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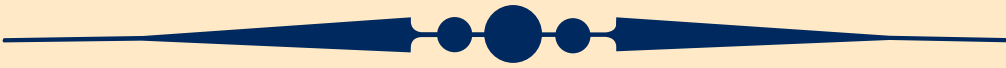

The Sense of Things

Toward a Phenomenological Realism

Angela Ales Bello

Translated by
Antonio Calcagno

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Angela Ales Bello

The Sense of Things

Toward a Phenomenological Realism

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Angela Ales Bello
Lateran University
Vatican City, Italy

Translated by Prof. Antonio Calcagno, Associate Professor of Philosophy, King's University College at The University of Western Ontario (Canada)

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For Anna Teresa Tymieniecka—in gratitude for her generosity and gifted mind.
In memoria.

Preface

But how do things stand with other egos that are not mere representations or represented objects, synthetic unities that can be verified in me, but in their own sense are properly "other?" Have we made an error vis-à-vis transcendental realism? This could be lacking phenomenological foundations, but in principle this could be right insofar as it inquires after a way that moves from the immanence of the ego to the transcendence of "others." (Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, § 42.)

[1]Edmund Husserl's brief reflection serves as a guide for the pages that follow.

In order to comprehend the guiding thesis of the present study, one can begin with the last chapter, which holds a double function: it is both conclusive and programmatic. One finds in it an attempt to justify the title of this book through the argument the monograph offers, but it also reiterates and clarifies the thesis that the book wishes to defend.

Today, in Italy, one encounters renewed philosophical interest in realism, which has fostered much intense debate. I offer here a contribution to this debate by rereading the transcendental realism of Edmund Husserl, always from the phenomenological perspective. I discuss his very definition of "transcendental idealism," a point of view that he himself explicitly maintained.

The thesis of this book is paradoxical: Transcendental idealism is truly a transcendental realism. But the objection quickly arises: how can one transform idealism into realism, if the two notions have always been opposed to one another within the history of western philosophy? We must ask if this opposition is valid.

If one stops to examine the prevailing use of the two terms, it seems as if no one term can exist outside of this opposition. If we probe more deeply, however, we find that at the core of such an opposition, there lie many equivocations. I maintain that the idealism advanced by Husserl demonstrates that "idealism" can be said in many ways and that this is also valid for realism: the semantic domains to which the two terms refer are not always univocal. Hence, Husserl's understanding of idealism possesses certain characteristics that are traditionally attributed to "realism" pro-

[1] Chapter 4 is not found in the original Italian edition and was added for this English translation.

vided that one does not forget the accompanying adjective that he attaches to the term, namely, "transcendental." Husserl's transcendental idealism is a realism.

I have always maintained this interpretation of Husserl's thought. This book represents a synthesis of my considerations over recent years set within the framework of my own theoretical and historical investigations of phenomenology. I showcase the results of my study here against the backdrop of a philosophical climate that calls for a return to realism, often asking myself whether or not the claims of realism are naïve or dogmatic.

It seems to me that Husserl's phenomenology has its own particular theoretical force and is capable of furnishing us with a deeper understanding of not only the relation between idealism and realism but also of a way for better clarifying our human knowledge of the "sense of things," which is the primary goal of philosophical research.

Husserl's writings and his treatment of sense are undoubtedly difficult as he requires us to change our perspective. Husserl's revolutionary thinking follows in the wake of Kant's Copernican Revolution, but Husserl arrives at different conclusions about knowing than does Kant.

Often, certain claims remain unknown; they are buried away or misunderstood, abused by various interpretative stereotypes. Here, we do not claim to know the actual, definitive truth of the sense of things through Husserlian-based analysis; rather, I hold that this is our cognitive goal in every case, even for those who explicitly negate this possibility. And this goal is linked to our searching for what is convincing precisely because what is most convincing is evident and indubitable. If someone "shows" us an approach through which we can arrive at certainty, then it must be explored and evaluated.

My readings of Husserl's work give me the distinct impression that we find ourselves in front of a signpost [*Wegweiser*] that makes evident aspects not previously considered or only partially explored. This signpost can help us comprehend the sense of things. This understanding of the sense of things is a search entrusted to the community of philosophers who can collaborate and assist one another by thinking "beyond their own time and space," to paraphrase an expression of Edith Stein.

The finitude of the human condition must keep us far away from the pretense of absolutization, but this does not mean that we have to listen to the sirens of nihilism for even nihilism is a form of absolutization.

Walking the long and arduous path of evidence and clarification, both of which remain ideals to be achieved, allows us to seize the sense of things.

Vatican City, Italy Angela Ales Bello

Abstract

This book offers a new interpretative framework for reading and overcoming the binary of idealism and realism. The way human consciousness unfolds in the relationship between the I and the world is central. This relationship opens up a field of phenomenological inquiry that cannot and must not remain closed within the limits of its own disciplinary borders. *The Sense of Things* focuses on the philosophical question of realism in contemporary debates, ultimately dismantling prejudices and undeveloped claims that one finds in them. Angela Ales Bello shows that at the root of the conflict between realism and idealism, one often finds equivocations of a semantic nature. By returning to the origins of modern phenomenology and by employing the Husserlian concept of transcendental idealism, she demonstrates that the aforementioned conflict is to be resolved through a broader conception of sense. By following a transcendental method and by neutralizing the extreme positions of an acritical and naïve realism, Ales Bello proposes a "transcendental realism," which reveals the horizon of a dynamic unity that embraces the process of cognition and which grounds the relation and not the subordination of subject and object. The investigation of this relation allows us to move beyond the limits of the domain of knowing, thereby leading us to the fundamental questions about the ultimate sense of things and their origin.

Contents

Introduction: On the Controversy Between Idealism and Realism

The opposition between idealism and realism can be viewed as an epiphenomenon in which claims of absoluteness must be purged. We must investigate this epiphenomenon in order to uncover what lies underneath it. In particular, we have to examine our understanding of the role the human subject plays in reality.

In the natural attitude, the human being feels surrounded, even threatened, by the world about it; its actions are limited insofar as it feels a difference between what it would like to do and the impossibility of actualizing its desire; the human being feels the gap between what it imagines doing and the way things present themselves in reality. "External" reality shaped by things, others, and unforeseeable events appears to the human being with all its gravity and drama; the individual feels "small" in a huge world.

But there is also another experience to consider: when the human being supposes that it has successfully realized its projects, that it knows reality, it rejoices and thinks of itself as autonomous and even capable of controlling things.

The natural attitude cannot be accepted, however, without probing more deeply: it has to be bracketed if one wishes to test the validity of experience. We are not dealing here with a "false" attitude; rather, this attitude alone is not enough to grasp "how things really are." This does not mean that one can change the human condition, but we do need to inquire after the deep reasons that can justify it.

The attitudes indicated above are psychic: we have here two interior "resonances" that are related to two moments, which are visible daily to the human being and which are even lived collectively. They lie at the base of two philosophical positions that we define as "realism" and "idealism." Fichte was correct when he wrote that realism and idealism correspond to two different modalities of inclination and interest.[1] Edith Stein confirms Fichte's insight, arguing that Husserl was not an idealist simply because idealism is an acritical position.[2]

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[1] J.G. Fichte, *Eine Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, in *Fichtes Werke,* vol. 3., ed. F. Medicus (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1977), 6–34.

[2] "He has always underlined, and I am uncertain if he continues to do so today as I have not spoken to him for some years, that phenomenology does not *result in idealism*. In my view, idealism is a

Why, then, have famous philosophers passionately debated idealism throughout the history of philosophy if it is acritical? How are we to understand the relation between Platonic idealism and Aristotelian realism? The difference between Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo? Fichte and Spinoza? Hegel and Maritain? Are these debates merely a series of plays on words?

Let us probe further by examining a text of Husserl, who was accused by his own followers of being an idealist. In his later thought, he calls phenomenology a transcendental idealism. He says the term expresses a new way of understanding idealism. He elaborates his position by explaining what he does not intend by the term. Transcendental idealism is not to be understood in a psychological sense that wishes to "deduce the world as fully endowed with sense, given by sense data that in themselves have no meaning." Nor is Husserl's idealism Kantian in form: he does not believe that one can possibly hold a "world of things in themselves" understood as a limiting concept.[3] Husserl's transcendental idealism cannot be based on a series of polemical arguments over realism. So what is realism for Husserl?

To answer this question, we need to turn to the *Cartesian Meditations,* where Husserl speaks of a "transcendental realism." In the "Fifth Meditation," we find a discussion of the alter ego, its transcendence vis-à-vis the ego, and the fact that alter egos are not mere representations or represented objects (they are existents in themselves). Husserl asks: how can one justify his position from a phenomenological perspective that defines itself as "transcendental idealism" without betraying the transcendence of the alter ego? Hence, realism means recognizing the existence of an objective world in itself that is formed by things and other subjects. *But must this objective world in itself be presupposed or must it be justified in terms of its genesis? Why do we refer to it and how do we speak about it?*

The theory of "naïve realism" presupposes the world in itself, which is separate from the subject. Husserl is not convinced of this presupposition and wants to justify it by comprehending the roots of the affirmation about the existence of a world in itself.

Why do I primarily refer to Husserl when tackling the question of the relation between idealism and realism? Because I see in Husserl's analysis a possible theoretical clarification of the relation between these two positions. We have to ask, though, whether or not such a clarification is sufficient for resolving the conflict. Also, is the conflict destined to remain irresolvable?

By closely reading the works of Husserl, I demonstrate that he was not an idealist in the usual sense of the term. But is he a realist in the way we currently understand the term? *I believe that we can show that Husserl was a "transcendental realist" by employing the resources and terms of a long tradition: it is hard to invent new terms*

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fundamentally personal and metaphysical concept and it is not the result of irrefutable phenomenological investigations." Edith Stein, "*Was ist die Phänomenologie?*", in *Wissenschaft/Volksbildung,* n. 5, May 15, 1924.

[3] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, ed. and introd. S. Strasser (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991). English translation: *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 86. Hereafter cited as CM.

for this specific undertaking. Certainly, "transcendental realism" is an expression that contrasts with his own term "transcendental idealism," but I argue that my definition best describes the analyses and results of Husserl's investigations.

One could rightly ask if the decision to proceed in the way outlined above inevitably ends up choosing one horn of the dilemma over the other, ultimately remaining firmly planted in the conflict and with no resolution. I believe we can overcome this conflict by demonstrating that the two horns of the dilemma are nothing other than the absolutization of two simultaneously present aspects. We proceed, then, in a way that is different from the traditional one. And so, must we be satisfied only with understanding the reasons for the conflict, or can a third way be found that allows us to clarify and ultimately overcome the conflict?

What we are inevitably dealing with here is the relation between the human being and reality. We begin with the genesis of this relation. I believe that Husserl's contribution to the history of philosophy lies in exploring this relation. His analysis strips away misconceptions, and he invites us to explore the matter with new eyes.

The key to understanding the third path, which also helps us understand the traditional paths of realism and idealism as well as sense, lies in the relation between the passive and active spheres of our knowledge. We have to examine, then, certain questions pertaining to the theory of knowledge (*Erkenntnistheorie*), which many western philosophers have already undertaken, including Heraclitus and Parmenides.

The history of philosophy largely focuses on the results of the two positions mentioned above: the *logos* and becoming on one hand and immutable Being on the other hand. This particular focus developed because human beings are interested in *what has been said* and often they do not seek to understand the way in which *what has been said* is obtained. What Husserl calls transcendental idealism is nothing other than an investigation of the role of the subject who carries out research—a role that cannot be ignored and that the greatest philosophers have not ignored; rather, they have given this role a primary place even though we may not have recognized it: we are attracted by the conquered object rather than by the way to reach the object.

In what follows, I consider the relation between both the way and the result obtained along the way because I believe exploring this relation is fundamental for probing the modality of the constitution of the relation between the human being and reality.

Since the most important philosophers have always emphasized that we must not accept things as they are given to us and that we must change our attitudes in order to leave behind a natural, naïve form of knowledge to acquire *epistemé*, as Aristotle says, we *have to put the natural attitude into question*. Hence, our first step consists in making us aware of the necessity of carrying out the aforementioned operation in order to deepen the sense of the new attitude, which we define as philosophical. This will help us investigate how it is possible to reach and seize "the sense of things."

Chapter 1
Epoché, Decision and Motivation

1.1 Method and Decision

The trajectory followed by classic phenomenology—and here I specifically refer to Husserl's trajectory—begins with its method. But what is its method and why does it involve a decision? The method grounds itself, first, on a change of attitude. Why should we change our attitude when the very attitude we find ourselves in seems perfectly capable of putting us into direct contact with the reality of "things" in a seemingly unproblematic manner?[1] We are confronted here with a radical question that distinguishes the person holding a critical attitude, which we traditionally call a philosophical attitude, from the individual who lives by trusting what she or he experiences. We can even ask whether or not, in the case of the latter, it is true that the person always uncritically trusts experience and whether or not some trace amount of critical awareness exists.

Let us accept the aforementioned dichotomy, ultimately reinforcing it with the words of Heraclitus: "For many men—those who encounter such things—do not understand them, and do not grasp them after they learnt; but to themselves they seem (to understand)."[2] Heraclitus also tells us, "Not understanding, although they have heard, they are like the deaf. The proverb bears witness to them: 'Present yet absent.'"[3]

Individuals who have the attitude described by Heraclitus are viewed as "sleeping." They do not realize that the meaning of reality must be sought by doing more than simply trusting experience: we must enter another dimension, namely, the realm of spirit. All that was said earlier does not mean that sleeping individuals are useless. On the contrary: "The sleeping are workmen (and fellow-workers) in what

[1] The same question arises in the work of Stefano Bancalari, "*Le paradoxe de l'indécidable et la structure de l'epoché*", in "*Archivio di Filosofia*", vol. 80, n. 1–2, 2012, 161–170.

[2] Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of Diels' "Fragmente der Vorsokratiker"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), Fr. 17, 26.

[3] *Ibid.*, Fr. 34, 27.

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
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happens in the world,"[4] but they do not attain the awareness of the unity of all things and "they live as if they have understanding peculiar to themselves."[5] In other words, they do not achieve an understanding of reality.

One could ask whether or not such an operation of overcoming the natural attitude is useful and necessary. Why do we need it? One could respond: we need it in order to understand truth. But what is truth? Why do we not immediately and spontaneously grasp it? Why can we only grasp truth with the eyes of our intellect? What does the intellect seek? It looks for absolute evidence. And what is evidence? It is the fulfilment of some kind of expectation, namely, the ability to know the sense or meaning of things. Is this sense immediately clear? Does not the natural attitude allow us to trust reality? Does it not cooperate with the events of the world? Is a pragmatic attitude not sufficient? Does not doubt about the purported clarity of our knowledge of things ever arise? Realistically speaking, doubt is always present, even when we attempt to pragmatically dispel it. Doubt correlates to the very seeking of evidence: they both refer to one another. It is not surprising, then, that Husserl speaks of these two modalities by placing them into relation with one another in his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*.

The first thing we need to investigate, therefore, is doubt, which is certainly connected to everyday consciousness, especially at the level of perception. Husserl observes that, at first glance, it is difficult to distinguish the wax figure from a real human being. The distinction only becomes clear through a verification made by the senses.[6] If the first level of our investigation is linked up with the source of doubt, this means that all our knowledge can be exposed to uncertainty and indecision. It is at this point of uncertainty and indecision that western philosophy arises.

In the *Republic*, Plato observes that human beings are like cave dwellers who live beneath the earth.[7] Plato's symbolic account describes the illusion that characterizes human existence when we naïvely trust that which surrounds us ("To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.")[8] and when we do not seek the deep sense of things, a sense that is not seen with the physical eyes: it can only emerge if we reflect at the level of the intellect. "And now l look again and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains."[9]

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[4] *Ibid*., Fr. 75, 29.

[5] *Ibid*., Fr. 2, 25.

[6] Edmund Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918–1926)*, ed. M. Fleischer, 1966, in *Husserliana*, vol. XI; English translation: *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. A.J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Springer, 2001), Chapter 2, section 8. Hereafter cited as APS.

[7] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1990), Book VII.

[8] *Ibid*., 254.

[9] *Ibid*.

I maintain that the important questions about Plato's description are the following: How does this "series of events happen?" Who liberates the prisoner? Is the liberator someone who has been freed and, if so, how did this person come to be liberated? The prisoner was made to "get up by force." Why? Is the force internal or external? Plato does not specify because he admits that someone has already liberated himself, namely, Socrates, who by means of his persistent asking to turn our gaze toward the light compels us to stand in the light. Even so, the question once again arises: How did Socrates manage to free himself?

Descartes and Husserl, and Augustine of Hippo before them, give a response to the aforementioned questions: certain potentialities exist within the human being that allow one to liberate oneself, and what guides one here is doubt. Doubt arises even at the bottom of the cave. For Descartes, doubt immediately surrounds the existence of things. For Husserl, doubt begins at the level of perception, despite the fact that one only becomes aware of this at the level of the intellect insofar as it is not possible in certain cases to make a perceptual judgment. One must ask: In these cases, what is doubt related to? Here, we find two paths: first, doubt concerns the existence of the world and, second, doubt throws the natural attitude into crisis. Husserl seeks to challenge Descartes with the latter path. Even if the natural attitude consists of assuming that reality is what gives itself in its existence, the existence of reality cannot be doubted. Positing the world as existing, that is, recognizing the validity of the thesis that the world exists, cannot be countered by an antithesis:

> The same material of being cannot simultaneously be doubted and held to be certain. In like manner, it is clear that the *attempt* to doubt anything intended to as something *on hand* necessarily *effects a certain annulment of positing* and precisely this interests us. The annulment in question is not a transmutation of positing into counter positing, of position into negation; it is also not transmutation into uncertain presumption, deeming possible, undecidedness, into a doubt (in any sense whatever of the world): nor indeed is anything like that within the sphere of our free choice.[10]

The citation above allows us to see how Husserl distinguishes himself from Descartes: Husserl believes that we are compelled to accept that reality does indeed present itself to us in its existence. One cannot say that reality does not exist; one can, however, change one's attitude in the face of reality. The thesis remains what it is, but we do not make use of it: we bracket it; we place it out of circulation. Husserl, being a fine mathematician, remarks: "It is still there, like the parenthesized in the parentheses, like the excluded outside the context of inclusion."[11] We are dealing here with a changing of our evaluation, which is connected to the domain of our freedom. We proceed to suspend our judgment "… which is compatible with the unshaken conviction of truth, even with the unshakable conviction of evident truth."[12]

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[10] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und einer phänomenologische Philosophie. Erstes Buch,* in *Husserliana* III, 1976; English translation: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy*, vol. I, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982), 58. Hereafter cited as *Ideas I*.

[11] *Ibid*., 59.

[12] *Ibid*.

What is the result of such an operation vis-à-vis the natural attitude? Rather than remaining at the bottom of the cave, one finds in one's very own self the strength to liberate oneself, not only by bracketing the question about the existence of the world—a metaphysical concession to Descartes—but also by suspending the validity of all the sciences that refer to the world and the way of the sciences, as they are configured in the modern world. Descartes, then, is only one of Husserl's fundamental interlocutors. In reality, Husserl's argument is against positivism, which, in its own way, also sought to be without prejudice and, in particular, was against metaphysical knowledge, all in the name of securing the validity of the sciences. But positivism did not make the radical turn away from facts to the essence of facts; rather, positivism understood existence as a pure actuality; it did not investigate the sense of what gives itself. Here we have to pause and ask: Is Husserl's view metaphysical? It is not metaphysical in the classic sense, although the primacy of essences opens a pathway to an area of research—notwithstanding the claim that this pathway remains mainly at the level of knowing—that possesses certain metaphysical aspects, especially when it comes to anthropological or theological questions.[13] These questions do not concern us here for the moment. We wish to investigate the sense or meaning of the decision.

In order to tackle the question of decision, I employ another text of Husserl in which he discusses the epoché, a text in which the discussion of decision emerges with greater force. I refer specifically to texts from volume 2 of his *Erste Philosophie*, (1923/1924).

The philosophical attitude must undergo the epoché and, here, we find a reference to Socrates-Plato and their explicit refutation of sophistry: philosophy is a knowledge that departs from the highest and ultimate self-awareness and self-responsibility of the knower; philosophy is a knowledge that presents itself as a universal science that is self-justifying. It is precisely because philosophy departs from self-awareness that it founds itself on *Willen* (willing): the subject that philosophizes founds itself on willing, which is always enacted in a reflexive manner; the subject actualizes a *Willensentschluss* (the subject makes a decision or a deliberately willed resolution). This German term refers to a decision that stems from a process that ultimately leads to a conclusion.[14] In the case of the epoché, one arrives at a decision when one recognizes that it is necessary for overcoming the natural attitude. At this point, we need to consider another German word for decision, which is similar to the Latin word *de-cidere*—from which the English word "decision" comes—namely, *Ent-scheidung:* both terms deal with the separation of two moments as well the choosing of one moment over the other. Here, we are confronted by two attitudes: an attitude for sleeping individuals and an attitude for those who are awake and wish to know deeply. To assume the latter is to choose a life dedi-

[13] I discuss this development in my *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*, trans. A. Calcagno, in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 98 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

[14] Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, ed. R. Boehm (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1959), in *Husserliana*, vol. VIII, 5–6. Hereafter cited as EP II.

cated to the pursuit of radical knowledge: it is a life choice that configures itself as a vocation, a call (*Berufung*).[15]

We find here a decision that is born out of the deepest center of our own personality. It is a choice that is both a commitment and a task: it is both existential and living. We hear the echo of Plato's words concerning the liberated prisoner: "And so, do you think there exits in that liberated prisoner any interest or desire for, any feeling of, or envy of great men, of the magnates of this world? Rather, in him, there arises the impression of which Homer speaks, 'Being a peasant, serving a man, gives nothing.' The free man would rather bear any catastrophe than believe in the opinions of or dwell in this world."[16] We must be careful insofar as our lives are in peril, for we wish not only to hold onto our discovery for ourselves but we also wish to help other prisoners liberate themselves: "If they could seize him and kill him, they undoubtedly would do it." The contrast between those who are awake and those who are sleeping becomes very dramatic at this point. In effect, Socrates has lost his life.

Husserl does not view the situation in such dramatic terms, for he was not involved in the life of the polis as Socrates had been. For Husserl, philosophical commitment is felt to be an existential task. In his text, even if he does not explicitly says so, he is commenting directly on Plato's myth of the cave because knowledge of truth is equated with the idea of the beautiful: "In the intelligible order, it seems to me that the Idea of the Good is seen last and with great difficulty. But once it is seen, one must conclude that it is indeed the Idea of the Good for all. The Idea of the Good is the cause of all that is good and beautiful."[17]

For Husserl, beauty is not only linked to truth but, as for Plato, "Beauty is loved. Love is without end. It is only love in the infinity of loving, which, therefore, carries in itself the infinite correlate of pure value."[18] And all of this is the fruit of a decision, which is even a "consecration" that radically grounds itself in the will.

As in Plato, Husserl's language takes on a religious connotation: vocation, consecration, love for the *sapientia universalis* (universal wisdom). One responds to the call by taking a stance: "Philosophy, in principle, separates (*scheidet*) its paths from all naïveté."[19] To paraphrase Husserl, philosophy separates itself from the natural attitude. In this way, circularity between knowledge, love, and the seeking of value is established. In a deep spiritual sense, the philosopher is not closed in upon him- or herself: s/he has a public function. S/he is truly the "civil servant of humanity," as Husserl affirms.

These are motivations that push one to adopt a philosophical attitude, that push one to make a decision. We must take note there that the decision to suspend the natural attitude is not born out of an arbitrary choice. In order to sustain the afore-

[15] *Ibid.*, 19.

[16] Plato, *The Republic*, 346.

[17] *Ibid.*, 347.

[18] EP II, 14–15.

[19] *Ibid.*, 18.

mentioned position, we need to probe more deeply into what a decision is and into the motivation that drives it.

Later, we will reflect on the decision and the particular motivation behind the phenomenological epoché. For the moment, however, let us examine the result of such an epoché, which will allow us to analyze what decision and motivation are in general.

1.2 Decision and Motivation

In order to analyze decision and motivation, we need to journey along the long path of the phenomenological method.

We saw earlier how the method begins with the epoché of the natural attitude, which means that we do not naïvely accept the existence of things as they appear. Following Descartes, then, we need to ask the question about the "residue" or what remains after the epoché is performed. The question about what remains after our bracketing, then, spontaneously arises.

If we view the epoché in absolute terms, we lapse into scepticism, which we would have to flee because it is an inherently contradictory position. The very affirmation of a position that maintains no grounds for certainty is both absolute and peremptory, Husserl says. Taking out of circulation our naïve belief in the existence of the world is an operation of the subject and is not radical; this operation leaves a residue. Augustine observes: one can doubt everything, but there is an "inner knowledge that we know we live" (*intima scientia, est qua nos vivere scimus*.) (*De Trinitate* XV, 12, 21). For Descartes, what remains is the *cogito* and, for Husserl, a region of being that is the locus of our living of experiences remains. Husserl's claim is very similar to Augustine's: Husserl seeks to specify what it is "to live" experience and what kind of science accompanies this "to live." He believes we need to recognize the "sense" or "meaning" of this living. This means that though I can bracket the existence of things, that is, their facticity, I can still seek out their sense.

The motivation that pushes one to bracket the natural attitude is precisely the search for a deeper sense, for an absolute justification that leads to evidence, as we have already mentioned. In the natural attitude, which first absolutizes facticity, not all is clearly presented. What comes to appear is often dubious and enigmatic. A search for sense already manifests itself.

In the positivist attitude, where the evidence of the diverse domains of scientific knowledge is primary, the guiding thread inevitably ends up being the sense or meaning of such domains. In physics, for example, mechanics, understood as the study of movement, presupposes the individuation-distinction of movement itself as essential. Moreover, mechanics also presupposes that its "essence" is different from that of optics or acoustics.

If the search for sense and evidence motivate research in general, the search for clarity and evidence becomes even more important in philosophical inquiry. We can

see, then, how Husserl is not only in agreement with Descartes but also with Plato and Aristotle: What makes *epistemé* different than *doxa*? According to Aristotle, *epistemé* is a deeper understanding that tends toward universality. "… [T]he man of experience is held to be wiser than the mere possessors of any power of sensation, the artist than the man of experience, the master craftsman than the artisan; and the speculative sciences to be more learned than the productive. Thus it is clear that Wisdom is knowledge of certain principles and causes."[20] By asking questions about why and about the causes of something one can achieve, with clarity, the ultimate sense of things.

At this point, we need to direct our attention to the human subject, who seeks. Certainly, the philosopher appears to be the one who succeeds at delving most deeply into the discovery of the sense of reality. One could ask if this produces an attitude of superiority over others. The conviction of superiority has, for the most part been present in philosophers. Have philosophers fashioned themselves into a cultural elite that ridicules others? This has certainly happened in some cases and still continues, but from a Socratic point of view, for example, the capacity to consider matters deeply could be seen more as a public service than as contemptuous detachment. Each attitude depends upon the moral stance of a given individual.

All human beings are endowed with critical capacities and, hence, are potentially capable of becoming philosophers, as John Paul II observed in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.[21] But the activity of philosophy is also nourished by creative capacities, and some individuals completely dedicate themselves to philosophical inquiry. They render philosophy a profession (*Beruf*). Aristotle defined the wise person in the following terms: "We consider first, then, that the wise man knows all things, so far as this is possible, without having knowledge of every one of them individually."[22] I believe that the insistence on the intellectual figure of the seeker, on his/her capacities or limits, certainly did not die with ancient philosophy, as evidenced by the aforementioned examples, including that of the foundational contribution of modern thought, which includes Husserl.

Philosophy is a collection of impersonal ideas but it is also the product of the work of a real individual who seeks the universality of results.

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[20] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vol. I, trans. H. Tredennick, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, (London: William Heinemann LTD/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 9.

[21] See section 1 of John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio*: "Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: *Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?* These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives." http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html. Accessed October 26, 2014.

[22] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 9.

What is new about modern philosophy? The answer: the crisis of the human subject who thinks that s/he can take on an unmediated, objective point of view. This crisis is concretized in the suspension of judgment on that which appears to extend beyond the subject and in the search for a residue that is individuated in consciousness, understood in its purity, that is, in its essential structure. We are dealing here with the transcendental dimension discussed in modern philosophy and re-examined through the phenomenological *epoché*, which leads to a series of reductions that, in their totality, can be referred to as the phenomenological reduction. While it is true that we are employing terms already used throughout the history of philosophy, the intent here is to revisit them in order to draw out new consequences.

The investigation hinges upon the essence of the consciousness of something that one lives through. Hence, we are analyzing something about which one is conscious insofar as it is lived. Consciousness is not a place or a box that contains something; rather, experiences are lived through in consciousness, and this is why they are called *Erlebnisse*. Edith Stein defines consciousness as an internal light that accompanies lived experiences. Her work, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, assists us to understand, in a clear and synthetic fashion, what decision and motivation are.

In order to grasp the sense of *Erlebnisse*, including the lived experiences of decision and motivation, we need to carry out a preliminary analysis of psyche and spirit. The dimensions of psyche and spirit are both defined in terms of the qualities of the acts that characterize each domain. In the case of the former, we are dealing with a psychic mechanism that is founded upon a life-force; here, reactions and impulses "occur." In the case of the latter, we enter into the sphere of free acts, which properly characterize the human being.

Motivation manifests itself in a transverse fashion because it is the link that connects acts to one another. The link must not be understood as psychic association, but as a spiritual act of the I. This is why one lived experience follows another lived experience. Each lived experience is accomplished on the basis of another lived experience or by the willing of another lived experience. Examples can be found in perception: the seeing of a spatial object on a surface or the seizing of the sense of an entire proposition only after hearing a few words. The unity of sense that the I brings to completion through a series of acts allows for the fullness or achievement of sense to be realized.

What is of particular interest for us here is not the understanding of motive as a stimulus, but rational motives or rational motivations, which allow us to speak reasonably about motivations, understood in the specific sense of the highest levels of spiritual activity. This is the case because the connection that is established between acts is not causal; rather, the connection is made in a motivational fashion, that is, from one act to another. The spontaneity of taking a stance can be accepted or rejected on the basis of a motive or on some grounds. When motive and grounds coincide, motivation is considered rational. Stein gives us an example for understanding the case of carrying out an epoché: Someone gives me some news, which I do not believe because the bearer of the news is unreliable. This determines my epoché, that is, the suspension of my belief vis-à-vis the unreliability of the news.

The foregoing example is also valid for the suspension of judgment in the natural attitude. I cannot accept remaining in the natural attitude because things will often be presented as dubious or not clear. Hence, it is necessary to bracket this attitude, for there is a rationally justified motive that pushes me to not accept the attitude. But what pushes me to doubt and to keep on searching? The answer: the fact that I face what gives itself to me with absoluteness and undeniable evidence. But whence do I derive this desire for absoluteness and evidence? Certainly not from the outside, but from something inside me, which gives me criteria and norms. I only briefly touch upon motive and motivation here. They require further elaboration, which I cannot give within the framework of this chapter. In my opinion, the theme of the ideal yields a criterion for truth, whose origin is to be sought in the presence of truth in us. Here, metaphysical and religious experience intertwine insofar as the basis of truth in the metaphysical sense is the presence of the divine in us. The divine is understood as the reality that transcends everything, as Augustine and Anselm teach us.

Let us turn briefly, again, to motivation: In what sense can we say that motivation is the base of decision? We have simply to examine acts of acceptance or rejection to answer our question. The acceptance or refusal of a spontaneous taking a stance is the fruit of an *Entscheidung*. We are dealing here with free acts, if motivation is rationally grounded, as Edith Stein notes.[23]

In order to deepen our analysis of a decision, I would like to examine the fourth chapter of Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* dedicated to "active and passive modalization." Syntheses of agreement and disagreement as well as those of obstructed and non-obstructed intentions manifest themselves at the passive level. We are not only dealing here with the letting a supposition live or the making manifest of passive intentionality; rather, we notice that the I decides; it expresses a judgment, and this implies an activity.

Judging is always only a process of conferring or denying validity that stems from the ego, says Edith Stein.[24] If the process of knowledge, understood as initiating in perception, arises without great difficulty, perceptual judgment does not imply a decision: it only arises when counter-motives are posited. It is necessary to assume, then, an attitude of acceptance or rejection on the basis of validity or non-validity. Motivation pushes us to accept one of the two attitudes. Certainly, a problematic perceptual ground can arise, and I can live it as being divided by opposing tendencies. We have already eliminated the case of doubt. Decision tends to establish the univocity of perception.[25] The primacy of doubt returns here, revealing a conflict within the I that appears at two levels: (1) the passive level (the passive and disjunct tension of problematic possibilities: I do not succeed through perception at deciding whether we are dealing here with a wax figure or a real human being); (2)

[23] Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans. M.C. Baseheart and M. Sawicki (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000), 49–50.

[24] APS, 93.

[25] "The motivational foundation for the decision as the ego's firm positing-as-valid, or again for the negative decision, is thus the restoration of perceptual concordance." *Ibid.*, 94–95.

the active level that splits the I (I cannot make a perceptual judgment). Here, asking arises, an asking that tends toward a sure response: harmony re-establishes itself.[26] It seems, then, that we can interpret the term "harmony," which Husserl employs in a surprising manner in this context, as the exigency to which I referred earlier in my text, namely, the deep sense of the unity and absoluteness that the human cognitive ideal represents.

Turning to our initial question about the sense of the phenomenological epoché, we discover that it is a decision which is not merely the product of an arbitrary act. If we start from the subject, from an act of his/her will, we end up at a voluntary decision that is the result of a trajectory that began in the passive sphere of doubt, that is, in the impossibility of expressing a perceptual judgment or, better still, of not always being able to express a judgment. We moved from a problem that arose from a question that asked something, to a response that one must give and, therefore, to a decision to exclude or accept. The foregoing operation does not only happen in attitudes of everyday life, but it also signals in a very particular way the beginning of philosophizing in western culture.

[26] "The passive disjunctive tension of problematic possibilities (of doubt in the passive sense) motivates an active doubting, a mode of comportment that displaces the ego in an act-schism. This essentially and immediately implies an uneasiness and an original drive to get beyond it, to come back to the normal condition of humanity." *Ibid*., 100.

Chapter 2
Why the Transcendental?

In the preceding chapter, a problem arose and a solution was offered. We need, however, to probe deeper and open up another entryway. This opening will allow us to not only justify the results obtained in the last chapter but it will also permit us to address the transcendental.

As mentioned earlier, we wish to closely follow Husserl's analysis. Though notoriously difficult, his work offers readers rich resources for understanding sense. In order to understand Husserl's investigations, let us imagine two movements or trajectories: the first moves from the bottom upward and vice versa, and the second radiates outward from a central point, ultimately forming a wheel. The former moves from constituted knowing to the foundations of such knowing in subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The latter is a subjective-intersubjective analysis that opens onto different dimensions: sciences, history, culture, anthropology, law, psychology, cultural anthropology, religion—all of which manifest important questions and internal structures, including space, time, community and society, corporeity, psyche and spirit, norms, the normal and the abnormal, and human expressions made concrete by their use in customs and religious practices. Both a depth of quality and quantity mark these dimensions.

The transcendental turn of Husserl, which affected discussions and oppositions between the "Master" and his students, eventually resulting in the separation of Husserl from some of his early students, needs to be discussed. We first have to ask how Husserl's position fits within the history of transcendental philosophy, a history that is intimately connected to the turn of modern philosophy toward the human subject, who is seen as a source of thought and action.

Let us begin with Descartes. In chapter 10 of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl defines Descartes' attitude as "transcendental." We need to understand, however, why Husserl separates himself from Descartes. There are numerous reasons. Husserl accuses Descartes of viewing the *ego cogito* as an apodictic axiom that constitutes the "foundation" of an explanatory and regulatory science, which works deductively *more geometrico* (in a geometric manner). Descartes sees the I, so Husserl claims, as a small part of the world that needs to be conserved and unquestioned, a world

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15395-7_2

that can be deduced through syllogistic operations. Even though Descartes discovered a modern way to approach subjectivity, he does not, says Husserl, uncover its deep sense, that is, its true "transcendental" sense.

Husserl launches the same critique against Kant, even though Kant himself had mapped out the transcendental sphere. It should be remarked that in his lecture of 1924, "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,"[1] which was held at the University of Freiburg to commemorate the philosophical legacy of Kant, Husserl recognizes Kant as his precursor. Despite the connection, Husserl's transcendental position arises independently from both Descartes' and Kant's positions. Though Husserl did not begin his transcendental project with Descartes and Kant, he included them in his philosophical work as it unfolded over 20 years. Husserl already referred to Descartes in his *Ideas I* (1913) and he treats Kant in his early 1900s discussion of Neo-Kantianism. Husserl also refers to Kant's psychological studies, which Husserl, in his early research, viewed as more or less correct. Ultimately, Husserl was not satisfied with Kant's account, and this motivated him to further clarify the distinction between the psychological I and the transcendental I, a distinction that allowed Husserl to describe Kant as his most direct precursor.

Husserl's critique of Kant's position becomes explicit. In the lecture mentioned above, we find significant points of contrast: Although Kant's interest was directed to moments of sensation necessary for objective validity and although he sought to grasp the a priori of the life of consciousness with its givens of sensation, Kant did not, however, undertake a concrete intuitive study of the functions of consciousness, of consciousness's active and passive syntheses. I maintain that the most important difference between Kant and Husserl can be seen in the following passage: "A transcendental logic is possible only within a transcendental noetics; the transcendental theories of the objective figures of sense are, if one wishes to fully achieve sufficient and absolute knowledge, inseparable from the transcendental search for the essences of life that give form to the objective sense."[2] In the foregoing citation, one notes, on one hand, the precedence of noetics over logic and, on the other hand, the necessity of a transcendental inquiry into the essence of life. The investigation of the transcendental and its relation to the essence of life demarcates the fundamental difference between Husserl and Kant, a difference that I will discuss later.

In order to understand more fully the meaning of the Husserlian transcendental, we need to consider other modern philosophers, whom Husserl cites in the *Crisis of the European Sciences*, namely, Leibniz and Hume. Though these philosophers have seemingly little to do with the discussion of the transcendental, they are, in fact, deeply important for understanding it.

We can read Leibniz as a pre-transcendental philosopher.[3] Husserl, however, does not see the whole of Leibniz's position as pre-transcendental. He thinks that

[1] Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Erster Teil: Kritische Ideen-geschichte*, ed. Rudolf Boehm, in *Husserliana*, vol. VII (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1956), 208–287, 350–408. Hereafter cited as EP I (volume 1) and EP II (volume 2).

[2] EP II, 179.

[3] Marco Ivaldo, *Fichte e Leibniz. La comprensione transcendentale della monadologia* (Milano: Guerini e Associati, 2000).

Leibniz can confirm his own discovery of *Einfühlung or* empathy (or how I prefer to call it intropathy), to which I shall refer later. The lived experience of intropathy entails two subjects, two Is or two monads, that are open to one another—an ego that opens up to an alter ego. Leibniz helps us understand the relationship between monads, as intropathy is a sort of "mirroring." "In a monad, other single monads directly mirror themselves though intropathy."[4] If Husserl is correct, one accesses the being of the other through the medium of lived experience and, in this sense, we find ourselves in the transcendental sphere.

Hume, who seems to be the philosopher most far removed from the transcendental, helps Husserl more in a deconstructive way than in a constructive one. Deconstruction is as necessary as it is preliminary. Hume executes a kind of epoché that consists in a rejection of objectivism.[5] Let us not forget that Hume also carried out the same critique of conceptual constructs while underscoring the necessity of transcending them, as Kant recognized. Hume's critique points Husserl in the right direction. Hume clearly shows that the primacy of the natural and mathematical sciences, and hence the natural and mathematical understanding of reality, conditions rationalist philosophy. According to Husserl, Descartes, although he wanted to avoid certain prejudices, excessively admired the mathematized natural sciences of his day.[6] "Descartes had not pondered the fact that, just as the sensible world, the world of everyday life, is the *cogitatum* of sensing *cogitations,* so too is the scientific world the *cogitatum* of scientific *cogitations*."[7] On the contrary, Hume shows us "…that the life of consciousness is a life of *accomplishment*: the accomplishment, right or wrong, of ontic meaning,"[8] and this is valid for the life that is sensibly intuited and "all the more" for the life of science, Husserl remarks.

" I myself," writes Husserl, "use the word 'transcendental' *in the broadest sense* for the original motif, discussed in detail above, which through Descartes confers meaning upon all modern philosophies, the motif which, in all of them, seeks to come to itself, so to speak—seeks to attain the genuine and pure form of its task and its systematic development. It is the motif of inquiring back into the ultimate sources of all the formations of knowledge, the motif of the knower's reflecting upon himself and his knowing life in which all the scientific structures that are valid for him occur purposefully, are stored up as acquisitions, and have become and continue to become freely available."[9]

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[4] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil: 1921–1928*, ed. I. Kern, in *Husserliana* 14 (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1973), Beilage XL, 300.

[5] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie.* Hrsg. von W. Biemel, in *Husserliana,* vol. VI, 1976. English translation: *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), § 24. Hereafter cited C.

[6] CM, First Meditation, § 1.

[7] C*,* 90.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] *Ibid*., 97–98.

Husserl's project, as it unfolds in the terms described above, which we can locate at the end of his investigations in the *Crisis*, can also be found at the beginning of his philosophical career. The wellspring of a universal philosophy, as Husserl understands it, always is, despite the different approaches and the diverse paths of his reductions, the *I itself*. For this reason "… as against the first application of the epoché, a second is required, or rather a conscious reshaping of the epoché through a reduction to the absolute ego as the ultimately unique center of function in all constitution."[10]

The expression "functional center" is key for understanding the meaning of the transcendental dimension, and is mentioned in § 24 of *Ideas I*: "… the pure ego is given in absolute selfhood and in a unity which does not present itself by way of adumbrations; it can be grasped adequately in the reflexive shift of focus that goes back to it as a center of functioning."[11]

Before we can grasp the meaning of the aforementioned term, we need to briefly examine two fundamental moments of the reduction and its residue. These aspects are found in *Ideas I* and the *Crisis*. In § 43 of the latter, the Cartesian route followed in *Ideas I* "… has a great shortcoming: while it leads to the transcendental ego in one leap, as it were, it brings this ego into view as apparently empty of content, since there can be no preparatory explication; so one is at loss, at first, to know what has been gained by it, much less how, starting with this, a completely new sort of fundamental science, decisive for philosophy, has been attained."[12]

To grasp the difference between the two moments, we need to investigate how they unfold; Husserl's analysis here is more convincing and "demonstrative" of all the steps necessary to obtain a result. Let us compare sections 31–36 of *Ideas I* with sections 44–85 of the *Crisis*. In the former, a problem arises, on one hand, with positivism and, on the other hand, with Descartes. The text here questions positivism's claims about the primacy of facts and existence achieved through factual observation. Husserl wishes to grasp essence, and essence here also includes the essence of essence itself: "We shall proceed, first of all, with a direct demonstrable showing and, since the being that we want to demonstrably show is nothing else than what we shall designate, for essential reasons, as "pure mental processes (*Erlebnisse*)," "pure consciousness" and, on the other hand, its "pure Ego," we shall start with *the* Ego, *the* consciousness and the mental processes (*Erlebnisse*) which are given to us in the natural attitude."[13]

The psychological I, the real human being, becomes the object of Husserl's new analysis and this is very significant because one can understand his position as excluding the aspect of the concretely human, existential, and individual, and as excluding nature in its real structure. On the contrary, Husserl does not want to eliminate the real human being and nature from his study. In these sections, he insists on presenting the human being as both a ground and instrument: the

[10] *Ibid*., 186.

[11] *Ideas I*, 111.

[12] C, 155.

[13] *Ideas I*, 64.

instrument is the bracketing of what is obvious about humans, the factuality that drags along with itself the theme of existence, understood as factual observation; the ground is subjectivity whose structures need to be investigated, thereby allowing the very mirror which reflects all that is human to appear. This mirror is formed by the I, consciousness, and *Erlebnisse*. But the holding firm of one's gaze on consciousness and the I, as Husserl says in § 33 of *Ideas I*, does not mean that one should forget that the I and consciousness are the true ways that can account for how reality presents and constitutes itself.

The goal here is to understand what nature is and what human beings are, as well as what relation exists among humans and between humans and nature. The answer to the foregoing questions can be found in *Ideas II*, a text rarely cited and hardly known, a text, one could say, whose publication was "constantly delayed" by Husserl himself as he did not wish to publish it. In my opinion, his reluctance has a definite meaning: one needs to sharpen one's instruments and scope the territory before constructing an edifice that runs the risk of being only a conceptual construction of a speculative nature. He scrupulously searches for a foundation, understood as the justification of the terrain that is essentially constituted by the I and its lived experiences; his search always pushes him to investigate, and almost maniacally so, this new terrain. Husserl's search in *Ideas II*, however, does show the constructive aspect of his work, but one has to admit that the constructive aspect is less organic and more dispersed than the methodological aspect of his philosophy.

A greater equilibrium between method and construction is found in the early phenomenological work of Edith Stein, though this equilibrium often gives the impression that a distance exists between Stein and Husserl. On the contrary, Edith Stein faithfully applied the phenomenological method with great acuity and discipline, following the results of Husserl's studies found in *Ideas II* and *On the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, which are works she transcribed.

One can also find *results* obtained through constructive argumentation in Husserl's thought, which I maintain can be seen in *Ideas II*: they represent a theoretical base for his later analyses. In this way, the transcendental dimension becomes the proper place for the justification, and not for the creation, of evidence, nor is it a place for the construction of reality. The transcendental manifests characteristics that are traceable through the human being. In and through philosophical reflection, the human being does nothing other than make evident all that occurs. The human being lives, but what does it mean to live? One knows, but what does it mean to know and what does one know?

The primacy of the subject must be understood as *quoad nos*: we ourselves are a central point of reference and departure. Questions are asked about reality and/or realities, but the subject asks them: the subject must first understand himself/herself as the one who asks the questions. And the primary goal of the epistemic question of understanding is to be viewed only as the beginning of a search and not as the ultimate foundation of reality.

We can find evidence for the aforementioned claim in Husserl's texts and in his reflections on the life world. In the *Crisis*, Husserl says that he has found a "new

way."[14] This new way begins with existential and cultural observations that show that a human being lives and lives within a context. The life world is the terrain of human life in a dynamic world; in this context, human life becomes a "Heraclitean river."[15]

The goal here is to understand this world of practices in order to comprehend the human operations that make these practices possible. This is why, then, we need to proceed to employ the *epoché* and consider "[a]nything that is—whatever its meaning and whatever region it belongs—as an index of a subjective system of correlations."[16] Transcendental constitution, then, belongs to the "originary formation of sense" that leads to the ontology of the life world. Insofar as the life world is the world of experience, its ontology must fundamentally involve human subjectivity that reveals itself as a paradox: "… being a subject for the world and at the same time an object in the world."[17]

2.1 The Knowledge of Things

If we remain on the gnoseological plane, a plane that is central for modern philosophy and for Husserl, and that is the privileged access way for comprehending the real, even if the real is understood in classical metaphysical terms, one must note that in the Husserlian expression "the active and passive synthesis of conscience," one finds the key to overcoming Kantian epistemology.

Having offered only some preliminary remarks on active and passive synthesis, I would now like to address Husserl's view on this topic. His deepest and most sustained reflections on active and passive synthesis can be found in his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*.

I cannot carry out here a full study of passive and active synthesis, but I would like to distinguish four important structural levels. The first two levels are mentioned in the aforementioned text and the last two levels are discussed in Husserl's *Experience and Judgment*. All levels follow one another, and I will start from the bottom and work my way to the top.

1. The synthesis of associative or pre-reflective unity, which arises on the basis of three principles (likeness or homogeneity, contrast and contiguity). This kind of synthesis permits a unitary formation.[18]
2. Affect, which operates in the flowing present and which produces the reawakening of givenness in retention and protention.[19]

[14] C, § 43.

[15] *Ibid*., 177.

[16] *Ibid*., see title of § 48.

[17] *Ibid*., see title of § 53.

[18] APS, Part 2, Division 3, Ch. I, §§ 28, 29.

[19] APS, Part 2, Division 3, Ch. 2.

3. Receptivity, which is motivated by affection and grounds the apprehension of an object. Even if motivated passively, receptivity permits the activity of consciousness to operate under it.[20]
4. Receptivity permits the formation of an object and an understanding and explication of the formation. Here, apperception is actualized.[21]

In the synthetic process, unity appears at the very first level; it is not achieved only at the fourth level (i.e., apperception), as is the case in Kant's philosophy. We are not dealing here with construction that follows the order of the levels indicated above. On the contrary, such levels start from the object, which manifests itself to consciousness. It is possible to carry out a retrospective analytical investigation in order to reach the givens. We are proceeding here in the reverse order from Kant's order, where it is possible to analyze the functions of the subject while separating from the object. For Husserl, on the contrary, consciousness is not a togetherness of functions independent of that to which the functions are applied. Consciousness is the very same stratification of the passive and active constitutive operations that form the object.

If it is true that the subject's awareness begins at the moment of receptivity, constituting a shift from passivity to activity, then what was first anonymously present to consciousness can be posited thematically for consciousness through receptivity.

All that was said above allows us to put forward two considerations. The first concerns the meaning of consciousness and the second deals with the genesis of consciousness. For Husserl, consciousness is not self-consciousness, as is the case for Descartes. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the I and consciousness.

For Husserl, subjectivity is larger than the I: not all that is subjective is egological. Even passive syntheses are pre-objective and pre-egological. The fact that they are subjective is uniquely determined by the possibility that passive syntheses are actively grasped by the subject who grasps them. Hence, transcendental subjectivity is more than just the transcendental I.

Our second consideration is very important because it permits us to clearly distinguish the originality of Husserl's position vis-à-vis Kant's in order to understand more precisely the meaning of the transcendental. The process of genesis clarifies the constitution of both object and subject. *We are dealing here with a unique process that has an objective and a subjective side.* It is not possible, therefore, to speak of a "faculty," says Husserl, even though for Kant this is possible. An already-structured subject, who organizes an un-formed material, thereby creating a unity,

[20] Edmund Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik,* Hrsg. Von L. Landgrebe, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985). English translation: *Experience and Judgment*: *Investigations in Genealogy of Logic,* Revised and edited by L. Landgrebe, trans. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks, Afterword by L. Eley, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973). Hereafter cited as EJ. See, "Affection and Turning-Toward of the Ego. Receptivity as the Lowest Level of the Activity of the Ego", § 17.

[21] EJ, § 24, "The Activity of Explicative Contemplation and the Explicative Synthesis."

does not exist, but, at the same time, the formation of the object and the subject give themselves. The pre-eminence that seems to be accorded to the subject resides in the fact that the subject is a human being, who, when asking himself/herself about the sense of things, is able to trace out a genetic pathway while investigating the genesis of constitution itself, as Husserl emphasizes in the second volume of his writings on intersubjectivity.[22]

Proof of Husserl's archaeological investigation of the genesis of constitution can be found in the role that intentionality plays in consciousness. Pre-objective givens are intended, but, unlike objects, these pre-givens presuppose no act that refers to the I-pole of lived experiences. Hence, Husserl speaks of a passive intentionality that is latently defined as "functioning" (*furgierende*), which, however, can transform itself into an active intentionality.[23] This passive intentionality that can become active can be seen in affects and, as with affects, this kind of intentionality can be directed toward a given that can be either effective or potential.

Passive and latent intentionality characterize what Husserl calls the hyletic dimension, a dimension that we will discuss later.

2.2 The Human Being as a Subject and Object of Knowledge

Having sketched *grosso modo* what happens in the relationship between the internal and the external, in particular, how their separation happens in unitary moments that are graspable through a regressive analysis, we are now able to focus our attention on the subject and how s/he is structured.

Let us return to the dimension of lived experience, as the examination of conscious lived experience can, says Husserl, lead us back to the "realities" that it manifests. These lived experiences reveal the human being as a bodily-psychic-spiritual being. This description of the human being is a response to the radical question: what is the human being? Husserl's clear and precise answer overcomes the Kantian position. If the guiding thread that links Husserl to Kant is represented by the theme of the transcendental, then we need to ask about the human being within this transcendental framework, and this can only be achieved through the transcendental I.

What is the transcendental ego? According to Husserl, the claim of the existence of the transcendental ego can withstand any radical objection of the following sort: if the I, that is, this human being (*Mensch*), if s/he assumes the transcendental position, s/he returns to her/his pure ego, which is an abstract level of the concrete human being, the human being's pure spirit, as Descartes maintained. But the individual who speaks in the way mentioned above, including Descartes, lapses into the naïve and natural attitude. The individual's thought moves within the territory of

[22] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil: 1921–1928*, in *Husserliana*, vol. 14, 41.

[23] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil: 1929–1935*, ed. I. Kern (Den Haag: Kluwer, 1973), in *Husserliana*, vol. 15, text no. 34.

a pre-given world rather than a domain made evident by the *epoché*. Through the epoché, it becomes clear that in the ego, the apperception of being human is maintained within the universal apperception of the sense of being of the world.[24]

One must ask oneself if the reduction to the ego cancels out *Mensch* as *Mensch in der Welt*, that is, is the human being eliminated from the human being existing in the world? Husserl emphasizes that the world remains a fundamental theme of investigation and cannot be eliminated from phenomenological inquiry; rather, it must be subtracted from the "naïveté" of everyday consciousness. What, then, is the structure of the human being that directly emerges from a deeper investigation of the transcendental domain? The answer to this question can be found in the second volume of Husserl's *Ideas*. We need to pay close attention to this text because it is most important for understanding the development of a philosophical anthropology.

Following the transcendental analysis that shows consciousness as the locus in which all the dimensions of the subject mirror themselves, it becomes possible, then, to essentially describe a series of conscious lived experience that refer back to the "real" structures of the human being. The first and second volumes of the *Ideas* are connected and must be read in this way. If the first volume establishes the connections between the phenomenological method and its various domains of analysis, that is, the transcendental dimension as a locus of revelation of the sense of the reality *quoad nos*, the second volume turns to the constitution of material nature, to which the body belongs, that is, animal nature, which is characterized by psyche and the world of spirit, to which the personal I appertains.

After bracketing all the traditional theories about the human being—in an original way, I would say, because Husserl prefers to take a demonstrative approach rather than a deductive one—one finds the human being viewed as consisting of three parts: body, psyche, and spirit.

The structure of the human being can be demonstrated by beginning with one's own body, *Leib*, which, in itself, is not a starting point; rather the living of one's body is traceable through its characteristics presented in perception, and perception is understood as a lived experience of consciousness. If perceptual apprehension presupposes the contents of sensation that play a necessary role in the constitution of schemata and the constitution of the appearing of real things, this means that "… in all perceptions, in all perceptual exhibition (experience), the Body is involved as freely moved sense organ, as freely moved totality of sense organs, and hence there is also given the fact that, on this original foundation, all that is thingly-real in the surrounding world of the Ego has its relation to the Body."[25]

The discussion of one's own body does not need to return to a discussion of consciousness and the pure I, but Husserl once again describes the pure I to remind his

[24] Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologie und Anthropologie*, in *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (*1922–1937*), eds. Th. Nenon and H.R. Sepp (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987), 179.

[25] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, vol. II, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Den Haag: Springer, 1989), 61. Hereafter cited as *Ideas II*.

readers that an essential description becomes possible thanks to human capacities uncovered by reflection: "As what is absolutely given, or what can be brought to givenness in the a priori possible view of fixating reflection, it is by no means whatsoever something mysterious or mystical. I take myself as the pure I insofar as I take myself purely as that which, in perception, is directed to the perceived, in knowing to the known, in phantasizing to the phantasized, in logical thinking to the thought, in valuing to the valued, in willing to the willed. In the accomplishment of each act there lies a ray of directedness I cannot describe otherwise than by saying it takes its point of departure in the "Ego" which evidently thereby remains undivided and numerically identical while it lives in the these manifold acts, spontaneously takes an active part in them, and by means of ever new rays goes through these acts toward what is objective in their sense."[26]

Such acts can include attraction and repulsion, desire, love, hate, decision to act, an act of *fiat*, acts of will, theoretical acts of delineating a thematic context, establishing relations, linking a subject with a predicate, drawing out consequences, etc. We have here a *sui generis* transcendental structure that permits us to move beyond the investigation of the human being, understood as nature: one can investigate one's own body as the bearer of localized sensations or even one's own body as affected by sensations of pleasure, pain, well-being, dis-ease, all of which constitute the material of hyletic basis for the constitution of values. Therefore, intentional and material functions connect with one another and materials take on a spiritual function at the hyletic level.

By means of the level of "real" qualities (the hyletic base), insofar as they are constituted by virtue of a relation with real circumstances within the domain of the real, one's own body interweaves itself with psyche. Hence, we can affirm that "Soul and psychic Ego 'have' a Body; there exists a material thing, of certain nature, which is not merely a material thing but it is a Body, i.e., a material thing which, as localization field for sensations and for stirring of feelings, as complex of sense organs, and as phenomenal partner and counter-part of all perceptions of things (along with whatever else could be said about it, based on the above) makes up a fundamental component of the real givenness of the soul and the Ego."[27]

We have moved to another level that is qualitatively different from the material thing, that is, psyche, but one's own body—or more exactly the living body—is precisely the interweaving of both body and psyche. Certain Husserlian manuscripts analyze, always probing deeper into the psychic dimension, the realm of instinct, which demonstrates a connection of the human being with the animal world. But the difference of the human world from the animal world can be traced to the intentional and spiritual function[28] of human beings.

We saw above how acts refer to the pure I—acts that are different than tensions, impulses and relations. Here, I am specifically referring to acts of will, valuing as

[26] *Ibid*., 104.

[27] *Ibid.*, 165.

[28] Angela Ales Bello, "Human World—Animal World: An Interpretation of Instinct in Some Late Husserlian Manuscripts," in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 68 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000), 249–254.

well as theoretical acts, all of which characterize the human person. We now enter into the life of the spirit, which is not "determined," but "motivated." The life of spirit is the seat of free acts and the taking on of rational positions. Passivity and activity interweave with one another, but activity distinguishes the human being as "awake," that is, as ethically and theoretically awake.

The I exists in relation to the world through acts upon which the I is capable of reflecting, for example, when the I becomes aware of itself as a personal I. Others can do the same thing through similar acts, through empathy or intropathy, that is, through grasping the aforementioned acts of the person in question, for example, speaking about a person, one becomes clearly aware of the person as a person. Hence, we can proceed to begin to give a definition of the person: a person has representations, feels, values, pursues things, and acts. And in each of these personal acts, the person exists in relation with something, with the objects of his/her surrounding world.[29]

To take on a personal attitude vis-à-vis the surrounding world means taking on a valuing and ethical attitude. Far from an artificial way of being, the aforementioned attitude is the true and proper "natural" attitude.[30] We find here one of the few places where the term "natural" is given a positive sense. Usually, Husserl blends the meaning of the term with the positivists' understanding of the term within the context of naturalism. This is why he substitutes the term "nature," used, for example, in Scholastic medieval philosophy, with that of "essence." Edith Stein, who reappropriates Scholastic language in her own work, recognized the similarity of the meaning of the two terms.

Certainly, Husserl's position did not entail understanding essence or nature in terms of substance: such a conception was far removed from his mental horizon for numerous reasons, including his formation as a scientist, his probing of philosophy in a personal way without belonging to a particular school of philosophy, his belonging to a Protestant cultural world that found itself at odds with medieval philosophy, and his rejection of modern rationalist metaphysics. As it is well known, Franz Brentano, an ex-Catholic priest and an inheritor of the medieval tradition in an area of Austria that remained faithful to Roman Catholicism, as well as a believer in a rigorous philosophy that was also open to the then-new psychology, introduced Husserl to philosophy. Edith Stein affirms that the aforementioned points are not inconsequential for understanding the "essential" description of the human being put forth by Husserl. Here, essentiality does not possess a decidedly metaphysical foundation; rather, it permits one to describe the human being and his/her characteristics.

The result Husserl arrives at after the *epoché* of all previously given interpretations is truly a recapitulation of the western Greco-Christian tradition: phenomenology, insofar as it is phenomenological philosophy, achieves a description that validates the western tradition, but it does so by following a new trajectory.

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[29] *Ideas II*, 195.

[30] *Ibid*., 190.

In Husserlian philosophical anthropology—I use the expression "philosophical anthropology" in this phenomenological context in a demonstrative, non-speculative manner—one finds a lengthy discussion of the ethico-religious dimension. Remarkable in Husserl's anthropology are its epistemological and cognitive aspects, for they provide a way out of or a solution for various philosophical problems. This being said, Husserl's emphasis on cognition does not mean that he set aside, especially in his private investigations, the "highest and ultimate question," as Husserl affirms in one of his most important works, *The Cartesian Meditations*.[31]

Husserlian ethics and religion are linked to the discussion of God, which is treated by Husserl at various points in his works. It is important to note the aforementioned aspects of his anthropology to show the emergence of a concept of the human being, understood in all of his/her potentialities and as not reducible to specific dimensions. Husserl views the human being as being open to others—one thinks here of his analysis not only of intersubjectivity but also interpersonality. Openness is understood as the bedrock of the human being's existence.[32]

Husserl's position on anthropology is validated and confirmed by the very same objections Heidegger raises against Husserl and Scheler. In section 10 of *Being and Time*, we read that the interpretation of the human being as a unity of body, psyche and spirit, which refers to both Husserl's and Scheler's views, is judged to be an insufficient philosophical view because it is impossible to conceive of the human being as joined together by such diverse modes of being as the body, soul and spirit, which Heidegger argues are assumed to be completely undetermined. Furthermore, an attempt at an ontological investigation of this kind, as proposed by Husserl and Scheler, would have to support an idea of the being of the whole. Heidegger adds that their arguments are oriented toward a Greco-Christian understanding of the human being, which linked the definition of the human being as *rational animal* to the theological understanding of being and essence. I will not develop Heidegger's criticisms here, but I do wish to highlight the fact that what, according to Heidegger, must be criticized in Husserl, is, on the contrary, the very basis of Husserl's anthropology.

Husserl's analysis of the human being allows him to distinguish himself from Kantian ethics and, in particular, the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In his lectures, "Lessons on Ethics and a Theory of Value," Husserl specifically refers to Kant's position, which he explicitly rejects by making the distinction between formal ethics and formalism. Husserl wishes to recuperate a dimension of feelings without lapsing into Hume's position. Husserl believes that we need to maintain the autonomy of moral judgment, which must, contrary to Kant's view, include feelings. We find in Husserl, in this respect, a material ethics, but not as Max Scheler understood it. Husserl's position lies between the views of Kant and Scheler. Husserl empha-

[31] I treat this argument in my essay, "*Fenomenologia e metafisica*," in "*Seconda Navigazione Annuario di Filosofia 2000—Corpo e anima. Necessità della metafisica*" (Milano: Mondadori, 2000), 171–219.

[32] Angela Ales Bello, *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*, trans. A. Calcagno, in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 98 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

sizes that the formal regulation of valuing and willing cannot rest on the material of feelings alone. If some "content" is necessary, contrary to Kant, then the very concept of objective value requires the universality of reason, understood in an axiological sense. Husserl remarks, "Emotive acts are originary sources for those values of truth that are proper to those acts and they can be logically determined."[33] The preceding citation helps us avoid lapsing into a view of ethics that is purely rooted in feelings, which ultimately leads to relativism. Turning back to our earlier observations about the relationship between ethics and religion, Husserl underlines the centrality of the feeling of love, which must be elevated in order to conform with the love lived by Christ. The feeling of love, then, becomes the source and base for universal ethical behaviour.[34]

According to Husserl, then, three precise and interconnected realities, which we can "know," always within the human limits of saying what these realities are, correspond to the three noumena, to the three ideas of reason indicated by Kant. The development of the aforementioned themes draws Husserl closer to strands of thought present more within traditional metaphysics than in Kant's philosophy.

2.3 The Co-relation of the I and the World

"The epoché, in giving us the attitude *above* the subject-object correlation which belongs to the world and thus the attitude of focus upon the *transcendental subject-object correlation,* leads us to recognize, in self-reflection, that the world that exists for us, that is, our world in its being and being-such, takes its ontic meaning entirely from our intentional life through a priori types of accomplishments that can be exhibited rather than argumentatively constructed or conceived through mythical thinking."[35] The preceding text is particularly meaningful because it synthesizes certain fundamental aspects of Husserl's position: first, the theme of the transcendental correlation of subject and object; second, the question about the sense of the world in relation to the life of intentionality. The sense-connection to the intentional life world refers to a series of operations of subjectivity that must be made evident through rigorous analysis. Once made evident, these subjective structures reveal themselves as the instrument that can grasp the sense of reality. And reality articulates itself, according to the philosophical tradition, in natural and spiritual realities. Reality is not first given in its duality; rather, it is grasped as such by means of

[33] Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre 1908–1914*, ed. U. Melle, in *Husserliana*, vol. 28 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988). For a good commentary on Husserl's ethics, please refer to *Fenomenologia della Ragion Pratica. L'etica di Edmund Husserl*, eds. B. Cenci and G. Gigliotti (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2004).

[34] Angela Ales Bello, "*Edmund Husserl. Cristo e il cristianesimo. Meditazioni filosofico-religiose*," in *Cristo nella filosofia contemporanea*, vol. 2 in *Il Novecento* (San Paolo, Brazil: Cinisello Balsamo, 2002), 11–30.

[35] C, 181.

returning to lived experiences, which lead one to different and qualitatively identifiable dimensions.

Ideas II first treats the constitution of material nature as well as the ontic layers of the sense of things; it then turns to living things by examining the structure of animals and the human living body. Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Edith Stein even speak of the structure of plants.[36] At this point, Husserl also presents an analysis of the pure I. He discusses the question of the transcendental as the locus of the mirroring and verification, on the part of the human being, of material nature. The pure I is the instrument that can reflect upon human reality and its constitutive moments, namely, human psychophysical and spiritual realities.

The analysis of the pure I begins with an important clarification. "Let us think of a self-perception as accomplished, but this time in such a way that we abstract from the Body. What we find then is ourselves as the spiritual Ego related to the stream of lived experiences—"spiritual" here is used in a mere general sense, referring to the Ego that has its place precisely not in Corporality; e.g., I think (*cogito*), i.e., I perceive, I represent in whatever mode, I judge, I feel, I will, etc., and I find myself thereby as that which is one and the same in the changing of these lived experiences, as "subject" of he acts and states. (This subject has absolute individuation as the Ego of the current *cogitation,* which is itself absolutely individual in itself)."[37]

The foregoing citation shows that the human being must be grasped in his/her existential concreteness. In order to be comprehended, a reversal that permits us to discover "ourselves as a spiritual I" is necessary. Spirit here indicates that the I has no principal seat in the body; rather, spirit finds itself connected to a series of its lived experiences.[38]

These lived experiences open the subject up to corresponding realities. Speaking in a completely schematic way, if I perceive, then I have a body and I exist in relation to physical objects, and all of this is different from fantasizing. I become aware of the aforementioned claims in the reflexive dimension of thinking. Furthermore, I value, I want, I realize in action, all of these acts allow the Ego to direct "itself in every case to the Object (…) and counter-rays issue from the Object and come back to the Ego."[39]

The pure I lives in single acts and this fact makes Edith Stein say that the pure I is an I that wills and acts freely, thereby ascribing a pre-eminent role to spiritual reality, which Husserl clearly demonstrates. I wish to emphasize that the pure I is a sort of "functional center." Questions about the nature of reality and the stratification of the I are what strongly interest the phenomenologist. They help the phenomenologist chart out a philosophical anthropology that commences with the analysis of lived experiences and their operation in order to seek out the structure of the

[36] Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Die Seele der Pflanzen* (Breslau: Otto Borgmeyer Verlag, 1934); Edith Stein, *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person. Vorlesungen zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, ed. B. Beckmann-Zöller, in *Edith Stein Gensamtausgabe*, vol. 14 (Freiburg: Herder, 2004).

[37] *Ideas II*, 103.

[38] *Ibid*., 103–104.

[39] *Ibid*., 104.

human person, as will become evident in the pages to come. This structure is obtained through the morphology of lived experiences, the ultimate objective of transcendental analysis.

A constant referring of one layer to another exists: from the obvious presence of everyday reality, where one takes on the "natural" attitude (that is, a naïve and non-mediated attitude), to the suspension of such an attitude in order to obtain a more radical perspective. This new attitude coincides with an analysis of that complex and tormented territory that is subjectivity, including all of its lived experiences. With this new attitude we can arrive at the authentic sense of reality in the plurality of its appearances.

The reality of the human being and nature present themselves, however, as indissolubly joined in a relation in which life manifests itself in different stages and layers, from the ecological-animal to the more decidedly cultural levels. The life world, the world of these layers, needs to be investigated through the transcendental dimension.

Chapter 3
The Sense of Things—From Logic to Ontology

The term "ontology" has a long history in western philosophy, as it is connected to one of the earliest, most important concepts of ancient Greek thought developed by Parmenides, namely, the *on*, which means "that which is existing." In Greek philosophy, the affirmation of existence was also linked to the question of "What is?" If onto-logy consisted in thinking about the *on*, insofar as one could reflect on what exists, this reflection inevitably led to the question about the meaning of the existing thing. In turn, this reflection became connected to the Latin notion of "essence" or *essentia*. Ontology, then, also included a study of being or what being is, that is, "essence." This second formulation is found more frequently in contemporary philosophy, especially in the work of Edmund Husserl.

Husserlian phenomenology arose alongside Husserl's studies of logic and psychology. But it is important to note that in focusing on logic, his reflections are also connected to the search for a new field of inquiry, which is distinct from logic, namely, ontology. An ontology that focuses on the question of "what is" is understood here in a new way, and in contemporary research it has received a new name, what Roberto Poli terms "category theory."[1]

Let us examine the fundamental aspects of Husserl's project, which can be contextualized within the framework of the organization of knowledge. Husserl was keenly interested in the way "knowledge" was organized in modern times, a way that led to the development of a series of disciplines that examine different fields of reality from material and formal perspectives.

There are four stages of Husserl's trajectory that demonstrate the progressive broadening and deepening of his study of ontology. We can delineate them by studying theses developed in his *Logical Investigations*, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and the *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.

[1] Roberto Poli, "The Categorial Stance," in *Theory and Applications of Ontology: Philosophical Perspectives*, eds. R. Poli and J. Seibt (Dordrecht: Springer 2010), 1–22.

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15395-7_3

3.1 The Path Toward Ontology

In the *Logical Investigations*, we find a pathway that leads Husserl to elaborate his understanding of ontology. If we are to examine his use of the term, we need to look at the first edition of the *Logical Investigations*. In the "Second Logical Investigation," Husserl distinguishes between a theory of meaning and a theory of the object. The term ontology is introduced in reference to the theory of the object, but only in the second edition of the *Logical Investigations*. Regarding the theory of the object, Husserl writes, "Each expression does not merely says something, but says it of something: it not only has a meaning, but refers to certain *objects*. This relation sometimes holds in the plural for one and the same expression. But the object never coincides with the meaning."[2] The last statement of the foregoing citation reveals something extraordinarily important: first, Husserl distinguishes between the signified and the referent; second, this distinction represents the guiding thread of all his research about meaning; third, the statement makes manifest the necessary presupposition for understanding the relations between parts and wholes in the "Third Logical Investigation." Let us turn our attention to this argument.

In note 12 of section 7 of the "Third Logical Investigation," Husserl invites us to probe more deeply his position on ontology. He remarks that, already in his 1894 *Bericht über deutsche Schriften für Logik*, he carried out an ontological turn by transforming evidence into an essential lawfulness, that is, an ideal necessity that comes to consciousness in apodictic evidence. Such evidence presents itself in a completely different manner from empirical necessity. When the distinction is made preliminarily, one can subsequently tackle a central theoretical question, namely, the relation between parts and wholes or parts organized into a whole.

The aforementioned relation is founded *a priori* on the idea of the object, understood not as *real* or real, but as *reell*, that is, as the possible content of a representation. Even if one passes through representation as a subjective moment, keeping in mind the origin of the problem in the thought of Berkeley, Husserl insists on the ideal, objective necessity of the not-being-capable-of-being-otherwise, thereby affirming that a pure lawfulness belongs to the essence of this objective necessity. This lawfulness, insofar as it only pertains to non-independent objects, consists in establishing these objects as pure species, as existing as parts of more comprehensive wholes: this is the case when one affirms that the parts cannot be thought of as existing in themselves, given that the aforementioned relationship between parts and wholes is already at work in the distinction between independent ideas and dependent ones, and, therefore, between the highest, pure genus and the hierarchy of species.[3]

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[2] Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Prologomena zur reinen Logik.* Hrsg. von E. Holenstein, in *Husserlinana* XVIII (Den Haag: Kluwer, 1975). English translation: *The Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N Findlay and ed. D. Moran (London: Routledge, 2001), 197. Hereafter cited as LI.

[3] *Ibid*., section 7.

A multiplicity of laws that applies to the diverse modes of non-independence, therefore, exists. An important distinction arises between material and formal laws. Concepts like house, tree, color, insofar as they are linked to materiality, are very different than concepts like something, object and quality. The former are organized within the highest material genera, that is, the material categories. Material ontologies are based on these material categories, whereas the latter articulate themselves in formal-ontological categories in such a way that two spheres are differentiated: an essential-material sphere and an essential-formal sphere, in which laws, necessities, and even synthetic *a priori* and analytic *a priori* disciplines can be traced. The laws pertaining to the different modes of non-independence are all synthetic *a priori*. An example of pure analytic generality is the claim that "a whole cannot exist without parts." In this case, the correlated elements are reciprocally postulated. By contrast, "a color cannot exist without a certain extension that is covered by the color," is a synthetic generality because the existence of a colored object is not analytically grounded in the concept of color.[4]

The independence or non-independence of content can sometimes be relative, a relativity that depends on the content's relationship with the whole. Husserl gives the example of the dependency within the flow of the consciousness of every "now" that becomes a "having been." It is possible, however, that a part within a momentary visual intuition can be independent, but the color that is related to the intuition is not independent.[5]

In order to justify the foregoing claim, Husserl introduces the concept of foundation,[6] arguing that the unity of independent objects can only be achieved through a foundation insofar as one object is not founded upon the other and, in turn, upon other content.

In the "Third Logical Investigation," the term "foundation" is introduced with reference to regions, that is, domains governed by empirical or fact-based sciences. Each of these empirical sciences has its essential theoretical foundations in regional ontologies. Husserl clarifies what he means with an example: If we consider the basic natural sciences, we discover that they correspond to an eidetic science of nature generally understood, because physical nature has an essence, an *eidos* that is intuitively graspable in its purity, that is, an essence of nature exists.[7]

3.2 From Ontology to Phenomenology and Vice Versa

The move from ontology to phenomenology occurs in Husserl's foundational work, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy*. In particular, his claim becomes radical when he discusses "natural" knowledge, which

[4] *Ibid*., section 11.

[5] *Ibid*., section 13.

[6] *Ibid*., section 22.

[7] *Ibid*., section 25.

grounds sciences based on fact, that is, natural sciences, be they material (i.e., inorganic), sciences of the psycho-physical (e.g., physiology and psychology), and even sciences of the spirit, including history, the cultural sciences, and sociology.[8] His radical philosophical intervention consists of reaffirming the insufficient evidence of empirical, fact-based sciences for constructing a science. Husserl believes that the eidetic must accompany the factual because all factual givens have an intuitively graspable essence: one can see the essence, a *Wesenserschauung*, which constitutes the object as a new species. Here, we are dealing with the reduction to essence, the first step of the phenomenological method.[9]

The operation of making an essence evident is connected to making judgments about essences, eidetic propositions, and eidetic truth. It is possible, then, to establish a difference between sciences of fact and sciences of essences insofar as the latter are autonomous with respect to the former, but not the reverse. One notes here that every fully developed science enters into relation with formal-ontological disciplines, including formal logic, *mathesis universalis* or arithmetic, that is, with pure analyses and with a theory of multiplicity.[10] Hence, we can delineate eidetic regional ontologies, which constitute the base of every empirical science. Husserl uses the same example of the "Third Investigation" in his *Ideas*, namely, the ontology of nature. He does this because a pure *eidos*, that is, the essence of nature, that can be grasped, corresponds to "factual" nature. The rational achievement of natural science is grounded in a formal *mathesis* that applies to all sciences and to all ontological, material disciplines. If we examine the science of physics, we observe that geometry, understood by the Platonic school as a pure science, comes to bear on the methodology of physics. Hence, geometry, understood as an ontological discipline, deals with the essential moment of the thing, which is a *res extensa*, that is, the thing's spatial form.

Husserl proceeds by distinguishing formal regions from material ones, highlighting the fact that all material regions underlie the formal region, which is empty and which prescribes a formal lawfulness for all these material regions. Husserl introduces the concept of the "category" that, on one hand, refers to a region, for example, "physical nature," and, on the other hand, brings one material region into relation with the form of a region in general, and, therefore, with the formal essence of an object in general, and with the related formal categories. We individuate here a general form of a region, which is strongly distinguished from material regions. We are dealing, then, with a formal ontology that includes all possible ontologies.[11]

Recalling the logical distinction between analytic and synthetic, already discussed in the "Third Logical Investigation," Husserl maintains that formal ontology, understood as pure logic and as the eidetic science of the object in general, contains immediate and fundamental truths, logical categories (i.e., axioms) that are analytic

[8] *Ideas I*, chapter 1, section 1.

[9] *Ibid*., section 2.

[10] *Ibid*., section 8.

[11] *Ibid*., section 10.

concepts as opposed to synthetic ones. Examples of logical categories include property, characteristic determination, the state of the thing, relation, identity, equality, togetherness, number, whole and part, genus and species. Husserl analyzes them again in the *Ideas*, arguing that each essence, be it material or empty, inserts itself into a hierarchy of genera and species. For example, number in general is the highest genus of individual numbers, and the thing is the highest genus that contains all content and material singularities. The categories of signification, that is, the concepts inhering in the essence of various types of propositions, belong to the logical categories. We find ourselves here in the domain of *apophansis*. We can observe a connection to and distinction between the object in general and meaning in general, which Husserl already discussed in his *Logical Investigations*. Connection-distinction allows us to separate the sphere of the object from the sphere of judgment: If the object can or must be examined from a logical point of view, it cannot be absorbed into the logical sphere; rather, it has to safeguard its autonomy, that is, its ontological autonomy.

The formal region of "objectivity in general," which is signified but which is also different from the signified, divides itself into syntactical categories and ultimate substrates. The first are layers of things, relations, determinations, unity, plurality, number, ordinal number, etc. Every object finds itself in the configurations described by syntactical categories. Correspondingly, there are apophantic expressions of significance that manifest themselves on the predicative plane. These expressions manifest themselves both on the path of syntactic formation as well as under the profile of predication, that is, in the ultimate substrates, which can no longer be configured syntactically. In objectification, one finds individuals, whereas in signification one finds the ultimate terms.[12]

Every material or empty formal essence inserts itself into a hierarchy of genus and species, which moves from the highest genus to an eidetic singularity.[13]

The aforementioned hierarchical movement is valid only for the universalization of the material element in something that is purely formal and logical, and not for the process of sub-ordering, by which Husserl designates the generalization that orders an individual or "that one here" under an essence. "Essence" is not a genus; rather, essence only refers to a generalization, whereas the sub-ordering that relates to a genus deals only with ontological, formal categories in the highest general ontological, formal category.[14] Substrates are individuated either under a material or formal profile. In the case of the former, they are empty, whereas in the case of the latter they are full. If we consider material objectivities, one adds to the highest substrates and to the *to de ti* of Aristotle—the *Organon* of Aristotle is present throughout all that we have previously discussed. While it is true that the Greek expression above can be translated as "individual," Husserl prefers to keep the Greek in order to avoid the sense of indivisibility that is contained in the term "individual."[15]

[12] *Ibid*., section 11.

[13] *Ibid*., section 12.

[14] *Ibid*., section 13.

[15] *Ibid*., section 14.

Husserl further determines the concept of the individual when he refers to independent and non-independent objects, which were already examined in the "Third Logical Investigation." He adds to the discussion by arguing that there are formal-categorial concepts, both concrete and abstract, that refer respectively to absolute independence and non-independence. The this-here, whose essence is filled in a concrete way, is the individual.[16]

Eidetic singularities, then, can be divided into abstract and concrete singularities. Concrete singularities can be divided into genera and species and, hence, into the highest genera that one can distinguish from the ultimate differences. For example, in a thing, the figure leads not only to the highest genus, that is, spatial figure but also to visible quality in general. The foregoing distinctions are important for the formation of material regions. The "individual" and the "concrete" define the region. The domain of the region comprises the ideal whole of the highest genera, which belong to the concrete. The domain of the individual, however, comprises all the possible individuals whose essences are concrete. This is why we need to make the distinction between analytic and synthetic. Synthetic essential truths are grounded in regional essences and they include regional axioms that function by determining that which has to be attributed *a priori* and synthetically to an individual object of a region. All of this "draws us nearer" to a formal ontology, but it is also independent of such an ontology. We are dealing with a parallel between formal ontologies and regional ontologies, as well as an essential difference.[17]

Pure logic, then, serves to determine all individuals according to concepts or laws that follow synthetic *a priori* principles. All empirical sciences must be grounded on correlated regional ontologies. The task for knowing is to determine, through the intuition of individuals, the regions of being in which single eidetic and empirical sciences can ground themselves, some of which require a connection that justifies the very classification of the sciences.[18]

The first chapter of the *Ideas* cannot be read as separate from the rest of the book, which is dedicated to a description of phenomenological investigation; rather, the description of phenomenological inquiry is inserted as a sort of "*intermezzo*" between the first section we already mentioned and the fourth section, in which the discussion of phenomenology is reprised through a treatment of a theory of reason. The middle part, however, is essential for connecting the first and last parts, and it helps us understand them. In this instance, we are not dealing with a detour away from phenomenology; rather, we have here the development of a theory of knowledge that explores phenomena in their essence—a theme that is clearly treated in formal terms as well as in terms of the relation between the subject and object, always within the framework of the investigation of the transcendental. The individuation of conscious lived experiences, examined essentially, as well as their intentional structure, leads one to the relation between *noesis* and *noema*, which is fundamental for understanding the theory of reason.

[16] *Ibid*., section 15.

[17] *Ibid*., section 16.

[18] *Ibid*., section 17.

It is not possible here to develop an analytical discussion of lived experiences. I take up this discussion in some of my earlier works.[19] We must focus, rather, on the relationship between *noesis and noema*.

The lived experience of perception acquires sense by intentionally directing itself toward that which is perceived.[20] The perceived, which is made evident after the phenomenological reduction that manifests the sense of the perception in transcendental terms (we are referring here to the second step after the reduction to essence), has noematic aspects. The phenomenological reduction seizes the perceived thing as an "intentional *obiectum*," that is, the perceived thing's objectivated sense is grasped, which is obtained after bracketing the perceived thing's real existence—a real existence that plays no role, but lives, just like all that is bracketed lives. The noematic moment is traceable to the sphere of judgment, understood as the judged thing as such (noema), which is different than the thing one judges according to another thing. We can even see this difference in Husserl's German where he distinguishes *Geurteiltes* (judged) from *Beurteiltes* (the thing one judges).[21] Furthermore, the relationship between noesis and noema also appears within the spheres of feelings and volition. One even finds this relationship in lived experiences of pleasure, displeasure, valuing, desiring, and deciding.[22]

In determining noematic sense, one encounters the object, always understood in a noematic sense, as a determinable X. "… [T]here 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.*'"[23] Sense is properly understood as the very noematic sense of the How; one can grasp the core of the noema, understood as sense in its fullness.[24]

In thetic moments or propositions one finds propositions with one member, as in the case of perception, or propositions consisting of many members, which are synthetic, for example, in the case of judgment. We can, therefore, delineate a morphology of senses and, hence, an apophantic morphology of logical meanings, understood in terms of formal logic. We are entering into the sphere of logic through the analysis of the noema and the morphology of the senses of the noema. Rather than departing from the sphere of logic, then, we are delineating the structure of a logical dimension through a focused analysis of lived experiences.

Phenomenological analysis permits one to examine the genesis of logic, which Husserl designated as "noematic phenomenology." Consequently, all that was said about formal ontology, the categories, material ontologies, and regional ontologies,

[19] For example, Angela Ales Bello, *L'universo nella coscienza: Introduzione alla fenomenologia di Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein e Hedwig Conrad-Martius* (Pisa: ETS, 2007).

[20] *Ideas I*, sections 35 and 88.

[21] *Ibid*., section 94.

[22] *Ibid*., section 95.

[23] *Ibid*., 314.

[24] *Ibid*., section 132.

refers back to the eidetic connections between the noesis and noema. Indeed, all that was said above becomes the task of a phenomenology of reason.

Traditional logic treats apophantic forms and fixes axioms of truth, but it does not investigate the very genesis of these processes and, in particular, the eidetic relations of noesis and noema. Phenomenology's task is to clarify, "… what is properly implied when, at one time, we speak of formal conditions of the truth and, at other times, of the forms of cognition."[25]

The first volume of the *Ideas*, which primarily sought to make regional ontologies evident through essences and to delineate regional ontologies as the ground of every empirical science, ultimately arriving at formal ontology and its relations to logic, returns to the question of knowing. Knowing is analyzed through the new phenomenological, transcendental method: we come to an understanding of knowing through an analysis of the relation between noesis and noema, and the justification of the genesis of pure logic and formal ontology. Husserl remarks, "But it must be explicitly noted that in these interrelations between constitutive phenomenologies and the corresponding formal and material ontologies *nothing is implied about the grounding of the former by the latter*."[26]

3.3 Ontology: Between Formal and Transcendental Logic

By employing the metaphor of concentric circles, a metaphor I have used in other works, we can investigate more deeply the question of human knowing.

Husserl's analysis of knowing deepens and broadens in his work *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. The logical sphere is revisited in this work, but this time he pays greater attention to traditional forms of logic. He also investigates with great acuity the possibility of phenomenology being a clarification and foundation of the genesis of ontology.

Challenging both the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions of logic, Husserl points out their positive and negative aspects. The merit of Plato lies in his stance against the Sceptics and Sophists: he separated logic from the theory of science (*epistemé*), that is, to borrow Plato's language, he distinguishes dialectic from the factual sciences. The limit of Greek philosophers, including both Plato and Aristotle, con-

[25] *Ibid*., 352. In his introduction to the Italian translation of the *Logical Investigations*, Giovanni Piana highlights the fundamental role that clarification plays in the very formation of phenomenology. In his opinion, the criteria for clarification of the discussion of meaning leads Husserl to develop the phenomenological method by means of distinguishing meaning intention from its fulfillment. Husserl, here, begins with logic. To further understand the genesis of the phenomenological method we also need to consider Brentanian psychology, which allows Husserl to develop his work on transcendental subjectivity, although we must also recall that Husserl, throughout his entire *oeuvre*, tries to differentiate himself from pure psychology.

[26] *Ideas I*, 369.

sisted in the fact that they could not explain[27] how the concept of cardinal number could be emptied of all concrete content in such a way as to make possible the category of Something in general. Also, the Greeks did not grasp that apophantics could be formalized. Aristotle remained firmly rooted in real ontology, that is, "first philosophy."

It is only through the algebra of the modern mathematician François Viète's and, above all, Leibniz's thinking, that a *mathesis universalis* became possible, albeit imperfectly. The possibility of the sense of logical, formal formations arose only after the internal connection between mathematics and logic was discovered.[28] Even Bolzano, who followed this logical-mathematical path and who argued for the possibility of an *a priori* general ontology, did not distinguish the universal region of the possible existent from an empty formal ontology of Something in general. Husserl claims to have brought forward the idea of a pure logic in the *Logical Investigations*, even though he had not yet named it a formal ontology, as I noted earlier. He declares that it is only in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and in the *Ideas* that he had carried out the fundamental operations of connecting the ontological, formal *a priori*, and the apophantic *a priori*, that is, the *a priori* of enunciated meanings. The connection also requires a distinction between objectivated formal categories (object, state of affairs, unity, plurality, cardinal number, relation, connection, etc.) and the categories of meaning (all the concepts that concern the construction of judgments). The laws of such domains are distinguished according to two groups of categories: categories of meaning (formal apophantics) and objectivated categories (formal ontology).[29] Here, all that was taken up in the *Ideas* is once again reaffirmed.

If we examine the formation of the sciences, we realize that they all have as their focus categorial objectivities that are related to pure forms: the elaboration of logic in this case follows categorial syntaxes, but also includes substrate-objectivities, understood as substrates of determinations. Hence, analytics, viewed as a formal theory of science, is oriented in both an ontic direction as well as in an ontological, formal one.[30] This fact seems to cancel out the double nature of formal-analytical ontology and analytics as formal apophantics, because all the objectivities are judgments. Hence, the need to analyze judgments arises here. The person who judges not only faces the object s/he wishes to determine, but also the determinations themselves. We are dealing here with a secondary reflection that individuates an intentional substrate as intentioned.[31] Here, we can distinguish between pure and simple objectivities and intended objectivities. The latter constitute a new region, namely, the region of sense.

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[27] Edmund Husserl, *Formale und transzendentale Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft.* Hrsg. von P. Janssen, in *Husserliana* VII (Den Haag: Kluwer, 1974). English translation: *Formal und Trascendental Logic*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), section 26a. Hereafter cited as FTL.

[28] *Ibid*., section 26b.

[29] *Ibid*., section 27b.

[30] *Ibid*., section 26b.

[31] *Ibid*., section 48.

At this point, Husserl connects his phenomenological investigations of consciousness, already developed in the *Ideas* (the second step of his method that deals with the transcendental reduction), to his analysis of logic being carried out in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. He shows how every *cogitatio*, that is, every conscious lived experience (*Erlebnis*), is connected to its own *cogitatum* insofar as every "I perceive" is intentionally directed to a perceived thing, every "I remember" is turned toward a remembered thing, and every valuing act is directed toward a valued thing. A reflection on the *cogitatum* itself, that is, on intentional objectivity, is also possible. We can call this kind of reflection doxic and it gives the intended thing, that is, it gives the perceptual or valuative sense, etc. Every type of positing has its own evidence. Here, one can speak of doxic evidence.

Each positing sphere has its own syntactic categories and its own modalities of Something and, hence, its own formal and analytic logic.[32] Pure formal analytics has as its domain the aforementioned senses. This domain contains the morphology of pure senses and non-contradiction. *Mathesis universalis* is the analytic of possible categorial elements and has nothing to do with concrete reality. Judgments, understood as senses, contain within themselves a formal lawfulness and say nothing about the possible being of their objectivities. The idea of a purely formal mathematics is grounded in this formal domain, which deals only with non-contradiction and with what analytically follows or what does not analytically follow. If one were to speak of possible concrete truth,[33] understood as an adequation to possible things, one would lapse into formal ontology. In fact, if a logic is epistemologically oriented, that is, if the logic becomes a science of possible categorial forms, it is not a formal apophantic logic; rather, it is a formal ontology in which the objectivized substrates must be able to be in the true sense of the word. If objectivity receives a categorial con-formation, we are no longer dealing with apophantics, but with an ontology.

A double sense of evidence and a double sense of judgment as well as double orientation toward formal logic, all correspond to the double nature discussed earlier. We deal with apophantic logic, if one is directed toward judgments. And, when treating categorial forms of sense, formal logic presents itself as *mathesis universalis*. We also deploy a formal ontological logic, when the logic is directed to possible categorial objectivities, even if it instrumentally employs as its objects the senses of judgments. Formal ontological logic has objects as its final intention.[34]

Having discussed the first part of Husserl's work *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, we can conclude our discussion of formal logic. Husserl again makes a general observation here, which he already made in section 8: Logic has a bilateral character. On one hand, we stand before an objective sphere that has its own objective validity. On the other hand, we have to ask what the origin of the objective formations discussed above is and whether or not one is constrained to refer back to the subjective sphere. Objectivity, understood as an operation carried out by the

[32] *Ibid*., section 50.

[33] *Ibid*., section 54a.

[34] *Ibid*., section 54b.

subject, was not fully investigated. We come, then, to the problem of the transcendental sphere, which Husserl analyzes in his phenomenology.

In the wake of Kant, but with a radically different approach that produces different results, Husserl tackles the question of a transcendental logic. He leaves behind certain prejudices, which, if he let himself be guided by them, would lead him to investigate subjectivity through the lens of a psychologistic logic.[35] We now are confronted by a fundamental question of phenomenology: How do we distinguish psychic acts from conscious lived experiences? The former are psychic realities, whereas the latter possess their own ideality as well as their own evidence. Be it in terms of external experience or be it in terms of internal experience, a general ideality of all intentional unities (in relation to their constitutive multiplicities) can be delineated.[36] Particularly significant in this regard is section 62 of *Formal and Transcendental Logic* where Husserl considers the distinction between immanence and transcendence. External objects are not only transcendent, but there also exists an internal transcendence of the reality of the psychic dimension as it pertains to conscious lived experiences. Conscious lived experiences, whether they refer to external objects or to the internal dimension, configure the immanent sphere of the multiplicity of consciousness.

The transcendence of the real is constituted in the sphere of immanence in a particular form of ideality. This is why we can understand the production of logical forms in consciousness. Production here is understood as a kind of acting that has as its objects irreal objects that are given in real psychic processes, but which are not identical with such processes. An originary activity of production of ideal objectivities (containing their own evidence) exists, and these objectivities are intentionally constituted in judgment.[37] The systematic examination of the connections between reality and irreality, the real and the possible, is structured as a universal ontology that is absolute and lies at the foundation of both formal and real ontology.[38]

We can now begin the hard work of probing subjectivity in order to make manifest the *a priori* evidence of subjective structures, understood as the correlates of an objective *a priori*. Husserl painstakingly describes the subjective genesis of all objectivities that he uncovered in the first part of his investigation of the formal dimension. He looks at the constitution of ideality, the analytic principle of contradiction, formal ontology as the logic of truth, and so on.

For example, from a subjective point of view, the fundamental formal law of the pure analytic involves the *a priori* structure of evidence, which holds that subjective essential situations must correspond to objective ones. We discover that subjective structures have an *a priori* function that needs to be investigated.[39] Concerning the logic of truth and, therefore, formal ontology, we come upon idealizing

[35] Angela Ales Bello, "*Coscienza Io Mondo*", in *…e la coscienza? Fenomenologia Psico-patologia Neuroscienze*, eds. A. Ales Bello and P. Manganaro (Bari: Laterza, 2012), 101–240.

[36] FTL, section 62.

[37] *Ibid*., section 63.

[38] *Ibid*., section 64.

[39] *Ibid*., section 75.

presuppositions that lie at the base of the principle of contradiction or the law of the excluded middle. We realize, in the end, that we have before us the possibility of the variation of the "fact," which transports the fact into the realm of ideal possibilities.[40] But once we have established this possibility, rather than proceeding into the process of essential generalization, it is better to step back, because each real and possible judgment leads back to the ultimate cores that no longer possess a syntactic value. Hence, we refer back to the ultimate substrates, absolute subjects that are not predicated nominally; we refer back to the ultimate predicates and not to the predicates of predicates, to ultimate relations. These ultimate and absolute things do not deal with *mathesis universalis* and, hence, formal mathematics; rather, they deal with the logic of truth because the ultimate substrate objects to which one returns are individuals. So, it is necessary to lead every analytic proposition, such that it could be understood, back to ultimate individual cores, which, however, must be made intuitable.[41] It is possible, then, to establish *a priori* that every judgment refers to something individual that is related to a real universe and a world in which a judgment has value.[42] Formal logic, however, does not wish to remain empty; rather, it seeks to be useful to concrete consciousness, and it refers teleologically to individual spheres, which are "prior," that is, which are most important as a starting point.

We recognize that one can and must refer backward, following the evidence that produces judgments, which are the finished products of the genesis of sense—the genesis of sense has its own story.[43] This is the backward-referring process: one probes until one reaches the pre-predicative level where one finds pre-predicative evidence that constitutes a true and proper experience.[44] The result consists in realizing that a logic postulated on a theory of experience, which needs logic because it needs to be maintained in its formality, requires preparatory cognitive work. Through such work the subjective foundation of logic as a transcendental problem, which was pointed out earlier in the *Ideas*, takes shape.

The transcendental terrain, as newly configured by Husserl, turns out to be the highest terrain of a new formal ontology; it is no longer the terrain of a possible world, but one that belongs to every existent, in every sense.[45] Here, we are leading the two formal sciences, that is, formal ontology, understood as the analytic of a new generality, and the new ontology that configures itself as the form of the totalities of reality, *from* space-time, or every region of reality, *to* transcendental subjectivity. The latter is the foundation of all sciences that is analyzable through the unique, authentic science of phenomenology, understood as philosophy.[46]

Through phenomenological analysis it is possible, then, to move from the highest point to the lowest one, and from the bottom to the top. One can reach the

[40] *Ibid*., section 80.

[41] *Ibid*., section 82.

[42] *Ibid*., section 83.

[43] *Ibid*., section 85.

[44] *Ibid*., section 86.

[45] *Ibid*., section 102.

[46] *Ibid*., section 103.

ante-predicative hyletic dimension and climb up to the objectivity of the formal analytic; one can also comprehend all that is entrusted to a theory of consciousness, which, in turn, is connected to a transcendental logic, which, together with the hyletic, can clarify the sense of a constituting subjectivity.

Husserl concludes by maintaining that transcendental logic is not a secondary logic, but a traditional logic radicalized as an absolute logic of science, that is, a radical knowledge, understood in the philosophical sense and, therefore, as an *absolute ontology*. All the disciplines affiliated with mundane ontologies come to relate to the aforementioned absolute ontology. The mundane ontologies are ultimately justified in the absolute ontology insofar as the mundane ontologies have to refer back to the *a priori* universal of a possible world in general. The most radical point is transcendental aesthetics, understood as the analysis of the sphere of pure experience. As we progress on this path, we can also justify the exact theories of geometry and physics. The latter is to be understood as an exact natural science, which functions through the sciences of ideality. We can also justify the formation of the sciences of the spirit, which need normative concepts that transcend them.

3.4 The Formal-General Ontology of the Life World

The question of ontology is taken up once again in the last concentric circle, that is, the centre circle, which contains what we have achieved so far while at the same time indicating the highest, foundational terrain that Husserl claims to have mapped.

We can certainly understand, then, the genesis of themes subsequently developed in the *Crisis* that focus on the life world and the birth of geometry.[47] Mundane ontology, which encompasses all cultural formations, requires, in all cases, according to Husserl, an ontology. In other words, an examination of the ontology's structures is required, even while remaining at a natural level, but this kind of naïve ontology is not sufficient. Given that Husserl has already undertaken a phenomenological inquiry, much like his Greek philosophical predecessors, he wishes to investigate beyond what is naively accepted to be the case. He wishes to take on a critical attitude. We observe here the necessity, as we have already seen, of delineating an *a priori*, universal ontology.[48] This *a priori*, universal ontology refers to the "world," that is, the totality of things that is spatio-temporally localized. Hence, Husserl defines such an ontology as "a concretely general theory of the essence of these "*onta*.""[49]

The justification of the theory mentioned above, which is distinguished from the formal theory of Something in general, but which nevertheless maintains the character of formality, understood as an *a priori* essential generality, is found on a plane that is not ontological; rather, it is found on a phenomenological plane. This is the

[47] C, section 9a.

[48] *Ibid*., section 36.

[49] *Ibid*., 142.

case because the life world presents itself as a phenomenon that must be investigated from transcendental, subjective and intersubjective perspectives: "But however it changes and however it may be corrected, it holds to its essentially lawful set of types, to which all life, and thus all sciences, of which it is "ground", remain bound. Thus it also has an ontology to be derived from pure self-evidence."[50]

From sections 39 to 50 of the *Crisis*, Husserl proposes again, but in a critical and analytical fashion, a trajectory that begins with an outline of his method and then proceeds to the discovery of transcendental subjectivity, understood as the terrain that can justify the genesis of the *a priori* of the life world. The life world must be seen as leading back, always through the transcendental epoché, to the transcendental correlation of the world to consciousness of the world, subject to object, which means that our world acquires sense through our intentional life.[51] Intentionality and evidence reciprocally refer to one another; evidence is a universal mode of intentionality. Both reveal the universal teleological structure of consciousness to which we have to return in order to grasp the universal *a priori* of the life world in the transcendental relationship between subject and object, understood as the ultimate terrain in which all objective sciences ground themselves.

Husserl observes that the sense of this new and highest ontology, understood as the essential ontology of "*onta*," is that of a science, that is, a radical *a priori* knowledge that has no connection to modern philosophy and the objective sciences, that are: "… guided by a constructive concept of a world which is true in itself, one substructed in mathematical form, at least in respect to nature."[52] In this construction, there is lacking "… the dignity of actual self-evidence, i.e. the dignity of essential insight obtained from direct self-giving (experiencing intuition), much as it would like to claim this for itself."[53]

Husserl insists that the validity of the evidence he has given makes concrete the need for a critical attitude, which ultimately gave birth to philosophy. There is nothing that is programmatically new, yet the results are all new. In mapping a territory to which we need to return in order to understand the structures of reality, he confronts the central problems of philosophy, including metaphysical and epistemological ones.

In the domain of metaphysics, Husserl elaborates a new anthropology by phenomenologically investigating lived experiences, especially in *Ideas II*. He also broaches ultimate questions, including those dealing with the notion of God.[54] In the domain of epistemology, Husserl justifies the possibility of the pure sciences, including geometry, mathematics, and physics; the latter is linked with the pure sciences that evolved in modernity.[55] Mathematics and geometry are justified through

[50] *Ibid*., 173.

[51] *Ibid*., section 51.

[52] *Ibid*., 173–174.

[53] *Ibid*., 174.

[54] See my *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*.

[55] Ales Bello, A., *Husserl e le scienze* (Husserl and Sciences), (Rome: La Goliardica, 1980); Ales Bello, A., *L'oggettività come pregiudizio. Analisi di inediti husserliani sulla scienza* (Objectivity as Prejudice. Analisis of unpublished husserlian Manuscript on Sciences), (Rome: La Goliardica, 1982).

the formative process of ideality: these pure sciences constitute an "objective," ideal world, enjoyable by all, because they were developed by human capacities. Mathematics and geometry are idealities developed in a particular culture and they are available to all human beings capable of following the same formative process.

We see here both the similarity and difference between Husserl and Plato's positions. On one hand, Husserl recognizes Plato's contribution to the development of the concept of ideality and the objectivity of ideality. We see Husserl's debt to Plato in the texts already discussed, but we also see that, already from 1908, Husserl was thinking about the question of meaning in his *Bedeutungslehre*.[56] On the other hand, Husserl does not accept the justification of Plato's account of ideality, understood in the context of Plato's critique of the Sophists: Against the relativism of the Sophists, Plato defends an ideal world over and beyond appearances, he defends the ideal world of "*onta*" (existing objects) that are immutable and not subject to becoming. Husserl recognizes that immutability and non-temporality are characteristics of ideality: he often speaks of supratemporality in his *Theory of Signification* and in the *Cartesian Meditations,*[57] but not in a metaphysical way. He does not accept the world of "*onta*," which, according to Plato, insofar as they are seen with the eyes of our intellect, are "ideas"—the root *id* comes from the past of the Greek verb *orao*, to see. Concerning geometry—and here we can recall that Plato and his students, especially Xenocrates and Speusippus, insist upon the reality of geometric "*onta*" that exist in a separate world, which can also be viewed by us as ideas—Husserl believes that the beings that belong to geometry are discovered by individual geometers and preserved in their purity through a tradition that consolidates itself through writing. What is lost in modernity, according to Husserl, is the origin of these ideal formations, which lead back to experience and the very perfectibility of experience itself: from a rough *plenum*, one can draw out, through a practical and theoretical process, something ideal. For example, as Husserl writes in *The Origin of Geometry*, "… straight lines are especially preferred, and among the surface, the even surface…. Thus the production of even surfaces and their perfection (polishing) always plays its role in the praxis" (C 376). Therefore, proceeding from the factual, we can gain, through a method of variation, the idea of an ideal surface, an ideal line, and we can elaborate the ideality of geometric axioms.

Ideal construction, then, is lowered down again upon rough *plena* as an "ideal suit," as the work of Galileo has demonstrated. Modern physics is born through the process described above, even though the process of its origin[58] is no longer present to consciousness. What interests Husserl is not the crisis of modern science, but the dogmatic attitudes that characterize it insofar as modern science cannot access the origin that determines its value.

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[56] Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre. Sommersemester 1908*, ed. U. Panzer, in *Husserliana*, XXVI (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987).

[57] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*.

[58] C, section 9.

The reflection on ontology has brought us far away from our investigation of sense, but it nonetheless remains connected to sense. Although Husserl's project contains many folds, one also finds in his work a unified phenomenological project.

3.5 Ontology Can Be Said in Many Ways

We can conclude this chapter by observing that, for Husserl, the term "ontology" slowly takes on a particular connotation, even though it possesses certain fundamental characteristics. Hence, it is important to be aware of the adjectives and other specifications that accompany the term.

Let us begin with formal ontology's Something in general, which is connected with the apophantic logic that Husserl treated in his logical works and the *Ideas*. We can then move on to the formal ontology of "each existent in all senses," which is discussed in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Finally, we can examine the application of formal ontology to the formal-general ontology of the life world.

Regarding the modalities in which ontology articulates itself in contemporary reflection and in Husserl's students, one notes:

1. The existence of an ontology that Husserl recognized as possible in the natural attitude and, therefore, the existence of an ontology that remains untouched by phenomenological inquiry;
2. A formal-essential ontology that makes evident the structures of the real through the reduction to essence and, therefore, the existence of an ontology that includes the first step of the phenomenological method. We find this ontology in the work of Adolf Reinach, Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Gerda Walther, Roman Ingarden, and Nicolai Hartmann.[59] Their work does not differ from general-essential theory, understood as an *a priori* structure demonstrated by Husserl in his *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and applied in the *Crisis* to his analysis of the life world;
3. That Husserl's analysis of the life world is justified transcendentally and phenomenologically. He describes a process that leads to a formal ontology of Something, of the object in general, as well as a process of the logic of the formal-general of the existent. Each sense, then, retraces the path from ideality to experience, and vice versa.

The discussion of the ontology of structure, which we also find in Anglo-American philosophy, cannot remain at the level of the natural attitude, Husserl would say.

[59] For further discussion of the relation between Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, please refer to my essay "Ontology and Phenomenology" *in Theory and Applications of Ontology*, 287–328. Also see, Nicoletta Ghigi, "Phenomenology and Ontology in Nicolai Hartmann and Roman Ingarden", *Theory and Application of Ontology Philosophical Perspectives*, eds. R. Poli and J. Seibt (Dordrecht: Springer 2010), 329–348.

Even the sciences employ, though they may not be aware of it, the individuation of essences. For example, what distinguishes optics from acoustics from mechanics? These are territories that refer to regional ontologies based on characteristic essential elements. In the same way, the formation of categories requires the delineation of territories. In this respect, then, I affirm what Poli maintains, "Ontology treats, at least in principle, that which can be categorized, that is, objectivated, and subsumed under distinct categories."[60] We can ask: What makes categories distinct? Inevitably, we can affirm, along with Poli, that territories, with their essential characteristics, create the distinctions.

Husserl is the first theorist of contemporary ontology. We need to draw upon his work, especially from its historical and theoretical perspectives, in order to take up his own style of inquiry as found, for example, in his analysis of geometry, which allows us to recognize and see its origins.

[60] Roberto Poli, *The Categorial Stance*, 1.

Chapter 4
The Genesis of Knowledge and the Foundation of the Sciences

In this chapter, I deepen the account of the genesis of knowledge through Husserl's archaeological investigations, which ultimately allow us to uncover the pre-categorial level analyzed, in a particular way, in his discussions of the life world.

4.1 The A Priori of the Life World

The delineation of the pre-categorial sphere coincides with the description of the characteristics of the life world (*Lebenswelt*), the analysis of which, achieved through the reduction, makes evident the dimension of lived experiences. This "backward reference" of the reduction, even when it calls for the abandonment of the sciences, understood as the fruit of the categorial, does not signify, as we have already seen, the withdrawal into a speculative "silence," nor is it a return to a pre-philosophical past; rather, it signifies a "a complete tearing down" of the illusion of the solution to problems "from above" (*von oben*): we need to start from "below" (*von unten*). If we follow this latter path, we do not have to abandon everything, that is, we continue to seek for the a priori (i.e., the *Lebenswelt*) through "reason," which is an ambivalent instrument. And because reason is ambivalent, sometimes we discover things and sometimes things are hidden from us. Such an a priori, then, is constituted by the dialectic of finitude and infinity.

Ms. AVII 21 (1933) is dedicated to the aforementioned notion of the a priori and bears the title "The Life World, Its A Priori."[1]

The tendency to embrace the totality of things and to surround and understand them to the depths of their being, if it is present in human knowledge, is fully realized only in God, Husserl maintains. Here, we encounter the question posed by Kant about the difference between the human and divine points of view. God's point of view, of course, sees and understands all things. Precisely because the human

[1] Edmund Husserl, Ms. A VII 21, *Lebenswelt, ihr Apriori* (1933).

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15395-7_4

being contemplates this possibility and because this thought is not foreign to him or her, s/he tends toward the obtention of comprehensive knowledge. Such human knowledge, however, is qualitatively different than intuitive knowledge, which is attributed to God. The positive sciences that seek comprehensive knowledge have inevitably to limit their inquiries to a particular project or field of study. The object of science, understood historically, consists in the establishment of a communal work that tends toward the infinite, and even in the relativity of its level of completeness, science has as its "*telos*" a comprehensive knowledge that functions as a "regulative idea."

In this context, then, what does phenomenological analysis bring forward? It makes evident the a priori, which is observable in the framework of cognitive relations, understood as historically consolidated: Evident is the tension that exists between the idea of totality—the world and the cosmos—and the finitude of single forms of knowledge, whose sum total never reaches infinity. It is the dialectic of finitude and infinity that is implicitly contained in the pre-scientific world as experience—still un-thematized—of a life within a "world."

The problem consists in knowing whether this a priori is a function of culture that is the work of a process of categorization—and in this case it cannot be considered to be a priori because it is a historical formation—or a mode of experience giving itself, which means that experience possesses such a gnoseological structure. If we examine more closely the characteristics of "infinity," we notice that it is connected to the theme of the open horizon; we have here an infinity that is an opening (*Offenheit*) and a furthering that consists of the fulfilling of every anticipation and the agreement between that which is presupposed and that which will be realized. One directly finds oneself, then, in the midst of a temporal process that comes to be through successive syntheses and that configures itself as a flow that unfolds in two directions: as a progressive knowledge of always new aspects of the surrounding world and as the achievement of the totality of an open and endless multiplicity; the infinitely small, understood as the inexhaustible determination of every single thing, and the infinitely large, understood as the identification of oneself with the one who knows the whole.

We are dealing here with spatiotemporal extension that moves from the now here to the after there. This extension continues in successive fulfillments, which also represent corrections of different perceived aspects in order to reach true being, that is, the totality of this very being as the ideal unity of appearances. The foregoing conception can be "made explicit" only through a philosophical vision of the world, but it arises in relation to the lived body (*Leib*), which we understand as a field of perception, as a field of a plurality of spatial objects that are subject to further amplification and successive syntheses of fulfillment. The lived body experiences itself as progressively moving forward but also as having the possibility of return and, hence, as the central point of diverse spatial directions. The surrounding world appears, then, as an "oriented" world in every phase of experience, and always with reference to the lived body.

The surrounding world is and is not cosmic space and cosmic time. It cannot be so because of the surrounding world's evident limitations; rather, the surrounding

world is presupposed and it gives itself (*zur Selbstgegebenheit kommt*): the world is an idea and the things of the world are partial ideas. Infinite space and infinite time are ideas. Such givenness is, however, relative to the intentional unities that are a grade higher than those given by the real surrounding world.

The finitude of the surrounding world, understood from the perspective of pure experience, does not represent an abstract limitation of cosmic infinity, understood as a determination achieved through the *via negationis* (the way of negation); rather, in its very limitation, the surrounding world is connected, through a *metexis* (an in-between), to a pre-constituted conception of ideal infinity.

The existence of the cosmos, understood as an infinite totality, is linked to a "presupposition" that arises from the always-open process of experience. Hence, the relation between the finite and the infinite, the real and ideal, unfolds in a gnoseological way. The philosophical-scientific tradition that discusses this way of knowing in ontological terms has fallen into a sort of naïve position. The analysis of the two levels in which one finds both the life world and the dynamic tension between them and the two levels, namely, real, concrete experience and ideal presupposition, permits the making evident of such a structure and, hence, the a priori of the very same life world. If this life world is experienced "passively" and as naïvely accepted, we are led not only into adopting a naïve natural attitude but also into taking on a philosophical-scientific attitude, as has been the case in western culture.

4.2 Science and Life

If the structures of the life world can be properly seized only through changing one's perspective through the phenomenological method, does this not mean that we lapse into the very intellectualism that phenomenology claims to overcome? Husserl highlights two different modalities of evidence[2]: first, there is the natural modality, which is connected to *doxa*, the values that guide moral and religious behavior; second, there is a modality that we can define as "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*), understood in the full sense of the term. The latter is and is not linked to everyday and traditional scientific-philosophical knowledge. This is the case because this modality does not refuse that which is intuitively given as a "fact," it is given as beautiful and good. This is also not the case because this modality "positions things in their right places," in a life that is modeled on a complete fulfillment of intentions and which completely "liberates" the I.

Are we dealing here with a process of idealization? How is this process achieved? It is reason that, far from lying in opposition to life, struggles against the absolutization of partial aspects of life itself. The result, then, is not one of establishing a hierarchy of values where philosophy occupies the principal position, unless we

[2] Edmund Husserl, Ms. BI 21, *Wissenschaft und Leben. Weg in die Philosophie der Praxis her (1918–1931).*

understand the primary position of philosophy simply as a reflexive attitude of essential description. In such a case, the value of every existential expression is not cancelled out; on the contrary, it is made evident. According to Husserl, if reason, understood in this particular "scientific" sense, has the greatest authority, then, in religious revelation, there is such an immediate experience that it configures itself as "higher" than any other experience or knowledge.

From the radical viewpoint of phenomenology, on one hand, we have to abandon the battle between various theorizations of science (because when phenomenology is proposed as a "new" science, it is not a theory like other theories; rather, it is a recognition of what is real and originary, and it is a making manifest of motivations); and, on the other hand, we must not liquidate all traditions, thereby accepting the inextricability of the process of "mechanization," which also entails the inauthenticity that invalidates or nullifies "life." Here, the methodic demand of phenomenological inquiry distinguishes—one thinks of Bergson's position in this regard, which Husserl seems to have accepted—between life and habit, life and schematizing intellect. To grasp life in its authenticity, to let oneself "be guided" by life itself does not mean eliminating all "mediation," for it is already implied in life, in terms of both life's positive and negative aspects.

Husserl is aware of the false opposition between life and reason, which is where modern rationalism leads and where the opposition still lingers in contemporary culture—a culture that positions itself against religious faith by virtue of the sciences that it has developed. These sciences demand understanding, intuition, penetration, and not knowing how to make all of these requirements accord and how to order them all, the sciences tend toward a complete refusal of faith, ultimately viewing it as irrational.[3] This is why Husserl is deeply involved in searching for the originary and why he has to "invent" the tools for his discovery. But is this really a discovery or simply a rediscovery of something forgotten or lost? We find ourselves facing the dilemma of the Enlightenment, which still affects our contemporary western culture and which was first articulated by Descartes, who claimed that reason grounds itself and is the foundation of all knowing. Rousseau puts an end to the dilemma by claiming that a society founded on culture is a corruption of our original state of nature.

If the originary state coincides with life, how can we "truly" identify it? We can identify life because either *all* is life or there are diverse levels of life that are more or less valid, but how can we distinguish between what is more or less valid? Phenomenology responds to this question by urging us to attend to that "which is given," but we must also "create" the necessary conditions for this givenness to actualize itself. Is the method, then, merely rationalization? Is it a process of categorization? This cannot be the case, if we pay close attention to the principle of *Selbstgegebenheit* (self-givenness). But even here we have to delineate a method and use reason. This insight is taken up in Ms. B I 21 I cited above, which is dedicated to the relation between science and life. We find here an understanding of

[3] I develop such an argument in my book *Il senso del sacro. Dall'arcaicità alla desacralizzazione* [*The Sense of the Sacred: From the Archaic to Desacralization*], (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2014).

reason different from what we normally encounter in the western philosophical tradition.

Reason, in this manuscript, must combat a tradition that has "lost" its very own justification (read Rousseau). The western tradition has constructed an edifice that no longer knows how to justify, yet it has to give an account of all traditions, understood in terms of their historical and structural aspects, in order to understand all the final laws that condition all domains of knowledge. Such a "universal" science, understood as reason in the most authentic sense, is an "idea" and, hence, the idea of a categorial formation (*kategorialen Gebildes*) that contains an idea of a method, of a path to be followed. Does it become impossible here, then, to overcome the impasse of a categorial construction, even in the elaboration of a method and in the idea of a pure science becoming a guiding thread for a "teleological" movement that tends toward the infinite? This cannot be the case because reason, according to Husserl, is the capacity to "make evident," and this is why the method must lead to that which "has been made evident" in the sense of things.

4.3 The Foundation of the Sciences

The reflection upon the formation and validity of the sciences constitutes a large part of Husserl's analyses and entails the phenomenological method tackling a significant epistemological challenge. This theme of reflection, for Husserl, bears the title "foundation of the sciences."

Husserl treats the theme in numerous published and unpublished texts, and given his large *Nachlass*, it is wise to make reference here to various manuscripts that deal with his analysis of the theme.

In Manuscript A VII 20, "The Possibility of Ontology (1930)," Husserl writes, "My original question was motivated by the *Theory of the Naturalistic Conception of the World b*y the positivist Avenarius. His work consists of a scientific description of the world as a *pure world of experience*—an experience that occurs in waking consciousness—that is not experienced as accidentally empirical, but as an *essential description* within the phenomenological reduction. We are dealing here with the essential structure of the phenomenon of the world reduced to pure experiential phenomenon, *the pure phenomenon of the world experienced as such*."[4]

I have indicated the key words of the aforementioned citation in italics and they demonstrate what Husserl saw as the direction to be taken by the phenomenological method. The problem of the foundation of science historically arose as the counterposition to positivism's absolutization of science. It also was born out of positivism's understanding of experience, which was seen to be the ground of the sciences. Hence, the impetus arose to describe the world as a pure world of experience. But Husserl does not wish to reduce the world to empirical experience; rather, he sees

[4] Edmund Husserl, Ms. trans. A VII 20, "*Möglichkeit der Ontologie (1930)*", transcribed by M. Biemel, 66.

our experience of the world in essential terms. Here, the essential structure of the phenomenon must be obtained by isolating what the experience of the world as such is.

We find ourselves facing two questions about the world, understood as a world of experience: on one hand, we have the foundation of the positive sciences and, on the other hand, we find the analysis of this world, understood as pure experience. Concerning the former, the term "foundation" presupposes a terrain to which one can lead back the positive sciences, which possess gnoseological validity determined by their processes of investigation and clarification. Foundation can also have another meaning, namely, the explanation of the way in which science constitutes itself in relation to its originary source, always mindful that such a constitution represents the object of the investigation that is to be completed. In this sense, then, we find ourselves pushed toward an analysis of the validity of science.

According to Husserl, as explained in his manuscript Ms. B I 27, titled "(1) The Task of Clarification; (2) The Inadequacy of the Positive Sciences; The Idea of Science (1924–1926),"[5] in the positive sciences, every researcher uses certain fundamental concepts that he inherits from the tradition and that belong to his formation as "empty symbolic residue," which he could use to clarify matters. Always returning to these sciences' originary and proper sense, he can reactivate the process that he has carried out on their formation and, therefore, on the "originary foundation" (*Urstiftung*) of their conceptual meaning.

Moreover, every science, as Husserl indicates in Ms. B I 33 titled "Critique of the Positive Sciences. Third Way (1922–1933),"[6] can never be complete in itself and aspires to acquire a full foundation. Even for sciences that are configured in such a way as to presume that they do indeed possess absolute justification, for example, geometry and contemporary physics, it is necessary to recognize that their system of principles and theories is nothing but an "enormous superstructure: that lacks a "valid foundation of cognition." In fact, if we point out the scope and aims of these sciences and we trace back to their guiding structure, always with respect to the "pure" science of space and to the "true" science of nature, through a reductive analysis, their foundation consists in the idea of pure space or the ideal concept of nature, which have their constitutive elements in a further or more profound sphere completely different than a superstructure. It is to this third level that subjective, relative concepts linked to sensation belong, which the physicist and the geometer discard, thereby giving to them no possible way of reentering into the objective validity of the world.

The negative reference to, the negative use of experience by the sciences, arises, then, in two senses. First, when pre-scientific experience, which properly belongs to life, is neglected and, second, when, under the pretext of making a reference to

[5] Edmund Husserl, Ms. trans. B I 27, 1) *Aufgabe der Klärung*; 2) *Unzugänglichkeit der positiven Wissenschaften*; *Idee der Wissenschaft* (1924–1926).

[6] Edmund Husserl, Ms. trans. *Beilage zu den Vormeditationen*: *Warum selbst exakte positive Wissenschaft zu keiner Endgüldichkeit führen können. Kritik der positiven Wissenschaft. Weg III* (1922–1923).

experience, experience itself is overcome. This task of clarification must be realized by a new and particular mode of inquiry that inserts itself in the furrows of traditional philosophy, which in the past was called "first philosophy," *Erste Philosophie,*[7] and which sought the meta-cosmic—an adjective chosen because of its assonance and opposition to the term "metaphysics," understood in its traditional meaning—"originary terrain."

That the sciences need the aforementioned kind of clarification does not only concern their epistemological status; rather, and above all, it is the fact that there is the problem of an unexplained aspect of nature—an aspect that the sciences pretend to explain. Nature remains spatiotemporal, identical with its spatiality and temporality, even if space is considered in Euclidean or non-Euclidean terms. The mode of being of nature prescinds from physicalist determinations and it becomes clear, when confronting such a problem, that physics, with its theoretical operations and its explanations of nature, does not comprehend the need for the clarification described above and how it is that this clarification is not included in what the sciences do. Husserl's critique of scientism is exact and precise. Sciences, in fact, presuppose the world of experience and do not subject it to deep investigation.

Biology, anthropology, psychology, and the sciences of the spirit can all be interested in organisms, animals, human beings, but the being that is relative to nature always remains the same, even if it is seen in a new light, and it is this that must be the object of research.

Manuscript A VII 20, where we began, represents the advent of a process of critique of science developed over time, which ultimately culminates in the text of the *Crisis*. Husserl, even earlier than the *Crisis*, however, maintained that there was a problem with the positivist sciences, arguing for a cognitive foundation that could not be secured through such sciences.[8]

The *pars destruens* (destructive or de-structuring part) of his argument sought to make evident the difference between the certainty obtained by the sciences and a deeper sense of certainty. The first kind of certainty, on one hand, had to overcome any confusion in the unfolding of thought. Precisely pin-pointing the epistemological status of modern science, Husserl maintains that the "overcoming" of the confusion is not about sensation—this does not enter into the discussion—rather, it is about the conceptual uncertainty fought against through the processes of verification.

This experimental verification is illusory. In reality, we have here a logical process that is very different from that connected to intuition (*Anshaulichkeit*) of thingness. The craftsperson and the scientist, in their concrete and experientially determined work, do not only differentiate the "object" of the former from the object of the latter, which is to "be discovered." Rather, the fact is that the scientist is guided by a presupposition that, in a well determined sphere of experience, there must exist an object of a certain type such that it fulfills an idea intention, thereby making possible a construction whose pieces must fit within a predetermined

[7] See EP I and EP II.

[8] Edmund Husserl, Ms. trans. B I 33, *op. cit*.

mosaic. The characteristic of the proof lies in a deduction that follows from certain premises: something similar must be analogously found in the general form about which one schematically thinks. It becomes a necessity, then, to further distinguish between a deduction that is related to a concrete experience—for example, I see traces of humans having been in a certain place and I deduce that humans must have been there—and the logical deduction that presupposes an axiomatic system with well-defined rules. We are dealing here with an analytic logical form that is founded on the formal possibility that excludes all "matter" whatsoever. If one considers, however, material specification, it is necessary to account for deductions and proofs that are valid both as reality and possibility, but in this case possibility arises through a presupposition that is motivated in a completely different way from formal possibility. The formal sense of possibility is configured within symbolic thought and leaves terms absolutely indeterminate, whereas possibility in this case is manifested through means that can be fulfilled by "actions" constructed in a typically determined way. Here, the term refers to that which is concrete in such a way that the intuition corresponding to an expectation truly realizes itself. Taking up once again the example of the traces of human beings, verification can only come through an intuition that fulfills that which is anticipated.

The difference established earlier leads to the conclusion that not only mathematics but also the natural sciences, which are grounded in mathematics, demonstrate that scientific aims are placed within the framework of an intentional, constituting subjectivity. This does not mean that the researcher must be aware of such an operation. In fact, the researcher maintains that objective knowledge must be "evident" without being aware that this very evidence refers back, in the end, to a lived experience. It is possible, then, for us to move on to a different level of analysis because if every object has logical content, whose determination is the aim of science to know, every object, then, has constitutive content that conforms to knowledge. If we analyze such knowledge, we uncover properties that can be expressed through logical predicates. This analysis displays what the "constitution" of the object is.

In other words, we are dealing here with a system of *Erlebnisse* that belong to the system of cognitive operations in which the subject knowing the object in question is configured as possessing this particular logical content. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish two attitudes. First, the naïve attitude, which extends to cover both everyday and scientific knowledge, including psychological knowledge, that is characterized by the fact that it "seizes" an object and that it wishes to know the gnoseological process that makes possible the true being of the object. The scientist that seems to take on a sharply aware and critical attitude, in reality, stops his/her analysis at what could be defined as the "ontic" evidence. The object is experienced as possessing certain characteristics and one presupposes through anticipation that an object possesses other characteristics. One makes judgments according to a normative logic, understood in the noetic sense.

The second attitude consists of consciousness or evidence being understood in psychological and transcendental senses. Here, the psychological sense is understood differently from its sense in the natural attitude: the sense forms part of a

phenomenological psychology. This is why Husserl asks himself whether or not normative logic constitutes a particular field of psychological research.

We must not forget Husserl's demand, already made in his early work, to investigate the logical moment within a psychological framework. This exigency gradually leads one from psychology to phenomenology to the elaboration found in such works as *Formal and Transcendental Logic*: the logical moment, though it has its own configuration, can be analyzed and understood, if it is led back to a constituting subjectivity. Hence, the terms "transcendental" and "psychological" become identical. Life and consciousness (used here as synonyms, and we will see later the problem with this identification) are subject to psychological objectivation and, therefore, belong to psychology, but the transcendental reduction also acts in relation to them, thereby bringing to the fore the claim that every objectivity is constituted by an ego.

4.4 Toward a New "Transcendental Aesthetic"

The problem of a transcendental aesthetic is gnoseological, and this is demonstrated by the recurring attempt on Husserl's part to found a new transcendental aesthetic. He sometimes is explicit about his intentions, while at other times he carries out a series of analyses of lived experiences in order to show the potential for a transcendental aesthetic.

In Ms. A VII 14, called "Transcendental Aesthetic,"[9] we find the base for the delimitation of the aesthetic realm. It is obvious in this text, even though the references to Kant are scarce, that the shadows of the *Critique of Pure Reason* hover over Husserl's thinking. We also note here the distance of the discussion from science.

On one hand, the domain of the aesthetic is broad enough to include *all* of experience and, on the other hand, it restricts itself to the evidence of an a priori that is a "structure" rather than a determined faculty. Because the transcendental aesthetic is a "systematic exposition of the essential structure of a world as a world of possible experience and the essential structure of its modes of givenness, its modes of appearing,"[10] it harbors an ambiguity, which Kant did not resolve. On one hand, the ambiguity refers to the concrete life of the human being, to the world that belongs to him or her in everyday living. The ambiguity appertains to the structures that remain invariable in eidetic variation and that constitute the open infinity of this world. On the other hand, one finds mathematized nature. The former do not immediately identify with the latter, with mathematical ideality. On the contrary, the mathematized world is an ideal possibility with respect to the given world. Through eidetic variation all possibilities are achievable, but it is at this point that the ambiguity arises, namely, when the openness (*Offenheit*) of the factual world becomes confused with the infinity (*Unendlichkeit*) of the mathematized world, which is

[9] Edmund Husserl, Ms. trans. A VII 14, "*Transzendentale Aesthetik* (1920–1926), transcribed by C. Schröder.

[10] *Ibid*., 84.

founded on a particular *eidos* that is linked to, but which must not be confused with, the "generality" that is related to things.

Ideation, the operation that lies at the base of the formation of the sciences in general and the natural and spiritual sciences in particular, rests (and here we grasp more deeply the gnoseological moment) on the idea of infinity, on the presupposition that an iterative proximity is possible, a continuous drawing closer to a determined being from whose reality we distance ourselves. From the interweaving of mathematics and physics arises the exigency of an "ideal ontology of nature" and of an "empirically" exact science that draws gradually closer to a science whose ideal structure has already been presupposed. Hence, within the transcendental aesthetic one also finds the ideation and iteration that is proper to the sciences of the spirit.

It appears, then, thanks to the transcendental aesthetic and from within it, that it becomes possible to distinguish practical experience, which is immediate and everyday, from more complex experience that is based on ideation.

At the beginning of the manuscript, however, the term "aesthetic" possesses a more limited meaning that is closer, in certain ways, to the Kantian notion. The term refers to the universe of intuition and description and, hence, to empirical generalities from which one can elaborate a transcendental aesthetic a priori, which is different from a higher transcendental, analytical induction that is no longer experience seized in its generality, but is the construction of ideas based on iteration. A universal a priori exists, which is more radically positioned: it refers to experience seized in its generality, understood as singularity, generality, type, and ideation. This seems to be the object of a transcendental aesthetic, which oscillates between the making evident of a totality that comprises all of experience—experience understood as global knowledge, which in Kantian terms must be seen as both aesthetic and analytic—and the limitation of the aesthetic itself to a "non-scientific" domain of experience that excludes all elements that refer to an elaboration of the sciences (the forms of intuition are seen as elements relevant for the elaboration of arithmetic and geometry.)

Moreover, the difficulty of separating the analysis of the experience of the aesthetic-transcendental a priori from the analytic a priori is connected to the fact that our experience is configured in an historical sense as a complex experience. This is why it becomes necessary to undertake a *reductive inquiry* that analyzes the various modalities of givenness, ultimately differentiating that which is given from that which is constructed. Husserl goes onto say in the manuscript: In order to avoid "construction" on the part of the researcher, even in his/her reductive analysis, while allowing the things themselves to speak, he proposes that one investigate motivations, which lies at the base of particular configurations of perceptual unities.

We are dealing here with the experiencability of an identity within the unity of a *perception* relative to a spatiotemporal object that, even in the flow of a perceptual field, remains unchanged, an identity without causality, to employ other words.

In order to understand the aforementioned identity it is necessary to consider the moves of movement and change, even the qualitative ones, to which things are subject in a field. Every movement constitutes itself as a change and in all phases of the change there is momentary rest. And the different phenomena that function in light

of the manifestation of movement must first achieve a unity. Hence, the phenomenon of the movement of a thing, understood as a series of visual apparitions in the ocular-motor field, must be expressed by the observation that the thing changes its position in the field. Two possibilities present themselves, which derive either from the movement of the subject (and this is why the object is seen to be drawn "closer" or "further away" in the visual field) or from the movement of the subject or the object (this is why all the aspects that constitute the thing at rest are present, but in a different way). This discussion is taken up in greater detail in Husserl's *Thing and Space*, as we shall see in the next chapter.[11]

All perceptual fields contain objects in movement and objects at rest, which can change their states from movement to rest and vice versa. The characteristic of such a change is the originary lawfulness of "immanent causality"; we expect that the future possesses the same style as the past. Hence, the link between spatiality and temporality: we analyze here the lived experiences that constitute the thingly, spatial-temporal world and we also explore how that which was lived becomes a rule for a successive experience. If a hyletic datum is at rest, we expect it to remain this way, that is, we "live" it in this way. If it changes, we expect to "live" an analogous change. But against this law of repetition, a delusion or error can arise: instead of repose, movement occurs; instead of the same movement, a "different" movement happens. In other words, the anticipation of a "form" of reality can often be put into crisis. In our very first attitudes, we find "causality," which is defined as properly immanent because it is based on repetition and, secondly, on contingency and newness.

The permanence of identity of the single thing within the perceptual field or the repetition of the phases of movement of the thing or things within the perceptual field carry with them the "certainty" that arises from the association of permanence without changes. Hence, in relation to a thing that I see, from the one side of the thing that I see, I can foresee the consistency of missing parts because I have already experienced them through a free movement. The modality of a delusion impedes us from concluding that one can definitively establish the characteristics of the experience: no concrete existent can be retained to be known through a tested certainty that implies absolute repetition.

The observation of the presence of two aspects, that is, permanence and newness, understood as modalities proper to the web of experience permits, on one hand, the descent of the categorial to the pre-categorial and, on the other hand, the ascent from the second to the first. Reductive inquiry permits us to understand how the very concepts of science, which far from representing a "reading" of the world in itself, are, on the contrary, a progressive transformation, a transvaluation of sense; and although sense may arise from the phenomenal world, science distances itself from phenomenological sense-making structures, thereby projecting onto the world a conceptual construction. The link between the two worlds, namely, life and science,

[11] Edmund Husserl, *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907*: Hrsg. von U. Claesges (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973). English translation: *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*, trans. and ed. by R. Rojcewicz, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997).

exists, but not in the sense of a pure and simple "continuity" whereby the passage of one to the other comes about through progressive clarification; rather, on the contrary, continuity indicates a change of sign, the use in a "different" way of that which is lived pre-categorially. At this point, we do not have here a liquidation of science, but simply the description of its genesis that can, on one hand, impede the absolutization of its concepts and, hence, the pretense of these concepts to be seen as the only authentic ones (against the claims of positivists) and, on the other hand, that can demonstrate the validity of other dimensions, especially when one finally discovers the theoretical value of the pre-categorial sphere. Let us now move forward with a description of this pre-categorial sphere.

Chapter 5
The Sense of Things—Hyletics, Anthropology, Metaphysics

5.1 What Is Hyletics?

If the individuation of the sphere of lived experiences is both Husserl's brilliant discovery and the focus of his work, the very analysis of lived experiences makes evident the relation between the intentional, noetic, and hyletic (i.e., "material") moments. The description of this relation, already mentioned in *Ideas I*, is deepened in the second volume of the *Ideas* through his analysis of the lived body (*Leib*). The lived body not only bears localized sense impressions, which have a constitutive function for objects that appear in space, but also other kinds of completely different sense impressions. In terms of the latter, he considers sensuous feelings, for example, the sensations of pleasure and pain, and the wellbeing or discomfort of the body that stem from the body being indisposed. The discussion of these sensuous feelings is particularly important for Husserl.

That the aforementioned discussion continues to be present in his own investigations is confirmed by a significant number of manuscripts that originate from the 1930s, namely, the C and D manuscripts. In them, one finds mention of both the noetic and hyletic moments discussed above. In particular, in the untitled Manuscript C10 of 1931, we grasp the connection between hyletic unity and affectivity: though the hyletic universe is a non-egological universe, insofar as it is constituted without the intervention of the I, the I still is present as a locus of the affects: the I is always active.

We find an example of what Husserl maintains about hyletic unity and affectivity in a text by Edith Stein called *The Structure of the Human Person,*[1] which contains a series of lectures delivered at the Institute for Pedagogy at Münster in the winter semester of 1932–1933. Here, she affirms that the world of spirit embraces the whole of the created world.

[1] Edith Stein, *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person. Vorlesungen zur philosophischen Philosophie,* ed. B. Beckmann-Zöller, in *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 14 (Freiburg: Herder, 2004).

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15395-7_5

In order to demonstrate the aforementioned claim, Stein contemplates a block of granite. Undoubtedly, the granite is formed of material, but it is also full of sense and it reveals its sense, because, though we do not perceive it as having a personal spirituality, the material formation before us is nevertheless constituted according to its own structural principle, which includes the granite's specific weight, consistency, and hardness. Even the granite's mass, the fact that it "presents itself" in enormous blocks and not in granules or pieces, all of these facts reveal something about the granite's structure. What is important here is that Stein's analysis is also applicable to what Husserl says about affectivity: our attention is "attracted in a unique way."[2] In fact, the granite's hard consistency and its mass do not only fall under the domain of our senses. Reason does not only affirm the granite as a reality. The senses and reason are struck from within. In them, something else is revealed to us; in this reality, we glean something. The "something" that is individuated at this point does not only have a *symbolic* sense, which is certainly also present. Here, the hyletic moment of the lived experience emerges because the block speaks of an unwavering stability and a certain trustworthiness that belong to the granite. Hardness, stability, trustworthiness all resonate within us, they give a sense of well-being or being ill-disposed, the very same things that Husserl describes when he discusses the hyletic aspect of lived experience—a sense that cannot be given by clay or sand.

Continuing with our comparison of Husserl's and Stein's descriptions, which certainly highlight a connection between the two phenomenologists, let us turn to a few of the passages already cited above. I refer specifically to a group of "*sensations belonging to totally different groups*," that is, "sensuous feelings (…), *which for the acts of valuing*, i.e., for the intentional lived experiences in the sphere of feeling, or *for the constitution of values* as their intentional correlates, *play a role, as matter, analogous to that played by the primary sensations for what is intentionally lived in the sphere of experience*, or for the constitution of Objects as spatial things."[3] These sensations are immediately localized in the body. They permit human beings to immediately intuit their living bodies (*Leib*) as their own bodies, as subjective objectivities, which are distinguished from a purely material "body proper" by means of a layer of localized sensations. This layer of localized sensation, which is "difficult to analyze and illustrate," forms, according to Husserl, the material substrate of the life of desire and the will; they are the sensations of the tension and release of energy, sensations of internal inhibition, paralysis, and liberation.[4] Intentional functions, then, are connected to this layer of sensation. Materiality takes on a spiritual function, as is the case for primary sensations that form part of the perceptions upon which perceptual judgments are formed.[5] We have here a double stratification: (1)

[2] *Ibid*., chapter 8, section 3.3.

[3] *Ideas* II, § 39, 160.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid*.

cognitive—formed by primary sensations, perceptions, perceptual judgments; (2) psychic-reactive—formed by sensuous feeling and valuing. The perceptual, judicative and valuing level belong to the noetic dimension.

The noetic and hyletic distinction can be delineated, therefore, in the manner discussed above, but the hyletic moment seems to drag the noetic moment after it. Husserl affirms: "… a human being's total consciousness is in a certain sense, by means of this hyletic substrate, bound to the Body."[6] The double moments are not eliminated. In fact, the intentional lived acts are not localized and they do not constitute a layer of one's own body. The autonomy of the spiritual moment with respect to the material one, though the spiritual moment is necessary because it permits the manifestation of the spiritual, is reaffirmed. Perception, insofar as it is a tactile seizing of the form, does not lie in the finger that touches, in the finger in which tactile sensations are localized. Thought is not veritably and intuitively localized in the head as are the localized sensations of tension.[7] Husserl observes that we often express ourselves as such. But why do we speak in this way? One could reply by saying that the attractive force of hyletic localization permits our attention to be concentrated on one's own body. We have here a new kind of materiality that is totally different from a traditional understanding of "matter," as Husserl proposes in section 85 of *Ideas I*, where he distinguishes between "matter," "material," and their respective functions. We see that Husserl is clearly searching for a new term to express a new territory and he thinks he has found it in the Greek word *hylé*. He is attempting to delineate an uncharted dimension. This is why he lacks the words to describe this new domain.

5.2 From Hyletics to Anthropology

Husserlian phenomenology presents itself as a useful theoretical guide for investigating the human being. I wish here to discuss a foundational question of western thought, namely, human anthropology as it relates to unity and multiplicity. Is science's reduction of the human being to a purely corporeal unity, which is very common in western culture, convincing? Can an analysis of the human being lead us to delineate both the complexity and stratification of this being? If so, what evidence can we give? In order to answer the aforementioned questions, I will employ Husserl's understanding of the "possible" and "impossible," and apply it to the phenomenological view of the human being, ultimately demonstrating that it is "impossible" to reduce the human being to one dimension, as did Marcuse in the 1960s.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] *Ibid*.

5.2.1 *Possible and Impossible in Husserl's Thought*

As a mathematician and logician, Husserl begins his investigation from "on high," that is, from the most abstract and complex cognitive plane in order then to descend to the dimension of experience. He carries out the "archaeological probing" that all phenomenology carries out: He not only indicates the phenomenon that must be analyzed but he also seeks to trace out the genetic process that determines the phenomenon. We see this approach throughout Husserl's work as well as in his logical works. One should not be surprised, then, to see terms like "possible" and "impossible" treated in his *Logical Investigations*, especially in the "Sixth Investigation," where he writes about the significance of possible and impossible meanings.

The question of possibility and impossibility is treated in the discussion of meaning intentions and, therefore, relates to the essential characteristics of knowledge. Husserl's analysis aims to trace what is valid in general with respect to the law that makes evident ideal validity and not empirical validity. In terms of expressibility, the following axiom can be established: "Meaning-intentions may accordingly be divided into the *possible* (internally consistent) and the *impossible* (internally inconsistent, imaginary)…. *Meanings (i.e., concepts and propositions in specie) divide into the possible and the impossible*."[8]

Possibility is real, whereas impossibility is "imaginary." Is it contradictory, then, to say that the possible is real? In order to answer this question, we have to understand what we mean by "real." The terms "real" and "reality" cannot fully capture the specific senses that Husserl gives to them. The English words do not translate the many adjectives and substantives used in the German language. As is well known, Husserl employs the word *Realität* to indicate natural reality. Since the phenomenological method calls for the bracketing of natural reality, as carried out by the epoché, we here can use the adjective *real* to refer to that which is bracketed. To indicate the component of the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) made evident by the phenomenologico-transcendental reduction Husserl uses the adjective *reell*, which refers to that which is immanent and not to the physical, transcendent object.

The "Sixth Logical Investigation," which we are examining here, contains an exception to the aforementioned distinction, for the term employed to define possibility, understood as "real", is *real*, but this is justified presumably in relation to that which is thingly in contrast to that which is imaginary (*imaginär*).[9] A confirmation of this interpretation can be found in the arguments of section 30. In fact, the idea of possibility can be seen in generalization and, therefore, in necessary ideal criteria, because one speaks here of possibility. Husserl maintains that not all empirical relations permit such a generalization, for example, "the paper is rough." "There accordingly really lies, behind the division of *meanings* into possible and impossible, a

[8] LI, vol. 2, 250.

[9] *Ibid*. See also G. Piana's notes on Husserl's terminology, 557.

peculiar general law rich in content, a law that governs phenomenological moments in ideal fashion by binding their species in the manner of general propositions."[10]

To understand the axiom mentioned above, it is necessary to contextualize the very axiom itself by placing it into relation with the sphere of objectivating acts. One must ascend the different levels of knowledge and move to knowledge's essential core, which, for Husserl, is constituted by the act of intuition and its "fulfilment." We have here made the move away from the meaning intention. This is why we can understand Husserl when he says, "Fulfilment arises out of the first application of fullness as such, in the identifying accommodation of 'corresponding' intuition to a signitive intention. In the context of coincidence the intuitive act 'gives' its fullness to the signitive act."[11] We are dealing with the relation between intuitional acts and syntheses of fulfilment, which constitute the structure of objectivating acts, that is, acts that present themselves as enunciated acts and which tend toward the achievement of fulfilment. These acts are called "objectivating" because the "object" designates the content as an intentional correlate of a representation. The achievement of fulfilment has content and is understood as "material" when the objectivating act as well as the act of representation present their very own object, their own mode, and their own articulation.

Husserl proposes another example, which is particularly important for understanding the relation between intuition and meaning intention. When the meaning of the white surface is grasped, it is the case that we live the intuitive manifestation of the white surface, and the "fulfilling" intention brings to an intuitional givenness, through its content, a white surface in a complete way, as requested by the "meaning intention." Possibility signifies the aforementioned fulfilment, and this is why Husserl uses the term *real*, understood in the sense of thingness, to indicate the possible.

Hence, the possibility of significance can be defined "… by saying *that there is an adequate essentia which corresponds to it in specie in the sphere of objectifying acts, an essential whose matter is identical to its own*, or what is the same, *has a fulfilling sense.*"[12] This possibility has a fulfilling sense. We have here an ideal generalization, which is not based on an empirical determination, that is, a contingent determination; rather, something of the real is contained, as non-imaginary. *Pure possibility is, therefore, distinguished from empirical possibility. This is why the real is not empirical. The real in this case is linked with the ideal, for, at the level of the ideal, one can establish what is* real. *The impossible, then, is that which does not respect this process and does not connect to the real. At the level of the ideal, however, it connects with the "imaginary," that is, the "incompatible."* The impossible does not lie in opposition to the possible; rather, it has its own specific configuration: we can say here, then, that there exist meanings that are possible (they are impossible) insofar as they are not real (that is, non-compatible), but imaginary (incompatible).

[10] LI, vol. 2, 251.

[11] *Ibid*., 239.

[12] *Ibid*., 251.

Husserl once again examines the relation between the possible and the real in his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. The strictly logical plane here appears to be abandoned in favor of the experiential dimension of consciousness, but this does not mean that rigor or universality cede to factual-empirical description. One discovers here the analysis of perception that is accompanied by apperception. For example, if we find ourselves facing a three-dimensional thing, one sees one side and one color of the side we face. The other colored sides are not perceived, but one can expect that they exist and that they are colored. All of this, however, remains indeterminate. In fact, we presentify to ourselves possible fulfilments of color in an empty form. We can imagine these colors, but only through real perception can a real fulfilment occur. What is important is that such a fulfilment be "possible."[13] An ideal rule is the norm for the realization of possibility. To grasp the impossibility of fulfilment, let us think of the backdrop of a theater scene. This backdrop can certainly deceive someone who does not know the structure of the representation of a scene, but once the scene is known, it is impossible for there to be a backside to the represented scene. The backside would be compatible, say, for an actually existing building, but in this case here, it is incompatible. We can only imagine such a backside because we are in an enclosed and confined space. We find ourselves here in an apperception that imaginatively fills in that which is lacking. Hence, even in this case, "possible" is connected to the real, whereas the impossible is linked to the imaginary.

Husserl calls this type of possibility "open," for there are no elements that impose suppositions, as is the case when problematic possibilities present themselves. In the case mentioned above, any shade of color could appear. We only became certain of the color grasped when we looked at the visible side of the figure. If we enter instead into the domain of supposition, we then can show a conflict between the possible solutions. I am convinced, for example, that an event happened in a particular way because of an eyewitness account. But there are also different accounts. If I choose one account, the others lose credence for me. We find ourselves in a field of possibilities in which I can choose or not choose possibilities. Certainty and supposition play an important role, depending upon the case. Doubt consists of oscillating between possibilities; questioning tends to enclose a certainty.

Husserl posits, then, an open form of possibility, which is linked to physical events, whose expectations are simple certainties or problematic possibilities in which supposition plays a large role because counter-possibilities exist, as in the case of the accounts mentioned above. The elimination of possibilities happens through the recognition of what is real; impossibility appears when the real is never able to be grasped—it can only be imagined. It is necessary to note that what can be imagined, in turn, can have two senses. One can imagine something that is compatible or incompatible. The latter has nothing to do with the "thing" and, hence, it is impossible. The impossible, insofar as it is defined as incompatible, is something else, which does not oppose the possible, and one could add, in a non-specific case.

[13] APS, Chapter 3, § 10, 79.

A further probing of the concept of possibility can be found in Husserl's *Experience and Judgment*. In the experiential moment,[14] we move from the "normal" act of perception, which can be modalized through the certainty of belief, to the presumption of belief. Presupposing the synthetic process of the first stages of knowledge, Husserl individuates a prior presumption in the very presumption of existence: first, there is the affect [*Affektion*] of the object: one believes that it exists for the I and that it is made in a certain way. But the case arises where another object causes the same presumption to appear and, hence, can be viewed as possible. "This presumed existence we also term *possible* (considered independently of its relation to the ego); it is in this conflict of inclinations of belief, correlatively of presumptions of being, that a *concept of possibility* has its origin. *Being possible, possibility, is thus a phenomenon which, like negation, already appears in the prepredicative sphere* and is most originally at home there."[15] Here, we make another gain and even obtain a further confirmation of what was indicated in the *Passive Synthesis* text: possibility manifests itself at the antepredicative level, especially with reference to the modality of doubt and, therefore, to problematic possibilities. Here, we find a deeper account of open possibilities that are grounded upon a series of unhindered perceptions. These open possibilities, when analyzed from the noematic perspective, present a determined side or aspect of an object; a generic determination (a pre-intention of perception) presents itself to an empty presentative consciousness. Husserl precisely explains, then, the relation that must be established between the analysis of the "Sixth Logical Investigation" and the *Analyses*, which were followed by the later discussions contained in *Experience and Judgment*. Husserl affirms, "Naturally, this talk of generality is employed here only as a makeshift of indirect description referring to the phenomenon itself. For we are not to think here of logical concepts of generalising or classifying generalities but simply of this foremeaning (*Vormeinung*) of perception, such as it is present in perception with its mode of consciousness; that of indeterminateness."[16]

Here, we are far removed from an empirical point of view: we are focusing on an analysis of the essence of every empty intention. We should add that a lawfulness also appears, which is connected to generality. If we probe further, we can say that possibility belongs to the indeterminate pre-indication. Possibility, in my opinion, must be understood as compatibility, as an "imagining," that could revolve around the object, that presentifies determined aspects which could be fully "varied" or concretely intuited; but, in regard to the object, the aspects themselves always remain almost undetermined. Only the perception of the sides leads to a determining specification in which the growth of knowledge consists. We are dealing here with the distinction between perceived and imagined lived experiences. In order to understand better the difference between them, we can compare them to the lived experience of memory. The presentification connected to the imagination is, in fact,

[14] EJ, § 21 b, 91.

[15] *Ibid*., 95.

[16] *Ibid*., 97.

different than a memory, which refers back to a perception accomplished through a fullness that satisfies a pre-expectation.

The "variation" that we referred to in our discussion of presentified colors refers back to another analysis of possibility that concerns the individuation of an essence, understood as invariable.

Husserl investigates variation in his studies on mathematics. The topic of his doctorate in mathematics was the calculation of variations. Philosophical reflection on this subject led Husserl to clarify the relation between variation and invariability. The *Variationsrichtung* found in Ms. trans. A VII 13 begins with perception focused on the production of a system of the concordant possibilities of a thing, which is based on homogeneity and heterogeneity. Variation lies in the discovery of the homogeneous, for example—and even here the example consists in a discussion of colors—given a certain color, one realizes that one can produce another color insofar as a series of colors, founded upon the identity of *immer wieder eine andere Farbe*,[17] can be realized. The identity of the thing is preserved when the conditions or the thing itself that has another identity are varied. The variation of perception permits the individuation of the invariable moment through the *Wesensschau*. The variation of a thing is the totality of its very being, in all of its possibilities; variation is linked to a practical change, that is, a change that passes through a *Handeln* that subsequently becomes theoretical: we are dealing here with a free, ideal operation that constitutes the general idea or *eidos*. Hence, the process of variation lies at the base of each process of ideation, that is, variation lies at the base of the process that leads to the formation of all scientific and philosophical "theorization," despite Husserl's hard distinction between philosophy and science.

If we look for the guiding thread of the aforementioned argument, we note that the domain of variations and their possibilities must, in all cases, be compatible with the invariable. Otherwise it would appear as "impossible." The possible is the real insofar as it is congruent with the thing in its invariability.

5.2.2 The Impossible as the Incompatible

Keeping in mind the similarity between the impossible and the incompatible, we can begin to analyze the complex structure of the human being. How should we begin our study, from the outside or the inside? Given that the human being is a paradox, for s/he is simultaneously the subject and object of investigation,[18] the privileged mode of inquiry begins with interiority, that is, the human being's capacity to be aware of itself through the "feeling" of itself. Such a feeling, which is accompanied by consciousness, is self-consciousness, that is, reflection. This feeling of oneself allows one to detach from oneself, which means that one can consider oneself as an object. The objects of the surrounding physical world manifest their

[17] Edmund Husserl, Ms. trans. A VII 13, *Vorgegebenheit-Wissenschaft* (1921, 1928, 1930).

[18] C, section 53.

foreignness precisely because they are not lived by us as we live ourselves. We do, however, consider other human beings as similar to ourselves because we are aware that others find themselves in the same paradoxical situation, that is, being a subject and an object to ourselves. We grasp the similarity through that special feeling or understanding that is *Einfühlung*.

The path toward interiority does not require banal introspection; rather, the path must pass through a 'filter' that guarantees certain results. And this is the very difference that lies between the investigations of Augustine, Descartes, and Husserl. The last two thinkers secure the path by delineating a method that is, in many ways, quite similar. Descartes seeks indubitable evidence, whereas Husserl specifies that such evidence concretizes itself in the grasping of the sense of the "thing" analyzed, hence, in the investigation of the sense obtained through the bracketing of all that is variable and contingent. A method that yields directive criteria allows one to obtain more stable results. A notable difference between Descartes and Husserl, however, arises. The operation of Husserl's epoché is possible because it does not plunge our certainty about the existence of things into a severe crisis; rather, it permits the elimination of the doubt—which Husserl sees as arbitrary and, hence, impossible or even incompatible with certainty—about the existence of the physical world, thereby allowing us to bracket the world. We do not have here a negation, but only a thematization of an aspect. Not thematizing this aspect is possible. It is clear that the epoché is an operation executed by a subject, who also is the result of the operation. The analysis of this residue permits the expansion of the limits of the residue itself: We do not only have the *cogitare*, thinking, as a specific human capacity—Husserl agrees that thinking is a human capacity—but it is also necessary to include in the transcendental analysis of subjectivity that which Descartes excluded, namely, the body and the psyche.

We need to discuss precisely this point, and it needs to be connected to the residue: Is that which remains unified? Is it a unified complex whole? In what does its complexity consist? The traditional problem of the relation between body and soul, with its more recent configuration as body and mind, remains an important area of research.

How are we to understand the challenge and how are we to evaluate the views that interpret the human being in a reductive way? How can we address those who advocate an empirical and material positivist view, who tend to reduce human beings to their bodies? This reductive reading supports neither the idea of the "soul" nor a spiritual vision of the human being. Yet, Descartes, for example, in addition to the *res cogitans*, recognizes the existence of a *res extensa*. There are also those who underscore the psychic dimension of the human being, as psychologists or psychoanalysts do.

Does corporeity play a role in our discussion here? Is it a self-sufficient dimension or does it draw upon other dimensions? How do we resolve this problem?

I maintain that the way proposed by classic phenomenology can provide us with useful tools for answering the aforementioned questions. We begin with subjectivity because it is within the very framework of subjectivity that the subject knows itself and the world. But how do we arrive at such knowledge? We find in phenomenology

a new approach that is different than other epistemological approaches found in the history of western thought. Husserl claims that he delineated a new "sphere of being" knowable through conscious lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*)—This is a transcendental sphere in which our lived experiences are registered, a sort of transparent pane, I dare say. Here our cognitive acts, understood from the perspective of their purity or essentiality, also register themselves.[19]

The metaphor of the transparent pane is justified by the fact that the transcendental sphere is not easily individuated. In fact, Husserl, throughout the whole course of his thinking, worried about the validity of his "discovery." The more he asked himself about his discovery, the harder he worked to make evident the power of his claim. This quest allows us to understand the reasons for the quasi "analytic delirium" that characterizes his studies as well as the reasons for the difficulty of finding an organic systematization of his analyses. But the proof for the validity of his discovery of a new territory can be found in the applications proposed by some of his students or followers. Edith Stein, who was the most faithful of all of Husserl's students, had much to say about the question of corporeity. We must also not forget the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on perception and the body as well as the explorations of Jean-Paul Sartre on the imagination and Paul Ricoeur on the question of temporality, especially in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*.[20]

The interpretative key of the body is useful for discussing the following question: Is the human being reducible to one dimension of being or do we need to think of human beings as constituted by certain layers?

5.2.3 The Sphere of Corporeity

We begin with corporeity because it is the most evident sphere of the human being, the sphere we immediately "encounter" in ourselves and in others. The body is also treated by positivist sciences, including physiology and anatomy, which serve as the foundation for other related sciences of great importance today like the neurosciences. We also have in mind here the biological, empirical sciences, which deal with the facts of the body, though they also rely on a deep theoretical base that must be closely examined. I do not wish to consider now the empirical or positivist point of view, even though one finds in this kind of position a reductive way of thinking. We should also note that not all scientists follow a positivist approach; rather, a problem arises when positivist philosophers tend to absolutize their results.

How does one approach the question of corporeity or being embodied from the perspective of lived experiences? We do this through certain perceptual lived experiences that lead us back to sensations. Husserl's analysis, as found in *Ideas II* and transcribed by Edith Stein, is useful here. Perception, insofar as it is an act lived by

[19] For a discussion of the phenomenological method, please refer to my book, *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*, part 1, chapter 1.

[20] Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

us, refers us back to the sensations or sense impressions that constitute the act. Important are tactile and visual sensations. The former are localized, whereas the latter are not. Both, however, are fundamental for knowledge of physical things as well as for their reference to the body proper. On one hand, the body could be understood as a physical thing and, on the other hand, it is a sensing body (*Leib*). There is a difference, however, when discussing sensations through which we grasp an inanimate physical object as opposed to sensations that concern our own bodies. Our own bodies, when they come into contact with other material things (a blow, pressure, a push, etc.), give us localized sensations that are different than the sensations of the impact of material things on one another.[21]

The perception of one's own body, which is in contact with the physical thing, must be added to the perception of the physical thing. We can also delineate a series of perceptions that become extraordinarily important because they constitute the reason why we sense our bodies and why we feel them as our own. In this case, tactile sensations have an absolute precedence over other sensations, for example, visual sensations, because they possess a double reference point. Our own seen lived body is not a thing that is seen and that sees, but our own body, when it is touched by us, is something that touches and is touched.[22] This means that visual sensations are different from tactile ones. Vision alone does not give the lived body to oneself and neither does hearing. If touch did not exist, we would not have the sensation of the body that we do.

Our discussion up until this point serves as the basis for further important developments. Localized tactile sensations, together with those that derive from other senses, give us the possibility of seizing objects in space, thereby exercising a fundamental function for the constitution sense-things.[23] We now find ourselves in that sphere that Husserl largely defined as hyletic.

As said earlier, Husserl uses the Greek word *hylé* to indicate a largely unexplored dimension that is foundational for higher formations, including the constitution of the physical object. The hyletic sphere focuses not only on relations between our own body and external reality but also on other groups of sensations that we can term "sensuous feelings," including pleasure, pain, tension and relaxation, well-being and being ill-disposed, all of which are at the base of life, feelings, and valuing.

Husserl understands the two spheres of external and internal sensation as occurring in a hyletic base that has two sides: a non-egological side as well as an egological one. Both constitute the substrate of the whole life of consciousness because, in this very layer, higher intentional functions connect with one another. These higher functions arise even in the spiritual sphere. Conscious recording and awareness of life reside in *Erlebnisse*, that is, in those acts that witness the flow of the whole of life and that are lived by us. These acts refer, then, to corporeity when these acts are perceptions. The acts refer to the psyche when we feel pleasure, pain or experience

[21] *Ideas II*, section 36.

[22] *Ibid*., section 37.

[23] *Ibid*., section 39.

a tension that produces a reaction different than physical tension. These acts can also refer to the spirit, understood as the domain of the intellect and will. We need now to justify the foregoing claims.

To understand the meaning of "lived," the path of investigation we are following is most useful. When a localized sensation is in the finger, the registering of the sensation at the perceptual level is not localized. Perception, understood as a lived experience that is drawn toward the perceived thing and that, therefore, manifests itself as intentional, excludes all localization. The lived experience is the means that allows us to enter the complex interior realm, the primary way that opens up a horizon of investigation that moves into the sphere of sensations and sensuous feelings, on one hand, and feelings and valuing, on the other hand.

The hyletic sphere characterizes one's own body; it is connected to the lived body (*Leib*) insofar as it is capable of sensation. The lived body is a crossway between interiority and exteriority because of its being "different" from other material things. It is different because the sensitivity to stimulation is a real quality that derives from a source different than the quality of the extension of a thing. The sensitivity is the material of the psyche that registers states of soul that develop in feelings. We can say, then, that the psyche not only expresses itself through the body, but also that the psyche has its own body.

The living body possesses additional characteristics that allow us to affirm that it is different than other physical things: it is a center of orientation. This means that things appear and disappear in relation to how near or far I am from them. The point of orientation is my body, which I cannot exit, albeit "imaginatively" and not really, which means, following what Husserl said about the possible and the impossible, that it is "impossible" to leave one's body behind. Impossibility here is clearly identified with the imaginary. We can affirm, then, that the body is a zero point of orientation.[24] We can observe that the body has "possibilities" and "limits." In fact, the body can move spontaneously and modify its position; it underlies all mechanical movements caused from the outside or inside, movements that we feel at the psychic level as undergone by us.

The limit establishes what is impossible, that is, incompatible with the body's capacities. In other words, from the viewpoint of conscious lived experience, the possibility of achieving a movement corresponds or implies a series of lived bodily experiences that start from the perception of space and move to the management of one's own body that stands in a relation to objects that can be eventually obtained or that are an obstacle and that, in their own way, can be perceived. Where does this movement originate? What is the base that determines the movement? What is the meaning of "base?" Are we dealing here with a reactive spontaneous movement determined by a received blow or by a desire to move toward something or even by the willed intention of reaching a certain goal? We need to distinguish between the aforementioned situations. Movement, understood in the second way, is possible, if the fulfillment of the intentions present in different lived experiences is real. If this is not the case, then we only have an imagined or desired case, which is not capable of being realized because it is incompatible. The imaginary, understood in its

[24] *Ibid*., section 41.

authentic meaning here, is something that is incompatible with real possibility; we have variations that are not connected to the invariable. We are not undervaluing the role of imagination here because it shows the great human capacity for constructing alternative worlds and spheres.

However, other questions arise: What is the source of the movement that one desires to perform? What is the source of the end that one wishes to reach? Is the body the source or the instrument? To answer these questions we have to remain at the level of the body, but we already foresee that something different than the body is required.

5.2.4 The Psycho-Spiritual Sphere

In analyzing the body, always commencing with lived experience and, hence, with perceptions that refer us back to sensations, other types of lived experiences emerge, namely, sensuous feelings: pleasure, pain, tension, relaxation, wellbeing, and being ill at ease. Certainly, these feelings are linked to sensations and some can derive from their relation to external things or they can be produced by internal physical states. Nevertheless, they all demonstrate the reactive capacities of human beings and the living of such capacities along with its contents. The following problem arises: To what do sensuous feelings refer? They largely refer to physicality. But do these feelings derive from the physical realm or are they a response to what manifests itself on the corporeal level, a response that proceeds from another source? We can employ here Husserl's earlier insight concerning the possible and the impossible.

Husserl's discussion of experience in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* and *Experience and Judgment* make evident the qualitative distinction between lived experiences that refer to the lived body and those that refer to the psyche. If the possible is the real, understood as compatible, one could rightly ask if visual or tactile sensations possess the same quality of fulfilment as sensuous feelings. The relation between the possible and impossible, always understood as compatible-incompatible, can also be found in the distinction between visual and tactile sensations. Why are these sensations different and why are they not identical? We can respond by saying that we are accompanied, at the level of consciousness, by the awareness that the perception related to visual experience has a diverse source and a characteristic different from sensations of touch because, for example, the former is localized in one point, whereas the latter first spread throughout the body and then became centered. Fulfilment linked to vision is not compatible with the fulfilment connected to tactile sensation.

In the psychic dimension, whereas tactile or visual sensations, though different, still refer to localized sensations and, hence, are qualitatively the same, sensuous feelings of pleasure or pain connected to sensations are both able and not able to present themselves. Sensuous feelings can have different intensities that stem from one's general physical condition: the fulfilment linked to the sensation is not the same as the one linked to the reaction. In neuroscience, one often finds the discussion cast in terms of the brain and the "neural base" of mental acts.

The delineation of a third sphere, which is linked to so-called spiritual acts, is analogous to the psychic realm. Viewed from the perspective of lived experience, making a decision could mean following an impulse linked to a physical sensation—I see a sweet pastry and I like it, so I decide to purchase it. I could also decide not to eat the sweet for health reasons. It is impossible that the act of decision be the same as the quality of the impulse and sensation. Such an act is incompatible with the characteristics of the first two acts.

We need to reverse matters here: Why are some acts defined as bodily while others are viewed as psychic and still others as spiritual? How do we not reduce one type of act to another type of act?

We are individuating here dimensions that possess within themselves distinct qualitative affinities. Qualitative affinities delimit a territory and they render incompatible the entry of other acts lived in that specific territory. Such delineated territories can be interpreted as specific "regional ontologies" contained in a large regional ontology constituted by all lived acts. Lived acts registered in consciousness also refer to real dimensions that exist within the larger unity of the human being that is constituted by them.

We can, therefore, distinguish between and connect the real I and the pure I. The flow of lived acts grasped in their purity are led by the pure I. There are as many pure Is as there are real Is. Whereas the former present themselves as an instrument of comprehension of real Is, the latter are "constituted unities not only in relation to a pure I and a stream of consciousness with its manifolds of appearance but also in relation to an intersubjective consciousness, that is, in relation to an open manifold of pure Egos separated from one another like monads or in relation to an open manifold of their streams of consciousness which, by reciprocal empathy, are unified into a nexus which constitutes intersubjective objectivities."[25] The real Is are real psychic subjects whose psychic properties announce themselves in the pure I and its flows of consciousness. This also happens for the spiritual I that manifests its personal real characteristics in an interpersonal world. If the premises of our investigation are correct, we must conclude that it is impossible to reduce the human being *ad unum*, that is, to only one dimension while eliminating the other two. Several co-present dimensions constitute the humanity of the human being: the human being is *unum*, but what is incompatible with this human constitution is precisely the "reduction" to one dimension. We challenge the *reduction ad unum*, but not the complex and layered unity of the human being.

5.3 From Hyletics to Metaphysics

If hyletics eminently manifests itself within the domain of gnoseology, many remarks by Husserl indicate that it has a larger function than just conditioning knowledge. Hyletics involve, as we saw, the affective and impulsive sphere that lies

[25] *Ideas II*, 118.

at the base (here, we can speak of *hylé,* that is, "matter") of noetic valuing. Analyzing the layers of human acts, Husserl affirms that a "blind" and "organic" entelechy is present in these acts. This entelechy operates at the level of impulses and becomes more explicit at the level of the will, ultimately passing from an impulsive intentionality to a conscious one. Following a practical, ethical path as opposed to a purely gnoseological one, it becomes possible to deepen the question of entelechy and its teleological sense.

Certainly, Husserl's insistence on the teleology of history is well known; it is understood as the discovery of an immanent end or purpose in history and as an ethical appeal for the realization of this very end. The ultimate causes of the existence of this dimension are to be found in what he defines as the necessary "reference back to the originary facts of *hylé*,"[26] which would appear incomprehensible, if we did not highlight the intentionality present at the level of impulse. Also manifest here is what Husserl calls the backward reference from the sphere of awareness, both cognitive and ethical, which he calls the categorical sphere, to the pre-categorial sphere. It is the path of logic that moves from formal to transcendental logic, as found in his work *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. It is also the path of knowing that moves from consciousness to passive synthesis (as developed in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses*). Again, passive synthesis is the base for the formation of all knowledge derived from the interweaving of subject and object, even before these two moments are distinguished from one another.

It is not an accident that in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, one finds Husserl's preliminary considerations for his lectures on transcendental logic. As mentioned earlier, it is through a genetic analysis that he delves into the formations of sense in order to arrive at the most hidden levels of passivity. This stepping backward Husserl calls "a questioning that tends to move backward"; it is difficult to actualize because human beings live at the surface of the process (where results are already present—this is the pre-scientific life). To "undo" these results and to grasp their genesis requires an attentive eye, an eye that is aware, "scientific." It is scientific not in the sense of a certain constructive type of science, but a descriptive one, and not because it renounces inquiry for sense, but because it probes in order to find further senses.

The hyletic dimension completely benefits from this probing because whereas cultural sedimentations, understood as noetic products, present themselves as solidly structured (that is, structured in a way that is commonly held to be definitive and that grows through further continuous stratifications), the genetic way that leads to the sphere of passivity is ignored for two reasons. First, an individual living at the pre-scientific level, in what Husserl in the 1930s calls the life world, is not aware of the genetic process presupposed by all knowledge and by all results obtained at the level of practice. Second, the individual, who lives at the scientific level because of the ever-increasing specialization of knowledge, with all of its ramifications and complexity, believes that s/he can justify everything with the aforementioned type

[26] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass*, vol. 3, 1929–1935, in *Husserliana* 15, ed. I. Kern (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1973), 386.

of knowledge while not asking himself or herself about the very genesis of that knowledge. It is within this context that philosophy has taken on, since the times of ancient Greece, the function of critique; philosophy, however, has not succeeded, according to Husserl, in unmasking the origin of the sedimentations.[27]

We have already underlined that Husserlian phenomenology was born with the intent of completing the unmasking mentioned above. Husserl examined the mathematical and physical sciences as well as those sciences belonging to the human sphere, which are called the sciences of the spirit. Related to and within these sciences, one finds the problems of the role of logic, that is, the problems of the organization of thought. These problems, for Husserl, took on ever-greater importance and can be found in formal logic, from Aristotle to more refined and abstract thinkers like the Neo-positivists. Husserl agrees that this kind of logic can be a useful tool for understanding the sciences, but how have the sciences and formal logic been developed?

This question was always present in Husserl's thought and his response, following the line of thought developed in his logic (an important line because it touches upon the mathematical sciences so important for Husserl's early formation), is not given purely within the framework of logic, but in terms of logical operations within the transcendental structure of lived experiences, as was explained in the preceding chapter. Here, we find the work of ascent and descent, work that has the great capacity of beginning with already-constituted formations and moving to their genesis and vice versa, from the first constitutive operations of the process to its highest levels.

We must consider the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* in our inquiry here, for it studies the preliminary operations traceable to the formation of perceptual knowledge, which is not the first stage of knowledge, but which is the result of an a priori process based essentially on association, that is, on the primary operations that, through contrast, succession and coexistence, permit us to first define perceptual fields. In this phase, subject and object are still indistinct from one another; the distinction between the two only happens at the perceptual level.

From this perspective, the problem of "sensation" and its origin is revisited. Husserl also examines the relation between the intentional noesis and *hylé* (i.e., the material that presents itself.) Hence, it is possible to delineate two modes of matter: internal and external sensation that he calls *hylé*. According to the static analyses carried out in the *Ideas*, *hylé* is the matter to which noesis gives a signification, thereby becoming matter for further operations, for example, the pleasure given by the seeing of a color pushes me to choose that color, to value it positively and, therefore, the pleasure of the color becomes the "matter" of a judgment. From the genetic perspective that makes evident the sphere of passivity, on the contrary, *hylé* already possesses an intentional structure that permits it to present itself in a configured or structured way.

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[27] See Edmund Husserl, *Teleologie in der Philosophiegeschichte*, in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die traszendentale Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband. Text aus dem Nachlass 1934–1937*, ed. R.N. Smid, in *Husserliana*, vol. 29 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993).

Furthermore, our "archaeological" probing, which we are attempting here to reconstruct based on Husserl's brief analysis, serves to discover the "ultimate reasons" that are connected to primary or clearer reasons. To understand Husserl's probing, let us examine his 1931 text, "Teleology,"[28] which mostly sums up the trajectory analyzed up until this point but which also adds new and unpublished elements. The subtitle, "Implication of the Eidos: Transcendental Intersubjectivity in the Eidos: The Transcendental I," refers once again to the discussion of anthropology mentioned earlier, but the discussion is deepened in relation to teleology. The manuscript begins with a tension that one observes at the transcendental level between the comportment of the human being *qua* perfection and self-preservation, and the presence of new contradictions. The idea of perfection, however, presents itself as an ethical guiding idea. This is a pre-ontological "notion" that is present right from the start. This "notion" acquires ontological value through reflection and can also bear a consequent value for the will: "and in this way, it has its explicit end and the explicit form of a purpose, a goal, consisting of the totality of all individual and superindividual goals (intersubjective goals of all humanity)."[29] Here, we can insert the theme of history and its sense. We need to remember that, for Husserl, history has a sense and an end; a "metaphysical" will runs through history that produces an infinite process or, in more precise terms, a process that tends to the infinite. All finite elements, even obscure ones, live in the form of infinity. Infinity appears in the form of time as the temporal succession of finite moments, but its true nature is the *nunc stans*, the eternity that is qualitatively different from time.

All of Husserl's discussion turns on a profound reality that guides history, which manifests itself as the infinite will that justifies various grades of the will. In fact, all human beings first feel an obscure will to live; they then tend toward different ends of perfection, even if they never realize such perfection. In other words, as we see in certain texts of Husserl on ethics, the person begins to ask ethical questions: How does the human being distinguish good from evil? Why do human beings have a sort of nostalgia for a situation better than the one in which they are actually constrained to dwell? Husserl hypothesizes a collective understanding of what is good and positive, where one can ask oneself what would happen if all subjects became ethically aware and understood all that is positive. He also asks how it is possible to spread what some individuals genuinely grasp. He refers to the roles of certain communities, for example, various churches, highlighting the function they exercised in spreading what is good. He also thinks in ethical and religious terms when reflecting on the work of missionaries or on the push to live the *imitatio*, that is, the imitation of Christ.

In addition to levels of ethics and religion, Husserl also discusses pedagogical and ethical-political levels. All of these dimensions tend toward an end. He tries to figure out why this is the case and why they are connected to a unifying "underlying" element that constitutes the "form of all forms." All the levels of human accom-

[28] Edmund Husserl, "*Teleologie. Die Implikation des Eidos transzendentale Intersubjektivität im Eidos transzendentales Ich*," in *Intersubjektivität*, vol. 3, 1931, n. 22.

[29] *Ibid*., 379.

plishment found along the path of history are ultimately justified in God. Husserl writes, "The absolute universal will that lives in all transcendental subjectivities and that makes possible the concrete-individual being, understood totally as transcendental subjectivity, is the divine will. This divine will, however, presupposes all intersubjectivity, not in the sense that intersubjectivity precedes the divine and is possible without the divine (and not in the sense of the soul that presupposes the body); rather, one presupposes the other as structural layers—layers without which this will cannot become concrete."[30] A deep relation between human beings and the divine is established, a divinity that does not present itself as distant and strange, but as close and active.

The text cited above is particularly significant because Husserl meditates further on the relation between the existential human dimension and the human capacity to grasp what is essential, thereby revealing the transcendental sphere, the "pane," as we mentioned earlier, upon which lived experiences continually impress themselves. He observes that while, in general, it is possible to seize the essential moment or *eidos* of any reality by separating it from the being or non-being of the realization of the essential moments, in the case of the human being, however, "the *eidos*[,] the transcendental I [,] is unthinkable without the factual transcendental I."[31] A correlation is established between mundane ontology and absolute ontology, that is, between the existential structures of the world and the essential ones. The proper connection of the relation lies within the human being.

The structure of "fact" is clarified, then, at the level of the transcendental sphere. The fact "human being," through our backward referencing mode of investigation, is individuated in its originary structures, which are configured in their initial stages at the hyletic level. Originary *hylé* presents itself in kinaesthesis, that is, in originary movements, originary sentiments and originary instincts. All of this originary material exists in a form of unity, which is the essential prime form of world-ness. Because this originary material immediately shows itself in the human being, the constitution of the whole world, which is contained in its own "essential grammar," in its essential alphabet located deep in the levels of the human being, manifests itself as already present at the level of instinct. What shows itself is not only a passive, unconscious structure that is instinctive and unified but also a structure that has its own end. Teleology manifests itself at the transcendental level, but its origin lies in facts: "… originary of *hylé* (understood in the widest sense); without them [facts] no world and no completely transcendental subjectivity would be possible. Things being what they are, can one say that this teleology, with its originary facticity, has its foundation in God? We arrive at the 'ultimate questions of fact,' the question of originary fact; we arrive at the question of ultimate necessity, of originary necessity."[32]

The way of arriving at God that we propose here is original in the sense that, because this way is founded on teleology, it encompasses the deep structure of

[30] *Ibid*., 381.

[31] *Ibid.,* 385.

[32] *Ibid*.

reality. It is as if we have reinvented the fifth way of Thomas Aquinas by giving it specific content. We do not only generically say that all things have an end, but we also distinctly analyze the stratification of reality through the stratification present in the human being in order to reach the conclusion that not only do the works of culture and spirit, the willed processes of human beings, the examination of organisms and their levels of development and perfection (as we read in *Ideas I*), have sense, but so too do the hidden world, originary instincts, feelings, and physical and unconscious psychic movements. And sense and ends/goals, formal and final causes, as Aristotle would say, are correlated, and this is why teleology is defined as the "form of all forms." In fact, it is observable in all levels of reality.

If the levels of rationality, the works of the spirit, as well as dimensions considered chaotic, magmatic and deeply hidden, even though they may appear irrational, all have sense, then we can but not attribute the origin of this sense to God. Husserl, more often than not, calls the principle of all things, the foundation of sense, God. Even if his arguments operate at the level of philosophy, he is nevertheless not afraid of employing that word that also has a religious value for him.

Husserl's intent is never to "demonstrate" the existence of God. The individuation of a foundation, the principle of all things, arises because Husserl pushes his own research to its limit. His research requires completion, an ultimate justification, otherwise all would remain bereft of sense.

Husserl's philosophical trajectory starts from hyletics, which begins in lived experience but which also leaves it behind, because the "ultimate reasons," even on the hyletic plane, are found in the fact that nothing is "by chance." On the contrary, it is necessary to trace an end back to the deepest levels of teleology. Hence, the reference back to an "originary facticity" can be completely understood, if we maintain that our backward reference leads to a foundation in God.[33]

God creates all things and the human being comes from the creative act of God, as our discussion of ultimate necessity, of originary necessity, shows. We know this about God by tracing the genesis of the distinction between subject and object, which we saw in the analysis of passive synthesis that showed the originary and profound unity of subject and object. Husserl describes this originary unity as having its beginning in an *Urkind*, an originary child, in the inseparable bond of the child in the womb with the mother. Though together, the mother and child are still distinguishable from one another. Birth is the moment that creates the distinction, but it is given without being understood. Awareness requires a long process of detachment along with the recognition of the detachment at, above all, the passive or hyletic level. Physical and psychic movements are seized only in a secondary moment by the very "becoming aware" of consciousness. The world of objects and other persons is grasped through perception or *Wahr-nehmung*. The grasping of other persons is achieved through intropathy.[34]

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[33] *Ibid.*

[34] See Angela Ales Bello, "*Intrapersonale e interpersonale. Lineamenti di un'antropologia filosofico-fenomenologica*," in *L'avventura educativa. Antropologia, Pedagogia, Scienze*, eds. A. Ales Bello, G. Basti, A.M. Pezzella (Vatican City: Lateran University Press, 2013), 17–30.

The process of distinguishing and recognizing oneself that characterizes the development of infants can be viewed as paradigmatic for the configuration of reality. In metaphysical and logical terms, we are treating the theme of the one and the many as well as the becoming of the many from the one insofar as we are probing that which is originary (*Ur*).

The aforementioned process does not arise from an indistinct chaos. One notes, right at the source and connected to impulses in the human being, the presence of an impulse-intentionality (*Trieb-Intentionalität*), which is in all things and, in particular, in what Stein calls, employing the expression of Russian writers, the "subsoil of the human being."

The pre-eminence of human beings over things consists in the fact that by knowing and using things the human being brings everything back to him- or herself through constitution, which establishes the unity-distinction between us and the world, a world that is for us precisely on account of constitution. We find here the sense of what Husserl intends by the expression "transcendental idealism." Given that we do not produce the world and given that we do not produce ourselves, we can legitimately introduce another expression, namely, "transcendental realism." We are not dealing here with an external world that we must explore; rather, we have a world that is born for the subject that concomitantly arises with the process of exploration.

In broader terms, the metaphysical problem is resolved through the epistemological one, though the metaphysical problem remains distinct. Commencing with the subject, who, in the last instant, asks questions, longs for knowledge, our investigation can be amplified by attempting to grasp the structure of reality in all of its deepest dimensions.

Chapter 6
Transcendental Idealism Revisited

One of the most contentious problems of contemporary philosophy revolves around the relation between idealism and realism in phenomenology. Husserl's early students were the first to raise the question about the relation, noting a change of perspective from his *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901) to his subsequent works, including *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1907) and *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1913). Adolf Reinach was one of these students, and as Husserl's assistant, he exercised a great influence on his own student Edith Stein.

What exactly was the core of the question? I believe it was rooted in the nature of the subject and the object, for they are not only initial moments of philosophical reflection but also loci of truth. The opposition between subject and object is ancient, and one can certainly see the imprint of such notable philosophers like Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas on the question. Behind these medieval thinkers, we also feel the weight of both Plato and Aristotle. According to Husserl's adversaries, the affirmation of the subject led to subjectivism, whereas the affirmation of the validity of the object, according to Fichte, who refers in particular to Spinoza, resulted in dogmatism. Which side ought one choose? Is it even necessary to choose one side over another? Does a "third way" exist?

Husserl always sought to achieve an objective sense, but not in a positivist way. And the two terms "sense" and "objective" are both important because the former renders the simple evidence of facts insufficient and the latter demonstrates that we do indeed encounter "sense" or essence: facts and essence are present and not simply presupposed. They plunge relativism, psychologism, and subjectivism into crisis. Though Husserl's students shared in his clear affirmation of objective sense in the *Logical Investigations*, which made Edith Stein leave the University of Breslau to follow his lectures in Göttingen, they doubted his subjective turn that focussed on the cognitive structures of the subject.

It is important to underline here that the question about the relation between idealism and realism was primarily gnoseological and only secondarily metaphysical. This is why Husserl justly tackles the question on the gnoseological level,

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15395-7_6

always re-asking the ancient but ever-present question: What are our capacities for knowing reality? This question clearly first arises in Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and then in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Both texts seek to grasp the capacities and limits of human reason. But is this really the first time that the question arises? If one traces the history of philosophical thought from its beginnings, one finds that this question was always present: it is intrinsically linked to the philosophical investigation of the sense of reality.

Heraclitus of Ephesus affirms from the shore of the Aegean Sea: "The Law (*of the universe*) (*Logos*) is as here explained; but men are always incapable of understanding it, both before they hear it, and when they have heard it for the first time. For though all things come into being in accordance with this Law, men seem as if they had never met with it, when they meet with words (*theories*) and actions (*processes*) such as I expound, separating each thing according to its nature and explaining how it is made. As for the rest of mankind, they are unaware of what they are doing after they wake, just as they forget what they did while asleep."[1]

And Parmenides of Elea responds from the shores of the Tyrrhenian Sea, "One should both say and think that Being Is; for To Be is possible, and Nothingness is not possible. This I command you to consider; for from the latter way of search first of all I debar you. But next I debar you from that way along which wander mortals knowing nothing, two-headed, for perplexity in their bosoms steers their intelligence astray, and they are carried along as deaf as they are blind, amazed, uncritical hordes, by whom To Be and Not To Be are regarded as the same and not the same, and (*for whom*) in everything there is a way of opposing stress."[2]

We have here a dialogue from two distant seas that focus on the same theme. The core of their reflections lies in the capacities and limits of human knowledge. A gnoseology emerges from these two passages, which exhibit sensible and intellectual levels constitutive of knowing. Both passages affirm the importance of the latter level. The two philosophers note that the intellectual level is not always attained and that human beings do not always use their intellects well. Human beings can be deceived, and this often happens. Many are deaf and blind; many human beings lack judgment. This is why it is necessary to probe deeply; one must use the eyes of the mind and not trust immediate experience. And so philosophy is born. Both thinkers are struck by the validity of philosophical inquiry, even though their respective metaphysical visions of reality differ: Is reality truly unified and immobile, as Parmenides says, or is it unified but also the source and justification of movement, of becoming, as Heraclitus maintains?

Besides metaphysical interpretations, what is surprising is the fact, which is never made evident, that the understanding of truth depends upon a subject. St. Paul reminds us that we hold truth in fragile clay pots that are often incapable of holding it. Hence, the question arises about the instruments humans possess to grasp truth. First, we have to investigate, as we mentioned earlier, the capacities and limits of the knowing human being, as do Heraclitus and Parmenides. The gnoseological question

[1] Heraclitus, Fr.1, in Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, 25.

[2] *Ibid*., Parmenides, section 6, 44.

that implies the investigation of human subjectivity has always been present since the inception of philosophy. It is not only a bizarre position of modernity. What happens in modernity, rather, is the radicalization of the question, which becomes preliminary and inescapable: It is necessary to respond to the question prior to investigating the real. Perhaps, the relation between the subject and the object needs to be investigated, which probably returns us to a common source and origin.

6.1 The Reasons for a Contrast

My intention here is to revisit the dispute over the nature of the idealism present in the phenomenology of Husserl. In order to do so, let us focus on his most devout student, Edith Stein, who followed him from the very beginning of his investigations and understood his way of interpreting human subjectivity. Husserl's thought profoundly marked this student. A doubt arises: Is this only an apparent relationship? Can we not delineate two phases of Edith Stein's thought: one more Husserlian and another that distances itself from Husserl? Did a distance always exist? On which questions did they diverge?

In order to respond to these questions, I would like to turn to a famous letter of Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden of 1917. I hold this letter as an important reference point for understanding Stein's analysis. Stein writes, "I have recently raised, with great seriousness, my perplexity over the Master's idealism. It was in no way a *painful situation* as you had feared…. The Master said he was not against modifying his position, if someone could demonstrate the necessity for it. Up until now, I have not succeeded. In any case, he did decide that he had to consider the matter more deeply, even though he postponed the question. I will remind and raise it with him once again at a later time."[3]

We gather from this letter that both Ingarden and Stein had already discussed the question of idealism. We know that Ingarden was always critical of Husserl and perhaps even pushed Edith Stein in his own direction. This does not mean, however, that she was dominated by Ingarden's views, for Stein was a fiercely independent thinker. The doubts Stein expresses are probably hers and are simply validated by her colleagues. In an earlier letter, Stein explains an argument that she took up with Husserl: "…a sudden intuition through which I believe more or less that I know what constitution means, but as a break with idealism. The presuppositions for why an evident nature can be constituted seem to be on, one hand, an absolutely existing physical nature and, on the other hand, a subjectivity that is endowed with its own structure. I have not yet been able to confess my heresy to the Master."[4]

[3] Edith Stein, *Selbtsbildnis in Briefen. Briefe an Roman Ingarden*, in Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe, vol. 4, Einleitung von H. B. Gerl- Falkovitz. Bearbeitung und Anmerkungen von M. A. Neyer O.C.D., Fußnoten mitbearbeitet von Eberhard Avé-Lallemant (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2001), 20-II-1917, 46.

[4] *Ibid*., *Briefe* 3-II-1917, 40.

Stein's heresy probably consisted in affirming an absolutely existing nature that was plunged into crisis by Husserl's position. Her own position seems to oscillate. In a 1924 essay, *What Is Phenomenology*, Stein pays special attention to so-called Husserlian idealism and to debates within the phenomenological school. She maintains that idealism "is a fundamentally personal and metaphysical conception; it is not the result of an irrefutable phenomenological investigation."[5] Given this definition, Stein asks whether or not Husserl can be viewed as an idealist, highlighting the fact that there are a few passages where Husserl explicitly adopts a metaphysical position. She does cite the famous passage from *Ideas I* "where we find the questionable statement: *if we cancel consciousness, we cancel the word*."[6] Although Stein admits that Husserl drew closer to Kant in his later thought, nevertheless her comprehensive assessment of Husserl is positive because the metaphysical idealist conception of reality is not the essential focus of her teacher's work. "And this work still is invaluable today. To penetrate its spirit requires years of study. But whoever seriously studies, with a philosophical attitude, even one of the *Logical Investigations* or a chapter of the *Ideas* cannot help but be struck by the impression that one has in one's hands one of the classic masterworks that mark the beginning of a new epoch in the history of philosophy."[7] Stein's appreciation is not accidental. I support the concluding words of Stein's essay and I believe they express what she thought was always true about her beloved teacher.

One sees, however, that the idealist cues Stein finds in Husserl's analyses will once again be confirmed after her conversion to Roman Catholicism and while reading the works of medieval thinkers, especially Thomas Aquinas. The question of realism emerged here with great force and is viewed by Stein under a new light. She tackles the question directly in her essay comparing the phenomenology of Husserl with the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

The relation between idealism and realism is not directly addressed in Stein's essay. The relation is examined within the framework of the role of the subject and the object in philosophical inquiry. In particular, she examines the relation between the object and existence.

Stein defines Husserl's philosophy as "egocentric," which inevitably brings to the fore the discussion of the transcendental. She maintains that Husserl's basic question is "how can the world come to be constituted by consciousness such that I can investigate it within immanence: the internal and external world, the natural and spiritual world, the world of values and goods? Also, [how can we investigate] the world of the divine, which is full of sense?"[8] She admits that all philosophical problems can be examined, which allowed his students to explore ultimate and

[5] Edith Stein, "*Was ist die Phänomenologie*," in *Teologie und Philosophie*, 66 (1991), 573.

[6] *Ibid.* Edith Stein refers to § 49 of *Ideas* where Husserl writes: "… it then becomes evident that *while the being of consciousness…would indeed be necessarily modified by an annihilation of the world of physical things, its own existence would not be touched."*, 110.

[7] *Ibid.*, 573.

[8] Edith Stein, *Husserls Phänomenologie und die Philosophie des heiligen Thomas von Aquin. Versuch einer Gegenüberstellung. Festschrift Edmund Husserl zum 70. Geburtstag* in

constitutive questions. Nevertheless, the question of the "foundation" is evaded. In more precise terms, the foundation is reduced to the subject or the subjective sphere. If existence is understood as a showing to a consciousness, then, "the inquiring intellect will never find a solid point of reference. And such inquiry—especially because it relativizes God—is opposed to belief."[9]

The problem of where to begin arises. What is the foundation? If the foundation is subjectivity, for Husserl, then we see emerge the discussion of idealism. But if the foundation is not simply the object, understood as external reality, as Thomas understood it, and if God is viewed as the object *par excellence*, then we have uncovered a secure foundation, Stein argues.

I believe we can hypothetically engage Stein on the discussion of the foundation in two ways. First, we can understand the foundation as *quoad nos* and, second, as a foundation *in se*. I believe Husserl saw this two-fold distinction in his own thinking, but he chose to develop the former rather than the latter because the *in se* is always grasped by us and, therefore, by the *quoad nos*. To seize the *in se* through the *quoad nos* does not mean that we reduce the *in se* to the *quoad nos*. On the contrary, it is possible to "recognize" the *in se* in its autonomy through the *quoad nos*.

If we read Thomas deeply, we note that he too carries out the same operation. We can ask him: Who speaks of God, if not the human being who recognizes God's power? Who admits theocentrism as a foundation, which, for Stein, is a distinctive aspect of Thomas's position? One must also consider that human beings recognize the revelation of God's divinity as stemming from God's own initiative. Moses became aware that he heard the Word that came from outside himself. He recognizes this Word and announces it to the Israelites. This is an important philosophical point.

Returning to Stein's comments, she believes that a line of research stemming from theocentrism can resolve the ancient question about the existence of things and, therefore, it can validate realism as an argument against idealism because the Power of God creates everything, including the very generation of things that exist. Thomas underlines that things that exist have an essence, and this point draws his thought close to Husserlian phenomenology. If egocentrism and theocentrism are the strongest points of divergence between Husserl and Thomas, the inquiry into essence is their greatest point of convergence. Stein observes, "In this way, then, another attitude exists that is common to both phenomenological and Scholastic inquiry—one is often struck by the convergence of the two methods at various points. This attitude was made manifest by the opponents of phenomenology when they perceived and pointed out, as was the case for the *Logical Investigations*, a renewal of Scholasticism."[10]

The discussion of essence is very rich, Stein admits, and through it Husserl opens up the way to a new ontology, namely, regional, formal and material essences,

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Ergänzungsband zum Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1929), 326.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.,* 328.

which allows us to move away from an ontology linked to the theme of existence; he amplifies the field of research.[11]

The hurdle we have to overcome remains always connected to the Kantian transcendental that Stein holds as having left a deep impression on the idealist turn in Husserlian phenomenology. Even in the relationship between Kant and Husserl, one finds a tension in Stein's interpretation. On one hand, she always fought to distinguish Husserl from the Neo-Kantians and, on the other hand, she makes evident the relationship between the two thinkers. We see this tension most clearly in Stein's "Excursus on Transcendental Idealism" found in *Potency and Act*.[12] Let us examine Stein's text.

6.2 An Examination of Edith Stein's "Excursus on Transcendental Idealism"

Because we are looking at an *excursus* we must explore both the central focus of and what is excluded in Stein's argument. In order to trace the argument, we must return to the general framework of the investigation, namely, the relation between body and soul. This relation seems far removed from our central focus, but it is nonetheless important for anthropological, gnoseological, and metaphysical reasons. The anthropological aspect of the relation is most significant for our purposes here. We find it taken up in Stein's discussion of Hedwig Conrad-Martius's *Metaphysical Dialogues*, which is Conrad-Martius's most comprehensive *summa* of her views on the human being, God, and nature.[13]

Edith Stein reviews all the arguments of her phenomenologist friend and treats the question of the formation of the body as an animated body. The thesis that brings Stein and Conrad-Martius together has its origin in Aristotle and is taken up once again by Thomas Aquinas: the soul is the principle of life that is found in the vegetative, animal and human world, and it takes on different characteristics, depending on where it is localized. The human soul is distinct because it rules the body and is not subject to it. Certainly, human beings have an animal-sensate soul, but the spiritual-personal soul, which also needs the body, can still rule over the body insofar as the soul can distance itself from the body when it is not preoccupied by the

[11] See Gianfranco Basti, "*Ontologia formale. Tommaso d'Aquino e Edith Stein* (*Formal Ontology: Thomas Aquinas and Edith Stein*)", 107–385, and Angela Ales Bello, "*Fenomenologia e ontologia*, (*Phenomenology and Ontology*)", 17–66, both in *Edith Stein Hedwig Conrad-Martius Gerda Walther. Fenomenologia della persona, della vita e della comunità* (*Phenomenology of the Person, Life, and Community*) (Bari: Laterza, 2011).

[12] Edith Stein, *Potenz und Akt. Studien zu einer Philosophie des Seins,* Eingeführt und bearbeitet von H. R. Sepp, in Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe, vol. 10, (Freiburg: Herder, 2005). English translation: *Potency and Act: Studies Toward a Philosophy of Being,* edited by L. Gelber and R. Leuven, O.C.D., Introduction by H.R. Sepp and Translation by W. Redmond (Washington, D. C.: ICS Publications, 2009). Hereafter cited as PA.

[13] Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Metaphysische Gespräche* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1921).

body.[14] This distance explains why many have theorized about a strong soul-body dualism, which arises by absolutizing one aspect over another. Corporeity, however, is not something that we can simply add to or take away from the person. The body is constitutive of the human being *in via*, as Edith Stein says. One must recognize a duality of the whole, which she demonstrates in her text, *The Structure of the Human Person*.

This interpretation of the human being, which Stein derived from phenomenology's discussion of the person's conscious lived experiences, is the result and presupposition of a possible response to the question: How do we know? What are the operations of cognition?

If the human being presents as complex and stratified—and this is shown by the analysis of the layers of lived experience that lead back to corporeity, psyche, and spirit—then these strata justify, in turn, the cognitive process, which involves the intervention of a psycho-physical moment through sensations, psychic reactions, and a spiritual or intellectual intervention.

Stein employs expressions and modalities treated by Husserl and filtered through Thomas's thought. On one hand, she speaks of *species sensibilis* and *species intelligibilis* and, on the other hand, she understands them in the phenomenological sense of acts and their intentions, that is, through the framework of noesis-noema.

Stein asks: What is a *species intelligibilis*? She responds, "So we may say that spiritual living is formed by acts determined by changing intentions and distinguished from one another when one follows another and perhaps also when one act occurs beside another. Such is the noetic sense of *species intellegibilis*."[15] All acts have an object; acts are directed toward objects and we can grasp the sense of objects. A sense that is grasped is the noematic content. Husserl would certainly agree with this claim, but Stein adds the following Thomistic insight, "What it seeks to get at is the species in the objective sense, the thing's substantial form."[16] This insight has an exquisite metaphysical character and cannot be found in Husserl's work. Undoubtedly, however, Stein sees agreement between Thomas and Husserl.

Agreement can also be found in Stein's discussion of the *species sensibilis*, which is linked to the thing that falls under the purview of the senses. The sensible species belongs to both the thing and the perceiver who perceives it. She adds a reflection that can also be found in Husserl. "In the *species sensibilis* (in the first sense of the word) sensible object (*Objekt*) and sensibly perceiving subject in a way coincide."[17] Stein develops her analysis by employing the Aristotelian and Thomistic categories of potency and act. She also employs the Husserlian term "fulfilment." "The species, however, is something that belongs to both. The actual being of the species is the actualization of the thing's potencies to fall upon the senses, and it is the actualization of the subject's potency to be sensibly fulfilled."[18] The *species*

[14] PA, 351.

[15] *Ibid.,* 355.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.,* 358.

[18] *Ibid.*

sensibilis is a sensible form that is obtained through the collaboration of the sensible and the spiritual in a subject. "Sensations, since the subject lives spiritually awake in them, are formed into sensible shapes into the appearances of things."[19] Intellectual life is awakened, for example, when one first feels cold. The object "cold" is seized following the lived experience of being cold. The pure data of sensations give impetus to a spiritual movement that animates the data. The sensible matter or *phantasma*, to borrow Thomas's expression, becomes animated and then becomes a *species sensibilis*. We have here, then, an animating apprehension.

Given this background information, we can now discuss the *Excursus*. Let us examine the key passages that focus on the animating apprehension because, according to Edith Stein, they will assist us to distinguish idealism from realism.

6.3 Animating Apprehension in Kant, Husserl and Stein

Stein explores Kant's position on the animating apprehension. "The 'throng of sensations' is taken into forms of the sensibility and of understanding—in this way the spirit constructs the world that appears. Such is Kant's interpretation of the "animating conception."[20] Kant argues for an unknowable thing in itself as a real foundation for transcendental formation. According to Edith Stein, Kant's idealism is naïve and it is overcome by Husserl's position that maintains another form of idealism. "For Husserl, 'thing (*Ding*)' and 'the world of things (*dinglich*)' is now nothing more than a label for networks of acts wherein a spiritual subject (or, on a higher level, an intersubjective community of "monads" in communication with one another), advancing from act to act according to fixed laws of motivations, gives meaning to the material sensation—given beforehand but in itself meaningless—thus constructing intentional objects."[21]

Husserl's idealism is judged to be superior over naïve realism because he no longer theorizes about the possibility of the thing-in-itself and he does not close off the subject onto itself. Edith Stein remarks, "… this transcendental idealism itself ends up with leftover things—unsolved, unsolvable, and totally irrational…."[22] Stein's objective is to understand the relation between sensible material and the subject and object. She also wants to know what the role of formative activity is, that is, spirit's giving of form. Stein wishes to resolve this problem phenomenologically, but not in a strictly Husserlian fashion. She has a realist-phenomenological approach and employs it to clarify the sense of the *species sensibilis* and, hence, in phenomenological terms, the sense of perception.

We are dealing here with the hyletic dimension, which Husserl treated in his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* and which date from 1920 to

[19] *Ibid.,* 359.

[20] *Ibid.,* 360.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid*., 360–361.

1926.[23] Stein probably never heard any of the lectures that form the aforementioned text, given that she had already distanced herself from Husserl. There is a striking coincidence, however, between Stein's argument about perception and Husserl's earlier argument. We see this coincidence in the discussion of the perception of light.

Husserl sets his example within his study of affectivity, that is, stimuli or the particular impulse that an object exerts on the I. This stimulus pushes the subject to turn toward something and activates intuition as the taking of a stance of an act, understood as the most detailed observation of the object.

In order to comprehend the constitution of existing objects in themselves, we need to focus our attention onto two passive operations, namely, affect and association. In addition to other passive operations, these two allow us to say that the object lies outside of us. But how can we say that an object is outside of us? The answer to this question seems obvious and simple, but Husserl and others in the history of philosophy still seek to understand how we arrive at this answer. In other words, Husserl pushes the genetic investigation beyond what is given, ultimately considering the given as a "result" and not a starting point. He seeks through an archaeological excavation to uncover a deeper reality. In carrying out his search, Husserl uncovers passive operations, which seem to be an oxymoron. Here, Husserl is seeking acts that we are not conscious of but which we nonetheless complete, thereby allowing us to know only the result. This is why we can understand him when he speaks of the "*immer wieder*" ("always further"), of an "always again;" he maintains that research is always infinite. Infinity is understood as the inexhaustibility of both the micro- and macroscopic levels of reality.

What does the constitution of objects that exist *per se* mean? For Husserl, this means searching for the lawfulness of the formation of the thing for the subject. The conclusions of his studies lead to a common origin from which both subject and object emerge. We discover a deep point of non-distinction, which Edith Stein affirms in her discussion of the *species sensibilis* of subjective and objective moments.

Given that we live in a continual flow of sensations, we have two possibilities: (1) An affect can arise from another—this is the phenomenon of reawakening—or (2) it arises as a contrast, as in the case of an explosion.[24] Husserl gives an example from experience. He writes, "While taking an evening stroll on the Loretto Heights," Husserl has in mind here the small hill in front of his house on Loretto Steeet in Freiburg, a hill that he used to take walks on with his students, including Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger, "a string of lights in the Rhine valley suddenly flashes in our horizon; it immediately becomes prominent affectively and unitarily without, incidentally, the allure having therefore to lead to an attentive turning toward."[25] Unity is experienced because, at a deeper, pre-affective level, a unity has been formed, and

[23] APS.

[24] APS, § 33, 202.

[25] *Ibid*., 202.

this point distinguishes Husserl from Kant.[26] The string of lights manifests itself in its own particularity and distinguishes itself from other levels. The series of lights appears more intensely than the other lights.

In the case of the string of lights, we do not have a reawakening because they appear *ex novo*. Husserl considers, however, the reawakening as happening from ground zero in contrast to one light of the string suddenly becoming more intense or even changing color. A new affect that produces and reinforces the whole series surges from this one light, ultimately generating the affect and the unity of a more intense reawakening. This happens up until a certain level of intensity of the single light is reached, which, if too intense, can obstruct the flow of light toward the other lights. We are dealing here with phenomena of fusion and contrast that are at the base of our knowledge of physical objects that we experience passively. These objects can be included as part of the domain Husserl calls hyletics.

With the preceding example, we remain at the level of perceptual stimulation. Following Husserl's next example, we enter into the affective-emotive sphere, which borders the cognitive process and which is often present in the process. When we distractedly listen to a melody, we do not pay attention to it. Suddenly, a particular sound gives us sensual pleasure and we find ourselves attracted to the whole melody. We discover that we are living a retentional moment, that is, we are directed toward that which has passed in order to understand what is present. This is the way the whole melody can hold our attention.

This is how the givenness of objects for consciousness comes about. As we saw from our example, this givenness to consciousness has a temporal dimension. Husserl reflects on the future: the melody that holds our attention will be listened to further. The role of association also emerges here. There is primary association that is directed backward and there is secondary association that is directed forward and in an anticipatory fashion.

Husserl is probing the hyletic dimension. Clearly, the stimuli are external and at the initial moment of the experience the subjective and objective realms are indistinguishable at the level of consciousness—a viewpoint that Stein shares.

In discussing the same phenomenon of the perception of a light in her *Excursus*, Stein claims that reflexive analysis allows us to demonstrate the stimulation caused by the light. For Stein, like for Husserl, the stimulus is the datum of immanent sensation, but insofar as the stimulus fills me, it is independent from me. We can ask whether the source of the stimulus is independent or whether the stimulus itself is independent. The stimulus appears in a cogent way and Husserl also demonstrates this reality, nonetheless the stimulus, as a stimulus, is lived by me. Stein concedes that the source is external in the sense that it does not originate from my interiority. Husserl speaks of a light that can appear in a more or less intense way, a light that strikes me.

What does all of this provoke in me? According to the transcendental constitution of my body—and note that in this case Stein employs the term "transcendental" with reference to "… the transcendental constitution of body and of the

[26] See Angela Ales Bello, *"Husserl interprete di Kant*," in *Aquinas*, 1–2, 2005.

spiritual-bodily subject…"[27]—Stein maintains that instinctual reactions, for example, protecting one's eyes from a bright light, and active positioning intervene. For example, a subject may consciously make a decision. Stein continues, "Coming to know the body and its movements means coming to know space at the same time, for all movements have a definite spatial direction and are carried out into space and in space. "Outside" now means outside spatiality, more precisely, outside the body. With the constitution body the data of sensation undergo spatial localization. Some in or on the body, others in the space. Now, it is proper to certain stimuli to come from without."[28]

First, something comes from the outside and, second, the subject who orients himself/herself toward the givens of experience does so through intentions that objectively interpret the datum. Such intentions are the noetic forms of sensibility or the intellect or a combination of the two. In what sense are forms intentions? Do we not inevitably remain enclosed in the subject? It seems that the external material, which provokes the stimulation, is "informed" by the intentions. If this is the case, do we not lapse into the very position we are criticizing?

6.4 The Formation of the Spatial Object

In order to clarify the two interpretations of the formation of the object, we must begin with Husserl's view. Here, the object, understood as a physical "thing," stands in relation to space and the human subject. Husserl gave a series of lectures devoted to the thing, which were eventually published as *Ding und Raum Vorlesungen 1907*.[29] The year of the lectures coincides with the birth of phenomenology. We are dealing neither with a late text of Husserl nor with a later elaboration of phenomenology; rather, we have here work proper to the core of the phenomenological method.

The years from 1907 to 1908 were important for the development of Husserlian phenomenology as three central texts were produced by Husserl: *Idea of Phenomenology*, *Thing and Space* and *Bedeutungslehre* (1908). The wide spectrum of human knowledge is investigated, from perception to the formation of logic in the relation between subject and object. Husserl sharpens his analysis of this relation in order to understand its genesis rather than simply discussing the already-constituted relation of subject and object. In the dominant philosophy of the day, the focus was on the result rather than on understanding the process that led to the result.

At the halfway point in the lectures on *Thing and Space*, Husserl pauses to reflect on what was said and to affirm his research agenda: "We are aiming at an analytic

[27] PA, 362.

[28] *Ibid.*, 363.

[29] Edmund Husserl, *Thing and Space*.

and thoroughly clear understanding of the constitution of the thing as an Object in perception, i.e., an understanding of the intentionality that belongs to the perception, an understanding of the givenness of the thing that occurs in it."[30] His insights here do not appear to be new except that he introduces the term "intentionality," which gives us a new viewpoint. Husserl's refutation of earlier philosophers is interesting: he asks a series of epistemological questions rooted in the history of philosophy. He tackles the history of epistemology and discusses the notion of an already-constituted subject and object. In particular, he reflects on two questions: the first draws from Kant's philosophy, "On what foundation does what we call a representation in us of an object existing in itself rest?" Second, there is the classic question of how come "things outside of us stimulate our sense organs, and that to these excitations are linked certain psychophysical sensations and, subsequently, representations and other movements in the soul."[31] Husserl maintains that these questions are "erroneous" as are those questions that deal with the relation between subjective lived experience, the givens, and external things manifested through inferences. What are these inferences?

Husserl's claim regarding the erroneous questions is made with great force, and it is supported by a new perspective that suspends—through the epoché—the things in themselves of metaphysics, the things of physics, the realities of psychology, souls, persons, attitudes, lived experience, and even the things of everyday life.

What interests Husserl is perception, understood as a phenomenon, that is, the essence of perception. In its purest form, perception is the "first level" where the essence of perception tells us that "Things appear. Things, thingly determinations, and thingly occurrences, such as processes, relations between things, etc., appear."[32] The essence of perception "… is to bring some object to appearance and posit what appears as something believed: as an existing actuality."[33] Here, we are not examining the question of existence as such; rather, we are treating perception itself, which tends toward existing reality. We are investigating the sense of perception, its tending toward a spatial object that manifests itself. This manifestation is constituted by a unity of "presentative" content and "apprehension," an intimate unity of an authentic presentation of the thing, "always from one side," and the intention of the sides that are not present, an intention that allows us to "identify" the thing.

Husserl's discussion aims at refuting not only that which was upheld in the history of epistemology but also the objection of his student Heinrich Hoffman, who attributes to Husserl the following claim, "If I perceive a house, there is not, juxtaposed to the physical thing, the house, still another psychic or phenomenological thing, called 'perception'."[34] According to Husserl: "This last statement expresses a juxtaposition we have certainly never stated."[35] He believes there is only one thing,

[30] *Thing and Space*, 117.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.,* 118.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, 121.

[35] *Ibid.*

only one absolute givenness. What follows is particularly interesting for understanding the genesis of similar positions in the history of philosophy. In fact, for Husserl we have "… yet two evidently different directions of judgment: one concerned with the appearing object, the other with the appearance."[36]

Based on Husserl's observations, we note that often, or maybe even always, these directions were separate; they may have occasionally been followed by those who absolutized the object—and who lapsed, therefore, into a naïve realism—and by those who absolutized the subject and, hence, become trapped in a subjective or idealistic position. Husserl attempts to overcome this opposition, but he seeks, however, to understand the genesis of the separation. As we mentioned earlier, he defines his analysis in the *Cartesian Meditations* in somewhat contradictory terms by calling his project a transcendental idealism and a transcendental realism.[37]

Phenomenology accounts for both subject and object, but not only as already-constituted objects; rather it examines the process of constitution. If we examine perception, which is the first level at which we relate to the world, one observes that, from a certain empirical standpoint and even an essential one, something is manifested to someone. The lectures on the thing and space are dedicated to this very argument. They carefully analyze the genesis of thing in relation to kinaesthesia, that is, oculomotor movements. "There are all sorts of phenomenological analysis to be made here. Our present concern will only be the intertwining, in a remarkable correlation, of the constitution of the physical thing with the constitution of an Ego-Body."[38] It should be remarked here that Edith Stein also discussed movements as knowable through an examination of the thing and space.

Husserl examines kinaesthetic sensations that have a primary materializing function; in particular, he looks at tactile sensations, especially in *Ideas II*—again, a text that was transcribed by Edith Stein. He discusses tactile sensation in relation to the constitution of one's own body, and he also discusses pain and pleasure, understood from a psychological perspective within a phenomenological framework. Sensations related to thingness have a double function connected to the manifestation of the physical thing and the living body insofar as it is a physical thing.

If touch has a primary function in one's own physical body, sight has a primary function for the constitution of a "visual field," which is connected to "extension" that, in turn, allows one to individuate "places." This means that the field can be fragmented: "Accordingly, every piece of the of the visual field, every visual concretum that can be distinguished in the field, has its position in the total nexus, and within this concretum so does every part, as well as, ultimately, even the smallest part that can

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Vincenzo Costa agrees with this interpretation, which he believes one must uphold, if one continues to deepen one's analysis of Husserl's texts: "This is the intention of Husserl when he places phenomenology on a transcendental level: to construct a non-naïve realism that is grounded and, therefore, capable of overcoming the objections of skeptics." Edmund Husserl, *La questione della cosa e il realismo* in Edmund Husserl, *La cosa e lo spazio. Lineamenti fondamentali di fenomenologia e critica della ragione,* tr. it. di A. Caputo e M. Averchi, Introduzione di Vincenzo Costa (Rubettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2009), xix.

[38] *Thing and Space*, 137.

still be differentiated, and every limit, every point."[39] The visual field, however, is bi-dimensional and is limited by non-independent limits. The thing is no longer divisible, and this is the point. Lines and points have nothing to do with either objective geometric space or empirical figures; rather, we are dealing here with a formation that is pre-empirical, to borrow an expression from Husserl. Pre-empirical in this context is understood much like the pre-empirical of a temporal flow that grounds all continuity and creates no dispersion of objects and subjects. On the contrary, the pre-empirical implies an identity, that is, the "possibility of the unfolding of continuity in a consciousness of unity." All this happens in a "consciousness of identity achieved through synthesis." Husserl describes here what will later be discussed analytically in the lecture on "passive synthesis," which, in my opinion, represents a development of what was said in the lectures on the thing and space.

If the pre-empirical temporal flow justifies the flow of a sound ("… a sound endures or changes, according to whether all the temporal phases in the stream of time of the elapsing sound have the same temporal filling or have a changing temporal filling …"),[40] then, in a parallel fashion, in the visual field, we must pay attention to the image that remains identical to itself throughout change. But the image is not the thing. The image is the guiding thread of the formation of extension that is variable in connection to monocular or binocular vision. In order to apprehend the thing, objective space, or objective places in visual fields alone are not enough. We also need to take into account movements of the body or "[t]he thing as unity in the kinaesthetically motivated manifold of appearance…"[41] The modification of the bi-dimensional field into a tri-dimensional one is based on a drawing closer or farther away, on the cyclical multiplicity of the rotation upon themselves and their mixings.

Based on the preceding observations we can conclude:

(a) The thing is the giving of forms of perception linked through a relation of identity, forms that individuate the same thing.[42]
(b) Time and space are interrelated and, notwithstanding the possibility of fragmentation, they present themselves as one space-cosmos and as only one (numerically one) time.[43]
(c) To understand all this it is necessary to closely examine the activity of the subject—"Moreover, it is a problem—the complementary problem—how the wonderful separate position of the Ego is constituted phenomenologically as the correlate and referential center of the thing and of the whole surrounding world"[44]—executed in a specific time thanks to the subject's psychic lived experiences.

[39] *Ibid.,* 140.

[40] *Ibid.,* 142.

[41] *Ibid.,* see title of chapter 10, 157.

[42] This link is clearly one of identity: "… which finds its pure expression in the statement that the different perceptions intend or present the same thing", *ibid.,* 23.

[43] We are dealing here with a spatio-temporal synthesis that individuates the thing, which has its own space and time in relation to the I.

[44] *Thing and Space,* 69.

6.5 The Question of Existence

Based on Husserl's analyses in *Thing and Space*, I maintain that we can see the emergence of what I call transcendental realism, which is finally concretized in the *Cartesian Meditations*. Stein views this latter text as the confirmation of Husserl's idealism. He discusses here the existence of the external world—a world of things and human beings. This world cannot be accepted as it is given in everyday or natural experience. We need to investigate it in order to uncover its authentic meaning.

In the "Third Meditation," evidence is the criterion that establishes actual reality. "It is clear that truth or the true actuality of objects is to be obtained only from *evidence,* and it is evidence alone by virtue of which an "*actually*" *existing,* true rightly accepted object of whatever form or kind *has sense for us*—and with all the determinations that for us belong to it under the title of its true nature."[45] Through evidence we understand that all things exist, and they exist in themselves, which leads us back to an infinity of intentions that not only refer to the things themselves but also to authentic evidence: The being of the world transcends consciousness. This transcendence tells us that the world effectively presents itself as existing.

In the "Fifth Meditation," we also learn that the body of the other is similar to mine but also other than mine in its spatio-temporality. Both bodies dispel any doubt over the existence of the world. The world exists, but not as something that is there before us as complete. On the contrary, it is always in a relation with us. Every adequation arises as our own confirmation; each is our own synthesis, understood in the proper sense of the relation. We do not have two universes that face one another; rather, we have a dynamic exchange. We do not create existence, but searching for what it is, independent of us, is absolutely arbitrary, for we are the ones who recognize existence. Recognition does not mean that we project whatever we like onto reality—although this is possible; rather, we know how to distinguish the two operations of the projection and the recognition. The question arises: How do we come to say that the world exists?

Stein searches for the rigorous lawfulness of the intentional life through an analysis of consciousness and she finds it in motivation. But when she asks what the law gives to the life of consciousness, she responds with objective being, that is, a being that is independent of consciousness. The focal point of her interpretation makes evident, on one hand, the objective being that is independent of consciousness and, on the other hand, she makes present the structures of consciousness and intentional life. Stein also continues to analyze lived experiences (e.g., perception, memory, phantasy) because she believes that this type of analysis is one of the major accomplishments of phenomenology. Through perception and memory she wishes to show that the thing is the first thing that falls under the domain of the senses; it continues to subsist independent of my memory. The thing is not to be understood solely in terms of existence. The independence of the thing from the subject is to be framed in terms of the sense of the thing itself. This is why she accuses Husserl of

[45] CM, 60.

maintaining the sense of things as being only dependent upon intersubjective relations. Hence, "absolute" being is the monads that are human beings. Husserl, of course, borrows here from Leibniz.

First, Husserl never understood the value of something as being only dependent upon intersubjective relations, thereby falling into a sort of conventional thinking. Second, he never thought that subjective and intersubjective consciousness is to be understood as "absolute being."

The sense and value of things are not projections of human beings. Husserl's *Theory of Meaning* (*Bedeutungslehre*) of 1908, written a year after *Thing and Space*, is quite illuminating in this regard. Seen as continuing the work of the *Logical Investigations*, the text highlights that meaning has an ideal, supratemporal value and must be understood as a unity in itself that is identical and non-dependent on individual psychic attitudes and intersubjective agreements. Husserl is dealing with the noema that he will eventually treat in his *Ideas I*, which makes the distinction between the mental, intention, immanent *obiectum* and the real *obiectum* of the Scholastics.[46]

The mental *obiectum* is not a re-figuration; rather, it is the noema understood as the core layer of sense. If one wishes to make evident this layer, one must bracket the real object. "The "actual" Object is then to be "parenthesized". Let us reflect on what that signifies: if we begin as people in the natural attitude, then the actual Object is the physical thing there, outside us. We see it, we stand before it, we have directed our eyes fixingly to it, and then we describe it and make our statements about it just as we find it there in space as what confronts us. Likewise we take a position toward it in valuing; what confronts us, what we see in space, pleases us, or determines us to act; we seize upon or manipulate what is given there, etc."[47] If we carry out the phenomenological reduction, we can fix our attention on the acts we execute. Here, we no longer make use of the real thing, but we do not reject it: we are simply shifting our perspective. The thing always subsists within the brackets and this permits us to analyze its meaning, for example, the sense of the thing or the sense of perception of the thing and the way it gives itself to consciousness.

The second question about the absoluteness of consciousness requires further clarification because it is an absoluteness *quoad nos*, that is, relevant to us. Recall that the Absolute is God, who is grasped through consciousness, but is in no way identical with it. After arguing that the teleologies present in the empirical world or the cultural world force us to ask the question about the foundation of reality, which cannot simply be a natural cause, but a divine one that is external to the world, Husserl writes, "that this being would obviously transcend not merely the world but "absolute" consciousness. It would therefore be an *"absolute" in the sense totally different from that in which consciousness is* an absolute, just as it would be *something transcendent in a sense totally different* from that in which the world is something transcendent."[48]

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[46] *Ideas I*, section 90.

[47] *Ibid.,* 219–220.

[48] *Ibid.,* 134.

Stein gives the following answer in her *Excursus*: "Above all, what does absolute being mean?" It is certainly strange that the text of *Ideas I*, in which Husserl distinguishes and justifies these two understandings of the "absolute," is missed by his student.

Stein continues to criticize Husserl in her *Excursus*, underlining that if, for Husserl, the existence of the I in its facticity is absolute, then he cannot recognize the dependency of the I as something else, a dependency that must be recognized for two reasons, for something is pre-given to it and because there are laws of its own actions that are not given by the I itself.

Husserl never wrote that the existence of the I in its own facticity is absolute. He eventually discusses the I, written with a capital I: "Is an I that comprehends all i's, that encloses in one life all that is temporally constituted, including the formations of all i's, of all i's themselves insofar as they are constituted through themselves, thinkable? Is an I that experiences nature and the world, constituted together with all finite I's, with the eyes of these i's, that contains in itself all their thoughts, that acts within all of them as an I that 'creates' nature and the world, understood in the sense of 'idea of the good, thinkable!?."[49] This I, which seems to have Fichtean origins, overcomes all finite i's and can be identified with God the Creator, at least this is how I interpret it.[50]

We note, however, that the very reasons which Stein chooses to justify the dependency of the I can also be found in Husserl. He never denied that there could be something pre-given. It is clear, for example, that I can presuppose that the lights already existed prior to me seeing them. It is this case of motivation that interests Stein. The motive that allows me to say that there are lights is the fact that I see them. It is possible that they were already there and it is possible that they could remain. There is no contradiction with the fact that the I sees the lights now. The possible is that which is compatible with reality and not that which is imaginary.[51]

Second, it is also clear that what Husserl calls the *style of experience*, which regulates the relation between subject and object, is not given to the I by itself. Husserl never held this view. We are dealing with something that is already given, that is potentially present in the human being.

Stein's argument about the absolute in the *Excursus* develops through her theorization about an absolute and originary principle that justifies the existence of all things, "… (hence toward a transcendence opposite to that of transcendental idealism)…"[52] We can reply to Stein by citing once again Husserl's text in which he establishes the relationship between teleology, which is traceable even to the depths of the hyletic dimension of impulses, and God: "This teleology, then, has conditions of its own possibility…the reference back to the originary facts of *hylé* (understood in the widest sense): without these facts no world and no totally transcendental sub-

[49] Edmund Husserl, *Intersubjektivität II*, 302.

[50] See my books, *Sul problema di Dio e Edmund Husserl* and *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*.

[51] See chapter two, section 2.

[52] PA, 374–375.

jectivity would be possible. Things being what they are, could one say that this teleology, with its originary facticity, has its foundation in God?"[53]

6.6 What Is Transcendental Idealism?

In conclusion, we need to ask: For Husserl, what is transcendental idealism? He gives his famous definition in the "Fourth Meditation"[54]: "Carried out with this systematic concreteness, phenomenology is *eo ipso "transcendental idealism"*, though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense. It is not a psychological idealism"—and here the reference could be to Berkeley—"an idealism that would derive a senseful world from senseless sensuous data," and this is Stein's interpretation in the *Excursus*. "Nor is it a Kantian idealism, which believes it can keep open, at least as a limiting concept, the possibility of a world of things in themselves"—this was certainly understood by Stein. "On the contrary we have here a transcendental idealism that *is* nothing else than a consequentially executed self-explication in the form of a systematic egological science, an explication of my ego as subject of every possible cognition, and indeed with respect to every sense of what exists, wherewith the latter might be able to *have* a sense for me, the ego."[55]

Husserl defends, on one hand, phenomenological sense against positivism and, on the other hand, the epistemological centrality of the human subject and, therefore, the *quoad nos*. Husserl continues, "This idealism is not a product of sportive argumentations, a prize to be won in the dialectical contest of 'realism.'"[56]

Here is my central point: Husserl is not thinking about the classic opposition between idealism and realism. His is a "new idealism" because the discussion of sense and essential idealities is maintained against the reduction to pure facticity. We find ourselves in the domain of the transcendental structure of monadic and inter-monadic subjectivity that does not exclude relations with the world and includes God. The great metaphysical question remains as the ultimate and highest question.[57] Husserl concludes his *Cartesian Meditations* in this way.

As I have already mentioned, Stein clearly understood this aspect of the highest question of phenomenology, but when she interprets Husserl's position Stein's own judgment is not always objective. I distinguish two types of analysis in Stein's work. First, there is the analysis of subjectivity that serves as the base for her anthropological analyses and, second, we find her analysis of nature. In the former, Stein always follows her teacher until the end of her life, arguing that valid inquiry must pass through a phenomenological reduction.

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[53] Edmund Husserl, *Intersubjektivität III*, number 22.

[54] CM, § 41, 86.

[55] *Ibid*.

[56] *Ibid*.

[57] CM, § 64.

In fact, in her *Excursus*, she writes about her attempt to clarify the formative activity of the spirit: "Any attempt to do this will tell against transcendental-phenomenological arguments only if the attempt itself is made in a phenomenological reduction—as far as it is actually admissible—indeed as we did in our effort to clarify the "*species sensibiles"* as a phenomenological analysis of perception."[58] Certainly, we can ask about which of the two phenomenological reductions she is referring to, the eidetic or the transcendental one. All phenomenologists, even those most critical of Husserl, are phenomenologists because they accept the reduction to essence. I hold that Stein even accepted the transcendental reduction, which makes evident the sphere of conscious lived experiences, and not only in her largely phenomenological works, for we also find traces of the transcendental in her *Finite and Eternal Being*.[59]

Stein's objections about "exteriority" are similar to those of other dissenting students of Husserl insofar as he claims that all we need is the reduction to essence to comprehend "exteriority." We saw this in Stein's letter to Ingarden. Husserl's philosophical revolution is radical: Even the investigation of nature must enter into the new way of viewing the relationship between interiority and exteriority, the investigation of nature must always be mindful of the relation between the two.

It is clear, then, that when Stein encounters a realist philosophical position, for example, that of Thomas Aquinas, she is pushed to assign to reality an autonomous structure. From the epistemological viewpoint of the *Excursus*, this claim is already contained *in nuce* in the acceptance of the criterion of the *adaequatio*, which is fully affirmed in *Finite and Eternal Being*.

In section 10, chapter 5, of the aforementioned work, Stein distinguishes between logical, ontological and transcendental truth. She follows Thomas on this score and believes that logical truth "… relates the existent…to a thinking which assimilates itself to that existent in a temporal process…"[60] Transcendental truth is given as "… congruity of the existent with a thinking of one kind or another has a foundation in existence as such."[61] This is why transcendental truth is also ontological truth, as is the case for medieval philosophy. Stein affirms that transcendental truth holds that all beings (*ente*), understood in Scholastic terms, have a meaning that is intelligible and graspable and, hence, that is in relation with the spirit. There is a manifestation for the spirit and the term "manifestation," of course, refers us back to phenomenology.

Stein always maintained a connection with phenomenology. The manifestation of a being to thought, the thing with its essential characteristics, these all show, even if not always explicitly, a point of contact with phenomenology. Hence, the tran-

[58] PA, 361.

[59] Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt to an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, translated by K. F. Reinhardt (Washington, D. C.: ICS Publications, 2002), Chapter II. In this text, Stein notes that the starting point of her investigation is traceable in being proper of the unity of lived experiences and the pure I.

[60] *Ibid.,* 295.

[61] *Ibid.*

scendental is connected to an ontological, metaphysical question and, so in this way, the "step back" to medieval thought is completed.

Can we justify the transcendental connection discussed above? First, can we refer to subjectivity in its universality, as developed in modernity and, second, can we link the transcendental to ontology, understood in its metaphysical sense? Edith Stein attempts the operations discussed above, always with the goal of "harmonizing" subjectivity and ontology.[62] In completing this audacious operation, she demonstrates her clear knowledge of the difference between the two perspectives. Therefore, we cannot speak of confusion on her part; rather, to fully understand her viewpoint we have to assume a broad perspective that can accommodate the contrasts that lie behind her own personal and original *Aufhebung* (sublation).

[62] I consider this to be the highpoint of Edith Stein's thought, as I suggest in my book *Edith Stein o dell'armonia. Esistenza, Pensiero, Fede* (Rome: Studium, 2010).

Chapter 7
Phenomenology as Transcendental Realism

Let us examine Husserl's view of transcendental idealism in order to discover reasons why we can reverse his position and see it as a new realism, a transcendental "realism."

In order to do so, we need to return to our understanding of realism and idealism. I wish to show a recurrent, if not comprehensive, aspect of the complexity of the term "idealism." Proof of this complexity lies in the necessity of having to add to the term a qualifying adjective. For example, Platonic idealism or Hegelian idealism, both of which are very different from one another. In the case of the former, the emphasis is on the importance of the ideal moment, which undoubtedly has its own reality, but which does not exclude another type of reality, namely, the material and sensible reality that coexists with ideal reality. Unlike Plato, we do not absolutize the spiritual subject, as also happens in Fichte's work, and we do not view the subject in the third person, as Hegel does when he discusses the relation between spirit and reason.

I understand idealism in largely generic terms, that is, as the absolutization of subjectivity that absorbs in itself the external world. I see realism, in a general sense, as a position that admits the existence of a reality that is external to the subject. Obviously, we have simplified matters here because both idealism and realism "are said in many ways," to paraphrase Aristotle. However, I choose these two definitions in order to develop the sense of transcendental idealism and transcendental realism.

If, by employing the aforementioned criteria, we trace phenomenology's claims back to its origins, that is, to Husserl's thought, two important insights can help clarify his view of transcendental idealism.

A. Ales Bello, *The Sense of Things*, Analecta Husserliana 118,
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7.1 Genesis of the Notion of "Transcendental Idealism"

The editors of the collected works of Husserl wisely collated in one volume (i.e., *Husserliana*, vol. 36) his writings on transcendental idealism from 1908 to 1921. This collection of texts affords readers a panoramic view of his position, which, if we examine the dates of his early writings on this theme, arises at the same time as Husserl's delineation of his new method, as demonstrated in his *Idea of Phenomenology* of 1907.

I wish to begin by examining a text written a year later after Husserl's initial meeting with Edith Stein, which she discusses in a letter to Ingarden written in 1917.[1] The title given to Husserl's texts is: *The Fundamental Arguments for Supporting a Phenomenological-Transcendental Idealism*.[2]

In this brief text, Husserl contemplates the possibility of an originary givenness as a correlate of the existence of objectivity. He ponders the possibility of the knowledge of things in terms of the relation between possibility and actual reality (*Wirklichkeit*). Husserl's thesis is: "An object is possible even if I cannot think it or if someone else cannot think it or if even one thinks it, but one really cannot experience it. In principle, however, an object that frustrates the ideal possibility of experience is unthinkable, and, hence, so too the ideal possibility of a subject that experiences the object is also unthinkable."[3] If we ask what Husserl means by object, we see that he distinguishes between an eidetic object and an individual one. Concerning the former, Husserl remarks, "The possibility of an eidetic object is equivalent to its actual reality."[4] This means that all subjects can have eidetic knowledge, even if, in fact, they do not possess it. In other words, if knowable things exist, understood in eidetic terms, even if we do not actually know them, the possibility of knowing them still exists.

To demonstrate what Husserl claims in his text, he discusses the relation between *hylé* and *morphé*. He undertakes a demonstration that we have already discussed in Chap. 5, Sect. 5.2.1, of the book, where I discuss the object, understood in the eidetic sense. Husserl maintains that the *eidos*, that is, *morphé* (color), is given to a subject, who, through sensation, passively grasps individual colors, understood as the substrate of knowledge that slowly becomes formalized, thereby elaborating the idea of the object and the propositions that describe it.

In this way, we move from the hyletic level to the ideal level. This move is consciously grasped by the subject whose empirical objects must be linked to the existence of an individual consciousness. I know that every eidetic possibility is equivalent to an actual reality. Hence, the "ideal" possibility of two being less than

[1] Please see Chap. 6, "Transcendental Idealism Revisited."

[2] Edmund Husserl, *Die Haupstücke für den Beweis des transzendental-phänomenologischen Idealismus*, in *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908–1921)*, eds. R.D. Rollinger and R. Sowa, in Husserliana, vol. 36, no. 8, 146–150.

[3] *Ibid*., 146

[4] *Ibid*.

three, for example, is conceivable. In this case, we have an ideal being that is validly known. On the contrary, in the case of the centaur, we are far from an "actual reality" as we have entered the domain of phantasy, which Husserl simultaneously treats alongside the sphere of actual reality. He calls the sphere of phantasy the "as if." He believes that the moment the subject finds itself in this sphere, it becomes "different" from the subject who knows reality, that is, the subject finds itself in a different situation; the subject is projected into a world "other" than the real one.

The real world is connected to the possibility of an individual/temporal object: we face an object immanent to consciousness in its temporal flow as past and present. The difference between eidetic possibility and the individual/temporal object lies in the supratemporality of the ideal object that can always be recalled by temporal living experience in consciousness, when the object is known here and now.

Certainly, these are strong arguments in favor of the real existence of something ideal/real that cannot be reduced to the subject. Otherwise we would not be able to understand the difference between the real world and the world of phantasy: the former refers to other things and the latter "creates" another situation. In both cases, the role of the subject remains foundational and it is in this sense that Husserl speaks of his particular *transcendental idealism* because reality constitutes itself for us: *reality constitutes itself, it does not construct itself*.

Focusing specifically on the theme of the constitution of nature, a theme that Stein discussed when she understood nature as nature in itself, Husserl, in text number 10 of *Tranzendentaler Idealismus,*[5] further develops the sense of "transcendental idealism" by refining the difference between what one mediately and immediately knows: "Only my consciousness is immediately given; the external world is only (one says) given through mediation in its manifestation in consciousness."[6] This observation stems from the recognition of the primacy of ourselves, but not from the absolutization of such primacy. Responding to the objection of solipsism that lodges the subject in an illusory or imagined knowledge, Husserl proposes an analysis of the lived experience of empathy. Through empathy we discover the consciousness of others, a discussion that is taken up once again and developed 10 years later in the *Cartesian Meditations*, as was mentioned in the Introduction. It is only in this intersubjective "harmony," understood in the Leibnizian sense, that a common and objective world is consolidated.

The guarantee of objectivity is given by intersubjectivity in the sense that intersubjectivity confirms a *style of experience*, as Husserl highlights in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. This style of experience is actual and not imagined, for if Husserl wishes to plunge naïve realism into crisis (where a constituted in-itself is presupposed), this does not mean that one need presuppose that there is nothing that transcends the subject, nor does it mean that the object is chaotic and requires a subject to order it. Colors are colors in their own modality of manifestation and in their difference from the subject, if they are colors that belong to things that

[5] Edmund Husserl, *Der Kausalschluss von den unmittelbar gegebenen Bewusstsein auf eine äussere Welt (1921)*, in *Traszendentaler Idealismus, op. cit.*

[6] *Ibid*., 174.

present themselves as colored. The problem, however, is what does it mean that there are colors for us, because we say they are colors and not sounds, and because colors always show themselves over and over again with their same characteristics and because we expect to see them again, and we even experience them again as always the same such that a style of experience is generated. And if others confirm for me that they are seeing colors, I am further reassured of the validity of my experience. Someone could exist that does not see colors, but even this supports the existence of colors because we have before us an unrealized possibility and not the radical doubt of the possibility of colors. This is so true that we seek to cure those who cannot see color by restoring their "normal" vision. This is why objectivity cannot be presupposed — above all, the presumed objectivity of scientific knowledge; rather, objectivity is validated through intersubjective agreement, otherwise it would only be my own presupposition or illusion. The case also arises that such a presupposition collectively comes to be, as naïve realism demonstrates. It is important, therefore, to examine a larger group of subjects rather than a small group.

In the 1921 text of volume 36 of the *Husserliana* titled "On the Concept of the In-Itself of the Real World," Husserl explicitly responds to the objection of the realists about the lack of clarity of the concept of the in-itself of real objects and the real world. He analyzes their point of view: if we speak about the phenomenon of the external world, we have to admit that things transcend the experience and they are in-themselves in the sense that they are and can be, even if no one experiences them. Furthermore, realists maintain that if a thing exists that I know, this thing belongs first to nature.

Husserl offers the following objection: "It is necessary to think the thing of common experience according to its own sense, as a thing of such a nature or as the first thing of scientific knowledge and, therefore, the highest apperception created by the scientific method of nature that makes this demand."[7] Husserl reveals the realist position he refers to, at least in this phrase. In fact, his attention is turned more to a mindset that follows a scientific understanding of reality rather than to philosophical realism, understood in a metaphysical and gnoseological sense. Husserl has always spoken about objectivity as a prejudice, especially when he refers to the scientific understanding of reality and to its own presupposition of naïve realism.[8] In my opinion, it is only in the *Cartesian Meditations* that his objections are turned toward a realist mentality, understood in the larger sense, even if the specific delineation of realism is lacking and even if realism is understood as an attitude that concerns the existence of the external world and does not seem to be exclusively connected to positivism.

In other words, we find here further proof of the limitations of Husserl's points of reference within the history of philosophy, which are understandable given his auto-didactic formation and the attention he gave to the philosophy dominant at the beginning of his career in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely,

[7] *Ibid*., 193.

[8] See my book, *L'oggettività come pregiudizio. Analisi di inediti husserliani sulla scienza* (*Objectivity as Prejudice: An Analysis of Edmund Husserl's Unpublished Writings on Science*) (Rome: La Goliardica, 1982).

positivism. The question that Husserl asks himself and the development of his argument seem to lead him in this direction. His question is: when one speaks of the in-itself in the contemporary age is one referring to an in-itself produced by our own conceptual construction, that is, by the sciences themselves? If this is the case, he objects, we have to ask ourselves how the *eide* of nature and the real world can show themselves. In other words, how can his proposal of an eidetic knowledge, and hence, an essential philosophical knowledge, that refers to nature be maintained?

In all of his speculation, including that contained in the *Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl contests the objectivistic presuppositions of scientific knowledge, as they have been developed in the modern mindset. He poses the problem of the knowledge of the things of nature, understood as *plena* that are not reducible to a conceptual structure.[9] Hence, *plena* exist. They are not only the "products" of our cognitive mental life. Rather than thinking of an idealist imposition on reality, the question becomes: How do we know these *plena* and their particularities, individualities, and complexities? Here, we find the relation between a philosophy of nature and a science of nature that presumes to have the last word on reality.

How can we evaluate the conceptual construction of presupposing that infinite space, time, substance and causality exist, as is presupposed in scientific theories? Is the presupposition of infinity traceable to the fact that we can observe experience as connected to an open horizon? To what extent are things independent of the subject? Are they independent because we construct such independence?

Husserl overcomes the objection levelled against him about idealism and realism, for he "constructs" an image of nature precisely for those who believe in a reality in itself. But this image needs to be understood and overturned again. The naïve or dogmatic realist prejudice that lies at the base of scientific knowledge Husserl wishes to remove: the desire to overcome this prejudice results in the lectures of Prague and Vienna, which ultimately form *The Crisis of the European Sciences*.

In the texts from the 1920s that we are commenting on, we already find at work a relation between the subject and nature, and the reciprocal necessity of keeping the two moments present.

This interweaving may be clarified from two points of view, namely, the subject and the object, but the two points can only be analytically distinguished. We are dealing here with a deep correlation between the points.

In text number 9, which is dedicated to the relation between reality and fiction,[10] Husserl affirms that it is possible to establish a priori that if a nature exists, there must be an I that cannot simply be anything whatsoever by virtue of happenstance or one's own pleasure (*beliebig*); rather, nature must be constituted as a flow of lived experiences that are not simply accidental. Sensations and experiences have a specific order: "… such that I itself has an immanent genesis within which the data of sensation must enter in a certain (*gewiss*) order."[11] The two adjectives *beliebig* and

[9] C, section 9c.

[10] *Argument für den transzendentale Idealismus (Die Umfiktion in Zusammenhang mit der Leiblichkiet und der Intersubjektivität)*, 1921.

[11] *Ibid*., 156.

gewiss are repeatedly distinguished from one another to show rules of connection between "external" apperceptions—even this adjective is often repeated—and the structure of the subject. Nature is fashioned in such a way that it correlates to the cognitive capacity of the subject, and another type of nature can be "thought," but not "known." The same thing happens in the relation between different subjects and nature: there are different modalities of nature for different subjects; subjects are all coordinated according to the same style of experience.

Nature is, therefore, neither an in-itself external to the subject and knowing subjects nor is it produced by knowing subjects; rather, it is fashioned in such a way that it is intimately correlated to subjects. Nature is not the product of the spirit in a Fichtean or Hegelian sense, nor is it a thinkable thing in-itself that is only partially knowable, as in the Kantian sense. The possibility of knowing nature is always being given, even if, in fact, it is not always knowable. This knowability demonstrates rules, rules that are the laws of nature. The things of nature are "transcendent" with respect to subjects, but these things are knowable through transcendental structures that intentionally bind themselves to things, ultimately forming the unity of knowledge. Nature is the sphere of transcendental objects: these objects are identical with themselves and, therefore, identifiable and knowable.

The aforementioned position is defined by Husserl as "transcendental idealism"—an expression in which the most important term is "transcendental." "Transcendental" is important because it is the locus of discovery of the rules of knowledge and of the identification not of an "irrational" material, but of a material constituted according to rules and an order.[12] This connection to a constituted material is not correctly expressed by the term "idealism," if it is interpreted as the absolutization of the subject's point of view. This is why I propose employing the term "realism" because it refers to the reality in which the subjective and objective moments become strictly related, moments which both lead back to a shared genesis, as confirmed by our discussion of the passive level.

7.2 Transcendental Idealism as Transcendental Realism

The second text important for clarifying transcendental idealism, which in my opinion can be defined as a transcendental realism, is found in the *Cartesian Meditations*. Husserl admits and maintains that there is an external world and there are others who are independent from us. He asks: How are they constituted?

[12] The discussion about Edith Stein in Chap. 6 is helpful here: Stein holds that nature has an essence in itself and, therefore, it is the in-itself that is the focus of the famous discussion between Stein and Husserl of 1918. She does not understand or, at least, does not accept, the relation between subjects and objects, and nature proposed by Husserl. Many years later, in the *Excursus on Transcendental Idealism*, found in *Potency and Act*, she claims that what is understood by Husserl as transcendental with respect to subjects and objects is done so in an irrational manner, that is, it is chaotic and not executed in an ordered fashion. The Husserlian texts I have examined argue the opposite of Stein's view.

The answer lies, as we have discussed, in the genesis of our knowledge, which is primarily taken up, in my opinion, in *Thing and Space* and the *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. The discussion of the genesis of our knowledge culminates in the *Cartesian Meditations*, where Husserl underlines that others and the external world are not mere representations, as Berkeley maintained; rather, the recognition of their existence and characteristics arise from a complex relation among knowing subjects and things. This relation points to an originary fusion, as discussed in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, and it also permits the distinction between subject and object, which are always tightly connected, even in their separation.[13]

Certainly, it is more obvious to admit that objectivity is something already given, but if we do so, then the result of a process is confused with the originary source from which the process arises, thereby allowing only for the seizing of the epiphenomenon.

Here, in this case, we end up with naïve realism, which lies at the base of scientific knowledge, as many realists, including Maritain, have maintained. Husserl does not appear to have known the French philosopher, at least, he does not refer to Maritain, as far as I know, but I hold that Husserl's position goes further than Maritain's "critical" realism. Though Maritain attributes to the knowing subject an important role, he nevertheless presupposes that "understanding does not originarily refer to itself, nor does it refer to the I," as Maritain claims happens in Kant, Hegel and Husserl, "but to being, our primary evidence … the evidence that is principally in itself acquired through understanding is the principle of identity discovered in the apprehension of being or the real."[14]

Certain observations follow from the thesis mentioned above. First, Husserl would certainly accept the criteria of evidence, but what does "being" mean and in what sense can it be identified with the real? Husserl often uses the expression "being," but not in the aforementioned sense, that is, in the metaphysical, gnoseological sense; rather, "being" refers to the concreteness of objects, arguments, and the spheres of investigation. This word, in fact, is not foreign to Husserl, and indicates the consistency of what we are discussing. Being, however, is not to be understood in an absolute sense. For example, he maintains that the sphere of being that interests him is the one related to known lived experiences. Lived experiences exist and they have their characteristics. We could say that the recognition of being is not primary, but secondary, understood as the universalization of the experience of existence. If one wishes, then, to identify being with God, one could argue that the notion of God is broader than that of being. And Husserl, though he does not view God as being, discusses God at length: he considers God as existing, omnipotent, and the creator of things.

Second, Husserl distinguishes his position from that of Kant and, above all, Hegel's view. Husserl would never accept Maritain's objection: "Others like

[13] In particular, Sect. 3.1 of Chap. 3 of this book.

[14] Jacques Maritain, *Distinguer pour unir ou Les Degrés du Savoir* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932), 149.

Edmund Husserl attempt to have the thing's existentiality absorbed by the transcendental subject, one of whose functions is to construct the thing inside itself: this is another way of suppressing the thing in the authentic sense of the word, the extramental thing, the metalogical thing."[15] Maritain himself claims, "Between the thing and thought, I mean thought in act, there is an incomparably deep unity between the model and the cast sculpture."

Hence, it is precisely this deep unity that Husserl wishes to investigate, arguing for an inside and an outside of consciousness, thereby tackling the question of interiority, which lies in opposition to what Maritain claimed about him when Maritain relegated him to the same camp that houses the idealists named above. In fact, Husserl is quite different.

We already mentioned that Husserl admits the existence of an external world and that we cannot doubt it, as does Descartes.[16] Husserl also agrees with Maritain that the thing is not only the known object. The distance between the material object and the formal object that Maritain insists upon, always referencing Thomas Aquinas, is also proposed and maintained by Husserl. He maintains that there is no identity between subject and object: there is only a distinction.

Maritain's critique of idealism is more applicable to Hegel than Husserl, but when Maritain refers to Kant, it becomes obvious that he needs to develop his position. Concerning Husserl, Maritain shows that he needs a broader understanding of Husserl's project. We cannot peg all idealist philosophers as sharing the same form of idealism simply because they are idealists. Clearly, when one thinks of idealism, one thinks of Hegel, but one must also ask about the specific sense Hegel attributes to idealism.

Husserl is certainly different from other idealists.[17] When Husserl says in the *Crisis* that the gnoseology of the empiricists, including Berkeley's, is a psychology,[18] he means that they reduce experience to sense experience. This is not sufficient for Husserl because the empirical account does not consider the complex modality of consciously living experience, that is, *Erlebnisse*, which are not psychic states, but rather the awareness of such states that are lived and recognized in their universal structure. Second, transcendental idealism is different from Kantian idealism, which deduces from data deprived of sense experience a world endowed with sense and

[15] *Ibid*., 180.

[16] One thinks here of the critique of Descartes in volume I of the *Ideas*, section 31: the existence of the world cannot be denied; we do not have the power to do so. The existence of the world can be bracketed in order to understand better the meaning of the world's existence for us.

[17] CM, 86.

[18] C, § 23, 86. Husserl writes: "Locke's naïvetés and inconsistencies lead to a rapid further development of his empiricism, which pushes toward a paradoxical idealism and finally ends in a consummated absurdity. The foundation continues to be sensationalism and what appears to be obvious, i.e., that the sole indubitable ground of all knowledge is self-experience and its realm of immanent data. Starting from here, Berkley reduces the bodily things which appear in natural experience to the complexes of sense-data themselves through which they appear." In any case, the merit of the empiricist form of idealism lies in its criticism *ante litteram* of the dogmatic objectivism of positivism, which is the main focus of Husserl's critique.

which upholds a "world in itself." Husserl's idealism, however, asks about the very sense of the being of things; it is an idealism of "sense" as opposed to a realism of facts.

In a footnote of *Finite and Eternal Being,*[19] Edith Stein astutely clarifies how the idealism of Husserl is an idealism of essence and she scolds him for not sufficiently taking into account the question of facticity. She does not hold, however, that facticity must be understood in a positivist sense, but as a position that examines being, that is, the apprehension of the thing as actual-real—a position held by Husserl's students who advocated for a realist phenomenology that examines the essence of things that present themselves as completely outside of consciousness. One could ask how essence could be known without consciousness or, at least, without the cognitive potential of the subject, which both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas made evident, especially when they discuss knowledge as a movement from potentiality to act. The phenomenological notion of "fulfilment" seems perfectly in line with this passing from potency to act, but we have to view this passing within the transcendental, which is negated as a viable position by realist phenomenology.

Stein's note mentioned above clarifies, and this is what interests us, the definition of idealism given by Husserl, that is, his idealism is one of sense. Stein, however, seems to ignore that the claim about the actual-real being, understood as an in-itself does not correspond, according to Husserl, to the investigations of a "pure" phenomenology. If phenomenology wants to be pure, it must be transcendental and it cannot presuppose an actual, real being that is already given, for if it does, it remains on the natural level where "natural" means "something that is not investigated in its constitution" and, therefore, in the deep relation between subject and object, the relation that supersedes the relation between the model and the cast of the sculpture, which is reflected, among others, by Jacques Maritain.

Despite her disagreement with Husserl, Edith Stein understands well the way in which Husserl speaks about transcendental idealism, understood as an idealism of sense. Accepting this very point of view, she is closer to the Platonic position, which remains an element of the phenomenological school through its attachment to the primacy of essence.[20] The analysis of the relations between essentiality, essence, *quid*, which Stein discusses in her *Finite and Eternal Being*, represents a development, understood in a metaphysical sense, of the theme of sense. These relations are presupposed in the development of her phenomenological thought. Hence, Stein's accusation of idealism against Husserl must be read as focusing on the interpretation of essence in which she understands Husserl as a Platonist insofar as she says that he does not distinguish the different levels of essence and, in particular, the *quid*, understood as essence connected to the apprehension of the real-actual thing.

[19] See the important note number 43 in section 6 titled "Actual-Real Being and Essential Being" in *Finite and Eternal Being*.

[20] Husserl comments on Platonic realism: "Blindness to ideas is a kind of psychical blindness; because of prejudices one becomes incapable of bringing what one has in one's field of intuition into one's field of judgment", *Ideas I*, 41. He rejects the Platonic hypostatization of the ideas, but not the distinction between real and ideal objects.

Husserl, on the contrary, according to Stein, does maintain a level of absolute generality. It is from this level that her definition of the Husserlian idealist position starts. This is why, therefore, we can find the presence of a form of Platonic idealism, which Stein critiques through an Aristotelian position, but not through the absolutization of subjectivity.

I realize that in order to understand the transcendental idealism of Husserl, reversed in my reading as a transcendental realism, it is important to take into account other positions, similar and dissimilar, because it is necessary to explain what transcendental idealism is not. Through this negative way, the intention of Husserl clearly emerges, hence, his proposed gnoseology does not remain confined only to the domain of knowing, but also, as often happens in the history of Western philosophy, it becomes intimately connected with a metaphysical vision, whether it is denied or accepted—an acceptance or rejection that depends on the very solution to the gnoseological problem.

It is because of my definition of transcendental realism that we can understand the meaning of the opposition between idealism and realism, understood in their traditional senses, as well as finding what I indicated at the beginning of this book as the third way of Husserl. He helps us to unpack the opposition, placing it on a level that permits it to be understood and overcome. He revisits traditional notions, not eliminating them, but clarifying them and all their relations.

The larger theoretical value of Husserl's position is relevant for the community of philosophers. Philosophers can choose to belong to such a community, and if they do so, they must listen to one another. More precisely, the value mentioned above consists in the fact that the three realities of I, world, and God, insightfully put into relation with one another by Descartes but always present in western thought, are arranged by Husserl in a particular way, which justifies an ultimate, deep, and unified substrate.[21] This unity is always found in Husserl's philosophical work, in the relation between the I and things, which refers us back to the unity of everything. This reference backward leads us to multiplicity. It is only by discussing both unity and multiplicity that Husserl can justify his philosophical claim of unity. In unity, understood in Husserl's sense, we find the "sense of things."

[21] As I have made clear in Chap. 5, Sect. 5.3.

Conclusion

First, my reading of the idealist-realist controversy in phenomenology permits us to understand it more deeply. Additionally, we learn how the controversy has unfolded within the history of western philosophy by means of Husserl's epistemological project, which I have defined as transcendental realism. Second, we see that idealism and realism are two horns of the same dilemma defined by the absolutization of one of the two moments, either as a modern idealism that enforces the binary between subject and object or as an ancient idealism that distinguishes between ideality and existence, which both constitute the end point of a cognitive process that is wider, deeper and often unexplored. The process, which departs from the unity-in-distinction, subsequently manifests itself in the separation of the two moments.

Distinguishing the two moments is not arbitrary, but when the moments are placed in a relation of opposition, one moment is absolutized while the other is not. Acritical idealism and naïve realism represent a maximal divarication or the two extreme poles of the dilemma, which, if followed, limit one's choices. On the contrary, it is necessary to underscore the importance of the correlation of subject and object: they cannot be isolated from one another and they must be considered as reciprocally connected and not subordinated one to the other.

The foregoing discussion is related to human knowing insofar as it sheds light on the relationship between the I and the world. This brings us to the third conclusion of our investigations, namely, the confirmation of the fact that the theory of knowing described here is a useful instrument not only for grasping the sense of things in their particularity but also in an ultimate sense. If unity lies at the base of distinctions within the framework of the cognitive, I must recognize that it is so because it is the source of reality, understood in metaphysical terms: a unity that carries within itself the possibility of multiplicity.

The question of the source of reality, understood as the interrelation between the one and the many, once again arises. Reality is a product of unity that contains multiplicity. We are not, however, dealing with the One of Plotinus out of which everything emanates; rather, we are focused on a one that is already dynamic in itself, to

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which the sense of things refers, thereby raising the question of the origin and sense of things. Transcendental realism has exposed the need to posit a fundamental unity, understood not in the Spinozistic sense of an indistinct whole, but in the Augustinian sense of a completely dynamic whole, different from things and the I but which is not extraneous to it, for it leaves its imprint on things and the I insofar as it generates them in its image.

Such a metaphysical development, sketched but not fully explained in the phenomenology of Husserl, is reiterated by Edith Stein, although she does so by grounding it in "classical" realism. In her later work, she pauses to consider, first and foremost, the distinction between subject and object without probing the unity proposed by her teacher.

As I have noted, a further investigation of the process of knowing can lead us closer to a solution to the problem of sense, understood in two ways: an inquiry into the way in which one comes to the senses of things leads one (1) to the source of sense as well as (2) to the tight connection between the two moments of subject and object.

The human being can become aware of the aforesaid correlation, and it is in this awareness that the human being's greatness consists, because, as Pascal observed, the human being certainly is a "reed," but she is also a "thinking reed."

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