitutive acts that could *never*, in principle, be mine.

In order to further understand this key tenet of Husserl's theory of transcendental intersubjectivity, consider Husserl's analysis of perception from the perspective of the singular ego. Perceptual experience essentially consists of presentation and appresentation. That is, in any given moment of perceptual experience, the specific profile of the object is explicitly given to consciousness is situated within a network (or, *horizon*) of implicitly "co-present" or "appresented" further possible profiles. Whatever is given in experience, in the "strict" sense of givenness, includes as an essential moment an "*intending-beyond-itself*" (Husserl 1960, 46). As Husserl summarizes this, presentation and appresentation "are so fused that they stand within the *functional community of one perception*" (Husserl 1960, 122). This analysis of the "communalization" of perception in the case of the singular ego serves as the model for an analogous intersubjective communalization:

> By virtue of the mentioned communalization of constitutive intentionality, the transcendental intersubjectivity has an *intersubjective* sphere of ownness, in which it constitutes the Objective world; and thus, as the transcendental "We", it is a subjectivity for this world an also for the world of men, which is the form in which it has made itself Objectively actual. (Husserl 1960,107)

In the intersubjectivity manuscripts Husserl further characterizes this communalization of constitutive intentionality in terms of the "being-within-one-another" or, as Moran puts it, the "interwovenness," of different experiential streams (Moran 2016). The "interweaving" of intersubjective conscious experiences is an instance (with important differences, to be sure) of the more general phenomenon of how conscious experiences are interwoven to constitute objectivities.

At this point it may seem that transcendental intersubjectivity (and its intentional correlate, the objective world) has a secondary or subordinate status in Husserl's philosophy. After all, it is only reached through an analysis of singular egoic consciousness. Solipsistic egology, however, is only *methodologically* prior to intersubjective phenomenology, and, as Carr puts it, "priority in order of inquiry does not imply priority in the order of being" (Carr 1973, 31). Husserl actually designates phenomenology's "transcendental solipsism" as methodologically prior but "philosophically

subordinate" to transcendental intersubjectivity (Husserl 1960, 30-31). Furthermore, in various places Husserl stresses the primordiality of what he calls the "personalistic" attitude over the naturalistic attitude. This means that it is actually the shared *human* world, or *lifeworld*, within which the objective world of nature is disclosed to us, "especially in and through natural scientific research, which is itself a cultural activity" (Moran 2016, 114).

3.2.   Sociality, Community, Historicity

Later in his career, Husserl increasingly articulated his vision of phenomenological philosophy in terms of this concept of the *lifeworld*. The lifeworld is the shared world of human communities and cultural objects in all of their concreteness, prior to any theorizing or abstraction. The lifeworld is the world of chairs and tables, as opposed to "physical objects" with such and such geometric properties. Aforementioned notions of transcendental intersubjectivity, or the "transcendental community of monads," and the correlative objective world or "Nature," float at a level of abstraction removed from historical and cultural milieu in which theorizing begins in the first place. In *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl gestures at this ultimate direction for phenomenology, through which, "with systematic progress…the transcendental sense of the world must also become disclosed to us ultimately in the *full concreteness* with which it is incessantly the *life-world* for us all" (Husserl 1960, 136).

Thus, just as there is a transcendental "We," there are lifewordly (concrete, socially and historically situated) communalized interweavings of consciousness to which the first-person plural pronoun "we" can refer. Founded upon a shared perceptual world and reciprocal empathic recognition, subjects form a We through communicative action. Through such "social acts," Husserl explains, "spiritual Objectivities of a peculiar kind" become constituted. These "plural subjects" encompass "various types of social communities," which Husserl dubs "*personalities of a higher order*" (Husserl 1960, 132).[7] Such social groupings are the constitutive basis for human communities, whose own form of continuity and intentional interwovenness constitute the "historicity" of the cultural world. Although this shared, inter-generational form of historical temporality differs in essential

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[7] The term "plural subject" comes from contemporary accounts of collective intentionality, namely Gilbert (1989), and is not Husserl's, who uses "higher order persons" or "personalities of a higher order." Speaking of plural subjects, however, is not anachronistic, as Husserl's account of higher order persons closely aligns with (and can be used to question) several contemporary accounts of plural subjects and collective intentionality. See Szanto (2016) for an excellent overview and critical discussion.

ways from basic structures of egoic time-consciousness, both constitute "a priori" structures of experience:

> I know myself to be factually within a generative framework, in the unitary flow of a historical development in which this present is mankind's present and world of which it is conscious is a historical present with a historical past and a historical future…but this form of generativity and historicity is unbreakable, as is the form, belonging to me as an individual ego, of my original perceptual present as a present with a remembered past and expectable future. (Husserl 1970, 253)

All of these structures, keep in mind – intersubjectivity, sociality, community, historicity – are made constitutionally possible by empathy. Just as every ego-subject has a perceptual horizon, "so every ego-subject has his horizon of empathy, that of his cosubjects," and thus "within the vitally flowing intentionality in which the life of an ego-subject consists, every other ego is already intentionally implicated in advance by way of empathy and the empathy-horizon" (Husserl 1970, 255). We see, therefore, in Husserl's most mature stage, the holistic integration of his account of empathy with his wide-ranging meditations on the phenomenological significance of other minds.

4. The basic structures of empathy

4.1.   *Solipsism, the Other, and phenomenological method*

If empathy, understood as the concrete interpersonal encounter of self and other, founds the possibility of the robustly intersubjective forms of experience discussed in the previous section, then we must examine what makes empathy possible at all. Before examining the details of Husserl's account of the essential structures of empathic experience, however, it is necessary to clarify just what problem Husserl thinks he is solving in providing an account of empathy. Husserl was acutely aware of the fact that phenomenology, as a matter of methodology, risked being "branded…as transcendental solipsism" (Husserl 1960, 89). Husserl wonders, "Do I not become a *solus ipse*…as long as I carry on a consistent self-explication under the name phenomenology?" (Husserl 1960, 89). But it is not the task of phenomenology to solve the traditional problem of other minds in the context of a realist metaphysics and epistemology. Husserl is not seeking to prove the existence of consciousness other than one's own. Rather, he is providing an account of *how* the other becomes constituted in experience at all. That is, his inquiry concerns how the sense-constituting processes of consciousness disclose the Other as not just an object but as a consciousness distinct from those

very processes. Thus, in *Cartesian Meditations* he sets out to obtain "insight into the explicit and implicit intentionality wherein the alter ego become evinced and verified in the realm of our transcendental ego," and thereby "discover in what intentionalities, syntheses, motivations, the sense 'other ego' becomes fashioned in me" (Husserl 1960, 90).

For the phenomenologist, the intentional object toward which experience is directed is constituted through harmonious streams of experience; but something about how the Other is constituted in experience violates this principle; the other is somehow something more than "a point of intersection belonging to my constitutive synthesis" (Husserl 1960, 105). The constitution of the other cannot be understood analogously to the constitution of perceptual objects. In the case of the latter, there are always further sides or aspects that are unavailable in a particular moment of consciousness of the object. These further aspects, however, are not unavailable *in principle*, and this is what differentiates perceptual experience from empathic experience. In the case of empathy, an intentional object – the Other – is constituted in harmonious streams of experience as any object is, but the Other shows up to us as the Other precisely insofar as there *necessarily* remains some aspect of the object that cannot become available to us; namely, their inner subjective life:

> Although the other is constituted as "being there in person," we must admit that
> [P]roperly speaking, neither the other Ego himself, nor his subjective processes or his
> appearances themselves, nor anything else belonging to his own essence, becomes given in
> our experience originally. If it were, if what belongs to the other's own essence were directly
> accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I
> myself would be the same. (Husserl 1960, 109)

In other words, there is a necessary asymmetry between how the sense-constituting processes of one's own consciousness and those of the other are given in experience. This asymmetry is not an epistemic shortcoming. Rather, it is constitutive of what Otherness even is (Overgaard 2005; Walsh 2014). The Other is accessible precisely insofar as they are constituted as ultimately inaccessible.

Inquiring into the specific forms of experience that make this kind of sense-constitution possible pushes Husserl methodologically. In *Cartesian Meditations* he finds that he must go further than the traditional phenomenological epoché, whereby any position-taking on the existence of what is given in consciousness is bracketed. The residue of the Other's consciousness remains throughout phenomenologically reduced experience. Within the epoché the natural world still shows up as transcendent – that is, as intersubjectively available and not a private construction of the *solus ipse*.

Artifacts like tables and chairs still show up *as artifacts* – that is, as *cultural* objects with a sense that implies a world of others. Thus, a further step is needed beyond the epoché in order to isolate what Husserl calls the "primordial sphere of ownness," which excludes any constitutive effects of other minds. He performs what he calls a "peculiar" version of the epoché that not only brackets the existence of what is constituted in consciousness, but also proceeds to "abstract" everything that involves an intersubjective sense (Husserl 1960, 95-96). This leaves the ego with the pure "stratum" of harmonious intuitive givenness that constitutes the natural world, but this is no longer the "objective" nature studied by science, since the latter includes in its sense its being intersubjectively available. One is left instead with "*mere Nature*" – the nature "*included in my ownness*" (Husserl 1960, 96).

Within this mere Nature, one's own bodily self-awareness stands out as unique within the constitution of the rest of the field of experience; for one's awareness of one's own body essentially differs from one's experience of any other object within the sphere of ownness. One experiences one's own body as *animate*, "the only Object 'in' which I '*rule and govern' immediately*" (Husserl 1960, 97). The uniqueness of bodily self-awareness is part of the constitutive asymmetry described above. "Others" are still constituted within the sphere of ownness, but only as mere physical bodies precisely because of the asymmetry between one's own bodily self-experience (which includes awareness of one's body as both object that can be seen and touched *and* as volitional structure within which one "rules and governs") and experience of other's bodies (which only show up as objects that can be seen and touched). This asymmetry of bodily givenness is central to Husserl's sophisticated account of how empathy is possible. Ultimately, it is my own bodily self-awareness that allows me to grasp the other as truly Other, as another animate being like me.

4.2.   *Bodily self-awareness, pairing, and the similarity condition*

Husserl's grounding of empathic recognition of the Other in one's own first-personal bodily self-awareness has largely been viewed as problematic at best and an abject failure at worst. He characterizes the structure of empathy as an "analogizing apperception," and an instance of "pairing," which is a "universal phenomenon of the transcendental sphere" (Husserl 1960, 112). The intentional target of empathic experience is the body of the other, which, even within the peculiar sphere of ownness, "is nevertheless apprehended as an animate organism," which, he reasons, "must have derived this sense by an *apperceptive transfer from my animate organism*" in a way that is "direct" and

"primordial" (Husserl 1960, 110-111). In other words, as discussed above, the unique sense one has of one's own body serves as the basis for the apperceptive surplus that imbues the (otherwise merely physical) body of the Other with the sense "animate." The way the body of the Other shows up is "paired" with the way one's own bodily self-awareness, and thus one sees the Other as an animate, sensing being.

But how is this "pairing" possible, given that Husserl has already established that one's own bodily self-awareness is utterly unique in the primordial sphere of ownness? Husserl explains this by claiming that pairing, or the "analogizing apperception" constitutive of empathic experience, is a form of "intentional overreach" that obtains in virtue of a perceived similarity. In a case of perceptual pairing, for example, suppose one perceives object X as having properties A and B. One then perceives object Y as also possessing property A. Pairing is form of "association," or "passive synthesis," whereby on the basis of a prominent perceived similarity between X and Y (property A), one thereby automatically perceives Y as also instantiating property B. To use an example from A.D. Smith, if I see a durian fruit for the first time and, upon investigating it more closely, experience its pungent smell, when I see a subsequent durian fruit (despite not smelling it), I will experience it as also having that smell (Smith 2003, 225). Husserl is clear that the similarity condition is key here: "It is clear from the very beginning that only a similarity connecting, within my primordial sphere, that body over there with my body can serve as the motivational basis for the '*analogizing' apprehension* of that body as another animate organism" (Husserl 1960, 111). Since it has already been demonstrated that the inner awareness one has of one's own body is utterly unique in the field of primordial givenness, then the similarity that grounds empathic pairing must be based one's external awareness of one's body – that is, how one's awareness of one's own body as a material thing.

It is this account of pairing, with its reliance on the similarity condition, that has drawn some of the sharpest ire from critics.[8] As several commentators have pointed out, the way one's own body becomes perceptual constituted to one as a material object is fundamentally limited, and thus is a dubious basis for grounding a similarity between it and the body of the other. In other words, the way the body of another is given in perceptual consciousness fundamentally differs from how one is aware of one's own physical body. One cannot, as a matter of principle, see the back of one's head, or one's own eyes, and so on. Husserl does not broach this difficulty in *Cartesian Meditations*, and seems to assume that the visual similarity is good enough, as he largely situates analogous

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[8] See Luo (2016) for a recent overview of influential criticisms of Husserl's account, namely the similarity condition.

appresentation in the visual modality, "and presupposes recognition of the visual similarity between the body of the other and the own living and lived body" (De Preester 2008, 134).

This problem seems to have been a thorn in Husserl's side, as he suggests multiple alternative ways to ground the similarity between self and other. As Luo (2016) points out, "Around 1926/27, Husserl comes up with a second solution by considering the bodily givenness delineated by tactual experience, so as to distance himself from the visual model of bodily givenness" (Luo 2016, 9). Elsewhere, in a footnote in *Ideas II*, Husserl expresses doubts about visual similarity and suggests the auditory modality, namely one's experience of voice, as the primordial motivation basis for empathy.[9] The tactile and auditory modalities seem more promising insofar as they both possess a more salient form of auto-affection than vision. In touching a surface, for example, I not only experience the touched property of the surface, but I also feel my hand being "touched back" by the surface. In virtue of this peculiar two-sidedness of tactile experience we might find the resources to locate a primordial form of intersubjectivity, or at least the seed of its possible genesis, within bodily self-experience: the touching-touched relation in auto-affection exhibits a kind of *reversibility*, whereby the passivity of the being-touched can always reverse into the activity of touching, and vice-versa. Merleau-Ponty made a great deal of this, and heavily mined Husserl's accounts of the lived body, tactile awareness, and empathic experience in the development of his own theory of intersubjectivity with concepts such as the flesh, reversibility, and the chiasm. I will briefly return to this point in the final section discussing Husserl's legacy.

4.3.   *Expressivity*

Both *Cartesian Meditations* and Husserl's voluminous unpublished manuscripts, however, contain an alternative possibility for understanding empathy. In several places, rather than explicating the bodily basis of empathic recognition in terms of similarity, Husserl focuses on the distinctive constitutive syntheses that disclose *expressive* behavior. In other words, the target of empathic experience may not necessarily be constituted by the recognition of similarity, but rather of distinctive temporal sequences of the body of the other that stand out as 'conduct' or 'behavior' rather than mere physical movement. In *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl claims that it is the "incessantly *harmonious 'behavior'*" of the Other that makes them stand out as an animate organism, and they become "experienced as a pseudo-organism, precisely if there is something discordant

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[9] See Derrida (2011) for an influential commentary on the nature of voice as auto-affection in Husserl.

about its behavior" (Husserl 1960, 114). Empathy targets "the other's organism *and specifically the organismal conduct*" (Husserl 1960, 119, my emphasis). In empathy, 'behavior' or 'conduct' is distinguished from the mere movement of a physical object insofar as the former appears as being *governed* (Husserl 1960, 91). While in *Ideas II* he describes the "*unity of expression*" as the "intuitive unity presenting itself when we grasp a person *as such*," and as the "only means" by which "the person of the other is there at all for the experiencing subject" (Husserl 1989, 248, 257).

If expressive phenomena are what motivate empathic pairing, the question remains as to why or how certain phenomena count as expressive in the first place. This could bring us back to the similarity condition, whereby expressive phenomena are constituted as such in virtue of a perceived similarity to one's own expressive behavior. On an alternative, and as some commentators have noted arguably more promising, account what motivates empathic pairing is a *reciprocity* or *complementarity* between the expressive behavior of self and other (Smith 2003, 243; Zahavi 2014, 136). Thus, we can account for the conditions that mark the appearance of expressive phenomena not in terms of similarity, but rather in terms of a history of interaction with the other whereby certain movements come to count as expressive in virtue of a learned history – a "sedimentation" of experience that "institutes" a horizon of expectation (Husserl 1960, 111). This resonates with contemporary "enactive" accounts that ground intersubjectivity in the emergent phenomena that arise from actual interactive behavior (Gallagher 2001; 2016).

5. Husserlian empathy and its shadow

Husserl's account of empathy has proven seminal for 20th Century philosophy. Discussions of Husserl can be found in both analytic and continental discussions of intersubjectivity, as well as contemporary work on social cognition in the cognitive sciences. As alluded to above, different aspects of Husserl's account of empathy resonate with both contemporary simulationist and enactivist theories. To give a very brief and rough overview: over the past several decades, a major debate about knowledge of other minds within analytic philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences has pitted "theory-theory" (TT) against "simulation-theory" (ST). TT claims that knowledge of other minds is achieved through the development of a folk-psychological theory of the other. ST argues that we come to understand others by simulating their mental states. The details of each, of course, are far more complex than can be explored here. TT need not necessarily be thought of as employing explicit conscious deliberation, but rather understood in terms of sub-personal

representation. The nature of the "simulation" of others' mental states in ST can be characterized as a sophisticated imaginative process, or a kind of direct bodily resonance, or some combination of both.[10]

In recent years, certain versions of ST that focus on the nature and function of the mirror neuron system have proven especially interesting to Husserl scholarship. Mirror neurons are present in several parts of primate brains related to motor control and the sense of touch, and activate both when the animal acts and when it observes the same action by another. Thus, several scientists and philosophers have put forward theories claiming that mirror neurons are the basis of a kind of direct bodily understanding of our awareness of other minds (Gallese 2001; Gallese & Goldman 1998). The function of the mirror neuron system and the extent to which it grounds social cognition is still very much a contentious issue (Hickok 2009; 2014; Spaulding 2012), but as Husserl scholars have noted, the idea that social cognition is grounded in a kind of direct bodily "mirroring" or "resonance" is very similar to several parts of Husserl's discussions of empathy, bodily awareness, and pairing (Thompson 2001; Ratcliffe 2006; De Preester 2008). Husserl discusses the experience of seeing oneself in the mirror in the section of *Ideas II* devoted to the constitution of the body as both material object and bearer of sensations (Husserl 1989, 155 fn. 1.). And in *Cartesian Meditations* he goes so far as to say that "the other is a 'mirroring' of my own self" (but "not a mirroring proper") (Husserl 1960, 94). De Preester succinctly summarizes the affinity:

> [T]he role of the mirror neurons system is to match an external, unknown event to an internal, known event… This can easily be reformulated in Husserlian terminology: the visual perception of the body of the other is mapped onto our own kinaesthetic representation, or the *Körper* is mapped onto the *Leib* (and receives the latter's status). (De Preester 2008, 139)

As Zahavi (2012) has argued, however, the compatibility of Husserl's theory of empathy and mirror-neuron-based accounts is questionable, as mirroring is too static of a concept to capture the "dynamic and dialectical" aspects of Husserl's mature view.

Enactive theories of social cognition, on the other hand, are better suited to this demand. Enactive (or, "interactionist") accounts are the relative newcomers on the scene, and, as mentioned in the previous section, resonate with Husserl's scattered remarks on the centrality of expressive behavior and reciprocal interaction to empathy. Such theories seek to ground empathic experience in

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[10] See Nichols and Stich (2003) for a comprehensive overview and integrated account.

the actual temporally extended processes of self-other interaction rather than internal mental states with content prescribing accuracy conditions about other minds (Gallagher 2001; De Jaegher et al. 2010). This kind of view can also be found in Merleau-Ponty, who was a serious scholar of Husserl's work on intersubjectivity, and at times characterizes the "intercorporeal" bodily relation of self and other in terms of a systemic whole (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 368-370).

Merleau-Ponty is probably the most significant philosopher in the continental tradition when it comes to the legacy of Husserl's account of empathy.[11] The chapter "Others and the Human World" of his *Phenomenology of Perception* and his essay "The Philosopher and his Shadow" both take up and continue several aspects of Husserl's theory. Following Husserl's analysis of the peculiar "reversibility" of the touching-touched relation in *Ideas II*, Merleau-Ponty contends that there is already an intersubjectivity of the body that provides the resources to account for awareness of other minds (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 364; 1964, 168). In other words, in experiences of auto-affection (e.g., touching one's right arm with one's left hand) one experiences one's own body as a material thing – the *touched* – while simultaneously experiencing the body as the organ of the will and locus of sensitivity to the world – the *touching*. Furthermore, that which is touching can at any moment reverse into that which is being touched, and vice versa.

Later in his career, Merleau-Ponty developed an ontology of the "flesh," based on this idea of reversibility, meant to transcend dualistic thinking and thus consequently dissolve the problem of other minds. This ontology of the flesh and its implications for intersubjectivity have been been taken up, both critically and charitably, by several feminist philosophers in the continental tradition (Olkowski and Weiss 2006). A major criticism of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl on this front is that any attempt to locate the genesis of genuine intersubjective experience in bodily auto-affection necessarily effaces the genuine alterity of the Other. In other words, Merleau-Ponty's account of an intersubjectivity of the body (which he traces back to Husserl in turn) subsumes the intercorporeal encounter (between bodily self and other) under the category of the *intra*corporeal encounter, and thus makes awareness of the other a projection of one's own self-awareness (Stawarska 2006). Arguably, this fails to do justice to the phenomenon for the same reasons as Husserl's notion of pairing: it ultimately makes awareness of others overly dependent on self-awareness.[12]

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[11] Although in addition to Merleau-Ponty, Levinas's (1969) critique of Husserl's notions of pairing and appresentation in *Cartesian Meditations*.

[12] Alia Al-Saji (2010) offers an interestingly different interpretation that divorces Merleau-Ponty's account from Husserl's original discussion of touch and auto-affection in *Ideas II*. For Al-Saji, it is actually Husserl who has more to offer to

This brief overview hardly suffices as an explication of the legacy of Husserl's investigations into empathy and intersubjectivity. Besides Merleau-Ponty, several other major figures in the phenomenological tradition have taken up these themes. From Emmanuel Levinas's development of a phenomenologically grounded ethics of alterity, to Alfred Schutz's (1967) phenomenological sociology, Husserl's influence pervades. Although much of the attention has been and remains critical, Husserl's theory of empathy is an exemplar of phenomenology as a research program: sophisticated in detail and scope, holistically integrated within a grand theoretical vision; and yet constantly subject to revision, modification, and a willingness to begin anew.

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contemporary feminist discussions of how social, cultural, and political forces constitute bodily subjects in an intersubjective field of affective differentiation.

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