

Transcendental phenomenology and possible worlds semantics

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Are transcendental phenomenology and possible worlds semantics, two seemingly disparate, perhaps even incompatible philosophical traditions, actually complementary? Have two well-known representatives of each tradition, J.N. Mohanty and J. Hintikka, misinterpreted the other's philosophical "program" in such a way that they did not recognize the complementarity? Charles Harvey¹ has recently argued that the answer to both questions is "yes." Here I intend to argue that the answer to the first is unclear, whereas the answer to the second is "no." Mohanty (at least) rightly cites fundamental differences between transcendental phenomenology and possible worlds semantics.

1. The Mohanty/Hintikka debate

How have Mohanty and Hintikka supposedly misconstrued one another's "conceptual framework?" Harvey writes: "whereas Professor Mohanty seems not to grant the possibility for genetic and transcendental dimensions of possible worlds methods of analysis, Hintikka, conversely, fails to recognize the function of the static-structural modes of phenomenological analysis" (p. 191). The alleged errors are put in terms of static and genetic analysis (or phenomenology), terms that occur repeatedly in the paper.

Now the occasion for Harvey's paper is an exchange between

* I read a shorter version of this paper at the Husserl Circle meeting in Chicago (at DePaul University, June 1986).

Mohanty and Hintikka that appeared in *Revue internationale de philosophie*² and in *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science*.³ Hintikka had, in *The Intentions of Intentionality*,⁴ put forward what Mohanty construes as “an interpretation” of Husserl’s notion of intentionality from the standpoint of possible worlds semantics. But Mohanty almost always treats Hintikka’s theory of intentionality as a competing alternative to Husserl’s. Mohanty devotes considerable attention to an attempt to prove that possible worlds semantics gives us only a list of what a noema picks out in a world, rather than an account of why it is picked out. Mohanty thinks that there is some merit to possible worlds semantics, but also believes that the concept of being *about* possibilities, which the semantics is supposed to clarify, is unanalyzed. Mohanty formulates several arguments in defense of intentionality as directedness. For his part, Hintikka maintains that whereas many of Mohanty’s criticisms militate against other versions of possible worlds semantics, they do not count against his. Hintikka stresses some points about which he and Mohanty agree and infers that he has constructed a theory of intentionality as intensionality from materials supplied by phenomenologists. Hintikka, however, believes that Husserl’s idea of intentionality as directedness is wrong (II, p. 197).

The point of this thumbnail sketch of the debate between Mohanty and Hintikka is to call attention to a feature that it *lacks*, namely, *any* discussion of static or genetic analysis, phenomenological or otherwise. However, Harvey characterizes Mohanty’s and Hintikka’s positions, along with their alleged shortcomings, in terms of static and genetic analysis. Mohanty, for example, supposedly believes that possible worlds semantics cannot accommodate genetic and transcendental analyses.

There are two reasonable requirements that must be met before we can evaluate this depiction of Mohanty’s and Hintikka’s views in terms that they did not use. In the first place, the terms ‘static analysis’ and ‘genetic analysis’ must either be defined or characterized in clear terms. It will not do to leave these terms unclarified, since a failure to elucidate these terms will leave us in the dark about just what is being said. Secondly, there must be quotations from the Mohanty/Hintikka exchange that establish that the *substance* of their views is about static and genetic

analysis even though their words are not.

I do not think that Harvey's paper addresses either requirement satisfactorily. Let us first consider the need to clarify the terms 'genetic phenomenology' and 'static phenomenology'. I aim to show that Harvey allows these terms to vacillate in meaning and does not pay sufficient attention to the question, "Is this what Husserl means by the terms?"

Harvey tries to defend Husserl's phenomenology against one of Hintikka's criticisms, and his defense is in terms of the distinction between static and genetic phenomenology. Since *Husserl* cannot be defended with someone else's views, we need to concern ourselves with what Husserl meant by the terms. The response to Hintikka on page 197, however, exhibits a lack of necessary attention to historical detail. There Harvey claims that Husserl's turn to genetic phenomenology necessarily implied abandoning static phenomenology. This would be true only if static and genetic phenomenology were irreconcilable. But when Husserl introduces the distinction in *Cartesian Meditations*, he says that static phenomenology must be supplemented by genetic analysis.

The phenomenology developed at first is merely 'static'; its descriptions are analogous to those of natural history, which concern particular types and, at best, arrange them in their systematic order. Questions of universal genesis and the genetic structure of the ego in his universality, so far as that structure is more than temporal formation, are still far away; and, indeed, they belong to a higher level.⁵

But since Husserl believes that genetic analysis supplements static phenomenology, the two are not irreconcilable.

How does genetic analysis supplement static analysis? Static phenomenology clarifies the nature of acts, exhibiting them as "synthetic in the sense that they unify a multiplicity in rendering something present."⁶ My perception of this desk, for example, is an act in which what I see is more than what is before my eyes. I see the desk, which has unobserved sides that I could see if I walked to the appropriate spot. The static analysis of the structure of this act (this perception of this desk, for example) reveals that it points beyond (or transcends) itself to other possible acts.

The acts, actual and possible, are synthesized as all being of this selfsame desk. It is noteworthy that this actual perception of this desk would not be what it is except by reference to other possible acts. But the possible acts reveal that consciousness itself has a temporal structure. The “predelineation” of possible perceptions points to a possible future, just as the side that is perceived now would be retained in (retention) consciousness as having been of the selfsame desk, were that possible future to become a present actuality.

We said that the constitution of the ego contains all the constitutions of all the objectivities existing for him, whether these be immanent or transcendent, ideal or real. It should now be added that the *constitutive systems* (systems actualizable by the Ego), by virtue of which such and such objects and categories of objects exist for him, are themselves possible only within the frame of a genesis in conformity with laws (CM, pp. 75–76).

David Carr puts it succinctly: “The drawing-together of the actual and the nonactual, which was the synthesis of static analysis, must be interpreted as a temporal drawing-together in order to be adequately described” (PPH, p. 71).

Genetic analysis supplements static phenomenology, then, in that it is a further dissection of the features of acts. It is noteworthy that Husserl writes of a genesis “in conformity with laws.” Husserl proceeds to write about the “universal genetic form that makes the concrete ego (the monad) possible as a unity.” These statements point to the fact that genetic analysis is still pure eidetic description (CM, p. 76). This is exactly what one would expect if my interpretation about the relationship between static and genetic phenomenology is correct.

Since Husserl’s depiction of genetic analysis in *Cartesian Meditations* is not irreconcilable with static phenomenology, Harvey must mean something different from Husserl when he treats the two as if they were incompatible. When we turn to Harvey’s paper we find more than one use of each of the two terms.

Consider, for example, the explanation of the response to Hintikka (p. 197). There the differences between static and

genetic phenomenological analysis are explained in order to show that “phenomenological analysis is not always restricted to the type of conscious immediacy that Hintikka seems to think” (p. 194; cf. p. 197). What is this “conscious immediacy” to which phenomenology is “not always” restricted, although (Harvey clearly suggests) it is *sometimes* thus restricted? It supposedly is a restriction to what is presented in a *single* act, a restriction that prohibits the analysis from including reference to possible acts.

Hintikka’s chief criticism of Husserlian methods of meaning analysis seems to relate primarily to methods of genetic analysis – the type of phenomenological analysis that commits itself to uncovering all the temporally layered constituents of any given sense. However, as soon as phenomenology adopts this procedure it simultaneously admits that consciousness can never grasp *all* of these constituent meanings *in one act*. With this realization Husserlian phenomenology escapes the principle of restraint to the *immediately* given, retaining only a regulative and procedural principle of restraint to that which *can be given* (p. 197).

Since this is supposed to be an explanation of the argument in which the change from static to genetic analysis is characterized as abandoning something, which now is characterized as abandoning “the principle of restraint to the immediately given,” Harvey seems to be saying that static phenomenology is a kind of analysis that is limited to what is given in a *single* act, the so-called “immediately given.”

This is very peculiar, and it is certainly not Husserl. There could be no descriptive, analytic phenomenology at all if reference to what *can* be given were precluded. In the fifth meditation Husserl explicitly says that the analysis of the sense, ‘objective transcendence,’ is a static analysis (CM, p. 106). And that analysis includes reference not only to what can be given, but to what cannot be given to me. Clarification of the sense of objective transcendence requires bringing the concept (not the existence) of others into the analysis – those who can experience what I cannot (at least at the same time, such as the other side of a desk). Husserl’s concept of static phenomenology never

included a restriction to the so-called “immediately given.”

To show that Harvey has misdescribed static phenomenology, however, paradoxically may have made the essential point he wants to make. *If* Hintikka believes that phenomenology is restricted to what is given in a single act, then Hintikka is mistaken, regardless of whether restriction to what is presented in a single act should be described as static phenomenology. It is granted that *if* Hintikka said that, he is mistaken. But this observation only establishes the fact that Harvey need not have mentioned static and genetic phenomenology in the argument at all. Such talk only muddied the waters.

Did Hintikka actually claim that phenomenological analyses of meaning preclude what can be given, as the response to him implies (p. 197)? There is one passage that appears to support Harvey’s interpretation. A closer examination of it, however, militates against that interpretation. This is what Hintikka wrote:

Even though phenomenological meaning analysis recognizes how much more can be present in an act over and above what is filled in it, nevertheless this analysis is bound to be constrained by what *is* present (and hence accessible to phenomenological reflection) in an act. In contrast, a possible-worlds analysis of the meaning of an act is not restricted to ingredients of meaning which can somehow be recaptured by a reflecting consciousness (*Revue*, p. 117; H,I, & CS, p. 254).

Hintikka merely says that phenomenological analyses are restricted to what is *accessible* to phenomenological reflection, a locution that refers to possible as well as actual acts. What of the recognition that more can be present in an act than what is filled in it? Is Hintikka committed to calling that recognition non-phenomenological? He would be if Harvey’s interpretation were correct, but the answer is far from determinate. Thus, it is not clear that Hintikka has misinterpreted Husserlian phenomenology in the way Harvey alleges. Hence, it is not clear that Harvey has defended Husserl.

Harvey thinks that genetic analysis, on the other hand, is “the type of phenomenological analysis that commits itself to uncovering all of the temporally layered constituents of any given

sense” (p. 197). By what does that mean? Does it mean the explicit recognition of the temporal nature of consciousness and the analysis of those necessary and *a priori* forms of constitution? Or is something that is both empirical and contingent meant by ‘the temporally layered constituents of any given sense?’ Does Harvey believe that genetic analysis is etymology? Etymology, after all, can be described as the study of the historical, empirical and contingent facts about what words have meant. But we lack phenomenological access to the historical and contingent facts about what words have meant. Phenomenology is not an attempt to settle empirical questions about what words have meant *a priori*. What about the first alternative I just mentioned? If genetic phenomenology is the analysis of the necessary and *a priori* forms of temporal constitution, then it is not irreconcilable with static analysis, but a supplement to it. However, Harvey characterizes genetic analysis as if it were irreconcilable with static (or structural) analyses. Thus, it is not clear what he means.

The discussion of Suzanne Bachelard’s criticisms of genetic analysis offers a clue, since Harvey endorses these criticisms. One putative problem is that the original sense may be irrelevant to currently existing meaning. “The same problem holds for even the gradual temporal-historical transmission of meanings” (p. 198). This suggests that Harvey believes that genetic analysis is identical with etymology, though that is not strictly implied. The reason this interpretation is suggested is that we know that a word can undergo such radical changes in meaning that the original meaning is unrelated to the current one. The same interpretation is corroborated by this quotation: “The point being made in each of these cases is that knowledge and the genesis of meanings often occurs in leaps – leaps that are not predictable from an understanding of lower level sense-progeny” (p. 199). But if this is what Harvey means, then the claim about genetic phenomenology is false, since it does not include predictions (as if it were an empirical scientific study). In short, Harvey’s characterization of genetic phenomenology leaves open two possible interpretations. The first is recognizably Husserlian, but is incompatible with Harvey’s own construal of the contrast with static analysis. The second, which seems to be the one favored, leaves open serious doubts about whether it is phenomenological at all.

But that is not the only ambiguity. Towards the end of the paper Harvey finally says something that was in the background: "I have, to some extent, identified genetic with transcendental analysis while such an identification seems a contingent one at best" (p. 203). What does 'to some extent' mean here? Does Harvey mean that he distinguishes genetic from transcendental analysis in some places, but otherwise fails to do so? What does it mean to say that the identification of transcendental with genetic analysis is contingent? Evidently it does not mean that the identity of the two is a contingent fact, for Harvey writes of "contingency to the investigations at hand" in the next sentence.

Either genetic analysis is identical with transcendental analysis, or it is not. The answer is that it is not. We do not need definitions to establish this fact. We only need an example of an analysis that is both static (i.e., not genetic) and transcendental. Husserl explicitly calls his analysis of the concept, 'objective transcendence,' a static analysis (CM, p. 106), and yet says that the analysis is also transcendental (CM, p. 148). Husserl's analysis is of the constitution of the concept "in" consciousness, and is thus transcendental. It is characterized by the transcendental attitude, which Husserl describes as "the attitude according to which everything previously existing for us in straightforward consciousness is taken exclusively as 'phenomenon,' as a sense meant and undergoing verification, purely in the manner in which, as correlate of un-coverable constitutive systems, it has gained and is gaining existential sense" (CM, p. 95). This attitude defines a transcendental analysis, but not a genetic one.

This distinction between transcendental and genetic has an important corollary: to show that possible worlds analyses can incorporate temporal concepts is not to show that those analyses are or can be transcendental-phenomenological.

Are there any passages from the Mohanty/Hintikka debate that corroborate Harvey's interpretation of the discussion in terms of static and genetic analysis? Does Harvey cite such passages?

No. Rather, Harvey introduces the terms almost imperceptibly on pages 194–5. The so-called "basis" seems to be his association of the difference between meanings as lived acts and meanings as ideal entities with the difference between static and genetic analysis. That difference has more to do with heeding or ignoring the

role of consciousness in the constitution of meanings, I think, since those who stress meanings as lived acts (whether in gestures, speech, listening, or reading) are more apt to bring out the role of consciousness, while those who pay most attention to meaning as ideal entities are, other things being equal, less likely to stress consciousness' role. (This is not to say that a phenomenologist must overlook meanings as ideal entities.) Thus, the difference between meanings as lived acts and as ideal entities has more to do with the transcendental/naive distinction than with the static/genetic distinction.

Now Mohanty does write of the transcendental/naive distinction in order to distinguish phenomenology from possible worlds semantics. Thus, if genetic analysis *were* identical with transcendental analysis, Harvey would be justified in reinterpreting the Mohanty/Hintikka debate in terms of the difference between static and genetic analysis. But we have already seen that genetic analysis is not identical with transcendental analysis.⁷

This failure to distinguish transcendental from genetic analysis has a bearing on some conclusions drawn on page 200. After setting forth three criticisms of a particular interpretation of genetic analysis, Harvey concludes that (1) there are serious flaws with "transcendental-genetic" analyses, that is, analyses that are not "ontologically naive;" and (2) there are real virtues to analyses that are naive. But these conclusions are predicated on the failure to distinguish (1) transcendental from genetic, and (2) naive from static. Difficulties with a *very specific* kind of genetic analysis simply do not constitute general difficulties for transcendental phenomenology. We have noted that these difficulties consist in trying to ascertain empirical and contingent facts about what meanings have been or will be, facts to which we have no phenomenological access. There is no textual evidence that supports the belief that Mohanty tries to defend that kind of genetic analysis, the kind that Bachelard allegedly criticized. Quite the contrary, Mohanty defends what is recognizably phenomenological — a kind of description and analysis, the aim of which is to disclose necessary and *a priori* truths about the relationships between consciousness and its intentional object. Senses or meanings are revealed thereby.

Harvey tries to justify talking in terms of static and genetic

analysis on page 203. He also attempts to justify scrapping discussion of the transcendental/naive distinction. But I do not understand the “reasoning” that he “can only assert rather than defend here.” Mohanty rightly cites the notion of the transcendental as what is distinctive (in this context) about Husserlian phenomenology. Husserlian phenomenologists treat whatever object (= anything of which one can speak) strictly in its being for a subject, and attempt to describe and analyze those experiences, actual and possible, in which the object’s existence (for me) and being such-and-such (again “for me”) are constituted. That is a generalized thumbnail depiction of a phenomenological analysis. The methodological device that yields this framework, whereby objects are always treated in relation to consciousness, is called “phenomenological reduction.”

Now Harvey’s only response is that possible worlds semanticists can perform phenomenological reduction, too. From this he infers that the distinction between the naive and transcendental “often functions as a red herring in the discussion between phenomenology and possible worlds” (p. 203).

This is a non-sequitur. Of course possible worlds semanticists can perform phenomenological reduction. If they analyzed in terms of the framework that that methodological device yields, then their analyses would be transcendental. But it does not follow that the distinction between the transcendental and naive is irrelevant to what is distinctive about Husserlian phenomenology. It would follow if we added the false premise that the reduction must be possible for only phenomenologists to perform in order for it to mark what is distinctive about transcendental phenomenology. Can his reply be interpreted differently?

I suspect that what underlies Harvey’s reply is a (mere) *decision* on his part to continue to call some analyses within the framework of phenomenological reduction “possible worlds analyses.” But that linguistic decision does not constitute a reason for saying that those who distinguish phenomenological from other analyses in terms of the transcendental/naive distinction are in error. Those people either have simply made a different decision, or they are distinguishing Husserl’s phenomenology from possible worlds semantics by citing a *factual* difference between the two.

I think that Mohanty cites such a factual difference when he

writes “phenomenology cannot take just that step, which would lead to possible-worlds semantics. It cannot take that step in order to remain phenomenology and not fall into the naivete of an ontological discourse” (H, I, and CS, p. 251). This is the only passage that could be cited to support the thesis that Mohanty mistakenly believes that possible worlds semantics is *necessarily* naive. If Mohanty had claimed that possible worlds semantics is necessarily naive, that would have registered a linguistic decision on Mohanty’s part about how to use the term ‘possible worlds semantics,’ a decision that would be based on a factual difference between transcendental phenomenology and possible worlds semantics. Thus, Harvey could not show that Mohanty’s statement is mistaken by noting his decision to use the term ‘possible worlds semantics’ differently.

It is noteworthy, however, that Mohanty does not even say that possible worlds semantics is necessarily naive in the passage. Rather, he says that phenomenology is necessarily transcendental, or not naive. The statement ‘Phenomenology is necessarily not naive’ does not imply ‘Possible worlds analyses are necessarily naive.’ We would (Mohanty continues) be making straightforward ontological commitments if we adopted any of the many possible worlds semantic theories, including Hintikka’s. There is nothing in Mohanty’s exchange with Hintikka that commits him to saying that possible worlds semantics is necessarily naive. Mohanty only says that those theories *are* “naive” (in the Husserlian sense). Harvey does not dispute Mohanty’s statement that possible worlds semantics *is* naive (or not transcendental). Thus, even if there were some point to disputing decisions about how to use a term, it should be noted that even *that* is not at issue. Although Harvey emphasizes (p. 204) the *possibility* of Hintikka adopting a “theory” of transcendental constitution, he admits that Hintikka in fact believes that we do not constitute some things. To the extent that the “dispute” is not verbal, therefore, Harvey agrees with Mohanty. Therefore, the thesis that Mohanty misconceives possible worlds semantics in his exchange with Hintikka is unfounded.

Is the distinction between the mundane and transcendental an irrelevant consideration? Apparently not, since even Hintikka’s theory is naturalistic, the identity of individuals from possible world to possible world ultimately being grounded in the laws of

nature (II, p. 209; Harvey, p. 204).

Let us summarize the several conclusions we have reached. The terms 'genetic analysis' and 'static analysis' never are clarified satisfactorily in the paper, whereas the Mohanty/Hintikka debate is couched in those terms. There is no textual evidence to support the claim that the substance of the Mohanty/Hintikka debate is about genetic and static phenomenology. Harvey's talk of genetic and static analysis turns out to be a red herring, whereas Mohanty's distinction between phenomenology and possible worlds semantics in terms of the transcendental/naive distinction is not. Harvey alleges that Mohanty and Hintikka misconceive one another's views, but those claims are either unfounded or inadequately supported by the textual evidence.

2. Irreconcilable differences or happy marriage?

It may be said that the preceding criticisms do not address the major topic, namely, whether a complementary relationship between phenomenology and possible worlds semantics is possible. Let us consider this important topic. The last part of Harvey's paper consists of remarks in passing, assurances that a transcendental-phenomenological possible worlds semantics is possible, but without paying attention to several important details.

I would have preferred more direct discussion of a complementary relationship between phenomenology and possible worlds semantics to the polemics about the Mohanty/Hintikka debate. Harvey envisions the merging of two markedly different philosophical approaches, and that is surely an important topic.

There are, however, some difficulties that must be overcome before we can be confident about the proposed marriage. I said that the distinction between transcendental and genetic has an important corollary, namely, to show that possible worlds analyses can incorporate temporal concepts is not to establish that those analyses are or can be transcendental. The distinction has another consequence: Harvey's confidence about the merger is based upon a misunderstanding of the full significance of phenomenological reduction. Let me show why.

There is a debate between Quine and possible worlds semanti-

cists about the existence of possible objects. Quine argues that we should reject claims about possible objects because there are not adequate criteria for their identity.⁸ Some possible worlds semanticists, including Hintikka, reply that commitment to possible objects is theoretically acceptable, in part, because of the explanatory power of such a commitment.⁹ The problem Quine identifies is not one that possible worlds semanticists can avoid. Now the entire problem is about the existence or non-existence of objects. Such a problem *could* not arise from the phenomenological standpoint, since transcendental reduction requires neutrality about metaphysical issues.

It may be replied that the issue is not essentially one about existence, but about whether we can make sense of the concept of a possible object. If the issue is conceptual, then the context defined by phenomenological reduction does not rule it out. Although this is true, the reply overlooks another essential feature of phenomenological reduction, namely, the reference to objects *only* in relationship to actual and possible consciousness. The reply to the problem that Quine poses would be criteria for the identity of possible objects, criteria that must not involve any relationship to consciousness. I say “must not involve any relationship to consciousness” because of the way Quine formulates the problem. According to Quine, the problem is to avoid violations of one of the “fundamental principles governing identity:” the principle of substitutivity.¹⁰ Referentially opaque contexts, which include contexts such as ‘believes that,’ ‘knows that,’ ‘is unaware that,’ ‘says that,’ ‘doubts that,’ ‘is surprised that,’ etc. — in short, the so-called “propositional attitudes,” violate the principle of substitutivity (R&M, pp. 141–143). Thus, if the identity conditions of objects are relativized to consciousness, as they must be in any (Husserlian) phenomenology, the net result is referential opacity.

How is the problem to be solved? Let us concentrate on only one requirement for a solution. A clue consists in Quine’s acceptance of the existence of physical objects. For Quine, there is no problem with identity conditions for physical objects, since the conditions are objective, or independent of consciousness. If physical objects were treated strictly as physical objects for a subject, then Quine would object because there would be viola-

tions of the principle of substitutivity.

Let me summarize. The problem is to avoid commitment to the existence of things that violates the principle of substitutivity. A requirement for avoiding such violations is that the identity conditions for things be independent of consciousness. But if they are independent of consciousness, then the phenomenological standpoint would have to be abandoned altogether.

What is the significance of these observations? One conclusion is straightforward: to grant the legitimacy of the problem is to adopt a naive (non-transcendental) point of view. The problem calls for an answer that excludes consciousness in favor of “objective” (i.e., “naive”) identity conditions. But the phenomenological standpoint would *necessitate* that the criteria be in terms of identity for a consciousness. Pure possibilities must be traced to motivated ones. For a transcendental possible worlds semantics to be possible, it must be proven that Quine’s objections are downright illegitimate because they are based on the presupposition of naivete. No blurring of the distinction between genetic and transcendental will render this non-phenomenological issue a transcendental one. Yet possible worlds semanticists face this non-phenomenological issue.

Possible worlds semanticists all base their systems on Tarski’s semantics for formal languages, which gives a semantical interpretation of a language in terms of sets and ordered sets of objects – i.e., in terms of extensions. Tarski’s semantics never goes beyond talk of objects to talk of a subject in which these objects are constituted. Tarski’s semantics, therefore, is not transcendental-phenomenological. Thus, a phenomenological possible worlds semantics would require a radical alteration of the basis of the possible worlds systems. Extensions would no longer be philosophically primitive; transcendental subjectivity would. Can there be such a fundamental change of primitive concepts, and yet remain a possible worlds semantics? Is the answer to that question a matter of *discovery* or *decision*?

I am uneasy about the shifts from talk of *Hintikka’s* possible worlds semantics to talk of possible worlds semantics in general. There is a tendency in Harvey’s paper to speak of possible worlds semantics as if it were all-of-a-kind, as if there were not important differences that separated possible worlds semanticists. This is

misleading, of course. Perhaps the title of the paper should have been “Husserl’s Phenomenology and a Particular Variation on Hintikka’s Possible Worlds Semantics.” If it is objected that this is unfair, on the grounds that the differences between possible worlds semanticists must be relevant to reconciling it with Husserl’s phenomenology, my reply is that there do seem to be such differences. For example, some possible worlds semanticists do not raise the issue of how, if at all, possible objects are constituted. Some do not regard the domain of prefabricated possible objects as philosophically problematic. Montague, for example, thinks that he can give a semantical account for *intentional* discourse without considering how the possible objects are constituted. For them, possibilities are simply “there.”¹¹ This thesis cannot be reconciled with Husserl’s phenomenology. Mohanty appears to take note of this thesis when he contrasts phenomenology with versions of possible worlds semantics according to which possibilities are simply “there.” Mohanty writes

by virtue of the fact that consciousness can always objectify any of its achievements, ‘It is possible that...’ may be objectified, reified into ‘the possibility of...’ whereby an objectivity of a higher order is constituted out of the modalized forms of consciousness and their intentional objects. But, as said above, no object is constituted without the ‘I can’ consciousness. It belongs to the sense of any object, of any type whatsoever, that it can be identified, reidentified, referred to again. Thus at the heart of the *constituting* consciousness – what Husserl often grandiosely calls transcendental subjectivity – there is a possibility consciousness. This ‘I can’ is very far from being a *modal* concept (H, I, & CS, p. 251).

Naturally, Mohanty’s reply points to the world of difference between the transcendental and naive. I shall not dispute Hintikka’s reply – that Mohanty’s remarks pertain to other possible worlds theories.

There is another problem in the “possible worlds” literature that is worth mentioning, since it has a bearing on the possibility of merging Husserlian phenomenology and possible worlds semantics. Possible worlds semanticists have had a very difficult

time trying to give a formalized account of an agent's inconsistent beliefs. Obviously, no adequate theory of consciousness (and, by implication, no phenomenology) can fail to accommodate the possibility of an agent having contradictory beliefs. Yet some possible worlds semanticists have come to despair about the prospect of accounting for that phenomenological fact, so much so that they have said that they are talking about an ideally rational agent.¹² But this is only to say that they are not speaking of actual consciousness at all. This appears to amount to concentration on the semantical relation between language and world without considering consciousness.

Now I am not saying that this problem is insolvable. I am saying that solving it is a prerequisite to confidence about merging possible worlds semantics with phenomenology.

If the semantical relation is ostensibly independent of consciousness, this may help explain Lloyd Carr's claims about Smith and MacIntyre's book, *Husserl and Intentionality*.¹³ Their book is a detailed attempt to construct a possible-worlds theory of intentionality. Among other things, Carr says that the exposition gives primacy to the linguistic and phases a consistently phenomenological approach to intentionality out of the picture (HS, p. 115). Carr alleges that *Husserl and Intentionality* deals with Husserl's theory *as* interpreted in terms of, and paraphrased into the language of, semantics (HS, p. 115). The "semantization" of Husserl eventually leads to Carr's claim about Smith and MacIntyre's interpretation of the relationship of a noematic *Sinn* to its objects, namely,

the intentional relation between consciousness and its object is made dependent upon, and somehow a derivative of, a non-intentional, *semantic* relation between a noematic *Sinn* and the object it 'points to' ... Consider, this reading of Husserl would allow for the possibility that noema-world relations obtain either completely independent of ... consciousness, or connected with consciousness only contingently. On this reading, the intentional relation requires the non-intentional (semantic) one, not the other way around, clearly a non-phenomenological, non-Husserlian position (HS, pp. 117–118).

I am not saying that Carr is right. I am saying that his claims become even clearer in light of the way some possible worlds semanticists seem to be forced to speak of the relation between meaning (or language) and world – as being independent of consciousness.

Is a Husserlian phenomenological possible worlds semantics possible? Is the answer to this question a matter of discovery or decision? We have seen that some *actual* versions (including Hintikka's) of possible worlds semantics contain theses that are incompatible with Husserl's phenomenology. Our enthusiasm for Smith and MacIntyre's fine work should not prompt us to ignore or ride roughshod over these important differences. Discovery of what possible worlds semanticists say leads to the conclusion that there can be no Husserlian possible worlds semantics. Of course, we could *decide* to call a way of philosophizing that incorporates the consistent elements of both "a Husserlian possible worlds semantics." We could even use concepts from possible worlds semantics in order to illuminate parts of phenomenology – or vice versa. But that is not to show that there are fundamental similarities between the two. It is not to show that either Mohanty or Hintikka is mistaken. Rather, it is to make a decision about how to use a term.¹⁴

Notes

1. Charles Harvey, "Husserl's phenomenology and possible worlds semantics," *Husserl Studies* 3.3 (1986), pp. 191–207. Hereafter I shall refer to this article in the text by page number only.
2. J.N. Mohanty and J. Hintikka, in *Revue internationale de philosophie* 35 (1981), pp. 91–119. Hereafter: *Revue*.
3. Hubert Dreyfus, ed., *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 233–255. Hereafter: H, I, & CS.
4. J. Hintikka, *The Intentions of Intentionality* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969), pp. 192–222. Hereafter: II.
5. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), pp. 76–77. Hereafter: CM.
6. David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 69. Hereafter: PPH.
7. J. Hintikka and Charles Harvey, Review of D.W. Smith and R. MacIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality*, in *Husserl Studies* 1.2 (1984), pp. 202–212. Harvey cites this review in support of the claim that the

substance of the Mohanty/Hintikka debate is about static and genetic analysis (p. 192). But since the review is about Smith and MacIntyre's book rather than the Mohanty/Hintikka debate, and since Mohanty is not one of the authors of the review, the citation is no evidence for the conclusion.

8. Quine's objections to possible worlds are linked to his arguments against a few other related concepts, such as analyticity, necessity, and synonymy. W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View*, Ch. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 20–37. See also Quine's *Philosophy of Logic*, Ch. 1 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970) and his Review of *Identity and Individuation*, ed. M. Munitz, in *Journal of Philosophy* 69 (7 September 1972), 492–493.
9. Hintikka, for example, believes that "the notion of a possible world serves to clarify considerably the idea of ontological commitment so as to limit the scope of Quine's dictum" that we are ontologically committed to whatever we quantify over. J. Hintikka, *Models for Modalities* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969), pp. 94–95.
10. W.V.O. Quine, "Reference and Modality," in *From a Logical Point of View*, Ch. 8, p. 139. Hereafter: R&M. According to Quine, modal contexts are *also* referentially opaque. But since modalities are, from the phenomenological standpoint, regarded under the rubric of consciousness, we need not treat them separately. See also Quine's "Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes," in *The Ways of Paradox* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 185–196. J. Hintikka, "Semantics for Propositional Attitudes," reprinted in L. Linsky, ed., *Reference and Modality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). D. Føllesdal discusses Quine's objections to modalities and the attempt by various modal logicians to make sense of quantification into opaque contexts in "Quine on Modality," *Synthese* 19 (1968–69), pp. 147–157.
11. Richard Montague, "Pragmatics and Intensional Logic," *Synthese* 22 (1970a), 68–04.
12. M.J. Cresswell, *Logics and Languages* (London: Methuen, 1973).
13. Lloyd Carr, Review of D.W. Smith and R. MacIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality*, in *Husserl Studies* 1.1 (1984), 113–123. Hereafter: HS.
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