

# Ego-Splitting and the Transcendental Subject. Kant's Original Insight and Husserl's Reappraisal



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**Abstract** In this paper, I contend that there are at least two essential traits that commonly define being an I: self-identity and self-consciousness. I argue that they bear quite an odd relation to each other in the sense that self-consciousness seems to jeopardize self-identity. My main concern is to elucidate this issue within the range of the transcendental philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl. In the first section, I shall briefly consider Kant's own rendition of the problem of the Ego-splitting. My reading of the Kantian texts reveals that Kant himself was aware of this phenomenon but eventually deems it an unexplainable fact. The second part of the paper tackles the same problematic from the standpoint of Husserlian phenomenology. What Husserl's extensive analyses on this topic bring to light is that the phenomenon of the Ego-splitting constitutes the bedrock not only of his thought but also of every philosophy that works within the framework of transcendental thinking.

**Keywords** Kant, Immanuel · Husserl, Edmund · Ego-splitting · Transcendental philosophy · Subjectivity · Self-consciousness

## 1 Introduction

There are two essential traits that, taken together, provide us with a general definition of being an I: self-identity and self-consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

The first is straightforwardly a necessary condition. Any object whatsoever must be identical with itself to be thinkable or, more generally speaking, experienceable. Even a squared circle must be identical with itself if I state its nonexistence. I-ness partakes of this formal condition of every being whatsoever.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from sources that are not available in English translation are the author's own translation. Quotes from sources available in English translation make reference only to the page number of the English translation.

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Self-consciousness, on the other hand, represents a necessary condition of I-ness in a way that is more specific. It defines the essential property of being an I, i.e. that without which there would be no sense of saying 'I' or saying 'my' thoughts, 'my' experiences. An I that is not conscious of being an I is not an I or, as Husserl phrased it, "to be a subject means to be in the mode of being conscious of itself" (Husserl 1973b, 151).<sup>2</sup> Certainly, this does not necessarily imply that everything that is currently unaware, e.g. the realm of the so-called unconscious, is not part of myself.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, being a self involves a certain primordial manner of experiencing (*Erleben*), and being in a primal relation with my instincts, habits, reflexes, and so forth. The I manifests itself in each of these passive experiences in the sense that it is there in the mode of being affected and receptive of what, principally or momentarily, lies outside its faculties in a broad sense. Still, on closer inspection what entitles me to say 'I', what constitutes my original experience of being an Ego is independent of the unconscious core of the human person. The self is the most original dimension of personal experience, the one that we, each for herself or himself, do not share with anyone else. But to distinguish myself and my experiences from another person and her experiences, I need to be conscious in the first place of my experiences precisely as *my* experiences. Self-consciousness or self-awareness as an inherent, structural moment of every experience is constitutive of my personal individuality. Hence, it represents a necessary condition of that entity that everyone is and which we normally refer to by the term 'I'.

By placing self-consciousness at the core of our definition of I-ness, we are also indirectly justifying the assumption we made that self-identity too must be deemed as an essential property and necessary condition of being an I. Self-consciousness implies the possibility for the I to thematize itself, which means to become, to say, an object for itself. Being an experienceable object implies being self-identical with itself. Consequently, self-consciousness and self-identity seem to consist in two essential and complementary features of the I.

Granted that we need at least self-identity and self-consciousness to think of and experience an I in the first place, one notices that these two fundamental conditions bear quite an odd relation to each other. Indeed, many thinkers have pointed out the fact that self-consciousness entails a sort of split of the I and, for this reason, it ends in jeopardizing the unity and identity of the I with itself. This would imply that, while being conscious of myself – for instance when I reflect upon my current experiences of writing these sentences –, I am the one who experiences something and, in the same breath, the one who experiences himself experiencing. In other terms, a split seems to occur between the one who is concentrated on the activity of writing

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<sup>2</sup>Fichte expresses the same view as follows: "The self exists only insofar as it is conscious of itself" (Fichte 1982, 98). From this Fichte draws the conclusion that it is contradictory to ask what I was before I came to self-consciousness. The obvious answer is that *I* did not exist at all, for I was not a self, i.e. an I in the full-blown sense.

<sup>3</sup>Mohanty 1997, 53 makes a similar point by clearly distinguishing between consciousness and subjectivity. Therefore, even the unconscious counts as subjective, as belonging to the I in this specific sense.

these sentences, and the one who reflectively observes this activity itself. In reflection, which is usually taken as the paradigmatic example of self-consciousness, the I splits up, as it were, into two different I's. These are, respectively, the I that reflects upon the experience (the reflecting I) and the I that is reflected upon (the reflected I).

If one generally agrees with this insight, then the relation between self-consciousness and self-identity becomes plainly troublesome. To put it straight, the former seems to render the latter sheer impossible. It appears that an I cannot be conscious of itself without splitting into two (or even more) I's, that is, without losing its (self-)identity. Hence, self-consciousness and self-identity seem to be two incompatible conditions of being an I. This appears as more aporetic as one recalls the initial thesis according to which self-consciousness and self-identity *only together* define most properly what an I is.

If we maintain the initial premises and the subsequent argument, we end up with serious repercussions for our understanding of the I and even for our belief that something like an I can exist at all. Indeed, the I ultimately reveals itself close to a self-contradictory entity, meaning an entity whose essential conditions of possibility contradict themselves. Here we face a concept, indeed a very important one which we constantly employ in everyday life and in our natural thinking and speaking, which nonetheless speedily betrays its untenable character as soon as philosophical reflection seizes upon it. Therefore, it seems at this point that we would have good reasons to sympathize with Ernst Mach's famous saying, and admit that "the ego must be given up".<sup>4</sup>

This is a too hasty conclusion, however. There is in fact a strand of philosophical thinking that takes into serious consideration this (as we will see) apparent contradiction embedded in the very essence of being an I. We are notably referring to transcendental philosophy.

A transcendental philosopher would admit in general that every kind of object-identity is the result of a specific form of synthesis actively or passively carried out by a transcendental subject.<sup>5</sup> The identity of an object throughout its manifold of appearances is not a given datum that the subject simply acknowledges, but the outcome of a "constituting" process in which the subject is actively or passively engaged. This overall view is generally common among all forms of transcendental philosophy. For instance, Kantian criticism and Husserlian phenomenology share this basic insight – although it hardly needs saying that they differ when it comes to determining the precise nature of the relationship between the subject and the object of experiencing.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Mach 1914, 24. Needless to say, the reasons that triggered Mach's rejection of the I-concept do not correspond to the ones laid out here.

<sup>5</sup>I do not consider here the strand of transcendental philosophies which admit no space for a constituting subject and that claim that the constitutional activity is performed (almost) exclusively by asubjective synthetic accomplishments. Cf. for instance Patočka 1991/1971.

<sup>6</sup>For an encompassing discussion of the relationship between the philosophies of Husserl and Kant, see the classical volume of Kern 1964. Important for the topic of this paper is also the insight set out by Kockelmans 1977.

From a transcendental standpoint, the problem of the Ego-splitting assumes an even more intriguing connotation. If the I has to be represented (experienced) in the first place – since this is an essential condition entailed in the definition of being an I –, how is it possible here to speak of a synthesis that should constitute the object at stake, i.e. the I? Is not rather the I the (transcendental) condition of every possible synthesis and, hence, of every possible experience of an object in general? It seems very likely here that transcendental philosophy faces an (apparently) unredeemable circle in the foundation of knowledge. Let us try to schematically sum up premises and conclusions of this circle. The I transcendently conditions every experience of an object. At the same time, the I must have an experience of itself as an I, otherwise it would not fit with the former definition of the I as an entity conscious of its own being. Therefore, the I must also be the condition of its own experience and *per definitionem* the condition of its own existence. This would clearly amount to a case of *generatio aequivoca*.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine how Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl address this problematic circle in the chain of transcendental arguments. My suggestion is that the Kantian and the Husserlian takes on transcendental philosophy differ especially when it comes to tackling this fundamental issue. In the first section, I shall briefly take into account Kant's own rendition of the problem of the Ego-splitting. My reading of some of the Kantian texts on this issue reveals that Kant himself was aware of this phenomenon, although he conceives of it as an unexplainable fact. The second part of my paper tackles the same issue from the standpoint of Husserlian phenomenology. I will show that what Husserl's extensive analyses on this topic bring to light, is that the Ego-splitting constitutes the bedrock not only of his thought but of every philosophy that works within the framework of transcendental thinking.

## 2 Ego-Splitting as Unexplainable Fact in Kant

According to Kant, the reduplication of the I occurring in the Ego-splitting, i.e. its being at the same time subject and object of experience, is primarily a "fact" whose actuality the philosopher can do nothing but acknowledge without trying to explain. The most commented Kantian passage on this topic stems from one of his late

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<sup>7</sup> Alfredo Ferrarin (1994) notices something similar in his reading of Husserl's late reflections on the historicity of the pure ego. He states that there must be a tension in the transcendental conception of the ego that Husserl cannot solve, i.e. "the fact that consciousness must both be the originary consciousness of inner time and be constituted or synthetically unified in time: *synthesis and the object of synthesis, activity and form*". To put it differently, the difficulty consists in the double requirement that the ego be the identical subject of its *Erlebnisse* and be the object of its concrete self-constitution in a history. If it has to constitute itself, it has in fact to be the subject of its self-objectification – in which case it has to presuppose itself for its own constitution (Ferrarin 1994, 655). Personally, I do not agree with this interpretation of the Husserlian doctrine, as I hope it shall gradually emerge between the lines of the present discussion.

writings, *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, and reads quite eloquently as follows:

I am conscious of myself, is a thought that already implies a twofold I, the I as subject and the I as object. How it is possible that I, being the I who thinks, be an object (of intuition) for myself, and in what way I would be able to differentiate me from myself, is simply impossible to explain, even though it is an unquestionable fact [*Faktum*]. (Kant 1902-, AA XX, 270)

Kant's thesis in this passage is threefold: (1) self-consciousness obtains, (2) it entails an Ego-splitting, (3) the phenomenon of Ego-splitting amounts to a "limit" with respect to any possible knowledge concerning the transcendental subject. In the following we will examine these claims one by one.

(1) Kant assumes that self-consciousness obtains, meaning that it is the case that I (the I of transcendental apperception) am conscious of myself and my synthetic activities. In this sense, he takes a similar view as the one Husserl expressed in the passage quoted at the beginning, for which to be an I is to be conscious of oneself. Accordingly, being conscious of oneself is not an accidental property of the I, a state which the I now and then just happens to be in; on the contrary, it is part of its very definition and characterizes the totality of its experiences.

Kant is referring here notably to transcendental self-consciousness and not to a form of empirical, psychological self-consciousness. This cannot be predicated as an essential and necessary attribute of an I, for we may from time to time lack empirical self-consciousness. Kant refers in this sense to the example of reading. While reading, the subject is thematically conscious of the meaning of the words she is reading but not of the activity of reading itself, i.e. the grasping of the words as bearers of meaning (Kant 1902-, AA II, 191). In other words, she does not possess empirical self-consciousness of her grasping activity.

In a passage from the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* Kant explicitly contrasts empirical self-consciousness or inner sense with transcendental self-consciousness or apperception:

Inner sense is not pure apperception, consciousness of what we are doing; for this belongs to the power of thinking. It is, rather, consciousness of what we undergo as we are affected by the play of our own thoughts. This consciousness rests on inner intuition, and so on the relation of ideas (as they are either simultaneous or successive). (Kant 1974, 39)

Empirical self-consciousness or inner sense is a receptive faculty which sets in when the mind is affected not by external things but by its own activity ("the play of our thoughts"). Apperception instead is a "pure" faculty, meaning a faculty which is before and beyond any experience of outer as well as inner objects (i.e. mental states). It is an *a priori* and transcendental consciousness of "what we are doing". As has been correctly pointed out (cf. Brook 2013), Kant is referring here to the fact that the way one becomes conscious of an act of representing is not in receiving intuitions but by *doing* it: "Man, [...] who knows the rest of nature solely through the senses, knows himself also through pure apperception; and this, indeed, in acts and inner determinations which he cannot regard as impressions of the senses" (Kant 1998, A546/B574; see also B132 and B153). One is conscious of oneself as

spontaneous, self-legislating, free subject of acts, as the doer of deeds and not just as a passive receptacle for sensuous data and representations. In Kant's words, "I exist as an intelligence which is conscious solely of its power of combination" (B158–159), of "the activity of the self" (B68).<sup>8</sup>

Apperception is thus characterized as a consciousness of mental activity – rather than of mental states – so that one might interpret the distinction between empirical and transcendental self-consciousness like the distinction between consciousness of mental passivity and activity, respectively. In this view, apperception would obtain only if the mind is actively involved in producing its own thoughts, whereas inner sense would occur when the mind is guided by its own principles of association – "consciousness rests on inner intuition, and so on the relation of ideas".

This kind of reading would certainly hold true if the categories of activity and passivity at stake here were thought of as belonging to the same level of foundation. However, the activity of which transcendental self-consciousness is consciousness of has nothing to do with the mental activity performed by an empirical subject (the soul). Roughly speaking, the former is transcendental whereas the latter is empirical. The consciousness of the activity of counting the members of a given manifold is not a form of transcendental self-consciousness, for counting is not in itself a transcendental performance. If we hold with Kant that self-consciousness arises out of a kind of self-affection representations, objects or activities exert on the mind (*Gemüt*), one must notice that the self-affection which motivates and grounds transcendental apperception stems from an array of *transcendental* (and not merely mental) intuiting, synthetizing, and combining activities – i.e. those activities that render experience possible, first of all the activity of synthesis which combines representations given by sensibility in order to form concepts and judgments (cf. Kant 1998, A77–8/B102–3).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is not astonishing to read Kant at A78/B103 noting that although acts of synthesis are indispensable for cognition, we are conscious of them "only very rarely [*selten nur einmal*]" and at A103–4 describing consciousness as "feeble [*schwach*]" and lacking in clarity. Here Kant is most likely referring to empirical self-consciousness and not to transcendental self-consciousness. We do not normally experience transcendental synthetic activities but more likely their products, i.e. the objects of representation and, through inner sense, the representations themselves. Yet, transcendental activities are always apperceived, that is, transcendently, not empirically, self-conscious, so that apperception amounts to a necessary condition for the possibility of cognitive experience and

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<sup>8</sup>This reading of the Kantian transcendental self as activity has been recently purported by Melnick 2009. Martin Heidegger already anticipated this trend of Kant's scholarship in his lecture course entitled *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* where he points out: "thinking as acting is what is fundamentally in the manner of 'I think.' Thinking as such [...] starts 'from itself,' from the self as itself. [...] The ability character of my actions [thinkings] determines the mode of being of the subject" (Heidegger 1997, 234).

<sup>9</sup>For the meaning of transcendental, see Kant's account in the appendix to the *Prolegomena*: "the word 'transcendental' [...] does not signify something passing beyond all experience but something that indeed precedes it *a priori*, but that is intended simply to make cognition of experience possible" (Kant 2001, 106 f.).

thus a pervasive feature of the entire life of consciousness (see e.g. Kant 1998, B132).<sup>10</sup>

The question that naturally arises is whether the (non-empirical) consciousness of the transcendental intuiting, synthesizing, and combining activities of the understanding equates for Kant to the consciousness the transcendental subject has of herself. There is little doubt that this must be the case. Kant believes not only that the subject is always and necessarily (non-empirically) conscious of her own transcendental activities; he also argues that this self-consciousness of representations entails at the same time a self-consciousness of the subject. I am constantly conscious of myself, meaning that I am conscious of being the bearer and doer of the transcendental activities which appear in self-consciousness. Self-consciousness of representational states always entails as inherent moment self-consciousness of the I.<sup>11</sup>

(2) Kant points out that self-consciousness essentially involves an Ego-splitting. More precisely, he asserts that in the thought that corresponds to the judgment “I am conscious of myself” the I figures as both subject and object. The splitting thus amounts for Kant in the double characterization of the I as subject and object of a self-reflective judgment – meaning a judgment that expresses an experience of self-reflection, such as “I am conscious of myself”.

Kant's characterization of self-consciousness as a judgment derives from his peculiar usage of the term ‘experience’. Kant always takes experience to involve the exercise of judgment (see e.g. Kitcher 1982, 57). Thus, having an experience of oneself does not amount to simply being conscious of oneself but rather judging that this is the case. The *experience* of self-consciousness entails the *judgment* “I am conscious of myself”. This point is of paramount importance to characterize Kant's own rendition of the problem of Ego-splitting. The split of the I occurs in the self-reflective judgment which accompanies every self-conscious experience; it is a con-

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<sup>10</sup>For a more detailed account of the meaning of transcendental self-consciousness and why Kant regards it to be a necessary condition for cognitive experience cf. the refined analyses of Kitcher 1999. More extensive readings are to be found in Keller 1998 and Powell 1990.

<sup>11</sup>Here lies the reason why Kant often equates transcendental synthesis with the transcendental unity of apperception: “This amounts to saying, that I am conscious to myself *a priori* of a necessary synthesis of representations – to be entitled the original synthetic unity of apperception” (Kant 1998, B135). Unfortunately, I cannot dig into this topic any further. I rely in my understanding of Kant's point here on Patricia Kitcher's discussion in Kitcher 1982. Kitcher clearly points out why Kant is committed to postulate self-consciousness of the I as a necessary condition for experience and especially cognition. Due to its complexity, I shall not report the all argument here. It suffices to mention the following fundamental steps. Kant regards a relation of synthesis between the subject's mental states as the condition of their representational feature: “We are conscious *a priori* of the complete identity of the self in respect of all representations which can ever belong to our knowledge, as being a necessary condition of the possibility of all representations. *For in me they can represent something only in so far as they belong with all others to one consciousness*, and therefore must be at least capable of being so connected” (Kant 1998, A116, italics are mine). But since for Kant a mental state is possible only as representational and I can acknowledge a relation of synthesis only if it is there, then a synthetic unity of all my mental states is both necessary and subsistent. This synthetic unity amounts to the possibility of ascribing every mental state to an “I think”, that is, I must be *able* (which means that actually I do not do it all the time) to acknowledge a relation between it and other mental states (Kant 1998, A116/B131–32).

sequence of the fact that every kind of experience according to Kant involves judgment, on the one hand, and that judgments contain a subject and a predicate conjoined by a copula, on the other. Then, in a judgment the I is split into the subject and the object (predicate) of judgment, respectively ‘I’ and ‘myself’. In a sense, judgments accompanying self-consciousness may resemble judgments of identity – such as the judgment “A is A”. Nonetheless, an important aspect allows us to draw a distinction between the two forms. As far as self-consciousness does not necessarily and directly entail a predication of the identity between subject and predicate, it is the more legitimate here to raise the issue of the Ego-splitting.<sup>12</sup>

There seems to be a path that Kant could have followed to escape the problem of the Ego-splitting in self-consciousness. This amounts in dismissing the view which declares experiences of self-consciousness to be nothing but judgments of the type “I am conscious of myself” or *ego cogito* (*me cogitare*).

In the passage from the *Preisschrift* quoted at the beginning of this section, Kant plainly does not follow this path. The same happens in the *Paralogisms* in the first *Critique* where he initially speaks of the *ego cogito* as a “judgment” involving a “concept” (Kant 1998, A341/B399), while later negating that we can even have the least concept of it (Kant 1998, A346/B404). Self-consciousness, considered on its own, is not the representation of an object in particular, but “a form of representation in general, insofar as it is to be called a cognition” (*ibid.*). Accordingly, it does not amount to any extension of our knowledge of reality – under this respect, self-consciousness distinguishes itself specifically from self-knowledge (cf. Henrich 1982, 19).

A real alternative to the view which is more likely to denounce the Ego-splitting is introduced in the *Prolegomena*. There Kant describes self-consciousness as “nothing more than the *feeling* of an existence without the least concept” (Kant 2001, 334 n., emphasis added). Rudolf Makkreel (1994, 103 ff.) suggests considering the feeling of existence lived through by the transcendental Ego in terms of the “pure aesthetic feeling of life,” which is introduced in the *Critique of Judgment* as the “bare consciousness of existence” (Kant 1987, § 29) in opposition to the aesthetic feeling of pleasure/displeasure or the “feeling of the enhancement of life”. Nor is self-consciousness, as a bare sensation (*Empfindung*) or feeling (*Gefühl*) of my own existence, to be conflated with the moral feeling of respect (*Achtung*) set out already in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). Both self-consciousness and respect are types of sensations not caused by the influence of an outer object – they are both “non-referential” in the strict sense of not-being dependent upon a sensuous affection of the subject by the object (see Kumar 2014). However, the feeling of respect is “a feeling self-wrought [*selbstgewirktes*]” by

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<sup>12</sup>I am not negating that judgments predicating identity of something with itself generally do not pose the problem of splitting. My observation, as simple as it is, refers merely to the fact that in self-consciousness it is easier to become aware of the problem of splitting than it is referring to identity judgments. On a related note, that the latter involve great difficulties and mediations when rightly seized upon is most efficiently proved by the Fichtean system of the theory of science or *Wissenschaftslehre*.



means of a concept of reason, i.e. the moral law (Kant 1997, 14), therefore it does refer to something, in the broader sense of the term: namely it is caused by an *a priori* principle of the practical reason. Self-consciousness instead is not even linked to a rational concept or principle which resides in the mind, since it fundamentally lacks the referential or presentational power as such. Hence Kant more precisely explains it as a “power [*Vermögen*]” which does not contribute anything to cognition, “but merely compares the given presentation in the subject with the entire presentational power, of which the mind becomes conscious when it feels its own state” (Kant 1987, 44). This is not at odds with what we noticed above, namely that transcendental self-consciousness implies a consciousness of my activities, meaning my “entire presentational power.” In this regard, self-consciousness as bare sensation of existence represents for Kant the transcendental feeling of spontaneity that the mind lives through in every (transcendental) activity it performs (see Klemme 2012, 207 ff.).

In such a manner, it seems the Ego-splitting would not be a problem at all. In the feeling the subject lives through of her own existence and spontaneity, there is no splitting of the I, no mediation, but rather an unmediated relation or “familiarity [*Vertrautheit*]” (cf. Frank 2002, 49; Klemme 1996, 401) of the I with its own presentational power and transcendently constituting activity. In other terms, if self-consciousness needs to be conceived of as a feeling of bare existence, no objectification of the I and a correspondent splitting between the subject (as experiencing) and this subject as its own object (as experienced) seem to occur. Nevertheless, far from being uncontroversial, this thesis has been thoroughly debated in the most recent Kantian scholarship.

In a famous article, Dieter Henrich blamed, among others, Kant for relying on what he calls the reflection theory of the I. This theory assumes a subject of thinking and emphasizes that this subject stands in a constant relation to itself. It then explains this relationship as a result of the subject's turning back into itself from its original relation to objects, and thus of its making itself into its own object. The I is thus ultimately regarded by Kant as that act in which the knowing subject becomes aware of its constant unity with itself (Henrich 1982, 19). This conception is insofar questionable for Henrich as it falls into a vicious circle. If we understand self-consciousness as reflection, the structure of reflection itself requests us to postulate an essential duality, i.e. a split, between the reflecting I and the reflected I – *Subjekt-Ich* and *Objekt-Ich* in Henrich's terminology. What is then the nature of the first subject, the subject-I? Properly speaking, it cannot be regarded as an I for one can only speak of an ‘I’ where a subject has apprehended itself. Further, the sole function of reflection consists in making explicit what was already there but concealed. Reflection therefore cannot explain the origin of the I, meaning that it is logically inadmissible to explain the I in terms of self-consciousness.

The main premise of Henrich's argument, which is more of interest for the topic of this paper than the argument itself, is that self-consciousness *qua* reflection entails a splitting of the I. As soon as reflection sets in, the I is not identical with itself anymore and a duality in its essential core is produced. This is however not an eventuality which pertains uniquely to those experiences in which the I grasps itself,

for reflective self-experience, according to the reflection theory of the I, is constitutive for the I. The internal split of the I would consist then in an essential feature of I-ness, a feature which most intimately defines the being of the transcendental subject for Kant.

This conclusion however has been recently challenged by Dieter Sturma. His critique of Henrich's reading of Kant amounts to showing that there are two ways in which Kant himself understands the phenomenon of self-consciousness: either as the consciousness of states and properties of the I (empirical self-consciousness) or as an immediate feeling about the bare existence of the I (transcendental self-consciousness). For the first kind of self-consciousness we might be keen to acknowledge a split and the consequent reduplication of the I, since the I is now considered as an object of experience with specific states and properties attaching to it. While this is only valid for the empirical concept of self-consciousness that Kant rejects in the *Paralogisms*, in transcendental self-consciousness, Sturma argues, there is no sense of speaking of an object-I and, consequently, of an Ego-splitting as the I cannot be an object of knowledge like any other (cf. Sturma 1985, 125). Accordingly, self-consciousness does not necessarily involve a split of the I for Kant.

In spite of his criticism of Henrich, Sturma himself is aware of a certain ambivalence in the Kantian doctrine regarding the second notion of self-consciousness (cf. Sturma 1985, 92). Indeed, in describing transcendental self-consciousness, Kant employs a notion of objectivity that must be distinguished from his more common usage of the concept of object as object of (sensuous) experience. In this sense Kant writes: "I am conscious of myself (*apperception*). I think i.e. I am to myself an object of *intellect*" (Kant 1902-, AA XXII, 119). As an object of intellectual intuition the transcendental I does not partake in the same essential conditions that make an object of sensible experience possible. This (Fichtean) reading of Kant's notion of transcendental self-consciousness draws on the distinction between sensible and intellectual intuition. According to Kant, objects are *given* to sensible intuition, whereby they are *created or posited* by intellectual intuition (Kant 1998, B135, 139). In a sensible intuition we are passive, since the object acts on us; in an intellectual intuition we actively produce the object we represent. Therefore, if we compare self-consciousness to intellectual intuition, the former is not barely the making explicit of the I but at the same time the production or positing of the I as such. The I is posited as an object to itself. Clearly, the kind of object posited by intellectual intuition is of a different sort than the object given in sensuous intuition. For this reason, Sturma suggests considering the I *qua* the object of self-consciousness as a "quasi-object" (Sturma 1985, 96).

This interpretation of the issue of self-consciousness, even if it might offer a reply to Henrich's argument, does not solve the issue of the Ego-splitting but only shifts it further towards another level. A quasi-objectivity is still an objectivity and the problem is again to state the identity between the subject-I and the quasi-object-I, that is, to preserve self-identity while admitting self-consciousness. Thus, eventually Sturma's criticism seems to boost Henrich's reading for which Kant

would rely on a reflection model in his account of the internal structure of self-consciousness.

(3) The third thesis that we can find in the above quoted passage may tone down the just addressed difficulties to a certain extent. From the Kantian perspective, the phenomenon of Ego-splitting amounts to a "limit" with respect to any possible knowledge concerning the transcendental subject (cf. Broekman 1963, 148). It is, to put it plainly, as if an analysis of the essential core of the I should stop exactly at the point in which this essential reduplication emerges. We can say nothing about it except that it occurs. It is a "matter of fact (*Faktum*)" that escapes any sort of explanation. As such, the Ego-splitting cannot be led back to a form of intuition stemming from sensibility, nor to a category of the understanding. One may notice that this is at odds with the role self-consciousness plays within the Kantian system. Transcendental self-consciousness or apperception is according to Kant the most fundamental condition for the possibility of cognitive experience. It is "pure" because it does not stem from experience but renders it possible in the first place. Since it may be regarded as the product or outcome of self-consciousness, also the Ego-splitting must share this same feature: it is not something we find in sensuous experience, but is a pure condition of experience. Kant, however, says nothing concerning what kind of transcendental function, if any, the Ego-splitting should undertake in the process of constitution of experience. If apperception allows us to grasp the manifold of experiences in terms of a totality, thus making possible a unitary experience which is in turn a condition of possibility for cognition, what transcendental condition does the ego-splitting ultimately fulfill?

I tend to believe that we can hardly find an answer to such a question in Kant's own works. As the outcome of the previous analyses, then, it must be retained that for Kant the Ego-splitting represents a fundamental matter of fact that we encounter when confronting ourselves with the nature of the transcendental subject as self-conscious I. Nonetheless, the transcendental philosopher must limit herself simply to admitting this split without trying to explain it. By taking the Ego-splitting as an unexplainable fact, Kant utterly rejects the task of rescuing the identity of the I from the threat of its splitting. It seems that self-consciousness has eventually taken over self-identity.

To find an answer to the previous question, namely what transcendental condition does the Ego-splitting fulfill, we need to consider Husserl's own reappraisal of Kant's original insight in the next section. In this manner, it shall be possible to shed more light on the nature of this phenomenon as well as to uncover its cardinal transcendental functioning in laying down the conditions of possibility for experience in general.

### 3 Husserl's Phenomenology of Ego-Splitting

In a recent article, Konrad Cramer argued for two theses concerning the problem of Ego-splitting in Husserl's transcendental philosophy. First, he argues, Husserl never had the problem that we also encounter in Kant, which means that he never had to account for a split of the I in self-consciousness. Second, even if he had had it, he would have appreciated Kant's 'solution' of it, that is, he would have agreed that we simply must acknowledge the Ego-splitting without even trying to explain it – "Husserl did not have this difficulty. But, if he had had it, he would have agreed with Kant's relinquishment of explaining this as well as any other 'undoubtedly' fact" (Cramer 2011, 25). I contend that neither of the two assertions Cramer supports here are true. On the one hand, Husserl has indeed encountered the phenomenon of Ego-splitting in his phenomenological analyses of reflection and representification. On the other, he does not simply limit himself to acknowledging the occurring of the Ego-splitting in common, natural experiences, but he takes it as characterizing the essential core of the transcendental subject. Not for nothing, Jan Broekman once stated that Husserl conceives of the Ego-splitting as the bedrock of his entire philosophy (cf. Broekman 1963, 123). In what follows, I shall argue for my twofold thesis with a reading of Husserl's texts in which the Ego-splitting comes particularly to light, that is, the texts in which Husserl considers the intentional structure of a peculiar type of acts, i.e. representifications (*Vergegenwärtigungen*), and those that deal with the nature of reflection. Secondly, I show in which sense transcendental subjectivity harbors a fundamental split in its very core, which is, I shall argue, what determines in turn its transcendentially constituting activity.

#### 3.1 *Ego-Splitting in Representifications*

Husserl's phenomenology aims at providing a description of the essential structures of pure consciousness or experience. According to Husserl, the phenomenological method allows us to draw the distinction between two fundamental types of living experiences: namely experiences that presentify (*gegenwärtigen*) their object directly and experiences that representify (*vergegenwärtigen*) their object indirectly. Husserl famously calls the former presentifications (*Gegenwärtigungen*) and the latter representifications (*Vergegenwärtigungen*).<sup>13</sup> Representifications display our capacity of representing things, states of affairs and events that are not in the actual field of our experience, i.e. that are absent. This faculty underpins many activities we carry out in our daily life, such as when we are waiting for the train, when we recollect the meal we have eaten last night or when we are imaging a battle of cen-

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<sup>13</sup>I follow Eduard Marbach (2012, 236) in translating the German *Vergegenwärtigung* and *vergegenwärtigen* with "representification" and "to representify", on the one hand, and *Gegenwärtigung* and *gegenwärtigen* with "presentification" and "to presentify", on the other.

taurs. In all these cases, we relate to an object or event (the train, the last night meal, the centaurs' battle) which is not really here and now, but which is in this or that manner representified.

Living in acts of representifications, we are not only able to call into presence, as it were, objects and events that are no more, not yet, or that have never been and will never be in the field of perception. According to Husserl, the representification of an object involves a sort of reduplication or split of the I. A couple of examples should clarify the essential structure of this phenomenon that we find at work in every act of representification.

### 3.2 *Ego-Splitting in Recollection*

Let us begin with the case of what Husserl notably calls “reflections upon memory” (Husserl 2019, 297; cf. Husserl 1983, 197 ff.). I recollect an event that took place in the past, e.g. a fire. What I recall is not only the event *in se*, in its objective existence, but also the event *per se*, that is, in the way I once experienced it. Therefore, the activity of recollection can function only as long as it representifies *both* the recollected object *and* the perception (or judgment, volition etc.) which once presentified that object.<sup>14</sup>

Now, at least since the publication of *Ideas I* Husserl attributes to every experience a double polarization: towards the object-pole and towards the I-pole.<sup>15</sup> Every experience or act intends an object that is altogether “transcendent” with respect to the act itself. The intending or “being-directed-to” (*Gerichtet-sein*) of the act has its point of origin in an I-pole that is both transcendent and immanent with respect to the act itself: in Husserl's famous words, it is “a transcendence in the immanence” (cf. Husserl 1989, 105–107; Husserl 1973a, 246; Husserl 1973b, 43; Husserl 1983, 109–112). This somewhat exotic expression serves Husserl to underline a fundamental twofold character of the I-pole. As a structural moment in the intentional act, the I is deemed to be “immanent” and to arise and perish along with the singular act in the stream of consciousness. Notwithstanding, for Husserl the I endures and remains identical by any real or possible changing of living experi-

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<sup>14</sup>Husserl's analyses of recollection notably focus on one specific type of remembering, i.e. what cognitive psychology nowadays calls “episodic memory”, the memory of an event I experienced in the past. However, there are other forms of remembering like the so-called “semantic memory”, which is the memory I have for example of the date of Caesar's murder – an event I did not directly experience. Cf. Fernández 2006 and critically Naylor 2011.

<sup>15</sup>Husserl explicitly purports a non-egological conception of consciousness in his *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901) in which the relation between the experiences or acts and the (phenomenological) I – intended as the bundle of all lived experiences – is considered as not phenomenologically proven (Husserl 2001, 85 f.; cf. also Marbach 1973, 5–22). Later he changed his view, when he realizes that the I represents an essential moment of every act of consciousness actively lived through. For a recent reconstruction of the development of Husserl's theory of the I, see Lohmar 2012.

ences. The I does not amount to a “really inherent piece” (*reelles Stück*) of the act, nor to a “fixed idea” that stupidly accompanies every and each intentional experience (Husserl 1983, 132). Although the I needs to be distinguished from the acts in which it lives and functions, it cannot exist independently of them. The I in this specific sense “transcends” the current lived experience as an abiding dimension of every form of manifestation (Hart 2009, 93; see Zahavi 1999, 148).

In the present context the latter insight allows us to explain the splitting of the I in representifications. In the case of recollection, by representifying a past experience one eventually faces a reduplication of the I into the I-pole of the representifying experience (in the previous example, the recollection of the fire) and the I-pole of the representified experience (the perception of the fire I lived through in the past). In Husserl’s own words: “In each memory lies in a certain sense a doubling of the I [*Ichverdoppelung*], insofar as what I remember directly is not only in general conscious as something past, but as something past as perceived by me [*als von mir wahrgenommenes Gewesen*]” (Husserl 2019, 297; see also Husserl 2006b, 58; Husserl 2006a, 366). The reason of doubling of the I, which as we will see is a consequence of the Ego-splitting, lies in the fact that the content of recollection belongs to my past I, i.e. the I that was there in the past and bore witness to the fire (cf. Husserl 2019, 297).

However, the two I’s of the recollecting and recollected experience maintain their identity despite the split and the temporal distance that separate them. This identity is, in the case of recollection, an identity through time, i.e. persistence. The persistence of the I through time is in no respect like the persistence of physical-material objects through time. The latter is an objective duration that calls for a constituting activity of the subject. The former, instead, implies what Husserl in § 29 of *Ideas II* calls “a kind of consequence of the Ego” (Husserl 1989, 120). This means that the identity of the I through the manifold of (its) experiences depends on the fact that I am a priori the same as far as I maintain consequence among all my position-takings. Surely, I may become “unfaithful” and “inconsistent” to myself – for instance, I may convert to a new religion and reject my previous stance towards it. I nonetheless remain identical with myself insofar as it is me that carries out this new decision and allows it to fit with the previous history of all my position-takings. What preserves my identity through time is thus the gradual sedimentation of my experiences and position-takings and their functioning in the present field of consciousness as individual patterns of motivational force and affection (cf. Cavallaro 2016).

The remembering and the remembered I’s have the same history of experience in common. This entails two possibilities: either what motivates the remembering I is akin to what has motivated the remembered I in the past or, even if the I has meanwhile changed its way of being motivated, i.e. the set of motivations the I allows itself to be affected by has been modified, it is possible to trace the motives that led the I to change its way of being motivated within the coherence of the same history of the I. In both cases, the so-called “genetic” identity of the I is still preserved.

From a static point of view, the identity of the I through recollection is cherished as well. It belongs to the intentional structure of recollecting an experience that the

I of the past experience be the same as the I of the recollecting experience. As Husserl pointed out in the previous quote, the past is given to me not as such but as being perceived and experienced *by me*. Therefore, there is a difference between representifying a past experience which belongs to my own history and representifying a past experience of someone else, as when I imaginatively recollect the first date of my parents. The criterion for distinguishing the two forms of recollection resides in the fact that my past experience has been lived through from the first-person perspective whereas this condition is fundamentally lacking in the latter case – I was obviously not there experiencing the scene when my parents met the first time.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.3 *Ego-Splitting in Phantasy Experiences*<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Husserl notices another form of Ego-splitting caused by those acts of representification which constitute the core of phantasy experiences. What characterizes phantasy in opposition to perception and recollection is the fact of being a non-positing consciousness in which something (an object or event) is experienced in the mode of the “as if [*als ob*]”. Let’s say I now live through a phantasy of a piano sonata by Chopin. I experience tones, intervals, and chords “as if” I would really perceiving them right now. In fact, I do not actually ‘listen’ to these sounds; rather I just imagine them as if they really existed. Nor I am occupied with a recollection of having once been hearing the piano sonata. In the latter case, I would effectively posit the concrete (past) existence not only of the musical piece (e.g. regarded as acoustic waves in the physical space, as long as I commit myself to a naturalistic worldview), but also of my experience of having listened to this musical piece. In phantasy, instead, both existential positings are “neutralized”.<sup>18</sup>

At this point we need to raise the following question: how is consciousness aware of the as-if character of phantasy experiences? This character cannot in fact be posulated as an *in se* quality of a certain type of experience. To be phenomenologically admissible, this datum must further be perceived in some manner or be experientially conscious: in other terms, it must be a *per se* quality. It is precisely here that the Ego-splitting comes into play. In fact, the as-if character must be somehow experienced by the phantasing subject. The quasi-position of the phantasy act becomes

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<sup>16</sup>This more static form of identity is due to an inner constituent of experience that Dan Zahavi famously calls “minimal self” (cf. Zahavi 1999).

<sup>17</sup>For a much broader assessment of the problems related to Husserl’s phenomenology of pure phantasy, especially with regard to the phenomenon of the ego-splitting, see Cavallaro 2017. In this section of the present paper, I mostly draw on the analyses laid down in that article.

<sup>18</sup>In *Ideas I* Husserl defines phantasy “the neutrality modification of ‘positing’ presentification, therefore of memory in the widest conceivable sense” (Husserl 1983, 260, translation modified). Yet, the identification of phantasy with a “modification” of a pre-given act is highly problematic, as Husserl himself will recognize in his later manuscripts published in Husserl 2005, 689–708. For an assessment of this issue see Cavallaro 2017, 167–171.

aware through what Husserl calls “inner consciousness, “inner perception”, or “original consciousness” of the act. In an important appendix to his lectures on time-consciousness, entitled *Internal Consciousness and the Grasping of Experiences*, Husserl illustrates this general feature of all acts of consciousness as follows: “Every act is consciousness of something, but there is also consciousness of every act. Every experience is ‘sensed’ [*empfunden*], is immanently ‘perceived’ (internal consciousness)” (Husserl 1991, 130). This inner experiencing accompanies every kind of intentional act and is not itself, as Husserl points out, an intentional act – otherwise this would lead to an infinite regress.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, one can live through a phantasy experience only in virtue of an internal awareness of that experience and its respective quasi-positing character. If we did not have such inner consciousness of the phantasying act, for example we would stand no chance of carrying out the divide between phantasy and perception – for, as we have seen, phantasy experiences distinguish themselves from perceptual experiences in virtue of their neutralizing character.

This significant phenomenon sheds light on the problem of the Ego-splitting here at stake. Namely it shows how inner consciousness is fundamentally responsible for the Ego-splitting in the case of phantasy experiences. As Rudolf Bernet pinpoints in his book *Conscience et existence*: “The inner consciousness of the accomplishment of an act of phantasy is the living experience of a reduplication of the intentional consciousness” (Bernet 2004, 6; cf. also Husserl 2005, 34). This entails that whenever we live through a phantasy experience we undergo a specific doubling of the intentional consciousness as well as of a split of the I. Let us develop this point more in detail.

To begin with, it is necessary to introduce a distinction between two forms of split involved in the living through of phantasy experiences. Firstly, there is the split of intentional consciousness. The phantasy experiences of the phantasied I do not belong to the same temporal flux of the phantasying I. As Fink distinctly puts it, “the time [of the phantasy world] does not coincide with the time of the actual I, it does not stand in any relation of orientation with the present, in which the phantasy experience constitutes itself” (Fink 1966, 46).<sup>20</sup> This aspect makes the distinction between phantasy and recollection even clearer. In recollection, as already discussed, we also experience a doubling of the intentional act, but in this case the two moments, namely the recollected perception and the actual recollecting act belong to the one and the same flux of consciousness. On the contrary, the phantasied experience and the phantasying experience remain alien to each other, for they belong to two different worlds, with their correspondent spatio-temporal dimensions.

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<sup>19</sup>Would consciousness become conscious only dependently on a second intentional experience, one would have to postulate a further intentional experience that makes the latter equally conscious, and so on *ad infinitum*. Hence, in order to forestall the regress one must consider self-consciousness an intrinsic feature of any experience whatsoever.

<sup>20</sup>Husserl himself reaches a similar conclusion in *Experience and Judgment* where he refers to the specific character of phantasy time as detached from the absolute time of perception (cf. Husserl 1975, § 39).



In addition, the split involves a redoubling of the I who lives through the phantasy experience. This difference of phantasying and phantasied I comes particularly into the fore in Husserl's references to the phenomenon of phantasy in the second part of his lectures on *First Philosophy*. Here, Husserl introduces the famous example of the phantasy experience of a centaurs' battle. Phantasying the battle, Husserl pinpoints, "it is also possible that I am not part of it [the phantasy world of the centaurus' battle, that I do not count. But upon closer inspection I am *myself then* in a certain sense, and necessarily so, co-phantasized. For, how could I imagine such an episode of the phantasy world with such determination, without imagining it in a *certain orientation*?" (Husserl 2019, 319; cf. also Husserl 2005, 556). One could argue that, in a certain respect, an analogy between phantasy and perception holds true, for also in phantasy we cannot quasi-perceive an object if not from a given viewpoint in the phantasy space. However, what is interesting here is the fact that the phantasied I who observes the centaurs' battle from a certain orientation is detached from the I who lives through the phantasy experience. No reunification or identification is possible between the two, otherwise, as Natalie Depraz correctly observes, "one would face a case of madness due to multiple personality disorder, schizophrenia in the literal sense" (Depraz 1995, 263; cf. also Bernet 2004, 112). Phantasying I and phantasied I must remain separated if the I should maintain its identity.

To take a step further, it can be argued that the impossibility of reunifying the two I's is justified by both static and genetic considerations. From a static point of view, the phantasied I represents the I-pole of the quasi-perception reproduced by the phantasy experience, whereas the phantasying I equals the I-pole of this experience itself. Thus, they belong to the inner intentional structure of two different acts and as such must be kept separated. The possibility of a sheer identification between the two I's is ruled out by Husserl since they belong to two different fluxes of consciousness, i.e. to two different temporal horizons. From a genetic point of view, I cannot consider the phantasyed I as myself since this one, together with the phantasy experience that gives rise to it, is the product of an unmotivated act of subjective freedom in which phantasy ultimately consists (cf. Bernet 2004, 108, 115). I cannot find so to speak a place for it in my genetic history since it does not fit with my past sedimented experiences in which, to continue the example began earlier, no centaurs occur and perform a battle in front of my incredulous eyes.

Does this ruling out the identity between the phantasying I and the phantasied I jeopardize the self-identity of the I? Once again self-consciousness and self-identity seem to clash here. It is namely self-consciousness that motivates us to draw the distinction between the phantasying experience and the phantasied experience along with their corresponding I's. If self-consciousness was not obtaining, surely I could not become conscious of living through a phantasy experience as I would not be aware of the neutralizing character of the positing performed by phantasy. Nonetheless, Husserl still admits here a "union of coincidence" (*Deckungseinheit*) between the phantasying I and phantasied I, which means a sort of identity in difference. There is no strict difference, since the phantasied I does not resemble an *alter ego* which I can perceive in the real world, but this I is nothing else than me as

imagined in a phantasy world. At the same time, there is also not a straightforward identity between the I's. The split brought about by self-consciousness is a split inasmuch as the consciousness of identity does not totally disappear but is still there albeit modified, tantalized by difference. The I loses its sheer identity in order to acquire a new level of identification which entails and harbors difference in itself. In this sense, strictly speaking, the splitting of the I does not coincide with its reduplication. A reduplication entails that at first there is one I, while thereafter there are two I's. On the opposite, a splitting does not bring to existence a new, second I, which would be numerically distinct from the first. In this case, the I undergoes a process, i.e. the splitting, which allows difference to enter its self-identity. At the end of this process, there are not two I's, but one and the same splitted I.

In sum, Husserl's phenomenological analyses of recollection and phantasy experiences expounded so far have shown us an intrinsic feature of the subject, namely its distinctive aptitude of splitting itself without giving up its own identity. In the case of phantasy, we further noticed that the identity of the I which follows the Ego-splitting is of a different kind with respect to the sheer self-identity prior to it. Now, these aspects of Husserl's approach to the problem of the Ego-splitting find their culmination in his analyses of reflection. We shall see in the next section how Husserl reached a more advanced insight into the issue concerning the incompatibility between self-consciousness and self-identity in his inquiries into the phenomenological structure of reflective experiences. This will at the same time allow us to draw a parallel with the Kantian approach set out in the first part of this paper.

### 3.4 *Ego-Splitting and Reflection*

The previous discussion about the role of the Ego-splitting in recollection and phantasy has shown the centrality of this concept for the general understanding of acts of representification. In every kind of representification, consciousness undergoes a splitting that, on the one hand, seems to jeopardize the identity of the I, but, on the other hand, renders it eventually possible to *experience* such an identity. As paradoxical as it may sound, the condition of possibility for experiencing the identity of the I rests on its original split. This is namely the general insight we can gather from Husserl's meditations on the phenomenon of Ego-splitting. Yet, before jumping to this conclusion, we still need to examine a further type of acts, in which the characteristic split of the I still plays a crucial role: we refer here to the acts of reflection.

Reflection for Husserl does not constitute a specific topic of phenomenological analysis among others. Instead, it takes on a "*universal* methodological function" since "the phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection" (Husserl 1983, 174). Husserl distinguishes a kind of reflection that we commonly perform in the natural attitude and the reflection peculiar to the phenomenological method. In contrast to natural reflection – which may also assume the form of a scientific enterprise such as in the case of the method of introspection as employed by empirical psychology – phenomenological reflection brackets the positing of

being pertaining to the reflected living experience by means of the phenomenological *epoché* (cf. Husserl 1960, 32 f.; see also the whole § 15 of the *First Cartesian Meditation*). What remains after this putting out of action of the existential thesis which accompanies every experience is the pure experience with its eidetic features. Now, despite the methodologically different meaning and usage of natural and phenomenological reflection in Husserl's philosophy, one notices that they both share a common intentional structure – which constitutes the referential common ground that permits us to employ the term 'reflection' to refer to each of those.<sup>21</sup>

Reflection has in common with the other kinds of experience such as perception, recollection, and phantasy the fact of having an intentional character. Accordingly, the relationship between the reflecting act and the reflected experience is to be characterized as intentional. This intentional relation however can neither be interpreted as a relation between two transcendent things nor as a relation between two *relata* that happen to be at two different moments in the objective time, like in the case of recollecting experiences. As a matter of fact, Husserl at times seems to boost an understanding of reflection in terms of a “retrospective glimpse [*rückschauender Blick*]” (cf. Husserl 1989, 260; cf. Husserl 1987, 208; Husserl 2006a, 196), which involves a temporal delay of the reflected act with respect to the reflecting act. In such a view, I can reflectively seize upon an act only insofar as it is already elapsed (and retentionally present), so that the act of reflection must be imagined at any time a step ahead, as it were.<sup>22</sup> However, Husserl gradually abandons this early insight. On the one hand, he becomes well aware of the difficulties and paradoxes that invalidate this account of reflection, and which are the ones traditionally attributed to the reflection-theory of the self and self-consciousness criticized for instance by Henrich (see above). On the other hand, in the second volume of his lecture course on *First Philosophy* he explicitly hints at the possibility of a reflecting act that runs parallel to the reflected experience. While perceiving a house I may turn my regard to the experience of perceiving as such, albeit without suspending my ongoing perception. Husserl writes there:

Once the perception, in our example the perception of a house, continues after having established myself already as a reflecting I, then I have, for this further continuing perception, not a temporal spread [*Auseinander*] of the I directed at the house [on the one hand] and, on the other, of the I of reflection directed at this I and its being-directed-perceptually-at-the-house [...]. Rather, in the living present I have in coexistence the doubled I and the doubled I-actus; hence the I which now observes the house continually, and the I which enacts the actus: 'I am aware that I continually observe the house', and which articulates itself, perhaps, in the form 'I observe the house' (Husserl 2019, 292).

<sup>21</sup> It is thus not my intent here to unveil the much debated topic of the split between the phenomenological, natural, and phenomenologizing I first identified by Eugen Fink in Fink 1933. For a recent valuable discussion of this topic see Varga 2011.

<sup>22</sup> In the same vein, Zahavi interprets reflection as an act that, when it sets in, “initially grasps something that has just elapsed, namely the motivating prereflective phase of the experience. I remain affected by that which is no longer present, and I therefore have the possibility to react on the affection and to thematize the backward sinking phase of experience” (Zahavi 1999, 117).

This long passage is crucial for understanding the difference between the Ego-splitting occurring in reflection and the one characteristic of the acts of representification considered so far, that is, recollection and phantasy. Previously we observed that the activity of recollecting a past experience entails a split between the recollecting I and the I of the recollected experience. In this case, we clearly notice a “temporal separation [*zeitliches Auseinander*]” between the two I’s: the I of recollection belongs to the living present in which the recollecting act takes place, whereas the I as immanent moment of the recollected experience settles in the temporal horizon of the I’s past life.

The situation becomes more complicated when it comes to addressing the temporal dimension of the Ego-splitting pertaining to phantasy experiences. In contrast to the phantasying I, the phantasized I is in no sense part of this world with its objective time and space. This means that it would make little sense to localize it in a temporal point instead of another, as long as these points are determined with respect to the now-point (*Jetztpunkt*) of the I who lives through the phantasy experience. A sentence as ‘the adventures of Frodo Baggins took place in the year 496 A.C.’ immediately appears awkward since we do not usually pose the objective existence of the happenings narrated in the fictional book of J.R.R. Tolkien while reading them. As already argued above, phantasy world and real world do not share the same modality of temporal experience – clearly, the same holds true for the experiential dimension of space. A consequence of this is that also the respective I’s with their corresponding experiences do not partake of the same temporal level. To put it plainly, it goes against the set of eidetic laws for phantasy experiences to say that the phantasying I is a step ahead or behind with respect to the phantasized I. In fact, the phenomenological structure of the two temporal dimensions does not allow any criterion of comparison for establishing what comes first and what comes after.<sup>23</sup>

In reflection, on the contrary, we acknowledge a temporal relation between the reflecting I and the reflected I, which is, first, incomparable with the one of phantasy experience and, second, of a different sort than the one of recollection. The act of reflection together with the reflected act join in a relationship of, to say, “temporal chiasm [*zeitliches Ineinander*]” or “contemporaneity”. Thus, it turns out that what makes reflection a peculiar act of its own, especially in contrast to recollection and phantasy, is the simultaneity between the reflected and reflecting experience together with their corresponding I’s.

Furthermore, it is clear, in this case as in the previous occurrences of the split, that these two I’s must maintain their identity in spite of the split. Were this not be the case, I would face an experience of the consciousness’ life of somebody else (what is called by Husserl “empathy”) and not a *reflection* into my own life of consciousness. The criterion that permits us to establish the fact that I am introspec-

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<sup>23</sup>Thus, also simultaneity between the phantasying and the phantasized experience and their respective I’s is ruled out. Temporal categories are relative categories of things (objects, events), which means, they hold true only if they are taken all together as possible predicates of one individual at a time.

tively experiencing my experience instead of empathizing with the experience of someone different from me is the phenomenal character of the reflected experience. If this experience is originally lived through, i.e. in a first-personal mode of presentation, I cannot cast in doubt its being-mine: objectively, I lack experiential motives to attribute it to someone else. For the first-personal givenness of the experience of another I different from me is fundamentally inaccessible to me or, as Husserl puts it, "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). Thus, although empathy and reflection share the structural simultaneity of two I's (and of two egological lives), they differ to the extent that in reflection it is one and the same I which is contemporaneously represented and then representifying, whereas empathy representifies the experience of another self, which cannot be identified with the experiencing I.

Even if reflection distinguishes itself from representifications, it may be considered as their essential condition. By every representification a type of reflection sets in, which in turn renders possible the representifying of an absent object or experience. The type of reflection we are talking about must not be conflated with the reflection as an autonomous act of consciousness which thematically directs itself towards its intentional object. As a condition for representifying experiences, reflection is rather an un-thematically conscious operation which brings about the Ego-splitting which is fundamental for any kind of representifying act. For the splitting must not be seen as an outcome of representification, rather as its most essential condition. In order to representify an experience, consciousness must redouble itself. This is true for every kind of representification: in remembering, phantasy, and reflection itself – considered as an intentional act – a reduplication of the I and a consequent split takes place. We cannot remember a past experience without operating a split of the I in remembering and remembered I. We cannot imagine experiencing something without divorcing the current experience of imagining from the imagined experience, and so for their corresponding I's. Finally, we cannot reflect upon our own experience without producing a new level of experiences with its reflecting I. The unthematic reflection which is at the basis of the split plays a double role by differentiating the I and at the same time identifying again the divided I's. The Ego-splitting becomes a factor of union rather than separation, since for Husserl, the reduplication (*Verdoppelung*) or split (*Spaltung*) of the I does not necessarily entail separation (*Scheidung*) (cf. Farges 2015), rather being the condition of possibility for self-identity. Without a previous splitting of the I, the latter cannot become conscious of itself, i.e. self-manifest. Self-consciousness ultimately implies the Ego-splitting as its condition of possibility.

## 4 Conclusion. The Split at the Core of the Transcendental Subject

What is the significance of these analyses for the problem stated at the beginning? We preliminarily observed that self-consciousness entails an Ego-splitting and noticed that this is at odds with the prerequisite of self-identity we generally attribute to every experienceable or solely thinkable object. The discussion in the first section has shown that Kant was aware of this problem, albeit without seriously tackling it. That by every act of reflection and self-consciousness the I can appear both as object and subject is for him an “undoubtable fact” which is at the same time “absolutely impossible to explain”. Husserl’s phenomenology has the merit of having uncovered new aspects of this fundamental split of the I. For him every act of representification, i.e. acts in which something absent comes into presence, may be deemed responsible for a certain type of Ego-splitting. We see in fact that to any form of representification corresponds a specific mode in which the splitting of the I can occur. Furthermore, we noticed how this qualification of the Ego-splitting basically depends on the relation between the temporalities of the representing I and the represented I characteristic for each case. In recollection both I’s belong to the same temporal stream, whereby what principally differentiates them is their ‘position’ in the temporal continuum. In phantasy experiences the phantasing I and the phantasied I are not parts of the same temporal stream. Hence, their difference does not amount to the delayed location within a temporal continuum, but to the heterogeneity of the temporal dimensions in which the two I’s, with their entire egological life, are to be located. Finally, we noticed that reflection discloses a further type of Ego-splitting due to the “temporal chiasm” between the reflecting and reflected I. In this case, we have seen, one can speak of a simultaneous existence of the two I’s in the living experience.

At the end of the previous section, it emerged how for Husserl reflection in general can be regarded as the condition of possibility for every act of representification. Husserl admits a sort of non-thematic self-consciousness which accompanies each and every act of representification. Since self-consciousness involves an Ego-splitting, we conclude that also the structure of this kind of act demands a split of the I. In the same vein, Kant’s analyses of transcendental self-consciousness showed that the latter is a fundamental ingredient of every experience and thus must always be presupposed as a transcendental condition of all experiencing. Husserl’s analyses further follow Kant’s in noticing in reflection or self-consciousness an Ego-splitting. We can gather from this, the conclusion that the Ego-splitting itself must be regarded as a transcendental condition of experience. For in order to experience something, the I must ‘see’ itself experiencing, as it were. This involves a split between the I who sees itself experiencing and the I who is seen.

Far from being the cause of an infinite regress, the splitting of the I is the condition for which an I can appear to itself, that is, in Husserl’s terms, can be “constituted” as an I. From a transcendental philosophical standpoint, self-manifestation

or self-constitution is a necessary condition not only for the I as a particular being, but for any object of knowledge and experience. We saw this point in the discussion of Kant's theory of transcendental self-consciousness. In order to have an experience of an object such as a table, there must be an I who experiences the object. This means that experiences are not alike floating entities with nobody conscious of them (cf. Husserl 1991, 84–88, 120–122). A no-ownership theory, i.e. a theory that downplays the role of a subject of experience, stating that there can be experiences that nobody really owns, clashes against a transcendental understanding of the structures of experience itself (cf. Hart 2009, 81–93). There is always a subject experiencing, thinking, desiring, and willing an object. The principle of intentionality, often considered as the major contribution of phenomenology, is condemned to remain misunderstood as long as one overshadows its counterpart, i.e. the eidetic necessity of what has been called the “self-luminosity” of experience, meaning the belonging of every and each experience to an experiencing subject.<sup>24</sup>

Now, to solve our issue, the question we ultimately need to respond to is precisely the following: does this appearing of the experience to itself involve a necessary split, in the sense of an irremediable separation, of the I's own life? The answer is no, since, as the previous analyses reveal, no matter what kind of split is at stake in whatever mode of representification, the representified experience and the representifying experience are *my* experiences, that means, they are the experiences of one and the same I. The problem, however, is not simply to state the identity of the I with itself. More fundamental is to show how the I becomes aware of its identity. To constitute its identity *per se*, the I must experience itself as divided. This is the original insight Kant offers us in his theory of self-consciousness. And this is the same insight that we can gather from Husserl's phenomenological analyses of the Ego-splitting in the acts of representification and reflection. Not solely self-consciousness, but also self-identity involves the Ego-splitting, for identity in the case of transcendental philosophy is in no way akin to a feature which entities possess *in se* – identity is rather always posited by a subject and hence it equals the product of an experiential synthesis. If this holds true for common entities such as tables, trees etc., the more it must hold for that peculiar sort of entity which is the transcendental subject. In other terms, the identity of the subject itself cannot be regarded as a given but always as a product of a synthesis. As we previously noticed, in this case Husserl speaks of a “synthesis of coincidence [*Deckungssynthese*]” between the two I's produced by the split. This synthesis obtains automatically, as it were, which means, it proceeds without any active position-taking by the subject – and obviously so, since it is the synthesis that transcendently constitutes the subject as such. The most inner nucleus of the subject thus entails an inner process of differentiation which brings about the split. Jan M. Broekman (1963, 124 and n. 3) speaks in this sense of an “egological difference” inhabiting the intimate depth of the I. This splitting, this differentiation is not the last word, however. Where there is a split, there is always a

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<sup>24</sup>This is a central thesis in the works of Dan Zahavi. See for instance Zahavi 1999.

possibility of reunification, of synthesis and reconciliation of what was previously separated. It is as if the subject constituted its own difference in order to subsequently affirm its identity on a deeper level.<sup>25</sup>

In an appendix to the second volume of *First Philosophy*, Husserl refers to a kind of synthesis of recognition of the I as a continuous subject that lives through all its acts of representification: “I find it [the transcendental I] as the continual *Ego* in the ‘I now experience this thing, I remember, I expect’, and so on, be it (as the I) of the respective individual experience, be it in a thoroughgoing (continuity) in the transition of one to the other [experience], while the phenomenon that just ran off is still alive intentionally” (Husserl 2019, 562). The wording “I find it” alludes to the fact that it is only through my reflective gaze that I can literally find myself in every experience – provided that the syntheses of time (especially retention) render possible the grasping of the elapsed phases of the flux in which my acts have been lived through. Thus, reflection is precisely that activity which allows us to recognize the I as continuous among all its experiences.

At this point, one may raise the objection that it is odd to speak of a split in the first place where there is nothing to be split. How could one intend an Ego-splitting, if the splitting is at the basis of the constitution of the I itself? To answer this objection, it is sufficient to take a closer look at the concept of “constitution [*Konstitution*]” at stake here. In Husserl’s understanding of the word, constitution is not synonymous with “production [*Erzeugung*]” (cf. Landgrebe 1974). The I does not have to be identified directly with the real product of a synthesis of coincidence between different acts of consciousness. What constitution refers to is rather a form of manifestation or, better, self-manifestation of the I, which can take place only if the synthesis of coincidence underlying several acts has been carried out. Thus, the splitting renders possible not the coming to being of the I, but its self-manifestation. However, because in phenomenology as well as in general in transcendental philosophy the mode of appearing of an object, in this case the I, is essential to the definition of the object itself, we may renew the thesis for which the splitting, as the condition for the manifestation and appearing of the I, belongs to the most essential

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<sup>25</sup> Julien Farges (2015, 99) emphasizes how reflection according to Husserl opens up a verticality in the essence of the I, a sort of original depth which produces a qualitatively infinite diffraction of the original split. I agree that the Ego-splitting allows difference and thus verticality to penetrate the essence of the I. However, I cannot see why this splitting should proceed *ad infinitum*, as Farges seems to suggest. The split must be recognized as the condition of possibility of the self-thematization of the I. This self-thematization, if we consider it in a non-methodological sense as self-consciousness which accompanies (or must be able to accompany) every and each experience, needs to be completed: in other words, its realization entails that the Ego-splitting finds eventually an end and becomes reunified by the synthesis of coincidence. In this precise sense, one might draw a distinction between reflection as a methodological means for Husserl’s phenomenological analyses and reflection as transcendental condition of possibility for experience. A distinction Farges’ article fails to draw. Christoph Durt (forthcoming) correctly pointed out that the splitting of the I is not a peculiarity of transcendental consciousness, but it occurs also in ordinary consciousness.



features of the I. Thus, to reframe our thesis in eidetic terms, we must conclude that the splitting is a necessary character of the *eidōs* 'Ego' along with self-consciousness and self-identity.<sup>26</sup>

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