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[...]he was the one who taught us to stand firmly in a time where everything inner and outer was falling apart, while he compelled us to avoid all big words, to test every concept in the intuition of phenomena, and to give answers to his questions that are valid "change" instead of large counterfeit cash.

K. Löwith, Edmund Husserl zum Gedächtnis, *Von Hegel bis Nietzsche* (1941)

"No, life isn't over at the age of thirty-one," Prince Andréj suddenly decided definitively, immutably. "It's not enough that I know all that's in me, everyone else must know it, too: Pierre, and that girl who wanted to fly into the sky, everyone must know me, so that my life is not only for myself; so that they don't live like that girl, independently of my life, but so that it is reflected in everyone, and they all live together with me!"

L. Tolstoj, *War and Peace*

"But you lied."

"My words lied. My eyes and my arm shouted out the truth, but you were not seeing."

"I was so," Arya said. "I watched you every second!"

"Watching is not seeing, dead girl. The water dancer sees. Come, put down the sword, it is time for listening now".

G. R.R. Martin, *A song of Ice and Fire*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- APS: *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*
- BPP: *The basic problems of phenomenology*
- CES: *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*
- CM: *Cartesian Meditations*
- EJ: *Experience and Judgment*
- FTL: *Formal and Transcendental Logic*
- ID: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*
- IP: *The Idea of Phenomenology*
- LI: *Logical Investigations*
- PCIT: *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*
- PICM: *Phantasy, Image-Consciousness and Memory*
- PRS: *Phenomenology as a Rigorous Science*
- TS: *Things and Space*

INTRODUCTION

Transcendental phenomenology beyond the fragments

At the outset of the twentieth century, the Husserlian phenomenology established itself as a new kind of reflection and, in particular, as a reflection which sets itself to the task of clarifying knowledge from its foundations in order to deal with the deep crisis of culture and rational thinking that plagued this time period. Before Husserl, the philosophical tradition dealt in various ways with the problem of the origin and foundation of concepts and thinking – from the empiricist tradition to Kant's transcendental deduction and the idealist conception dominated by the idea of the Absolute (and, in particular, by an absolute Ego). Husserl's phenomenology, instead, stemmed from a demand for a *renewed* look at the cultural and theoretical crisis of knowledge, and had the ambition of playing a leading role in its solution¹. It is important, then, to ask how Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is able to reconcile this demand for a renewed look with the guidelines provided by past philosophical traditions.

¹ Antonio Banfi, one of the first Italian Husserl's scholar, claimed in this regard: "Phenomenology was for its author (and still is for us) not a definite or concluded system of thought with regard of both its structure and of its meaning. Rather, phenomenology is the starting point of a methodical, theoretical purification and of a cultural renewal thanks to which it can illuminate the speculative past tradition of thought and provide for this tradition the assurance of a future development". (Banfi, 1939: 326 translation mine). In particular, according to Banfi, phenomenology is entitled to a rightful place in contemporary thought thanks to these peculiar characteristics. Therefore, phenomenology takes on the task of finding a solution to the crisis of culture and knowledge, and, in order to fulfill this task, it brings to the forefront the issue of freeing reason from a rigid objectivist conception (Banfi, 1956).

Nevertheless, by taking the mainstream positions expressed by a great part of the Husserlian scholarship into account with regard to Husserl's transcendental project, a whole different picture can be put together. The hermeneutics, post-structuralist, and post-modern critics attacked transcendental phenomenology from both a historicist and a theoretical point of view. In particular, the relationship between transcendental phenomenology and past philosophical traditions (especially the modern segment of the history of philosophy) seems to be a sensitive issue. Indeed, phenomenology has been considered to be a wishful return to an old, irretrievable past, and it has further been charged with having the dogmatic foundationalism typical of modern epistemology. Moreover, these criticisms that see transcendental phenomenology as a speculative architecture in which reality is judged as something dependent on the existence of absolute consciousness are particularly harsh in regard to the notion of pure, absolute consciousness and its prevalence over the natural world². For instance, Martin Heidegger's evaluation was particularly *trenchant*:

“The primary concern which guides him [Husserl] is the *idea of an absolute science*. This idea, that *consciousness is to be the region of an absolute science*, is not simply invented; it is the idea which has occupied modern philosophy ever since Descartes. The elaboration of pure consciousness as the thematic field of phenomenology is *not derived phenomenologically by going back to the matters themselves* but by going back to a traditional idea of philosophy.”³

The thematic phenomenological region of pure consciousness is, for

² I will often refer in this dissertation to those critiques that consider transcendental phenomenology as a metaphysical idealism. These critiques generally propose two main arguments: the preeminence of the *absolute consciousness* over the natural world, and the construction of a speculative system of thought that evaluates reality as dependent on the existence of the absolute consciousness.

³ M. Heidegger *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* GA 20 p. 147; en. tr. (1985) p. 107.

Heidegger, nothing other than a dogmatic postulate inherited from modern philosophical tradition. Many other scholars, and Husserl's former students, joined Heidegger's side. Patočka (1988), for instance, considered transcendental phenomenology, in the end, to be merely imperfect cartesianism; Findlay (1972), on the other hand, believed transcendental phenomenology to be a metaphysical idealism, and criticized Husserl for distancing himself from the first theory of intentionality⁴.

Along the same line, other scholars considered transcendental phenomenology as a brisk turn in the luminous path followed at an early stage of Husserlian thought and a turn that brought it astray, towards a transcendental solipsism and a metaphysical idealism. For instance, Levinas (1930) and Ingarden (1975) believed that phenomenology, with the so-called transcendental turn, had moved away from its initial path, which had celebrated the importance and central role of the *things themselves*. Ingarden's criticism, in particular, addressed the problem of transcendental phenomenology being too deeply affected by an epistemological interest which makes it vulnerable and inextricably linked to a form of dogmatic idealism⁵. Other arguments, following this line of thought, grant a greater value and importance to the early stages of phenomenology than that pertaining to the transcendental goal of phenomenology. In this way, they basically drive the core theme of Husserl's phenomenology to a sort of *ontological realism*. On the other hand, an example of the almost exactly opposite position is offered by Adorno (1940), who saw

⁴ In particular, Findlay (1972) drew his conclusion from two different points: first, from Husserl's methodological refusal to return to nature after having it bracketed by reduction; second, from the ontological conviction ascribed to Husserl that the real world depends for its being on the constitutive transcendental consciousness.

⁵ According to Ingarden (1975), this epistemological interest should be rejected in order to overcome a metaphysical *impasse*. Indeed, the real cause of this *impasse* is the epistemic demand to account for consciousness and reality as objects in themselves. Nonetheless, because it is essentially not decidable if the world in itself exists independently of consciousness or not, the epistemological question cannot find an answer without falling into a dogmatic view. For Ingarden, on the other hand, ontology offers the opportunity to break the circularity, and to account for the *being* of the relationship between consciousness and the world.

the essentially *idealist* basis of the phenomenological reflection to be the reason for Husserl's failure to break out the idealist tradition⁶.

On a superficial level, these positions seem to have little in common. Still, upon more closely examining most of them, although undeniably very far apart, they seem to be connected by the same basic idea. Starting from Heidegger's opinion that the phenomenological pure consciousness is a 'second-hand' idea taken from Descartes and the modern tradition, and going through other positions that, while they underline new and interesting aspects of Husserl's thought, merely grant phenomenology the merit of inflating (or deflating) a certain philosophical tradition – all these interpretations seem to have a thinly veiled desire to put a label, or to classify, the true inner core of phenomenology according to a certain kind of philosophy (and most notably according to realist or idealist traditions). It is precisely this idea and this tendency that makes all these interpretations outline a *fragmented image* of Husserl's phenomenology divided into periods, stages, and, above all, torn apart by the issue of which side of some 'eternal' dichotomy it stands on.

The aim of this study is not to evaluate the consistency of each of the previously recalled arguments and positions (which can probably show evidence of strength or weakness on each side). Rather, I intend to question this fragmented image of phenomenology in order to account for the sense of Husserl's transcendental project, as well as for its actual novelty and possible contributions to contemporary philosophical debates. In this regard, the primary problem is how to account for the transcendental character of the analysis that Husserl put forth, especially in relation to the philosophical tradition set out by Kant. In truth, it was Husserl himself who claimed that his project should be considered as a *phenomenological transcendental idealism*.

⁶ According to Adorno, phenomenology is "an attempt to destroy idealism from within, an attempt with the means of consciousness to break through the wall of transcendental analysis" (Adorno, 1940: 6). However, according to Adorno, such a goal was not fulfilled because phenomenology could not free itself from the idealist presupposition of an ultimate identity between subject and object.

However, what does this definition really mean and indicate? What is behind it? If we were to avoid settling for an explanation that does not question the novelty of transcendental phenomenology and merely brings its core theme back to a particular philosophical tradition, what would we find out?

In order to deal with these problems, I shall consider first in what sense Husserl's phenomenology can be considered as transcendental philosophy (and, in particular, what the difference is between transcendental phenomenology and Kant's transcendental philosophy). However, there is a second issue that follows the first and concerns the peculiar phenomenological character of transcendental phenomenology, which has to be explained and understood in relation to the *development* of Husserl's reflection and not only to one of its alleged 'stages'.

Regarding the first issue, first of all it can be helpful to recall that the problem of the transcendental deduction at the core of Kant's critical philosophy indicates a crisis *of* foundation, and this crisis cannot be resolved by leaving the *mode of being* of the foundation itself unaltered, which, according to the traditional metaphysical notion, is *unconditioned* and necessary (Chiodi, 1961). In other words, the answer to this crisis has no connection with the choice of a different reality to be entrusted with the same, unconditioned foundational role⁷. On the contrary, Kant's solution is to connect the problem of foundation with the problem of finding *conditions* of possibility and limitations. This connection is at the heart of Kant's transcendental philosophy and it gives the meaning of the Copernican Revolution introduced by Kant, whereas the latter does not merely imply a role exchange between subject and object, but an actual revolution of the categorical ground of the relationship between subject and object (Chiodi, 1961:12). However, there are

⁷ Chiodi in *La deduzione nell'opera di Kant* (1961) claims that the Kantian transcendental deduction points out an issue *of* foundation that underlines the crisis of the traditional, categorial foundation since the Kantian philosophy requires to abandon the traditional notion of unconditional foundation in order to seek for conditions of possibility of truthful knowledge.

different ways to establish the connection between foundation and conditions, and also different ways to understand it. In this regard, I shall refer in particular to the interpretation offered by J.N. Mohanty (1985) according to which we could speak of two different models of transcendental philosophy. The first is the Kantian one (*prinzipien-theoretisch* transcendental philosophy, as the neo-Kantians called it), which establishes the *a priori* conditions of possibility which pertain to the structure of the knowing subject. The Kantian transcendental philosophy “appeals to a set of principles” and “its concern with subjectivity is only to the extent this transcendental subjectivity is the source of the principles which constitute scientific knowledge (and correlatively, the world of science)” (Mohanty, 1985: 214). Moreover, these principles are discovered through a *method of reasoning* – that is, the mode of access to the foundation is defined by a *transcendental argument*. The second model is the Husserlian one, which is called *evidenz-theoretisch* transcendental philosophy. In this case “the concrete subjectivity of a phenomenological transcendental philosophy uses a method of reflection to lay bare the founding stratum.” (Mohanty, 1985: 215). And Mohanty points out that “the mode of *access*, in the two cases, to the foundation they look for, are different” (Mohanty, 1985: 215). Therefore, the phenomenological reflection does not aim to build an argument in favor of the transcendental constitutive functions of experience, but to *show* the constituting intentional experience. In other words, it aims to bring acts of knowledge and experience to evidence and it makes the structure of the experiential process *visible*.

However, about the peculiar model of transcendental philosophy put forth by Husserl, a further issue has to be addressed. Indeed, as Mohanty observed, phenomenology’s claim to render the foundational stratum of subjectivity *evident* could be misunderstood as a way to evade the requirement for a good and sound argument. What does Husserl mean by evidence? What kind of intuitive insight can actually make the reflective subjectivity clearly grasp the conditions of possibility of knowledge and experience? These questions require

a more detailed study of the phenomenological transcendental perspective, which concerns the *development* of such a perspective throughout different years and lines of thought followed by Husserl. In fact there are many aspects pertaining to the phenomenological mode of access to the founding transcendental stratum that need to be further addressed and explained. For instance, it is true that this mode of access is subjective, but the evident givenness of consciousness cannot depend on a private, inner feeling. Moreover, a very important role in Husserl's transcendental reflection is played by an 'immediate seeing' (or *noein*) which is defined as an 'originally presentive consciousness of any kind' and as the 'legitimizing source' of rational assertions and cognitions⁸. As Erazim Kohák poignantly claimed, this seeing refers to a peculiar kind of evidence, the same that is involved in exclamations such as: «Oh, *now* I see!» (Kohák 1978), which means that we are not only watching, or plainly seeing something with our eyes, but we are getting to the point of something through a clear evident insight. Thus, the phenomenological seeing seems to be the keystone of Husserl's *evidenz-theoretisch* transcendental philosophy.

In order to carry on the investigation on these aspects of Husserl's project of transcendental phenomenology based on evidence, I shall focus in particular on three different moments: the first moment is inscribed between the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, and concerns Husserl's effort to clarify knowledge and experience. The second pivots on *Ideas I* and the outline of pure phenomenology. The third moment concerns the genetic development and the radicalization of transcendental phenomenology. However, it is important to emphasize that the progress of the analysis illustrated in these chapters does not aim at reproducing the steps that constitute the historical development of Husserl's thought exactly, nor does it aspire to deal with every single critical aspect of such development. Indeed, I intend to focus specifically on phenomenology's transcendental perspective and its basic insight in order to

⁸ Cf. Hua III/1 p.43; en.tr. ID1 p.36.

show the meaningful consistency of the Husserlian transcendental project. In this way, I shall also suggest the possibility of overcoming the fragmented image of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology by showing the way to assess phenomenology's influence and contribution to contemporary philosophical debates beyond traditional dichotomies such as realism and idealism.

The first chapter will deal with the phenomenological effort to clarify knowledge and experience. This effort leads to the discovery of the immanent, evident givenness of consciousness as a new territory of givenness to be investigated. In particular, I will take into consideration the issue of the phenomenological break-through in the *Logical Investigations* and the difference between phenomenological and psychological descriptions of consciousness, which more clearly define phenomenology's style of analysis and thought-motives. Furthermore, I will illustrate the development of the phenomenological task of clarification after the *Investigations* by taking into consideration the analyses dedicated to time-consciousness (which highlight the notions of constitutive absolute time-consciousness and internal consciousness), the analyses dedicated to the imaginative consciousness (which highlight the reproductive modification of consciousness), and Husserl's account of the method of reduction in 1907 and in 1910-11. By retracing these steps that characterize the phenomenological reflection between *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, my aim is to clarify the meaning of important phenomenological notions such as evident perception, immanent and internal consciousness. In this way I shall highlight the meaning of the discovery of the evident givenness of consciousness as the realm of pure phenomena which phenomenology intends to investigate.

The second chapter will focus on Husserl's project of *pure phenomenology* leading to a new philosophical, rigorous science. Here I shall take into account the course of reflection of *Ideas I*, which leads Husserl to a change of vision and to a new attitude of thought – a *transcendental attitude*. In

particular, by retracing the steps of the transcendental phenomenological reflection in *Ideas I*, I intend to highlight the central role of *seeing* for Husserl's *evidenz-theoretisch* transcendental philosophy. The phenomenological sense of seeing has often been misunderstood or simply overlooked by scholars and by all those interpretations that have taken transcendental phenomenology for a metaphysical theory of pure consciousness. However, understanding the central role of seeing is a fundamental move in order to properly understand the core theme of Husserl's transcendental project which is basically linked to the idea of penetrating into the complexity of experience through acts of pure seeing and learning to see what *actually* lies within view with the help of the system of reductions. In this regard, I shall address the issue of the meaning of the Husserlian definition of phenomenology as a *transcendental idealism* as well.

The third chapter will concern the process of revision undergone by phenomenology during roughly the last fifteen years of Husserl's philosophical activity. I will address, in particular, the genetic movement and the radicalization of transcendental phenomenology by means of the apodictic critique. In contrast to the idea that this process of revision coincides with a radical transformation of transcendental phenomenology, I shall try to show that the latter leads instead to the advancement of the phenomenological transcendental perspective, which possibly highlights its most original aspects.

In the fourth and last chapter, I will address the issue of phenomenology's actual contribution to philosophical debates in order to reevaluate the shape of a phenomenological transcendental legacy, which goes beyond eternal dichotomies – such as realist or idealist, internalist or externalist epistemological dichotomies. In this regard, I shall focus specifically on the notion of transcendental experience, which seems to express the peculiarity of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. In particular, I believe that such a notion can provide fruitful insights about how transcendental phenomenology deals with actual philosophical problems such as the problem of the mind-

world relation and the problem of truthful knowledge without committing to internalist or externalist premises.

In the Conclusions, I shall take a step further and claim that the value of the phenomenological transcendental perspective has to be found in a fundamental cognitive reorientation towards the experience as it is lived by the subject, and not in new secure foundations for knowledge. Indeed, the kind of clarity that can be gained in the transcendental attitude is not the clarity achieved once and for all by speculation. Rather, Husserl's transcendental philosophy seems to have opened the way for coming back and revaluing the realm of intuitive knowledge starting from the acknowledgment of the original evidence of lived experience and the transcendental dimension of subjectivity.

*

Even if for many scholars and commentators it could be confusing not to choose a definite angle within the development of Husserl's thought, this dissertation does not aim to give a limited account of Husserl's transcendental perspective to a single phase of phenomenology. Indeed, despite the almost settled fragmented image of transcendental phenomenology I shall try to focus on what essentially characterizes transcendental phenomenology in order to challenge this fragmented image. In this way, I believe it is possible to underline the *unitary* sense of transcendental phenomenology developing throughout the stages of Husserl's thought.

In view of this goal, I have chosen to address primarily the main published Husserlian works that most plainly reflect the author's intentions to give its philosophical reflection a unitary form, in order to make it more accessible. However, the great deal of writings, notes and lectures that compose the huge body of Husserliana still remain a fundamental source for any hopefully future possibility to drive forward this research and extend clues and topics that were just briefly touched upon. The present study of the phenomenological transcendental perspective required also making references to classics of the

history of philosophy – both preceding and following Husserl’s reflection – such as, in particular, the works of Descartes, Kant, Heidegger and Sartre. On the other hand, regarding the secondary literature, I have taken into account the contemporary state of the art on the specific technical issues I dealt with.

CHAPTER ONE

Phenomenological break-through between *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*

The beginning of transcendental phenomenology is often vaguely situated between the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, namely, between the refutation of psychologism and the analysis that defines the transcendental functions of subjectivity. But what does characterize and define this step? How does phenomenology, from the refutation of psychologism, come to envision the goal of a transcendental philosophy?

In order to address the issue regarding what is brought forward by transcendental phenomenology between the *Investigations* and *Ideas I*, I shall take into account Husserl's endeavor to spell out phenomenology's style of analysis and thought-motives – an endeavor that concerns the break-through and sharp outline of phenomenology. In particular, I shall retrace the stages through which I believe the style of analysis and the main thought-motives of phenomenology were carved into a more definitive form. In this way, on the one hand, it will be possible to appreciate how does the phenomenological analysis progressively uncover the *evident givenness* of consciousness. On the other hand, it will be possible to understand the crucial meaning of this evident givenness for Husserl's philosophical project. The first stage is characterized by the outline of the difference between phenomenological and psychological description. The second stage is characterized by the various aspects pertaining

to time-consciousness and imaginative consciousness, and the third by the method of reduction. I shall briefly summarize now the distinctive features of these stages.

The task of clarification of knowledge and experience was the essential goal in the *Investigations* and can be considered the hallmark of the phenomenological analysis, even if it was continuously refined and driven forward by Husserl during the following years. In the *Investigations*, the phenomenological analysis dwells on the definition of the *genuine* characters of the lived experience, and in this analysis, the difference between phenomenological and psychological description becomes a relevant theme. Indeed, this difference is important for the phenomenological account of perception and, in particular, for the definition of the adequate perception that reveals the *evident givenness* of consciousness as a realm of *pure phenomena* to be explored and investigated.

Moreover, in relation to the inquiry into different acts of experience (and, in particular, into time-consciousness and imagination) carried on by Husserl after the *Investigations*, we can appreciate the development of the phenomenological analysis which is directed toward the flow of *constitutive absolute time-consciousness* (and the original, non-positional awareness of this absolute consciousness), as well as toward the reproductive modification of consciousness.

The phenomenological clarification of acts of experience and knowledge is also further pursued by Husserl through the *method of reduction*¹. Indeed, the phenomenological reduction represents access to the pure consciousness by means of a *pure intuitive seeing*² (or *phenomenological perception*). It is not

¹ Through the method of reduction we “appropriate all experiences” and this means that “rather than pursuing experience, and living in experience, pass judgments and devise experiential theories and sciences, we receive in terms of their pure being [...] every act of experience, [...] every complete or incomplete experiential knowledge.” Hua XIII pp. 149-150; en tr. BPP p. 40-41.

² “Every intellectual experience, indeed every experience whatsoever, can be made into an object of pure seeing and apprehension while it is occurring. And in this act of pure seeing it is an absolute givenness.” Hua II p. 31; en.tr. IP p. 24.

until one consistently carries out the phenomenological reduction – and no longer grasps and posits the experience as a *psychical state* – that one obtains *pure* lived experience. This pure experience will be the object of the phenomenological perception, which for Husserl has to be understood “in its radical distinctiveness from empirical perception.”³ In other words, it seems that, by discovering the realm of pure consciousness, it is possible for Husserl to *see* what a simple naïve look is not able to display – namely, those pure articulations of consciousness that can account for *how* something is known, instead of *what* is known. Answers to the question about how something is known cannot simply be reasoned from the existence of a thing known – or, in other words, knowledge of something’s existence does not help with the problem of how knowledge itself is possible⁴.

Therefore, the effort to more clearly state phenomenology’s style of analysis and thought-motives seems to be largely an effort to find the appropriate way to grasp what is really genuinely given within experience, which includes how something is known and experienced. It could be claimed that the development of the phenomenological analyses actually outlines a new realm of pure, evident givenness and a new attitude of thought or perspective capable of grasping this evident givenness of consciousness and its pure articulations. Moreover, according to Husserl, phenomenology *is*, above all, a method and attitude of thought. Once the core theme of such a method is elucidated, I shall address the problems concerning things themselves and the reflective investigation of subjectivity. These issues indeed offer the chance to further understand the meaning of the discovery of the evident givenness of consciousness.

³ Hua XIII pp. 149-150; en tr. BPP p. 40-41.

⁴ In this regard, there is a famous example illustrated by Husserl: a person born deaf knows that there are tones and something that is called “music”. But such person cannot derive from this knowledge the explanation of how tones can compose a melody. See Hua II p. 38; en.tr. IP p. 30.

In the first group of sections (§§ 1.1, 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3), I will focus on the distinguishing elements of phenomenology's style of analysis with respect to descriptive psychology in the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Next, I will take into consideration the diversified study that Husserl dedicated to different acts of experience, which refers back to the central notion of internal consciousness. I shall also highlight the development of phenomenology towards a complex theory of experiences thanks to this last notion (§§ 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2). Furthermore I will discuss the outcome of the phenomenological clarification of experience and knowledge (§ 1.3), and I will take into consideration two series of lectures delivered by Husserl in 1907 and 1910-11, through which it is possible to give an account of the phenomenological method of reduction (§§ 1.4, 1.4.1, 1.4.2). Finally, in the last two sections, I will revisit two critical issues, particularly important for the development of phenomenology between *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, regarding the problem of the things themselves (§ 1.5) and the possibility of a reflective investigation of subjectivity (§1.6).

1.1 Phenomenological analysis of lived experience in the *Investigations*

The *Logical Investigations* were first published between 1900 and 1901 and later revised in several editions. This work is considered controversial for several reasons, such as its role within Husserlian thought and the extent to which it actually contributed to the discipline of logic. Moreover, we have to bear in mind that the *Investigations* were the subject of several changes over time. This is also one of the reasons why this work continues to puzzle many Husserlian scholars. In particular, the following are the two main opposing camps: One faction claims that some specific themes and content can be labeled as culmination points of the phenomenological analysis with no

connection to the future transcendental development. The other side claims instead that many other aspects of the *Investigations* can be considered clear signs that foreshadow a transcendental commitment⁵. I will not get into the arguments that support these very different interpretations. Instead, I believe it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of Husserl's statement in the foreword of the second edition (1913): "My *Logical Investigations* were my 'break-through', not an end but rather a beginning."⁶ The statement looks like a sort of invitation from Husserl himself to read the *Logical Investigations* in order to find the break-through of phenomenology. Furthermore, it is precisely because of such a break-through that Husserl struggled during the extensive (but not radical) revision of the first edition of the *Investigations* that led to the second edition in 1913⁷. In this regard, in the 1913 foreword Husserl stated that the first edition's style of analysis and method of thought were too obscure and confusing and needed to be thoroughly clarified⁸.

In short, the problem of the break-through of the phenomenological thought-motives is not a problem regarding their first appearance, but a problem of the definitive form they take. Therefore, the phenomenological break-through relates to the distinguished aspects that can be fully appreciated only in the second and further editions of the *Investigations*, where Husserl actually starts to outline his reflections⁹. It is worth mentioning that many

⁵ For a more detailed account of these different positions see Smith and Mulligan (1986), Zahavi (1992), Benoist (1997), Willard (2000).

⁶ "Die 'Logischen Untersuchungen' waren für mich ein Werk des Durchbruchs, und somit nicht ein Ende, sondern ein Anfang." Vorwort zur zweiten Auflage (1913), *Logische Untersuchungen*/I (Husserl 1968) VIII, en. tr. LI/1 p. 3.

⁷ In this dissertation I will mainly refer to the second edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* in order to take into account the Husserlian edits to the first edition.

⁸ "To improve all that could be improved, without altering the course and style of the old work, and, above all, to bring to most definite expression the new thought-motives that had their break-through in the old work, but which had, in the first edition, been at times sharply stressed, at times blurred, by the hesitant and timid author". *Logische Untersuchungen*/I (Husserl 1968) X; en. tr. LI/1 p.5.

⁹ For instance, De Boer (1978) claims that between the first and second edition of the *Fifth Investigation*, the phenomenological analysis moves forward and discovers different modes of intentionality of the same object, and the phenomenological meaning of Husserl's descriptive method is deepened.

scholars believe that Husserl's revision did not affect the main themes of the *Investigations* – like, for instance, its metaphysical neutrality¹⁰. However, there is one difference that stands out between the first and the second edition: The intended difference between the phenomenological descriptive analysis and the psychological one. In particular, such a difference shows Husserl's will and choice to put some distance between phenomenology and descriptive psychology, not only in order to give to phenomenology a more definitive form, but also to avoid accusations of a relapse into psychologism (which was actively refuted by Husserl in the *Prolegomena*).

Therefore, the issue of a phenomenological break-through and its meaning leads us to pointedly ask what kind of analysis the phenomenological one is, and hence, what really distinguishes the phenomenological description from the psychological one. These questions can be answered in light of those analyses that, in the *Logical Investigations*, display Husserl's interest for the genuine characteristics of experience. In particular, in the next group of sections, I shall first give an account of the overall project of the *Investigations*, and I shall consider the key points of the thematic difference between phenomenology and descriptive psychology in the Fifth Investigation. Finally, I shall deal with the main results of this inquiry by taking into consideration the well-known *Beilage* to the *Investigations* concerning the actual difference between internal and external perception.

1.1.1 Psychologism and phenomenological descriptive method

I shall now consider some of the main themes of the *Investigations* as a brief introduction to the work. The primary problem is the foundation of logic; this issue rises under the influence of the logical-mathematical address of Bolzano, and it goes along with a special interest towards the role of philosophy and of

¹⁰ About the metaphysical neutrality of the *Investigations* and its interpretations in the literature see in particular the debate between Benoist (1997) and Zahavi (1992, 2002).

mathematics. Philosophy is considered particularly important for the construction of a *pure logic* as a science or doctrine of theories. Thus, Husserl pursues the ideal of a universal philosophical understanding of the nature of all knowledge. Moreover, given science's inability to explain its own methods and foundations, the question of how philosophical thought can reach for a clear insight of cognitive elements in such a way that the psychologist/logicist dispute can be overcome is important. In particular, in the *Prolegomena* Husserl provides a strong criticism against psychologism¹¹ based on various arguments: The inaccuracy of the psychological generalizations, probabilism of the psychological laws of thought, and the inability to stem from psychological facts logical laws and *vice versa*. However, in other parts of the text the dissatisfaction with the logicist solution leaks out as well – dissatisfaction that spreads towards all the anti-psychologist arguments that lack the strength to be conclusive. Overall, the debate regarding the foundation of logic can be described as being polarized between, on one side, the investigation of the psychological genesis of truths and universals to explain their presence in the human mind, and, on the other, the exclusive value of the logical and ideal contents of concepts to explain their objective character. Whereas psychologism exposes the universality of the categorical truth to the danger of relativity, the logicist positions poorly conceal the actual inability to provide an alternative to innatism behind a lack of interest in the subjective genesis of concepts.

Therefore, in the *Logische Untersuchungen* there is clearly a need for an alternative view – and, in particular, one, that could secure the true meaning of logic as a pure, *a priori* science of ideal meanings, entirely distinct from

¹¹ The term ‘psychologisms’ was first used at the end of XIX century in German logical and philosophical tradition. It was used for referring to the specific tendency (that can be dated back to 1830) to assign to psychology a founding role for philosophical disciplines, and in particular for logic. The pivotal point of psychologism is to consider judgments, deductions and any logical arguments as psychic facts and occurrences that refer to subjective mental processes. On the issue of psychologism within the Husserlian thought see for instance Wild (1940), Meiland (1976), Hance (1987), Hanna (1993), Mohanty (1997).

psychological acts. Husserl deals with this task in the *Investigations* by accounting for the problem of objectivity while gaining, at the same time, clear insights into the essential features of the cognitive process (namely, insights regarding *how* something is given in knowledge rather than *what is* the thing known). In this way, it is possible to appreciate phenomenological thought-motives coming to a sharper definition through a peculiar kind of analysis dedicated to consciousness and lived experience.

“I assume accordingly that no one will think it enough to develop pure logic merely in the manner of our mathematical disciplines, as a growing system of propositions having naïvely factual validity, without also striving to be *philosophically clear* in regard to these same propositions, without, that is, gaining insight into the essence of the modes of cognition which come into play in the utterance and in the ideal possibility of applying such propositions, together with all such conferments of sense and objective validities as are essentially constituted therein.”¹²

In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl tried precisely to gain philosophical clarity regarding objective meanings of logical propositions through an investigation of their nature and origins. Meaning, for Husserl, is an *ideal unity* distinguished from the act of which it is a part and from the *expression*. The latter, however, is strongly linked with the former and together they form a necessary unity that refers to an object, which can be found in front of our eyes or either absent or re-presented. Even if we can describe the possibility to understand something without having an intuition of it, namely, in a purely symbolic and empty way – for example, expressions such as ‘mountain of gold’ or ‘round square’ refer to something without any corresponding intuition – it is clear from the start that the phenomenological analysis does not settle for a purely symbolic understanding, i.e. ‘for mere words’. In particular, the

¹² Hua XIX/1 pp. 5-6; en.tr. LI/1 p. 165.

philosophical clarity necessary to build a pure logic cannot be achieved at the expense of our full experience. This is why, for Husserl, we must go back to *things themselves*¹³. Namely, we have to clarify the origin of propositional meanings on the ground of intentional lived experiences [*Erlebnissen*] of things themselves. “A signitive intention merely points to its object, an intuitive intention gives it ‘presence’, in the pregnant sense of the word, it imports something of the fullness of the object itself”¹⁴; and such fullness is reached by syntheses of fulfillment between empty meaning-intentions and intuitive intentions.

The phenomenological accounts of consciousness and the elucidation of knowledge that we find in the Fifth and Sixth Investigations refer precisely to this ground of conscious acts and lived act-experiences. In this regard, the phenomenological description illustrates a goal which goes beyond the psychological one, as the former sets out to *bring to evidence* the objective meaning of knowledge without taking it already for granted as the latter does. Moreover, in relation to the intentional lived experience, the phenomenological analysis takes into account what does determine the intentional direction towards a specific object, namely, the systems of empty meaning-intentions and intuitive intentions through which the cognitive process can be accomplished.

In the *Investigations* it is also acknowledged that such phenomenological elucidation entails many difficulties: in particular, for Husserl, we have to adopt a “unnatural direction of intuition and thought”¹⁵, which is necessary to gain an ‘immanent vision’ of acts and their contents in a total absence of presuppositions (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit*)¹⁶ – and such difficulties would not arise if we were dealing only with a psychological account of empirical psychic

¹³ “Anders ausgedrückt: Wir wollen uns schlechterdings nicht mit "bloßen Worten", das ist mit einem symbolischen Wortverständnis, zufrieden geben [...]. Wir wollen auf die ‘Sachen selbst’ zurückgehen” Hua XIX/1 p. 10; en. tr. LI/1 p. 168.

¹⁴ Hua XIX/2 p. 607; en. tr. LI/2 p. 233.

¹⁵ Hua XIX/1 p. 14; en. tr. LI/1 p. 170.

¹⁶ For further phenomenological developments regarding this subject see Farber (1940).

phenomena. Indeed it seems that the difference between phenomenology and descriptive psychology relies primarily upon the achievement of this unnatural direction of intuition (which can allow us to have clear insights into the realm of consciousness and its lived experiences). In this sense, the question about what kind of unnatural direction of intuition is entailed by the phenomenological description cannot be avoided.

Moreover, the distance kept by phenomenology from descriptive psychology can also be measured by the progressive detachment of Husserl's theories from his teacher's, Franz Brentano¹⁷, with whom Husserl studied in Wien from 1884 to 1886. This detachment is particularly relevant to the theory of intentionality, the distinction between psychic and physical phenomena and the status of immanent objectivity. These topics, however, will be the subject of further discussion in the next section.

1.1.2 Theory of consciousness in the Fifth Investigation

In the overall project of the *Investigations* I pointed out Husserl's endeavor for a new style of analysis that could account for the origin of objectivity, while clarifying, at the same time, *how* something is known. However, it is important to stress that this analysis is primarily concerned with the experience of things themselves – specifically, the intentional experience (or acts) that are *presentations* of something. I shall now bring my attention to the way Husserl develops this analysis in the Fifth Investigation starting from the clarification of character and contents of mental acts; in particular, the nature of mental acts

¹⁷ It is often credited to Franz Brentano the cultural revolution that subverted the leading post-Kantian philosophical trend and led the debate to the research of an 'aristotelic' scientific method. This new direction of thought influenced many aspects of the twentieth century philosophy, including Husserlian phenomenology, logical positivism and philosophy of science in general. Brentano was particularly interested in philosophy of mind and psychology; one of his major work is 1874 *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, in which he conducts a detailed analysis of psychical and physical phenomena and their distinctive characters. In particular, according to Brentano, *intentionality* is what distinguishes psychic phenomena at the basis of an autonomous psychological science.

cannot be fully discussed for Husserl without pointing out different accounts of consciousness that, in descriptive psychology, always overlap with one another. Therefore, the goal of the Fifth Investigation seems primarily to be an attempt to lay out the basic structure of consciousness, which regards both the peculiar character of the act of experience, and what drives the act towards an object¹⁸. Granted that, for Husserl, it is possible to achieve clarity about the objectivity of knowledge without referring only to mere descriptive psychological contents. I shall now comment on the initial part of the Fifth Investigation, in order to show the first outline of a fundamental difference between phenomenological and psychological description.

At the outset of the Fifth Investigation, Husserl illustrates three different accounts of consciousness: Consciousness i) as a stream of experiences of the empirical Ego, ii) as inner awareness of one's own psychic experiences, and, finally, iii) as a comprehensive designation of intentional acts or experience. Each of these accounts is the object of a critical appraisal that provides the opportunity to underscore the genuine characteristics of lived experience and intentional consciousness overlooked by the psychological description. In particular, a crucial point here seems that, whereas descriptive psychology never really questioned the account of consciousness that comes from an empirical external standpoint, or an allegedly evident inner perception, phenomenology highlights the ambiguities of these kinds of description, as well as the ambiguities of Brentano's conception of intentionality and mental phenomena.

If we take, for instance, the first account of consciousness, it displays the empirical standpoint of the modern psychologist who takes experiences and contents as *real* occurrences that compose the unity of consciousness in the

¹⁸ "Experiences of meaning are classifiable as 'acts', and the meaningful element in each such single act must be sought in the act-experience, and not in its object; it must lie in that element which makes the act an 'intentional' experience, one 'directed' to objects." Hua XIX/1 p. 356; en. tr. LI/2 p.79.

individual mind¹⁹. From this empirical standpoint, consciousness is considered as a unity of real occurrences, and then, as a real occurrence itself by means of external perception. In other words, being conscious of something in this sense is equivalent to experiencing consciousness' contents and parts as real occurrences. Husserl's argument against this account of consciousness is that, in this way, one cannot account for the fundamental distinction between the *act* of perceiving and an externally perceived *object*. Moreover, there is the risk of a phenomenalist view based on the fallacious claim that the difference between conscious perceptual contents and externally perceived objects is a difference between different standpoints on the object (one subjective and the other objective). In this way, there is not a substantial difference between real world and consciousness of the world. Husserl remarks instead that: "The appearing of the thing (the experience) is not the thing which appears (that seems to stand before us *in propria persona*)"²⁰; in other words, if we see these appearances as one and the *same appearance*, we completely lose sight of the difference between objective and subjective.

The second account of consciousness is that of 'inner consciousness' as 'inner perception' of our experiences. Such a 'inner perception' is traditionally considered self-evident. However, for Husserl, there are many ambiguities surrounding this definition. It is not clear, for instance, what defines the evident character of the inner perception, and what are its objects (Psychical states? Intentional acts?). According to Husserl, every perception is characterized by the intention to grasp its object as something that is present in front of our eyes. In particular, evident perceptions grasp their objects as present, and *in propria persona*²¹. Therefore, the evident perception is the *adequate perception*: a perceptual experience "ascribing nothing to its objects that is not intuitively

¹⁹ This is an explicit reference to the new branch of scientific psychology started by Wilhelm Wundt. This branch of scientific psychology was based on a rigorous method of self-observation that aimed to build a science of *immediate* experience.

²⁰ "Die Dingerscheinung (das Erlebnis) ist nicht das erscheinende Ding (das uns vermeintlich in leibhafter Selbstheit 'Gegenüberstehende'". Hua XIX/1 p. 359; en. tr. LI/2 p.83.

²¹ See Hua XIX/1 p.365; en. tr. LI/2 p.86.

presented, and given as a real part (*reell*) of the perceptual experience”²². It is accordingly clear that adequate perceptions can be only ‘inner perceptions’ directed to simultaneously given experiences. However, Husserl also underlines that this definition holds only for for experience in the purely phenomenological sense. Indeed, there is a psychological descriptive sense and a phenomenological sense of inner perception and only in the second sense inner perceptions coincide with evident perceptions. Therefore, different terms should be used for inner perceptions of one's own experiences and evident or adequate perceptions. In this way, for Husserl, the confused and psychologically misused distinction between inner and outer perception actually vanishes and leaves room for a more genuine contrast between adequate and inadequate perception. Moreover, such a genuine distinction relies on another central distinction that pertains to the basic structure of consciousness between *reell* immanent contents and *real* transcendent objects. And the third account of consciousness illustrated by Husserl in the Fifth Investigation – which refers to Brentano's theory of intentionality and to a conception of consciousness in the sense of psychical act – actually offers the occasion to clarify the interplay between immanent contents and transcendent objects while it enables us to sketch some of the key-points of the phenomenological description of the intentional experiences.

Brentano is credited with the rediscovery of the concept of intentionality from the medieval scholastic tradition²³. In scholastic thought, the *intentio* designated the form of a mental act directed towards an object; this object had the property of being an *in-existentia intentionalis* inside the mind, as a meaning or a representation of the object as it is²⁴. The notion of *in-existentia*

²² Hua XIX/1 p. 365; en. tr. LI/2 p.86

²³ See XIX/1 p. 377; en.tr. LI/2 p.95

²⁴ The term intentionality derives from the latin word *intensio*, which was used to describe an archer with his bow drawn. The archer has the bow *in tension* aimed at a target in the same way that a mental state (belief, desire or act of thought) is aimed at the world. About the connection between the Husserlian notion of intentionality and its medieval equivalent see Sofia Vanni-Rovighi (1960). Vanni-Rovighi's comparative study between Husserlian intentionality and Pietro Aureolo reflection on the same notion underlines the importance of

intentionalis inherent to the intentional object survives in Brentano's conception. Indeed, Brentano sees intentionality as the hallmark of psychic phenomena as opposed to physical phenomena. Every mental phenomenon includes an *immanent object* within itself. Every possible act of seeing, feeling, perceiving always implies an object to be seen, felt, perceived, etc. Nonetheless, the ontological status of this immanent object is not clear, and above all, it seems impossible to distinguish perception of an object of manifestation from perception of a mental act taken *as* an object. Furthermore, according to Husserl, psychic acts and intentional lived experiences do not coincide with the sphere of psychical phenomena identified by Brentano. Not all psychic contents or phenomena are intentional. And the idea of intentionality as a device to classify different kinds of acts prevents a proper understanding of the intentional relationship itself. In particular, for Husserl there are two misunderstandings regarding Brentano's account of psychical phenomena, and more in general, regarding expressions such as psychical phenomena²⁵. On one hand, such an expression seems to suggest that we are dealing with a *real* event (*real*), or a real (*real*) relationship between consciousness and the thing that appears to it (namely, the immanent object with the property of the *in-existentia intentionalis*); on other hand, the intentional relationship could be thought to be something which happens *inside* our consciousness, between two things both present in an equally real fashion (*reell*) inside consciousness – such as an act and an intentional object. In this way, the intentional relationship is invested with psychological reality and it is considered as “belonging to the real (*reell*) content of an experience”²⁶.

Husserl, for these reasons, avoids terms such as ‘psychical phenomena’ and talks of *intentional experiences*, which have the peculiarity of *intending* and of referring to what is objective in a presentative fashion. Moreover, the

the desire to understand the meaning of thinking and of being conscious of the world as the principal motive that led to the formulation of the intentional conception of the mind.

²⁵ See XIX/1 p. 379; en.tr. LI/2 p.98

²⁶ See XIX/1 p. 379; en.tr. LI/2 p.98

phenomenological analysis distinguishes contents and objects of experience independently from any consideration of existence or reality (that also implies the classification of phenomena as mental or physical). There is also the possibility of the *non-existence* of an intentional object; that is the case, for instance, of fantasy objects. When we imagine Anna Karenina's face while reading Tolstoy's masterpiece, or Achilles' body while reading Homer's Iliad, we are no less experiencing these intentional objects, even if they do not exist.

Many other interesting and compelling themes enrich the discussion of intentional experiences in the Fifth Investigation. However, starting from this brief outline of the phenomenological critique of different accounts of consciousness, it is possible to focus on some differences between phenomenological and psychological description. First of all, while phenomenology strives for clarifying knowledge, it does not rely on vague or presupposed definitions of contents and objects, internal or external perceptions. The phenomenological description highlights the *consciousness qua consciousness*, as well as the distinction between *immanent descriptive contents* that belong to the *reell* whole of *Erlebnissen*, and *intentional contents*, which are independent from the existence of the object or by its internal or external ontological position. Therefore, the phenomenological approach does not consist of a description that reduces consciousness to the account of internal contents or psychic facts. Indeed, it tries to go to the bottom of knowledge and experience and redefine the elements that genuinely compose the *Erlebnis* in order to show the relation between immanent, descriptive contents and transcendent intentional objects. The next section will show some of the important outcomes of this inquiring attitude in the Appendix to the *Investigations*.

1.1.3 Inner perception and adequate experience in the *Beilage*

The *Beilage* to the *Investigations* sums up the two main issues it addresses in

its title – *Äußere und innere Wahrnehmung, Physische und psychische Phänomene*: The difference between internal and external perception, and the related difference between physical and mental phenomena. Even if these issues were subject matter of the last two *Investigations*, the role of the Appendix is not just that of a conclusive summary of the Fifth and Sixth Investigations’ main arguments. In fact the Appendix has already received special interest due to its ‘impressionistic touch’ and was further appraised for being both *a removed conclusion to the Investigations* and *a conclusion deferred from the Investigations* (De Warren, 2003).

In particular, despite the fact that this brief text does not add further elements to the account of perception given in the *Investigations*, it seems that this thematic account acquires here a peculiar meaning for the phenomenological project and a peculiar *philosophical sense* in relation to the problem of the ever-deepening gap between speculative philosophical thought and everyday experience. In this regard, the phenomenological analysis of perception not only leads us to acknowledge that there is in fact an unjustified distance between a speculative philosophical thought and everyday experience, but it also outlines a peculiar direction of analysis that can allow us to find a possible solution to this problem. I shall proceed to briefly outline some of the *Beilage* main trends of analysis in order to show what kind of direction this is (even if this means to forcedly overlook some of the rich and complex aspects that make this brief text so dense and interesting to interpret.)

At the outset of the Appendix, Husserl introduces the *naïve man* standpoint on perception that provides the distinction between two pairs of concepts: external perception vs. self-perception (set against by object), and sensible perception vs. internal perception (set against by perceptual source). The first pair refers to the distinction between perceiving our own Ego and its properties and, for instance, a house. The second pair refers instead to the difference between perceiving something through our senses, and an internal perception of thinking, willing etc., that has no connection with our sense

organs. Husserl proceeds to illustrate how the philosophical reflection made these distinctions collapse on just one pair of concepts: internal, evident perception vs. external, not evident perception. The problem with this distinction becomes clear when Husserl retraces the line of thought that, from Descartes' radical doubt to Brentano's definition of the realm of empirical psychology, leads to a number of confusing points and ambiguities. In particular, it seems that both the epistemological and psychological interest to deepen the distinction between internal, evident perception and external, non-evident perception had been developed and pursued without an authentic inquiry into the genuine characteristics of experience. In this regard, Descartes and Brentano are two examples of a shared failure to understand the genuine nature of experience. Although very different and far apart from each other, for Husserl these two great thinkers seem to share the same problem of searching for a pure ground for a new science without the appropriate method (or attitude) of reflection. On the one hand, Descartes' radical doubt set up a viable method for a pure description. Certainly, he was the first thinker who actually discovered the *evident givenness* of consciousness: one can doubt everything except for the *Cogito* and its *Cogitationes*. Yet, according to Husserl, he failed to appreciate the peculiar kind of investigation required to deal with the immanent self-evident ground of the *Cogitationes*, as well as the authentic feature of *adequate perception*. On the other hand, Brentano tried to achieve a metaphysically uncommitted definition of psychic and physical phenomena based on the account of internal perception as a self-evident and distinctive perception. But this position led, for Husserl, to a circular argument because the difference between internal/external perceptions is defined by Brentano *after* the difference between physical and psychical domains, and *vice versa*. Moreover, Brentano could not see the difference between content and intentional objects. This lack of clarity exposed him to 'delusive confusions'.

What is restored by the phenomenological account of perception, instead, is first of all the *unitary epistemic character* of perception.

“As opposed to this, inner and outer perception seem to me, if the terms are naturally interpreted, to be of an entirely similar epistemological character. More explicitly: there is a well-justified distinction between evident and non evident [...]. But, if one understands by outer perception (as one naturally does, and as Brentano also does) the perception of physical things [...] and classes all other perceptions as inner perceptions, then such a division will not coincide at all with the division previously given.”²⁷

Moreover, Husserl explains again why perceptions of the mental states of the Ego are not necessarily evident perceptions. Internal perceptions are not immediately conscious acts through which we apprehend something without an apperception; a perceived object is always apprehended in some way. Be it a mental state or physical object such as a table or a flowerpot, there must be an apprehension of certain sensory contents. Thus, there cannot be any concurrence between the two pairs of distinctions (internal/external and evident/non evident perception). Instead, regardless of the internal or external character, phenomenology recognizes the *unitary structure* of perceptual phenomena (as every phenomenon is something that appears, and such appearance is given to our consciousness), and also distinguishes them using the fundamental character of *adequateness*²⁸. Husserl’s adequate perception is a perception that posits and presents its objects *just as* they are experienced. It ascribes nothing to the object that is not intuitively presented. This is the

²⁷ “Demgegenüber will es mir scheinen, daß innere und äußere Wahrnehmung, wofern man diese Termini naturgemäß versteht, von ganz gleichem erkenntnistheoretischen Charakter sind.” Hua XIX/2 p. 760; en. tr. LI/2 p. 340.

²⁸ As it is well known, such character is discussed and explained in the Sixth Investigation where Husserl deals with the elucidation of knowledge and, in particular, with the relation between intuition and thought, as well as the essence of those objectifying acts in which all thinking and theoretical knowledge is achieved. In this regard, the phenomenological analysis illustrates the synthetic relations of fulfillment between, on one hand, empty meaning-intentions that merely refer to the object, and, on the other hand, intuitive-intentions (or meaning-fulfillments) that present the object as something fully present. In particular, for Husserl, these syntheses of fulfillment correspond to different degrees of *adequacy*, which represent the *evident character* of lived experiences.

genuine character of an *evident perception*. However, one could wonder what kind of perception is in fact evident according to this definition. Possibly in this regard Husserl discussed the meaning of appearance (*Erscheinung*) in the last sections of the Appendix. Despite some ambiguities, the meaning of appearance encompasses not only the intended object of experience, but also experience itself. In particular, the notion of appearance for Husserl can indicate the intuitive *Erlebnis*, the object itself that appears here and now, and, in a misleading sense, even those constitutive elements of the appearance that are present in the first sense. These meanings combined together point out the richness and complex character of appearance. However, for Husserl, all sorts of experiences (including outer perceptions) are objects of a *reflective intuition* and they are *phenomena* in the Ego's experiential unity. These phenomena are indeed the objects of the previously defined evident perception, inasmuch as they display only what is really intuitively presented through the experience ("it is the essence of adequate perception that the intuited object itself really and truly dwells in it, which is merely another way of saying that only the perception of one's own actual experiences is indubitable and evident")²⁹. Accordingly, phenomenology for Husserl is a theory of experience in general, while *pure phenomenology* is a science of the essences of *pure phenomena* that carries on an investigation into the essential, basic structures of the experiencing consciousness. The phenomenological approach is concerned exclusively with the investigation of what is purely given, namely with a pure immanent consciousness that displays the genuine, essential components of lived experiences. Thus, it is also clear why this investigation is not related to something that is inside or outside the intentional consciousness, but is rather related to those 'psychic phenomena' that are intuitively presented *purely* as they are experienced and given. In this way, Husserl stresses that these psychic phenomena are not the same as the psychic phenomena Brentano supported³⁰.

²⁹ Hua XIX/2 p. 765; en. tr. LI/2 p. 346.

³⁰ Indeed, for Brentano, psychic phenomena are experienced exclusively by inner perceptions.

On the other hand, non-inner perceptions do not coincide with outer perceptions, but with a wider class of *inadequate* perceptions – whose objects *transcend* what is intuitively given as a real (*reell*) part of perceptual experience.

This brief summary of the Appendix main trends of analysis aimed to grasp the first outline of the *immanent consciousness*, which is an *evident givenness* that will be the territory for a phenomenological consideration. In this regards, it is important to underline that this evident givenness of consciousness and its pure phenomena is not an abstraction, but is indeed and actual givenness which appears and is found in the reflective process. The endeavor to clarify knowledge seems thus to be rewarded by the discovery of this fundamental ground of immanent givenness, which regards both the subjectivity of experience and the world that is given precisely in its experiencing acts – as the notion of appearance (*Erscheinung*) relates *both* to lived experience and to things themselves that are presented as intentional objects of this lived experience. Moreover, the phenomenological realm of pure appearance does comprise existent and non-existent intentional objects, illusions, dreams, as well as every kind of experience that we have and can possibly have. The far-reaching consequences of the phenomenological account of consciousness and lived experience are only charted in this text, but it is at least clear that the result of such analysis is a much vaster and more significant territory than the territory of internal or external psychological descriptions of consciousness.

In conclusion, the *Logical Investigations* represent the beginning of something inasmuch as they entail the definition of a new style of analysis focused on lived experience, through which, in turn, a new territory of evident givenness is found. This discovery, however, does not put an *end* to Husserl's endeavor to clarify knowledge and experience. This will be the object of further discussion in the next sections which take into account some of the

See XIX/2 p. 759; en.tr. LI/2 p. 340.

most important of Husserl's texts and writings between *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*.

1.2 The *Principal Parts* of experience and the unitary flow of consciousness

I shall consider now a few key points of the development of Husserl's inquiry from lived experience to the unitary flow of consciousness, starting from 1904-05 and covering more or less the first decade of the twentieth century.

In the winter semester of 1904-05, Husserl delivered a series of lectures (*Principal Parts of the Phenomenology and Theory of Knowledge*) regarding different kinds of experience related to our consciousness: perception, attention, fantasy and image-consciousness, and time-consciousness. These lectures partially revisited topics that Husserl had been discussing since 1898 and offer revisions stemming from the influence of the newest outcomes of Husserl's research. Moreover, the structure of these lectures is noteworthy. Different kinds of analysis are dedicated to different kinds of experience that present specific problems and characteristics. In other words, the partition of the analysis seems to reproduce the ramification of the rich and complex notion of experience in order to account for every facet and aspect that pertains to this notion. However, it is important to clarify that Husserl's analysis is not about a 'differentiation' of the experiencing consciousness. In particular, if we take a closer look, for instance, at the core of the intertwined analyses of time-consciousness (experience of temporal objects) and imagination (imaginative experience), we can realize that these analyses are not only connected, but they underscore a significant aspect that the *Investigations* had not the chance to face properly, namely, the *absolute constitutive flow of temporal unity*, unity that is the basis of every kind of *Erlebnis* that we take into consideration. In

this regard, a crucial notion comes to the forefront: that of the *internal consciousness* which provides, for Husserl, the access to the absolute flow, and explains as well the imaginative apprehension of a fantasized object.

In a text that goes back to 1911-12, Husserl stated that the kind of phenomenology he envisioned in the *Investigations* was a phenomenology of experience that moved *within* the boundaries of internal consciousness without having acknowledged it³¹. Therefore, the analyses dedicated to time-consciousness and imagination, and especially the notion of internal consciousness that they bring forward, are particularly interesting and meaningful for the task of further understanding the peculiar direction taken by phenomenology between *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*. In this regard, it is also noteworthy the way in which Husserl describes the progress of the phenomenological analysis:

“Every step forward yields a new points of view from which what we have already discovered appears in a new light, so that often enough what we were originally able to take as simple and undivided presents itself as complex and full of distinctions.”³²

In other words, the peculiarity of the phenomenological analysis is to acquire a *deeper insight* that allows us to shed new light on what, at first sight, seems simple and undivided. If we reflect on the experience of an object, for instance, a lamp or a table, nothing seems more simple and patent. There is a table in front of me. I perceive it as it is. It is a table. However, by reflecting on this experience, and especially by focusing on the *consciousness qua consciousness*

³¹ “The entire phenomenology I had in view in the *Logical Investigations* was a phenomenology of experiences in the sense of data of internal consciousness, and this, in any event, is a closed field” Hua XXIII p. 309; en. tr. PICM p. 371.

³² “Das ist ja überhaupt die Eigenheit der phänomenologischen Analyse. Jeder Schritt vorwärts gibt neue Gesichtspunkte, von denen aus das schon Gefundene in neuen Beleuchtungen erscheint, so dass oft genug das als mehrfältig und unterschieden sich darstellt, was ursprünglich als einfältig ungeschieden angenommen werden konnte.” Hua XXIII p. 18; en. tr. PICM p. 19.

of this object, I can realize that there is more to be discovered. It could be claimed that the phenomenological analysis that finds new outlooks every time seems to slowly determine what the evident givenness of consciousness in pure reflection comprises – almost as if the reflective regard could penetrate into the ‘fabric’ of the experiential consciousness itself, showing its patterned quality, its richness and complexity. The goal of the next two sections will be that of retracing some aspects of the analyses of time-consciousness and imaginative experience carried out after the *Investigations*, in order to assess precisely Husserl's attempt to grasp this complex character of experience within the boundaries of the internal consciousness.

1.2.1 Temporal lived experience: the analysis of time-consciousness

The 1905 *Zeitvorlesungen* are based on a partial recovery of the fourth chapter of *Principal Parts* dedicated to the phenomenology of time. In this text, Husserl focused on the problem of the relation between objective time and subjective time-consciousness by first taking into account the experience of temporal objects. Perception of an object, for example a melody, takes place in time and lasts over time; when we listen to a song we do not hear just a manifold of ‘now-moments’ of the song, we hear the song. Still, how is it possible to grasp what exceeds the ‘now’, in order to experience temporal objects?

The explanations offered by Brentano and others, like Meinong and James, are not entirely satisfactory for Husserl. Brentano in particular believed that an act of imagination is responsible for the association of past and present contents into a unitary representation of the same object in time. Although Husserl was inclined to acknowledge the basic idea lying behind this conception – namely, that something just perceived does not immediately disappear when it is no more perceived – it seemed problematic to him that the same object could appear as an object of perception and, at the same time, of

fantasy. Moreover, the issue of how can a temporal transcendent object be grasped seemed a bit different from the problem of the connection between past and present. Phenomenology does not seek a psychological explanation for this event. Instead, it turns to the apprehension of a temporal progression, and to the *time-consciousness* that lies behind every apprehension of time-objects.

This time-consciousness for Husserl consists of three key moments: primal impression, retention (directed at the moment just passed) and protention (directed at the immediate future moment). Here is how the key moments are presented:

“The ‘source point’ with which the ‘production’ of these enduring objects begins is a primal impression. This consciousness is in a state of constant change: the tone-now present ‘in person’ continuously changes (*scil.* consciously ‘in’ consciousness) into something that has been”³³.

From this angle we discover that every experience consists of a *continuum* of modifications: each phase passes continuously into a new one, leaving behind a trail of retentions that flow one from another like the tail of a comet. In the *Zeitvorlesungen* (unlike other important texts on the same subject³⁴) the retentional consciousness has a crucial role in the experience of temporal objects, inasmuch as it is involved in a sort of ‘perception of the past’, which is different from an act of memory. The experience of a

³³ “Der ‘Quellpunkt’, mit dem die ‘Erzeugung’ des dauernden Objektes einsetzt, ist eine Urimpression. Dies Bewußtsein ist in beständiger Wandlung begriffen : stetig wandelt sich das leib- hafte Ton-Jetzt (*scil.* bewußtseinsmäßig, ‘im’ Bewußtsein) in ein Gewesen [...]” Hua X p. 29; en. tr. PCIT pp.30-31.

³⁴ The major Husserlian writings on time-consciousness are the *Zeitvorlesungen*, the *Bernau Manuscripts*, and the *C-Manuscripts*. Through this production we can appreciate the tormented development of Husserlian thought regarding the subject of time and time-consciousness. There are in fact many remarkable differences between these texts that show how the author changed his mind about aspects such as the constitutive nature of the flow or the importance of retention with respect to protention. For a synthetic recollection of the main issues of these texts see Bernet (2010).

memory reproduces the whole temporal halo of the modes of intentionality through which objects or events are remembered. Retention, instead, indicates a modification of a different type, which affects the apprehension but without a *reproduction*³⁵. However, the specific nature of retention leads to a broader issue regarding the problem of how do we apprehend an object over time through the flow of its different manifestations retained by consciousness while they sink gradually into the past. There must be something responsible for a *unitary* apprehension of the object that actually guarantees the synthesis of identity of the same object through time, and this, for Husserl, is the flow of *constitutive absolute time-consciousness* (or absolute consciousness). Thus, the focal point of the analysis becomes the relationship between a *constituted time unity*, which allows the object to be regarded as one and identical through time, and this flow of *constitutive absolute time-consciousness*.

Quoted here is the way in which the absolute flow is introduced in the lectures of 1905:

“This flow is something we speak of *in conformity with what is constituted*, but it is not ‘something in objective time’. It is *absolute subjectivity* and has the absolute properties of something to be designated *metaphorically* as ‘flow’; of something that originates in a point of actuality, in a primal source-point the ‘now’, and so on. In the actuality-experience we have the primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation. For all of this, we lack names.”³⁶

The starting point for reflection is always a constituted unity of experience. However, the analysis can go further and investigate every single unity of

³⁵ This crucial phenomenological term will be further explained in the next section.

³⁶ “Dieser Fluß ist etwas, das wir nachdem Konstituierten so nennen, aber es ist nichts zeitlich ‘Objektives’. Es ist die absolute Subjektivität, und hat die absoluten Eigenschaften eines im Bilde als ‘Fluß’ zu Bezeichnenden, in einem Aktualitätspunkt, Urquellpunkt, ‘Jetzt’ Entspringenden usw. Im Aktualitätserlebnis haben wir den Urquellpunkt und eine Kontinuität von Nachhallmomenten. Für all das fehlen uns die Namen.” Hua X p. 75 (see also p.371); en. tr. PCIT p. 79 (see also p.382).

experience in the light of the absolute flow because of which there actually is such a unity. Regarding this absolute consciousness, two main issues come up and can be summarized in this way: the first concerns the nature of the flow, especially the problem of the temporal nature of its flow; the second concerns the possibility to grasp it as such without losing the absolute character and falling into an infinite regress.

The first problem is that the absolute constitutive flow does not belong to an objective temporality, but it is not entirely clear whether it is a temporal flow or not. In a supplementary text dated between 1908 and 1909 Husserl stated that “the flow of the modes of consciousness is not a process; the consciousness of the now is not itself now”³⁷. Then, again, between 1909 and 1911, Husserl described the absolute flow as an *a-temporal* object: it neither changes nor is altered within a period of time, but flows precisely as it flows, neither faster nor slower³⁸. Therefore, one could wonder if the absolute flow has to be considered as something in itself, or if it is a part of a singular flow of consciousness. To what extent can we speak of *two different* flows, one temporal and empirical and the other a-temporal and absolute? The difference between something constituted *through* time and something constitutive *of* time is clear, but we can still think that the absolute flow is like a deeper level of the temporal stream responsible for the unitary structure of the lived experience rather than something in itself (or an a-temporal object).

Notably, this issue is addressed by the Husserlian theory of the *double intentionality of retention*³⁹: Each and every act has a double series of retentions, which in turn corresponds to a transverse intentionality (*Querintentionalität*) and to a longitudinal intentionality (*Längsintentionalität*). While the former constitutes the time object, the second constitutes the unity of

³⁷ Hua X p. 333; en. tr. PCIT p.345.

³⁸ In the Appendix XI Husserl also claimed that we should call this flow a *pre-empirical* or *phenomenological time* in which we can swim following its course with a contemplative glance (see PCIT p. 128).

³⁹ See Hua X §39 p.80 and Beilage VIII p.116 ; en. tr. PCIT §39 p. 84 and Appendix VIII p. 120.

the flow itself. With this dual aspect of retention, for Husserl, we can explain the apprehension of a time object, for instance a melody. The explanation comes by looking at the constitution of a temporal unity by virtue of the transverse intentionality grasping different phases of the flow self-constituted *longitudinally*. This is precisely how a melody is heard *as a melody*, from the start to the end, whereas every individual sound in the melody is perceived as part of a unity in the flowing consciousness. Furthermore, transverse and longitudinal intentionality are two different moments, but they appear to be inseparable from each other. Retention, as a still-being conscious, is a consciousness that holds back the object, i.e. the elapsed tone. It is a continuous retention of the continuously preceding phases⁴⁰. This means that you cannot really identify two streams – or even two consciousnesses, one empirical and the other absolute. Instead, Husserl claims, there are two different *senses* of constitutive consciousness: one that stands for the constitution of the temporal unity of the experience upon which we reflect, and the other that stands for the self-constitutive original flow to which every single *Erlebnis* belongs. Nevertheless, the issue of how the absolute flow can manifest itself remains unresolved. What kind of consciousness can refer to the absolute flow without, in turn, being an intentional consciousness – that is, without falling into an inevitable infinite regress?

The answer rests precisely in the concept of internal consciousness (*inneres Bewußtsein*), which grasps in a *non-positional way* the manifestation of the absolute time-consciousness that constitutes itself by constituting time objects. Husserl devotes himself illustrating the notion of this internal consciousness especially in the various supplementary texts added to the *Zeitvorlesungen* after 1905. Here is an interesting quote that summarizes the situation:

“I surely do know of the flow of consciousness as flow. I can look at it. I

⁴⁰ See Hua X p. 81; en. tr. PCIT p. 85.

therefore have, in a consciousness that grasps its object, the actuality-phase of the flow and, together with it, a series of memories of the earlier phases. [...]There is one, unique flow of consciousness (perhaps within an ultimate consciousness) in which both the unity of the tone in immanent time and the unity of the flow of consciousness itself become constituted at once. As shocking (when not initially even absurd) as it may seem to say that the flow of consciousness constitutes its own unity, it is nonetheless the case that it does and that this is something that can be made intelligible on the basis of the flow's essential constitution."⁴¹

In other words, the role of the internal consciousness seems to be that it makes the form of the original flow of consciousness appear as it is – it makes possible to grasp it by means of a *reflective regard*. Thus, the form of the flow is *given* for Husserl in the internal consciousness and, hence, it can be ‘seen’ in a certain sense.

Now, despite the difficulties that the analyses dedicated to time-consciousness entail, there are some specific points about the internal consciousness that are worth noting: There is no act of internal perception involved, and no kind of self-consciousness of an Ego that accompanies every representation. “Every experience is ‘sensed’, is immanently ‘perceived’ (internal consciousness) although naturally not posited, meant”⁴². Otherwise, if the internal consciousness were some kind of positional experience, there would be another absolute flow behind it, and another internal consciousness and so on in an infinite regression. The word ‘internal’ should not be puzzling if it concerns, as we saw in the *Investigations*, the *immanent* character of the absolute, constitutive flow that this internal consciousness displays. This non-thetic internal consciousness can be also considered as a *primitive awareness* of the experiencing consciousness *as* a flowing stream. The internal

⁴¹ Hua X p. 377; en. tr. PCIT pp.389-390.

⁴² “Jedes Erlebnis ist ‘empfunden’, ist immanent ‘wahrgenommen’ (inneres Bewußtsein), wenn auch natürlich nicht gesetzt, gemeint” Hua X p. 126; en.tr. PCIT p. 130.

consciousness and all these unities are further defined also as the *pre-phenomenal being* of lived experiences by Husserl – being that comes before any reflective, positional attention.

Considering this, we can see that the phenomenological reflection that takes into account consciousness and lived experiences does not mean to fix a single lived experience in order to grasp its genuine characters. Each ‘new’ single phenomenon that we take into account already belongs to the temporal unity of consciousness, and is part of a background that is always present. From the phenomenological standpoint, then, there seem to be various strata pertaining to the experiential consciousness which comprise its pre-phenomenal and phenomenal being. In particular, I can always retrieve and go back to a certain lived experience, and such lived experience refers to a unity in the flowing stream of consciousness which displays its pre-phenomenal being.

Therefore, according to Husserl, on the one hand, the internal consciousness ensures the unitary structure of experience, while, on the other hand, it allows the phenomenological reflective analysis a *deeper insight* into modes of intentionality, characters of apprehension and, in general, the aspects and conditions of every kind of experience. Every reflective look towards the *Erlbenis* presupposes the self-constitution of the original flow to which the *Erlebnissen* belong. Husserl carried on this kind of analysis, which includes the unique structure of the flow of consciousness, as well as the actual and non-actual modes of consciousness, and started to develop in this way a fundamental conception regarding the *transcendental constitutive functions* underlying every lived experience.

1.2.2 Imaginative re-presentation and reproductive modification

The third chapter of the 1904-05 *Principal Parts* lectures is dedicated to the analysis of imaginative experience and image consciousness. Here what is of the most importance to the phenomenological analysis are the characters of

apprehension of the imaginative experience, that is, the conditions that allow us to have a particular experience of a fantasized object that hovers in front of the eyes. Thus, the phenomenologist starts to investigate the proper character of this presentation by comparing it with that of perception. In this regard, according to Husserl, Brentano was able to single out only a difference concerning contents, whereas what really matters is imaginative *apprehension* of something fantasized.

However, in the 1904-05 lectures the idea of an internal image misled the investigation of the imaginative experience. In other words, at first Husserl considered the experience of a physical image helpful to understand the difference between imaginative and perceptive presentations, but he soon realized the dubious nature of these clues.

“We must count in our sphere of imagination not merely the internal image presentations [...] hence presentations by means of mental images, but also image presentations in the ordinary sense of the word, hence those remarkable presentations in which a perceived object is designed to present and is capable of presenting another object by means of resemblance.”⁴³

Indeed, a fantasized object *actually appears* before the eyes, even if only in a certain floating and vague manner, and it is known for itself, i.e. *without* the help of any image or symbol referring to something not there. Therefore, in the following years, and in particular between 1908 and 1912, the issues regarding the way in which an object of fantasy can appear as itself, and what it is a reproduction of, becomes a central issue and opens the further issue of the reproductive modification of consciousness⁴⁴.

There is, however, something in common between imaginative

⁴³ Hua XXIII p. 17; en tr. PICM p. 19.

⁴⁴ On the other hand, the analyses dedicated to *Bildbewusstseins*, namely, to the peculiar characters of the experience of images, constitute a major phenomenological field, which can be explored at length in many texts of Husserliana XXIII.

experience and perceptual experience, something important that has to be highlighted, namely, the co-present appearance of myself as the subject of the imaginative experience of a fantasized object. In this regard, Husserl states that

“I have a ‘phantasy’ presentation of the whole situation; particularly a phantasy presentation of myself. And just as I can identify a table that I am now seeing with a table that I remember in a phantasy appearance (the location, the look may be changed, however), so I can identify the memory of the Ego with the Ego that is sensed or perceived now. In phantasy, therefore, the object stands over against my Ego (my Ego in a certain phantasied situation, position).”⁴⁵

The Ego is involved in the imaginative experience in the same sense as it is in perceptive experience. For instance, when I fantasize about something and this thing appears hovering before my eyes, for Husserl, I “transplant myself”⁴⁶ into this situation. This is the only way in which I can possibly have a lived experience of it. It is just as if, at that moment, I were in a fantasized place where I could feel all the things I would perceive if I were in the same actual place. Nonetheless, this means also that, if there is an appearance of something, even a non-existent object of fantasy, time-consciousness must be involved. Thus, as Husserl claims, time-consciousness is implicated throughout the imaginative process. In particular, there seems to be an apprehension through time of one and the same object that I fantasize, even if this object is not actually present in the flesh, but just hovering in front of my eyes. In short, we cannot consider imaginative experiences as a mere *repetitions* of other experiences that I have already had – and neither we can take fantasized objects as a mere ‘ghost’ copies of actual objects. The core of the imaginative experience is instead a *peculiar modification* of consciousness through which the apprehension of a fantasized object can be achieved. About this

⁴⁵ Hua XXIII p. 172; en tr. PICM 209.

⁴⁶ Hua XXIII p. 170; en tr. PICM p. 207.

modification Husserl in 1911-12 wrote:

“Specifically just as perception grasps or makes what is present appear in person, so if occasion should arise this modification or reproduction grasps the same object or something perfectly like it, which does not stand there in person but is *re-presented*”⁴⁷.

For Husserl, this *reproductive modification* of consciousness pertains to the experience of an object that is not there as if it were there. In particular, as we have seen, Husserl claims that every experience is ‘immanently perceived’ as a unity of immanent duration through an internal consciousness. It is precisely this internal consciousness that, according to Husserl, undergoes the reproductive modification that characterizes different acts (imagination, memory, expectation etc.) as acts that re-present an object. Hence, the imaginative apprehension of a re-presented object seems to rely on the reproduction (*Reproduktion*) through which an already constituted immanent unity of experience can be ‘produced again’ or re-presented in a new act of imagination.

“Every experience our regard can reach presents itself as an experience that endures, that flows away, and that changes in such and such a way. And it is not the intentional regard that makes the experience be what it presents itself as being; the regard only looks at the experience. This present, now existing, enduring experience, as we can discover by altering our regard, is already a ‘unity of consciousness’, of time consciousness [...] all of these are unities of time consciousness and are therefore perceived. Now to each such unity a modification corresponds: more precisely, a reproducing corresponds to the originary constitution of time, to the perceiving, and something re-presented

⁴⁷ “Vitality and Suitability in re-presentation; empty re-presentation. Internal consciousness, internal reflection. The strict concept of reproduction” Hua XXIII p. 305; en. tr. PICM p. 367.

corresponds to what is perceived.”⁴⁸

These analyses show that imagination as a *quasi-perception* of fantasized objects allows for the possibility of re-living for an infinite number of times the experience of something. In other words, the stream of the experiential consciousness is not something fixed or given once and for all. It modifies itself, and thanks to this modification we apprehend something as an object of fantasy – an object which is not ‘created’ by our own reflective regard, as ‘it is not the intentional regard that makes the experience be what it presents itself as being’.

Therefore, this brief outline of the phenomenological account of the imaginative apprehension and experience highlights several interesting and peculiar aspects of Husserl’s reflection. For instance, the affinity between imagination and perception seems to have found a new framework, which is different from that of the long-standing tradition of dependence that saw imagination as a decaying sense. Moreover, imagination and experience of images are accounted for as two distinct kinds of experience. Most importantly, the reproductive modification highlights the imaginative function of *expanding* the reflective ‘space’ of the intuitive appearance of something. This expansion relies on the possibility of modifying and varying the experience an infinite number of times. Indeed, every single lived experience is an index of infinite possible reproduced experiences.

In conclusion, thanks to the analyses that show the core theme of time-consciousness and imaginative experience, I think it is possible to gain some important insights into the direction taken by the phenomenological clarification of knowledge and experience. In particular, we have seen that the phenomenological account of lived experience is not limited to those distinctive characters that pertain to different kinds of experience, but it also involves the unitary temporal structure of the experience which underlies every

⁴⁸ Hua XXIII p.308; en. tr. PICM p. 369-370.

single *Erlebnis*. This means that, on the one hand, it is possible to take into consideration the *constitutive* flow of absolute consciousness to which the single constituted temporal unity found as the starting point of reflection is correlated. On the other hand, the phenomenological analysis of the imaginative experience reveals the infinite number of possible modifications that can unfold from a single lived experience. Moreover, it seems appropriate to recall here Husserl's definition of the peculiarity of the phenomenological analysis: every step forward yields a new point of view, from which what we have already discovered appears in a new light. If we are willing to take this definition seriously, then we should interpret the results of the analyses dedicated to time-consciousness and imaginative consciousness as a new point of view from which it will be possible, for Husserl, to cast a new reflective regard on the pure phenomena of consciousness in order to grasp the complexity of experience, its patterns as a flow and its own logic.

1.3 Towards self-evident, immanent consciousness

In the previous sections I attempted to highlight what characterizes the phenomenological development between *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* by taking into consideration Husserl's endeavor for a new style of analysis focused on experience and knowledge. First, I showed in the *Logical Investigations* the issue of the phenomenological break-through and I took into consideration the difference between phenomenological and psychological description. Such a difference served as evidence of the peculiar character of the phenomenological analysis that turns to consciousness and lived experience in order to explain *how* we know something, as well as the origins of objective knowledge. In this way, it was possible to gain some insights into Husserl's outline of a new direction of analysis, which highlights the *evident givenness* of consciousness through the definition of an adequate ('inner') perception.

Furthermore, the clarification of the experiential consciousness carried on

after the *Investigations* emphasizes the possibility to account for both the unitary flowing stream of consciousness (on which the temporal unity of lived experience depends), and all the possible reproductions pertaining to every single lived experience (through which the limits of reflection are expanded by means of the reproductive modification). In relation to this account of the experiential consciousness, one of the most effective metaphors that Husserl uses is the example of a reflective look that can ‘swim’ in the pre-phenomenal being of consciousness, in order to discover its different layers and aspects. But what is this reflective look, and how can it be really gained? The notion of internal consciousness, previously defined as a primitive, non-positional awareness of the experiencing acts of consciousness, seems to ensure a deeper insight into the new territory of evident givenness of pure phenomena. However, a fundamental consideration regarding the phenomenological method is required. In fact, Husserl's phenomenology starts to acquire a more definite form as a *pure reflection* (or *method of reflection*) through which it is possible to investigate and explore the *essential* connections of pure consciousness and its pure phenomena.

It should also be noted that the development of the phenomenological analysis in this direction raises many issues. For instance, one could wonder about the point of shedding light on what is normally implicit, or enclosed, in the word ‘experience’. Why cannot we simply be satisfied with *what* we know instead of searching for *how* do we know? Moreover, what is really accomplished by phenomenology? What is the purpose or its ultimate conclusion?

In order to face these questions, one should start mentioning the fact that the phenomenological analysis does not look for a specific element (subjective or objective) of the cognitive process as the ultimate conclusion of the clarification of knowledge. Instead, the goal seems to acquire a *pure reflective stance* through which it is possible to investigate the actual ground of the cognitive process, in its genuine characters, without presupposing intellectual

structures of the mind that gives form to the object known, or the factual existence of the object as a causal principle. However, it is not possible to effectively argue for this point until we have taken into consideration the *method of reduction* through which Husserl highlights the importance and the far-reaching consequences of the discovery of the evident givenness of consciousness as a new territory of analysis. In particular, by taking into account the method of reduction we can see how a *rigorous* analysis of such an evident ground of consciousness can be accomplished through *intuitive acts of pure seeing* (or phenomenological perceptions) which indicate primarily a new attitude of reflection to be relentlessly pursued.

1.4 Method of reduction and new phenomenological science

“We could now let the universal ἐποχή in our sharply determinate and novel sense of the term, take the place of the Cartesian attempt to doubt universally [...] *We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude*; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being: thus the whole natural world which is continually ‘there for us’ ‘on hand’, and which will always remain there according to consciousness as an ‘actuality’ even if we choose to parenthesize it”⁴⁹.

According to this quote, which is taken from 1913 Husserl’s work *Ideas I*, the phenomenological *epoché* consists of parenthesizing, or suspending everything that the general positing of the natural attitude encompasses⁵⁰. Therefore, the easy way to approach a complex thematic notion such as that of the phenomenological *reduction or epoché* perhaps is to consider it as a method for

⁴⁹ Hua III/1 p. 65; en. tr. ID1 pp. 60-61.

⁵⁰ I shall deal with a more detailed discussion of what Husserl means by natural attitude in the next section and in the next chapter of this dissertation.

removing something from the reflective consideration of experience. However, the easy way is not always the more appropriate one. There is no doubt that one of the main difficulties that phenomenology had to deal with was the difficulty of leaving behind an *attitude* of thought that is profoundly rooted in everyday life, as well as in the philosophical tradition. Such a habit implies a way of being oriented towards the world. The world is always there for us, and we *naturally* posit its existence. Moreover, in this attitude it is the *object* of experience (or *the thing*) that receives all the attention. Thus, the problem with experience is whether to match the thing that is taken for granted as something existent, or as a *fact*. However, if the reduction were just a method for removing *the thing* in order to focus exclusively on the experiencing consciousness, phenomenology would have to face the contradiction of returning to the experience of the things themselves without being able to display the things experienced⁵¹.

Starting from this problematic context, I shall take into account how Husserl introduced the method of reduction in two particularly important texts: the lectures delivered in 1907 (published as *The idea of phenomenology*) and the lectures of the winter semester 1910-11 (*The basic problems of phenomenology*). In these lectures we can find what I believe to be the basis for defining the method of reduction. Indeed the reduction represents the method of access to the pure consciousness, and the achievement of a clear awareness of our conscious acts of experience. However, it is worth noting that the widespread thesis in the literature regarding these two texts is that the 1907 epistemological reduction falls into *solipsism* and is influenced by Cartesianism. For the same reason, the 1910-11 lectures are often considered a reaction to this issue, because they show the engagement of the world at the

⁵¹ There are other difficulties that are worth noting regarding the phenomenological method of reduction: for instance, there is not just *one* method of reduction, but there are different types of reduction that can be singled out by the terms they apply to (and for a particularly interesting and thorough sketch of all the different kinds of reduction in Husserlian phenomenology see Lohmar [2013]), as well as different ways to perform the reduction – I am thinking of Kern (1962) and the Cartesian, ontological, and psychological ways.

core of phenomenology. Nonetheless, while it is true that the two texts describe two different ways of performing the reduction, in the end they also seem to share the same goal. In particular, they both show the direction for the new phenomenological science (opposed to positive science): *A rigorous* science of absolute givenness, that is, of the absolute being of pure consciousness. The problem is how to understand the relation between the realm of pure phenomena (the absolute donation of consciousness to reflection) and the world of the things themselves. For instance, as it has been already noted, if the reduction indicated the exclusion of the world from the phenomenological analysis, it would be hard not to give in to solipsism. Moreover, even if *pure*, we are still referring to *phenomena*, and, as Marc Richir pointed out, we cannot separate the clarified dimension of phenomena from its horizon of givenness, which always presents a *rift* between a genuine donation and its opposite. This is what characterizes the *phenomenality* of phenomena (Richir 1992). In other words, we are not discussing here the ‘thing in itself’, namely the absolute being *beyond* phenomenal appearances. The realm of phenomenology is rather concerned with the lit and shaded ground of givenness, where the visible and the invisible (or not yet visible) intertwine, and where intentional objects display determinate and indeterminate sides, and actual or potential aspects. When Husserl refers to the absolute givenness he is not excluding transcendent objects, but once again he is referring to the evident donation of consciousness to reflection, which comprises pure phenomena even if these pure phenomena do not represent every possible point of view on the object experienced. Still, we have to understand how does the reduction grant the access to the realm of pure consciousness and what does this realm entail precisely. As an anticipation of a more detailed discussion, we can quote two important passages that illustrate the Husserlian consideration of phenomenology and its method relying on a pure seeing (1907) and on a genuine phenomenological perception (1910-11).

“Phenomenology carries out its clarification in acts of seeing, determining, and distinguishing sense. [...] But it does all this in the act of pure seeing. It does not engage in theory or mathematical construction; that is, it offers no explanations in the sense of deductive theories. [...]It ends where objectifying science begins. Thus it is a science in an entirely different sense, with entirely different tasks to fulfill and entirely different methods.⁵² (1907)

“It is not until one consistently and completely carries out the *phenomenological reduction* and in the immanent description of the psychical experience no longer grasps and posits the latter as a state, as ‘experience’ of the experiencing I and as an entity in objective time, that one obtains pure lived experience, as the object of the phenomenological perception, and, for the first time, achieves genuine phenomenological perception in its radical distinctiveness from empirical perception.”⁵³ (1910-11)

As these two quotes suggest, the core of phenomenology is represented by pure seeing and by a pure phenomenological perception that the subject of reflection can achieve by performing the reduction. Therefore, I will focus on these particularly interesting aspects in the next two sections concerning first the 1907 lectures, and then the 1910-11 lectures.

1.4.1 The adventure of reflection on the *mainland of givenness*

The five lectures published as *The Idea of Phenomenology* highlight the distinguished path of phenomenological reflective thought from a naïve view to a more sophisticated and mature outlook on intentional consciousness and experience⁵⁴. In particular, through these lectures we can retrace the steps that lead to the phenomenological new attitude of reflection by means of the

⁵² Hua II p. 58; en. tr. IP p. 43.

⁵³ Hua XIII pp. 149-150; en. tr. BPP pp. 40-41.

⁵⁴ On the particular structure of IP lectures see Brough (2008).

method of reduction.

The starting point is represented by the obscure metaphysical condition of epistemological thought that faces the problem of the possibility of knowledge. According to Husserl, modern philosophy tried hard enough to solve the issue, but it still did not succeed. The reason for this failure depends primarily on a misleading way of addressing the problem, as if it was a sort of unsolvable riddle. Phenomenology, on the contrary, addresses the problem of knowledge as a problem of clarification of the *essence* of knowledge. However, in order to fulfill this goal, knowledge has first to be taken into account as a *pure phenomenon*, namely, as an absolute givenness. Indeed, knowledge as a pure phenomenon of consciousness is actually something positively given, and this positive givenness can be taken into consideration in order to answer the question of the possibility of knowledge and avoid skepticism. In particular, phenomenology wants to give a positive solution that can overcome *both* the attitude of a positive science (which does not even raise the question of the possibility of knowledge) and the skeptical positions (which deny the possibility of true knowledge) to this issue.

Nonetheless, the problem is how knowledge can become a pure phenomenon. In regard to this issue, Husserl draws upon Descartes and the method of radical doubt as the only true starting point for a critique of knowledge; it is by virtue of universal doubt that we can discover the evidence of the *Cogitatio*. However, this reference to Descartes seems useful to introduce a fundamental *difference* of purpose between phenomenology and Cartesian thought more than anything. Husserl heavily underlines that, whereas Descartes was more interested in *securing* the objectivity of knowledge, phenomenology is much more interested in the *understanding of objectivity*, rather than in ensuring it. In other words, Descartes took the evidence of the immanent *Cogito* for a justifying principle regarding its *Cogitationes*, while Husserl envisioned a phenomenological inquiry into the essence of knowledge as a pure phenomenon, no matter what its objectiveness may be. What matters

most when considering this inquiry is that knowledge is something that can be absolutely given to us in details at any particular time, and this means for Husserl that “those forms of thought that I actually realize in thinking are given to me insofar as I *reflect* on them, accept them and posit them in a *pure act of seeing*.”⁵⁵ This pure act of seeing, however, is different from a naïve seeing, and it has to be accounted for. Moreover, it seems important to understand the meaning that Husserl gives to the immanent, absolute givenness of every experience that becomes the object of pure seeing, and whether the immanent field of knowledge is limited to intentional acts without any reference to transcendent objects.

In order to address these issues, there are some important aspects of the accounts of transcendence to take into consideration. Transcendence is often defined as something that is posited as existing without being genuinely given in the act of knowing (i.e. without being immanent to it). However, according to Husserl, upon closer examination this sense of transcendence turns out to be ambiguous. Indeed, it can refer to something which is *not* contained in the act of knowing as one of its real [*reelle*] moments, but it can refer also to every kind of givenness which is *not* self-evident, namely, which is *not* clear and absolute givenness. In other words, the problem of how knowledge posits something that is not directly given to it as existing can be addressed in a twofold manner: on the one hand, as a problem of the possibility of real transcendence, and, on the other hand, as a problem of the possibility of transcendence *beyond* the sphere of evident givenness. Here the bottom line seems that, if we take transcendence in the second sense, for Husserl we can achieve clarity regarding how knowledge is possible by purely seeing and grasping the self-evident character of those forms of thought that we refer to as knowledge. However, in view of this task we will have to put aside every pre-given idea of real transcendence (although Husserl points out that the

⁵⁵ “Nämlich die Denkgestaltungen, die ich wirklich vollziehe, sind mir gegeben, wofern ich auf sie *reflektierte*, sie *rein schauend* aufnehme und setze.” Hua II p. 30; en. tr. IP p. 24.

problem of transcendence remains both the initial and the guiding problem for the critique of knowledge). This is where the *epistemological reduction* steps in and excludes what is *posited* by the act of knowing in order to focus on what is genuinely *given* in our experience.

“In every epistemological investigation into whatever type of knowledge, the epistemological reduction must be performed, that is, all transcendence that comes into play here must be excluded, must be supplied with the index of indifference, of epistemological nullity, with an index that says: the existence of all transcendent entities whether I believe in them or not, does not concern me here”.⁵⁶

It may seem that the phenomenological reduction creates a sort of *vacuum* within our predicative knowledge: Where there was before an epistemic judgment about the existence of something, now there is an index of epistemological nullity. However, this index does not prevent the subject from further reflecting – on the contrary, such nullity seems to create the conditions for the reflective subject to leave behind the naïve seeing, and be able to really see what is purely given in the acts of experience and knowledge.

From the definition of the epistemological reduction we also gather that the pure phenomenon of knowledge is not a ‘reality’ or a psychic fact, but has to be something purely given as such – a *mainland of givenness* as Husserl calls it – specifically, a *self-giving consciousness* freed of assumptions or prejudices, which allows us to consider the given as such leaving aside the issue of its existence, in order to focus only on its *essential* characters⁵⁷. Of

⁵⁶ Hua II p. 39; en. tr. IP p. 30.

⁵⁷ In this regard, it is noteworthy the opposition between the positive judgment about the existence of the object of experience and the phenomenological judgment about the essential traits of the experience of the very same object. Such opposition points out the peculiar meaning of Husserlian reference to essences, which concerns the ground of lived experience and cognitive acts of consciousness. In particular, it seems that in order to formulate the phenomenological judgment it is necessary to *see* the essences that pertain to the ground of lived experience and determine it as it is.

course, the transcendent object cannot be denied or excluded from this mainland of givenness (or there would be no knowledge, because knowledge is *always* about something), but instead, for Husserl, it becomes an index of infinite possible ways of appearance, which can never really exhaust the wholeness of the thing. In this way, we can see that the phenomenological (*epistemological*) reduction tries to prevent confusing the evidence of the being of the *Cogitatio* with the evidence that *justifies* the existence of my *Cogitatio* – a confusion that clearly affected the Cartesian reflection; while the former allows a peculiar inquiry into the essence of knowledge in order to elucidate it, the latter concerns an internal justification of knowledge. It is important to further emphasize this point because it shows that, after performing the phenomenological reduction, we are not left alone with our internal states of mind, nor are we required to justify our knowledge through them. World and nature are still there; they are still transcendent objects of knowledge. The problem is how do we *see* them now. What is important here is that they are now taken into account *inasmuch as* they are genuinely given in the pure phenomenon of knowledge. In this way for Husserl we “drop anchor on the shore of phenomenology”⁵⁸ – an expression that brings forth images of a journey of reflection, a theoretical adventure through a finally discovered new territory.

However, there is a further step to consider: What we discover in this ‘territory’, is not something concerning just the experience of individuals. By means of the reduction, the phenomenological analysis can in fact reach the *essential forms* of knowledge and its universal character:

“For those who can place themselves in the position of pure seeing and can stay clear of all natural prejudices, it is easier to conceive of knowledge that can not only bring particulars, but also universals, universal objects, and universal states

⁵⁸ “Und so werfen wir schon Anker an der Küste der Phänomenologie” Hua II p. 45; en. tr. IP p. 34.

of affairs to absolute givenness. This knowledge is of decisive significance for the possibility of phenomenology. For it is the peculiar character of phenomenology to analyze and conduct research into essences within the framework of a reflection that involves only pure seeing, a framework of absolute self-givenness.”⁵⁹

This significant knowledge of universal objects and states of affairs seems to be the main result of the sophisticated and articulated reflective *seeing* performed by phenomenology. The objective of the phenomenological act of pure seeing is that of returning to the evident givenness of consciousness, which seems to comprise not only contingent contents of experience, but also its necessary structure – that is, the essential characters that genuinely determine the experience of individuals. And it is in this regard that Husserl also starts to talk of a *phenomenology of reason* that “sets itself the task of bringing the discursive understanding to reason”⁶⁰. Husserl claimed indeed that knowing something does not necessarily imply a fully articulated *understanding* of the mental process involved in knowing – for example, I can say that I know that this object in front of me is a glass of water. Yet, I do not necessarily know how I came to such a conclusion or what kind of mental process led me to recognize this object as a glass of water. From the phenomenological standpoint, we still see what is presented in our experience, but what is more important is that we *see* what is genuinely given, and starting from here we can investigate the essential structures of experience. Put into other words, after the reduction we do not see the world or any kind of reality by means of epistemic judgments or established known fact anymore. Instead we focus on what is genuinely given, namely, we focus on *evidence*, which is, for Husserl, *a seeing consciousness that directly apprehends itself*⁶¹. This

⁵⁹ Hua II p. 51; en. tr. IP p. 39.

⁶⁰ “Schauende Erkenntnis ist die Vernunft, die sich vorsetzt, den Verstand eben zur Vernunft zu bringen” Hua II p. 62; en. tr. IP. p. 46. I shall return to the topic of the phenomenology of reason and specifically to this quote in §3.5

⁶¹ Hua II p.59; en. tr. p.44.

seems to be the cornerstone idea of Husserl's 1907 idea of phenomenology as a phenomenological critique of knowledge and thinking. Such a critique entails as much intuition as possible and as little understanding (*Verstand*) as possible. In particular, according to Husserl, once the position of the pure seeing is acquired, we have to just let 'the eye' speak and exclude all transcendent reference interwoven with seeing⁶².

In the last part of the 1907 lectures Husserl outlines the shape of a new peculiar science, namely, a phenomenological science that has an entirely different meaning with respect to positive science. While the former aims at *understanding objectivity through evidence*, the latter aims at stating positive facts about the world and reality. However, in these lectures we find above all the pivotal point of phenomenology stated in a surprisingly straightforward way. Phenomenology targets the self-evident field of consciousness and lived experience, which is taken purely into consideration, and, thanks to the method of the reduction, aims at bringing what is already central in our experience back to the foreground: *Evidence*. What these lectures truly lack, though, is a further explication of what the phenomenological pure seeing actually entails, and what kind of relationship goes on between phenomenological seeing and everyday life's experience. On the other hand, these lectures contribute to clarify the issue previously recalled regarding the method of reduction as a way of excluding or removing the transcendent object, which now seems rather misleading. Indeed, the phenomenological reduction is not about 'reducing' the inquiry to some experiences instead of others. The method of reduction is designed to make the access to the rigorous analysis of pure phenomena clear, starting from the naïve view, which turns into a more sophisticated form of intuition pertaining to the phenomenological standpoint. And the phenomenological pure seeing defines itself *while* the reduction allows us to focus on the fundamental core of the acts of experience. Indeed it seems that what the act of pure seeing actually shows is something that a simple 'opening

⁶² "The whole trick here is to let the seeing eye have its say" Hua II p. 62; en.tr. IP p. 47.

of our eyes' would never reveal *per se*. There is no shrinking of the natural scope of vision; rather, there is a new territory (mainland) of givenness to take into consideration. We will see now that in the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* there is no attempt to step back from this issue, but a further account and explanation of the extent of reduction.

1.4.2 The transposition (*Wendung*) of experience

The 1910-11 lectures on *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* begin with an accurate description of what the Ego finds around and in front of its eyes in the so-called *natural attitude* – that is, the objects of experience that we naturally take for granted and that can become objects of a positive science. According to the natural-world thesis, everything we encounter in experience within such a natural attitude is posited as an existence. However, for Husserl the natural-world thesis is an example of epistemic naivety, which entails many problems and obscurities that have to be critically discussed. In such a critical discussion, the reference to Avenarius is particularly noteworthy alongside the familiar reference to Descartes. Avenarius's positivism consisted of strongly anti-metaphysical positions that appealed to the comeback to pure experience by means of the exclusion of those “suppositions not in accordance with the *fundamental sense* of the natural world-thesis or the sense of experience”⁶³. In this regard, a distinct affinity between the empirio-criticism method and the phenomenological reduction has been noted, and this affinity has raised the issue of the actual contribution coming from Avenarius to the genesis of reduction (Lavigne 2003)⁶⁴. However, the reference to empirio-criticism, which emphasizes the discovery of the concept of the world lying at the basis of

⁶³ Hua XIII p. 136; en. tr. BPP p.25.

⁶⁴ Lavigne in his *Husserl lecteur d'Avenarius* (2003) takes into account the problem of the enigmatic origin of Husserlian reduction. He particularly underlines the use of the term *Ausschaltung* (first used by Avenarius) and the notion of pure experience in order to suggest that Husserl could have found in the reading of Avenarius work the reasons to free the phenomenological datum from psychological characters.

experience, might also express only the need for a more comprehensive way for performing the reduction that extends to our entire flow of experiences directed at the world and draws a parallelism between phenomenological and natural experience.

Indeed, in this text, the method of reduction is primarily defined as a disengagement from the empirical terms of the experience. Only the essential components of nature should be preserved. To further explain this point, Husserl speaks of a *distinctio phaenomenologica* that cuts the empirical links between the *Erlebnissen*, and allows us to consider lived experiences in themselves, namely, without making use of any natural position about the world.

“We put in brackets, as it were, every empirical act [...] In no way do we accept what any empirical act presents to us as being. Instead of living in its achievement, and instead of clinging naïvely to its positing with its sense after its achievement, we rather turn to the act itself and make it itself, plus what in it may present itself to us, an object. This object is not at all natural, and it no longer contains any positing of nature. *In this way*, we appropriate all experiences.”⁶⁵

In other words, the ‘phenomenological brackets’ seem to allow for a new way of reflecting upon what we are experiencing and living right now, granted that we acknowledge that there is a difference between reflecting and living. In this way Husserl stresses the acquisition of a true sense of experience, along with the transposition (*Umwendung*) of experience into a new phenomenological dimension of experience, where intuitions of single individuals are projected on the background of the whole completion of *Cogitationes* intertwined with one another in the temporal flow of consciousness. In §32 Husserl claims that this is ‘the realm of pure consciousness’ and this consciousness is defined as a

⁶⁵ Hua XIII p. 148; en. tr. BPP p.39.

“purely immanent being, [...] something that in this positing is not nature, because it is neither the being of that which itself appears, the mere being of what presents itself, nor has it a share in such a being by way of an indirect co-positing of nature.”⁶⁶ Moreover, in the realm of pure consciousness every phenomenon, according to Husserl, can be grasped by a *phenomenological perception* as an absolutely immanent self-givenness. Such phenomenological perception directly recalls the act of pure seeing that Husserl discussed in 1907. However, in Husserl’s 1910-11 lectures, we can recognize something that in 1907 was not so easy to understand. Specifically, we see a *parallelism* drawn between phenomenological experience and natural experience. While the object of an empirical natural perception presents itself through its appearances, the phenomenological perception grasps the self-presence and self-evident experience of the object, which has its own duration – a ‘now’ point and a retentive stream of consciousness. Therefore, although it maintains the characteristics of the act of pure seeing from 1907, the phenomenological perception seems concerned with a constant confrontation (a transposition) with everyday experience, and then, with the discovery of the world which is at the basis of experience. Thus, the pure consciousness reveals itself to the phenomenological perception while we live and experience the world as human beings with our bodies. This also means that the absolute ground of the phenomenological pure experience cannot be given all at once, in the same way that the world cannot be discovered all at once⁶⁷. Moreover, the

⁶⁶ “Aber ein Teil dieser Welt, genannt Bewusstsein, hat die Eigentümlichkeit, dass er sich phänomenologisch reduzieren lässt; d.h., wenn wir alle in ihm vollzogenen und mit ihm verflochtenen natürlichen Daseinssetzungen ausser Aktion setzen, für unser Urteilen ausschalten, bleibt es selbst übrig als rein immanentes Sein, als etwas, das in dieser Setzung nicht Natur ist, sofern es weder selbsterscheinendes Sein, sich bloss darstellendes Sein ist, noch an derartigem Sein Anteil hat durch indirekte Mitsetzung von Natur.” Hua XIII p. 174; en. tr. BPP p.70.

⁶⁷ Also here lie the main reasons for rebutting the accusations of metaphysics of presence addressed to the Husserlian phenomenology by Heidegger in particular. The streaming life of consciousness is not crystallized by the phenomenological perception to a ‘now’ point or to an eternal present. However it can be progressively discovered while we are actually living and having experiences of objects and things. Granted that, Husserl’s reference to a *double reduction* could be taken as a way to articulate the phenomenological perception in

idea of a transposition of experience indicates that we are referring to the same experience in two different ways. Along these same lines, Husserl states that the transcendent unities that we find in the natural attitude now become indexes of pure connections of consciousness that may be exhibited as acts of phenomenological experience. This does not mean that we stop experiencing things, but that we are seeing them in a different sense, as transcendent unities. Indeed, it must be especially clear that the phenomenological realm is not a 'noumenal' double of the empirical realm. What does appear in the realm of pure consciousness, instead, are the essential features of experience, along with consciousness' constitutive layers and, in general, all that is implied by the intentional relationship between consciousness and the world.

In conclusion, both the 1907 and 1910-11 lectures provide interesting insights for clarifying the method of reduction and offer the occasion to specify the new direction of analysis undertaken by Husserl in the first decade of the twentieth century. However, before addressing the problem of how notions such as 'mainland of givenness' (or pure consciousness), and 'pure seeing' (or phenomenological perceptions) – which have only been introduced here – actually take part in Husserl's transcendental philosophical project, I shall deal now with some problems regarding the early phenomenological perspective and its interpretations.

1.5 Phenomenological spring of *things themselves*

As I have stated earlier leading up to this chapter, there are many critical issues that affect Husserl's reflection especially during the first decade of Husserl's Göttingen years. In light of the previous considerations, I intend to revisit two critical topics that majorly affected the interpretation of Husserlian thought

this text. Starting from the natural reflection, which focuses upon the stream of consciousness, a first reduction should produce an immanent intuition of the experience itself. A second reduction should be then performed in order to highlight the intentional object of the experience.

especially between the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*. The first issue is related to the aforementioned problem of *things themselves*. The second issue is related to the problem of pure reflection.

Husserl's reference to things themselves in the *Logical Investigations* soon became a sort of phenomenological slogan upon going back to things themselves («*zurück zu den Sachen selbst!*»). This slogan triggered an extensive debate that ended up fueling many prejudiced visions and ideological rebuttals of transcendental phenomenology. On the other hand, it also raised some important questions regarding the further development of phenomenology: How is it possible to get back to things themselves if the investigation focuses only on pure consciousness? What does it actually mean to (re)turn to things themselves? A great part of the phenomenological debate originated from these kinds of questions, and the answers to these questions often took the so-called 'transcendental turn' as an alleged alienation of things themselves from the phenomenological ground (replaced by correlates of the transcendental consciousness). I would like now to briefly give some context, as well as a response to these different positions.

The positions closest to a phenomenology of things themselves can be ascribed mainly to the *Göttingen Kreis*, one of the most famous phenomenological associations that gathered around the academic figure of Husserl in the first years of the twentieth century. The members of *Göttingen Kreis* formulated positions based on the idea of phenomenology as a philosophy of universal essences (*Wesenphänomenologie*). However, they put aside the reflection on essential structure of consciousness, and focused exclusively on 'things' (*Sachen*). The word 'thing' is referred in this context to a set of phenomena taken in an objective sense that breaks into the inner circle of consciousness as actually experienced things. Therefore, in this context phenomenology could be taken as a way to get rid of positivist conceptions by providing a valuable alternative instead of an actual autonomous discipline to be developed with a specific project. It could be claimed that the years of the

‘phenomenological spring’ (Spiegelberg, 1965: 168) are also the years of the phenomenological *spring of things themselves*⁶⁸.

However, about these years, Spiegelberg remarks: “It seems that in those days even the bouquet of the wines and the scent of tobaccos served as legitimate topics for phenomenological improvisations and discussions.”(Spiegelberg, 1965: 170). In other words, the phenomenological turn to things themselves, along with the theory of intentionality and the anti-representationalist approach of the *Investigations*, was greeted as a return to an immediate closeness to the ‘real world’. Yet, this idea of an immediate reality is exactly the kind of conception that anchors phenomenology to the ground of doxastic allegiances and assumptions. As we have already seen, Husserl, by referring to things themselves, intended to drive the phenomenological investigation towards the origin of meanings on the ground of intuitive full experiences (in opposition with empty intentions and references). Furthermore, the phenomenological theory of intentionality never claimed that things were breaking into the inner circle of consciousness. On the contrary, intentionality points to things themselves *in so far as they are given*. Namely, intentionality points to things themselves in so far as they present themselves according to every possible mode of intentionality before our consciousness. It is true that we do not find mental images of the real world inside the mind. However, we certainly do not find objects inside the mind, as if they were contained or stored in there.

Furthermore, mystifying interpretations of the phenomenological slogan did not only come from ‘things themselves enthusiasts’. This mystifying

⁶⁸ This is how for instance Simone de Beauvoir describes in *The prime of life* the first encounter between Sartre and phenomenology through Raymond Aron, a realist phenomenologist: “Aron said, pointing to his glass: «You see, my dear fellow, if you are a phenomenologist, you can talk about this cocktail and make philosophy out of it!» Sartre turned pale with emotion at this. Here was just the thing he had been longing to achieve for years – to describe objects just as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process. Aron convinced him that phenomenology exactly fitted in with his special preoccupations: by-passing the antithesis of idealism and realism, affirming simultaneously both the supremacy of reason and the reality of the visible world as it appears to our senses.” Beauvoir *The Prime of life* (1965), p. 135.

understanding can also be found in other sources such as the neo-Kantian criticism addressed to Husserl's project. According to this criticism, the *Logische Untersuchungen* would lay the groundwork for a dogmatic adherence to intuitions and given data. Phenomenology is reproached this time for not questioning the possibility of givenness itself and for undermining, in this way, its entire transcendental enterprise. In this regard, I shall recall the position expressed by Eugen Fink in 1933 when he responded to the objections directed toward phenomenology by Rickert and his neo-Kantian school⁶⁹ (Fink, 1933). Fink stated that the main problem raised by the neo-Kantian 'critical criticism' can be boiled down to an attempt to read the transcendental project in the light of still obscure phenomenological motives. According to Fink, the philosophical meaning of the *Investigations* was still implicit and preliminary; for this reason it was a basic mistake to create a notion of intuition from here, in order to make it the guiding principle for further phenomenological development. If there were any dogmatic edge of phenomenology in the *Investigations*, it would have been overcome by a genuinely new philosophical attitude gained with the reduction. Furthermore, Fink reads the invitation to come back to things themselves as the Husserlian way to address precisely the problem of thingness (*Sachlichkeit*), i.e. of the being-thing in a concrete sense. This explanation actually disputed the outcomes of critical criticism. Fink pointed out also that to come back to the things themselves does not mean necessarily to surrender to the given external data – or to take for granted their givenness. It can be a way for *questioning* the relationship between consciousness and the world on a different ground, as the phenomenological reflection wanted to do.

Fink's argument is particularly interesting because it points out something important that was clearly missed by the neo-Kantians. Specifically, Fink refers to the process of maturation of phenomenological thought through which its

⁶⁹ Fink takes into account those criticisms made against Husserl by the neo-Kantian axiological school and, in particular, by Rudolf Zocher e Friedrich Kreis (Fink, 1933).

own philosophical motivations came to the fore. In other words, what the neo-Kantian and realist (or ‘things themselves enthusiasts’) positions have in common is basically a refusal to understand the deep, authentic reasons that guided Husserl’s strive for the development of a new, reflective attitude of thought. Among these, there is undoubtedly the rejection of the naïve vision of the world and reality, which, however, does not amount to a rejection of experience in favor of *a priori* categories of the mind. In other words, the *rise* of the phenomenological, transcendental perspective does not coincide with the *wane* of things themselves. On the contrary, phenomenology is closely related with a new dimension of givenness, which is the dimension of *pure consciousness* and of its connections, which presents the being of the world as it is given (in the way it is given). Here we can see also the meaning of Fink’s claim that being is the horizon of questions for the phenomenological consciousness – that is, the horizon upon which consciousness interrogates itself. As a consequence of this interrogation, the reflective subject can discover within its reflection the mainland of pure phenomena and all that is entailed by it.

Following the issues raised by the neo-Kantians and by those in favor of the positions expressed by the *Göttingen Kreis*, there is an extensive debate regarding the phenomenological realism⁷⁰. Such a debate raises issues about how well the phenomenological reflection can be applied to deliberations on the being of things and world⁷¹. And in case of a negative answer, the issue of a purported subordination of reality to consciousness has been raised: does the phenomenological perspective indicate an *ontological* precedence of

⁷⁰ The realist debate within the phenomenological context is very broad: it encompasses realist positions expressed by Husserl’s scholars such as Ingarden, Reinach and Scheler, and by representatives of the American phenomenological thought such as Morriston (1976), Hall (1976), Gutting (1978), Ameriks (1977), Van de Pitte (1976), Gerner (1991), Drummond (1990).

⁷¹ Similarly J. Benoist argues that the problem of phenomenological transcendental idealism is the detachment of meaning from being in such a way that meaning determines being and not the other way around. For this reason, according to Benoist the transcendental idealist perspective on one hand allows phenomenology to turn back to ontology and on the other inevitably leads to an ontological idealism. (Benoist, 2005).

consciousness over the world? In light of what has previously been discussed regarding the evident givenness of consciousness, I believe that the problem of the ontological precedence does not affect Husserl's phenomenology. Rather, it could be claimed that phenomenology establishes an *epistemological* precedence of the absolute givenness of consciousness. Without the absolute givenness of pure consciousness, there would not be any experience to reflect upon in the first place. Furthermore, it should never be overlooked that Husserl primarily aims to find the appropriate reflective framework for the question about being and reality in order to avoid dogmatic answers, as Fink pointed out⁷².

In conclusion, the problem of understanding the phenomenological return to the things themselves, as well as the phenomenological realism, seems to depend above all on the correct understanding of the positive dimension of givenness of pure consciousness that is the field of phenomenology's philosophical project. Hence, it seems that the relationship between phenomenology and realism can be clarified only by further investigating the meaning and role of pure consciousness and of the evident givenness of consciousness. This investigation will be carried out from another standpoint in the following section.

1.6 The problem of pure reflection

⁷² On the other hand, it is worth noting that, for these very same reasons, phenomenology cannot be taken as skepticism either. It is true that Husserl claimed in the first part of *Erste Philosophie* dedicated to a *Kritische Ideengeschichte* that skepticism is an undeniable and unsurpassed presence in reflective thought; but what he wanted to show is that skepticism's immortality is the historical index of a missed true and authentic science of subjectivity. In particular, it seems that for Husserl the skeptical spine had opened a space for phenomenological reflection, which is a *positive* space that involves consciousness and its lived experiences in a pure sense. Nonetheless, aside from this common instance, skepticism gave rise to a form of subjectivism, whereas Husserl fought against precisely this outcome, even if he never resorted to denying the lively skeptical spirit of negation that stems from the dimension of pure consciousness and that, for him, could lead to a true science of subjectivity (See Hua VII p. 57).

Paul Natorp, one of the most eminent neo-kantian philosophers, who is considered to have been very influential on Husserl's phenomenology⁷³, successfully brought the attention on a critical aspect regarding reflection as an appropriate method for investigating subjectivity. This issue engaged thinkers and scholars in a debate that closely involves the cornerstone of transcendental phenomenology, as Zahavi has pointed out (Zahavi, 2003)⁷⁴. In particular, this debate focuses on the possibility of investigating subjectivity reflectively without turning it into something completely different, namely, an *object* of reflection. This problem cannot be underestimated within the context of phenomenology. However, the issue about the possibility of a reflective investigation of subjectivity can provide the opportunity for further clarifying the phenomenological pure consciousness instead of undermining Husserl's project.

Natorp in *Allegemeine Psychologie nach Kritischer Methode* (1912) notably emphasized the difference between the subjective and objective sides of experience. Here, experience is defined precisely by the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. Every self-experience, therefore, involves a *distance* from oneself – namely, an objectification of the subjective nature.

“One kills subjectivity in order to dissect it, and believes that the life of the soul is on display in the result of the dissection!”⁷⁵.

Natorp's criticism was picked up in 1919 by Heidegger⁷⁶, who proposed

⁷³ Particularly influential for Husserl's refutation of psychologism were Natorp's "Ueber objektive und subjektive Begründung der Erkenntnis (Erster Aufsatz)" (1887), and "Einleitung in die Psychologie nach kritischer Methode" (1888).

⁷⁴ I am particularly in debt with Dan Zahavi and his *How to investigate subjectivity: Natorp and Heidegger on reflection* (Zahavi, 2003) in which a very interesting picture of the problem of reflection and self-reflection is offered.

⁷⁵ P. Natorp *Die allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode* (1912) pp. 102–103 (transl. by Dan Zahavi).

⁷⁶ See M. Heidegger, *Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungs Problem*, GA 56/57, pp. 100-101.

replacing the method of reflection with a new a-reflexive method able to account for the life of consciousness without altering it. This approach is represented by *hermeneutic phenomenology*, endorsed by Heidegger as the most appropriate method to shed light on the articulations of life. For Heidegger, there was no objectification implied by the hermeneutic approach. Moreover, this hermeneutic phenomenology relied on a special self-acquaintance, a basic familiarity with oneself that did not need to be called a 'subject'. Thus, the most far-reaching consequence of such hermeneutic, *a-reflective* attitude was actually the *de-subjectivization* of the life of consciousness.

However, as Zahavi pointed out, there is no valid proof that this hermeneutic method of thought is not actually a reflective one. Moreover, one could wonder what it really means to reflectively investigate the experiential subjectivity or Ego. In this regard, Sartre's account of pure reflection seems particularly meaningful. Sartre, whilst also opposing any substantial form of pure Ego⁷⁷, did not follow the way of the Heideggerian hermeneutics. *L'Être et le Néant* in particular caught and exposed the traits of self-evident consciousness without refuting the method of reflection. This means that *pure reflection* can actually reach a self-evident consciousness, which Sartre took as a transphenomenal dimension of the *absolute of existence*.

According to Sartre, consciousness is at once *reflected* and *reflective*. However, if we ever try to catch it as reflective, we will never obtain anything more than an object of reflection.

“Consciousness is a reflection (*reflet*), but qua reflection it is exactly the one reflecting (*réfléchissant*), and if we attempt to grasp it as reflecting, it vanishes and we fall back on the reflection. This structure of the reflection-reflecting (*reflet-reflétant*) has disconcerted philosophers”⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ About the autonomy of the irreflexive consciousness see in particular J.P. Sartre, *La Transcendance de l'Ego*, (1965).

⁷⁸ J.P.Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant*, (1943) p. 118; en.tr. (1993), pp.75-76.

Thus, if we accept the objective reflection-reflecting structure of consciousness, we are also forced to change its way of being-in-itself into a “reflection (*reflet*) which is its own reflecting (*reflection*)”⁷⁹. Pre-reflective consciousness expresses an immediate relationship with oneself, but this self is not a ‘in-itself’. This self relates to the subject and “[it] represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity”⁸⁰. Therefore, this pre-reflective, immediate self-presence of consciousness is bound to become an irretrievable distance from oneself when a reflective thought occurs. This, according to Sartre, represents the ontological foundation of consciousness, a form of self-presence crossed by ‘a negative fissure within consciousness’, which is *nothingness*. The being of consciousness, thus, has the existential meaning of a distance from oneself; on the other hand, the being of consciousness *is* a self-presence inasmuch as this distance is the ‘nothingness’ responsible for the fall of the in-itself toward the self.

From Sartre's account we can derive that self-constitution of substantial subject is impossible, and that consciousness is an absolute of existence, a transphenomenal being. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the possibility of *pure reflection* is not denied by the French philosopher, as long as it can grasp the difference between the self and the in-itself. In particular, consciousness (of) self, according to Sartre, represents a form of *transparent* self-giveness of consciousness to itself that does not entail an externalization. Consciousness needs nothing but its absolute existence to express its presence. Thus, here we reach the limits of Natorp's criticism, which misses the difference between a pure reflection grasping the being of consciousness, and the objectification of consciousness.

⁷⁹ Sartre (1943), p. 118; en.tr. (1993) p. 76.

⁸⁰ Sartre (1943), p. 119; en.tr. (1993) p. 77.

However, Sartre's account of consciousness is not the same as Husserl's. Still, as J.N. Mohanty claimed, Sartre can be considered the phenomenologist that came closest to the account of self-evident consciousness (Mohanty, 1985). Sartre considered consciousness as something given to itself without being an object of intentional acts (like an internal perception). Nonetheless, there is an intrinsic character of *transparence* inherent to this consciousness that grants this possibility. Is such transparent character entailed by Husserl's self-evident consciousness as well? According to Mohanty, the answer is negative. Indeed, the Husserlian account of consciousness is not fully transparent or fully intentional. Moreover, in this regard Mohanty points out another crucial difference between a first meaning of self-evident consciousness that inalienably belongs to every consciousness and a second meaning, which is 'the experience of truth', namely, the adequate, 'ideal' experience of something transcendent (Mohanty, 1985). The reason for this distinction is that we do not reach an 'awareness of truth' through the self-evident consciousness. The complete intuitive fulfillment of meaning-intentions is an *ideal* to be achieved, which drives the course of experience and shapes it into a certain direction. This form of *ideality* has to be acknowledged on the ground of pure phenomena as the ideal *telos* of a complete fulfillment of the meaning-intentions that "condemns us to meaning" to put it in the words of Merleau-Ponty's effective expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

Therefore, Mohanty's distinctions seem useful to indicate that the self-evident consciousness that offers itself in pure reflection does not bring us immediate evidences of a certain subjective (or objective) *reality*. In other words, it does not entail an objectification of subjectivity. The pure phenomena that we find in pure reflection are not *things* in the same sense that external objects of knowledge and experience are things. Basically, this is Husserl's answer to the problem of reflection raised by Natorp⁸¹.

We started this analysis by addressing the problem of what Husserl called

⁸¹ See for instance Hua XIX/1 p.373; en.tr. LI/2 p.92.

the ‘phenomenological break-through’. This is also the problem of what characterizes and defines the steps taken by Husserl from the refutation of psychologism to the outline of a transcendental philosophy. Husserl's researches and analyses that I took into consideration seem to suggest that these steps are concerned mainly with taking a different direction of analysis from the one followed by psychology and by any form of introspective thought. Thus, if the problem is to find a third way between these two, then it seems that Husserl's reflection can offer its own solution. On the one hand, the phenomenological analysis is tightly connected to pure reflection that makes consciousness (i.e. the whole stream of lived experiences) its *theme* – that is, the thematic ground of acts of pure seeing. On the other hand, such a pure reflection for Husserl will allow the investigation of the *a priori* constitutive origins of unities of meaning, as well as the stratifications and layers through which such unities are constituted. In this way, we will see that phenomenology not only defines its own territory by attaining to pure acts of seeing and then to the pure, self-evident consciousness, but it also raises the challenge to another level: That of a transcendental philosophy.

CHAPTER TWO

“Let the ‘seeing eye’ have its say”: the basic insight of pure phenomenology

The first issue encountered in this work was to understand the novel aspects of Husserl's transcendental project which seem to be more and more shaded by a fragmented image of phenomenology. As I previously suggested, such a fragmented image can be considered the main outcome of the manifold evaluations of Husserl's philosophy that share the idea of bringing the core of the phenomenological thinking back to traditional epistemological dichotomies. This kind of interpretations, which seems also to have won over the debate regarding the contributions of phenomenology to contemporary philosophical issues, ignores or simply does not care to explain the peculiarities of Husserl's transcendental philosophy. Therefore, with this goal in mind, I proposed to investigate the Husserlian transcendental perspective and its development starting from the second edition of the *Logical Investigations*. In particular, I took into account the phenomenological task of the clarification of knowledge carried out in the first decade of the twentieth century (the Göttingen period) and I focused on the first results of such an effort: the analysis of the lived experience, the genuine characteristics of the evident perception (as a perceptual experience that adequately grasps its object), the notion of internal consciousness (the non-positional consciousness of the absolute flow of lived experience, or the pre-phenomenal being of

consciousness), the phenomenological reduction and the account of the immanent, self-evident consciousness. In this way, it was possible to highlight the peculiarity of the phenomenological standpoint as opposed to the psychological standpoint. Moreover, a new realm or territory of givenness, which is the immanent consciousness of pure phenomena, emerged. This immanent consciousness of pure phenomena (which Husserl called the *mainland of givenness*) is neither the product of deductions or inferential processes, nor the result of a theoretical construction. Rather, it is discovered and made visible as an *evident givenness (Evidenz)*. And in *The Idea of Phenomenology* Husserl stated that evidence *is* the *seeing* consciousness that directly apprehends itself (or adequate self-givenness)¹. Therefore, this means that, on the one hand, pure acts of seeing for Husserl can bring to evidence every experience whatsoever and every form of thought that “stand before us as objects of intuition”. Indeed we *see* these objects of intuition, “and, as we are seeing them, we can examine their essence, their constitution, their immanent character”². On the other hand, the phenomenological analysis is to be conducted precisely by acts of pure seeing through which it is possible to further investigate this immanent givenness³.

In *Ideas I* this possibility of bringing acts of knowledge and experience to evidence is not only confirmed, but also further specified. In particular, the possibility of evidently grasping pure phenomena goes hand in hand with a broad sense of seeing which Husserl defines in this way:

“*Immediate ‘seeing’ [noein], not merely sensuous, experiential seeing, but seeing in the universal sense as an originally presentive consciousness of any kind whatever, is the ultimate legitimizing source of all rational assertions.*”⁴

¹ See Hua II p.59; en. tr. IP p.44.

² Hua II p. 32; en. tr. IP p. 25.

³ “For it is the peculiar character of phenomenology to analyze and conduct research into essences within the framework of a reflection that involves only pure seeing, a framework of absolute self-givenness” Hua II p.51; en. tr. IP p.39.

⁴ Das unmittelbare ‘Sehen’ [noein], nicht bloss das sinnliche, erfahrende Sehen, sondern das

This statement, which should be considered one of the crucial statements of transcendental phenomenology, points out the possibility of clearly grasping pure phenomena in order to clarify, and then *legitimize* all rational assertions and cognitions. This means for Husserl to grasp what essentially characterizes knowledge and experience, and make visible the essential characters of the pure mental process that underlies every act of knowledge and experience.

Therefore, it seems that behind the goal of the investigation and legitimization of the origins and foundations of knowledge and experience there is in Husserl's reflection a peculiar possibility of *seeing* what lies at the basis of every kind of cognition and rational assertion. However, it is also necessary to understand what 'seeing' means in this context, and what is *seen* in a phenomenological sense. Thus, in this chapter my aim is twofold. On the one hand, I intend to explain and specify the significance of the account of evidence for *Ideas I* particularly as it pertains to Husserl's transcendental project of pure phenomenology that aims for a new rigorous scientific philosophy. On the other hand, I will try to give an account of the *phenomenological seeing* starting from Husserl's definition of the originary presentive consciousness as a direct seeing or *noein*. Moreover, since this twofold goal of analysis closely concerns *Ideas I* and Husserl's project of a phenomenological philosophy, it is necessary to elucidate what this project is about.

The issue of a scientific philosophy is deeply rooted in Husserl's reflection; in the *Logical Investigations*, where Husserl dealt with the theoretical foundation of logic as a normative science (and in particular with the foundation of pure logic as a purely formal 'science of science'), it was philosophy that had to undertake the task of thinking through the essential

Sehen überhaupt als originär gebendes Bewusstsein welcher Art immer, ist die letzte Rechtsquelle aller vernünftigen Behauptungen" Hua III/1 p.43; en. tr. ID1 p. 36.

meanings of logical procedures. Husserl claimed that higher-ordered sciences, such as mathematics or logic, could not explain the intuitive procedures through which they got their results; thus, these intuitive procedures needed a philosophical grounding. Therefore, the role assigned to philosophy was to clarify what made a theory or a scientific discipline really scientific – but, on the other hand, only philosophy as a *rigorous science* could guarantee the genuinely scientific character of any other sciences. However, as Husserl stated in the 1911 article *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, such a rigorous, philosophical science had not yet been achieved, and it is only through the phenomenological method of thought (namely, through a *phenomenology of consciousness* that investigates the flow of pure phenomena or lived experiences) that the task of philosophy as a rigorous science could be accomplished. In order to support this claim Husserl in this text dwells especially on the explanation of what is this *phenomenology of consciousness* (i.e., which difficulties does it face, and how can these difficulties be overcome), so that the article could be taken as a sort of introduction to the method of pure phenomenology which will be further illustrated in *Ideas I*. In this way, it also appears that the development of a new *method of thought* (as opposed to a new system of thought) is the central issue that led Husserl to work on an ‘introduction’ to phenomenology such as *Ideas I* in order to give its philosophical project a more accessible and systematic form. However, it is well known that *Ideas I*, a challenging and controversial work, instead of providing actual solutions, raised many problems with interpreting the philosophical project of pure phenomenology and of a new rigorous science. I will address in particular two different issues that seem to reflect the difficulty of grasping Husserl’s intention and basic insight in *Ideas I*. On the one hand,

⁵ This connection between *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* and *Ideas I* could be considered a little unusual. As a matter of fact it is quite widespread in the literature the idea that while *Ideas I* stands thematically closer to the *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), the *Logos* article stands closer to the *Vienna Lectures* (1935-36); however, as I will try to show, the 1911 discussion of a phenomenology of consciousness brings forward many of the core themes expressed in *Ideas I*.

there is Ricoeur's critique, which contends that there is no difference between pure phenomenology and eidetic intentional psychology. Indeed, according to Ricoeur, in *Ideas I* it is possible to find only a propaedeutic discipline to the actual transcendental philosophical science, since Husserl, instead of addressing the normative role of transcendental consciousness, focuses on the illustration of a change of vision and of a new peculiar 'way of seeing'. On the other hand, there is the problem of the metaphysical interpretation of transcendental phenomenology, which regards in particular the thesis of absolute consciousness. I believe that both these issues, namely, transcendental phenomenology as a mere eidetic psychology and transcendental phenomenology as a metaphysical theory of absolute consciousness, underestimate in two different ways the significance of evidence for transcendental phenomenology. This underestimation can prevent a full understanding of Husserl's project of transcendental phenomenology, especially regarding what this project is really about – and, in particular, regarding the fundamental first-person cognitive reorientation towards the subject experience (that is, the experience *as lived* by the subject, though not *subjective*) that transcendental phenomenology, as a *method of thought*, proposes.

Indeed, one of the most challenging issues of *Ideas I* appears to be that of recovering the core theme of transcendental phenomenology and of understanding the path of the phenomenological pure reflection that 'let the seeing eye have its say'⁶ towards a new philosophical science. And, given that this path starts from the originary presentive consciousness (direct seeing or *noein*) as the *legitimizing* source of all rational assertions⁷, I shall try to reach a better understanding of this aspect by taking into account and commenting on some crucial points made in *Ideas I*. However, the significance of Husserl's analyses in *Ideas I* could not be fully appreciated without having first

⁶ See Hua II p. 62; en.tr. IP p. 47.

⁷ See Hua III/1 p.43; en. tr. ID1 p. 36.

understood the phenomenological standpoint on lived experience and Husserl's effort of clarification. For this reason, the previously established points regarding the direction of analysis outlined between the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* prove to be crucial to grasp the core theme of pure phenomenology.

Finally, I will try to shed light on the connection, pointed out by Husserl in the 1931 *Postscriptum* to the English edition of *Ideas I*, between transcendental phenomenology and *idealism*.

In short, I will first deal with the 1911 article *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* and with the project of a new foundation of philosophy as a rigorous science (§2.1); I shall further take into account *Ideas I* as one of the most controversial, and occasionally underrated Husserlian works and I will discuss in particular two critical issues regarding the project of pure phenomenology (§§ 2.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2). Next, I will undertake a brief commentary of some of the most important points made by Husserl in the first part of *Ideas I* (§§ 2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4). In the last section (§2.4), I will discuss Husserl's definition of a phenomenological transcendental idealism.

2.1 Phenomenology against Minerva: methods and systems of thought

In the 1911 article *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (published on the neo-Kantian journal *Logos*), Husserl laid the groundwork of a scientific philosophy starting from a detailed discussion of the contemporary pretenders to the title of 'scientific philosophy' – such as naturalism and natural psychologism – and of the opposite relativist edge of the historicist side of the philosophy of the spirit. Husserl ardently defends the absolute need for philosophy to be scientific, even if he acknowledges philosophers' numerous failed attempts to build authentic scientific systems of thought in the history of Western philosophy. In

particular, all traditional systems of thought for Husserl are like the Greek goddess Minerva, “springing forth complete and full-panoplied from the head of some creative genius, only in later times to be kept along with other such Minervas in the silent museum of history”⁸. However, these failures cannot be taken as proofs that philosophy’s character is non-scientific. Indeed, Husserl contended that only from a rigorous philosophy comes the possibility to ultimately clarify and guarantee the genuinely scientific character of any kind of theory.

The discussion about how to fulfill this goal dwells at first upon naturalism. Naturalism is described by Husserl as “a phenomenon consequent upon the discovery of nature”, while “the naturalist, to consider him in particular, sees only nature, and primarily physical nature”⁹ (and with nature Husserl means a unity of spatial-temporal being subject to the same exact laws). The problem is that the naturalist's effort for a rational scientific knowledge coincides with the *naturalization* of every object – including consciousness and every kind of intentional idealities. In other words, for Husserl the naturalist philosopher recognizes only the *physical* realm as *real*, but in this way the *idea* of objectivity itself (which is not physical at all) seems to be implicitly rejected. This refutation of naturalism based on its consequences, however, is not enough:

“It is altogether different when we engage in the necessary positive and hence principiant criticism of its foundation, methods and accomplishments. Because criticism distinguishes and clarifies, because it compels us to pursue the proper sense of the philosophical motivations that are usually so vaguely and equivocally formulated as problems.”¹⁰

⁸ “Ein philosophisches ‘System’ im traditionellen Sinn, gleichsam eine Minerva, die vollendet und gewappnet aus dem Haupte eines schöpferischen Genies entspringt – um dann in späteren Zeiten neben anderen solchen Minerven im stillen Museum der Geschichte aufbewahrt zu werden?” Hua XXV p.6; en.tr. PRS p.75.

⁹ Hua XXV p.9; en.tr. PRS p. 79.

¹⁰ Hua XXV p.11; en tr. PRS p.83.

In particular, Husserl realizes that a negative critique of naturalism would be also a strong argument against the possibility of a scientific philosophy. A positive critique, on the contrary, by focusing on ‘foundation, methods and accomplishments’, could work with naturalism without discarding the possibility of philosophy as a rigorous science. Therefore, the goal of this critique is to address the *naturalistic attitude of thought* – an attitude shared by all psychophysical disciplines that refer to naturalism and then, to those naturalistic principles and motives that, for Husserl, are simply not *original* enough, and not radical enough to interpret the need for a rigorous science. The problem specifically concerns the starting point shared by all natural sciences (psychology included), namely, the consideration of nature, which is naïve and lacks a truly radical character. Nature should be the object of investigation of natural science, but instead most of the times it is simply *assumed* as being there. That is to say, it is taken for granted by the naturalist. Moreover, while Husserl recognizes that natural science can be very critical in its own way, it never questions “all experience as such and the sort of thinking proper to empirical science”¹¹. Thus, not only is a radical critique of experience missing, but it cannot actually be performed from the naturalist standpoint. And it is precisely such a critique that is indispensable for Husserl in order to deal with the *problem of beginnings* seriously – namely, the problem of the *true and radical beginning* of a rigorous, well-founded knowledge.

Therefore, in the segment of *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* dedicated to a positive critique of naturalism we find out that the discovery of the true beginning of a scientific knowledge is connected with a radical critique of experience. This kind of radical critique for Husserl starts with a question to be addressed to our experiential consciousness. “How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object?”¹². If there is an actual commitment to

¹¹ Hua XXV p.16; en tr. PRS p.87.

¹² Hua XXV p.14; en.tr. PRS p.87.

a radical critique of experience, the answer to this question will lead us to investigate the *essential features* of the experiential consciousness, namely, what consciousness really *is* – in other words, it will lead us to a “phenomenology of consciousness as opposed to a natural science about consciousness”¹³. This is a crucial distinction for Husserl. A natural science about consciousness is a *psychological science*; on the other hand, phenomenology is concerned with consciousness, but in Husserl’s own words, “according to a different orientation”¹⁴. Such a different orientation indicates, in particular, the possibility of a new attitude of thought through which consciousness is not taken as a natural being, but as *pure consciousness* – namely, not as the psychophysical object of the naturalist consideration. However, the shift of orientation does not seem so easy to understand. Husserl even claims that the naturalistic standpoint ‘casted a spell’ that made us incapable of ‘prescinding from nature’ and then also of making consciousness the object of an intuitive investigation from a *pure* standpoint.

In particular, Husserl states:

“The spell of inborn naturalism also consists in the fact that it makes it so difficult for all of us to *see* ‘essences’, or ‘ideas’ – or rather, since in fact we do, so to speak, constantly see them, for us to let them have the peculiar value which is theirs instead of absurdly naturalizing it.”¹⁵

There are a few points that I want to specifically highlight in this quote. First, this claim seems to indicate that the actual difficulty addressed by a phenomenology of consciousness is not that of *seeing essences and ideas*, but that of realizing that we *see* in a broad sense essences and ideas. In other words, the fact that one constantly sees essences, and the fact that these essences should be recognized and valued are not obvious points. A great deal

¹³ Hua XXV p. 18; en.tr. PRS p. 91.

¹⁴ Hua XXV p. 18; en.tr. PRS p. 91.

¹⁵ Hua XXV p.32; en.tr. PRS p.110.

of effort is required to stop naturalizing what we see. On the other hand, if it is true that essences and ideas are just there to be intuitively grasped, it is possible to understand why Husserl claims that: “Intuiting essences conceals no more difficulties or ‘mystical’ secrets than does perception”¹⁶. The intuition of essences however cannot be considered a perceptual intuition because there is no empirical generalization involved in the ‘*Wesensschauung*’, and, more specifically, because there is no existential positing of an individual with its empirical details involved in the eidetic intuition. There is an *essential being* to grasp, which, however, has nothing to do with a factual being, or a matter of fact. Indeed, according to Husserl, the *Wesensschauung* lays the groundwork for a *new* great science – a science that is not about facts but that is reckoned to be both the fundamental condition for a truly scientific psychology and the field for a genuine critique of reason¹⁷.

Yet, in view of such an ambitious task, the possibility of *seeing* essences and ideas has to be further clarified¹⁸. What we have actually learned so far about phenomenology of consciousness is that consciousness is not taken for granted, nor is it posited as a natural object. Consciousness is not the substitute for nature. To put it into other words, the phenomenologist does not see only consciousness whereas the naturalist sees only nature and causal relations among things. In particular, it seems that, through the phenomenological account of consciousness, it is possible for the phenomenologist to account for, and value, what the naturalist sees without even knowing that he or she is seeing something. I shall try to explain the meaning of this statement with an example. When I go to the theater and I sit in the dark while looking at Desdemona being murdered by Othello on stage, I am plainly seeing two people acting strangely. However, I am seeing also a scene taken from

¹⁶ Hua XXV p.32; en.tr. PRS p.110.

¹⁷ See Hua XXV p.32; en.tr. PRS p.110.

¹⁸ Husserl will also elaborate a method (the method of eidetic variation) in order to illustrate the intuition of essences. In *Ideas I* (§§66-70) it is already possible to find the guidelines of this method.

Shakespeare's Othello, and I am seeing the character of Desdemona being murdered while I am looking at the actress falls to the ground pretending to be dead. There are causal relationship among facts and there is something else, something that cannot be reduced to the contingent situation or to a natural category. When I am looking at the actors on stage I am seeing something other than two actors on stage. I am seeing something that has a certain meaning, and my lived experience of this event can always be retrieved and clarified by grasping what essentially characterizes it. In this way, for Husserl, I put myself in the position of *seeing* what consciousness 'means' and what it intends to do, or what it demonstrates¹⁹ according to its essence in all its forms. The *Wesensschauung* stands for the intuition of the way of being of a certain experience. The essence of this experience is what makes it intelligible for me, namely, what clarifies it for me, and this experience should not be naturalized if we want to recognize its proper value.

Nonetheless, how can we be sure to have fully grasped the essence? Does this happen *immediately* or not? These questions, which for now will remain open, anticipate the challenge presented by *Ideas I* and, in particular, by its project of a new eidetic science of consciousness which needs to be further addressed in the next sections.

2.2 The project of *Ideas*

The first volume of *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy* was part of an originally planned work of three volumes: The first concerning a general introduction to pure phenomenology, the second concerning the phenomenological research on constitution and the third exploring the relationship between phenomenology and the foundation of sciences. Each of these books is quite different from one another regarding

¹⁹ See Hua XXV p.16; en. tr. PRS p.89.

both the thematic and temporal context, but they all suffer from a basic *incompleteness* which has often been ascribed to the open character of the *in fieri* phenomenological project. This character of incompleteness seems to have weighted especially on the interpretation of the first volume, which incidentally is the only one that Husserl actually published²⁰. However, such a complex and rich work should be judged for something more than what it lacks. First of all, *Ideas I* mainly reflects Husserl's effort to provide a clear and more accessible form to his philosophical project. Moreover, beside the intent of introducing scholars to phenomenology (and despite the overdoing of both rhetorical and more alluring than clarifying claims), this kind of 'introduction' seems to primarily fulfill Husserl's need of checking the progress made by his analyses, to make sure that every tile is fitting right into its place. It is not uncommon for Husserl to express the need of gathering all his ideas right from the start, and this is what happens in *Ideas I*. In particular, this latter was supposed to be the book that showed, by means of the transcendental reduction, a psychological description of consciousness turning into a pure experience, and become the foundation of a new phenomenological science. Therefore, it seems that Husserl tried here to offer also a sort of *systematization* of phenomenology as a method of thought, rather than simply summarize the main trends of the phenomenological analysis – and this is a delicate issue regarding *Ideas I*. On the one hand, it is noteworthy that the results of such a systematization cannot be considered definitive (Husserl himself changed his mind about it as proved by two other great 'introductions' such as the *Cartesian Meditations* and *The Crisis*). On the other hand, this systematization could be considered

²⁰ For instance, the phenomenological description illustrated in *Ideas I* has been considered *aporetic* because even if it claims to exhaust the ground of the whole possible and actual knowledge, something necessarily eludes it. The *static* representation of the pure structures of consciousness cannot account for the authentic givenness of an object to our conscious experience, and this givenness remains always irreducible to such representation. Moreover, *Ideas I* has been criticized because many interesting aspects that were touched upon during the previous decade of phenomenological research (such as the issue of time-consciousness, the absolute constitutive flow of consciousness etc.) were left behind in order to highlight other aspects (such as the pure, absolute consciousness and the transcendental functions of subjectivity).

problematic whenever it draws the attention to some other point than the basic insight and core theme of pure phenomenology. Indeed, the actual difficulty regarding *Ideas I* seems that of recovering this basic insight from the complexity of the Husserlian analyses²¹ where it is almost embedded, but possibly never so pervasive. The core theme of transcendental phenomenology in *Ideas I* relates precisely to the possibility of clearly grasping what characterizes and legitimizes rational assertions and cognitions²². In other words, by focusing on the originally presentive consciousness, and by accepting what is purely given in intuition (not only individual or contingent objects, but also ideal objects, meanings, essences and ideas), it is possible for Husserl to bring rational assertions and cognition to *evidence* (to the evident, absolute givenness that pertains to pure phenomena). However, this does not mean that we find the immediate answer to the problem of the foundation and legitimization of knowledge in the originally presentive consciousness. The phenomenological broad sense of seeing implies always further seeing. As Husserl stated in the first pages of *Ideas I*, in order to achieve these goals we have to “learn to see, distinguish and describe what lies within view”²³. This means not only that we have to recognize the value of what has been there all along as a part of our cognitive processes. Learning to see for Husserl implies also a change of attitude (or a change of vision), namely, an effort to (re)orient the apprehension towards pure phenomena *evidently* and originally given. In this way, it is possible to grasp what essentially characterizes our knowledge and experience: contingent contents and necessary structures, namely, the patterns of experience (which are eidetic patterns), as well as the constitutive functions that produce unities of meaning. In other words, the goal of transcendental phenomenology is that of laying bare from a first person standpoint the concrete founding stratum of the experience. And, in this way,

²¹ This is the main thesis expressed by E. Kohàk in *Idea and Experience* (1978).

²² See Hua III/1 p.43; en. tr. ID1 p. 36.

²³ Hua III/1 p.3; en.tr. ID1 Introduction, XIX.

transcendental phenomenology lays the groundwork for a new rigorous *eidetic* science.

Now, before dealing with these cornerstone ideas of *Ideas I*, I intend to address two different kinds of interpretation of this work and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology that seem to ignore the significance of evidence and that, consequently, miss the point of the central role of *seeing*. One is expressed by Ricoeur's critique to *Ideas I*, which focuses on 'the spiritual movement in *Ideas I*', and the other focuses on a metaphysical account of the absolute consciousness, which leads to a metaphysical idealism. Both these issues will be the subject matter of the next two sections.

2.2.1 Beyond the introductory purpose

Paul Ricoeur, who in 1950 translated *Ideas I* into French²⁴, highlighted some problems concerning the introductory purpose of *Ideas I* and the propaedeutic character of pure phenomenology. In particular, Ricoeur was convinced that the phenomenological analysis in *Ideas I* could not overcome its programmatic intent, and he drew this conclusion after having dedicated himself to grasp 'the law of the spiritual movement in *Ideas I*'. I will briefly recapitulate here the main points of Ricoeur's critical view of Husserl's work.

In the introduction to the French translation of the volume, Ricoeur acknowledges the difficulty to treat the text as if it were self-explanatory, because it was in fact meant to be part of a trilogy. Soon afterward, Ricoeur expresses the main problem of the work in this way:

"It must be said that *Ideas I* is a book whose meaning remains concealed and that one is inevitably inclined to look for its meaning elsewhere. At every moment one gets the impression that what is essential is not stated, because the

²⁴ We can find Ricoeur's interpretation of *Ideas I* in *A key to Husserl's Ideas I* (1996), a commentary originally published as part of Ricoeur's French translation of *Ideas I*.

book is more concerned with offering a new vision of the world and consciousness than with providing definite statements about consciousness and the world, which precisely could not be comprehended without this change of vision.”²⁵

Therefore, according to Ricoeur, *Ideas I* lacks a substantial theory of the relationship between consciousness and the world, and the reader is left with a mere ‘vision’ of the world. In order to prove this point, Ricoeur takes into account the movement of thought within *Ideas I*, at the end of which phenomenology should have been able to ground sciences and knowledge. In this movement, every step receives its sense from the next one: the natural thesis regarding the reality of the world can be understood only in light of the transcendental reduction, and the reduction can be understood only in light of the analysis of constitution. In particular, in Ricoeur’s analysis the first part of *Ideas I* can be considered a mere anticipation (*prolepsis*) which should be actually skipped in order to grasp the law of the spiritual movement of the work. The second part shows instead the structure of an *ascent* that leads to the phenomenological reductions, and in particular, to the suspension of the natural thesis of the world. Again, it is only through the reduction that we can understand the natural thesis of the world and overcome it. This step implies the *nullification* or negation of such thesis, as well as the abolishment of the limits of consciousness in order to free its absolute scope. Moreover, this is how, according to Ricoeur, I realize myself no longer as a psychological Ego, but rather as a *transcendental subject*. To put it into different terms: this is how it is possible to reach the *summit*, even if still a provisional one, of phenomenology. In this regard, another problem highlighted by Ricoeur is that the analysis of *Ideas I* “leaves reduction dangerously associated with the notion of destruction of the world and the relativity of the world to the absoluteness of

²⁵ Ricoeur (1996), pp. 36-37.

consciousness”²⁶. Indeed, the sense of reduction can only be determined in light of the analysis of transcendental constitution, which is not properly addressed by Husserl in this first book of *Ideas* according to Ricoeur. This fault is partially due to the structure of the work (the problem of constitution would have been addressed more clearly only in the second book), but, given that Husserl himself had never been satisfied with the analyses of *Ideas II*, the problem could be wider than it seems, because it could concern the possibility itself of a proper phenomenological analysis of constitution – and consequently of transcendental phenomenology. However, even if these points are implied by this kind of criticism, Ricoeur himself does not actually go that far. In particular, he considers the phenomenological analyses of *Ideas I* too limited to thematic distinctions and correlations between *noesis* and *noema*, which made the work lingering on the threshold of transcendental phenomenology. In this way, for Ricoeur, Husserl does not actually explain the way in which the mode of givenness of the object is determined by the transcendental consciousness. For these reasons, the first book of *Ideas* is defined as just an ‘ideal witness’ for an intermediary process that goes from a mere intentional psychology to transcendental phenomenology. In short, Ricoeur’s conclusion is that in this work there is no actual room for transcendental phenomenology.

Several problems can be spotted in this critique. For instance, it is not clear if the problem highlighted by Ricoeur concerns *Ideas I* or phenomenology in general. Moreover, if *Ideas I* represented only a preparation and an unfulfilled promise for transcendental phenomenology (i.e., if it lacked those necessary elements for establishing a really transcendental phenomenology), I believe there would be no alternatives. We would have to conclude that either the work is irrelevant and can be skipped and forgot once we find the ‘true’ transcendental phenomenology, or it represents in itself the inability of phenomenology to cross the line of intentional and eidetic psychology, and to embrace its transcendental character.

²⁶ Ricoeur (1996), pp. 41-42.

However, if it is true that there is more to say about *Ideas I* than what Ricoeur mentioned, his insights are also compelling and fruitful at some level. For instance, the French phenomenologist claims about the phenomenological seeing:

“[...] Consciousness continues to be a subject of *intuition* and not of *construction*. [...]The basic intuitionism of Husserlian epistemology is not destroyed by transcendental phenomenology. On the contrary, Husserl will constantly deepen his philosophy of perception as a *philosophy of seeing* in the broadest sense. The thesis is therefore something that mixes with an indubitable belief and which is, moreover, intuitive. Husserl thus has in view a principle which pervades *belief* without being belief and which contaminates *seeing* without being seeing itself.”²⁷

In other words, Ricoeur proves with this claim to have grasped the basic idea of Husserl’s philosophical project, which is interestingly defined as a *philosophy of seeing*. Nonetheless, it seems that he cannot really grasp the value of this idea possibly because he is too focused on the systematical form of pure phenomenology. In particular, what Ricoeur fails to understand here is the fact that on this peculiar sense of seeing relies the task of the *transcendental clarification* of the constitutive origins of meanings. The ‘principle’ that contaminates seeing and pervades belief is actually the principle that defines the phenomenological transcendental project²⁸. It could also be claimed that phenomenology is a transcendental philosophy *inasmuch as* it is a philosophy of seeing in a broad sense. On the other hand, the phenomenological reflection does not amount simply to a change of vision as if there were special phenomenological glasses to see something that is normally invisible to the human sight. Rather, this change of vision has to be further examined and explained since it underlies the possibility of bringing the

²⁷ Ricoeur (1996), p. 41(emphasis mine).

²⁸ For a more extensive view on this principle see §2.3.1.

essential characters of lived experiences and acts of knowledge to evidence.

In conclusion, perhaps it is possible to overturn the sense of Ricoeur's evaluation that "*Ideas I* is a book whose meaning remains concealed and that one is inevitably inclined to look for its meaning elsewhere"²⁹. Indeed *Ideas I* conceals something *essential*, but this is all the more reason to try to find it.

2.2.2 Pure phenomenology and metaphysical premises

Ideas I has often been considered the work where Husserl's change of direction towards a metaphysical theory was made evident. This would be the effect of the so-called *transcendental turn* that, as I previously mentioned, for some commentators and scholars (like for instance Findlay, 1972) took phenomenology astray from the luminous path that went back to the things themselves. Indeed, starting from *Ideas I*, Husserl's phenomenology has repeatedly been accused to be a metaphysical theory of consciousness (and in particular a metaphysical idealism). However, it seems at least fair to try to understand better what this kind of accusation actually implies.

The traditional metaphysical problem is often defined as the problem of finding and investigating the unchangeable structures of reality (*being qua being*) and higher-ordered truths as opposed to the world of appearances and experience. Therefore, phenomenology as a metaphysical theory of consciousness should be concerned with what goes beyond the appearances of things – an immutable and high-ordered ground if compared with the changing world of appearances³⁰. This claim seems to refer in particular to the notion of *absolute consciousness* that Husserl introduced in some of the most important sections of *Ideas I*³¹. Regarding this notion, I shall briefly mention that,

²⁹ Ricoeur (1996), pp. 36.

³⁰ The conception of reality that seems to underlie a metaphysical system of thought has been effectively described by the metaphor of reality as a *peach*, hiding a hard core beneath the skin and the pulp (see Kohák, 1978). On the contrary, ordinary experience seems to suggest a conception of reality as an *onion*, made up entirely of skins.

³¹ I shall come back to the notion of absolute consciousness defined in *Ideas I* in §2.3.2

according to Husserl, the *absolute* character of consciousness implies that, while the world is given inasmuch as the intentional consciousness presents this givenness as it is, the ‘being as consciousness’ does not depend on the existence of the world and it can be discovered as an absolute *self-givenness*. However, if we assume that the idea of absolute consciousness is a metaphysical foundational ground, this would imply that the absolute consciousness is the immutable and necessary core of reality. By the same token, pure phenomenology would be a method to overcome the contingent world of appearances and then a ‘lower’ form of empirical consciousness, which is subject to change. In other words, if the phenomenological theory of consciousness were to conflate with a metaphysical theory, the so-called transcendental turn would not be just a turn. Actually it would amount to the destruction of the phenomenological project, namely that of a rigorous science of pure *phenomena*. Therefore, what I claim is that, even if it is possible to quote some of Husserl’s statements in *Ideas I* in order to suggest and even encourage such an interpretation³², it should also be never left out that there is no such a thing as a ‘metaphysical phenomenology’.

What seems more promising instead, at least regarding *Ideas I* and its interpretations, is the attempt of better understanding and grasping the meaning of the notion of absolute pure consciousness in relation to the evident givenness of consciousness and its pure phenomena. The absolute consciousness is not necessarily a metaphysical idea that contains or ‘swallows’ the real world. Husserl is always very careful and almost diligent in separating the new territory of givenness that refers to ‘being as consciousness’ and the ‘being as physical thing’ which is irreducible to it. Moreover, according to Husserl, the phenomenological investigation aims to clarify the

³² For instance, Husserl claims that: the facticity of the natural world disappears from out theoretical regard in order to carry out a purely eidetic research (§34); over against the contingent positing of the world stands the necessary positing of the pure-*Ego* and *Ego*-life as absolutely indubitable positing (§46); the existence of a world is the correlate of certain multiplicities of experience distinguished by certain essential formations (§49) and so on.

concrete mental process that underlies any factual knowledge. This investigation is concerned in particular with the essential characters of the experience and with the ‘logic’ of experience itself, so that it is possible to describe how a transcendent object can be experienced according to different *a priori* regions of consciousness. The problem, then, is to understand what is the actual meaning of the absolute consciousness *within* the peculiar context offered by phenomenology starting from a different orientation that allows us to recognize the self-evident and pure givenness of consciousness..

In conclusion, as far as evidence is the central issue of phenomenology, the goal of the phenomenological analysis is to *grasp* clearly and evidently what the experience is about. And such a challenging enterprise *is* the Husserlian transcendental project. By definition phenomenology is concerned with *phenomena* and, in particular, with the pure kind of appearances of one’s own experiential acts grasped in pure reflection. Thus, as Kohák claimed, in *Ideas I*

“phenomenology recognizes the full breadth of experience as primordial awareness presenting all our being, its necessary structure as well as its contingent content, in the evident givenness which he [Husserl] comes to call *Evidenz*. In that recognition, Husserl fuses the cutting edge of positivism with the wisdom of Continental rationalism, that is, with its awareness that experience presents us not only with contingent contents but with necessary structures as well.” (Kohák, 1978: XI).

I believe these words not only grasp phenomenology’s true spirit and make *Ideas I* an inescapable and invaluable source to understand Husserl’s project. They also point out that the crucial role of *Evidenz*. Indeed, the account of the evident givenness of consciousness provides many clues to recognize the ‘positivist’, anti-metaphysical character of phenomenology, and even if this character is fused with the wisdom of Continental rationalism, it still has to

count for arguing against the metaphysical interpretation of phenomenology.

2.3 The path of pure phenomenology in *Ideas I*

Ideas I consists of four parts through which Husserl illustrates the project of pure phenomenology. In the first part Husserl lays the groundwork for pure phenomenology by explaining the meaning of essences (*eide*), and by refuting naturalistic misinterpretations of the ‘universal sense’ of seeing (especially empiricist and idealist misinterpretations of this concept) through which essences are grasped. The second part is concerned with the considerations fundamental to phenomenology, namely, the eidetic consideration of consciousness as a concrete mental process and the exclusion of natural positing. These considerations will lead to the notion of pure, transcendental consciousness. In this second part it is possible to appreciate how the phenomenological analyses builds up to a new method of thought which is a step-by-step method – each step being represented by a specific reduction (to the extent that Husserl often refers to a ‘system of reductions’ instead of a single reduction). The third part deals with the method and problems of pure phenomenology. The last fourth part is dedicated to the problem of “what the claim of consciousness to actually relate to something objective [...] properly signifies”³³ and this, for Husserl, is the great *problem of reason* formulated as a phenomenological problem.

In the following sections, my aim is to address some crucial issues of Husserl’s project of pure phenomenology in *Ideas I*. In this way, it will be possible to highlight the significance of the *general sense of seeing* that underlies the project. This seeing is neither a sensible, perceptual seeing nor a sort of contemplation of truths. As I have already mentioned, Husserl defines it as an originally presentive consciousness through which it is possible to clarify

³³ Hua III/1 p. 266; en.tr. ID.1 p. 308.

and legitimize every rational assertion and cognition. However, with regard to this claim, one could wonder how this clarification and legitimization can be really achieved, and where the phenomenological seeing really leads us.

In order to face these issues, which pertain to pure phenomenology as a method of thought, I shall take four challenging topics of *Ideas I* into account: 1. The definition of the task of the phenomenological analysis and of the Principle of all Principles that guides the analysis; 2. The thesis of the absolute consciousness; 3. The transcendental attitude of thought; 4. The noetic-noematic correlation.

2.3.1 The task of phenomenology and the Principle of all Principles

Ideas I begins with Husserl stating the possibility to apprehend essences:

“It belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence and therefore an *Eidos* which can be apprehended purely.”³⁴

Everything that belongs to the essence of an *individuum* can belong also to another *individuum*, hence there are eidetic species with different degrees of universality. The highest eidetic universalities delimit *regions* or categories of individuals. This could indicate, for example, that the possibility to refer to this glass of water that I perceive in front of me precisely as a glass of water is determined by some essential traits of experience which predelineates any possible experience of a glass of water, and then also by the essence of the universal experience of any possible container for something liquid (small, large, made of stone, or wood, or metal etc.).

Moreover, Husserl states the difference between pure sciences of essences (like pure logic, or mathematics), and empirical sciences of matters of fact in this section. The main difference between them is that, while the first kind

³⁴ Hua III/1 p.12; en.tr. ID.1 p.7.

cannot be independent from the laws of essences, on the contrary eidetic sciences are completely independent from matters of fact. For instance, the mathematician does not need to take factual objects into considerations in order to build theories. Nonetheless, according to Husserl every possible intuition of something individual can “become transmuted into *eidetic seeing*”³⁵ and this happens when the ‘what’ of an *individuum* is put into an idea (*ideation*). In this case, just like the *datum* of an individual experience is the concrete object of adequate or inadequate experience, the datum of eidetic intuition is *pure essence*. In other words, Husserl refers to eidetic seeing as a proper intuition, which however is also an intuition of a new kind – the kind that grasps essences instead of factual objects.

The discussion presented in this first chapter of the first part of *Ideas* notably proceeds by taking into account the results of ‘purely logical considerations’ regarding eidetic judgments, the notion of *eidetic necessity* as a correlate of contingency and matters of fact, and other differences regarding the eidetic field. It is precisely in relation to these considerations, and in particular in relation to the possibility of the eidetic intuition, that Husserl comes to define the *task* of the phenomenological analysis:

“Within the circle of our intuition of individuals, [the task is] to determine the *summa genera* of concretions and, in this manner, to effect a *distribution of all intuited individual being according to regions of being, each of which marks off an eidetic and empirical science* (or group of sciences) that is *necessarily* distinct from other sciences because it is distinguished from them on the most radical eidetic grounds.”³⁶

The task of the phenomenological analysis, then, is that of laying the groundwork for a science of *summa genera* of concretions and highest eidetic regions of beings – a science of a novel kind that is based on the possibility of

³⁵ Hua III/1 p. 10; en. tr. ID1 p. 8.

³⁶ Hua III/1 p.38; en. tr. ID1 p. 32.

purely investigating the adequate self-givenness and its essential traits. In view of this definition of the task of phenomenology, one might recall that for Ricoeur the first chapter should be omitted in order to grasp the spiritual movement of *Ideas I*³⁷. Conversely, I think that putting aside this first chapter of *Ideas* would actually compromise the entire interpretation of the work and pure phenomenology in general. First of all, in the first chapter Husserl states the premises to understand what the desired goal of pure phenomenology actually is. Moreover, here Husserl introduces the central topic of the *continuity* of intuition that can cross the line between real and ideal, or between the empirical and *a priori* regions. Such a central topic is addressed and furthered in the second chapter of the first part of *Ideas I*, where Husserl takes into account the naturalistic misinterpretations that prevented the acknowledgment of a general sense of intuitive *seeing* and of its significance for the knowing process. On the one hand, empiricism confuses evident experience with matters of fact, and, in this way, it excludes the possibility of grasping the essences. Moreover, every kind of ideality is reduced to individuality from the empiricist point of view³⁸. On the other hand, dogmatic idealism reduces evidence to a subjective feeling and to a mystic *index veri*. Therefore, neither empiricism nor idealism could truly understand or appreciate the importance of the discovery of the evident givenness of consciousness and what this discovery entails – namely, according to Husserl, the possibility of clearly grasping the essence, constitution and immanent character of the acts of experience and knowledge. Instead, it is precisely through a universal or general sense of seeing (and not a particular perceptual experience) that for Husserl we can effectively legitimize rational judgments by showing what is originally offered by intuition. However, Husserl also points out that this seeing does not claim a dogmatic power of infallibility for itself. On the contrary, the possibility that one act of seeing could conflict with another is not

³⁷ Ricoeur (1996), p.37.

³⁸ In this regard, see also Husserl's critique of empiricism in the Second Logical Investigation.

excluded. The fact that one act of seeing could be more legitimate or valid than another does not nullify the originally presentive consciousness itself – inasmuch as, Husserl states, a force can be outweighed by another but it does not stop being a force for this reason either.

I will try now to further illustrate these points with an example before taking into account the next steps undertaken by Husserl. Let's say for instance that I set a date with a friend of mine who I have not seen for several years and that has now come to visit Padua. We set a date in Prato della Valle under one of its statues. As I am getting closer to the spot, I look at the statue and just by its side there is a tall woman with red hair. She must be Elizabeth, I think, even if I recall her having dark hair. I try to take a closer look while I walk towards her, and I try to focus on some detail that could help me, but the more I look, the more I grasp that this sense-data is apparently conflicting with what I remember of my friend. And then, just like that, I correct my first impression (in which I did not recognize my friend) and I recognize her: Yes, she is my friend Elizabeth. This kind of situation is quite common in everyday experience. And if I purely reflect upon it, I can conclude that the originally presentive consciousness of Elizabeth outweighed the originally presentive consciousness of a tall woman, but I can still retrieve the pure, evident self-givenness of my experience. This latter is the experience as lived by the subject, namely, by me. If another person were in Prato della Valle watching the statue of Petrarca, he or she would not have seen my friend Elizabeth, but simply a tall woman. However, this kind of experience is not a private, subjective experience and it is not arbitrary. There is a peculiar structure and a pattern that determines it; there is an essence that can be grasped and that delineates the concatenation of actual and possible consciousness through which objective unities of sense are constituted. In this regard, what Husserl observed is that if I had to report this same event, I would simply say that I saw my old friend Elizabeth and that I met her in Prato della Valle. Thus, I would just report from a third person standpoint what I *know* as a fact, without

considering the lived experience from a first person standpoint. Nonetheless, if I purely reflect upon it, my lived experience comes to me through a sort of originary awareness and this is what Husserl calls the originally presentive consciousness. Moreover, according to Husserl, I can analyze the evident givenness of the experience and distinguish its components, essential characters etc. by means of acts of pure seeing. This analysis, however, does not produce immediate results – precisely as one mere look at a tall figure beside a statue in Prato della Valle could not make me recognize my friend. In fact, the phenomenological analysis implies seeing and seeing again what is originally given in intuition, in order to describe and illustrate what I naturally consider as a fact, namely, that I met my friend the other day.

Therefore, the first thing to note seems that the originally presentive consciousness should not be taken and does not stand for a single instant look – or for a plain, perceptual act of seeing. Rather, it aims at discovering the constituted sense and the essential structure that underlie every factual knowledge and cognition. On the other hand, the phenomenological seeing seems to share at least some aspects of the perceptual seeing. For instance, it can correct or test itself, and it does not consist of a single, immediate grasp³⁹.

About this originary intuitive consciousness Husserl states:

“Every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, [...]

³⁹ It should be noted indeed that the sphere of perceptual vision actually includes different kinds of experience. Take for instance the difference between *watching* and *seeing*, which is perfectly showed by Hitchcock’s masterpiece *Vertigo*. A man, “Scottie”, who once was a detective and who is afraid of heights accepts the job of following a woman whose strange behavior concerns her husband; he follows her everywhere, he watches her, and looks at every single detail (her dresses, jewelry, hair etc.) without knowing that she is in fact an impostor, someone hired to play that role. Scottie falls in love with her, but she apparently dies in front of his eyes in a strange accident. Scottie, overcome with utter despair, fortuitously meets another woman who reminds him of her, and who is in fact the same woman. Indeed, at some point he finally realizes this fact, namely, he finally *sees* that she is the same woman he fell in love with – and that he had been played all along. This example shows the process of seeing which is involved in knowing and which can correct itself, through further seeing. Nonetheless, this is also an example that shows the difference between watching and seeing as two independent acts.

*everything originarily (so to speak in its ‘personal’ actuality) offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also within the limits in which it is presented there.’*⁴⁰

This is Husserl’s formulation of the *Principle of all Principles* (§24), which implies that perfect clarity is the measure of truth⁴¹ – or, put into other words, that what we originarily find in our experience is an *absolute beginning* for a particular reflective intuition, which allows us to reach a higher degree of clarity. There must be conformity between judgments and pure intuition – and whether the connection between what is purely intuited and a certain argument does not appear with clarity, there must be some kind of mistake. In this case, the Principle of all Principles requires returning to the originary presentive consciousness in order to further examine the essential characters of the knowing and experiential processes.

Therefore, it appears that the task of the phenomenological analysis, which was defined by Husserl as the task to determine the *summa genera* of concretions, can be accomplished by following and applying this Principle. However, the significance of the Principle and its primary results actually come to light in the next parts of *Ideas I* where it is possible to find the specific elaboration of the method of pure phenomenology.

2.3.2 The thesis of the absolute, immanent consciousness

The second part of *Ideas I* is dedicated to the considerations fundamental to phenomenology and it basically illustrates the steps of pure phenomenology. The first step is represented by the recovery of the experiential ground by

⁴⁰ “Dass jede originär gebende Anschauung eine Rechtsquelle der Erkenntnis sei, dass alles, was sich uns in der ‘Intuition’ originär, (sozusagen in seiner leibhaften Wirklichkeit) darbietet, einfach hinzunehmen sei, als was es sich gibt, aber auch nur in den Schranken, in denen es sich da gibt, kann uns keine erdenkliche Theorie irre machen.” Hua III/1 p.51; en.tr. ID1 p. 44.

⁴¹ Hua III/1 p. 169; en.tr. ID1 p. 181.

confronting the natural attitude and, in particular, by taking into account every kind of knowledge that is acquired from the natural standpoint. In the natural attitude, reality is always in the fashion of something factually existent. We accept the object as a *factum* and we register it as an existing reality. These are the main traits that characterize the general positing of the natural attitude described in the first chapter of the second part of *Ideas I*. We live in the natural attitude without realizing its limits; we also proceed in knowing, thinking, making statements and building sciences within this attitude. Therefore, Husserl basically proposed that, once this has been acknowledged, we alter this attitude and, above all, that we be accepting of the possibility of such an alteration⁴². The objective of Husserl's proposal is to refrain from judgments, and to suspend or parenthesize the natural positing that every judgment implies (phenomenological *epoché*). "Every positing related to this objectivity is to be excluded and converted into its parenthetical modification"⁴³ namely, into a parenthesized judgment.

On the other hand, as we can see in the second chapter, the natural self-reflection is also a starting point of the eidetic analysis that focuses on consciousness in order to seize upon and fix in adequate ideation the pure essences of consciousness and its stream of *Erlebnisse*. For Husserl, such an eidetic descriptive analysis delivers the universal characterization of our *Cogitationes*, as well as their contents, purely in their ownness, that is, "by what belongs to the *Cogitationes* as their own, such that they could not exist without that unity"⁴⁴. In other words, the eidetic insight as well as the descriptive eidetic analysis of mental processes show the way for taking into consideration our own *Cogitationes* without making abstractions, that is, in their full *concreteness*, leaving behind their facticity at the same time (which would concern a private subjective sphere). Moreover, in §39 Husserl claims

⁴² See Hua III/1 p.53; en.tr. ID1 p.57.

⁴³ See Hua III/1 p. 55; en. tr. ID1 p. 60.

⁴⁴ Hua III/1 p.70; en. tr. ID1 p. 69.

that the discovery of the essential characteristics of consciousness is a necessary step in the acquisition of the essence of pure consciousness, which will be the field of phenomenology. In particular, the eidetic analysis has to go as far as to reach the insight that consciousness has in itself a *being* of its own, which is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion – and this will be the “*phenomenological residuum* [...] a region of being which is of essential necessity quite unique and which can indeed become the field of a science of a novel kind: phenomenology”⁴⁵.

Therefore, it seems that, whereas the results of the phenomenological parenthesizing of positional judgments and the results of the eidetic analysis of consciousness *overlap*, then it is possible to discover the field of a science of novel kind, that is, the field of *pure consciousness*⁴⁶ (§39). In this way, it seems that pure consciousness is basically the result of an *adequate ideation*: the self-evident consciousness, which immanently gives itself to reflection, is seized upon in its pure ownness. However, the eidetic analysis of pure consciousness amounts to turning the reflective regard to our own mental process and what is *purely immanent* to it, namely, those acts whose object belong to the same stream of consciousness, in order to investigate the essential characters of the experience of transcendence (or in order to “acquire a deeper insight into how the transcendent stands with respect to the consciousness which is a consciousness of it”⁴⁷). Such an investigation underlines not only the fundamental difference between being as a mental process and being as a physical thing (which is an essential difference between both modes of intuition and modes of givenness pertaining to immanent and transcendent beings), but also the ordered experiential concatenation that characterizes the pure consciousness. In this way, for Husserl, it is possible to trace every

⁴⁵ Hua III/1 p. 59; en.tr. ID1 pp. 65-66. For a more detailed discussion of the phenomenological notion of residuum see §2.3.4.

⁴⁶ Here Husserl describes the goal that continually guides us as “the acquisition of the essence of that ‘*pure*’ *consciousness* which will determine the field of phenomenology” Hua III/1 p.79; en.tr. ID1 p. 81.

⁴⁷ Hua III/1 p.73; en.tr. ID1 p. 86.

possible essential variants of the motivated and actual experiential concatenation. The world itself is ideally nothing but a special case among a multitude of possible worlds (§47). Thus, in the famous §49, Husserl comes to the crux of these considerations: The existence of the world cannot be taken as a precondition, because it appears to be just the correlate of a coherent life of consciousness, namely, of systems of multiple experiences distinguished by essential formations. This means that the possibility of the annihilation of the world is always present, and cannot be *a priori* excluded – while the existence of our own consciousness is, on the contrary, always indubitable.

“[...] *no real being*, no being which is presented and legitimated in consciousness by appearances, *is necessary to the being of consciousness itself*. [...] *Immanent being is therefore indubitably absolute being in the sense that by essential necessity immanent being nulla ‘re’ indiget ad existendum.*”⁴⁸

The correlative part of this thesis is that every transcendent *res* always refers to an actual consciousness in order to be characterized, known and recognized exactly for what it is.

On a superficial level, such a thesis gives quite an easy path to those who considered phenomenology as a metaphysical idealism centered on a notion of absolute consciousness. However, it should also be remembered that this thesis actually stems from the phenomenological eidetic analysis of the concrete mental process. In other words, this thesis is the result of the analysis that, starting from the originally presentive consciousness, discovers and clarifies the essential connections that determine the experience of a transcendent object. From another angle, one could claim, as Claudio Majolino effectively did, that the thesis of the absolute consciousness is the result of an eidetic judgment (Majolino, 2010:579)⁴⁹. This means that the thesis of the absolute

⁴⁸ “Das immanente Sein ist also zweifellos in dem Sinne absolutes Sein, dass es prinzipiell nulla ‘re’ indiget ad existendum” Hua III/1 p. 104; en.tr. ID1 p. 110.

⁴⁹ In particular, for Majolino Husserl is indicating the way for a trans-regional ontology,

consciousness does not refer to matters of fact – in other words, the eidetic judgment does not provide a statement about matters of fact or ‘being in itself’. In particular, the eidetic law expressed by means of the thesis of the absolute consciousness can prove its validity by virtue of an eidetic intuition, which must fulfill the eidetic judgment⁵⁰. The eidetic ground *essentially* concerns the categorial ground in an *a priori* way. As Sokolowski puts it: “essences provide the ‘ontological space’ within which facts can be registered and reported” (Sokolowski, 1974:69). On the other hand, we have to remind that: “we do not start the career of our minds with the presence of *eide*, only to become submerged into sensibility and forgetfulness of these forms” (Sokolowski, 1974:64), because the phenomenological sense of essence is not that of platonic forms⁵¹. The realm of essences is opposed to the realm of existence. If the eidetic analysis shows that “the being which is first for us is second in itself; i.e. it is what it is only ‘in relation’ to the first”⁵² this means that what we refer to as ‘real world’ is the correlate of a certain ideal possibility of experience. And, at the same time, I can purely see the absolute being that pertains to consciousness⁵³. The being first in itself of consciousness, then, is

which will be able to explain (in terms of a new eidetics) the relationship between the two main regions of being, namely, the world and consciousness. The thesis that proclaims both the absolute being of consciousness and the relativity of the world has to be understood *within* the context of this trans-regional ontology, which says nothing about ‘the being in itself’ (Majolino, 2010).

⁵⁰ By Majolino’s terms, the eidetic intuition (as well as other ‘eidetic devices’), thanks to the eidetic free variation of fantasy actually makes visible something that concerns the categorial structure of the judgment *after* the judgment itself (*en aval*) in order to elucidate it. Majolino insists in particular on the difference between two kind of intuitions, *en amont* (upstream) and *en aval* (downstream) of a judgment. While the first kind concerns the pre-predicative experience, the *tode ti* that starts the knowing process, the second kind elucidates what the judgment is about and shows its fulfillment (Majolino, 2010:591).

⁵¹ We can recall here the critique against the eidetic realm given by Antonio Banfi: Banfi claims in fact that there is a dogmatic residue inside the Husserlian eidetic conception, a residue that cause problems to the task that phenomenology has chosen for itself. According to Banfi in fact the eidetic realm serves the purpose of justifying the possibility of an infinite correlation between *noesis* and *noema* more than it provides a source of normativity. Moreover, the eidetic denies that dialectics which could bring to a really overt (and open) rationality (Banfi, 1956).

⁵² Hua III/1 p.106; en.tr. ID1 p.112.

⁵³ This seeing refers again to the possibility of *intuitively grasping* the essence of the experience of the real world with variable degrees of clarity. In particular, Husserl describes

not postulated or presupposed, but it is actually seized and made visible by the eidetic analysis of consciousness. In this way, it is also possible to explain how pure phenomenology, which takes the originally presentive consciousness (instead of factual reality) as the source of clarification (and then of legitimization) of rational assertions and cognition, does not refer to an otherworldly view or God's eyesight⁵⁴, as if the phenomenologist could see what normal people cannot. In truth, the phenomenologist still has the same world and the same objects in front of the eyes, but he or she can reach a *higher level of clarity* regarding all the possible cognitions and experiences of this same world⁵⁵. This goal implies, however, a fundamental change of *attitude of thought* which will be the subject of the next section.

2.3.3 Transcendental attitude of thought

“It now becomes clear that, in contrast to the natural theoretical attitude, the correlate of which is the world, a new attitude must in fact be possible which, in spite of the ‘exclusion’ of this psychophysical universe of Nature, leaves us something: the whole field of absolute consciousness.”⁵⁶

According to this claim, a new phenomenological *attitude of thought* has to be acquired in order to discover and deal with the field of the absolute

the method of perfectly clear seizing upon essence (§§69-70) as a method that involves *free fantasy*, namely, the presentification of exemplificative single particulars (and in this way, Husserl anticipates the method of the eidetic variation which can be found more extensively treated in *Experience and Judgment*).

⁵⁴ Indeed the transcendence of God is excluded by the transcendental reduction according to Husserl's claim in §58.

⁵⁵ The possibility to reach a higher clarity hinges on the method of clarification that Husserl described in §§67-70 of *Ideas I*. This method consists in making perfectly clear what “floats before us in fluid unclarity” and then in using this as the basis for a correspondingly valid eidetic intuition. Indeed, the seizing upon essences has for Husserl its degrees of clarity, as does the single particular floating in front of us. See Hua III/1 p.126; en.tr. ID1 p. 153.

⁵⁶ Hua III/1 p. 94; en.tr. ID1 p. 113.

consciousness, which is a pure eidetic *a priori* consciousness⁵⁷. This is indeed the fundamental field of phenomenology. However, one could wonder what this new attitude consists of, and what a change of attitude of thought concretely means. Husserl claims at the end of §50 that in the phenomenological attitude we prevent the effecting of every positings, namely, that we do not participate in these positings. “Instead of living *in* them, instead of effecting *them*, we effect acts of *reflection* directed to them”⁵⁸. In other words, in the phenomenological attitude it seems that we are only capable of pure acts of reflection that grasp the absolute being of the stream of consciousness. What about the world, then? What about reality? The thesis of the absolute consciousness implies the acknowledgment that there is no such a thing as an absolute reality⁵⁹. However, this does not mean that there is no real world that we can experience and know as it is given. The world has not disappeared. The phenomenologist is not a magician that can make the world disappear. Nonetheless, from the standpoint of the pure consciousness, all real unities are *unities of sense* (§55) that presuppose a sense-bestowing subjectivity (which, in turn, cannot depend on any kind of sense-bestowing). This sense-bestowing subjectivity is the *transcendental subjectivity*. I shall now try to unfold the chief points of the phenomenological access to this new perspective.

The last chapter of the second part of *Ideas I* is dedicated to the systematical doctrine of reductions through which it is possible to gain access to “the idea of transcendently pure consciousness”⁶⁰. In particular, this system of reductions progressively extends its range and puts every kind of transcendence in brackets – from the personal human being to God and eidetic sciences like pure logic. In this way, for Husserl, we deal with the field of the absolute pure consciousness. However, once discovered the fundamental field of phenomenology, it is necessary to further investigate this field and it is

⁵⁷ "unendliche Feld des Bewusstseins apriori" Hua III/1 p.135; en.tr. ID1 p. 147.

⁵⁸ Hua III/1 p.95 ; en.tr. ID1 p. 114.

⁵⁹ See Hua III/1 p.120; en.tr. ID1. p. 129.

⁶⁰ Hua III/1 p. 121; en.tr. ID1 p. 130

necessary to parenthesize other positings. Of particular interest here is that one thing cannot be excluded for Husserl, and this is the pure Ego. “We shall not encounter the pure *Ego* anywhere in the flux of manifold mental process which remains as a transcendental *residuum*”, but still “the *Ego* seems to be there continually, indeed, necessarily”⁶¹. After having performed the reduction, a particular kind of ‘not constituted’ transcendence, and precisely a *transcendence in immanence*, emerges as not reducible any further⁶². And this is the pure Ego. Therefore, the Ego is not a content of experience, but it seems something more fundamental. In particular, Husserl's brief thematization of the pure Ego seems to point out that the immanent, absolute sphere of consciousness and lived experience, freed of all the naturally posited transcendences, is not at all anonymous. The primordial experience that the subject actually lives (the *subject experience*) is ‘owned’ in an originary sense by the subject. Therefore, Husserl states that the pure Ego is comparable to the Kantian ‘I think’, which must be able to accompany all my presentations. In particular, the pure Ego seems to be here an unavoidable and not excludable ‘I-hood’ pertaining to the subject experience – or a pure ‘I’ understood as a *pure standpoint of the lived experience* that cannot be escaped.

Therefore, the phenomenological change of attitude is not a change from a first-person psychological stance to a third-person stance. Rather, it entails the acquisition of a first-person *pure* reflective stance through which a double sense of the ‘I’ can be recognized: On the one hand, the Ego is something we are aware of in the natural attitude (and it is generally recognized as something we *have*). On the other hand, there is the ‘I’ that sees (what Descartes called *Cogito*), which is something more fundamental than the natural subject. In this case *I am* the Ego, and this Ego is a pure I-hood – a pure standpoint that pertains to the experience as lived by me, the subject. From this pure

⁶¹ Hua III/1 p.123; en.tr. ID1 p. 132.

⁶² For further discussions of the pure *Ego* see Altobrando (2010) on the unity of consciousness and the *Ego* in relation to the problem of the monad.

standpoint ‘my’ stream of lived experiences can become intelligible for Husserl, namely, from this pure standpoint I can bring acts of knowledge and experience to clarity. In particular, what is implied by the acquisition of the phenomenological transcendental perspective in a first-person reflective stance is the overthrow of the consolidated idea of the world and reality in itself as an *explanans* of the experience. That is, as causal terms for our own experience. On the contrary, the first-person reflective subjectivity takes the *experience* as the *explanans*, while reality is something to be explained (the *explanandum*)⁶³ instead of a *factum*. This is the meaning of the phenomenological ‘change of vision’. The change of vision highlights the value of the experiential grounding and of the subject’s ‘lived reality’ that is obscured by the natural attitude. However, such a lived reality is not a private, inner world. A *private* reality is in fact the object of introspection, and then it undergoes the system of reductions as every other apperceived transcendent object. Rather, the system of reductions gives access to the *free* horizon of transcendently pure phenomena (namely, the horizon of givenness freed from the ‘naturalistic spell’). This horizon opens up in front of the phenomenologist, who has the task of learning to see and discern in it the patterns and constitutive characters of experience.

Bearing these points in mind we may turn to the last point regarding the contents of transcendental phenomenology, namely, the noetic-noematic analyses that are found in the second half of *Ideas I*.

2.3.4 The analysis of noetic-noematic correlations

At the end of II, 3 Husserl stated:

“For us what is essential is the evidence that [...] after we effect that reduction,

⁶³ See Kohák: the world as *explanandum* derives its meaning from acts of lived experience (Kohák, 1978: 28).

absolute or transcendently pure consciousness remains as a *residuum* to which reality cannot be ascribed without absurdity.”⁶⁴

With these words Husserl indicated that the original being of consciousness is the result of the transcendental reduction. However, one could legitimately wonder what does this *residuum* consist of. The first problem regarding this notion is that a ‘residue’ is often something marginal, something left behind. Nonetheless, the previous considerations regarding the phenomenological change of attitude suggest that, for Husserl, the problem of the transcendental *residuum* is not a problem of what remains after the reductions, but primarily a problem of learning to see ‘what lies within view’ from a pure, transcendental standpoint. In particular, the third part of *Ideas I (Methods and problems of pure phenomenology)* takes the mental process that purely appears after having performed the reductions as its point of departure. And in this regard, Husserl’s primary goal is that of illustrating how the *real* world comes to be a comprehensible and intelligible unity of sense within experience. In other words, reality is investigated and clarified as a unity of meaning by going back to the transcendental subjectivity and its constitutive functions. This is what happens after the transcendental reduction and what the noetic-noematic correlation, and the noematic descriptions are about. I will now briefly recapitulate the main points of the Husserlian thematic analysis in order to come back to Ricoeur's critique and clarify what the phenomenological transcendental perspective actually entails.

In the third part of *Ideas I* Husserl provides a number of accurate descriptions and distinctions regarding the mode of givenness of the pure life of consciousness and its concrete *eide* in their different degrees of clarity⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ “Das Wesentliche ist für uns die Evidenz, dass die phänomenologische Reduktion als Ausschaltung der natürlichen Einstellung, bzw. ihrer generalen Thesis, möglich ist, und dass nach ihrem Vollzuge das absolute oder transzendental reine Bewusstsein als Residuum verbleibt, dem noch Realität zuzumuten, Widersinn ist.” Hua III/1 p.121; en.tr. ID1 p.130.

⁶⁵ Again, it is important to underline here that it would be misleading to take the phenomenological eidetic seeing as producing immediate perfect clarity (see in particular

Indeed, the actual exploration starts once the stream of consciousness has become *evidentially* apprehensible and analyzable (§78). This exploration concerns in particular the relationship of each lived experience to the pure Ego (§80). In order to articulate this relationship Husserl refers to a two-sidedness belonging to the essence of the sphere of lived experience: one side consists of “purely subjective moments of the mode of consciousness”, while the other concerns the “content of the mental process turned away from the *Ego*”⁶⁶. A fundamentally divergent orientation of analysis corresponds to these two sides. Part of the investigation is oriented toward pure subjectivity, while the other points to the problems of the constitution concerning objectivity. Husserl calls the latter *functional problems* (§86) and defines them as being concerned with how the noetic stratum animates the sensuous non-intentional contents (or hyletic stuff-data), and specifically, how *noesis* combines the hyletic stuff and brings about the consciousness of something. In other words, these functional issues concern the *constitution* of objective unities of sense in a manner peculiar to our consciousness, and, consequently, they concern the constitutive functions of transcendental subjectivity.

However, there is another term to take into consideration. It is precisely the intentional correlate of *noesis* which Husserl calls the *noema*. Therefore the situation is this: on the one hand, there are proper components of the intensive living consciousness, such as the noetic moments, which are described by Husserl as “directions of the regard of the pure *Ego* to the objects ‘meant’ by it

§69 *Ideas I*). Husserl in fact clearly states that the method of an eidetic science requires proceeding step by step. This kind of proceeding has been explained by J.N. Mohanty, who provides an account of two different side of the Husserlian account of essences: the first side refers to the traditional rationalistic vision opposing essential and accidental. The second side, which for Mohanty represents the real phenomenological account of essence, refers to empirical and individual intuitions transformed into essential insights. That is how the ‘what’ of an object can become its *eidōs*, namely, how the individual’s own essence takes up the totality of the content of an individual (*concretum*)(Mohanty, 1978: 306). Therefore, as Husserl states in §69, there will always be the need to bring the single particulars of an individual ‘nearer’, even though what is obscurely intended will keep *knocking at the door of intuition* and not coming in (see Hua III/1 p.144; en.tr. ID1 p. 157).

⁶⁶ Hua III/1 p.179; en.tr. ID1 p.191.

owing to sense-bestowal”⁶⁷; on the other hand, there is a multiplicity of data, which corresponds to the multiplicity of noetic data and is “demonstrable in actual intuition, in a correlative *noematic content*, or, in short, in the ‘*noema*’”⁶⁸.

The term *noema* has always been considered problematic because of the difficulties that both its understanding and definition bring about⁶⁹. For instance, Husserl here describes the *noema* as the object of experience taken precisely as it is meant and intended by the subject, or as ‘sense’:

“In every case the noematic correlate, which is called ‘sense’ here (in a very extended signification) is to be taken precisely as it inheres ‘immanently’ in the mental process of perceiving, of judging, of liking, and so forth; that is, just as it is offered to us when we *inquire purely into this mental process itself*.”⁷⁰

From this quote we can gather that there is no such object as *noema* in the natural attitude. In the natural attitude we perceive the thing that exists in the transcendent spatial actuality. In the transcendental attitude, instead, we “must raise the eidetic question: *what the ‘perceived as perceived’ is, which eidetic*

⁶⁷ Hua III/1 p. 203; en. tr. ID1 p. 214.

⁶⁸ Hua III/1 p. 203; en. tr. ID1 p. 214.

⁶⁹ The notion of *noema* has always been debated among scholars and philosophers approaching phenomenology (such as, for instance Sartre, who considered it in *L'Être et le Néant* as an irreal content of consciousness incapable of connecting consciousness to the real being). In particular D.W.Smith has recently distinguished four prominent schools of thought, which develop from the interpretation of the Husserlian dual definition of the *noema* as both ‘sense’ and the ‘object as intended’ (Smith 2007: 304-305): 1) Intentional object school of thought, that basically takes the *noema* as an intended object 2) Neo-phenomenalist school of thought, whose main exponent is Aron Gurwitsch. Gurwitsch proposes to identify the object itself with a system of *noemata* and therefore hints at a phenomenalist interpretation of phenomenology (Gurwitsch, 1964). Against this interpretation we have to recall in particular Drummond’s position (1990, 1992) which argues instead for a non-foundational phenomenological realism. 3) Mediating-sense school of thought (or ‘West Coast’) inspired by Føllesdal who gives a Fregean interpretation of the *noema* (Føllesdal, 1969). This conception of the *noema* as something internal to the ray of intention has been developed by Smith and McIntyre (1975, 1984, 1989) and from a different point of view by Mohanty (1981). 4) The bracketed object school of thought (or ‘East Coast’) which takes the *noema* as the object *transcendentally viewed*. Its main exponents are Sokolowski (2000) and Drummond (1990). Finally some other interesting references for the debates can be Bernet (1989), Rabanaque (2003) and Kosowski (2008).

⁷⁰ Hua III/1 p. 203; en. tr. ID1 p. 214.

moments it includes in itself as this perception noema”⁷¹. The perception of a thing is not the thing perceived. Therefore, in the transcendental attitude, which purely inquires into the mental process itself, it is possible to describe the ‘appearing as appearing’, namely, perception in its noematic respect. Thus, the *noema* can be taken as part of the phenomenological transcendental description of acts of experience of whatever kind (perception, phantasy, remembering etc.). On the other hand, the *noema* should not be compared to a supersensible entity that stems from contemplation or abstraction. Again, the *noema* stands for the object as it is *intended* by the subject. In this regard, Husserl adds that:

“There is inherent in each noema a pure object-something as a point of unity and, at the same time, we see how in a noematic respect two sorts of object-concepts are to be distinguished: this pure point of unity, this noematic ‘*object simpliciter*’, and the ‘*object in the How of its determinations*’.”⁷²

In particular, for Husserl the unity of one perception can include a multiplicity of modifications. In the natural attitude these modifications of consciousness are normally ascribed to the object of experience that changes, but in fact there is one noematic core that is intended throughout the continuous unity of changeable perceptual consciousness.

Therefore, the *noema* is described by Husserl as the object in the How of its determinations, as the noematic point of unity, as the perceived as perceived. However, it is noteworthy that all these definitions of the noema do not seem to indicate that the latter has to be taken as a ‘third kind of substance’ between a physical thing and the mind – and, in particular, *Ideas I* does not seem to provide clear arguments in favor of this conclusion. Indeed, the idea of a transcendental consciousness as a pure ‘alternative universe’ of *noemas* standing against the natural world would be very problematic, as for instance it

⁷¹ Hua III/1 p.183; en.tr. ID1 p. 216.

⁷² Hua III/1 p. 272; en.tr. ID1 p. 314.

is not clear how the multiplication of entities (or in this case, how the *noema* as an unreal entity) could give a better explanation of the experiential relationship of subject and object⁷³. Rather, the noematic description of reality as a unity of sense constituted by transcendental subjectivity seems to refer to a more comprehensible and intelligible totality, which encompasses the objects of experience, knowledge, assumptions, thinking etc. Indeed, the noematic consideration of reality as a unity of sense does not aim to replace reality and the world with correlates of consciousness, but it aims to clarify reality itself by taking it as the *explanandum* instead of the *explanans*. Within the phenomenological perspective there is no other world from the one that we face in our ordinary experience, and, by means of transcendental phenomenology, we can analyze this experience in its noetic and noematic aspects, in order to understand what we are referring to by the terms ‘reality’ and ‘world’.

In light of these considerations, it also seems possible to refute Ricoeur’s critique that took the Husserlian analysis of constitution as belonging to a vague region between intentional psychology and actual transcendental phenomenology. Ricoeur questioned precisely the choice of addressing the problem of constitution of transcendence without explaining how consciousness prescribes the mode of givenness of the objects. Ricoeur believed that the analyses in *Ideas I* were *limited* to distinctions and correlations between *noesis* and *noema*. In this way, the most radical problems concerning the constitution and the role of the Ego are not really faced. However, it is possible to oppose that the objective of the analysis dedicated to the noetic-noematic correlation is precisely that of illustrating and thematizing

⁷³ Nonetheless, in this regard the problem of the validity of the Cartesian two-terms conception of reality could be addressed (or at least it could be addressed the Cartesian philosophical presupposition according to which everything can be categorized as *Res Cogitans* or as *Res Extensa*) not only because pure phenomenology sheds light on a new territory of givenness, which is the territory of originary *experience*, but also because the eidetic determinations of the *a priori* regions of consciousness seems to imply the possibility of an eidetic ontology of consciousness, whose objects are pure possibility of experience.

what essentially belongs to the subject experience taken *purely* into account. *Noesis* and *noema* are the phenomenological terms that indicate the *clarification* based on *evidence* – namely, on the adequate self-givenness – of the relationship between subjectivity and the world. The explanation of this relationship cannot be found in the mind or in the physical world. For Husserl it has to be found *in* the experience itself, purely considered. And, from a pure phenomenological standpoint, it is possible to illustrate precisely what is found in the experience, namely, the correlation between noetic and noematic contents of the experience.

Therefore, turning again to Ricoeur's critique, if the noetic-noematic descriptions were just a mere preparation for the actual transcendental phenomenology to come, we might never know what such a transcendental analysis would actually look like.

2.4 Transcendental phenomenology and idealism

The Husserlian analyses in the first book of *Ideas* provide some crucial insights for understanding Husserl's transcendental project based on evidence and on the phenomenological sense of seeing. In particular, the phenomenological sense of seeing is connected with the possibility of describing what can be discovered in the experience purely taken (or taken as it is lived by the subject): its eidetic patterns, modes of intentionality and meaning-giving functions. Thus, it seems that, from a pure first-person standpoint we can explore what the experience essentially means, namely, its essence and its constitutive functions.

In light of these points, it is possible to deal with the connection between phenomenology and transcendental idealism that led Husserl to describe his philosophical project as a 'phenomenological *transcendental idealism*' in the *Postscriptum to Ideas I* (1931).

First of all, this definition should not be taken as a sort of final

acknowledgment that the Husserlian philosophy is an idealist one. Rather, it is transcendental phenomenology that can positively reconsider the cornerstone ideas of idealism. However, it should not be overlooked the fact that such a reevaluation concerns also the cornerstone ideas of *empiricism*.

First of all, it is rather noteworthy that Husserl does not ever mention the expression ‘transcendental idealism’ in *Ideas I*. However, almost twenty years later he did just that in the brief *Postscriptum* to the English edition of *Ideas I*. In particular, it could seem surprising that Husserl used the expression ‘transcendental idealism’ to define phenomenology right in the *Postscriptum* committed to defend his position from objections like intellectualism, rationalism, solipsism and transcendental psychologism⁷⁴. The main argument provided by Husserl against these objections is that they do not really apply because they are not capable of acknowledging the radical *novelty* of phenomenology itself. These kinds of critiques reduce the phenomenological thought exactly to those positions that it aims to overcome (as, for instance, the idea of grounding a new philosophical science on psychological considerations of the human being and of its contingent existence), and more importantly they do not recognize a ‘nuance’, which has for Husserl a unique character and meaning⁷⁵. This nuance seems to indicate indeed the fundamental change of attitude that leads us to *evidently* grasp what legitimizes our rational cognitions and assertions from a pure, phenomenological standpoint – a standpoint that does not coincide with a psychological standpoint implied by psychologism or subjectivism. On the other hand, it is true that, from the pure phenomenological standpoint, the role and the importance of subjectivity in the experience are valued and particularly underlined. Husserl in the *Postscriptum* states that transcendental phenomenology develops a theory that makes every conceivable

⁷⁴ In the *Postscriptum* it is specified that these objections come from the context of German philosophy in which the philosophy of life was struggling for the affirmation of its anthropology and of its interest for existence.

⁷⁵ “Die ganz einzige Bedeutung dieser «Nuance» kann nur evident werden durch eine radikale Selbstverständigung der Philosophierenden hinsichtlich dessen, worauf er unter dem Titel Philosophie eigentlich hinaus will” Hua V p. 147.

object – i.e. the real world which is already given to us, and every possible ideal world – intelligible as a *transcendental correlate*. This is indeed the novelty of transcendental phenomenology. Therefore, when Husserl claims that the concrete phenomenological science is a ‘universal idealism’⁷⁶, such a claim seems to refer to the possibility of transcendental phenomenology to satisfy some demands of idealist theories, without being an idealist theory itself. These demands regards for instance the struggle against the isolation of the mind from reality, as well as by the interest in the mind’s participation to the constitution of the world and reality. However, this is not a world possessed (or assimilated) by the subject, but a world that makes sense for every subject⁷⁷. Indeed, transcendental phenomenology as a pure inquiry into the experiential process is not concerned with matters of fact, but with essences and ideal objects, such as unities of meaning. And, in this regard, it is also important to keep in mind what Husserl observed in the second chapter of *Ideas I*, namely, that idealism does not value the role and importance of *evidence*. I do not believe that Husserl’s definition of phenomenology as a transcendental idealism stands for a rejection of this critique. In fact it seems exactly the opposite. Thanks to the evident givenness of consciousness it is possible to make the ideal structures of meaning that characterize acts of experience and knowledge *visible*. In this way, it is possible to account for the mind’s participation to the constitution of reality. We do not find the transcendental conditions of possibility of knowledge and experience *in the mind* of the subject, but in the *experience* taken as it is lived by the subject.

Thus, even though the experience cannot be reduced to the experience of individuals, it is nonetheless upon the experiential relationship between subject

⁷⁶ “Der transzendental-phänomenologische Idealismus ist nicht eine philosophische Sonderthese und Theorie unter anderen, sondern die transzendente Phänomenologie als konkrete Wissenschaft ist, auch wenn kein Wort über Idealismus gesagt wird, in sich selbst *universaler Idealismus*, als Wissenschaft durchgeführt.” Hua V p.152.

⁷⁷ In recent years F.C. Beiser has given an interesting account of German idealism and its struggle against subjectivism (Beiser, 2002). This account partly recalls the position of G. Plimpton Adams (1919) and J. Royce (1955).

and object that the attention must be focused (and not for instance on words or language). In this way it seems that the phenomenological transcendental idealism reshapes *both* the notions of subjectivity and experience, so that transcendental phenomenology actually relates to both idealist *and* empiricist epistemological issues. One does not seem to exclude the other. On the contrary, once the basic insight of phenomenology is clarified the idealist and empiricist edges of phenomenology seem to imply each other reciprocally – though in a very different way from Berkeley's conception that tied the extreme consequences of empiricism to absolute idealism.

At the end of the *Postscriptum*, Husserl claims that during years and years of work he has followed many paths in order to illustrate in the clearest way the peculiar motivation leading to open a new perspective and to embrace a new transcendental attitude of thought⁷⁸. Such a new perspective, which is alternative to the naturalistic positive perspective of life and science, primarily consists in the systematical elaboration of the *art* of questioning the subjective consciousness without naturalistic prejudices⁷⁹. The necessary starting point of transcendental phenomenology coincides with a question that the subject has to ask itself – a question that in *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* was formulated in this way: “How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object?”⁸⁰. As I have tried to explain in the previous sections, from the phenomenological standpoint the answer to this question concerns in particular the experience as it is lived by the subject. In other words, the answer to the question concerns the possibility of taking a first person pure reflective stance,

⁷⁸ “Ich habe in vieljährigem Nachdenken verschiedene gleichmögliche Wege eingeschlagen, um eine solche Motivation absolut durchsichtig und zwingend herauszustellen, die über die natürliche Positivität des Lebens und der Wissenschaft hinaustreibt und die transzendente Umstellung, die phänomenologische Reduktion notwendig macht.” Hua V p.148.

⁷⁹ “Der Weg von den ‘Logischen Untersuchungen’ zu den ‘Ideen’ ist, wenn wir von der transzendental-philosophischen Abzweckung umbiegen in die psychologische, der Weg von der ersten und noch unvollkommen geklärten und beschränkten Erschließung der *Aufgabe* bis zur systematischen Ausbildung der *Kunst*, die Bewusstseinssubjektivität selbst, ungeblendet durch naturalistische Vorurteile zu befragen und als in ihr Stehender sie aus ihr selbst, aus ihrem eigenen Wesen auszulegen.” Hua V p. 158.

⁸⁰ Hua XXV p.14; en.tr. PRS p.87.

and also the possibility to *see* from this pure standpoint what the lived experience ‘means’.

Granted that the Husserlian thought passed through different crossroads and stages, but each of these does not necessarily stand for a ‘different kind’ phenomenology, I will try to show in the next chapter the sense of the phenomenological transcendental perspective in relation to the genetic development and its main outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE

Phenomenological reflection during the Freiburg years. Radical transformation or development?

It is well known that transcendental phenomenology underwent a process of revision and change during Husserl's last period of philosophical activity (otherwise known as the Freiburg period, referring to the time Husserl spent in Freiburg, both as a professor and as retired scholar from 1916 to 1938¹). This process will prove to be especially important for the present work because it can offer valuable insights into Husserl's overall transcendental project based on *evidence*.

As it became clear in *Ideas I*, the Husserlian pure phenomenology of the concrete mental process involved in knowledge and experience focused in particular on the originally presentive consciousness and on the thematic analysis that purely highlighted the essential characters of experience and its constitutive structures (noetic-noematic correlations). In this way, Husserl's transcendental philosophy can be considered as a *philosophy of seeing*, whereas this seeing stands for clearly grasping and bringing to evidence from a pure first-person stance what essentially characterizes acts of knowledge and experience.

The later phenomenological reflection bears on the issue of the *evidenz-*

¹ In 1916 Husserl was called from the Freiburg University to take the place once belonged to Heinrich Rickert. Here Husserl met Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein (who was his first assistant) Ludwig Landgrebe and Eugen Fink.

theoretisch transcendental philosophy, but Husserl's process of revision raises the problem of reassessing the status of transcendental phenomenology. However, such an evaluation mostly depends on the meaning of the process of revision of phenomenology: Is it a radical transformation of the nature and sense of the Husserlian project, or a development of the main phenomenological themes which assures a better understanding of its most original aspects? Where does the revision lead?

There are indeed some basic alterations in the Husserlian interests, conceptions and even language of the later years. These changes are far-reaching and blatant also in the published work. For instance, the analysis of *constitution* is diversified into the accounts of physical things (bringing along the central role of the lived body in the constitution of the spatial world through *kinaesthetic* sensations), mental life and the spiritual world. Moreover, the idea of a first philosophy comes forward, alongside with an apodictic critique of the transcendental experience. A great deal of Husserl's work is also devoted to transcendental logic and transcendental aesthetics, speaking more specifically, to the analysis of the pre-predicative perceptual experience upon which the account of logical thinking must be founded. Furthermore, Husserl tackles the problem of solipsism and focuses on the analysis of intersubjectivity, while in his last posthumously published work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, history and the life-world come to the forefront as central themes. Nonetheless, the question previously asked regarding the radical transformation or development of the core phenomenological themes during the Freiburg years cannot be answered only considering specific and surely interesting contents from the later phenomenological analyses. Indeed, the structural aspects of the Husserl's revisions are noteworthy and accountable for further investigation.

In this regard, two lines of inquiry can be identified: the *deepening* movement relative to the genetic method, and the *radicalization* of phenomenology by means of the apodictic critique of transcendental

experience². The discussion of this chapter will focus precisely on these lines of inquiry in order to attempt to clarify both the meaning of the deepening and radicalizing movement of phenomenology as well as its actual results for transcendental phenomenology.

I shall deal first with the genetic method. In particular, I shall address the relationship between static and genetic phenomenology in order to focus on the so-called genetic turn and on the *genetic development* of the results of static analysis. In this regard, I shall argue that the mere association between genetic analysis and inner-core of consciousness and between static analysis and surface of consciousness essentially misses the *tension* between deep layers of consciousness and surfacing constituted unities of meaning – a tension that the genetic analysis addressed, making the task of clarifying knowledge and meaning a problem which concerns the genesis of sense within the life of consciousness. Therefore, the basic outcome of this deepening movement of phenomenology is not one of reaching the real inner-core of consciousness directly connected with the thing itself (as opposed to the noematic ‘irreal’ object). Instead it is represented by the connection of *life* and *meaning* that refashions and articulates the field of transcendental subjectivity as a layered, stratified field that encompasses passive syntheses as well as the highest activity of the Ego. My aim will be especially that of accounting for the sense of the phenomenological genetic development, particularly in relation to the quite extensive theme of genetic constitution and transcendental aesthetics which highlights what is possibly the most interesting and original aspects of the phenomenological transcendental perspective (such as the genetic historical dimension of consciousness, the concrete presence of the living Body, and the transcendental field of consciousness as a living present).

On the other hand, the thematization of the development of transcendental

² J.N.Mohanty (1995) in particular defines the development of the Husserlian thought during the Freiburg years as a process deepening and radicalizing results already achieved by transcendental phenomenology.

phenomenology is intercepted by the issue of the radical critique of transcendental phenomenology and, in particular, of the *apodictic* critique of transcendental experience illustrated in the 1923-24 lectures *First Philosophy*. I will take the controversial notion of apodicticity into account, especially in relation to the meaning of the radical critique of transcendental experience and to the difference between apodictic and adequate evidence. In this regard, I shall argue, on the one hand, that this radical critique does not imply an *absolute vision* (which would jeopardize the sense of the phenomenological transcendental project grounded on a universal sense of seeing, inasmuch as an absolute vision actually negates the essential character of imperfection implied by vision). On the other hand, even if the notion of apodictic evidence could be taken for a metaphysical ‘first cognition’ that provides absolute justification of knowledge, this is not the only possible interpretation. Indeed, the notion of apodictic evidence, in certain respects, can provide fruitful insights into the project of transcendental phenomenology and Husserl's goal of a phenomenological theory of reason.

The first part of the present chapter is devoted to the elucidation of the static and genetic methods (§3.1) and to the notion of *genesis* (§3.2). Then, in order to address the meaning and the effects of the deepening movement of the phenomenological analysis (§3.3) I will focus in particular on the notion of pre-cognition and pre-predicative experience (§3.3.1), on the phenomenological conception of *Leib*, or *living body* (§3.3.2) and on the idea of *lebendige Gegenwart* (§3.3.3). The next three sections move on to the issue of radicalization of transcendental phenomenology (§3.4) and its consequences relating particularly to the issue of apodicticity (§3.4.1) and its distinction from adequacy (§3.4.2). Finally, I will state my conclusions regarding the advancement of the transcendental phenomenological perspective (§3.5).

3.1 Static and genetic method

The year 1916 was a very eventful year in Husserl's career and personal life. He moved from Göttingen to Freiburg University, met many brilliant scholars such as Martin Heidegger and Edith Stein. Yet he also lost one of his sons in battle, while another was deeply injured. The first hints of a process of revision of phenomenology date back to this period, which entailed a new way of thinking and approaching matters such as, in particular, that of *genesis*³.

A 1921 working text on static and genetic method⁴ showed the first results of a new course of reflection. This new course, possibly motivated by the limitations of the eidetic description of pure consciousness, represented an attempt at re-thinking the phenomenological method in order to gain a better insights into certain problems such as, for instance, the problem of apperception, which was unsatisfactory accounted for in *Ideas I*. Therefore, it seems just as fair to say that this process of revision does not amount to a *tabula rasa* of everything previously achieved. Husserl himself suggested on more than one occasion that there is a line of continuity between statics and genetics, and that genetic phenomenology necessarily *follows* static phenomenology, even if its objects actually *precede* what is accounted by the static method. It is precisely in this sense, then, that it is possible to speak of a *genetic development* regarding the static analysis' results.

On the opposite side, it has been argued that static phenomenology depends on something that the static method is actually incapable to explain, namely, the actual relation between consciousness and things⁵. This is to say

³ The use of the term *genesis* before this time seems to be mainly associated with a psychological context (even if the opposite has also been argued regarding for instance the genetic clarification of conceptual terms in *Philosophy of Arithmetic*). See R. Miraglia (2003). However it is only in a text dated 1916-17 that Husserl starts to distinguish explicitly between a genetic origin and a static-phenomenological origin (see HUA XIII pp. 351-352).

⁴ "*Statische und genetische phänomenologische Methode*". Taken from the B III 10 signature manuscripts, this essay was originally published in Edmund Husserl, *Analysen zur passive Synthesis*, ed. Margot Fleischer, Husserliana XI (1966).

⁵ In this regard see D. Welton *The origins of meaning* (1983) according to which the genetic turn must be seen in terms of the immanent demands of the static analysis – demands that

that static analysis' scope is too limited to essences and *noemata* and that genetic phenomenology, by taking on the uncompleted business of static analysis, will come to overthrow it. However, the objective of the phenomenological analysis which took into account essences and *noemata* was to make what essentially characterizes different types of experience visible, and highlight its intentional structure through the noetic-noematic correlation. Moreover, Husserl defined the static (or descriptive) phenomenology and its task by contrast with a genetic (or explanatory) phenomenology in this way:

“In a certain way, we can therefore distinguish ‘explanatory’ phenomenology as a phenomenology of regulated genesis, and ‘descriptive’ phenomenology as a phenomenology of possible, essential shapes (no matter how they have come to pass) in pure consciousness and their teleological ordering in the realm of possible reason under the headings, ‘object’ and ‘sense’. In my lectures, I did not say ‘descriptive’, but rather ‘static’ phenomenology. The latter offers an understanding of intentional accomplishment, especially of the accomplishment of reason and its *negata*.”⁶

The aim of static phenomenology is to grasp what the intentional consciousness has already accomplished. More specifically, what is already constituted in the experiential process, in order to describe it according to the essential possible forms of consciousness. Indeed, there are some questions that remain unanswered. For instance, how is a transcendent object really apperceived? How is it possible to experience something and then suddenly experience something else, in an infinite continuous flow? In truth, these questions represent some problems that cannot be addressed by simply focusing on what is already constituted in my experience in order to clarify it. However, it seems also that these questions could not be answered in a proper

entail the overcome of static analysis itself, because of its limitations to a description of essences.

⁶ Hua XI p. 340; en. tr. *Static and genetic method* p.138.

way without addressing and enriching precisely the results of static phenomenology. What is important regarding apperception is that it always transcends the immanent contents. This is to say, in every apperception there is always more than the consciousness of something in general, because this consciousness is intended at the same time to be a motivation for a consciousness of something else⁷. In this regard, the phenomenological analysis points to the possibility of tracing the history of the apperception back to its *genesis*. This means back to a more original level of constitution through which we can *explain* the apperception itself. This explanation (*Erklärung*) is a key term for defining the kind of genetic analysis Husserl had in mind, which refers to something else (and more) than the activity of the Ego. Indeed, it refers to those founding lived experiences that genetically precede every active apperception (and this means also that the expression ‘explanatory’ does not refer either to causal explanation that characterizes the sciences in the natural attitude). Thus, it seems that both description and explanation aim for the same goal: the clarification of the transcendental constitution of meanings that shapes the experience of the world. However, the noematic description, which for Husserl entails the indications of all the possible additional experiences regarding the object in question⁸, from a genetic standpoint comes to encompass more than the formal unity of all the possible experiences of the object. It encompasses the *stratification* through which the possibility of such unity is rooted in the *most original and primordial experience*.

The second volume of *Ideas*, written shortly after the first, already moved towards this direction by taking into account the constitution of a material thing and the sense data (which in *Ideas I* were called hyletic components of

⁷ “A consciousness that is not merely conscious of something, and then still something else that it does not include, but rather, a consciousness that points to this other one as one that belongs to it, as what is motivated through it.” Hua XI p. 338; en.tr. *Static and genetic method* p. 136.

⁸ “In the noema of the act of perception, i.e., in the perceived, taken precisely as characterized phenomenologically [...] there is included a determinate directive for all further experiences of the object in question.” Hua IV p.35; en tr. ID2 p.38.

consciousness). In particular, here there is a direct reference to a “hidden constitutive synthesis”⁹, which is the ultimate and most original synthesis that precedes every thesis, in the discussion of the manifestation of sensed spatial objects and their constitution. Husserl takes the example of a violin tone and shows how we can focus exclusively on the sense *datum* instead of the spatial sounding tone – and then how we come to grasp the stream of its continuous changing into something else. Such a stream of consciousness for Husserl actually pre-gives the ‘violin-note’ object, and this pre-giveness “precedes the constitution of the object as object”, because it refers back to an “original constitution”¹⁰ of the object.

This kind of original constitution is addressed by Husserl through the issue of *genesis*.

“The theory of consciousness is directly a theory of apperceptions; the stream of consciousness is a stream of constant genesis; it is not a mere series, but a development, a process of becoming according to laws of necessary succession in which concrete apperceptions of different typicalities (among them all the apperceptions that give rise to the universal apperception of a world) grow out of primordial apperceptions or out of apperceptive intentions of a primitive kind. Every apperception exhibits the structure of noesis and noema.”¹¹

Thus, it seems that the problem of genesis is included in the idea of apperception itself, and that it concerns primarily genetic laws of passivity (like the laws of association), as well as the relationship between passivity and activity. In particular, the apperception, which exhibits the noetic-noematic structure, seems to be the chosen thematic ground for the phenomenological analysis to deepen and enrich the results of static phenomenology. In this regard, there are interesting topics to take into account. Before going into some

⁹ Hua IV p.22; en.tr. ID2 p. 24.

¹⁰ Hua IV p.23; en.tr. ID2 p.25.

¹¹ Hua XI p.339; en.tr. *Static and genetic method* p. 137.

details, I shall take a closer look at the connection between the problems of the genesis and a supposed deep inner-core of consciousness.

3.2 Towards the depth of consciousness

The idea of genesis can be associated with a deep or profound level of consciousness to be discovered. However, this descriptive reference hides a certain ambiguity that has to be clarified, especially regarding the nature of such a deep level: Is it a deep inner core opposed to superficial external level of consciousness? Are there two kinds of consciousness, one deep and one superficial? I shall take these as leading questions to further clarifying the meaning of the phenomenological account of genesis and the deep level associated with it.

First, it is noteworthy that Husserl refers to the genetic approach as a *Rückfrage* or *Rückgang*. This means a leading *back* of all the predicative evidences to a pre-predicative consciousness which is an “original form of consciousness, ‘*experience*’ in the broadest sense” that has “not only a static but also a genetic priority to its intentional variants. Genetically too, the original (*die originale*) manner of givenness is – in a certain fashion – the primitive one (*die ursprüngliche*)”¹². Therefore, for Husserl, the problem of genesis explicitly refers to a *deep* primitive level of consciousness, which, however, does not have to be an ‘inner core’. Husserl rather refers to a genetic dimension pertaining to every single *Erlebnis* that shows its *history*. Moreover, the genetic analysis is for Husserl “directed to the whole concrete nexus in which each particular consciousness stands, along with its intentional object as intentional”¹³. Such a whole concrete nexus seems to be comprised of not only every possible form of consciousness, but also the conditions of appearance of a sensible object through which it will be possible to explicate the historical

¹² Hua XVII p. 317; en.tr. FTL p. 316.

¹³ Hua XVII p. 317; en.tr. FTL p. 316.

dimension of the apperception.

However, such an understanding implies a hidden path of ‘experience’ (one that involves passivity), which is not immediately graspable; the historical dimension of the lived experience has to be *retraced*, and in some way *dug out* from the depths of the intentional life of consciousness. In this regard, another difficulty has to be taken into account. Indeed, the possibility of exhausting this research for the hidden path of experience is hard to assess. How can we be sure that there is not another, more primitive level of experience which will always remain ahead of the genetic exploration?

Some important clues to address this issue can be found in *The Crisis of European Sciences* §49 where Husserl discusses the difficulty of dealing with the total intentional accomplishment of subjectivity that does not refer to an isolated subject, but to the entire intersubjectivity brought together by this accomplishment. The difficulty specifically arises when it is realized that visible objects are themselves unities of multiplicities that lie deeper and lead back to an ‘obscure horizon’ which will be the object of a methodical regressive inquiry. Therefore, regarding the whole intentional life of subjectivity Husserl claims:

“[...] If we could equate this subjectivity with the ψυχή of Heraclitus, his saying would doubtless be true of it: «You will never find the boundaries of the soul, even if you follow every road; so deep is its ground.» Indeed, every ‘ground’ [*Grund*] that is reached points to further grounds, every horizon opened up awakens new horizons, and yet the endless whole, in its infinity of flowing movement, is oriented toward the unity of one meaning; not, of course, in such a way that we could ever simply grasp and understand the whole; rather, as soon as one has fairly well mastered the universal form of meaning-formation, the breadths and depths of this total meaning, in its infinite totality, take on valuative [*axiotische*] dimensions: there arise problems of the totality as that of a

universal reason.”¹⁴

A regressive inquiry into the most obscure and deep horizon of the life of consciousness seems to imply an *endless* investigation. Nonetheless, as Husserl claims, it is the *unity of meaning* that has to guide the regressive analysis and, in particular, it is only possible to understand the significance of the regressive inquiry into the obscure deep horizon of consciousness in relation to this unity of meaning. According to the previous quote, the objective of the phenomenological analysis is to investigate the *legitimacy* of the constituted meaning once the “breadths and depths” of the total meaning have been mastered. In other words, the idea of a deep level of consciousness evoked by the issue of genesis – while it refers to a whole concrete nexus in which each particular consciousness stands, and not to an inner core of consciousness opposed to an external surface – implies a profound (and perhaps bottomless) life of consciousness. The significance of which, however, is not given by the bottom itself – or by the possibility of reaching the ultimate boundaries. Indeed, this deep life of consciousness entails and makes a sort of *tension* visible from the phenomenological standpoint. This tension could be explained as a tension between what is known and constituted as a unity of meaning and the *living functions* of consciousness, or as a tension between experiential depths and surface. For instance, when I wake up in the middle of the night after a bad dream, I experience moments in which I do not know who I am or where I am or what happened to me. Nonetheless, in this situation both the world and myself do not simply cease to exist. Indeed, if I lie in bed for a few seconds, the world around me will regain its meaning. There are different layers that stratify the field of consciousness and its constitution of meaning. Husserl intended to further conduct the phenomenological investigation of the ‘logic’ of the subject experience precisely by considering the connection between experiential depths and surface and, then, in a sense, between life and

¹⁴ Hua VI p.173; en.tr. CES p.170.

meaning. Such an investigation refers in particular to the laws of legitimacy of experience itself that are the *a priori* conditions of the appearance of the sensible world as it is. Moreover, according to the previous quote, the legitimacy of the unity of meaning, once the breadths and depths of the total meaning have been mastered, represents a problem of *universal reason*¹⁵ for Husserl. Therefore, it is in view of this goal that, despite the ambiguities entailed by a vague idea of a deep level of consciousness, genetic phenomenology rigorously retraces the stratified layers of the life of consciousness through the *Rückgang*. In this way, both the inner deep core and the ultimate boundary of consciousness are actually useless for the phenomenological transcendental investigation. Thus, while there seems to be no need to grasp (or describe) the totality of the life of consciousness according to Husserl's claim, what really does interest us now is how genetic phenomenology makes the deep level of consciousness accessible to the analysis, and what are the consequences for the transcendental phenomenological perspective.

3.3 The genetic development of the phenomenological perspective

In the foregoing sections, I have put questions regarding the process of revision of Husserl's philosophy together. These questions regarded in particular the meaning of the deepening movement of phenomenology implied by the regressive genetic analysis.

Thus, the issue of genesis has been connected with that of a tension between what surfaces in the experience as constituted unity of meaning, and what lies at the deep roots of such a constitution. The ground of the transcendental constitution appears to be fluent and stratified. This means that

¹⁵ I shall briefly return to the phenomenological idea of reason in the last sections of this chapter, where I will discuss Husserl's apodictic critique of transcendental experience.

it is analyzable under different aspects corresponding to different stages and phases of experience. Therefore, in the following sections I will take into account some central aspects of Husserl's genetic analysis that show the new horizon of the phenomenological clarification of meaning. In particular, I shall highlight how the genetic analysis provides a new unique axis for the transcendental problem to pivot around: the relation between life and meaning.

Three topics seem especially important in order to elucidate the nexus between the living functions of consciousness and the constitution of meaning: the account of pre-predicative experience and the analysis of the layers of the life of consciousness, the phenomenological conception and role of a living body and corporeity (*Leib*), the phenomenological account of the empty presentations within the transcendental field and the living present. Moreover, I believe that through these topics it is possible to address the actual *development* of the transcendental phenomenological perspective that, on the one hand, points out the most original aspects of transcendental phenomenology and, on the other hand, provides the elements for a theory of experience and knowledge which upholds the intelligibility of experience and knowledge as a goal to fulfill, and yet preserves their irreducible complexity.

3.3.1 Pre-predicative experience and layers of the life of consciousness

Husserl describes the regressive genetic method of phenomenology (*Rückgang*), or regressive question (*Rückfrage*), as envisioning something that is 'inside' the *Erleben*, a formation that is shaped in it and that has not to be confused with the mental process of judging itself¹⁶. Indeed, this is actually the ruinous mistake of *logical psychologism*, a mistake that also misled the English empiricists and that, in Husserl's opinion, prevented the development of a genuine phenomenological analysis. These considerations are just a small extract from the analysis contained in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, a

¹⁶ See Hua XVII p. 162; en.tr. FTL p.153.

work dedicated to the issue of the foundations of logic found by means of the phenomenological transcendental experience highlighting the idea of a pure logic as a universal *a priori* doctrine of science. In particular, in the second part of the book, Husserl retraces the path taken by genetic phenomenology – a path that leads to *pre-predicative and pre-categorical evidences* – and explains the way in which this path relates to the phenomenological account of evidence. Therefore, I intend to pick up the key points of this thematic analysis in order to introduce Husserl’s notion of pre-predicative experience, which is famously exposed also in *Experience and Judgment* (a posthumous work dedicated to the problem of the origin of predicative judgment).

At the beginning of the second part of *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl clarifies the significance of the phenomenological account of evidence for a rigorous analysis concerning predicative judgments and objective knowledge. In particular, Husserl states that

“The identity and, therefore, the *objectivity* of something ideal can be directly ‘seen’ (and, if we wished to give the word a suitably amplified sense, directly experienced) with the same originality as the identity of an object of experience in the usual sense – for example: an experienced object belonging to Nature or an experienced immanent object (any psychic Datum).”¹⁷

The objectivity of predicative judgments can be brought back to evidence, namely, to the primordial self-givenness that makes us *see* and clearly grasp the objectivity as a constituted unity of sense. Here evidence for Husserl “consists in the giving of something-itself”¹⁸, and it seems that through this evident self-givenness it is possible to address the problem of truth and

¹⁷ “Die Identität eines Idealen und damit dessen *Gegenständlichkeit* ist in gleicher Ursprünglichkeit direkt zu ‘sehen’ (und wenn man das Wort mit entsprechend erweitertem Sinne fassen wollte : direkt zu erfahren) wie die Identität eines gewöhnlichen Erfahrungsgegenstandes, z.B. eines Gegenstandes der naturalen Erfahrung oder eines solchen der immanenten Erfahrung von irgendwelchen psychischen Daten. Hua XVII pp 163-164; en.tr. FTL p.155.

¹⁸ Hua XVII p.165: en.tr. FTL p.157.

objectivity without resorting to a dogmatic absolute criterion of truth. Indeed, all that matters to phenomenology is the explication and understanding of higher evidences that appear as higher-ordered in light of other evidences, *in infinitum*. Moreover, Husserl claims that: “Only in seeing can I bring out what is truly present in a seeing; I must make a seeing explication of the proper essence of seeing”¹⁹. In other words, the phenomenological transcendental analysis is still concerned with bringing acts of knowledge and experience to evidence and, in particular, with seeing or clearly grasping what is genuinely given in these acts. Evidence for Husserl gives something-itself, so it is only through evidence that it is possible to explicate what is genuinely given in the objective predicative judgments. Therefore, for Husserl, we have to further examine the evidence awakened by our reflection. This is to say that we have to ask questions about what it aims for and what it really represents. These are the crucial steps that determine the sense of turning reflectively from what is given straightforwardly, to the hidden and anonymous activity of constitution²⁰. Indeed, it is such a reflective turn that leads us to investigate the genesis of every meaningful predicative judgment by tracing its predicative evidence to the *pre-predicative evidence*, which for Husserl is a particular kind of experience.

In *Experience and Judgment* Husserl dedicates an extensive analysis to the pre-predicative experience in relation to the self-evident consciousness and, in particular, to originally appearing self-given object. Every act of judgment, for Husserl, requires something underlying. Judgments require an ‘*object about-which*’, namely, an object which is pre-given and potentially the object of judgment. Therefore, one that engages in a predicative activity *always* has the object already present in mind, or intuitively *self-given* – which in this context for Husserl means *self-evident* (“the way in which an object in its givenness

¹⁹ Hua XVII p.167: en.tr. FTL p.159.

²⁰ See Hua XVII p.184; en tr. FTL p. 177.

can be characterized relative to consciousness as *itself-there*²¹). These primal objective self-evidences stemming from the *Rückgang* are defined as the indispensable points of departure for elucidating the origin of predicative judgment. Moreover, this come back to the self-evident character of individuals in order to reach the pre-predicative givenness of an object (or pre-predicative experience) is the first element of a phenomenological theory of judgment for Husserl.

Thus, it appears that the pre-predicative experience is the ground for explicating the objective evidence of the predicative judgments (such as that of logic) through the self-evident consciousness that presents its intentional objects inasmuch as they are self-given. However, in this regard the problem of justifying the explanation of the nature of the superior (namely, the domain of predicative *episteme*) by turning back to the inferior (experience itself – the realm of *doxa*) needs to be addressed. This issue triggers in *Experience and Judgment* a more extensive analysis regarding the nature and structure of pre-predicative experience, and, in particular, regarding the fundamental laws of intentionality that can be found in order to clarify the evidences entailed by predicative judgments. It is in this way that the nature of the superior is traced back to the genesis of sense in the pre-predicative experience – that is, in the domain of something *pre-given* that contributes to the activation of proper cognitive functions.

I shall briefly summarize now some relevant points of this analysis in order to reach a first conclusion regarding the results of this regressive analysis for transcendental phenomenology.

First, Husserl defines the nature of something *pre-given*, which indicates the preliminary presence of an object that *affects* the subjective consciousness by entering into the background of the field of consciousness. It is only afterwards that this object begins to awaken what Husserl calls the ‘interest in cognition’. Moreover, the pre-given object is presumed within a certainty of

²¹ E.Husserl, EU p. 11; en. tr. EJ p.19.

belief, which remains unaltered unless it is modified by further experience. In other words, the pre-given object for Husserl is a *dynamis*, which can turn into a n *entelecheia* only whenever the interest in cognition of the subject is awakened²². Indeed, when the Ego's interest in cognition is awakened, the pre-predicative experience, which is a sort of pre-cognition (*Vorbekanntheit*), finds its realization²³. Moreover, if one wondered whether such a realization coincides with an extinction of the pre-predicative experience, Husserl points out that the pre-cognition is never about a single object, and that it always refers to an environment, namely to an entire domain of passive pre-givenness. The object of cognition always stands out from a co-present environment, which cannot ever go away and which includes the system of horizons (both internal and external) that indicate the paths of possible further experience according to different *a priori* types (*Typik*)²⁴.

What is noteworthy at this point for the purpose of the present study is the way in which the phenomenological analysis, by focusing on the self-evident consciousness uncovers the hidden strata of experience and actually opens an *extended* thematic space of consciousness if compared with the narrow account

²² “We can also say that before every movement of cognition the object of cognition is already present as a *dynamis* which is to turn into an *entelecheia*. This ‘preliminary presence’ [*Voranliegen*] means that the object affects us as entering into the background of our field of consciousness, or even that it is already in the fore-ground, possibly already grasped, but only afterwards awakens the ‘interest in cognition’, that interest which is distinguished from all other interests of practical life.” E.Husserl, EU p. 24; en.tr. EJ p. 29.

²³ These considerations foresee the phenomenological accounts of *affection* and *receptivity* that relate to the pre-predicative experience status. About the notion of affection and the epistemic role assigned to it by Husserlian phenomenology, some studies have been devoted to its relation to attentiveness and to the issue of becoming aware of something. See Steinbock (2004). However, it is of foremost importance also its relation to passivity, as Spinicci underlined. In particular, affection has to be distinguished from pure passivity, as it is comparable to a form of ‘passion’ suffered by subjectivity in relation to an object. See Spinicci (1985).

²⁴ A particularly interesting debate has concerned the phenomenological notion of *horizon*. I recall for instance the cognitivist position expressed by S.Kelly (2004) in regard to the Husserlian conception of experience and horizons. According to Kelly, the horizon of experience represents something absent from the sense perception field, but nonetheless anticipated by the subject. To this interpretation answered D. Dahalstrom (2006), whose account of horizons of experience focuses on the object givenness and on its temporal character, inasmuch as the horizontal phenomenological experience is irreducible to conceptual or intellectual activities.

of the mental space (so often prone to be reduced to a set of psychic phenomena). Through this thematic space of consciousness it is possible to further elucidate cognition by addressing *pre-cognition*. This pre-cognition is not only the premise of cognition, but also indicates a perpetual ‘openness’, an overt character of the experiential consciousness to further experience, according to certain *a priori* patterns. Indeed, the entire set of knowledge that one acquires during a lifetime is not determined by a series of contingent contents of experience, nor it depends only on mental acts of the Ego. By means of the genetic method transcendental phenomenology allows us to retrace the history of the object’s givenness that displays how it comes to be the object that is intended. This history coincides with the display of the different layers of the life of consciousness and, in particular, with the explication of the fundamental laws that rule over passive and active layers of the life of consciousness. In this way, the object can be seen as a potential givenness entangled in the very horizon of experience – and the actualization of this potentiality corresponds to the most genuine presentation of the object of experience.

In conclusion, as the account of pre-predicative experience shows, the genetic method extends the scope of the transcendental clarification of meaning towards a historical genetic dimension, while the account of the experiential ground of consciousness acquires a more complex character. However, this account does not lead to a decreased intelligibility of the experiential process itself. Indeed, what is at hand here is a further explanation of this process, which underlines the importance of passivity, affection, pre-cognition and, in general, all of the elements that describe and determine the status of the pre-predicative evidence, which is independent from the mental acts of the Ego.

3.3.2 The *living body* and its role in the phenomenological analysis

The phenomenological conception of pre-predicative experience is closely

connected to the phenomenological conception of the body and corporeity – which is of a great importance in the later years of phenomenology. At the core of this concept lies the distinction between the body as the ontic ‘physical body’ (*Körper*) and the body actually given in perception (*Leib*) without being objectified; the latter is the target of the phenomenological analysis.

As it has been noted, the obviousness of the presence of the Body²⁵ in the experiential field indeed interested Husserl the most²⁶, up to the point that corporeity became a central theme for the phenomenological analysis. In particular, it is noteworthy that, starting from the first descriptions of the Ego-body functions relating to the constitution of three-dimensional spatiality, Husserl in the later years comes to consider the central role of the Body both in the issues of self-constitution (the problem of the mundanizing self-apperception of the transcendental Ego) and of the experience of others subjects (analogizing apperception). Husserl addressed these challenging and very complex problems in particular in the *Cartesian Meditations*, where it is possible to find a deeper insight into the conception of the Body that comes to uncover its connection with subjectivity.

I will briefly analyze now the key-points of the phenomenological development of the conception of the Body in order to understand its significance for the transcendental phenomenological perspective. In particular, I will try to show in what sense the living body, far from representing a sort of *limitation* to the transcendental reflection, instead becomes an aspect that determines the originality of the phenomenological account of transcendental subjectivity to which pertains a *concrete* presence in the world.

In 1907 lectures *Ding und Raum* Husserl was already concerned with showing the role of the Body (with its moves and changes) in the constitution of the identical corporeal thing in the manifold of its appearances – while, on

²⁵ Here I will use Body with the capital B to indicate the living body (*Leib*) instead of *Körper*.

²⁶ About the connection between the phenomenological conception of the body and transcendental idealism see Dodd (1997).

the other hand, the distinction between *this* Body and other external things came to be established (even if the Body is a *thing* too). In particular, in this early text Husserl already had the idea of “the intertwining, in a remarkable correlation, of the constitution of the physical thing with the constitution of an *Ego-Body*”²⁷. The key point of this conception was that the Body is a zero-point of orientation that allows us to move in the world and experience it through *kinaesthesia*. This is to say, we experience the world through sensations connected with the movement of the Body itself.

“The eye, the head, or the whole Body moves; the relations between the thing and the Body change, and to these there correspond ever different modes of appearance of the thing.”²⁸

Thus, for Husserl spatiality is always constituted *in movement* (a movement that can be attributed both to the object and to the Ego itself). However, on one hand, this Body is the bearer of the Ego: the Ego has sensations and these are localized in the Body; on the other hand, it can also be an object of experience too. For instance, when my right hand touches my left hand – and in this kind of self-experience not only it is possible to experience our left hand, but also the right hand appears as having the sensations relating to the object being touched.

Therefore, the Body “is also a physical thing and is constituted like any physical thing but is pre-eminent in its appearance and is above all other physical things through a class of appended determinations”²⁹. This pre-eminence in 1907 seems to be due in particular to the central role assigned to the Body in the constitution of spatiality, which is always essentially mediated by the movement of the body and its kinaesthetic sensations. In the *Cartesian Meditations* (and in particular in the *Fifth Meditation*) Husserl returns to these

²⁷ Hua XVI p.150; en.tr. TS p.125.

²⁸ Hua XVI p.150; en.tr. TS p.125.

²⁹ Hua XVI p.162; en.tr. TS p. 137.

themes. However, here the Body is more specifically defined as the animate organism³⁰ (*Leib*) identified after the reduction of the transcendental experience to the sphere of pure ownness (or to “my transcendental concrete I-myself”³¹), and this *Leib* seems particularly involved in the constitution of a relationship with myself as a concrete subject of experience, and with other concrete subjects. This animate organism again is not just a body. It is the only object in which for Husserl ‘I rule and govern’, and to which I ascribe the field of sensations. Nonetheless, it is also something I can actively experience and when this experience occurs, the functioning organ becomes the object and the object becomes the functioning organ. However, in this context, the animate organism refers to the ownness essence pertaining to this ‘I’ which is mine, right here, right now. This means, in particular, that I find myself as a part of the world which has been reduced to the pure sphere of my ownness, unaffected by the Other; at the same time, I am also the transcendental Ego – the Ego of all constitutions “who exists in his actual and potential life-processes and *Ego*-habitualities and who constitutes in them not only everything Objective but also himself as identical *Ego*.”³² Therefore, it seems that the problem of the Body is no longer that of showing the role of corporeity for the constitution of the world, but instead that of defining the relationship between the psychophysical Ego and the transcendental Ego. Husserl explains this issue through a *mundanizing self-apperception* carried out by the same transcendental Ego that constitutes the world as a phenomenon that exists for me. In particular, the Ego in the usual sense is apperceived as a psychophysical Ego; but this is possible only because the living body is already there, as a mute, concrete presence in the world (or there would be no mundanization at all). Indeed, in the moment of the mundanizing self-apperception I, the

³⁰ “Among the bodies belonging to this ‘Nature’ and included in my peculiar ownness, I then find my *animate organism* as *uniquely* singled out namely as the only one of them that is not just a body but precisely an animate organism.”Hua I p.128; en. tr. CM p.97.

³¹ Hua I p.125; en.tr. CM p. 93.

³² Hua I p.130; en.tr. CM p.99.

transcendental Ego, actually recognize myself as *having* a body. Moreover, this Body is not discovered as something *alien*, but as something that has always belonged from the start to the sphere of the ownness of the Ego – while the ‘Other’ that enters in the perceptual field is immediately recognized as something alien, with the opacity belonging to an another animate organism different than mine.

Nonetheless, according to Husserl, the ‘Other’ is still apprehended as an animate organism too, one that derives its meaning from an apperceptive transfer from my own animate organism. Thus, the apprehension of other subjects actually occurs by means of an *analogizing apperception*, which could not take place if it was not for the immediately evident *sense of belonging* through which we intuitively *know* that we have a body, namely, through which our body (*Leib*) is actually given to us before being objectified into a physical body (*Körper*).

“I, as the primordial psychophysical *Ego*, am always prominent in my primordial field of perception, regardless of whether I pay attention to myself and turn toward myself with some activity or other. In particular, my live body is always there and sensuously prominent; but, in addition to that and likewise with primordial originariness, it is equipped with the specific sense of an animate organism.”³³

The prominent character of the Body, then, is valued within the transcendental field of consciousness for its role in self-apperception, as well as in the apperception of other people who have a body similar to ours, which enters into a *phenomenal pairing* with ours. In the *Crisis of European Sciences* Husserl further explained the originariness of the Body by stating that I actually exist in a completely *unique* way as the Ego of affection and actions by virtue of this living body. I ‘hold sway’ kinesthetically as a living body³⁴,

³³ Hua I p.143; en.tr. CM p.113.

³⁴ “In a quite unique way the living body is constantly in the perceptual field quite

and even if there are many other ways of being an Ego, and together they form a unity, through the living body I am always *concretely* in the field of perception, however broadly conceived. Indeed, the significance of the phenomenological conception of the Body seems to lie precisely in the fact that, by means of such a conception, it is possible to address from the phenomenological standpoint the originality of the experience of our Body and of other Body-subjects as *concrete presences* in the world through self-perceptions of the Ego, as well as perceptions of alter-Egos. In this way, the conception of the body is integrated in the phenomenological transcendental perspective. And while the phenomenological account of the Body shows the relation between kinaesthetic functions and constitutive structures of meaning, the transcendental life of consciousness acquires the status of a concrete thematic field³⁵ to be further investigated.

3.3.3 Empty presentations in the *living present*

In the previous sections, I have tried to show a few of the most interesting aspects related to the deepening movement of genetic phenomenology. The field of transcendental subjectivity can be shown to be a *concrete* field that is not reducible to a mental activity – and especially a field that can be explicated in its many layers while pursuing the task of the phenomenological clarification of knowledge and objective meanings. Such a task concerns now

immediately, with completely unique ontic meaning, precisely the meaning indicated by the word ‘organ’ (here used in its most primitive sense), [namely, as] that through which I exist in a completely unique way and quite immediately as the Ego of affection and actions, [as that] in which I *hold sway* quite immediately, kinesthetically” Hua VI p.109; en.tr. CES p. 107. The English translator, however, specifies in a footnote that “to hold sway” in this context translates the German word *walten* which is often used in religious language to signify God’s power over the world (*Gottes Walten*).

³⁵ Regarding the originality of the phenomenological conception of a *concrete* thematic field of the life of consciousness see for instance J.N. Mohanty (1978) who argued that *Leib* and *Lifeworld* are two notions that represent the connection between consciousness and existence, namely, between a philosophical thinking that tends to expunge existence based on conscious awareness, and the opposite philosophical conception centered on existence.

the connection between life and meaning – more specifically, between the life of consciousness, whose strata comprise anonymous and passive levels of pre-predicative experience and the active meaning-giving functions of transcendental constitution. I shall now consider more carefully this connection starting from how it is illustrated in the *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis* (a series of lectures held in Freiburg between 1920 and 1926) and I shall focus especially on the role played in it by the *empty presentation*.

In the *Analysen* Husserl defines the theme of genetic phenomenology by considering the highly ramified intentional analysis, which belongs to the universal genesis of consciousness. In this regard, two different sides of the analysis are distinguished: on one hand, there is the constitutive analysis that makes the sense-giving functions through which objects are constituted understandable according to the intentional *noema* and sense (*noematic side*). On the other hand, there is the genetic analysis that makes understandable “how, in the development proper to the structure of every stream of consciousness, which is at the same time the development of the Ego – how those intricate intentional systems develop, through which finally an external world can appear to consciousness and to the *Ego*”³⁶ (*noetic side*).

This noetic side of the analysis, in particular, is concerned with the passive strata of the life of consciousness and with the passive syntheses and its laws of association. Indeed Husserl wants to expose the connection between a *phenomenological consideration of association*, which pertains to the passive life of consciousness, and *the doctrine of intention*, through which experience and knowledge are developed. Precisely in this regard the important role of the complex, but also fascinating concept of *empty presentation*³⁷ is highlighted.

First, one may wonder what kind of presentation could be *empty*. What is there to present? In order to explain this peculiar notion, Husserl primarily

³⁶ Hua XI p.24; en.tr. APS p.62.

³⁷ See XI p. 65; en.tr. APS p. 106. The first chapter of the second division dedicated to Evidence regards in particular the synthesis of empty presentation and corresponding intuition.

claims that it is not opposed to the original intuitive givenness³⁸ (as the mere ‘picturing something’ is). I can picture something without having the corresponding intuitive intention. On the other hand, if I see the façade of a building, the empty presentation of the back of the building is not merely pictured, but it reflects the corresponding intuition. I expect the building having a back, even if I have not seen it yet.

Therefore, the empty presentation has to be valued for its role in the continuous process of fulfillment that characterizes every perceptual lived experience. Moreover, there can be different kinds of empty presentation, which correspond to different mode of intuition. According to Husserl, there are also two different functions of the empty presentation: the first is that it stands for what is meant in an empty manner and subsequently enters in a synthesis of fulfillment with the corresponding intuition. The second is that the empty presentation acts like a *trace* left behind by the corresponding intuition when this latter has disappeared. In particular, it seems that *protentions* (that arise from associative synthesis produced in pure passivity) and *retentions* (that arise from the synthesis of the original time-consciousness) can be described in this way as different functions of the empty presentation. However, Husserl strongly underlines that nothing is really shown or constituted through empty presentations, inasmuch as they are *passively intending presentations* through which an object is either always available (retentions) or anticipated (protentions). On the other hand, thanks to the empty presentation a synthesis of fulfillment can occur and the object can truly come to be experienced. In other words, what is passively intended seems to precede the synthesis of fulfillment as “a special shape that a consciousness of something must assume in order for it to be able to function in syntheses of fulfillment”³⁹. This, I believe, is a good definition of the role of the empty presentation, specifically,

³⁸ “Nothing takes place genuinely in the empty presentation, an objective sense is not genuinely constituted. And yet we do say that it presents this or that, i.e. that I am conscious of this or that.” Hua XI p. 72; en.tr. APS p. 114.

³⁹ Hua XI p.90; en.tr. APS p.133.

a peculiar shape of consciousness that seems to connect the results of the passive synthesis of associations and the doctrine of intention. What seems all the more interesting is that the empty presentation cannot be considered as a sort of *vacancy* within the experience that can be filled for by *phantasmata* or images but rather, it makes us recall the Leibnizian veins of the block of marble that indicated the disposition to further knowledge⁴⁰. It is an empty presentation, not a hole in the ‘plot’ of experience. Moreover, according to the Husserlian analysis, there are multiple rays of expectations that intersect such an empty presentive consciousness, so that “the emptiness is the potentiality of what is actualized in the corresponding intuitions and syntheses of disclosure.”⁴¹ In other words, it seems that the experiential consciousness *needs* this emptiness in order to have an actual experience of something, inasmuch as the experiential consciousness is always able to engage in further experience through this emptiness. Also it could be claimed that consciousness *lives* through this emptiness, striving for fulfillment and complete realization. Indeed, in the *Analysen* Husserl describes the whole unity of the life of consciousness as being constituted by syntheses of fulfillment and syntheses of concordance occurring within the immanent life of consciousness itself; and it is in the same unity of this life that the thing is constituted as a higher level of being. There is no isolated experience or intention, just as there is no first-hand experience in the life of consciousness. Everything is already *meant* to some level, even if in a passive or empty manner (but surely not yet determined, as the freedom of the datum to be different than expected is always preserved). The plot of consciousness, then, seems more ‘thick’ than ever – even if, at the same time, its links seem loose enough to include the possibility of something to be different than expected.

In conclusion, I believe that the notion of empty presentation represents

⁴⁰ In this regard see the *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain* in which Leibniz responds to Locke's rejection of innate ideas.

⁴¹ Hua XI p.94; en.tr. APS p. 138.

another original aspect highlighted by the genetic development of the phenomenological transcendental perspective. Indeed in this way the phenomenological transcendental perspective encompasses not only what is actually present and originally intuited, but also what has not reached yet the originally presentive consciousness (and it underlines again in this way the overt character of the experiential consciousness). Moreover, the definition of the empty presentation can help us to understand in what sense the field of the life of consciousness is, for Husserl, the ground not only of our own objective world, but of the entire universe of being. The field of the life of consciousness is fluent and ‘dense’, and it is not reducible to a full presence. Indeed, in opposition to the metaphysics of presence there is the phenomenological notion of *lebendige Gegenwart*, the living present of experience, which must have an identity that is distinct from any other constituted concrete living presence in the actual stream of consciousness. The living present comprises presence and absence, emptiness and fulfillment. Perhaps there is no better way to describe it than using Husserl’s words: at first glance it seems that in the living present a phenomenologist can find everything that phenomenology has to offer⁴².

3.4 Radical critique of transcendental phenomenology

The historical genetic dimension of consciousness, the concrete presence of the living body, the empty presentation and passive intentions – all of these topics represent interesting and original aspects of Husserl’s transcendental project highlighted by the genetic development. However, one could also wonder if there is another side of the coin – for instance, if the vital account of consciousness as a stratified life of consciousness and a living present could not come to jeopardize Husserl’s transcendental project by exposing the transitory nature of evidence. Indeed, by turning our attention to the immanent sphere of the life of consciousness, every self-giving phenomenon can always

⁴² Hua XXXIV p. 298.

be deemed not valid as a result of conflicts with other self-giving phenomena and so on, *ad infinitum*.

In the *Analyses Concerning Passive Synthesis* Husserl seemed to acknowledge this problem, but also noted that:

“To be sure, at first we see that immanently constituted being in its living present is not only self-giving as being, but that this being is essentially incapable of being crossed out. The moment we assert that it is not, like we can do any time, we see that apodictically this assertion is annulled with respect to what is given. Here the indubitable, the indefeasible validity is clear.”⁴³

In this way Husserl basically states that the validity of the immanently constituted being that we can find in the life of consciousness cannot be crossed out, even by the negation of what is given. Indeed, when this happens there is already another immanent self-giving being to consider. However, in this quote Husserl also hints at the idea of *apodictic consciousness*, which seems to annul the given *datum* while confirming at the same time the validity of the self-giveness. Indeed, the thematic notion of apodicticity plays a significant role for phenomenology, even if it is controversial, and can be considered to be the outcome of the process of critical *radicalization* of transcendental phenomenology undertaken by Husserl in regard to a theory of reason (or a first philosophy).

Husserl established a strong connection between the goal of first philosophy, which is another central theme of the later period of phenomenology, and apodictic evidence, which would be the ultimate evidence identified with the new radical beginning of a genuine science. However, the objective of my inquiry into the challenging topics of apodictic evidence and first philosophy is limited to the definition of some of the ideas hereby involved by the radical critique of transcendental phenomenology in order to

⁴³ Hua XI p.110; en.tr. APS p.155.

avoid at least some problems and ambiguities which can mislead us in our interpretation of Husserl's transcendental project. One problem in particular is closely related to the conception of apodictic evidence and could lead phenomenology to a remarkable setback: the issue concerning apodictic evidence as the evidence pertaining to an *absolute vision*, which would amount to a rejection of phenomenology as a philosophy of seeing all together.

Therefore, in order to address specifically this latter issue, I intend to deal with the meaning of the critical revision that aimed to radicalize the field of transcendental phenomenology and, in particular, the field of *transcendental experience*⁴⁴. In this regard, it is crucial to note that, if Husserl really pursued the goal of a phenomenological theory of reason (which relies on the possibility of clearly and distinctly grasping what essentially characterizes acts of knowledge in order to clarify it), such a goal will require aiming for the *ultimate evidence* and for a proper clarification of the structure of meaning and its legitimacy. The alternative would probably entail a form of relativization of evidence or a fall back to transcendental psychologism.

Therefore, considering that Husserl's phenomenology took the first path, I shall consider the apodictic evidence resulting from the radical critique of transcendental experience in order to understand the possibility of the *advancement* of transcendental phenomenology to a theory of reason or first philosophy.

In the following sections, first I shall begin by briefly recalling the way Husserl introduces the *apodictic necessary critique* of the transcendental experience (which finalizes the distinction between transcendental and apodictic reduction) in the 1923-24 lectures *First Philosophy*. Secondly, the notion of apodictic evidence will be discussed in relation to the distinction from *adequacy* introduced in the *Cartesian Meditations*.

⁴⁴ A more detailed account of this notion will be given in Chapter Four, §§4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2.

3.4.1 The apodictic critique of transcendental experience and the problem of absolute vision

In the second part of the 1923-24 lectures on *First philosophy*, dedicated to the theory of reduction, Husserl focuses on the theme of the *authentic* philosophical thought as the aim of transcendental phenomenology. Such an authentic philosophy for Husserl needs a presuppositionless beginning (*voraussetzungslosen Anfang*), and would entail a new radical epistemic life (*neuen, wirklich radikalen Erkenntnisleben*)⁴⁵. This means that, for whoever wanted to be an authentic philosopher, a crucial life-changing decision that will turn his/her life into a life characterized by and *absolute calling* (*Leben aus absoluter Berufung*) to the ultimate evidence awaited. If this were not the case, it would not be an authentic philosophical life at all, and there would be no difference between philosophy and objective science, or even psychology. It is precisely such a calling that intrinsically characterizes a first philosophy for Husserl.

The first thing that has been noted about this conception of first philosophy with respect of the traditional and classic account is that Husserl does not refer here to a metaphysical step leading philosophy to distinguish itself from knowledge concerning the material, contingent world of experience (Sokolowski, 2009). The interesting point, instead, is that the first philosophy represents a goal that will finally mark the distance between philosophy and psychology – a goal that relies entirely on the notion of ultimate evidence, whose definition, then, seems crucial.

However, in order to clarify the notion of ultimate evidence in these lectures the only reference given by Husserl is to the *adequate evidence*, namely, the evidence to which belongs the ideal perfection⁴⁶ that necessarily leads to an absolute justification (*letzte Rechtfertigungsquelle*)⁴⁷ – that is, an

⁴⁵ See Hua VIII p. 11.

⁴⁶ “Eine Evidenz, die die bezeichnete ideale Vollkommenheit hat, nennen wir auch adäquate Evidenz” Hua VIII p. 33.

⁴⁷ Hua VIII p. 36.

absolute clear and distinct grasp – of knowledge. However, such an ideal perfection is obtained by an infinite progression of relative evidences. In such a case, for Husserl we can speak of a particular character of adequate evidence, which is called apodicticity⁴⁸.

Thus, leaving aside for a moment the problem of the relation between adequate and apodictic evidence⁴⁹, this adequate evidence seems for Husserl the ultimate source of justification and the actual new radical beginning of an authentic philosophical science. However, in order to reach this evidence, the field of transcendental experience – which is the field defined by the transcendental phenomenological reduction – must become the theme for an *apodictic transcendental critique*. In Husserl's own words, to this critique the authentic philosopher should attend in order to value the principle of a radical beginning and to aim to the ultimate evidence.

What about the transcendental reduction, then? Here, the transcendental reduction does not seem to be enough in order to reach the apodictic truth or the radical new beginning. However, from another angle, the reduction is also freed from the claim of apodicticity of the transcendental self-knowledge. In particular, according to Husserl, the task of an apodictic critique of the transcendental experience (“*die Aufgabe der apodiktischen Kritik der transzendentale Erfahrung*”⁵⁰) has to be undertaken *after* the transcendental reduction in order to exclude *all kind of naivety* – that is to say, not only naïve knowledge entailed by the natural attitude, but also *transcendental naivety*, which pertains to those cognitions not guided by the idea of absolute justification according to the ultimate evidence.

Thus, Husserl distinguishes here two meanings of the word naivety: the first stems from the opposition between natural and transcendental attitude.

⁴⁸ “Wir können diese Eigenheit adäquater Evidenz auch als ihre Apodiktizität bezeichnen” Hua VIII p. 35.

⁴⁹ In these lectures on *First Philosophy* in fact Husserl claims that every apodictic evidence must be in turn adequate, while in the *Cartesian Meditations* such claim will be overturned when Husserl state that apodicticity and adequacy do not go hand in hand.

⁵⁰ Hua VIII p. 169.

Every kind of experience that is not transcendental is naïve in this sense. The second meaning of naivety refers instead to every kind of knowledge that is not driven by the ideal of an absolute justified knowledge⁵¹. In relation to this distinction, however, one could still wonder what the point of the transcendental reduction is considering that the second meaning of naivety seems more comprehensive than the first. A possible answer to this question can come from the fact that the apodictic critique can only be applied to the transcendental experience. This means that there is such a thing as an apodictic critique only with respect to the transcendental field of subjectivity reached by means of the transcendental reduction. The transcendental reduction, then, is still a necessary step both in order to set aside the natural attitude and to dedicate oneself to the task of the transcendental clarification of knowledge carried on by acts of pure seeing.

However, the problematic definition of the ultimate apodictic evidence as adequate evidence raises other problems. Above all it is difficult to understand how the field of transcendental experience, where a form of naivety seems bound to remain, could *not* be entirely invalidated by the apodictic critique. It is true that, if there is the risk of transcendental naivety in regard to the phenomenological experience of the field of transcendental subjectivity, a radical, transcendental critique is required. In particular, if the goal is first philosophy, then the phenomenological analysis has to accept and embrace the idea of pursuing the ultimate evidence in order to lay the groundwork for an new absolute, rigorous science. Nonetheless, the problem is to understand to what extent this pursuing of the ultimate evidence coincides with a further possibility of seeing without taking the characteristics of an *absolute vision*. Indeed the association between apodictic evidence and adequate givenness (*Gegebenheit in absoluter Evidenz*)⁵² seems to indicate the *absolute donation* of the thing itself. What does it mean, then, to reach the absolute donation of the

⁵¹ See Hua VIII pp. 170-171.

⁵² See Hua VIII p. 68.

thing? Does this mean that it is necessary to overcome the perspectival givenness of the thing as it is originally presented before consciousness?

The problem of an absolute vision is that, as many have noted (starting, for instance, from Derrida), it actually jeopardizes the entire phenomenological reflection by exposing a blatant contradiction at its very core. Indeed, the idea of an absolute vision represents the refutation of all the imperfections of vision in order to gain the perfect adequacy – and this would stand for the rejection of the nature of vision itself (Rawlinson, 1997). I believe that while this argument against the idea of absolute vision is sound, there is something else to consider before applying it to the phenomenological apodictic evidence. As a matter of fact, the argument relies on the assumption that, at the basis of the phenomenological seeing, there is a sort of *borrowing* relation from the qualities of vision (credibility, immediacy, directionality, horizontality etc.), and that this borrowing ensures the apprehension of essences (as well as the self apprehension of the transcendental Ego) the necessary credibility and certainty resulting from a sensible vision. Nonetheless, does the sensible vision really possess such qualities? And why would we need the apodictic critique if that was the case?

While it is easy to show that the perceptual seeing can be immediate and direct, but it is not certain (even though there are some other aspects to be acknowledged, such as, for instance, when I am walking in a crowded street and someone I know is standing right in front of me, his/her face is surely within my field of vision, but I am not really *seeing* it, and it can take more than a few seconds for me to recognize their face and say hi), it is more difficult to show the difference between this sense of seeing and the phenomenological seeing. In the phenomenological context, seeing (direct seeing or *noein*) is the originally presentive consciousness. This seeing already entails the evident and clear grasp of something and in such a primitive awareness I can discover the logic and the structures of the experience, not only its contents. However, before making these discoveries, I need to

acknowledge from a first person standpoint the realm of the subject experience, namely the pure realm of experience as it is lived by the subject. Only in this way what we called evidence in the ordinary experience can be actually recognized and tied to an originally presentive consciousness – a consciousness that actually shows us something without implying neither an imperfect sensible vision nor the omniscient God’s eye vision freed from the imperfection of the perceptual vision⁵³.

Therefore, it seems clear that the idea of a borrowing relationship between the phenomenological and perceptual seeing is not enough to account for the universal sense of seeing Husserl addressed in his philosophical project.

Moreover, Husserl claims in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* that the usual, fundamentally wrong interpretation of evidence (due to the lack of a serious phenomenological analysis) is that of an “absolute apodicticity, an absolute security against deceptions – an apodicticity quite incomprehensibly ascribed to a single mental process torn from the concrete, essentially unitary context of subjective mental living”⁵⁴. From this quote it is possible to add another important aspect to the explanation of the apodictic evidence: the phenomenological apodictic critique does not tear form the life of consciousness a single mental process, but it aims at providing an evidence of a higher level, through which it will be possible to fully explicate every kind of experience and knowledge. Moreover, since seeing can be tested only by further seeing, it seems that the apodictic critique of transcendental experience, far from leading to another kind of vision such as an absolute vision, can actually lead us to rely more on the originally seeing consciousness – on the primordial awareness of lived experiences – in order to reach a further explication and clarification of knowledge.

What is especially noteworthy, then, is that the apodictic evidence is not

⁵³ In this regard, it is interesting the connection with William James critical stand against a too sharp distinction between blindness of sense and light of concept, (which is responsible for the intellectualization of philosophy) taken in *Some problems of philosophy* (1911).

⁵⁴ Hua XVII p.165; en.tr. FTL p. 157.

something to be presupposed about a single mental process as an absolute criterion of truth, but it goes hand in hand with the possibility of further clarifying experience and knowledge. However, in this regard, the 1923-24 lectures on *First Philosophy* lack a specific account of the distinction between adequacy and apodicticity that can be found instead in the *Cartesian Meditations*.

3.4.2 The difference between adequacy and apodicticity in the *Cartesian Meditations*

The *Cartesian Meditations* is one of the four main introductions to phenomenology⁵⁵ and it is considered a masterly synthesis of the completely formulated Husserlian philosophy (Lavigne, 2008). In relation to the issues previously highlighted regarding the character of apodicticity, it is particularly important to consider how Husserl returns to the issue of the ultimate apodictic evidence in this work, and especially how the distinction between adequate and apodictic evidence is established. Therefore, I shall address the way in which Husserl comes to this distinction in the *Cartesian Meditations* in order to address its purpose within the phenomenological analysis.

First of all, Husserl in the first meditation tries to restate the Cartesian idea of a ‘radically genuine’ science grounded on an absolute foundation by means of a phenomenological clarification of this very idea. This clarification occurs when we “immerse ourselves in the scientific striving” so that “the constituent parts of the general final idea, genuine science, become explicated for us”⁵⁶. In this way, the final aim of the scientific effort is uncovered to coincide with *evidence*, which is the source of complete justification and foundation, and the ideal goal of every science. This evidence, according to the phenomenological standpoint, is defined as “an ‘*experiencing*’ of something that is, and is thus; it

⁵⁵ Alongside with *Ideas I, Formal and Transcendental Logic* and *The Crisis of European Sciences*.

⁵⁶ Hua I p.50; en.tr. CM p.9.

is precisely a mental seeing of something itself”⁵⁷.

On the other hand, only perfect evidence can legitimize the scientific effort towards truth and, in particular, the objectivity of science. Therefore, once the *first methodological principle* is established (“I, as someone beginning philosophically must not accept as scientific any judgment not derived from evidence”⁵⁸) there is the problem of defining such perfect evidence (which will be the absolute beginning of rigorous, genuine science). In particular, for Husserl, it is necessary to investigate those cognitions which are *first* in themselves and which lay the groundwork for a universal knowledge. These cognitions indeed show a peculiar kind of evidence, which has to be distinguished from an ideal goal of adequateness. Thus, on the one side, there is the perfecting process of the unfulfilled, incomplete and imperfect pre-scientific experience, resulting into *adequate evidence*. This adequate evidence is nothing else than the *idea* continuously guiding scientists’ intent. On the other side, instead, for Husserl there is a different perfection, one of a higher dignity:

“This perfection is ‘apodicticity’, and it can occur even in evidences that are inadequate. It is absolute indubitability in a quite definite and peculiar sense, the absolute indubitability that the scientist demands of all ‘principles’, and its superior value is evinced in his endeavor, where groundings already evident in and by themselves are concerned, to ground them further and at a higher level by going back to principles, and thereby to obtain for them the highest dignity, that of apodicticity.”⁵⁹

In this quote we find stated the difference between adequacy and apodicticity. About this distinction, the first thing that seems noteworthy is that it is not

⁵⁷ “Evidenz ist in einem allerweitesten Sinne eine Erfahrung von Seiendem und So-Seiendem, eben ein Es-selbst-geistig-zu-Gesicht-bekommen.”Hua I p.52; en.tr. CM p. 12.

⁵⁸ See Hua I p.54; en.tr. CM p. 13.

⁵⁹ Hua I p.56; en.tr. CM p. 15.

quantitative but qualitative, namely, it concerns the way in which the perfect evidence is, and not ‘how much’ there is. Indeed, the originally presentive consciousness and its full certainty do not exclude the possibility that what is evident may become doubtful. However, there is still absolute certainty in mental life. On one hand there is the ideal perfection of adequate evidence, which can be considered the ideal *telos* of science and knowledge. On the other hand, there are evidences that are *accessible* and that “bear the stamp of fitness” for the function of preceding every imaginable evidences⁶⁰. This kind of evidence, however, seems essentially connected to a critical reflection that shows that everything can become doubtful *in spite of* its evidence. Indeed, it is exactly in this critical reflection that the nature of apodicticity becomes apparent not as a mere certainty of state of affairs, but as an absolute inconceivability of the *non-being* of something as it is⁶¹.

Therefore, the situation illustrated by Husserl in the *Cartesian Meditations* seems to be this: there is a kind of evidence that *appears* as first evidence (such as the idea of the existence of the world), but that can be doubted (as it happens when the existence of the world is doubted and it is possible to conceive its opposite, namely, the non-existence of the world). This is a temporary kind of evidence, which can always be perfected. The perfect evidence instead is subdivided into two kinds: *adequate evidence*, which stands for the ideal *telos* of adequateness, and accessible, *apodictic evidence*, which corresponds to the absolute inconceivability of the *non-being* of something as it is. As Husserl wrote, “adequacy and apodicticity of evidence need not go hand in hand”⁶².

The latter kind, according to Husserl, can only pertain to the Ego Cogito and to the life of consciousness. The Ego Cogito is the “ultimate and apodictically certain basis for judgments, the basis on which radical-philosophy must be grounded”⁶³. In this sense, the apodictic consciousness – indubitable,

⁶⁰ Hua I p.55; en.tr. CM p. 14.

⁶¹ See Hua I p.56; en.tr. CM p. 16.

⁶² Hua I p. 62; en tr. CM p.22.

⁶³ Hua I. p. 68; en.tr. CM p.18.

though not adequate in every aspect – coincides with the indubitable being of the *Cogito* as a *whole*, which goes beyond the actuality of a stream of consciousness and comprises indeterminate horizons, empty presentations, and everything else regarding the object of experience that, even if not directly experienced, is always *meant*.

Therefore, it seems that the purpose of this distinction between adequacy and apodicticity is mainly that of offering a further definition of what is apodictic: it is not a single mental state torn from the whole field of life of consciousness, and it is not necessarily a fully adequate experience. Still, one could wonder in what sense the indubitable being of the Ego Cogito is the legitimizing source of cognitions and rational assertions. In particular, it seems that, it the Ego Cogito provides the foundational ground of knowledge, the indubitability of the Ego Cogito has to be the *first* thing to be discovered rather than the final result of a process of radical critique of the transcendental experience. And if that was the case, it would not be easy to see the difference between the apodictic evidence and a mere pretext to justify an ‘absolute knowledge’ which would strengthen the claim of phenomenology to become a first philosophy. Moreover, it is not clear how the absolute knowledge of the indubitable being of the *Cogito* could *not* lead to a metaphysical first philosophy instead of a phenomenological theory of reason.

For these reasons, the notion of apodictic evidence seems to be quite problematic. However, I do not believe that it should be entirely dismissed; on the contrary, if it is connected to a radical critique that affects the transcendental realm of intelligibility – and, in particular, the phenomenological transcendental experience – it can provide interesting and important clues about a possible sense of the phenomenological theory of reason. Indeed, the difference between adequacy and apodicticity frees the phenomenological method or perspective from the unreachable ideality of complete adequateness⁶⁴. At the same time, the apodictic evidence – which

⁶⁴ In this regard, J.N. Mohanty underlined that Husserl himself pointed out that the idea of

according to the definition that we find in the *Cartesian Meditations* represents a higher kind of evidence pertaining to the stream of consciousness and not to a single mental state – further validates the phenomenological seeing (i.e. the originally presentive consciousness) as the legitimizing source of our cognitions. In this regard, however, it should not be overlooked that the possibility of relying on this seeing and considering it as the legitimizing source of rational assertions and cognitions is basically connected to the possibility of *testing* this seeing. As I previously mentioned, seeing is tested only by further seeing. Therefore, what seems truly problematic about Husserl's conception of evidence in the *Cartesian Meditation* is not the difference between adequacy and apodicticity, or the idea of apodictic evidence, but rather the association of the latter to a first cognition of the indubitable being of the Ego Cogito. Indeed, in this way, what essentially characterizes and distinguishes the phenomenological seeing as a *process* of looking and looking again, comparing, focusing etc. would be irremediably lost to the metaphysical idea of an absolute first cognition.

3.5 Transcendental phenomenology as a philosophy of seeing

My aim in this chapter was to show that the genetic analysis and the apodictic transcendental critique, which I took into account as the two main poles of the deepening and radicalizing process of phenomenology, contribute to the development of the phenomenological transcendental perspective in new directions, and highlight its most interesting aspects. On the one hand, the genetic method provides the explicative horizon to clarify knowledge and experience by showing the layers of the subject experience. On the other hand, the apodictic critique highlights the sense of ultimate evidence which does not

adequate evidence needs to be given up. “Neither outer, physical things (as Husserl saw early enough) nor inner states and essences (as he realized later on) are capable of adequate givenness.” (Mohanty, 1985: 94-95). Consequently, for Mohanty, we can distinguish three kinds of inadequacy: perspectival, conceptual and temporal inadequacy.

coincide with a complete adequateness and, above all, seems compatible with the process that characterizes the seeing consciousness (which entails looking and looking again, comparing, focusing etc.).

Again, seeing seems to have a central role and a peculiar meaning in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. Let me recall again what Husserl claims in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*: “Only in seeing can I bring out what is truly present in a seeing; I must make a seeing explication of the proper essence of seeing”⁶⁵. In other words, while pure phenomenology as a method brings to the fore the evident givenness of consciousness by means of pure acts of seeing (the trick is to ‘let the seeing eye have its say’, Husserl had claimed in 1907), it also shows the essence of this evident consciousness as a peculiar seeing through which we can grasp the necessary structures as well as contingent contents of the experience.

In ordinary experience and everyday life there are many examples that show a peculiar sense of seeing. For instance, when someone makes the exclamation «Now I see it!», such an exclamation does not simply come out of the blue. It implies a certain pattern of experience. It indicates that a certain experience, no matter how inadequate or primitive, is already meaningful, and has its own logic and inner necessity. However, all these aspects can be revealed only by acquiring a new perspective and attitude of thought, one that is different from the natural attitude in which we just take for granted the objects of experience and focus on factual judgments and evaluations: a perspective that brings to the fore the experience *as it is lived by the subject*.

Now, in light of what has been discovered regarding the phenomenological seeing and evidence, it seems possible to go back and try to clarify one of the most important claim made by Husserl in 1907:

“Intuitive knowledge [*Schauende Erkenntnis*] is that form of reason that sets itself the task of bringing the discursive understanding to reason. The

⁶⁵ Hua XVII p.167: en.tr. FTL p.159.

understanding must not be allowed to interrupt and smuggle its unredeemed banknotes among those that have already been cashed [...] Hence: as little understanding as possible, as much pure intuition as possible (*intuitio sine comprehensione*).”⁶⁶

In this quote Husserl defines intuitive knowledge as a *form of reason* which seems opposed to the understanding, or intellect. This form of reason gives itself the task of intuitively clarifying the opacity of discursive thinking. Therefore, what this consideration seems to imply is that there is a danger in thinking too much, namely, the danger to overlook the originarily presentive consciousness at the very basis of every possible experience. And when this happens, for Husserl, it is easy to take mere assumptions or presuppositions for truthful knowledge. The only way to avoid this danger is to take the path of the phenomenological critical reflection which is, in fact, the path of a phenomenological theory of reason.

However, if this is the task of a phenomenology of reason, it seems that such a task is even amplified by the genetic development and the transcendental critique. Indeed, the reflective subject has to master the depths and breadths of the noetic-noematic layered structure, and to explicate the total meaning in its infinite totality in order to deal with the problem of universal reason⁶⁷. This means also that we have to deal with passivity, corporeality, consciousness of absence and empty presentations in the experiential process. The task of a phenomenological theory of reason, then, appears to be infinite. Surely it implies a relentless effort and a challenging work. Yet, the transcendental life of consciousness remains the *concrete thematic field* where presence and absence, emptiness and fullness, actual and virtual aspects intertwine. There we find both the *origin* in which every sense is rooted and the end *ortelos*, namely, the ultimate evidence to which the discursive

⁶⁶ Hua II p. 62; en.tr. IP p. 46.

⁶⁷ See § 3.2.

understanding has to be brought⁶⁸. The span of a phenomenology of reason, even considering how much complex and challenging it can be, extends between these two poles.

Before drawing some conclusions regarding the phenomenological transcendental project based on evidence, I shall discuss in the next final chapter the fragmented image of transcendental phenomenology which still influences contemporary philosophical debates.

⁶⁸ In this regard, M. Brainard (2002) claimed that the span of the phenomenological striving extends from the origin up to the *logos*, which for Husserl is absolute reason. However, I believe Brainard overlooked the connection between these two poles – Origin and Logos. For Brainard the sense of Husserl's thought is the sense of this striving, which is captured in the system of transcendental phenomenology. Nonetheless, one could wonder what really makes transcendental phenomenology a system, and what is its core theme and basic insight. If transcendental phenomenology is nothing but a striving towards reason, how could we claim that it actually fulfilled its goal?

CHAPTER FOUR

Transcendental phenomenology in a contemporary context

The problem of understanding the novelty of Husserl's transcendental philosophy motivated this investigation of the phenomenological transcendental perspective based on evidence. In the previous chapters, I have tried to show how the phenomenological transcendental perspective not only revolves around the possibility of *seeing* and clearly grasping what is originally intuited and presented by the evident givenness of consciousness. It also develops and specifies itself in relation to this seeing, through which the structure and genesis of meaning can be described and explicated. The way we experience something, the modes of intentionality involved in the experiential process and the *a priori* pure forms of consciousness according to which the experienced is for us what is: all these elements contribute to the phenomenological transcendental insights into acts of knowledge and experience – this is to say, they are all the results of the way phenomenology brings acts of knowledge and experience to *evidence*.

Such a study highlighted also an insuperable distance between transcendental phenomenology and the fragmented image that the Husserlian and post-Husserlian scholarship gave of it. Indeed, the inquiry into the *evidenz-theoretisch* transcendental philosophy was undertaken precisely after reckoning that the core theme of phenomenology could not be discovered by referring only to a particular stage of Husserl's thought, or by merely bringing it to

different philosophical traditions. However, now that this claim seems to have been confirmed by looking at the overall Husserlian philosophical project and focusing on the central role and peculiar meaning of evidence, it is time to ask how the fragmented image of transcendental phenomenology can be really put aside and what is the actual contribution and relevance of the transcendental perspective in contemporary philosophical debates. Indeed, whoever settles for the fragmented image of phenomenology, then, also accepts the idea that Husserl's phenomenological project contributes more to a certain *side* of the philosophical debate – and, in particular, to a realist or idealist side – than to the philosophical problems underlying different traditions of thought. However, while philosophical labels can become outdated, the actual problems of philosophy can, at most, find new expressions. Thus, the relevance and significance of phenomenology, and of every other philosophical reflection, should depend on the answers it gives to philosophical issues, and not on the labels that can be attached to these same issues.

Furthermore, if evidence is taken as the core theme of transcendental phenomenology, not only such a core theme cannot be brought back or reduced to other traditions of thought, like realism or idealism, but from the phenomenological transcendental standpoint, the limits of both idealist and realist positions is readily apparent. The phenomenological sense of evidence does not account for factual reality and is not merely a feeling, nor does it lead us to evaluate just an ideal or mentally defined character of reality. On the contrary, the field of transcendental being, which is investigated by transcendental phenomenology, is the field of the constitution of meaning that necessarily *precedes* any constituted objective reality such as the external, factually given world or the internal, psychical space of the mind.

Therefore, if it is possible to question and put aside the fragmented image of Husserl's phenomenology in light of the phenomenological sense of evidence, it is also possible to start reevaluating the phenomenological contribution to the philosophical problems underlying contemporary debates,

such as the internalism/externalism debate, instead of merely assessing which side phenomenology takes.

However, this does not amount to saying that every interpretation of phenomenology in regard to any certain tradition of thought is mistaken – and I will not go as far as claiming that every reference that inclines phenomenology towards any given direction is necessarily mistaken. Rather, the fact remains that Husserl’s phenomenology, and in particular the promising leads it opens, cannot really be accounted for by these interpretations. In this regard, I will take into account in particular the notion of *transcendental experience* as an interesting and challenging notion also for assessing the philosophical contribution of transcendental phenomenology to the actual problems underlying the long-standing tradition that focuses on the opposition between the ‘real world’ and the ‘Ego or the mind’.

In the following sections, I will take the internalist/externalist debate as an example of a contemporary debate in which the Husserlian phenomenology has been called to support both sides (§4.1). I will not reject the content or the motives for such arguments, but I will argue that transcendental phenomenology actually shows their narrow limits, thanks in particular to the notion of transcendental experience (§4.2), which I will take as the subject of a detailed examination (§§4.2.1, 4.2.2). Moreover, I will argue that, through the development of the sense of such a crucial notion, it is possible to account for the phenomenological contribution to some of the problems underlying the epistemological debate (§4.3) such as the mind-world relation (§4.3.1) and the problem of the apprehension of truth (§4.3.2).

4.1 Phenomenology and the Internalist/Externalist debate

The internalist/externalist debate moves from two main positions, which can be described schematically as:

a) The mind-world relation is chiefly determined *within* the mind: that is, nothing from the outside can really affect the subject beliefs or experiences.

b) The mind-world relation is chiefly determined *outside* (and independently of) the mind: that is, the mind, and, in particular, its mental process and contents are not independent from what is external to consciousness.

Even if it is true that these two positions do not account for the entire debate (as many specifications and internal articulations of those bullet points have been established during the years) surely a reference to the main aspects that determine the difference between internalist or externalist points of view cannot be skipped – considering further that a more detailed description of the internalist or externalist position should not result in changing the subject, but should aim at extending their scope and consequences. Therefore, in the present discussion I will leave aside both the specification of externalism (such as for instance the account of radical and reactionary externalism) and the specification of internalism (possession-claim and location-claim¹), and I will focus on the reference to Husserlian phenomenology in the general context of the internalism/externalism debate.

First of all, during the last twenty years phenomenology has been quite frequently associated with externalism, while, by contrast, in the past it had been considered almost unanimously to be closer to internalism. Indeed, the affinity between phenomenology and the general externalist position previously described cannot be easily eluded: the Husserlian reflection does not negate the existence of the world; moreover, the phenomenological analysis distinguishes the immanent content of consciousness from the intentional object – the latter being the external object as meant or intended.

However, retrieving externalist themes at the core of phenomenological

¹ For a detailed account of such distinctive positions see *Internalism, externalism and transcendental idealism* (Zahavi, 2008:356,356) that also refers to Rowlands account of the two main components of classical Cartesian internalism (Rowlands, 2003:13).

analysis leads us to raise some questions, especially about the nature of phenomenology itself. Dan Zahavi, in his article *Internalism, Externalism and Transcendental Idealism* asks for instance if phenomenology is a more heterogeneous reflection than has been previously acknowledged, and if it harbors a secret aspiration to reconcile internal and external points of view (Zahavi, 2008). Otherwise, it should be concluded that neither internalism nor externalism are applicable to phenomenology and that any further reference to such debates about Husserl's phenomenology has to be rejected. Before accepting such a drastic solution, the connection between the phenomenological *transcendental idealism* and externalism seems to be particularly interesting to understand according to Zahavi. Are these two terms compatible in any way? In this regard, Zahavi's claim is to interpret the commitment to transcendental idealism precisely as what prevents phenomenology to be an internalist theory of consciousness. In particular, according to Zahavi, the phenomenological transcendental idealism is nothing other than an 'anti-representationalist criticism of metaphysical realism' (Zahavi, 2008:364). Such a definition, for Zahavi, has the virtue of presenting transcendental idealism no more as an obsolete or marginal doctrine, but instead as a theory which acts as the ground for a great part of the twentieth century philosophical thought. Moreover, in this way, the phenomenological transcendental idealism could be taken as a special contribution to the outline of a phenomenological externalism.

However, if it is undeniably true that both the anti-representationalist phenomenological claim (expressed by the conception of intentionality itself, and by the critique of the image theory²) and the critique of an absolute, dogmatic sense of reality³ are crucial aspects that shape Husserlian thought, it

² The chief points of the Husserlian critique of the image-theory can be found in the Appendix to §11 and §20 of the fifth of the *Logical Investigations*. Here Husserl criticizes in particular the idea that while outside we find the thing itself, in consciousness there is an image that substitutes it. The refutation of such conception can be considered a cornerstone of the Husserlian thought, and it is resumed also in *Ideas I* §52.

³ See *Ideas I* §55.

seems that these points are not enough to describe the phenomenological transcendental project. Moreover, it is not clear in which sense the phenomenological critique of the idea of an absolute reality (based on the fact that there is no reality in itself contained or ‘bagged’ in our consciousness) could actually be favorable to a phenomenological externalist perspective. Therefore, it appears that it is not enough to define the phenomenological transcendental idealism as an anti-representationalist criticism of metaphysical realism like Dan Zahavi does – or at least it is not enough to prove that there is, in fact, a connection between transcendental phenomenology and externalism. Even if we can consider the elements that compose this definition to be correct under some circumstances, the actual problem regarding the phenomenological transcendental idealism is how to understand its meaning rather than provide for it a less obsolete definition. In particular, only after we have agreed on what the phenomenological transcendental field of consciousness is, as well as on the sense of the phenomenological transcendental perspective and its development, can we reflect upon the relation of mind and world from a phenomenological standpoint. It is in this way that the actual phenomenological contribution to the debate can truly be evaluated. Indeed, the issue of the relation between phenomenology and externalism or internalism should not have any concern whatsoever with which side phenomenology may or may not take. Rather, the debate should pertain to the way transcendental phenomenology could advance the internalism/externalism debate, so that promising results can be delineated.

Therefore, the alternative established at the beginning between finding the point of connection between internalism and externalism in transcendental phenomenology, or rejecting every kind of reference to transcendental phenomenology in the context of the internalism/externalism debate, does not seem so sharp and exclusive now. There are other options to take into account. Zahavi possibly realizes this when he claims, at the end of his article, that the phenomenological transcendental idealism can allow for a significant new

discussion of intentionality in the contemporary debates, and by consequence, that it can lead us to recognize the possibility to *go beyond* the internalism/externalism alternative. Unfortunately in the article such a conclusion is only hinted at and basically left open to interpretation (as the author seems quite undecided about which way to pursue: the phenomenological externalism or the overcoming of the internalist/externalism debate). Nonetheless, such a hint could be followed by taking into account the realm of transcendental phenomenology, namely, what Husserl calls ‘the ground of transcendental being’ which is the field of transcendental subjectivity made accessible by the transcendental reduction. This transcendental field of consciousness, upon which the phenomenological analysis is focused, does not entail the idea of an external absolute reality, or of an internal space of the mind, and actually its investigation can show the narrowness of both the internalist and externalist core themes. Indeed, it seems that both these positions stem from a limited account of the mind and the real world, respectively. On the contrary, in light of what has previously been discussed about the phenomenological transcendental perspective, it seems possible to restore to the subjective epistemic functions, as well as to the given world, the sheer complexity that belongs to them. The following sections will focus precisely on this possibility and especially on the notion of transcendental experience through which I believe phenomenology accounts for, and even embraces, the full breadth of experience.

4.2 The notion of transcendental experience

The previous section introduced the problem, left open by Dan Zahavi, regarding the limits of the debate between internalism and externalism, and, in particular, the narrowness of such positions which can be exposed by transcendental phenomenology. I shall now stress the role that the notion of transcendental experience plays in this regard, since it represents the very

possibility of examining and investigating the field of transcendental being that actually *precedes* all objective realities, including the psychical internal space of the mind and the external real world. This, according to Husserl, is the field of transcendental subjectivity⁴.

First of all, the notion of transcendental experience seems quite peculiar inasmuch it paradoxically expresses an ‘impossible’ point of convergence between Humean empiricism and Kantian transcendental philosophy. For Kant, the transcendental realm of the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge is an *a priori* realm of rules and principles – a realm that cannot be *empiric*. On the other hand, how could experience lead to a transcendental realm? From the empiricist’s point of view, experience is about individuals, and the empiricists do without ideal or universal objects. However, despite these apparently insuperable difficulties, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology grants the idea of *pure reflective experience* the groundbreaking possibility of making everything we know, and everything that is considered to be a fact, *intelligible* with regard to the modes of intentionality through which this fact has been acquired, and with regard to the eidetic field of the *a priori* regions of consciousness which predelineate the constitution of sense. In particular, from a pure reflective stance, what appears to me is not only an individual object or a single content, but a complex, layered ground of lived experiences in which I can learn to *see* and discern what lies within view. The more I focus on this ground, the more I can discover the *essential* fabric itself of the experience as it is lived by me, the subject. The evident givenness of consciousness appears to me as a mainland of givenness to be explored. And this leads me to assume a pure transcendental standpoint. From this standpoint, I can question the experience and knowledge acquired in the natural attitude and make visible that which underlies this natural experience and knowledge in order to further understand what I naturally take for granted, namely, the real world that I share with other subjects in everyday life experience, as well as my own *self*, and the

⁴ See Hua XVII p. 151; en.tr. FTL p. 169.

self of Others.

Nonetheless, the notion of transcendental experience entails certain ambiguities that need to be addressed and discussed. For instance, in what sense is it really a form of experience? What is really experienced in this way? Experiencing the transcendental ground of consciousness is not like experiencing a material thing. Moreover, there is also the problem of understanding the relationship between ordinary experience (in the natural attitude) and transcendental experience. Should the latter supersede the former? These questions shall provide the guidelines to address the idea of transcendental experience in the next two sections.

4.2.1 Transcendental experience as self-experience

As the previous chapters displayed, according to Husserl, the phenomenological field of pure consciousness is discovered once one focuses on the evident givenness of consciousness that originally presents the world to us in pure reflection, regardless of any preceding internal/external distinctions concerning both objects and mental acts. This field of consciousness, however, is not just the subject matter of a new theory of consciousness. On the contrary, the discovery of the evident givenness of consciousness stands for the possibility of thematizing and exploring what is *meant* by the pure consciousness or the pure mental process, so that the essence, constitution and immanent character of acts of knowledge and lived experiences are made *visible*. In this way, for Husserl, we acquire a new attitude of thought through which it is possible to gain access to the field of transcendental subjectivity, more specifically, to the transcendental meaning-giving functions of consciousness as well as to the noetic-noematic correlation. As Husserl states in the *Britannica* article, from the phenomenological standpoint we have a *transcendental experience* of this limitless transcendental field of being that provides the access to transcendental subjectivity.

Now, the fact that this ground of transcendental being essentially refers to the transcendental constitutive functions pertaining to subjectivity leads to the Husserlian claim in the *Cartesian Meditations* that defines the realm of transcendental phenomenology as the realm of *transcendental self-experience*.

“By phenomenological epoché I reduce my natural human Ego and my psychic life – the realm of my *psychological self-experience* – to my transcendental-phenomenological Ego, the realm of *transcendental-phenomenological self-experience*.”⁵

Transcendental experience for Husserl makes the Ego accessible “*originaliter* to himself”⁶. In other words, after having discovered the Ego Cogito and its apodictic evidence through the reduction, instead of making it the premise for arguments which supposedly imply transcendental subjectivity “we shall direct our attention to the fact that the phenomenological *epoché* lays open (to me the meditating philosopher) an *infinite realm of being of a new kind*, as the sphere of a new kind of experience: transcendental experience.”⁷

Therefore, since the transcendental experience brings the Ego to discover itself as a transcendental, apodictic Ego, we can speak for Husserl of a transcendental *self-experience*. However, in the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl is also quite careful regarding the difference between the phenomenological Ego and the Cartesian substantial Ego. In particular, even if by following the Cartesian inquiry and radical doubt it is possible to get a hold to the pure Ego and its pure *Cogitationes* (which is assumed to be the same as the phenomenological Ego), according to Husserl Descartes could not grasp the genuine sense of this discovery and he misrepresented the Ego Cogito considering it as a *substantia cogitans*, instead of passing “through the gateway

⁵ Hua I p.65; en.tr. CM p. 26.

⁶ Hua I p.62, en.tr. CM p.22.

⁷ Hua I p. 66: en.tr. CM p.27..

that leads into genuine transcendental philosophy”⁸.

The crucial importance of this difference is strengthened by Husserl's claim that this is ‘a matter of philosophical life and death’⁹. On the one hand, there is the limitless possibility of transcendental phenomenology and a science of a new kind; on the other hand, there is the hypostatization of the Ego Cogito and the absurdity of a transcendental realism. Nonetheless, one could wonder what really determines the distinction between transcendental phenomenology and Cartesian philosophy. Is this just a problem of misinterpretation? In order to answer this question it seems necessary to clarify what is concretely entailed by the transcendental realm of the Ego Cogito, and also what kind of self-experience can be considered transcendental.

In this regard, the first thing to note is that thematizing the transcendental constitutive functions of subjectivity from the phenomenological pure standpoint is one thing, and finding the apodictic transcendental Ego is another. Husserl in the *Cartesian Meditations* tries to explain and detail the discovery of the apodictic Ego by underlining that, from it, the absolute evidence of the “manifolds of self-experience in which the ego’s *transcendental life* and *habitual properties* are given”¹⁰ derives. Thus, the transcendental self-experience is not limited to the bare identity of the ‘I am’, but rather extends to all the data of actual and possible self-experience (even if there is no actual explanation regarding the reason why from the indubitable Ego Cogito should derive the indubitability of the *Cogitationes*).

Moreover, at the end of the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* Husserl claims that the Delfic motto γνῶθι σεαυτόν ‘know thyself’ must acquire a new significance and a new meaning within transcendental phenomenology: that of a ‘self-examination’ through which the subject of reflection actually *regains* the world

⁸ Hua I p.64; en.tr. CM p.25.

⁹ “It is as though we were on the brink of a precipice, where advancing calmly and surely is a matter of philosophical life and death” Hua I p.63; en. tr. CM p.23.

¹⁰ Hua I p. 67; en.tr. CM p. 28.

that was lost by means of the reduction¹¹. Therefore, if it is true that in the first stage of the transcendental self-experience the attention is fixed exclusively upon the Ego, this self-experience aims in fact at regaining the world through a more genuine and fundamental knowledge. The fundamental sense of the phenomenological access to the realm of transcendental subjectivity cannot be overlooked here. Indeed, the phenomenological perspective highlights first the experience as *lived* by the subject, namely, it highlights what is originally given and intuited in a primordial awareness. It is in this way that the subjective side of the experiential processes is recognized properly in regard to the account of the constitutive problems and the transcendental *meaning-giving* functions (and, as a side note, these meaning-giving functions should not be confused with *form-giving functions*). The phenomenological thematization of the noetic-noematic correlation (and also the *morphology* of *noesis* and of *noemas*) corresponds to a pure, transcendental analysis carried out from the transcendental standpoint, that describes and explains the way something is known and experienced as it is, and its *sense*. In this way, the *naivety* that characterizes the natural attitude, and that can never be fully suppressed, can nonetheless be effectively combated. The obvious and the naïve are the enemies of the intelligible for Husserl. However, in this fight against naivety, the world is never truly lost (nor is lost the natural sense of self of the human being). It is only suspended in the form that it takes for us in the natural attitude of thought in order to be regained in a more intelligible and meaningful form.

Therefore, the realm of transcendental subjectivity should not be taken as an alternative to the real world. In the phenomenological transcendental context the possibility of ‘making the Ego discover itself *originaliter*’ – namely, the possibility of a transcendental self-experience – represents the possibility of taking the subjectivity as the transcendental source of clarification of knowledge and experience. Furthermore, such a possibility has

¹¹ See Hua I p.183; en.tr. CM p.157.

to be understood as a way to return to *evidence*, namely, to the evident givenness of consciousness that lays bare the essential characters of acts of knowledge and lived experience. This seems to be the fundamental sense of the transcendental self-experience that determines also the difference between Cartesian philosophy and transcendental phenomenology.

However, this goal shows that the transcendental self-experience actually encompasses the entire field of lived experience and stream of consciousness inasmuch as it is lived by the subject – this includes what the subject does not even suspect to be living or experiencing – and not only an egological activity. Indeed, the evident givenness of consciousness – the originary presentive consciousness – offers itself to us with more than what pertains to the activity of Ego. It opens before the regard of the reflective subjectivity the actual and possible world(s) of pure experience, which encompasses contents, ideas, essences and structures of meaning. All together, these elements represent the complex and varied landscape of the temporal and also historical life of consciousness that is revealed by the transcendental self-experience.

4.2.2 Ordinary and transcendental experience

After having clarified what Husserl meant by transcendental experience as a self-experience, it should be considered in what sense the phenomenological transcendental experience explores and investigates the realm of transcendental being which precedes all objective realities. Indeed, we know that this realm is ‘experienced’ inasmuch it is possible to return to the originally presentive consciousness and take into account what is entailed by it. Moreover, this kind of transcendental experiencing requires that everything that I know or experience as a fact in the natural attitude is parenthesized and put aside so that the evident givenness of consciousness can emerge. Therefore, one could legitimately wonder here what kind of relation is there between the *ordinary experience* in the natural attitude, and the *transcendental experience* in the

transcendental phenomenological attitude. In particular, the most interesting point is that whoever assumes a transcendental stance of reflection and gains the transcendental field of experience continues to have a body and be engaged in the world that is experienced as it is always there. The ordinary experience that we constantly have cannot be stopped or erased, as we cannot stop to perceive or to acquire sense-data, or to make judgments, evaluations etc.

Thus, there seems to be a sort of relation of interdependence between ordinary and transcendental experience: the first fuels the second, while the second fights against the naivety of the first. This situation was effectively addressed by J.N. Mohanty who raised the problem of the *parallelism* between the empirical and the transcendental perspectives as one of the greatest mysteries of phenomenology¹² (Mohanty, 1985:208). With the *epoché* nothing is lost, but everything reappears with a ‘change of signature’. We can always go from the empirical domain, to the transcendental domain by changing our attitude. However, this means, according to Mohanty, that there are not actually two distinct domains, but rather transcendental consciousness *is* the empirical consciousness freed from its mundanity – “i.e. aware of its own function as self-interpreting as well as meaning-giving, therefore as constituting both itself and its world.” (Mohanty, 1985:208). Nonetheless, the sense of mundanity has its origins in the transcendental life of consciousness. Does this mean that the transcendental subjectivity has to renounce or to parenthesize a part of itself? While I do not believe that this is the case, the relation between natural, ordinary experience and transcendental experience has to be further addressed. Of particular interest here is the fact that the sense of experience in the phenomenological context seems to acquire a much wider meaning than in the empiricist philosophical context. The possibility itself of establishing a parallel relation between transcendental and ordinary experience depends on a wide understanding of experience that cannot be reduced to

¹² Mohanty refers in particular to the thesis of the ‘wonderful parallelism’ expressed by Husserl in the Amsterdam Lectures.

individual contents, or to a ‘direct line’ between the mind and the object in itself. As Husserl states in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*:

“In every day life, so too in science [...] experience is the consciousness of being with the matters themselves, of seizing upon and having them quite directly. But experience is not an opening through which a world, existing prior to all experience, shines into a room of consciousness; it is not a mere taking of something alien to consciousness into consciousness.”¹³

Moreover, for Husserl it would not be possible to make a rational statement without *seeing* and without clearly grasping a certain state-of-affairs. Indeed, the consciousness of being with the things themselves that Husserl calls experience entails, and actually is, *seeing* in a broad sense. Experience does not put me in contact with a foreign or unconceivable thing. In particular:

“Experience is the performance in which for me, the experiencer, experienced being ‘is there’, and is there as what it is, with the whole content and the mode of being that experience itself, by the performance going on in its intentionality, attributes to it.”¹⁴

From the pure transcendental phenomenological standpoint it seems that I can actually regain the full breadth of experience: the originally presentive consciousness (or direct seeing) which presents a certain experienced object to me as well as the possible experiential modes according to which this object is what it is (but also all the possible forms of consciousness and eidetic variations that pertains to the experience itself). In other words, the phenomenological transcendental experience does not aim to substitute the ordinary experience. It is in the experience itself that transcendental phenomenology confronts the naivety implied by the natural attitude. From

¹³ Hua XVII p. 206; en.tr. FTL p. 232.

¹⁴ Hua XVII p. 206; en. tr. FTL p. 233.

here, it follows that there is no ‘other’ transcendental world from the phenomenological standpoint. We are always in the same world, which nevertheless, does not appear as the *explanans*, but as the *explanandum* in the transcendental attitude. The world investigated by the phenomenologist is *concretely given* and it genuinely *appears* precisely as this lamp appears in front of me right now. Phenomenology basically teaches the way to focus on this appearance, and distinguish what it entails or even conceals thanks, in particular, to the system of reductions and to method of eidetic variations. Again, it seems that one of the most interesting and important points of transcendental phenomenology is that of recognizing the value of seeing in a broad sense, which leads, for Husserl, to an infinite possibility of clarification and explication of the meaning of what is actually and possibly known and experienced. As is stated in *The Crisis*, transcendental phenomenology points to “a philosophy based on *ultimate insight* and on an absolute universality within which there must be no unasked questions, nothing taken for granted that is not understood.”¹⁵ However, this does not mean that the phenomenological seeing reduces the invisible or elusive characters of experience to a material givenness, or to the sphere of a complete, almost ‘palpable’ visibility¹⁶. In the phenomenological context, what is visible and manifest is primarily something *given* (but not necessarily materially given), and then something that can be thematized and grasped or understood according to the logic and structure of meaning of the experience. The invisible or the elusive character entailed by the experience in this way can be a part of the phenomenological project of clarification.

In view of this sense of transcendental experience, I shall underline in the following sections how transcendental phenomenology actually deals with the

¹⁵ Hua VI p.269; en.tr. CES p. 265.

¹⁶ Indeed the Husserlian thought represents a remarkable effort to avoid what Stanley Rosen called the *Scylla* and *Charybdis* of philosophy – namely, on the one side the reduction of thinking to ordinary language, and, on the other side, the recognition of an exceptional origin to thinking itself (Rosen, 1999).

issues raised by the internalism/externalism debate.

4.3 Beyond the internalism/externalism debate

In light of the previous account of the phenomenological notion of transcendental experience, transcendental phenomenology appears to be irreducible to the internalist or externalist positions. On the one hand, the phenomenological transcendental subjectivity does not coincide with the internal space of the mind. In the transcendental attitude we still have a Body (the *Leib*) and we are engaged in the experience of the world. On the other hand, the experience is not an ‘opening through which the world shines into the room of consciousness’¹⁷. Rather, the phenomenological transcendental experience expresses the possibility of facing, and even fighting against, the naivety implied by acts of experience and knowledge in the natural attitude.

Moreover, if we take the internalist and externalist positions as updated versions of the opposing sides in the realism/idealism debate, the following Husserlian statement seems rather meaningful:

“All previous discussions of idealism and realism have failed to penetrate to the consciousness of the genuine problem which lies, sought for but undiscovered, behind all theories of knowledge; much less have they grasped the transcendental reduction in its difficult sense as the gate of entry to genuine knowledge of self and of the world.”¹⁸

Discussions about realism and idealism, as well as about externalism and internalism, fail for Husserl to discover the genuine epistemological problem inasmuch as they cling to a ground that is not pure – a ground of presuppositions and assumptions that encompasses both the idea of an internal space of the mind and the factual, real world. However, this quote seems to

¹⁷ See §4.2.2

¹⁸ Hua VI p. 266; en.tr. CES p.262-263.

imply that transcendental phenomenology not only exposes the main reason of weaknesses and narrow aspects of the realist/idealist positions, but that it can also shows a way to overcome the realist/idealist discussions by dealing with the genuine problem of knowledge in the transcendental attitude of thought. Indeed, if the contribution of transcendental phenomenology to contemporary debates such as the internalism/externalism debate does not favor either of the two sides, this does not erase the possible phenomenological contribution to the main problems raised by the debate. The internalist and externalist perspectives deal with descriptive and normative epistemological problems regarding basically the relationship between mind and world and the possibility of objective knowledge and truth. Many interesting and original aspects of Husserl's philosophy could be taken as positive contributions to these universal basic problems. I shall focus now on two particular aspects which entail some promising leads of research to be further pursued: the complexity restored to the mind/world relation, and the transcendental primacy of the meaning over truth within the phenomenological reflection.

4.3.1 The mind-world relation as a phenomenological problem

If we assume that from the phenomenological standpoint, the mind-world relation cannot be displayed by neither an account of an internal mental process independent from what occurs outside, nor by an account of a factual external reality capable of shaping the mental process and determining it from the outside, how does transcendental phenomenology actually deal with it?

First of all, the transcendental phenomenological reflection highlights the *correlation* between consciousness and world through the notion of intentionality and the doctrine of intention. We could say that this correlation shapes the concrete field of the life of consciousness. However, before going into the detail of this correlation, it is important to stress the peculiarity of the phenomenological approach to the mind-body relation with respect to the

internalist-externalist positions. Indeed, while the internalist/externalist debate shows the tendency of specifying its own positions in order to deal with the complexity of the mind-world relation – even if such a tendency results only in a blurred context of the primary issues from which the debate originates – in the phenomenological transcendental perspective this complexity is investigated precisely by turning to the most primitive awareness and original evidence. In other words, Husserl's phenomenology tries to fill the gap between a theory of experience and what is actually lived by the subject. And, through this sort of adherence to the field of the lived experience, the mind-world relation seems to show itself in the phenomenological analysis, with its peculiar structure and features. Thus, instead of giving an explanation of the experiential relation between two fixed entities – the mind and the world – the phenomenological perspective puts us in the position of *seeing* the overt, horizontal structure of experience, its endless potentialities, its infinite possible variations. In this way, a fresh look is casted upon the mind-world relation. We can recognize for instance different modes of consciousness that correspond to different modalities of givenness of an object and refer to a *unity* of meaning transcendently constituted. And it is possible also to investigate the role played by different modes of consciousness in the transcendental constitution of unities of meaning. This kind of investigation concerns in particular the experience of something *absent* from the perceptual field – be it something anticipated, co-intended or belonging to the background of an object of attention – which raised a great deal of interest in the analysis of perceptual consciousness in other phenomenological contexts as well, such as, for instance, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology¹⁹.

Furthermore, Husserl put great emphasis especially on the distinction between what is directly present in a perceptual experience, and what is absent, but nonetheless co-intended – for instance, the backside of an object, or the background from which the present object stands out. Indeed the object of my

¹⁹ See M. Merleau Ponty *Le Visible et l'Invisible* (1964).

perception is not only the visible portion of an object. The same object that is being perceived can suddenly be connected to a remembered or imagined object that hovers before our eyes, *as if it were here*. The experience of such a *presentified* object entails a modification of the character of actuality of consciousness, but nonetheless it is still connected to the experience of the object that is actually present. For Husserl, every single experience, every *datum* and every given object is always a datum within a *horizon* that implies another horizon and so on. A rough outline of the phenomenological notion of horizon would mainly distinguish three kinds of horizons: *internal* horizons, which are indexes of all the possible fulfillment of those empty intentions that co-intend absent parts of an object; *external* horizons that comprise the background in which the object of attention stands out; *relational* horizons that show a typical preacquaintance or familiarity in which every object is pre-given. This third kind of horizon, for Husserl, is composed of all the passive associations of likeness and similarity that pertain to a given object, and includes presentified objects of imagination and memory²⁰.

Therefore, returning to the issue of the phenomenological account of the mind-world relation, it can be claimed that, according to the phenomenological standpoint, the relation between mind and world is displayed in the complex and layered field of experience, where it can assume different forms, depending on the different mode of consciousness. In other words, it seems that there is no ‘fixed’ or ‘standard’ relationship between mind and world. Rather it seems that the relation between mind and world shapes itself *in* experience,

²⁰ Husserl in *Ideas I* had already delineated a sort of relational shape of the indeterminate horizon, which according to the phenomenological analysis of experience always surrounds a determinate object (see *Ideas I* §27). Here in fact Husserl claimed that one can always send rays of illuminative regard of attention into the horizon of indeterminate presentations, which starts in this way to be determined, to become alive; “a chain of such quasi-memories is linked together; the sphere of determinateness becomes wider and wider” Hua III/1 p.49; en.tr. ID1 p. 52. In *Experience and Judgment* we can find a specific account of this horizon of typical familiarity, through which the object is pre-given, so that “the contemplative regard can go back and forth from what is given in itself to what is presentified, in connection with which the relations of likeness and similarity in the true sense of the term are first actively preconstituted” E. Husserl EU p. 172; en.tr. EJ p.150.

according to different modalities of givenness and different kinds of experiences (i.e. perception, imagination, memory, expectation, etc.), which are connected together by transcendental structures of meaning. Transcendental phenomenology highlights the horizontal patterns of intentionality and the structure through which it is possible to clarify and explicate the meaning. Thus, from the unique phenomenological standpoint and transcendental stance, it is possible to appreciate the full extent of the mind/world relation. In other words, it is possible to see the complexity of experience as a binding feature restored to the mind-world relation. This complexity points out that the mind does not coincide with an internal space disconnected from the world, and that the given object (or the world itself) is recognized to be a multi-faceted being: we cannot grasp it with a single look as it is always hiding something that can be only adumbrated.

Although this brief and general overview highlighted only a few points of Husserl's doctrine of intentionality and intentional experience, I believe it is already possible to see that there are some interesting and promising phenomenological leads we can follow in order to make the debate regarding the mind-body relationship advance in new directions. In particular, I believe that Husserl's investigation of different modes of consciousness, and of different kinds of experience which elude and overcome rigid definitions of the relationship between reality and actuality²¹, spurs the creation of a fresh line of thinking with regard to the mind-body relation and other epistemological issues. This sort of galvanizing influence opens promising leads for the epistemological debates – leads that can be pursued not only in order to reclaim

²¹ In this regard, for instance it is very interesting to understand the connection between Husserl's analysis of inactuality and the concept of virtuality, which has recently been pivotal for many different investigations: from those produced by Pierre Lévy and Paul Virilio, to the studies focused on the ontological status of possible worlds, as well as those branches of analytic philosophy concerned with methodological value of mental experiments. Moreover, the notion of virtuality, even if it cannot be considered a classical phenomenological notion, seems to have inspired the work of many post-Husserlian phenomenologist such as Fink, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty etc. who developed Husserl's insight regarding the realm of absent and presentified objects of experience.

the actuality of transcendental phenomenology, but possibly to develop and carry out Husserl's insights in new directions as well.

4.3.2 Transcendental primacy of meaning

The transcendental phenomenological analysis always brings the problem of truthful, objective knowledge of the real world back to the constitutive origin and genesis of the objective *meaning*. Husserl's phenomenology aims to clarify and explicate the structures of meaning that shape our cognitions and experiences. In this way, it is possible to claim that a *primacy of meaning* is established from the phenomenological standpoint *over truth*. However, this primacy should not be understood as a way to set aside the problem of truth all together. On the contrary, the goal of the transcendental clarification of meaning was precisely the legitimization of all rational assertions and cognitions that claimed to be truthful and objective. In this regard, it should be recalled that, from the transcendental phenomenological standpoint, the overt character of the noetic-noematic correlations shows that it is always possible to constitute a *new sense*, which is founded on the *noesis* underlying it. In other words, the apprehension of truth in a phenomenological context is not just the apprehension of an object as it is – the *given qua given*. Indeed, the given always implies a horizon of givenness, namely, the object is given with its horizontal intentionalities. Therefore, the apprehension of truth seems to refer to the potentially infinite system of meaning-intentions which belong to this horizon of givenness and which must be fulfilled. As Mohanty claimed, the apprehension of truth is “an experience of a fulfilling synthesis of identification between the object as intended (i.e. the noematic sense) and the object as it presents itself”, whereas such an identifying synthesis is “an asymptotic process and is not achieved all at once” (Mohanty, 1985: 89).

However, one could wonder whether, in this way, the idea of truth will not come to be relativized to an infinite, revisable process of constitution of sense. If that was the case, almost every scientific knowledge should be considered

untruthful and merely temporary from the phenomenological standpoint. It is true that the history of science itself shows that we can speak of different paradigms, and that such paradigms are subjected to changes. Nonetheless, this does not mean that there cannot be any objective and scientific meaning at all.

In this regard, it should be noted, as Mohanty did, that the transcendental clarification of the objective meaning that characterizes a truthful knowledge shows the overt, fundamental aspect of the experiential process, but also the *a priori* eidetic structure of the pure consciousness that delimits the noetic-noematic correlation of meaning in an *extra-temporal way*. If it were not for this kind of structure, it would be impossible to genuinely *see* consciousness as an absolute flow, or to recognize the abiding noematic structures of constituted meaning²². On the contrary, by means of the pure eidetic being of consciousness that abides in this constitutive flow, it is possible to appreciate the historical stratification of meaning itself. The eidetic field comprises all the possible variations of the object of intention in its regions, and these variations are made accessible to the reflective subject by imagination. Thus, the results of the phenomenological clarification of meaning are not bound to a singular or contingent experience, but instead relate to the whole life of consciousness and its transcendental structures.

Furthermore, regarding the problem of relativism, Mohanty also noted that the phenomenological transcendental perspective, while it recognizes relativism as a phenomenon, also displays a way to overcome it. In this regard, we have to focus on the idea of pluralism, specifically, on the plurality of worlds from the transcendental standpoint (Mohanty, 1985). The ‘one’ world (not in the sense of the totality of all worlds) has many versions and each version is a noematic structure. Therefore, since the *noema* indicates the unity

²² In this regard Mohanty argued that “if Husserl recognizes the flux character of consciousness, experience and the world, he also saw that the flux has an abiding structure. He rightly saw also that the flux of experience ‘throws out’ stable formations, unities of meaning, complex meaning structures called theories, objectivities of various orders” (Mohanty, 1988: 232).

of sense, transcendental phenomenology may begin with a pluralism of worlds, but it also overcomes this pluralism *from within*, rather than by opting arbitrarily for a preferred world-view²³. The phenomenological transcendental analysis actually takes the ‘one’ world as a *regulative concept* that cannot coincide with one of its particular versions, but that instead orders its quasi-incommensurable variations. In this way, Mohanty argues that transcendental phenomenology actually leads us *out* of a hopeless relativism and toward communication and understanding (Mohanty, 1985). Indeed, from the transcendental standpoint, relativism is treated as a *phenomenon*, and only after the phenomenon of relativism has been granted its recognition is it really possible to find a way out.

Therefore, regardless of first appearances, the primacy of meaning over truth established by the transcendental phenomenological analysis actually represents a way for the philosophical reflection to overcome the phenomenon of relativism and possibly to return to a genuine research of truth. Indeed, this issue, if pursued, would constitute another fundamental motive to reaffirm the cutting-edge contribution of phenomenology to current epistemological problems.

In conclusion, dealing with the phenomenological approach to the problems underlying contemporary debates such as the internalism/externalism debate can actually lead us to realize the importance and actuality of Husserl’s transcendental philosophy, as well as the many clues that such a philosophical project left us despite the fragmented image reflected by a great part of the Husserlian scholarship. These clues, can provide just as many promising leads to advance and enrich the epistemological debate. And this is only a small part of the open field of possibilities which unfold before Husserlian scholars, as opposed to prolonging long-standing opposite traditions.

²³ See Mohanty (1985) Introduction to *The possibility of transcendental phenomenology*, xxvii.

CONCLUSIONS

Transcendental phenomenology vs. naivety of thought: towards a cognitive reorientation of thinking

Husserl's project of transcendental reflection has displayed the tendency to go back to and have a hold on the ground of the original consciousness presenting what is given as it is given – and in particular, presenting unities of sense with their own structure, as well as eidetic patterns – at its innermost core. In the originarily presentive consciousness, in direct seeing and evidence we have found the hallmark of Husserl's transcendental perspective. However, this study of the *evidenz-theoretisch* transcendental philosophy also showed that we cannot really talk of a new foundational ground of knowledge and thinking. In order to face the crisis of culture and rationality Husserl proposed instead a method to clarify acts of knowledge and experience while fighting the naivety of thought which characterizes the natural attitude and, more specifically, natural sciences and natural kind of reflections. Thus, if we had to take a step forward and ask what is the meaning and value of Husserl's perspective as a transcendental perspective, what would be the answer? How does it really face the problem of the foundations of knowledge and, in particular, of the mode of being of the foundation?

In order to deal with these issues, I will come back to the meaning of originarily presentive consciousness and its possible ambiguities, and I will draw some conclusions about the phenomenological transcendental

perspective.

There seems to be a sense in which the originally presentive consciousness, which is supposed to be more fundamental than what results from a natural reflection, is free from the naivety. Nonetheless, one could wonder, for instance, how can we really fight naivety and, at the same time, aim for the original givenness of the pure, experiential consciousness and its pure phenomena. And what could be the reason for not considering the phenomenological reflection as just another kind of naïve reflection?

The originally presentive consciousness precedes what is known and experienced in the natural attitude, and presents something that is *genuinely* given. Indeed from the phenomenological standpoint there is a crucial difference between what is given as obvious, what is taken for granted, and what is genuinely given. Above all, grasping the latter requires an effort and a new orientation which is somehow ‘unnatural’ for Husserl. What is genuinely given is paradoxically more elusive and comes to be ignored when, in the natural attitude, we focus on what is naturally posited – on facts and causal relations between things. This is the reason why, for Husserl, we have to assume a new attitude of thought and a new perspective which allows us to critically confront the naivety of the natural attitude.

However, even if the transcendental attitude is freed by the natural naivety (but not necessarily by naivety in general, as it was previously underlined¹) this does not mean that the natural attitude and the natural naivety are completely eliminated or eradicated from the everyday life. In the transcendental attitude, the phenomenologist can put up a relentless fight against naïve reflection, not only by identifying it as it is, but also by eliminating its negative effects on thinking and, in particular, on scientific and cultural systems. And this is possible above of all because by fighting the naivety of thought we actually gain something in the transcendental attitude: that is, a new *trusting relationship* between subjectivity and its own experience, taken purely as it is –

¹ See §3.4.1 where I discussed Husserl’s idea of transcendental naivety.

taken as it is lived by the subject. In this particular regard, as J.N. Mohanty puts it, a *phenomenology of respect* should be distinguished from a *phenomenology of suspect* (Mohanty 1978:314). While the second term indicates a hierarchical system of thought that entails the overcoming of the mundane aspect of consciousness in order to culminate in absolute knowledge, a phenomenology of respect sees no such a closure. On the contrary, it is based on *trust* in what is given in an originally pure fashion (i.e. in the evident self-givenness), in order to reach a fresh understanding of the world and reality.

If this interpretation is correct, if Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is a phenomenology of respect, there seems to be no need for a metaphysical principles of foundation that secure the objectivity of knowledge. It is true that, according to Husserl, the philosopher must, at least once, destroy everything in order to rebuild everything from the start². However, in order to be truly radical, such a theoretical operation should trust only what is originally intended by the pure consciousness, which is valid from every possible standpoint. Thus, we can speak of a rediscovered and renewed trust in what we *see* in a universal sense.

This conclusion now puts one in the position of taking a few steps forward in order to evaluate the outcomes of the phenomenological transcendental perspective *beyond* the problem of the foundation of knowledge and thinking and of the critique of such foundation. The *evidenz-theoretisch* transcendental perspective provides the horizon that traces both the limits and the infinite possible extension of the thinking process. Indeed, the possibility of thinking, judging, evaluating etc. can always be traced back to the pre-predicative experience and the genetic layers of the concrete life of consciousness. What is essential, then, is the new orientation, the new attitude of thought through which it is possible to purely focus on the subject experience, the experience as

² “First, anyone who seriously intends to become a philosopher must ‘once in his life’ withdraw into himself and attempt, within himself, to overthrow and build anew all the sciences that, up to then, he has been accepting.” Hua I p. 44; en.tr. CM p.2.

it is lived by the subject. The transcendental phenomenological perspective essentially represents and stands for a peculiar re-orientation that brings to the fore the originally presentive consciousness, the direct seeing. This means that we can reach a higher level of clarity which is produced by this change of attitude. Nonetheless, such a clarity is not ultimate or definitive inasmuch it does not come from a speculative form of thinking. Indeed, instead of providing us with a perfect, indestructible clarity, transcendental phenomenology seems to firmly push us towards intuitive knowledge, namely, towards the endless possibility of making acts of knowledge and experience, as well as the discursive understanding, intelligible in a new way.

I shall conclude by noting that these peculiar aspects that were highlighted regarding the meaning of Husserl's transcendental perspective interestingly seems to resonate with Hannah Arendt's reflection about the activity of thinking and passive contemplation. Arendt's analysis underlines the common absence of thinking in the modern society ("we have hardly the time, let alone the inclination, to stop and think"³) which leads us to approach the issue of what thinking is⁴. While the notion of contemplation has always been considered the highest state of the mind, the activity of thinking was given rather little consideration. "Thinking aims at and ends in contemplation, and contemplation is not an activity, but a passivity; it is the point where mental activity comes to rest"⁵. Thus, according to Arendt, in the Christian time thinking became *meditation*, which was supposed to end again in contemplation – a blessed state of the mind where the mind passively received truth in intuition. On the other hand, Arendt underlines the need to focus on what we are *doing* when we are thinking in order to rediscover the crucial meaning of the activity of thinking for the human being. Arendt describes it as an 'urge' or a need to think, as opposed to the speculative desire of knowing

³ H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (1978) p. 4.

⁴ In particular, both in *The human condition* and in *The life of the mind* Arendt investigates thinking in opposition with the notion of contemplation.

⁵ H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (1978) p. 6.

which dominated over the philosophical tradition⁶.

These distinctions between activity of thinking and passivity of contemplation, as well as the come back to the urge of thinking, are especially interesting because they seem to come from and *reshape* that certain dimension of reflection in which we grasp what is genuinely given as opposed to deductions or purely formal ‘empty’ understanding. Indeed, if compared with the traditional philosophical path that takes contemplation – the highest state of mind in which we *passively* accept truths – as the end of the thinking process and of meditation, transcendental phenomenology shows instead how we can reach the highest and most profound intelligibility precisely through acts of pure seeing which grasp and focus on what is genuinely given in the lived experience. And when such a higher clarity is gained, contemplation no longer needs to be the ultimate goal of the thinking process. “As little understanding as possible, as much pure intuition as possible [*intuitio sine comprehensione*]”⁷.

⁶ Even if Arendt gives the merit for the fundamental distinction between reason and intellect (that leads to the fundamental distinction between thinking and knowing) to Kant, she claims also that Kant “remained less than fully aware of the extent to which he had liberated reason, the ability to think, by justifying it in terms of the ultimate questions” (1978: 14), and, in particular, that he did not pay much attention to thinking as an activity and “even less to the *experiences of thinking Ego*” (1978: 15 emphasis mine). The problem was that Kant and his successors were unable to find another criterion for certainty and evidence than the criterion that was valid for cognition. Therefore, according to Arendt, it was not possible to realize that reason is not inspired by the quest for truth, but by the *quest for meaning*. Heidegger too did not realize the importance of this distinction and mixed up the meaning of Being with the truth of Being (1978: 15) .

⁷ Hua II p. 62; en.tr. IP p. 46.

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