

# Towards a Phenomenological Account of Personal Identity

Hanne Jacobs\* (*Loyola University Chicago*)

hjacobsluc@luc.edu

The conviction which every man has of his identity, as far back as his memory reaches, needs no aid of philosophy to strengthen it, and no philosophy can weaken it, without first producing some degree of insanity. The Philosopher, however, may very properly consider this conviction as a phaenomenon of human nature worthy of his attention.<sup>1</sup>

*Thomas Reid*

Most contemporary philosophical discussions of personal identity still refer to or even engage with John Locke's account of personal identity in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. For Locke, the question of personal identity is essentially a question of what it means to *experience* oneself as a person and, more precisely, to experience oneself as the same person at different times. Locke's definition of the person clearly indicates this move to experience. He defines a person as "a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and *can consider it self as it self*, the same thinking thing in different times and places."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Locke argues that when dealing with matters related to personal identity it is con-

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\*I would like to thank the director of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven, Prof. Dr. Ulrich Melle, for his kind permission to quote in the following from Husserl's unpublished manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup>Reid (2002), 262.

<sup>2</sup>Locke (1975), II, 27, §9.

sciousness, and consciousness alone, that should concern us. Locke writes: “consciousness always accompanies thinking, and ‘tis that, that makes every one to be what he call *self*; [...] and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*.”<sup>1</sup>

If Husserl’s phenomenology can contribute something to the discussion concerning personal identity, it is exactly because his phenomenological descriptions of consciousness can give us additional insight into what it means to *experience* oneself as continuous through time, to experience oneself as a person, and to experience oneself as the same person that one was before. Thus, the phenomenological account of personal identity that is developed in the following proceeds like the Lockean account insofar as the question of personal identity is understood as the question of what it means to experience oneself as the same person at different times and places. However, as I also intend to show, Husserl’s critique of Locke’s understanding of experience in general implies several critical emendations to Locke’s treatment of the question of personal identity.

Husserl’s critique of Locke’s understanding of conscious experience essentially comes down to the fact that, according to Husserl, Locke, like many others in the history of philosophy, did not understand intentionality.<sup>2</sup> What is important here is that Husserl himself identifies Locke’s neglect of the intentionality of consciousness as the origin of his failure to convincingly account for personhood. As Husserl writes with regard to Locke: “If one has no insight into what is essential to intentionality and into the specific method that belongs to it, one can also not acquire an insight into what is essential to personality and personal accomplishments.”<sup>3</sup>

The following elaborates in what sense the phenomenological understanding of the intentionality of consciousness allows us to formulate a theory of personal identity that can at least (1) account for the continuity

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<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Husserl (1956), 76; 92; 110; 112; 114.

<sup>3</sup>“Wer das Wesentliche der Intentionalität und der besonderen, ihr zugehörigen Methodik nicht sieht, sieht auch nicht das Wesentliche der Personalität und personaler Leistungen” (Husserl (1968), 221).

of consciousness through time, (2) provide an account of a certain aspect of what it means to be a person, namely to be able to appropriate one's past as one's own, and (3) give an original answer to the question of personal identity and state in what the identity of a person through time consists. After having developed the outlines for such a genuinely phenomenological theory of personal identity, it is indicated how the provided account of the person is the correlate of the phenomenological concept of world. Thus, in what way does a phenomenological understanding of intentionality contribute to an understanding of the experience we have of ourselves as continuous through time, as a person, and as the same person through time?

### 1. Continuity of Consciousness through Sleep

We experience our own conscious experience as a continuous temporally unfolding stream of conscious awareness. More precisely, our experience is an ongoing and continuous experience of an enduring though changing world that I have experienced before, experience now, and continuously anticipate experiencing. The most minimal phenomenological elucidation of this seemingly trivial phenomenon of the continuity of my awareness as the uninterrupted appearance of one and the same world already requires a fully elaborated theory of time-consciousness, association, and apperception that would account for the constitutional accomplishment of transcendent perception as bringing one and the same abiding and transcendent world to appearance.

However, this ongoing continuity of my wakeful conscious awareness of one and the same world is not the kind of continuity that has puzzled and intrigued philosophers in the history of philosophy. What has stirred controversy and inspired ad-hoc solutions is rather the continuity of our conscious awareness through deep dreamless sleep or, in other words, the seemingly interrupted continuity between the wakeful episodes of our lives.<sup>1</sup> So, for example, in order to secure the continuity of the thinking

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that when speaking in the following about continuity through sleep, I am thinking, following Descartes, Locke, and Leibniz, specifically of deep dreamless

substance during sleep, Descartes postulates the existence of thought during sleep and swoon. However, since, according to Descartes, the vital condition for remembrance is lacking in such states (that is, traces being imprinted on the brain), we experience the intervals of sleep as if they were devoid of any thoughts and are easily misled into thinking that our continued existence as thinking substances is interrupted.<sup>1</sup>

Like Descartes,<sup>2</sup> Locke insists on the necessarily self-aware nature of our thoughts: “our being sensible of it is not necessary to any thing, but to our thoughts.”<sup>3</sup> Against Descartes, however, Locke questions the possibility that there could be self-aware thought during sleep of which we have no recollection.<sup>4</sup> Further, Locke argues that my inability to recollect the thoughts I presumably entertained during sleep leaves open the possibility that these thoughts could belong to another person.<sup>5</sup> That is, for Locke, sleep and the incapacity to recollect anything of it, introduces a

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sleep. The question of dreaming as well as the question of the relation between the one who dreams and the one who perceives while awake both deserve careful attention, though are not discussed here. It should, moreover, be noted that it might be that deep dreamless sleep is a mere philosophical hypothesis. Aristotle already wonders if the creatures that sleep don't also always dream, even if they do not always remember that they have done so: “we must also inquire what dreams are, and from what cause sleepers sometimes dream, and sometimes do not; or whether the truth is that sleepers always dream but do not always remember” (Aristotle (1995), 721). Kant is explicitly of this opinion and writes that “one can take it as certain that there could be no sleep without dreaming, and whoever imagines that he has not dreamed has merely forgotten his dream” (Kant (2006), 83). See also Zahavi (1997), 148. Husserl himself admits that we cannot know for certain if there is something like deep dreamless sleep when he writes that “Eigentlich ist traumloser Schlaf eine Hypothese” (Husserl (2006), 309). For more on wakefulness, sleep, and dreams see also *Alter. Revue de Phénoménologie. Veille, sommeil, rêve*. number 5 (1997) as well as Linschoten (1987).

<sup>1</sup>“In order for it [the mind] to remember thoughts which it had in the past, it is necessary for some traces of them to be imprinted on the brain; it is by turning to these, or applying itself to them, that the mind remembers. So is it really surprising if the brain of an infant, or a man in a deep sleep, is unsuited to receive these traces?” (Descartes (1994), 247). See Carrique (1995).

<sup>2</sup>“*Thought*. I use this term to include everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it” (Descartes (1994), 133).

<sup>3</sup>Locke (1975), II, 1, §10.

<sup>4</sup>“I say, it is as possible, that the Soul may not always think; and much more probable, that it should sometimes not think, than that it should often think, and that a long while together, and not be conscious to it self the next moment after, that it had thought” (*Ibid.*, II, 1, §18).

<sup>5</sup>“but his [Socrates's] Soul when he sleeps, and *Socrates* the Man consisting of Body and Soul when he is waking, are two Persons: Since waking *Socrates*, has no Knowledge of, or Concernment for that Happiness, or Misery of his Soul” (*Ibid.* II, 1, §11).

genuine interruption in the continuity of ourselves as one and the same person. Locke writes, “for if we take wholly away all Consciousness of our Actions and Sensations, especially of Pleasure and Pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal Identity.”<sup>1</sup> The ultimate consequence of Locke’s denial of the continuation of thought during sleep is that there is no continuity *through* sleep. That is, when following Locke, the interruption of sleep can only be bridged and the continuity of the successive wakeful episodes must be established by means of recollection or consciousness. From a phenomenological point of view, is it also recollection that spans the gap of sleep and connects the successive intervals of our wakeful life?

The non-phenomenon of deep dreamless sleep poses an undeniable challenge to the phenomenological investigation. At a certain point, Husserl himself wonders: “How do I originally represent falling asleep and waking up and how do I originally represent the stretch of sleep itself? What is the evidence here, where is the original self-givenness?” Husserl immediately answers: “The evidence can only be found in waking up or the presentification of waking up and the recollection of falling asleep.”<sup>2</sup> That is, dreamless sleep is a specific form of lived-experiencing (*Erleben*)<sup>3</sup> that, unlike our waking conscious experience, cannot be brought to intuitive givenness in phenomenological reflection. Still, we are aware that our experience is not an ever-waking one insofar as we experience it as interrupted by recurring periods of sleep and experience ourselves falling asleep and waking up. Further, we experience ourselves as continuous through sleep in the sense that upon awakening we experience ourselves as continuous to the selves that went to sleep. But how do we experience our own ongoing experience as a stream of conscious awareness that does not only extend beyond sleep but that is continuous through stretches of sleep if we do not experience sleep in the way we experience ourselves

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<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 1, §11.

<sup>2</sup>“Wie stelle ich aber ursprünglich das Einschlafen und Aufwachen vor und <wie> die Schlafstrecke selbst? Was ist hier die Evidenz, wo ist die ursprüngliche Selbstgegebenheit? Das kann nur das Aufwachen bzw. die Vergegenwärtigung des Aufwachens sein und die Erinnerung an das Einschlafen” (Husserl (1993), 335).

<sup>3</sup>“Im Zustande der Dumpfheit wird auch erlebt” (Husserl (1974), 362).

while awake?

Husserl occasionally answers this question in a way that is at once clear and puzzling when he says that consciousness constitutes its own continuity through sleep by means of recollection. For example, in the following passage, where Husserl speaks of our lives as lives of “wakefulness and sleep, connecting periods of wakefulness through periods of sleep, in which in the current period of wakefulness the consciousness of having slept and the recollection of the previous period of wakefulness takes place as well as the recollection of the whole chain of previous periods of wakefulness,” Husserl immediately adds: “This recollection and this chain of recollection is what enables the synthesis in the present period of wakefulness between this period and the past one.”<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that I, when waking up in the morning and recollecting the moment of my falling asleep, have bridged the gap of sleep. I can even be said to have an awareness of the period of sleep as an interval between my falling asleep and waking again since it belongs to my experience of waking up not to be merely awake but to awaken from sleep after having fallen asleep at night. On the other hand, however, Husserl invoking recollection to establish the continuity of consciousness through periods of sleep is puzzling.

For one, this account invites a critique similar to the one that Joseph Butler directed against Locke. For Butler, consciousness of personal identity presupposes this identity and, consequently, this consciousness or recollection can by no means be said to establish personal identity.<sup>2</sup> Thus,

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<sup>1</sup>“Universalität meines und unseres Weltlebens, das ein Leben der Wachheit und des Schlafes ist, durch Schlafperioden hindurch Wachperioden mit Wachperioden verknüpfend, wobei aber in der jeweiligen Wachperiode selbst Bewusstsein des Geschlafenhabens und Wiedererinnerung an die vorangegangene Wachperiode und die ganze Kette der „früheren“ Wachperioden statthat. Und diese Wiedererinnerung und Wiedererinnerungskette ist es, die in der gegenwärtigen Wachperiode die Synthesis ihrer selbst mit den vergangenen ermöglicht” (Husserl (2008), 587).

<sup>2</sup>In 1736, 38 years after the second edition of Locke’s *Essay* in which the chapter on personal identity first appeared, Butler writes: “And one should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity; any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes” (Butler (1995), 388). In 1785, Thomas Reid also points out that my ability to remember does not make a past action mine, but that I can remember a past action because it is mine, when he writes: “it is not my remembering any action of mine that makes me to

one could, in a similar vein, reply to Husserl that recollection merely brings the continuity of myself before and after sleep to explicit awareness, but does not constitute this continuity and, moreover, presupposes it. Butler understood Locke to be saying that a person remembering at time X having had certain experiences at an earlier time Y suffices to establish the identity of this person between time X and Y. However, should we understand this to be what Husserl is saying? Or reformulated with respect to the problem of sleep, does Husserl claim (and can he claim) that recollection establishes the continuity of consciousness through sleep?

It is by no means a phenomenological given that upon waking up I effectively need to remember my falling asleep in order to experience myself as continuous through sleep. That is, if, due to contingent circumstances, I am unable to remember my experiences before falling asleep, this does not seem to entail an experience of discontinuity. Moreover, it is one of the central insights of Husserl's phenomenology of time that a recollection of an event presupposes the retention of the original experience of this event in the sense that in the recollection of a certain event we presentify intuitively what was (in most cases, emptily) retained.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, if we have to isolate the form of consciousness that would bridge the gap of our sleeping, it seems it would be the retention, rather than the

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be the person who did it. This remembrance makes me to know assuredly that I did it; but I might have done it, though I did not remember it. [...] To say that my remembering that I did such a thing, or as some chuse to express it, my being conscious that I did it, makes me to have done it, appears to me as great an absurdity as it would be to say, that my belief that the world was created, made it to be created" (Reid (2002), 265). Leibniz, in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*, finished by 1704-1705 even though only published in 1765, had already argued that the consciousness of my past self presupposes real identity being in place as my consciousness of my past self or remembering only reveals this identity, when he had Theophilus (Leibniz) reply to Philalethes (Locke): "As regards 'self', it will be as well to distinguish it from the appearance of self and from consciousness. The 'self' makes real physical identity, and the appearance of self, when accompanied by truth, adds to it personal identity. So, not wishing to say that personal identity extends no further than memory, still less would I say that the 'self', or physical identity, depends upon it," (Leibniz (1996), II, 27, §9).

<sup>1</sup>"Geht eine intendierende Retention unter synthetischer Deckung in eine entsprechende Anschauung über, so ist diese Anschauung ja eine anschauliche Wiedererinnerung. Zweifellos können wir sagen, durch sie wird anschaulich klar, was in der leeren Retention eben nur leer intendiert wird. Die Synthesis leistet somit sicher eine Sinn klärende Veranschaulichung. Sie enthüllt den intendierten, aber zunächst leer vorstelligen gegenständlichen Sinn" (Husserl (1966), 80).

recollection, of our experience of falling asleep.<sup>1</sup>

However, a look at the phenomenon of awakening and more precisely at what we experience when we wake up in the morning shows that upon awakening the past wakeful episodes are never *just* retained; rather, my retained past still informs the present and does so before any recollection. That is, the continuity of my conscious life through time and times of sleep is given in the way in which my past experiences influence the present, even if this present is distanced from its past by a night of sleep. More concretely, when I wake up, I do not only wake up after a period of sleep; I wake up in a world that is familiar to me. My experience of a familiar world upon awakening, however, relies on more than the retention of my wakeful past, though without retention there would be no experience of familiarity or even recognition possible. In addition to the retentions of my past wakeful life, there are the associations on all levels between what is newly experienced in the morning and what I have experienced before falling asleep that makes the new appearance of the world a familiar one. Moreover, what is familiar is not only my worldly surrounding but is also my kinesthetic situation in the sense that I am aware of my kinesthetic possibilities from my previous experience.

In short, when we wake up in the morning, everything that we have habitually acquired awakens with us and secures the intimate experience of self-continuity through sleep that we all have. As Husserl himself notes: “The hyletic forcefulness and intrusiveness awakens the I, which is already a human I, that is, an I which has in its habituality the acquisition of the experience of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

The world that I experience upon waking up is, however, not just an intimately familiar one. In the morning, I implicitly experience the surrounding room with all its objects as the *same* room I went to sleep in the night before. Moreover, the objective room did not only exist now and

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<sup>1</sup>The question of how we retain the wakeful episode preceding our period of sleep is not discussed here, as it would require a detailed investigation into the structure of time-consciousness and the consideration of the possibility of a retentionalization without the upsurge of new impressional givenness that is itself subsequently retained, since the latter seems to be lacking during sleep. Nicolas de Warren brought this problem to my attention.

<sup>2</sup>“Die hyletische Eindringlichkeit, Zudringlichkeit weckt das Ich, das schon Menschen-Ich ist, also in seiner Habitualität den Erwerb der Welterfahrung hat” (Husserl (2006), 100).

then; rather, it objectively endured while I was asleep. One might remark here that while the object now and then was experienced in person, its enduring through the period of my sleep is not given in this way. This is indeed the case, but the positing of the enduring objectivity is not without experiential grounds since this positing of my objective surroundings as enduring while asleep would be fulfilled if the real possible experiences as they are motivated by my actual past experience would have factually unfolded. Applied to our example, I would have experienced the room if I had stayed awake all night and this real possibility of these experiences unfolding passively motivates the positing of the enduring being of the room that I experience only before and after sleeping.

In his reply to Locke's account of personal identity, it seems that Leibniz to some extent anticipated the kernel of what has been put forward as a possible phenomenological account of the continuity through sleep that we experience when we wake up. When commenting on a passage where Locke wonders if someone who has no conscious awareness or recollection of the actions and thoughts of Socrates can claim to be the same person as Socrates, Leibniz adds that one not being explicitly aware of one's past existence does not exclude the possibility that there are traces of this past in the present.<sup>1</sup>

From a phenomenological point of view, one can say that the traces of our past impressional awareness implicitly show themselves in the way I experience the world at present. That is, a past experience never just precedes a present experience; rather, present consciousness is always saddled with the constitutive history of its past. Upon awakening, my past experience informs the apperceptions of types and individuals in my surrounding and expresses itself in the intimate familiarity I have of my own bodily possibilities. The modification of such passive habitualities evades my will and every such modification bears the traces of the modified, while it at the same time brings about a new way of seeing or experiencing things.

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<sup>1</sup>"An immaterial being or spirit cannot be stripped of all perception of its past existence. It retains impressions of everything which has previously happened to it [...] but these states of mind are mostly too minute to be distinguishable and for one to be aware of them, although they may perhaps grow some day. It is this continuity and interconnection of perceptions which make someone really the same individual" (Leibniz (1996), II, 27, §14).

It was suggested before that the phenomenological understanding of intentionality would radicalize the Lockean theory of personal identity. Thus far, the focus has been on the experience of our conscious continuity through time and sleep. From a phenomenological point of view, it appeared that our persistence through sleep does not merely consist in a relation of the (present) self to the (past) self, but shows itself in the experience of the one familiar world, an experience that arises because our passive habitualities bear on every new current intentional directedness. That is, while Locke could only think of sleep as an interruption of myself as a person that possibly could be bridged by the recollection of the period before my sleeping, the phenomenological analysis shows that the continuity of my periods of wakeful life is not established by recollection, but first and foremost reveals itself in the way in which we are aware of our surroundings when waking up.

Thus, even though recollection of the previous day is always possible, the insight into the intentional accomplishment of our unfolding conscious awareness that phenomenology contributes shows that recollection only makes the continuity of our consciousness through time explicit. That is, it is only an analysis that understands the question of our continuity through time not solely as a question about the succession of conscious states and how these states relate, but also as a question that concerns what continuously appears to us, that can make clear that the continuity of our ongoing consciousness implicitly shows forth in the experience of the same and familiar world. If our past experiences were not at work in the present in a manifold of ways, we would not experience the same and familiar world and anticipate it being the same as before. Locke's preoccupation with immanent mental states and his neglect of their intentionality prevented him from seeing how before any recollection our awareness of the world bears witness to the continuity of our consciousness through time and, more specifically, through sleep.

We could add that, in light of the proposed phenomenological account, the hypothetical case of radical discontinuity, would not, like Locke seems to think, be primarily characterized by the incapacity to recollect, but would first and foremost make itself felt in the way I experience the

world. In his story "Shakespeare's Memory," Jorge Luis Borges aptly describes how the discontinuity and the absence of the presence of the past in the present first and foremost expresses itself in the absence of a familiarity with the world I was previously so familiar with. In the story, a man who comes to possess Shakespeare's memory says: "I began not to understand the everyday world around me (*die alltägliche Umwelt [sic]*). One morning I became lost in a welter of great shapes forged in iron, wood, and glass. Shrieks and deafening noises assailed and confused me. It took me some time (it seemed an infinity) to recognize the engines and cars of the Bremen railway station."<sup>1</sup>

A theory of personal identity, however, most often aims to account for more than the continuity of consciousness through time and sleep. That is, a theory of *personal* identity aims to account for how I can still consider myself at point Y to be the same *person* as at an earlier point X. In the wake of Locke, the main focus in the debate has been on the question of whether mere recollection is enough or too much to secure such personal identity. In the following, I will ask what role recollection plays in a certain phenomenological account of personhood and in the identification of oneself with who one was in the past. Before doing so, I would like to point to an alternate reading of Locke that will set us on the way to Husserl.

## 2. Becoming a Person

Locke is often interpreted as having argued that I am still the same person at point Y as the person at earlier point X *if and only if* at point Y I can actually remember myself at point X. In this way, recollection becomes the sole criterion of personal identity. However, the inconsistencies that follow from this theory are so obvious that we could wonder if this is really what Locke claimed. One such inconsistency was formulated by Thomas Reid and can be elucidated by considering the example of a person who can now remember her first day of high school, but cannot remember her first day of primary school, although on her first day of high school she

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<sup>1</sup>Borges (1998), 514.

could remember her first day of primary school. According to the theory proposed above, we would have to conclude that while the person now is the same person as she was on her first day of high school, she is not the same person as she was on her first day of primary school because she cannot remember it. However, we would also have to conclude that on her first day of high school, she was the same person as on the first day of primary school because she could remember it. That is, she would then both be the same person and not be the same person as the girl on her first day of primary school.

Up to this day, people have tried to accommodate for such inconsistencies in the so-called Lockean memory-theory of personal identity.<sup>1</sup> Another strategy, however, consists in wondering whether Locke was really formulating criteria of identity through time and whether he commits to memory being this criterion. In this vein, some have argued that Locke, on the contrary, was trying to get clear on what it means to appropriate one's past actions and thoughts.<sup>2</sup> I would like to follow up on this suggestion because it leads to the phenomenologically interesting question of whether recollecting a past experience suffices to be able to identify with the personal self having had this past experience. Further, answering this question will provide an occasion to develop a phenomenological account of at least one important aspect of what it means to be a person.

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<sup>1</sup>One could wonder whether the possibility of forgetting really discredits Locke's account. That is, one could argue that one should distinguish the case in which I at present cannot recollect an action or event due to forgetfulness from the case in which I can *in principle* not recollect an action because I was not self-conscious at the moment I performed the action, like when sleep-walking or severely drunk. In the following, this line of thought is not pursued in favor of a consideration of what it means to personally appropriate one's past.

<sup>2</sup>See for example K.P. Winkler who proposes the following reading of Locke: "I am proposing that Locke is interested in a sense of the word *self* according to which what the self includes depends on what it appropriates" (Winkler (1991), 205). In the same vein, Leibniz reads Locke's theory of personal identity as a theory of *moral* identity. Accordingly, Locke himself writes that "person" is: "a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery. This personality extends it *self* beyond present Existence to what is past, only by consciousness, whereby it becomes *concerned and accountable*, owns and imputes to it *self* past Actions, just upon the same ground, and for the same reason, that it does the present. [...] whatever past Actions it cannot reconcile or appropriate to that present *self* by consciousness, it can be no more concerned in, than if they had never been done" (Locke (1975), II, 27, §26).

Merely passively and receptively experiencing a world and others does not yet, according to Husserl, make us persons. Us being persons originates in us performing a rather specific kind of intentional act, namely position-takings (*Stellungnahme*).<sup>1</sup> Such position-takings presuppose the passive dimension of experience of enduring objects since in them the subject takes a position on or a stance towards what it experiences. To take a stance towards something, at the same time, requires a kind of wakefulness that consists in more than perceptual wakeful awareness since to take a stance involves a conscious effort to decide in favor of or against something, be it being, values, or goals. This awakening to a new level of intentionality in and through the taking of a position need not entail further higher order activity; to take a stance is not yet to make explicative or comparative judgments.<sup>2</sup>

Though, according to Husserl, a position-taking is an active and egoic accomplishment, such an egoic effort does not occur unsolicited. Like we most often direct our perceptual attention to what affects us most by virtue of the affecting objectivity being compelling, interesting, new, or unusual, one only takes a stance when one is instigated to do so by something in the perceptual environment that fails to seamlessly blend into the horizon of expectations. We can elucidate this easily with Husserl's preferred example of a mannequin mistakenly being taken for a person. In this situation, my confusion about the extremely slim waist and exaggerated long slender legs might compel me to look twice and motivate me

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<sup>1</sup>Husserl writes: "Ich kann Person nur sein, sofern ich nicht nur bleibende Apperzeptionen habe und durch sie eine standhaltende und mir als ichfremd gegenüberstehende Welt, sondern sofern ich bleibende „Überzeugungen“ habe, selbsterworbene, selbsttätig gewonnene Überzeugungen, durch tätige Stellungnahmen vom Ich her, bleibende Wertungen, bleibenden Willen" (Husserl (1973b), 196). When I speak in the following of position-takings, convictions, or stances, I do not limit myself to theoretical ones. That is, I use the term generally and consider it to be applicable to the theoretical, as well as to the evaluative and volitional sphere. Husserl himself does the same when he, for example, in the context of a discussion on personhood in a letter to Gerda Walther of 1920, writes that "Doch muß ich dabei darauf hinweisen, daß Überzeugung mir hier als ein allgemeiner Begriff gilt für Urteilsüberzeugung, Wertungsüberzeugung, Willensüberzeugung" (Husserl (1994), 262).

<sup>2</sup>As Husserl writes: "Diese Stellungnahmen, dieses Geltung Erteilen und seine Wandlungen ist ferner, im voraus sei gesagt, nicht zu verwechseln mit sonstigen Ichverhaltensweisen, die zur Urteilssphäre gehören, insbesondere mit dem tätigen Explizieren, Kolligieren, Vergleichen, Unterscheiden u. dgl." (Husserl (1966), 53).

to take an explicit stance concerning the being of the perceived object, in this case it being a plastic doll. Nevertheless, most of the time we don't take such an explicit position towards what we experience, value, and desire, but, so to say, just passively go along experiencing. And isn't it often the view of others concerning what is the case or what is worthwhile and worth striving for that entices us to consider these things for ourselves and to take a stance with them or against them? I will return to the other's role in my being and becoming a person shortly. For now, let's elaborate how my different position-takings make me one person.

For Husserl, initially, all position-takings occur as a specific form of active intentional directedness towards being, values, or goals. But like everything else, from impressions to apperceptions, these position-takings soon trade their lived character for a sedimented one as they sink further back into the past. In this way, as persons, we are characterized by a habituality originating in our activity that adds on to what was already passively acquired.<sup>1</sup> Like in the case of habitualities of the passive sphere, the past of my active positing life is still alive to the extent that it informs my future active life. While past and gone apperceptions are revived in the present on the occasion of associating with what is experienced in the present, position-takings have their own manner of temporal endurance. That is, position-takings endure as features (*Eigenheiten*) of the ego or self that is the agent responsible for all its position-takings.

Being the bearer of such enduring position-takings, the ego is always more than the source of its positing, since it is, as a personal ego, also the product of this positing. As a self with a personal history in the form of enduring interests, choices, and convictions, I am not just aware of a perceptually appearing surrounding; rather, I am aware of this surrounding as displaying my interests, goals, and projects. More precisely, the enduring convictions, projects, and beliefs are expressed in the interest the subject takes in certain cultural, social, scientific, and political practices. In short, one is what one stands for and what one stands for is shown in the way

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<sup>1</sup>“Die Habitualität, die zum allgemeinen Wesen der Subjektivität gehört, ist eben eine andersartige in der Passivität und in der Aktivität, oder besser in der Rezeptivität und in der Spontaneität” (Husserl (1966), 360).

one experiences the world. What one stands for, moreover, is not some private affair, but is expressed in the intersubjective situation in how we act, think, and talk. Though, according to Husserl, we at some point have freely and actually decided for what we stand for, long after the active enactment of this decision, the decision still effects the way we make other decisions and evaluate the position-takings of others.

To localize personhood in the positions a subject takes on a variety of issues has several interesting implications. One such implication is that, in light of this theory, to be a specific person, that is, to be this and not another person, does not consist in having a specific set of features that only belongs to me and differentiates me from other persons. My personal habitualities only individualize me because they originated in me having individually chosen in favor of or against something. That is, my decisions individualize me because they were *mine* and in this sense I could, in principle, make decisions that are identical to the ones that others have made. As long as I am the author of my position-takings, however, they are mine and not yours, although we might share a set of decisions and convictions. Thus, it is not by their content that my convictions individualize me; rather, they receive their individualizing force from the fact that I have opted in favor of them.<sup>1</sup>

Another implication can be inferred from an extreme case that Husserl sometimes mentions and with regard to which it is possible to say that I become another person in the sense that the source of what I believe, want, and desire is, in this case, located in another subject. The example is the one of the servant or slave who is continuously forced to incorporate the beliefs, will, and desire of the master.<sup>2</sup> Although the servant/slave and master have different streams of conscious experience and are in this sense two distinct individuals, the slave is not allowed to be a person in their own right as they are forced to become the person of

<sup>1</sup>As Husserl writes in an unpublished manuscript: "Aber wenn auch kein Zweiter persönlich werten kann wie ich, da er sonst ich selbst wäre, so kann er persönlich werten in gleicher Form (in gleichem Typus, wenn auch in Bezug auf andere Objekte)" (B I 21/58a).

<sup>2</sup>See Husserl (1973a), 97, 104; Husserl (1973b), 169, 181. Especially this passage: "Ferner: Sklaven. Sie sind nicht Personen im prägnanten Gemeinschaftssinn, sie haben wie auch die Kinder „keinen eigenen Willen“, keine eigenen Lebenszwecke, sie sind nicht Freie" (Husserl (2008), 584).

their master in the sense that the master does not allow the slave to express their individuality in their active position-takings. On the contrary, it is the master's personal individuality that speaks in the way the slave thinks and chooses. Thus, generally speaking, while it is not possible to experience someone else's experience, the slave-master dynamic seems to present us with a case in which one subject is virtually the same person as another subject, not because the content of their convictions is the same, but because the source of these convictions is the same. To be clear, I am not saying that the people who are mistreated as slaves by others are not persons; the point I am making with Husserl is that, insofar as they are treated as slaves by others, they are not granted a personality of their own as they are forced to act and think in accordance to the will and wants of the master, though entirely unjustifiably so.

In this context, one could wonder what the difference is between sharing someone else's position-takings while opting for them individually or just taking them over without these stances having originated in one's own self and how these two cases are different from one another. In the latter case, it is the other's individuality that speaks in what I think and want. In the first case, we both speak as individuals even though we say the same. The question is, moreover, if two personally distinct individuals can ever really say the same, as well as if one can really want something only because the other wants it. It might well be that we are dealing here with limit-cases between which we are bound to perpetually navigate in our intersubjective contacts.

Before I return to the question of how this theory of personhood can also provide us with a theory of personal identity, I would like to insist on one last implication of Husserl's theory of personhood as presented here. It is Husserl's opinion that my personal habituality originates in an active and free effort of taking a stance. The incessantly fleeting character of our experience makes it, however, that these active stances soon disappear into the retentional background together with all other experiences; they do so in such a way, however, that they continue to structure the way we experience and perceive situations. Seeing the sedimentation that immediately sets in after having freely made a decision, one could won-

der if one can recall everything that one stands for at will and, if not, in what kind of situations my sedimented and deep-rooted convictions that are in a certain sense invisible to me can show themselves to me and show themselves as fundamentally pertinent.

It seems to me that such a situation is unavoidably intersubjective in the sense that it is often the confrontation with others and especially with others' different ways of living that shows me the pervasive way in which the things that I am accustomed to believe, want, or value structure my life and determine my awareness of my surrounding world. Such a confrontation might motivate me to revise my convictions or might, for the first time, instigate a desire to get to know why I believe in a certain way in the first place.

Thus, we can conclude that to become a person consists, phenomenologically speaking, in constituting oneself as a person in and through the positions one takes. What kind of theory of personal identity follows from the phenomenological account of what it means to become or be a person?

### 3. Personal Identity

In light of what we have thus far seen, it is, in principle, not necessary that a set of convictions would endure for life and in this way guarantee an identity of myself as a *person* through time that would consist in there being some identical, enduring personal nucleus. In fact, in the ideal case, our personal convictions are open to continual revision and reassessment. Although the tendency to affirm what we have already achieved and decided might at times be too strong to take the new and the other into account, Husserl's vision on personhood, in the end, is a dynamic one. That is, to localize one being a person in the positions a subject takes is to think of personhood as something that is the result of a self-constitution and that continually develops, if not continually modifies, itself. In what can *personal identity* still consist after we have identified personhood with the incessant becoming a person through actively constituting oneself in and through active position-takings?

Even if we were to change our minds constantly, our personal history would, from a phenomenological perspective, still be characterized by some identity. That is, through all changes and self-transformations, it is always still *me* that is taking a stance in response to something that strikes *me* or exercises an appeal on *me* to take a stance. As the one feeling addressed to take a stance as well as being the agent and solely responsible one in taking such a stance, I do not endure like any worldly object, nor do I abide in the way that my habitualities do. As an agent considered apart from my initiatives, I am a mere formal identity, I.

This formal identity is revealed by a specific case of me recollecting a past event. Since most of the time I can identify with my past self in a way that goes beyond a formal identification, this mere formal identity does not normally appear. This formal identity only appears at moments where I cannot appropriate my past position-takings and when all other means of identifying have disappeared. Consider the case in which I recollect a certain period of my life in which I no longer recognize myself. Every time I think back to that time in my life, I am overwhelmed by a feeling of alienating embarrassment. In one sense, the feeling of alienation implies a feeling of “that was not me” or “how could I have been like that?” and indicates that I cannot or am unwilling to personally identify with myself in this respect at that point in time. At the same time, however, I do identify in some way with my remembered self, since otherwise there would be no reason to be embarrassed. The formal identity of myself as the self that is both recollecting and recollected is, thus, not a personal identity. Nevertheless, this distinction between a formal and a personal identity can indicate to us what it means to personally identify with some past action or decision and brings us back to Locke.

In the previous, I pointed to an existing alternate reading of Locke’s theory of personal identity that suggests that we understand Locke’s account as attempting to clarify what it means to identify with one’s past self. The key term in this reading is “appropriation.” To identify with one’s past self is to be able to appropriate the thoughts and actions of one’s past self. I think that Husserl could agree with Locke that to personally identify with oneself is a matter of being able to appropriate one’s

past convictions and actions. The question is, however, whether Husserl could agree with Locke that it is in recollecting that we personally appropriate our past actions and positions and that to assume responsibility for my past implies appropriating and thus recollecting it. I think that Husserl would have to disagree here since, from a phenomenological point of view, the mere ability to recollect a past experience or action does not yet imply the ability to personally appropriate it. Or, in other words, self-alienation and the inability to appropriate one's past self is not due to the inability to recollect, but, on the contrary, presupposes this ability. That is, the inability to personally identify with oneself presupposes the ability to formally identify with oneself. The latter identification belongs to the structure of the recollective consciousness, while the ability to personally identify requires something more.

Technically speaking, when recollecting, I presentify a past event by reproducing the past awareness of this event. Due to the given that a recollection is a reproduction of a past experience, it implies an implicit awareness of oneself being identical to the self that has experienced the event in the past.<sup>1</sup> In the case of a personal identification, however, I do not only recollect a past event and myself as having experienced this event; rather, I still believe in the positions that I have actively taken with regard to the experienced event. In other words, I would act the same, decide the same, or want the same. Thus, from a phenomenological perspective, to appropriate one's past self in the strong sense would mean that one would share the convictions of this past self and would decide, value, and desire in a way that is identical to the way one did in the past. An explicit appropriation of my past is at the same time a making explicit what implicitly or habitually is still valid for me.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Beachten Sie, daß diese Wiedererinnerung ein wesentlich anderes ist als eine Retention, und nicht etwa eine bloße Verlebendigung derselben ist im Sinn einer Steigerung der Klarheitsstufe. [...] Die Wiedererinnerung ist eine Art von Wiederwahrnehmung, d.h., es ist zwar keine Wahrnehmung, aber ein von neuem Sich-konstituieren, von neuem mit dem Urjetzt Anfangen und retentional Verklingen, aber eben im Modus der Reproduktion. In der Wiedererinnerung treten also alle die retentionalen Stufen „wieder“ auf, reproduktiv modifiziert” (Husserl (1966), 111).

<sup>2</sup>The question of the ability to recollect, on the one hand, and to personally appropriate, on the other, seems, moreover, to be different from the question of responsibility. That

We could thus say that recollection most often reveals personal continuity even though the possibility of recollecting is not enough to establish such personal continuity. When I recollect a certain point in my life and still think that I have made the right decision in favor of, for example, a certain profession, the explicit appropriation of my past decision reveals that this decision still holds today both in the sense that I would make the same decision again and in the sense that this decision was mine all along as a habitual and sedimented decision. As such, this decision, even without being re-actualized at every moment, has implicitly structured and influenced my other decisions and even prevented me from making other decisions. In this sense, I am still the same person as I was before. If, however, I come to change my mind drastically, I can no longer call myself the same person in this respect; though I am still a person and up to a large extent continuous with myself in the past, I have, in this specific respect, changed and become another person than I was before.

One could wonder if this would not leave someone wanting to account for *personal* identity somehow unsatisfied. That is, based on what has just been said, while formal identity is always guaranteed, personal identity seems to be constantly at risk. In fact, we can find in Husserl's work two ways to bypass the possibility of self-alienation. More precisely, even though Husserl's theory of habituality implies a dynamic concept of personhood, he appears interested in phenomenologically elucidating what it could mean to be absolutely true to oneself and to remain one and the same person throughout the vicissitudes of our lives. In other words, Husserl is interested in determining what could possibly halt the continual self-revising and personal self-transformation that characterizes our finite lives. As I intend to show in the remainder of this article, it is

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is, to take responsibility for one's past actions does not seem to presuppose such strong or personal appropriation. I am responsible for my past actions even if I cannot personally identify with them anymore. Moreover, it seems that even this possibility to take responsibility for something one regrets doing and would not do again does not solely rely on the capacity to recollect the past. We might feel responsible for what we do not remember doing. Alternately, there are human beings that we hold unaccountable while they might be able to recollect the event in question. Them being unaccountable has more to do with them being unable to function as responsible agents or as persons of their own rather than with them being able to recollect their past actions.

here that one finds Husserl's theory of a genuine *personal identity*, a personal identity which would consist in more than the continuity of our conscious awareness through sleep and more than the relative continuity of myself as a person through time, changing continuously as I continuously take new stances and revise old ones.

Locke has already seen that our happiness and sorrow is at stake in our capacity to appropriate our own past. Only the capacity to appropriate one's past deeds and decisions can preclude the possibility of being held accountable for something that one does not remember doing, which would, according to Locke, unavoidably result in an unhappy and miserable existence. It might well be for the sake of happiness that Locke also posits the restoration of our recollection on the day of final reckoning.<sup>1</sup> For Husserl, however, happiness, satisfaction, and ultimately *Seligkeit* rather consist in the ability to decide in favor of something with an insight into its unshakable validity. In his mind, there are at least two ways to come to such position-takings that are shielded from any future devaluation.

On the one hand, Husserl raises the possibility of deeply personal convictions whose validity is immune to the perils and contingencies of our personal life. On the other hand, there are position-takings that are not personal or individual but universally valid ones and are, as such, impervious to the possibility of a future reevaluation. Thus, from a Husserlian point of view, it does not only seem to be possible to construct a genuine theory of *personal* identity, it seems that we can formulate two such accounts. Both ways correspond to two kinds of true selves, namely a deeper true self or a true, future self. Allow me to shortly illustrate how so.

In Husserl's reflections on personal values and love, the idea of a true

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<sup>1</sup>As Locke writes: "And therefore whatever past Actions it cannot reconcile or appropriate to that present *self* by consciousness, it can be no more concerned in, than if they had never been done: And to receive Pleasure and Pain; *i.e.* Reward or Punishment, on the account of any such Action, is all one, as to be made happy or miserable in its first being, without any demerit at all. For supposing a Man punish'd now, for what he had done in another Life, whereof he could be made to have no consciousness at all, what difference is there between that Punishment, and being created miserable? And therefore conformable to this, the Apostle tells us, that at the Great Day, when every one shall receive according to his doings, the secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open" (Locke (1975), II, 27, §26).

self or true person occasionally surfaces.<sup>1</sup> According to Husserl, I live this true self if I heed my individual calling, be it the well-being of a loved one for the lover, the child for the mother, the country for the patriot, or art for the artist. Although such valuations and priorities are deeply personal, they are said to exercise a power that we normally only ascribe to universal norms and values. In other words, within the context of my individual life, these values seem to hold sway in an absolute manner. Consequently, if circumstances force me to give up on those personal values or goals, I, in fact, give up on myself.<sup>2</sup>

By pleading for such personal convictions and position-takings as making up the core of our inner self, Husserl in fact introduces a persistent nucleus in the whole of our habitualities.<sup>3</sup> In other words, even if most of our habitualities are up for future revision, such habitualities have to be distinguished from other kinds of deeply personal ones that guarantee the persistence of my true self through time. Husserl, moreover, seems to think that this persistence remains and that I am in some way still my true self even if I, deaf to my true calling, live a life in self-forgetfulness and am not living this true self. What is more, the power of our conscience seems to depend on this true self being somehow still alive.<sup>4</sup> One could question whether our conscience calling is really the calling of our deeper self that just calls to be recognized and lived. For our purpose here,

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<sup>1</sup>See Melle (2002) and (2007).

<sup>2</sup>Husserl writes in the following unpublished manuscript: "Das Gut, dem man entsagt, das man opfert, ist und bleibt ein Liebeswert, ein Wert für mich und als personale Individualität bin ich in solcher Wahl mit mir selbst in Widerstreit; indem ich das eine Gut opfere, opfere ich mich selbst; und der Schmerz des Opfers ist unüberwindlich" (A V 21/81b). Or, again, in another unpublished manuscript: "Bei Werten, die aus den Tiefen der Persönlichkeit und ihrer persönlichen Liebe ihren persönlichen Sinn empfangen, gibt es keine Wahl und keine „quantitativen“ Unterschiede, nämlich keine Unterschiede des Gewichtes, des überwiegenden und überwogenen. Ein Wert, der aus mir selbst entquillt, für den ich mich, als der ich bin, entscheide aus ursprünglich liebender Hingabe, ist praktisch ein unbedingter, ein absolut gesollter, mich bindend als der ich bin. Gegen ihn entscheiden ist sich selbst untreu werden, sich selbst verlieren, sich versündigen, sein wahres Ich verraten, seinem wahren Sein zuwider handeln (absoluter praktischer Widerspruch)" (B I 21/53a).

<sup>3</sup>Husserl writes: "Mein wahres Ich ist das der bleibenden Entscheidungen, die ich immer wieder als Entscheidungen an ihrer Stelle gelten lasse und nachprüfend billige etc. Nur so haben wir ein bleibendes Sein als personales Ich etc." (A V 21/84b).

<sup>4</sup>Husserl writes: "Das verfallende Ich lebt im unseligen Widerspruch mit seinem wahren Selbst und die Hoffnungen haben den Charakter der Unreinheit, der Unechtheit, Unseligkeit und bekunden sich als das im „Gewissen“" (A V 21/89a).

it suffices to conclude that this true self fulfills the function of a persistent personal nucleus through time. In this way, Husserl could guarantee me being the same person through time beyond any alteration or insignificant alterations. There is, however, another way in which Husserl tries to account for such persistence in my convictions through time.

The notion of a deep personal self occurs in a handful of Husserl's manuscripts and letters from the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> One can, however, in the same time-period, discern a competing notion of a true self in Husserl's writings.<sup>2</sup> In some texts, the notion of a true self that is not so much true to its own individual depth but one that is indebted to the truth emerges. This alternate second notion of a true self is one that is intimately connected to the idea of a rational self. In the end, for Husserl, satisfaction and fulfillment depend on the ultimate definitiveness (*Endgültigkeit*) of my position-takings. Although within our practically oriented lives such absolute truth is by no means desired, the desire for ultimate justification and absolute truth springs forth from the disappointments of our practical lives in which we are time and again confronted with situations, circumstances, and others that contradict our position-takings and undercut our projects.<sup>3</sup> Since we are what we stand for, our striving to stand for

<sup>1</sup>Primarily the cited manuscripts A V 21 and B I 21.

<sup>2</sup>Both notions – a deep self and a true self – seem, in fact, to be operative in the *Kaizo*-articles. On the one hand, Husserl differentiates between two kinds of habitualities of which only the second kind are deeply personal ones directed at personal values: “Es zeigt sich ja ein wesentlicher Unterschied darin an, daß ich mancherlei Werte vollkommen achten und schätzen, aber doch nicht aus dem innersten Zentrum der Persönlichkeit – „mit ganzer Seele“ – lieben kann: als die meinen, als diejenigen, zu denen ich, als der ich bin, untrennbar gehöre. So ist die Kunst für den echten Künstler, die Wissenschaft für den echten Wissenschaftler (den „Philosophen“) „Beruf“; sie ist das Gebiet geistiger Tätigkeiten und Leistungen, zu dem er sich „berufen“ weiß und so, daß nur die Schöpfung solcher Güter ihm zu „innerster“ und „reiner“ Befriedigung gereicht, ihm mit jedem vollen Gelingen das Bewußtsein der „Seligkeit“ gewährt” (Husserl (1989), 28). On the other hand, he also speaks of the ideal of a “„wahres“ und „besseres Ich“. Es ist in der absoluten Fassung das Ideal seines eigenen, vor sich selbst absolut gerechtfertigten, nur in absolut zu rechtfertigenden Akten lebenden Ich” (Husserl (1989), 35).

<sup>3</sup>Husserl writes: “In der letzteren Hinsicht erwachsen solche Entwertungen in der peinlichen Erkenntnis, das erzielte „Gute“ sei nur ein vermeintliches Gutes; die ihm gewidmete Arbeit sei also eine nutzlose, die Freude daran eine sinnlose gewesen, und darnach eine solche, die hinfort nicht mehr zur Glückssumme des bisherigen Lebens gerechnet werden dürfe. Die von derart peinlichen Entwertungen und Enttäuschungen ausgehende Motivation ist es, die, wie früher schon angedeutet, das Bedürfnis nach solcher Kritik und das

something that remains true throughout all vicissitudes and downturns that befall our convictions and projects, or, in short, the striving towards ultimate truth, is at the same time a striving to become truly oneself and identical with oneself; in Husserl's words, it is a striving to become the "I of personal identity, as an *a priori* idea of a possible self-creation towards identity with oneself."<sup>1</sup>

At this point Husserl has transformed the more common notion of personal identity. The question of personal identity, for Husserl, no longer concerns the continuity of our conscious awareness or the relative continuity of myself as a person through time, but is about the falling together with myself for all times. This I that would fall together with itself is not like a deep self that I already was and would still have to find or return to. On the contrary, the subject that would be ultimately true to itself is a future self, a future ideal, or *telos*. As a *telos*, however, it remains beyond our reach and, as such, personal identity is never realized to its full extent.

To conclude, I would like to indicate how Husserl's radicalization of the understanding of experience and, more precisely, the world that is experienced, are but the other side of his theory of the person and personal identity. Thus, how is the phenomenological understanding of the person and the understanding of personal identity as a *telos* implied by the phenomenological understanding of intentionality and what appears in this intentionality, namely the world?

#### 4. Conclusion: Person and World

When discussing the continuity of our experience through sleep, the implications of Husserl's radicalization of the turn to experience already became apparent. It was not an inward reflection on the mind, as first pro-

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spezifische Wahrheitsstreben bzw. das Streben nach Bewahrung, nach „endgultiger“ Rechtfertigung durch einsichtige Begrundung motiviert. [...] Indessen, es bestehen hier wesensmaBige Moglichkeiten fur eine Motivation, welche in einem allgemeinen Streben nach einem vollkommenen Leben uberhaupt ausmunden, namlich als einem Leben, das in allen seinen Betatigungen voll zu rechtfertigen ware und eine reine, standhaltende Befriedigung gewahrleistete" (Husserl (1989), 30).

<sup>1</sup>"Ich personaler Identitat, und zwar als Idee einer *a priori* moglichen Selbstgestaltung zur Identitat mit sich selbst" (Husserl (2002b), 431).

posed by Locke, that yielded insight into the experience of self-continuity. Rather, what the experience of self-continuity through sleep actually consists in only became clear upon the thematization of our experience as bringing about the appearance of a world that is familiar and identical upon awakening. Such thematization of experience, in which we do not retreat into an enclosed consciousness but thematize the world in its appearance already implies the transcendental stance that Husserl spent his lifetime explaining and the understanding of intentionality it yielded.

Thus far, I have not yet elaborated on the intentional correlate of the active position-takings and their sedimentation into habitualities. When taking a stance, I do not merely experience something in the flesh or in an intuitively fulfilled manner but I posit what I experience as something that from now on will remain valid unless other position-takings come to modify my stance.<sup>1</sup> This at the same time means that when appropriating my past, I am, in fact, appropriating the objective validities that I posited in the past. Moreover, this appropriation is never a mere recollection but is the actualization of my habitually enduring position-takings.<sup>2</sup> Now, the correlate of these habitualities is nothing else than the world as we know it. That is, the being of the world is the correlate of the *Eigenheiten* of the ego or its habitualities. The question that a transcendental phenomenology aims to answer is thus the following: “in what way is the being of the world, the world, which is for me and could be for me, grounded in my intending, in my streaming experiencing and otherwise conscious life, and in my *enduring features*?”<sup>3</sup> The possibility of even formulating this question in this way already implies a revolutionary way of thinking

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<sup>1</sup>As Husserl writes: “Die „Anerkennung“ ist es, die eine eigentümliche Zueignung, Festlegung vollzieht, und dabei eine Festlegung als für mich hinfort und bleibend geltendes Sein. Ein wichtiges Moment tritt hier als charakteristisch auf für das urteilende Entscheiden. Nicht nur ein gegenwärtiger Vollzug, ein bloßes Patentmachen der Intentionalität der Wahrnehmung ist in Frage, sondern eine Zueignung, durch die das aktive, strebend tätige Ich einen Erwerb, also eine bleibende Kenntnis sich zueignet” (Husserl (1966), 55).

<sup>2</sup>Husserl writes: “wenn nun das Ich das Urteil wiederholt, so „aktualisiert“ es, verwirklicht es nur die Entscheidung, die von früher in ihm war, als seine bleibende Entschiedenheit” (Husserl (1966), 360).

<sup>3</sup>“wie gründet in dem Meinen, in meinem strömend erfahrenden und sonstigen Bewusstseinsleben, in meinen *bleibenden Eigenheiten* das Sein der Welt, der Welt, die für mich ist und je sein könnte?” (Husserl (2002a), 244), my emphasis.

about the world.

If the world is always already the one that we experience and if the being of the world resides in our habitualities, then the being of the world is not determined in advance. On the contrary, the world is in constant becoming like I myself and the other subjects constituting it. Husserl describes the correlation of person and world in a passage, whose clarity makes it well worth citing here extensively:

The reflection on the world that is valid for me shows me that this world, in all and everything that it is for me, in its totality and its detail, is acquired by me out of my own activities and own passive sources, as well as myself, insofar as I am for myself valid as being. This reflection shows me that this world, which is for me, is in continuous movement insofar as I am continuously acquiring further and more, gaining always new validity (thereby frequently modalizing old validities and even at times “crossing out” old validities). [. . . ] I myself am always implicated in the change of this valid world, I am always the same, but taken up in continuous change as well [. . .].<sup>1</sup>

In constituting the world for me, I constitute myself as a person; or also, the world, as it is valid for me, is constituted in and through me becoming a person. With the idea of the world as it is in itself deferred to the horizon, Husserl also defers the actuality of us falling together with ourselves infinitely. Or, in other words, the phenomenological insight that personal identity is not a given, but a *telos*, goes hand in hand with the phenomenological insight into the givenness of the world as a givenness

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<sup>1</sup>“Die Besinnung auf die mir geltende Welt als solche zeigt mir, dass sie nach allem und jedem, was sie für mich ist, im Ganzen und Einzelnen, von mir aus meinen eigenen Tätigkeiten und eigenen passiven Quellen erworben ist, darunter ich selbst, sofern ich eben für mich selbst bin, in Seinsgeltung bin. Und sie zeigt mir, dass diese für mich seiende Welt in ständiger Bewegung ist, sofern ich immerfort im Weitererwerben bin, immer neue Geltung gewinne (dabei alte Geltungen vielfach modalisierend, darunter auch gelegentlich „durchstreichend“). Immer heißt es: die Welt, die eine und selbe, und doch sie ist nach ihrem Geltungssinn im Rahmen einer durchgehenden (und selbst von mir in Geltung gesetzten) Identität immerzu anders, mit anderen Sinngehalten, mit neuen Gegenständen, die für mich noch nicht da waren, und mit neuen Bestimmungen, in denen die mir schon bekannt gewordenen Gegenstände vordem für mich nicht waren. Und ich selbst bin im Wandel dieser Geltungswelt stets dabei, bin immerzu derselbe, aber in beständiger Mitwandlung begriffen und für mich selbst im Wandel hinsichtlich dessen, was ich von mir zur Geltung gebracht, in Geltung gehalten habe und neu zur Geltung bringe. (Husserl (2002a), 285-286).

in becoming. Like I never fall together with myself, the world is never absolutely given. When, as a phenomenology shows, “an absolute being thing and, universally speaking, an absolute being world is a nonsense,”<sup>1</sup> then a person that would actually be, for once and for all, identical to herself or himself, is equally a nonsense.

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<sup>1</sup>“dass also ein absolut seiendes Ding und so universal eine absolut seiende Welt ein Nonsens ist” (Husserl (2008), 725).

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