

HUSSERL'S TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM & THE PROBLEM OF SOLIPSISM

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by

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Abstract

A pervasive interpretation among Husserl scholars is that his transcendental idealism inevitably leads to some form of solipsism. The aim of this dissertation is to defend Husserl against this charge. First, I argue that Husserl's transcendental idealism is not a metaphysical theory. Transcendental phenomenology brackets all metaphysical presuppositions and argues from experience to the conditions of the possibility of experience. Husserl's transcendental idealism should therefore be interpreted as a transcendental theory of knowledge. Second, it follows from the above characterization of Husserl's transcendental idealism that the responses Husserl gives to the problem of solipsism are in no way meant to prove the existence in-itself of an external world or the existence in-themselves of other transcendental egos. The purpose of Husserl's engagement with the problem of solipsism is to explain how it is that transcendental phenomenology can account for the constitution of both the Objectivity of the world of experience and other psycho-physical subjects. The result is a set of transcendental arguments that explain the necessary conditions of the cognition of a shared external world and of other persons. I conclude with Husserl that the solipsism is a transcendental illusion, and that Husserl's transcendental idealism does not lead to a problematic solipsism. Through a careful study of Husserl's *Nachlass*, with particular attention paid to *Ideas I*, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and *Cartesian Meditations*, I lay the framework for a transcendental-epistemological interpretation of Husserl's idealism. Applying this interpretive strategy to Husserl's discussions of the problem of solipsism and intersubjective monadology, I argue that, for Husserl, empathy is the condition of the experience of other subjects, but that it does not allow us to experience the mental-lives of other transcendental egos.

Keywords

Edmund Husserl, transcendental phenomenology, pure phenomenology, transcendental idealism, phenomenological idealism, solipsism, monads, monadology, intersubjectivity, Objectivity, empathy, transcendental arguments, Cartesian Meditations, Formal and Transcendental Logic, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Theodor Celms, Carl Stumpf, Eugen Fink.

For Benson and Thelma

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Introduction

“...the whole spatiotemporal world, which includes human being and the human Ego as subordinate single realities is, according to its sense, a merely intentional being, thus one that has the merely secondary sense of being for a consciousness...[and] beyond that it is nothing.”

Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.112 <93>

“Whatever I encounter as an existing object is something that...has received its whole being-sense for me from my effective intentionality; not a shadow of that sense remains excluded from my effective intentionality. Precisely this I must consult, I must explicate systematically, if I intend to understand that sense and consequently to understand also what I am allowed, and what I am not allowed, to attribute to an object.”

Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.234 <207>

A typical undergraduate introduction to the work of Edmund Husserl will make little or no mention of his commitment to transcendental philosophy. There is good reason for this. First, casting Husserl's thought in these terms requires some background knowledge of Kant and Fichte, who themselves are not easily understood. Second, history shows us that Husserl's lasting contribution to philosophy was phenomenology, but not his transcendental idealism. Third, even experts on Husserl find aspects of his transcendental phenomenology difficult to understand. The resulting caricature of Husserl is one of a philosopher whose work consists primarily in detailed descriptive analyses of phenomena as they are experienced by a subject, where such descriptions are guided by a methodological constraint known as “bracketing.” This is certainly where Husserl's phenomenology begins, but this is far from its end.

Whereas beginners in philosophy are, by and large, kept in the dark with respect to Husserl's transcendental philosophy, deciphering this aspect of Husserl's thought is one of the greatest challenges faced by Husserl scholars, and one which they cannot overlook. In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl writes that, carried out systematically, “phenomenology

is *eo ipso* ‘transcendental idealism’, though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense.”¹ He insists that only someone who “misunderstands either the deepest sense of intentional method, or that of transcendental reduction, or perhaps both, can attempt to separate phenomenology from transcendental idealism.”² Husserl committed himself to transcendental idealism sometime between 1905 and 1908. From this point onward he often referred to his phenomenology as *pure* or *transcendental phenomenology*, and characterized it as a *transcendental theory of knowledge* and as a *transcendental monadology*.

In the ‘Introduction’ to *Husserliana XXXVI: Transzendentaler Idealismus. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1921)*, Rochus Sowa writes that Husserl’s special sense of transcendental idealism can be summarized as the thesis that, “the existence of real objects, and thus the existence of the real world, is unthinkable without reference to a consciousness which is currently experiencing them.”³ Those objects that in the natural attitude we refer to as “real” are simply objects which consciousness constitutes with a particular kind of being-sense [*Seinssinn*], and that nothing exists for me - not myself, my body, the world, nor others - apart from my being conscious of it. While the phenomenology of his *Logical Investigations* had attracted positive attention from the philosophical community, these later transcendental writings were met with overwhelming resistance, especially from Husserl’s students and fellow phenomenologists. A common complaint, which Husserl considered to be “truly disturbing,”⁴ was that his transcendental phenomenology not only leads to

¹ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.86 <118>

² Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.86 <119>

³ „Sie besagt, dass die Existenz von realen Gegenständen und damit die Existenz der realen Welt nicht denkbar ist ohne Bezug auf ein aktuell erfahrendes Bewusstsein.“ (Husserl, *Hua XXXVI*, p.ix) This is the dominant interpretation of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. For instance, Roman Ingarden considered the *fundamental thesis* of Husserl’s transcendental idealism to be that what is real is “nothing but a constituted noematic unity (individual) of a special kind of sense which in its manner of being (*Sosein*) results from a set of experiences of a special kind and is quite impossible without them. Entities of this kind exist only for the pure transcendental ego which experiences such a set of perceptions. The existence of what is perceived (of the perceived as such) is nothing ‘in itself’ (*an sich*) but only something ‘for somebody,’ for the experiencing ego.” (Roman Ingarden, *On the Motives which led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism*, p.21. Translation modified.) According to James Mensch, Husserl’s transcendental idealism would have it that “being depends upon knowing or – to speak more precisely – that an object’s being depends upon its *being-given* to consciousness.” (James Mensch, *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism*, p.3) Similarly, Sebastian Luft argues that the central claim of Husserl’s transcendental idealism is “that all being receives its meaning in meaning-bestowing acts of transcendental subjectivity.” (Sebastian Luft, “From Being to Givenness and Back: Some Remarks on the Meaning of Transcendental Idealism in Kant and Husserl,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 15:3 (2007), p.368)

⁴ Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, p.34 <34>

solipsism, but that it starts from solipsism and cannot move beyond this starting point, and should therefore be rejected.

Husserl's critics argued that unless transcendental phenomenology can demonstrate the existence in-itself of the external world or the existence in-themselves of other subjects, then it leads to solipsism. Given that Husserl acknowledged the problem of solipsism as a threat to his theory, they interpret Husserl's argument regarding the existence of the Objective world, intersubjectivity, and other subjects in his later works as attempts to show the existence of things-in-themselves. They then conclude that Husserl's attempts to demonstrate the existence of the world and others are insufficient insofar as they rely on the presupposition of an unacknowledged Leibnizian metaphysics. Husserl's position therefore shows itself to be a pluralistic solipsism, but solipsism nonetheless. The purpose of this dissertation is to show that neither of these two claims is true. Husserl never attempts to demonstrate the existence of the external world or other subjects, nor does he need to. According to Husserl, solipsism is just as nonsensical as both realism and idealism. As Dan Zahavi notes, "Far from entailing a commitment to a methodological or metaphysical solipsism, Husserl's transcendental idealism is committed to the view that the world is necessarily correlated to an intersubjective community of embodied subjects. His transcendental idealism doesn't deny the existence of mind-independent objects in the uncontroversial sense of empirical realism, but only in the controversial sense of metaphysical realism."⁵

The challenge for transcendental phenomenology is not to prove the existence of things-in-themselves, but to provide transcendental arguments for how we constitute the actual Objective external world and actual other subjects, and for how it is that consciousness constitutes objects as having the *being-sense* that they have for me. The literature on Husserl's use of transcendental arguments is thin and generally dismissive. While I argue throughout this dissertation that Husserl attempts to give a transcendental argument against solipsism, David Carr suggests in *Interpreting Husserl* that no such argument actually emerges in this context, despite Husserl's recognition that one is necessary.⁶ Steven Gault

⁵ Dan Zahavi, "Internalism, externalism, and transcendental idealism," *Synthese* 160 (2008), p.372

⁶ David Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, p.33-34

Crowell suggests that Husserl never gives transcendental arguments as such, and where they do appear to crop up, Husserl does not intend them to be taken in the sense that Kant did.⁷ On my reading of Husserl's transcendental idealism, one of the main goals of Husserlian phenomenology is to give transcendental arguments. The difficulty, particularly in the cases of Objectivity, intersubjectivity, and empathy, is figuring out how Husserl intends for these arguments to work.

The basic transcendental argument, or rather, the set of nested transcendental arguments, that I understand Husserl to be giving in response to the problem of solipsism runs as follows: *Possible* other subjects are a necessary condition of the constitution of a world of the Non-ego. *Actual* other subjects are a necessary condition of the constitution of an Objective world. And finally, *empathy* is a necessary condition of the constitution of other subjects. For Husserl, there is no sense to the claim that other subjects exist in-themselves or that an external world exists in-itself. However, if Husserl's transcendental arguments regarding Objectivity, intersubjectivity, and other subjects are valid, then transcendental-phenomenological idealism does not lead to solipsism in any traditional or problematic sense. What is more, these arguments do not rely on a Leibnizian metaphysics. The fundamental thesis of Husserl's transcendental idealism is best summarized as the claim that all being is nothing other than the constitutional achievement of intentional consciousness. Accordingly, there are no things-in-themselves, only actual and potential objects for a cognizing subject. Everything that exists for me receives its entire being-sense from my constituting consciousness, and beyond that they are nothing. Following Husserl, the proof of transcendental idealism is transcendental phenomenology, defined as the study of all possible objects and modes of cognition, or the conditions of the possibility of cognition in general and as such. It is the science of how objects are necessarily constituted by consciousness, whose method consists in systematic self-explication on the part of transcendental subjectivity.⁸ Such a philosophy is not a metaphysical theory, but a transcendental-epistemological one.

⁷ Crowell, "Husserl, Heidegger, and Transcendental Philosophy: Another Look at the Encyclopaedia Britannica Article," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 50:3 (1990), p.507-508

⁸ For the most part, this characterization of Husserl's transcendental idealism unwittingly squares with one we find in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. In the final section of that work, Eugen Fink explains that: "The basic central thought of transcendental idealism is: *being is in principle constituted* in the life of transcendental

The first essay in this collection, “The ‘Metaphysical conclusions’ of Husserl’s *Monadology*,” deals primarily with Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*. In the infamous ‘Fifth Meditation’ Husserl presents his transcendental theory of empathy, which he frames as a protracted response to the problem of solipsism. Husserl concludes his transcendental explication of the experience of someone else with what he refers to as a set of “metaphysical results.” However, Husserl notes that these results are not metaphysical in any customary sense, and are actually concerned with the cognition of being.⁹ Commentators such as Arthur David Smith seem to ignore this rather important qualification, and read Husserl as concluding that other subjects necessarily exist in-themselves, and that there is a single Objective mind-independent real world.¹⁰ Contrary to Smith, I argue that the ‘Fifth Meditation’ can only be understood if it is interpreted as a transcendental-epistemological investigation concerned with the conditions of the possibility of cognition of the world and of others, but not with being in-itself. On my reading, Husserl’s monadology neither presupposes nor defends Leibnizian metaphysics. However, it agrees with Aron Gurwitsch’s thesis that Husserl belongs to a tradition of philosophy that also includes Leibniz and Kant. This discussion of the *Cartesian Meditations* is not so much concerned with defending the details of Husserl’s analysis, but more with outlining a correct strategy for attempting to interpret them in light of his transcendental idealism.

The second essay, “The World ‘for me’ and the World ‘for everyone’,” is a detailed reading of §§ 94-96 of Husserl’s *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. While the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* remains an underutilized text for interpreting Husserl’s other later works, it contains an important discussion of solipsism, which Husserl refers to as a

subjectivity...Transcendental idealism is best characterized by the designation “*constitutive idealism*.”...This means above all that transcendental idealism is not a hypothesis resting on arguments but is the summation of the *concrete results* of phenomenological analysis.” (Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, p.158-159 <178>. Translation modified.) As a science that collapses the subject-object distinction that forms the basic problematic of traditional realism and idealism, and that instead investigates transcendental subjectivity, arguing from experience to the conditions of the possibility of experience, “transcendental idealism is *beyond idealism and realism*.” (Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, p.159 <179>)

⁹ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.139-141 <166-168>

¹⁰ A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.234-235

“transcendental illusion.”¹¹ Husserl argues in this text that the Objective world is inherently intersubjective, that is, that objects which I constitute as “real” things in the world are necessarily possible objects of cognition for other subjects like myself. It would seem to follow from this that insofar as I actually experience an Objective world that I co-constitute with other subjects, other subjects must exist in-themselves. However, Husserl also claims that everything that I experience receives its entire being-sense from my effective intentionality, including other egos.¹² If this is correct, then Husserl’s position seems to amount to solipsism, and the denial of the existence of genuine other subjects and an Objective external world. In this essay, I defend Husserl’s claim that this final inference is a transcendental illusion. While it is true that the Objective world is constituted as inherently intersubjective, and that the experience of the actual world requires the actual existence of other cognizing subjects, none of this requires or demonstrates the existence in-themselves of other subjects. All that is required is that Husserl needs to give an account of how we constitute actual other subjects in experience. This appears to entail solipsism, but as long as Husserl is able to account for both the Objective world and other subjects, then it is not solipsism at all. It is simply a denial that objects exist in-themselves, since such existence is nothing for me.¹³

Finally, in “Husserl’s Phenomenological Idealism and its Early Critics,” I discuss *Ideas I* and how this work was interpreted by Carl Stumpf and Theodor Celms. Stumpf claimed that transcendental phenomenology is a phenomenology without phenomena, and that Husserl fails to provide any convincing concrete results in support of his theory. I argue that this reading misunderstands the aims of transcendental philosophy, and that Stumpf’s criticisms are based on his adherence to metaphysical realism. Celms argues that Husserl’s

¹¹ Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.241 <213>

¹² Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.237 <210>

¹³ As Dermot Moran writes: “Husserl offers a demythologized version of transcendental idealism: there is no such thing as the ‘thing in itself’; all being and objectivity must be understood as the product of subjective accomplishments, and cannot be thought without them. As he put it in 1908, ‘Transcendental phenomenology is the phenomenology of constituting consciousness’ (24:425).” (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.6.) Later on in Moran’s book, he again argues: “‘Husserl understood transcendental idealism to mean that there is no such thing as ‘being-in-itself’ or ‘objectivity as such’; every form of objectivity, the constitution of everything, from the natural world to the world of spirit, culture and history is constituted, is given its ‘being and meaning’ (*Sein und Sinn*) by a constituting *subjectivity* or subjectivities acting in consort. Furthermore, he always insists that his transcendental idealism is not in any sense solipsism, despite his beginning from the single meditating self, the *solus ipse*. In fact, he regarded ‘solipsism’ as a transcendental illusion.” (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.56-57)

phenomenological idealism can only escape solipsism with the help of the doctrine of pre-established harmony among monads, and even then, Husserl is left with a pluralistic solipsism.¹⁴ I show that the notion that Husserl's transcendental idealism might lead to a pluralistic solipsism is unproblematic. Husserl's theory of empathy allows for the constitution of other subjects, but it does not entail some sort of special epistemic access to the concrete contents of other minds, nor should it. We do not directly experience the mental-lives of others. For Husserl, empathy is the condition of the possibility of experiencing another subject, but empathy does not allow us first person access to their mental-lives. More importantly, Husserl does not need to prove the existence in-themselves of other subjects. Such metaphysical adventures are beyond the scope of transcendental phenomenology, and therefore beyond the legitimate scope of philosophy as a rigorous science.

In dealing with Husserl's transcendental idealism and his engagement with the problem of solipsism, I have tried, as far as possible, to situate Husserl within the proper historical context. As Husserl wrote late in his life:

we must engross ourselves in historical considerations if we are to be able to understand ourselves as philosophers and understand what philosophy is to become through us...*Every philosopher 'takes something from the history'* of past philosophers, from past philosophical writings - just as he...[does] the present philosophical environment, the works that have most recently been added and put in circulation...[and by] entering into a personal exchange of ideas with still living fellow philosophers.¹⁵

Many hours of research were spent reading the books and articles that Husserl himself read by his predecessors, peers, and students. Many were also spent scouring Husserl's correspondence for help in interpreting his work. Much of that work did not end up being explicitly included in the essays that follow. But in this connection, I feel the need to take this opportunity to note that my interpretation of Husserl has been deeply influenced by the work of Edith Stein, Dietrich Mahnke, Alexandre Koyré, Emmanuel Levinas, Aron

¹⁴ „Nur mit Hilfe der metaphysischen Annahme einer prästablierten Harmonie gewinnt Husserl seine phänomenologische Monadologie. Diese ist aber im eigentlichen Sinne *gar keine Überwindung des Solipsismus*, sondern nur *eine Erweiterung des »monistischen Solipsismus« zum »pluralistischen Solipsismus«*.“ (Theodor Celms, *Die phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, p.404)

¹⁵ Husserl, “Denial of Scientific Philosophy. Necessity of Reflection. The Reflection Must Be Historical. How is History Required?” in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p.392.

Gurwitsch, Eugen Fink, and Dorion Cairns. This is not to suggest that I believe Husserl's students "got him right," whatever that might mean, but that they have given me insight into how Husserl ought to be read, and where genuine shortcomings in his philosophy arise. They have also taught me that such shortcomings are not reasons to reject Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, but that it is a work in progress, and that it is a philosophical project capable of progress. So while I approach Husserl's work in this dissertation as a historian and an interpreter, I also am a defender of Husserl's transcendental idealism. Working out the details of this complete interpretation and defense will be the next stage of my work.

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“Philosophy – we must frankly confess – moves slowly, and makes little progress. It deals with simple things. It deals with being, with knowledge, with man. The questions it asks, moreover, are simple questions: simple, and therefore permanently alive; simple, and thus immensely difficult to grasp. It follows that the attempts of great philosophers to solve these simple questions remain important, and ‘modern’, for hundreds and even for thousands of years...Yet, in spite of this perennial aliveness of philosophical questions and answers – or because of it – no philosophy, at least no authentic one, can be ‘abstracted’ from its context in time. Not only does philosophy speak the language and use the concepts of its time – as it must in order to be understood by its contemporaries – it grows from the deepest reflection on the specific, burning problems of the age. Thus it belongs to an epoch and shares its climate and its background, and these we must study in order fully to understand the philosopher’s message.”

– Alexandre Koyré

1 *The “Metaphysical Conclusions” of Husserl’s Monadology*

Over the past decade, there has been increasing interest in Husserl’s transcendental idealism and the extent to which it can claim to be “metaphysically neutral.” In “Phenomenology and Metaphysics” (2003), Dan Zahavi argues that it is false to interpret Husserl’s metaphysical neutrality as meaning that his transcendental idealism is, in principle, compatible with any metaphysical framework. As transcendental philosophy, Husserl’s phenomenology brackets all metaphysical presuppositions, but this does not mean that it has no implications for metaphysical theories. Zahavi further suggests that advocates of the compatibilist reading sneak a pernicious two-world theory into transcendental phenomenology by allowing for a distinction between phenomena and reality – one that Husserl collapses.¹ He therefore proposes that Husserl’s transcendental idealism be understood as *minimally* metaphysical.² Arthur David Smith’s book, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations* (2003), muddies the water with respect to phenomenology’s metaphysical neutrality even more. By focussing on Husserl’s adoption of Leibnizian monads, Smith argues that transcendental phenomenology is, in the end, committed to overtly “metaphysical conclusions.” The question I will address concerns the substantiveness of these metaphysical conclusions, and which, if any, we can settle out and discard (if necessary) from Husserl’s transcendental idealism.

¹ Zahavi attributes such an interpretation to David Carr and Steven Crowell. This debate mirrors the one currently taking place within Kant scholarship regarding the nature of transcendental idealism. See Dennis Schulting, “Kant’s Idealism: The Current Debate,” in *Kant’s Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine*, 2011. Zahavi’s own reading of Husserl is as follows: “Husserl’s transcendental idealism might exactly be said to constitute such an attempt to undermine any commonsensical divide between mind and world. As he writes in *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität III*: “Transcendental subjectivity encompasses the totality of the subjective, and this ultimately comprises the world itself as subjectively constituted” (Husserl, 1973b, p. 288), and as he states in the volume *Transzendentaler Idealismus* “The transcendental ego has no exterior; the very suggestion is quite nonsensical” (Husserl, 2003, p. 179).” (Dan Zahavi, “Internalism, externalism, and transcendental idealism,” *Synthese* 160 (2008), p.371)

² Dan Zahavi, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics,” in *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation* (2003), p.13 and 17.

In §60 of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl outlines the “metaphysical results” of his transcendental theory of empathy. However, he qualifies that these results are “*anything but metaphysics in the customary sense*,” insofar as they involve no speculative excesses. These results are “metaphysical” to the extent that they concern the *a priori* conditions of the “ultimate cognitions of being [*Seinserkennnisse*].”³ Husserl frames these conclusions in terms of a *community* of monads, and describes transcendental phenomenology as an intersubjective monadology. Smith points out that there are at least two ways to understand these results. On the weak reading, “the *sense* of [a community of monads] is implicit in my experiencing a world with an objective sense, and that the actual *existence* of such a community is *conditionally* apodictic – being inconsistent with an ultimately harmonious experience.”⁴ The stronger reading would have it that the actual existence of a community of monads is *unconditional*, suggesting that my experience of an Objective world demonstrates or depends on the existence in-themselves of other monads.⁵ I find this second reading to be both speculative and excessive. In keeping with the problematic that Husserl sets up at the beginning of the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ I argue that we should adopt the weaker reading, that is, one that focuses on the *being-sense* [*Seinsinne*] of the Objective world and of others, rather than trying to tease out “proofs” for their existence in-themselves.⁶ Philosophers must avoid the common mistake of confusing “Objective,” “actual” and “real” existence with existence in-itself. Husserl’s monadology should be kept, as far as possible, *minimally* metaphysical. What is at stake here is not merely some esoteric point within Husserl scholarship, but a point which concerns the nature of transcendental idealism more broadly conceived, namely, that it can escape solipsism without devolving into speculative or dogmatic metaphysics.

³ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.139 <166>. Hereafter cited as *CM*.

⁴ A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.234.

⁵ “Bearing in mind [Husserl’s] views on the divine entelechy of the world and the *aseity of transcendental monads*, I believe that *at least most* of these statements should be taken in the stronger sense.” (A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.234-235. Emphasis added.)

⁶ As Husserl writes in the *CM*: “phenomenological explication is nothing like ‘metaphysical construction’; and it is neither overtly nor covertly a theorizing with adopted presuppositions or helpful thoughts drawn from the historical metaphysical tradition. It stands in sharpest contrast to all that.” (Husserl, *CM*, p.150 <177>) In doing so, I hope to advance the reading of Husserl proposed by Peter Hutcheson and Kevin Hermberg.

1.1 Phenomenology's claim to "metaphysical neutrality"

The demand that transcendental phenomenology be "metaphysically neutral" is not the invention of commentators; it comes from Husserl himself. For instance, in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl states that transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical method that, "disregard[s] any metaphysical purpose...[and is confined] purely to the task of clarifying the essence of cognition and of being an [possible] object of cognition."⁷ At the end of *Ideas I*, Husserl emphasizes that the theory he has presented should not be confused with "metaphysics,"⁸ and that the phenomenological reduction puts all metaphysical claims in brackets. Despite recent efforts to show that Husserl's philosophy is not metaphysically neutral, and that a continuous view of a phenomenologically grounded metaphysics runs through both his pre- and post-transcendental turn writings,⁹ I am hesitant to think that Husserl ever abandons the requirement of metaphysical neutrality. Whatever a "phenomenological metaphysics" might be, it is not, at least in theory, dogmatic or speculative metaphysics.¹⁰ Husserl's turn to transcendental philosophy was a turn away from such systems of philosophy. Whether or not Husserl sometimes violates the requirement of metaphysical neutrality, or if he sometimes voices certain metaphysical beliefs, is a side issue.¹¹ Against the metaphysical reading of Husserl, I argue that metaphysical neutrality, in some yet to be determined sense, is an inborn feature of *transcendental* phenomenology.¹²

⁷ Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p.18.

⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.359 <313>. Husserl repeats this sentiment in §153: "*The phenomenologist does not judge ontologically* when he cognizes an ontological concept or principle as an index to constitutive eidetic complexes..." (Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.369 <323>)

⁹ Nam-In Lee, "Husserl's View of Metaphysics: The Role of Genuine Metaphysics in Phenomenological Philosophy," in *Phenomenology 2005, Vol. I, Selected Essays from Asia* (2007).

¹⁰ Speculative metaphysics appeals to a supersensible realm of entities in order to account for the realm of appearances. Dogmatic metaphysics uncritically posits or accepts the existence of entities without being able to account for their existence in the face of skepticism.

¹¹ Unless blatantly metaphysical statements can be shown to follow necessarily from the basic tenants of Husserl's mature position, or unless they occur regularly and consistently, they pose no real threat to the neutrality thesis. Passages from early texts, unpublished working notes, personal correspondence, and so on, should always be read in light of the published materials which represent Husserl's mature position, and not the other way around. A strong case would have to be made in order to convince any serious scholar that, say, Husserl's belief in the existence of God, counts against his theoretical commitment to the metaphysical neutrality of his transcendental phenomenology. The potential incompatibility of these beliefs demonstrates little more than Husserl's humanness.

¹² Zahavi does a fine job of explaining metaphysical neutrality as it is originally presented by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*. However, in Husserl's mature thought, what was once a guiding, but perhaps extraneous, principle of phenomenology becomes an inherent part of it.

To abandon it as an “unnecessary limitation” is to no longer be doing transcendental philosophy, and thus, for Husserl, to no longer be doing rigorous, scientific philosophy.¹³

While we could embark on a lengthy historical excursus to determine precisely what Husserl means when he speaks about metaphysics, or who he has in mind as opponents, we can refrain from such a project for our present purposes. We can safely assume that Husserl understands the main task of metaphysics to be answering questions concerning the nature and existence of reality – specifically *external* reality, comprised of ‘genuine transcendencies.’ From the transcendental standpoint, metaphysics defined in this manner is nonsensical, if not impossible. If a scientific or non-speculative metaphysics that investigates the nature and existence of such a reality *is possible*, then it can only hope to be achieved once we have first answered the problems of transcendental philosophy. These problems concern our cognition of the world, and the *meaning* of its existence. As Dermot Moran explains, “Transcendental philosophy, as it came to be understood with Kant, is concerned not so much with elaborating a metaphysical account of the objective world as with a justification of our sense of that world as objective. It is a formal inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of knowledge.”¹⁴ We ought not to expect that in answering these questions we will ultimately pave the way for a scientific metaphysics that investigates *being-as-such* apart from *being-for-an-I*. We may well find that no such metaphysics can be constructed.

In opposition to a metaphysics that purports to study external reality in-itself, the field of research of Husserlian phenomenology is transcendental subjectivity, which is opened up for us by the phenomenological reduction. Phenomenology, at least in its *transcendental* form,¹⁵ does not content itself with a *merely descriptive* analysis of particular intentional objects we might find in this field, taken as pure phenomena. Likewise, it is not a mere description of the various modes of intentional consciousness, that is, a description of the relational structures which holds between the thinking ego and its objects. The aim of transcendental phenomenology is to uncover the *essential* features of consciousness – the “immanent *a priori*” intentional *structures that condition all possible and actual experience*,

¹³ Perhaps a phenomenological metaphysics stands in a similar relationship to transcendental phenomenology as phenomenological psychology. I will leave this for others to explore.

¹⁴ Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.175

¹⁵ I do, of course, accept that transcendental phenomenology is only one branch of phenomenology. But I am inclined to think that it is perhaps the trunk of this family tree.

all possible cognition as such. According to Husserl, this can be attained through a systematic investigation of my own transcendently reduced ego and how it constitutes its objects, that is, “*the sense of its own transcendental functions.*”¹⁶ Carried out in systematic concreteness, “phenomenology is *eo ipso* ‘*transcendental idealism*’.”¹⁷

The *phenomenological-transcendental reduction*, along with *eidetic analysis*, “determine, through and through, the legitimate sense of a transcendental phenomenology.”¹⁸ The phenomenological reduction requires that I bracket, or put out of play, all my naive judgments and acceptances concerning the metaphysical nature of things. This is the basis for the claim that metaphysical neutrality is an inborn and *essential* feature of any *legitimate* transcendental phenomenology. As a phenomenologist operating in the transcendently reduced field of my own ego, I neither make nor accept any claims about what the objects of my experience might be beyond what they are *in* my experience. If I stray from this, I am no longer doing rigorous or legitimate philosophy. Husserl’s *principle of all principles* states:

*that every originary presentative intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak, in its “personal” actuality) offered to us in “intuition” is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.*¹⁹

From the standpoint of transcendental phenomenology, the phenomena as they are constituted in consciousness are the “things themselves.” This phenomenology is concerned with the constitution of intentional objects *in* and *by* my own consciousness, that is, with *what they are, as they are, for me*. Husserl writes:

...nothing exists for me otherwise than by virtue of the *actual and potential performance of my own consciousness*...Whatever I encounter as an existing object is something that...has received its *whole* being-sense [*Seinssinn*] for

¹⁶ Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.274 <242>. Hereafter cited as *FTL*. *FTL* §104 might be the clearest explanation of his own transcendental idealism that Husserl gives.

¹⁷ Husserl, *CM*, p.86 <118>. This is not to say that Husserl is a Kantian. In fact, Husserl himself points out that while Kant’s philosophy was an important precursor to transcendental phenomenology (see *Ideas I*, p.142 <118-119> and *FTL*, §100), he sees essential differences between the two, particularly the fact that Kant believes he can “keep open, at least as a limiting concept, the possibility of a world of things in themselves.” (Husserl, *CM*, p.86 <118>)

¹⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.72 <106>

¹⁹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.44 <43-44>

me from my effective intentionality; not a shadow of that sense remains excluded from my effective intentionality.²⁰

Objects exist for me, and are for me what they are, *only* as objects of actual and possible consciousness.²¹

Every real thing, and ultimately the whole world as it exists for us in such and such a way, only exists as an actual or possible *cogitatum* of our own *cogitatio*, as a possible experiential content of our own experience...Thus, for us, true being is a name for products of actual and possible cognitive operations, an accomplishment of cognition (*Erkenntnisleistung*).²²

Whatever sort of *being-sense* an object of experience might have is posited by consciousness, and “*beyond that it is nothing.*”²³ All objects of experience have “*merely intentional being,*” in the sense of being *for* a consciousness, and this does not entail any sort of “metaphysical hypostatization.”²⁴ Mind independent things-in-themselves, as the realist conceives them, are nonsensical, metaphysical fictions, insofar as they are not even possible objects of cognition.

Regarding the existence of things-in-themselves, Husserl is careful to distance his version of transcendental idealism from Kant’s, or at least certain readings of Kant. According to Husserl, transcendental idealism must, “from the outset go beyond all of the, in the worst sense of the word, ‘metaphysical’ stock elements of the critique of reason (like the doctrine of the thing-in-itself...), that oppose the phenomenological transcendentalism and with it the deepest sense and legitimacy of the Kantian position.”²⁵ Husserl defines transcendental idealism as the study of the transcendental subject taken as, “the primal locus and primal source of all sense-bestowal and truth achievements, and therewith, of all true objectivities and true worlds (and no less, all fictitious ones),” and such a theory:

leaves no room for ‘metaphysical’ substructurings of a being *behind* the being intentionally constituting itself in actual and possible achievements of

²⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.234 <207>

²¹ Husserl, *CM*, p.65 <99>

²² Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 236.

²³ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.112 <93>. In Copy A, Husserl notes that worldly objects are constituted in consciousness as “harmonious” unities of multiplicities of appearances, both across time and space, and across particular (possible) consciousnesses. Their being anything beyond this is a “countersensical thought.”

²⁴ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.41 <41>

²⁵ Husserl, “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,” *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, 5:3 (1974), p.13

consciousness, whether it be a matter of an in-itself of nature or an in-itself of souls, in-itself of history, an in-itself of eidetic objectivities, and of ideal ones of whatever type...Metaphysics in the common sense of the word, referring to [a realm of] transcendences [which are] in principle trans-subjective, is...contrary to sense, as must be made evident. Therefore, only if we disregard such constituent elements, which for Kant's philosophy, of course, are not indifferent, will we transcendental phenomenologists be able to confirm Kant's genuine intuitions.²⁶

In defining the nature of his project, Husserl is clear that he rejects outright the notion of things existing in-themselves, no matter what one might choose to define such things to be. From the phenomenological standpoint, transcendences defined in this way are nonsense. Insofar as metaphysics refers to such nonsensical entities it cannot be considered rigorous, scientific philosophy and must therefore be kept apart from phenomenological-transcendental idealism.²⁷

Transcendental phenomenology is a rigorous, scientific investigation of all possible cognition, and thus an explication of the *being-sense* of all actual and possible objects of cognition. It might therefore be characterized as a "transcendental theory of knowledge," as Husserl himself indicates.²⁸ Such a project disregards any metaphysical purposes.²⁹ But insofar as it explores all possible objects of cognition, it certainly will lead to a set of *epistemic conditions* which limit the sorts of metaphysical claims or distinctions one can legitimately make. Husserl was quick to reproach transcendental realism and subjective

²⁶ Husserl, "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy," p.14

²⁷ In a note to his Fichte Lectures (1917/18), Husserl writes: "There is no meaning in saying: A world exists in itself and consciousness is an incidental event in it. Rather the world is nothing else than a lawful structure of appearances of consciousness encompassing all conscious subjects...and over and above this they have no meaningful existence." (Husserl, "Fichte's Ideal of Humanity," *Husserl Studies* 12 (1995), p.132)

²⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.81 <114-115>. In *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism* (1988), James Mensch insists on the independence and priority of epistemology with respect to metaphysics. See *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism*, p.5-15.

²⁹ "If we then disregard the metaphysical purposes of the critique of knowledge and attend solely to its task of clarifying the essence of knowledge and known objectivity, then it is a phenomenology of knowledge and known objectivity, which forms the first and fundamental part of phenomenology in general. Phenomenology: this term designates a science, a complex of scientific disciplines; but it also designates at the same time and above all a method and an attitude of thought: the specifically philosophical attitude of thought, the specifically philosophical method." (Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p.19) In the Paris Lectures, Husserl also states that, "phenomenology excludes only that type of metaphysics which deals with naive and contradictory objects, but it does not exclude metaphysics altogether." (Husserl, *Paris Lectures*, p.38) Here Husserl explains that the traditional problems of metaphysics can still be posed, but their sense or meaning is to be determined phenomenologically.

idealism on exactly these terms.³⁰ Here we begin to see what it means for Husserl to be metaphysically neutral, or at least *minimally* metaphysical. In *Ideas II*, Husserl states that, “[transcendental] phenomenology actually has within its field of view all questions that can be put to man in the concrete, including as well all so-called metaphysical questions, *insofar as they have possible sense in the first place*, for it is their original formulation and critical delimitation which is precisely the vocation of this phenomenology.”³¹ Questions about the nature of being are not annihilated by the phenomenological reduction; the goal of phenomenology is not to answer these questions. However, the results yielded through transcendental phenomenology will tell us if they have any possible sense. Some metaphysical claims, such as those concerning the existence of things-in-themselves, may turn out to be *nonsense*. Therefore, the fact that the conditions of possible cognition elaborated by transcendental phenomenology might limit the scope of legitimate metaphysics, does not demonstrate that phenomenology is itself metaphysical.

The sense of metaphysical neutrality that Husserl endorses is not one where his philosophy has no metaphysical implications, but where transcendental phenomenology proper, as a general rule, neither presupposes nor makes *strong, positive, or speculative* metaphysical claims regarding being in-itself. The one exception to this is the claim that the “pure” or *transcendental ego* necessarily exists in-itself and for-itself, and that the Ego is a monad.³² However, this ego is not some entity presupposed by Husserl’s philosophy, but a non-substantive, unifying, centering, subject-pole of experience which he believes must exist. Metaphysical neutrality so delimited is an intrinsic limit on the legitimacy and scope of transcendental phenomenology.³³ Phenomenology is not about proving or demonstrating the

³⁰ Zahavi, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics,” p.8.

³¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.408. Emphasis added.

³² “Though the phenomenologist, in all his transcendental descriptions, does not pass the slightest judgment about the world and about his *human* Ego as a mundane being, nevertheless he does constantly make a judgment about his Ego, indeed a judgment affirming its existence; but now this is the transcendental Ego, i.e., the Ego as a being absolutely in itself and for itself, ‘*prior*’ to all mundane being, which only in this Ego first acquires ontological validity.” (Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.413) See also *FTL* §102-104; *CM* §11; *Ideas I* §49, §57 (with §46); Hua XXXVI, Nr.3.

³³ I offer this as a friendly amendment to the following statement by Zahavi: “One could argue that metaphysical issues are pseudoproblems and that the rejection of metaphysics is consequently a liberating move. One could argue that metaphysical problems are real problems, but that phenomenology lacks the resources to tackle these problems, for which reason the neutrality is totally appropriate. And finally, one could argue that phenomenology has metaphysical implications and consequently deplore the neutrality as an unnecessary limitation. In the end these three different responses might be less incompatible than one might think at first

existence of anything. It gives a critical account of phenomena by arguing for the conditions under which the cognition of such objects is possible. As it turns out, things-in-themselves are not possible objects of cognition. If we abandon the metaphysical neutrality requirement, then we undermine the purpose of Husserl's entire project since it could no longer claim to be rigorous or scientific if we do so. Because of this, the neutrality requirement is a valuable interpretive tool. We should be suspicious of readings of Husserl's that come into conflict with the neutrality requirement.

Before turning to Husserl's monadology and its "metaphysical conclusions," I want to acknowledge that my use of the term "epistemic conditions" in our considerations up to this point is no accident. It is borrowed from Henry E. Allison, specifically his work on Kant's transcendental idealism.³⁴ However, the Kantian turn of phrase *conditions of the possibility of experience/cognition* (*Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung/Erkennens*) is used by Husserl throughout his works, specifically in the context of conditions of the possibility of the experience of others and of an Objective world.³⁵ Husserl often labels the discussions of

glance. Thus...there might be metaphysical pseudo-problems which phenomenology is wise to abandon, metaphysical questions which is beyond its reach, and metaphysical questions which it is capable of addressing. (Zahavi, "Phenomenology and Metaphysics," p.16)

³⁴ Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, 2nd ed. (2004). Allison was a student of Aron Gurwitsch, who studied under Husserl, Carl Stumpf, and Moritz Geiger. In Gurwitsch's essay "The Kantian and Husserlian Conceptions of Consciousness," he suggests that Husserl's phenomenology is a natural continuation of the Leibnizian and Kantian projects, which characterized consciousness in terms of the activity of a monad or transcendental ego. Iso Kern suggests that while Husserl is critical of Kant, Husserl also believes that Kant's investigations are *de facto* operating at the level of transcendental phenomenology. Similar to Gurwitsch, he argues that Husserl sought to understand Kant's ego-subject and its faculties in light of Leibniz's monads. Kern writes: „In den Zwanziger Jahren wie dann auch im letzten Jahrzehnt von Husserls Leben finden wir immer wieder der Auffassung Ausdruck gegeben, dass sich Kants Forschungen de facto auf transzendental-phänomenologischer Ebene abspielen. Husserl versuchte in jener Zeit das Kantische Subjekt von der Monade Leibnizens her zu verstehen, dessen Einfluss auf Kant er in seinen philosophiegeschichtlichen Vorlesungen stark hervorhob. Die Kantische Vermögenstheorie zeigte sich ihm so als eine "flüchtige monadologische Interpretation psychologischer Lehren". Die Monade Leibnizens deutete Husserl als Cartesianisches reines Ego. Wir finden also den an Kant gerichteten Vorwurf des Psychologismus einerseits und die transzendental-phänomenologische Interpretation des Kantischen Subjekts bei Husserl gleichzeitig, obschon jener Vorwurf immer mehr zurückgeht, und diese Interpretation sich immer sicherer äussert. Selbst in den allerletzten Jahren war Husserl noch immer der Auffassung, dass Kants Vernunftkritik nicht gänzlich rein von dogmatisch-psychologischen Momenten sei, wenn er auch in den Prager Vorträgen eine psychologische Kantinterpretation als grundverkehrt ablehnt.“ (Iso Kern, *Husserl und Kant*, p.75)

³⁵ See for example: Hua XI, p.152; Hua XV, p.616-617; Hua XXXV, p.36, 373; Hua XXXVI, p.148. This is by no means a comprehensive list. Husserl's use of this turn of phrase deserves a separate and thorough treatment of its own. It is also worth noting in this connection that in the *Paris Lectures*, Husserl writes that following the method of phenomenological reduction, the second "most important insight" in phenomenology is that "the

such conditions as phenomenological “metaphysics” or “formal ontology” but always in scare quotes to indicate that he is not using these terms in the traditional sense. While I think the concept of epistemic conditions is useful here for our understanding of Husserl’s transcendental idealism, it must take on certain nuances. Epistemic conditions in Husserl’s philosophy are still, “necessary condition[s] for the representation of objects...condition[s] without which our representations would not...possess objective reality,” and as “conditions of the possibility of representing objects,” they are still to be distinguished from both psychological and ontological conditions.³⁶ But this is not to say that Husserl’s philosophy can be reduced to the Kantian one, since we have already pointed to a separation between these views above. Nevertheless, some sort of “epistemological” interpretation, in keeping with the argument in favor of metaphysical neutrality/‘minimalism’ above, is both warranted and useful.

1.2 To what is Husserl’s intersubjective monadology a response?

A.D Smith’s discussion of the “metaphysical conclusions” that follow from Husserl’s transcendental idealism presents a further challenge to the neutrality requirement. According to Smith, the *Cartesian Meditations* culminate in, “an out-and-out idealism...with which very few today will have any sympathy at all.”³⁷ Herein we will be concerned with Husserl’s adoption of the Leibnizian term “monad” as a name for the concrete Ego,³⁸ and his

ego...possesses an enormous inborn a priori.” (Husserl, *Paris Lectures*, p.28) According to Husserl, this is the genuine sense of ‘innate’ ideas that Leibniz had sought to explain: there are general conscious-structures that are conditions of all possible cognition.

³⁶ Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, p.11. We must also note that for Husserl these are not conditions on *human* cognition, since for him the transcendental ego is not yet the human ego.

³⁷ A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.107.

³⁸ “The ego, taken in full concreteness, we propose to call by the Leibnizian name: monad.” (Husserl, *CM*, p.67-68 <102>; „Ein Ego, eine Monade, eine transzendente Subjektivität kann also derart sein, daß sich im Rahmen ihres absoluten Bewußtseins ein anderes absolutes Ego ausdrückt, durch die Art des Ausdrucks seine fortgehende vernünftige Bestätigung findet und demgemäß rechtmäßig zu setzen ist als seiende Wirklichkeit. Aber es ist seinem eigenen Sinn nach wirklich, nicht in der bloßen Weise eines Körpers, eines bloß intentionalen Pols, sondern in der Weise eben eines Ego, eines absoluten Seins, eines sich selbst erlebenden und sich für sich selbst konstituierenden. Für mich, der ich den anderen nicht ursprünglich, sondern in der Form der vergegenwärtigenden, indizierenden Einfühlung erfahre, ist der andere eben anderer, alter ego, Objekt, aber ein

subsequent description of the *community* of monads. More specifically, without getting wrapped up in the details of Husserl's theory of *empathy*, I will assess the purported metaphysical implications that Smith finds in these texts. The first step in understanding Husserl's intersubjective monadology and its "metaphysical conclusions" consists in identifying the problem that Husserl is attempting to address by them. Second, we must clarify why this problem arises and why it is a threat. The purpose of this section is to accomplish these two preliminary tasks before carrying out more detailed interpretive analysis. It is only once we know the problem to which Husserl is responding that we can properly interpret his response to it.

Above all others, Husserl regarded the problem of solipsism as the greatest threat to his transcendental phenomenology. He describes it as the "transcendental illusion" that "from the outset misleads, and usually paralyses any attempt to start a consistent transcendental philosophy. If everything I can ever accept as existent is constituted in my ego, then everything that exists does indeed seem to be a mere moment of my own transcendental being."³⁹ While Husserl revisits this problem time and again in his writings, it receives special attention in the *CM*. The 'Fifth Meditation' is a protracted response to the problem of solipsism, or, more precisely, what Husserl calls the problem of *transcendental* solipsism. Husserl summarizes the general worry generated by his position as follows:

Starting from the transcendental ego of the phenomenological reduction and thenceforth restricted to it, phenomenology is incapable of solving [problems concerning the possibility of Objective knowledge]. Without admitting that it does so, it lapses into a transcendental solipsism; and the whole step leading to other subjectivity and to genuine Objectivity is possible only by virtue of an unacknowledged metaphysics, a concealed adoption of Leibnizian traditions.⁴⁰

If, due to the phenomenological reduction, we are forced to remain strictly within the realm of *my own* transcendental subjectivity, then it seems transcendental phenomenology leads, necessarily, to some form of solipsism *or* it is dogmatic (and is therefore unscientific). The

Objekt, das nicht bloß Objekt ist, sondern für sich selbst Subjekt ist, so wie ich in noch ursprünglicherer Form Subjekt und für mich selbst zugleich Objekt bin." (Husserl, *Hua* XXXV, p.282)

³⁹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>.

⁴⁰ Husserl, *CM*, p.148 <174>.

purpose of the ‘Fifth Meditation’ is, however, to show that the above objection is “groundless.”

The traditional problem of solipsism is a consequence of the three skeptical theses presented by Gorgias:

- 1) No external objects exist. (In fact, nothing exists, not even space and time.)
- 2) If an external object were to exist, it would be both unknowable and inconceivable.
- 3) If some external object were knowable, this knowledge could not be communicated to others.⁴¹

Variants of this problem are typically divided into two categories: *metaphysical solipsism* and *epistemological solipsism*. Metaphysical solipsism entails that only my mind and its contents exist, whereas epistemological solipsism entails that all we can know to exist is our own mind and its content. Philosophical idealism is particularly susceptible to this skeptical challenge. But the version of the problem that Husserl faces (or at least the one he takes on) is distinct from these. First, Husserl states that the concern is not about the existence of external objects, but mind-independent objects which exist in-themselves.

The basic idea of the skepticism of Gorgias and Protagoras was this: the world for me, the person who thinks it, is given to me in my thinking, only as it is experienced and thought by me. The subjective experience, the subjective representation is not what is presented. It is commonly said and admitted that something can be represented as being external to us. I have therefore always only my subjective phenomena, my ideas. How can I claim that more than my

⁴¹ Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, 7.65-86 = 82B3. In *Skeptizismus in der Philosophie und seine Ueberwindung*, Raoul Richter writes: „Gorgias aber huldigte einem völligen Nihilismus, den er zum Teil mit eleatischen Gedankenreihen stützte, in seinen drei Thesen: es ist nichts; gäbe es etwas, so wäre es unerkennbar; wäre es erkennbar, so wäre es nichts mitteilbar.“ (Richter, *Skeptizismus in der Philosophie und seine Ueberwindung*, Bd.1, p.15 [BQ 382/1]) Husserl also refers to Gorgias in a similar way at F I 42/26a: „Möglichkeiten: extremer Skeptizismus. Unbedingte Leugnung aller Wahrheit. Nicht bloss die Lösung des Zweifels, sondern der Zweifel selbst ist nur möglich unter Voraussetzung irgendeiner anerkannten Wahrheit. Wer auf einen **xx** aus der Skeptizis schöpft, gibt dies eigentlich zu. Ein Weg kann nur gefunden werden durch die Untersuchung, Untersuchung setzt aber mindestens formale Grundsetzung der Beurteilung voraus, nach denen Richtigkeit und Unrichtigkeit zu bemessen ist. Der Skeptizismus mit seinen drei Thesen (Gorgias) widerspricht <sich> selbst. Keine demonstrative Widerlegung der Skeptizis möglich.“

representations and my mind, that the things presented and thought, exist in themselves?⁴²

Since Husserl's transcendental idealism accepts the existence of the external world, but denies the existence of things-in-themselves in the usual sense, neither of the traditional versions of problem of solipsism would seem to threaten him. Husserl admits, however, that phenomenology at least begins as a sort of solipsistic enterprise. The problem is to escape transcendental solipsism, a task which Dorion Cairns says consists in, "explaining the *constitution* of transcendental other mind(s)."⁴³ As stated above, Husserl thinks that this is necessary in order for the transcendental idealist to reclaim Objectivity, since the path to doing so consists in explaining how certain objects of consciousness are not constituted as being merely subjective but *intersubjective*.

Husserl argues for the *universality* of the results of transcendental phenomenology early on in the *CM*. There he explains how we proceed from a particular cognition, taken as a "transcendental clue," to the universal "unconditioned" *eidōs* cognition it is a token of.⁴⁴ In this way, every *de facto* cognition, "can be thought of merely as exemplifying a pure possibility."⁴⁵ By this method of eidetic analysis, Husserl argues that we come to universal *a priori* conditions or laws of cognition that hold for the pure transcendental ego as such. My concrete ego is just a particular set of possible cognitions that have been actualized out of an infinite number of possible cognitions.⁴⁶

Husserl admits that transcendental phenomenology begins as a "pure egology and as a science that apparently condemns us to solipsism, albeit a transcendental solipsism."⁴⁷ From the solipsistic standpoint of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, Husserl must explain how other subjects, not as mere worldly phenomena but as other transcendental egos,

⁴² „Der Grundgedanke der Skepsis der Gorgias und Protagoras war der: Die Welt ist mir, dem erkennenden Menschen, nur als von mir erfahrene und in meinem Denken gedachte gegeben. Das subjektive Erfahren, das subjektive Vorstellen ist nicht das Vorgestellte. Allgemein sagt man ja und gibt zu, dass etwas vorgestellt sein, erscheinen könne, ohne zu sein. Ich habe also immer nur meine subjektiven Erscheinungen, meine Vorstellungen. Wie kann ich dann aber je behaupten, dass mehr ist als meine Vorstellen und mein Denken, dass ein Vorgestelltes und Gedachtes an sich ist?“ (Husserl, *Erste Philosophie*, Hua VII, p.342)

⁴³ Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink*, p.90.

⁴⁴ Husserl, *CM*, p.50-53 <87-89>. For more on Husserl's use of the phrase "transcendental clue," see *CM*, p.90-91 <122-123>, p.138-139 <165>; *FTL*, p.245 <217>, p.262 <231>, p.269 <237>, p.293 <257>.

⁴⁵ Husserl, *CM*, p.71 <105>.

⁴⁶ Husserl, *CM*, p.71-72 <105-106>. This will be expanded later in the present work.

⁴⁷ Husserl, *CM*, p.30 <69>.

are *constituted* as such. He continues, “Perhaps reduction to the transcendental ego only *seems* to entail a *permanently* solipsistic science; whereas the consequential elaboration of this science, in accordance with its own sense, leads over to a phenomenology of transcendental intersubjectivity and, by means of this, to a universal transcendental philosophy.”⁴⁸ The second stage of phenomenology is to move from transcendental solipsism to transcendental intersubjectivity, that is, to an intersubjective monadology.

Again, the question of most importance here is what sort of solipsism Husserl is attempting to avoid. In a text from the spring of 1933, Husserl writes that there is a “*Two-fold problem concerning solipsism*” that arises from his *Ideas*:

a) first, there is this problem of the possibility of a solipsistic world, that is, the conceivability of a solitary existing ego-subject in a surrounding world [*Umwelt*], which does not, at least in terms of its own sense of existing [*Seinsinne*], have any reference to other ego-subjects; b) another problem concerns how if the world, which is for me, can only derive its sense of being out of my life of consciousness, whether it is possible to avoid the problem of solipsism.⁴⁹

The first problem is one where I exist in a world that has no reference to others, and in the second, there may be others, but the world simply is what it is for me. The problem which seems to threaten Husserl is the second. He also wonders if it is possible that what we call “the world” is really just a closed box, with nothing external to it, and everyone else with whom we communicate is included in it. This might be how madmen [*Verrückten*] constitute the world, but not the rest of us.⁵⁰ In a supplement to *Erste Philosophie II*, “*Begründung des transzendentalen Idealismus. Radikale Überwindung des Solipsismus*,” Husserl attacks both the traditional problem of solipsism and the transcendental problem of solipsism. According to Husserl, the phenomenological reduction is not a reduction to a *solus ipse*.

A solipsism that declares: I, a psychic being, *alone* exist; everything else is merely phenomena – is nonsense...Even the variation of solipsism into the

⁴⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.30 <69>.

⁴⁹ „*Zweierlei Probleme des Solipsismus*: a) Ein anderes ist also dieses Problem der Möglichkeit einer solipsistischen Welt, also der Erdenklichkeit eines allein seienden Ichsubjekts in einer Umwelt, die nicht das Mindeste in ihrem Seinssinn hätte, das auf andere Ichsubjekte verweist, b) und ein anderes das Problem, wie, wenn die Welt, die für mich ist, ihren Seinssinn nur aus meinem Bewusstseinsleben schöpfen kann, es möglich sei, den Solipsismus zu vermeiden.“ (Husserl, *Hua XV*, p.562)

⁵⁰ Husserl, *Hua XV*, p.562-563.

transcendental, which already makes the correct distinction between the ego and transcendental subjectivity, means that the phenomenological reduction and the transcendental interpretation of nature levels [*hebe*] every possible foreign subjectivity, even a transcendental one, is nonsense.⁵¹

Here Husserl writes that the phenomenological reduction is not a reduction to a *solus ipse*. It leads neither to solipsism in the “personalistic” sense, where only my mind exists, nor to a transcendental solipsism where the phenomenological reduction eliminates every other possible subjectivity, including other transcendental subjects. Both of these positions, according to Husserl, are “nonsense.”

In *Interpreting Husserl* (1987), David Carr correctly points out that, “Husserl is not at all concerned with the problem of solipsism in any traditional sense, and that the ‘solution’ he offers, when understood in light of Husserl’s understanding of the problem,”⁵² should not be confused with the Cartesian attempt to infer the existence of the external world from the existence of the ego. According to Carr, the *transcendental problem of solipsism* can be explained as follows:

The task which arises is to explain *how* the other exists *for [me]*, not *whether* the other exists as such. What is sought, then, is a specifically phenomenological concept of the *alter ego*, that is, one that will fit into the overall scheme of phenomenological investigation, the scheme indicated by the words *ego-cogito-cogitatum-qua-cogitatum*. And when Husserl places the objection of ‘solipsism’ into the mouth of his imaginary critic, it is the possibility of just such a concept that is being questioned in principle...his ability to make ‘phenomenological sense’ of other egos. There is simply no place in the phenomenological scheme, he argues, for the *alter ego*. In that scheme everything must be either *ego*, *cogitatio*, or *cogitatum*, and the *alter ego* presents us with the apparent paradox of a *cogitatum cogitans*.⁵³

⁵¹ „Gegen den Solipsismus, den personalen und seelischen wie auch den transzendentalen. Die phänomenologischste Reduktion keine Reduktion auf einen solus ipse.

Ein solipsismus, der sagt: Ich, das seelische Wesen, bin *allein* alles andere ist bloss Phänomen - ist Unsinn...Aber auch die Abwandlung des Solipsismus ins Transzendente, die schon die korrekte Scheidung zwischen Ich und transzendentaler Subjektivität macht und die meint, die phänomenologischste Reduktion und die transzendente Interpretation der Natur hebe jede mögliche Setzung fremder Subjektivität, auch transzendentaler, auf, ist Unsinn.“ (Husserl, Hua VIII, p.496-497)

⁵² David Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, p.46.

⁵³ Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, p.50. Just above this, Carr makes another important point: “Husserl is not concerned with showing that *different* egos are possible or conceivable. In a sense the possibility of different egos has already been taken into account by the very eidetic approach of phenomenology. By taking the *particular* objects of transcendental reflection as merely exemplary, Husserl seeks to describe the structure of any consciousness at all. That not all possibilities can be construed as possibilities of *my* consciousness is ruled out by the concept of the monad as a system of compossibilities. Not all possibilities of consciousness are

The critic who charges Husserl with transcendental solipsism claims that he cannot fit the notion of another transcendental ego in the intentional model of consciousness, that there can be no genuine sense of another subject. On this reading, Husserl must in some way argue his way around what appears to be a logical impossibility entailed by the theory of intentionality when coupled with the phenomenological reduction, and explain the sense of an *alter ego*.⁵⁴ The problem is to explain the *sense* of the existence of other egos, and to seek out the *a priori* epistemic conditions that make the cognition of an Objective world and other transcendental egos possible.

In *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism* (1988), James Mensch presents us with another way of understanding the problem of transcendental solipsism. On his reading, transcendental solipsism emerges out of an epistemological concern.

This ‘transcendental solipsism’ springs from the fact that I can verify through direct perception only those statements which are true for me – i.e., those which have a merely private, subjective validity. To claim more than this, I must apparently make what Husserl terms a ‘metaphysical’ assertion. This is a statement that cannot be phenomenologically grounded...Insofar as objective knowledge does imply Others, the objection Husserl is raising concerns their existence as *perceiving subjects*. The objection is that such existence must remain a ‘metaphysical’ assumption of phenomenology...[The phenomenological reduction] necessarily involves a suspension of belief in the existence of Others as having the same perceptual evidence for an assertion as I myself have. The objection here is that there is no way to re-establish this belief in terms of direct perception of the Other...⁵⁵

If Husserl wants to say that Objective knowledge implies the existence of other subjects, then it seems that he must make a metaphysical assumption about the existence of other subjects. However, there is no way to establish the existence of other subjects understood as other

compossible with all others, and certain conceivable possibilities would rule out my actual present and past. They would have to be other than they are, a different stream of consciousness involved in a different system of possibilities. The monad as such a system of compossibilities makes no sense except by reference to other possible systems, and this is why Husserl speaks in the *Cartesian Meditations* not only of the *eidōs* of consciousness, the instances of which could potentially all belong to one stream of experience, but of the *eidōs ego* whose instances are different and incompatible streams of experience.” (Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, p.49-50)

⁵⁴ Peter Hutcheson also argues in favor of this reading of the ‘Fifth Meditation.’ See Hutcheson, “Solipsistic and Intersubjective Phenomenology,” p.167-168.

⁵⁵ Mensch, *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism*, p.17-18.

transcendental egos like myself based on direct perception. Not only is an empirical truth that “another’s psychic life is essentially inaccessible to me in direct perception,”⁵⁶ it is logically impossible for me to experience the experiences of someone else. The claim is that insofar as this is the case, Husserl has no way of explaining either the existence of other subjects, or the existence of an Objective world that is “there for everyone.”

These two ways of understanding the problem of transcendental solipsism are not as different as they first appear. In both cases, what is important for Husserl is explaining the *sense* of other egos in a way that is consistent with the basic tenets of transcendental phenomenology. They both focus on other transcendental egos, since the other possible perspectives of an Objective world must somehow relate to these. When Husserl argues for the impossibility of my concrete monad having these different perspectives, he thereby shows that the infinite *a priori* possible perspectives are not all “mine” in the sense that solipsism would require.⁵⁷ He must therefore make sense of other egos, while, at the same time, avoid positing their existence in-themselves and for-themselves. Next we must investigate the *being-sense* of others as they are constituted in experience, taken as a “transcendental clue,” to some *a priori* epistemic condition that makes an Objective, shared, external world possible.⁵⁸ The whole of Husserl’s transcendental idealism relies on his ability to do this. While everything which exists receives its entire *being-sense* from my effective intentionality, in the case of external “physical” objects which are constituted in experience, this sense includes different possible perspectives, that is, perspectives that are other than my own. This includes other possible first person perspectives which are impossible with my actual lived-experience, but are *a priori* possible perspectives of *other* transcendental egos, and which are harmoniously united with those experiences that are

⁵⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.233 <206>

⁵⁷ In *On the Problem of Empathy*, Edith Stein writes the following: “The perceived world and the world given empathetically are the same world differently seen. But it is not only the same world seen from different sides as when I perceive primordially and, traversing continuous varieties of appearances, go from one standpoint to another...The same world is not merely presented now in one way and then in another, but in both ways at the same time. And not only is it differently presented depending on the momentary standpoint, but also depending on the nature of the observer. This makes the appearance of the world dependent on individual consciousness, but the appearing world...is the same, however and to whomever it appears...Thus empathy as the basis of intersubjective experience becomes the condition of possible knowledge of the existing outer world, as Husserl and also Royce present it.” (Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, p.64 <72>) Stein argues here that this amounts to something of a proof for the existence in-itself of the external world. However, we know from her ‘Foreword’ to the text that she was aware that this reading was incompatible with Husserl’s views.

⁵⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.90-92 <123-124>.

my peculiarly own.⁵⁹ Here we discover that, for Husserl, the Objective world is an inherently intersubjective world, and thus, the transcendental phenomenology which once appeared to be entirely solipsistic, leads inevitably to an intersubjective monadology.

The difficulty for Husserl is to avoid transcendental solipsism without presupposing any metaphysical claims about other egos, particularly without simply positing the existence of a plurality of monads. Husserl explicitly maintains that his theory does not rely on some *unacknowledged* and *problematic* Leibnizian metaphysics that accounts for the apparent convergence of the various perspectives on the world. The transcendental problem of solipsism is, for Husserl, a constitutional problem to be answered by phenomenological analysis. It is not a problem to be answered by metaphysical speculation. Any “metaphysical results” that phenomenological analysis might yield should be interpreted as minimally metaphysical. They are clarifications of and limitations on the legitimate meaning of the being-sense of the Objective world and other subjects, both of which are constituted by consciousness, in terms of the epistemic conditions of the possibility of experiencing and accepting objects with such being-senses. These results should not be interpreted as positive metaphysical claims about the existence of a world that exists in-itself or the aseity of other egos in any traditional sense. Reading Husserl in this way might lead to some difficulties, but there should be no doubt that this is the way in which he intended for his work, including the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ to be read.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Husserl, *CM*, p.105 <135>.

⁶⁰ Husserl himself believes that transcendental solipsism is just as much nonsense as traditional solipsism, and that a transcendental theory of empathy is the key to resolving the problem. He writes: „Ein solipsismus, der sagt: Ich, das seelische Wesen, bin allein alles andere ist bloss Phänomen - ist Unsinn. Ich setzt Nicht-ich Leib und Ding voraus, Ich im natürlichen Sinn ist Person.

Aber auch die Abwandlung des Solipsismus ins Transzendente, die schon die korrekte Scheidung zwischen Ich und transzendentaler Subjektivität macht und die meint, die phänomenologische Reduktion und die transzendente Interpretation der Natur hebe jede mögliche Setzung fremder Subjektivität, auch transzendentaler, auf, ist Unsinn. Die transzendente Deutung der Einfühlung ergibt den sich rechtfertigenden Uebergang in fremde Subjektivität, und dabei in die transzendente. So, wie ich in meiner transzendentalen Subjektivität nicht nur rechtmässige Erinnerung, rechtmässige Erwartung, assoziative Vordeutung, Vergegenwärtigung habe, so auch eine auf demselben Recht fussende Vergegenwärtigung von transzendentelem Bewusstsein - als Einfühlung.“ (Husserl, *EP II*, p.496-497.)

1.3 Husserlian monads: The transcendental ego versus the ego in its full concreteness

This transcendental ego, taken in its “full concreteness,” Husserl calls a *monad*.⁶¹ While Husserl consciously chooses this Leibnizian term, it is important to distinguish the Leibnizian conception of monads from the Husserlian one. We might also wonder when and why Husserl adopts this term in the first place, rather than sticking to the language of transcendental idealism we find in Kant and Fichte. Along with Husserl’s adoption of Cartesian terms, this only adds to confusions between how we are to understand the relationship between transcendental phenomenology and the problem of solipsism. In what follows, I will offer some historical comments that might help to clear up the issues surrounding Husserl’s motivations for returning to Leibniz, and then move to more philosophical details concerning the meaning of the term ‘monad’ in Husserl’s writings. In doing so, I will attempt to purge some of the unnecessary metaphysical baggage that one might think is imported into Husserl’s philosophy along with the term.

While Husserl explicitly borrows terms and concepts from Leibniz in his works, Husserl is not concerned with properly interpreting the writings of Leibniz. As he does with the work of a number of thinkers, Husserl appropriates Leibniz by giving a phenomenological interpretation of his philosophy.⁶² If this happens to shed new light on Leibniz, then it is simply by chance.⁶³ Calling Husserl a Leibnizian, or even a neo-Leibnizian, would be altogether misleading.⁶⁴ That said, along with Berkeley and

⁶¹ Husserl, *CM*, p.67-68 <102>. In text from 1921, Husserl also equates “my pure ego” with “my pure monad.” (Husserl, *Hua XXXVI*, p.176) See also A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.108-113.

⁶² The project of translating Leibniz into the language of phenomenology was taken up literally by Husserl’s former student Dietrich Mahnke. In 1917, without the prior knowledge of Husserl, Mahnke published *Eine Neue Monadologie*; a paragraph by paragraph “translation” of Leibniz’s *Monadology* into the language of Husserl and Lotze. (Mahnke, *Eine Neue Monadologie*, p.3). Husserl received a copy of the work [BP 168] in June of 1917, but did not read it thoroughly until the spring of 1919. (Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, Bd.3, p.422.) In a letter to Husserl dated 3 March, 1932, Mahnke mentions that reading the *Cartesian Meditations* inspired him to begin reworking *Eine Neue Monadologie*. The ‘Fourth’ and ‘Fifth Meditation’ were to serve as the basis for this reworking, and he expressed to Husserl that he hoped that the German edition of the *CM* would go into matters in more detail. (Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, Bd.3, p.480-481) Unfortunately, there is no working manuscript for this second attempt at a “new monadology” in Mahnke’s *Nachlass* at Marburg.

⁶³ Perhaps it is useful here to consider Husserl’s remarks on the “pre-cursors” of phenomenology from *Ideas III*, §10. Here Husserl warns that even though he draws on historical figures, sometimes intentionally other times maybe not, we should not confuse Husserl’s project with theirs. We find similar remarks in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and the *Crisis* writings.

⁶⁴ Husserl writes to Mahnke on 27 December, 1927 that this intersubjective phenomenology is a concrete scientific elaboration of Leibniz’s monadology. (Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, Bd.3, p.460) He continues by stating that he is a “Leibnizian” in the sense that “research into the possible always precedes research of the actual –

Schopenhauer,⁶⁵ Husserl admits that Leibniz was one of his early philosophical influences.⁶⁶ This fact is not only reflected in Husserl's early writings on the philosophy of logic and mathematics, but in his mature writings as well. Beginning in 1908, Husserl writes of the relationship between consciousness and the constitution of the shared, and harmoniously perceived, world in terms of Leibnizian monads.⁶⁷

The 'Fourth Meditation' begins with Husserl stating that, "Objects exist for me, and are for me what they are, only as objects of actual and possible consciousness."⁶⁸ The task of the phenomenologist is then to give an account of what this concrete existence-for-me and existence-as-such [*Für-mich-sein und So-sein*] consists in, what sort of actual and possible consciousness is at play here, what we mean here by *possibility*, what the structure of consciousness is in relation to its objects, and so on, by way of systematic intentional analysis. Following this, Husserl writes that, "the transcendental ego...is what it is solely in relation to intentional objectivities," which include not only those objects which I immanently experience, but also "world Objects, which are shown to be existent only in his inadequate, merely presumptive, external experience."⁶⁹ An *essential* property of the ego is to have within itself harmonious complexes of intentionality which are in part actualized in the stream of experience, and which also in part exist as *fixed potentialities* which are always already available but yet to uncovered. Every Object, i.e., spatio-temporal object, that exists for me is nothing more than the experiential correlate of such intentional complexes, and these complexes are in some sense *a priori* structures of consciousness. Husserl defines the transcendental ego here in terms of its relation to intentional objects or, more precisely, the

that is, understood as rigorous science." (Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, Bd.3, p.461) According to Husserl, a study of the conditions of possible experience, and thus of the possible objects experience, by way of a transcendental-phenomenological (intersubjective) monadology must precede any empirical inquiry. So while Husserl considers himself a Leibnizian in some sense, I contend that it is misnomer.

⁶⁵ Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink*, p.47.

⁶⁶ „Ihre Liebe zu Leibniz kann ich sehr wohl nach verstehen. In jungen Jahren habe ich mit offenen Augen öfters in der Erdmann-Ausgabe von Leibniz gelesen und zweifellos hat das auf mich...stark gewirkt.“ (Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, Bd.3, p.407.) The text Husserl is referring to is likely, *God. Guil. Leibniti Opera Philosophica quae exstant Latina Gallica Germanica omnia* (1839-40) [BQ 252]. He would have read this work circa 1890. (Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik*, p.25-26)

⁶⁷ Husserl, *Hua XIII*, p.7.

⁶⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.65 <99>

⁶⁹ Husserl, *CM*, p.65 <99>

intentional structures which condition all possible cognition. Intentional objects are not transcendent things-in-themselves which consciousness apprehends, but rather the constitutional achievement of intentional consciousness. But this ego is also a concrete ego defined in terms of the actualization of these potentialities and its actual relation to intentional objects, that is, it is an ego defined in terms of its *activity*.

In addition to the ego's existence in relation to the intentional objects which it constitutes in experience, the ego is also "*existent for itself* in continuous evidence; thus in itself, [the ego] is *continuously constituting itself as existing*."⁷⁰ Husserl calls this the doctrine of *transcendental self-constitution*. The ego grasps itself not only as a flowing cogito, but as the I which persists throughout this flow. The unity of experience over time points to an identical and enduring subject of these experiences; "the identical Ego, who, *as the active and affected subject of consciousness*, lives in all the processes of consciousness and is related, *through* them, to all object-poles."⁷¹ Husserl insists that the transcendental ego, this "monadic nexus of consciousness,"⁷² is not an "empty pole of identity" any more than the objects of consciousness are empty.⁷³ With each *act* of consciousness, the ego takes on a new abiding property. I determine myself as *this* particular ego with each act of consciousness. The ego is therefore both the identical pole of consciousness and the identical substrate of ego properties.

From the ego considered as identical pole and as substrate of ego properties, we can distinguish, "*the ego taken in full its concreteness*," that is, the ego taken along with all of the objects which are meant in its intentional life, without which it cannot be concrete. "The ego, taken in full concreteness, we propose to call by the Leibnizian name: monad."⁷⁴ According to Husserl, the concrete ego, or monad, has a surrounding world which continually exists "for me" and is made up of objects which I constitute and which I thereby have a unique "perspective" on. The *pure* ego and the *concrete* ego are the same ego considered in two different ways: first purely as the ego which constitutes all objects and itself, the absolute subject of all possible cognition, second as the unity of those possible acts

⁷⁰ Husserl, *CM*, p.66 <100>. Translation modified.

⁷¹ Husserl, *CM*, p.66 <100>

⁷² Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.128.

⁷³ Husserl, *CM*, p.66 <100>

⁷⁴ Husserl, *CM*, p.67-68 <102>

of consciousness which it (actively or passively) actualizes, including the intentional correlates of those acts. Husserl makes similar points in *Ideas II*:

All data of consciousness, levels of consciousness, and noetic forms which 'can be accompanied' by the identical Ego of an actual or possible 'I think' belong to a monad. Now within the absolute stream of consciousness of a monad, certain formations of unity occur, but ones which are thoroughly different from the intentional unity of the real Ego and its properties. To those formations belong unities such as the persistent 'opinions' of one and the same subject...to the pure Ego. The identity of the pure Ego does not only reside in the fact that I (*sc.* the pure Ego), with regard to each and every *cogito*, can grasp myself as the identical Ego of the *cogito*; rather, I am even therein and *a priori* the same Ego insofar as I, in taking a position, necessarily exercise consistency in a determinate sense: each 'new' position-taking institutes a persistent 'opinion' or a *thema* (a *thema* of experience, of judgment, of enjoyment, of will, etc.) so that, from now on, as often as I grasp myself as the same as I used to be or as the same as I now am and earlier was, I also retain my *themata*, assume them as active *themata*, just as I had posited them previously.⁷⁵

As the subject constitutes itself as itself in time, the ego takes on certain abiding properties according to the law of "transcendental generation." The transcendental ego "contains" an infinite number of possible perspectives, but it takes on only one concrete unity of these perspectives, and this unity actively persists and accumulates through the lived stream of consciousness, insofar as I identify myself as myself.⁷⁶

After giving a rough definition of what he means by the term *monad*, Husserl goes on to explain that pure phenomenology is a transcendental monadology. He writes: "Since the monadically concrete ego includes also the whole of actual and potential conscious life, it is clear that the problem of *explicating this monadic ego phenomenologically...must include all constitutional problems without exception.*"⁷⁷ By way of the transcendental reduction, the

⁷⁵ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.118-119 <111-112>.

⁷⁶ "All unities of duration which are built up in the continuous flux of immanent time merge into the unity of the monadic stream of consciousness which is constantly becoming and changing, together with the concomitant pure Ego. Thereby, this pure Ego is established by means of a cogito determined in any way whatsoever. It extends itself therein onto the total sphere of what is, in the sense of ideal possibility, absolutely immanently experienceable by it, rememberable, expectable, and indeed even phantasizable, according to all temporal modes...Consequently, the idea, not only of the actual world posited by me but also of each and every possible and phantasizable world, as a world for this pure Ego, has, precisely through the relation to the actual pure Ego, fixed bounds." (Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.127 <120>)

⁷⁷ Husserl, *CM*, p.68 <102-103>

meditating philosopher is led back to the transcendental subject and its concrete-monadic contents. Husserl insists that his investigations are concerned not with my particular ego, but “with apperceptive forms, with modes of consciousness that are conceived so generally that they must belong to the make-up of every monad (e.g., perception, memory, etc.).”⁷⁸ Pure phenomenology studies the concrete monad and argues from its concrete contents to “a *purely possible ego*, a pure possibility variant of my *de facto* ego.”⁷⁹ It is nothing other than the uncovering of the “transcendental ego as such, which comprises all pure possibility-variants of my *de facto* ego and this ego itself *qua* possibility.”⁸⁰ Husserl states that transcendental-phenomenological idealism thus reveals itself as “a *transcendental and phenomenological monadology*, one which is not a metaphysical construction, but a systematic explanation of the meaning that the world has for all of us prior to any philosophizing.”⁸¹ Transcendental phenomenology therefore presents itself as a solipsistic science, but this no more entails metaphysical solipsism than mathematics, which is also a solipsistic science, does. The question is whether or not, from its solipsistic stand-point, transcendental phenomenology can give an account of how within my monadic ego I constitute an intersubjective world that is there for everyone, a world that is the same for everyone, and which I co-constitute with other subjects. It must also explain how I constitute an open plurality of other subjects within my monad. Husserl’s explanation to this comes in the form of his transcendental theory of empathy.

1.4 The proposed “metaphysical conclusions” of the *Cartesian Meditations*

According to A.D. Smith, in *CM* §40-41, 56, and 60 we find Husserl drawing explicitly metaphysical conclusions.⁸² These are the sections of the *CM* where Husserl identifies transcendental phenomenology as transcendental idealism, where he discusses the “higher levels” of intersubjectivity, and where he summarizes the “metaphysical results” of his monadology respectively.⁸³ It should be clear given what has already been argued herein that

⁷⁸ Husserl, *Passive Synthesis*, p.629

⁷⁹ Husserl, *CM*, p.71 <105>

⁸⁰ Husserl, *CM*, p.71 <106>

⁸¹ Husserl, *Paris Lectures*, p.36

⁸² Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.107; p.232-235

⁸³ Moran points to similar passages in Hua XV (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.12, p.228, p.230-231) and Hua XXXVI (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* p.196-198), but insists, following Husserl, that the talk of a community of monads and the Objective world in *CM* §49 should

Smith is wrong regarding the final two sections of the ‘Fourth Meditation’ when Husserl states that phenomenology is itself nothing other than transcendental idealism. Transcendental idealism is not a metaphysical position. To claim otherwise is to have missed the sense of transcendental philosophy entirely. Explaining away the metaphysical import of the other section mentioned by Smith is, however, not as straightforward.

In *CM* §56, Husserl argues that only the lowest level of considerations pertaining to transcendental intersubjectivity have been explained by the analysis of the constitution of an Objective and of other subjects by way of empathy. Here Husserl stresses the point that “the only *conceivable* manner in which others can have *for me* the sense and status of existent others, thus and so determined, consists in their being constituted *in me* as others.”⁸⁴ Others do indeed “exist,” but the sense of this existence is nothing beyond how they are constituted by consciousness. They are constituted by me as other monads that exist in common with my monad, but that are not inherent parts of my monad.⁸⁵ Those familiar with Husserl’s writing on intersubjectivity will see nothing new in this.

Smith takes Husserl to be arguing that what emerges at this stage of phenomenological analysis as “absolute reality is not my transcendental ego, but *transcendental intersubjectivity*. This is, concretely, ‘an open community of monads’ (158), and it is this that constitutes the objective, only truly real, world.”⁸⁶ This is a strange reading of what Husserl writes in this section. Husserl’s argument is that in my monadic consciousness I constitute myself and others as being part of a community. We exist in a mutually shared Objective world. While each of us constitutes within our monad a unique perspective on this world, we all constitute the same world. In a sense, the existence of an actual community of other subjects, which are concretely constituted in my consciousness, makes possible the actual Objective world of things and humans. If it were not for actual other subjects, that is, if I could possibly constitute other subjects but never did, then there

not be construed as metaphysical (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.229-230). He says little here about the metaphysical import of the remainder of the ‘Fifth Meditation.’

⁸⁴ Husserl, *CM*, p.128 <156>

⁸⁵ Husserl, *CM*, p.128 <156-157>

⁸⁶ Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.232

would be no world which I would experience as for us, but only a world for me. But this is not a metaphysical claim about the existence in-themselves of other egos or the world. This is simply an explication of the conditions of the possibility of experiencing or of constituting an Objective world.

When Husserl asserts that the actual existence of other subjects is necessary for the constitution of the actual Objective world, he is not claiming that other subjects exist in-themselves. His claim is that those things which I actually constitute in my consciousness as other psycho-physical subjects are necessary in order for me to also constitute the spatio-temporal world as the *actual* Objective world. If I did not constitute an actual community of other subjects, and if I did not constitute them as being subjects like myself who constitute the world for them and themselves in it, then I could not constitute the actual Objective world. This is not a simple argument, but it is not a metaphysical one.⁸⁷ Smith is not alone in his confusion. Dermot Moran also discusses the “metaphysical conclusions” of Husserl’s mature philosophy. He writes that, for Husserl:

Really possible entities require correlation with an *actual* existing subject (36: 113ff). In a text from 1914-15 Husserl goes further: a material world is thinkable only as a psychophysical world, containing something like human modes of being in it (36: 138). Indeed, transcendental idealism requires that the world of real being be known not just by a subject as such, but by an *embodied* subjectivity (*eine leibliche Subjektivität*; 36: 132). Furthermore all worlds must relate to this world. There cannot *a priori* be separated individuals in their own world; all worlds are variants of this world; all subjects belong to the one community of subjects. These are very strong metaphysical claims, and Husserl is aware of the difficulties they pose.⁸⁸

These passages from the Husserliana volume on *Transzendentaler Idealismus* are certainly parallel to parts of the ‘Fifth Meditation’, and it is just as misguided to take Husserl’s

⁸⁷ Husserl explains this in *CM* §49: “The Objective world as an *idea* – the ideal correlate of an intersubjective (intersubjectively communalized) experience, which ideally can be and is carried on as constantly harmonious – is essentially related to intersubjectivity (itself constituted as having the ideality of endless openness), whose component particular subjects are equipped with mutually corresponding and harmonious constitutive systems. Consequently *the constitution of the world essentially involves a ‘harmony’ of the monads*: precisely this harmony among particular constitutions in the particular monads; and accordingly it involves also a harmonious generation that goes on in each particular monad. That is not meant, however, as a ‘metaphysical’ hypothesizing of monadic harmony, any more than the monads themselves are metaphysical inventions or hypotheses. On the contrary, it is itself part of the explication of the intentional components implicit in the fact of the experiential world that exists for us.” (Husserl, *CM*, p.107-108 <138>)

⁸⁸ Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.197

statements about the actual existence of other subjects and the world as having metaphysical import in these texts as it is in the case of the *CM*. While the actual existence of other embodied egos is necessary for the constitution of the actual world, this “actual existence” is not equivalent to existence in-itself in the traditional metaphysical sense. The aim of transcendental phenomenology is to explain this being-sense without presupposing or making any metaphysical claims. Whether or not Husserl’s project is successful or convincing is another question.

In addition, Smith argues that Husserl not only admits a connection between his own metaphysical scheme and Leibniz’s monadology, but that when Husserl eschews the accusation that his philosophy avoids solipsism by adopting Leibnizian metaphysics, it is not metaphysics that Husserl is distancing himself from, but the accusation that his metaphysics is simply dogmatic. Smith writes:

Husserl had rejected the accusation that in the final meditation he escapes solipsism only by ‘an unacknowledged metaphysics, a concealed adoption of Leibnizian traditions’ (174). According to Husserl...this accusation fails to stick, not because his own final position fails to be discernibly Leibnizian in character (otherwise, why the ‘deliberate suggestions’?), but because his is not simply an ‘adopted’ metaphysics, but one that ‘draws its content purely from phenomenological explication of the transcendental experience laid open by transcendental reduction’ (176-7). The Leibnizian metaphysics has, Husserl believes, been *earned* phenomenologically. Indeed, he says elsewhere that ‘phenomenology leads to the monadology that Leibniz anticipated with an *aperçu* of genius’ (*EP II*, 190).⁸⁹

Smith has taken Husserl’s adoption of Leibnizian language too strongly. Husserl is no more a Leibnizian than Kant is, as I have argued above. If we took every deliberate reference Husserl makes to a metaphysical concept found in an earlier philosopher as an outright endorsement of their metaphysics, then Husserl would not only be a Leibnizian, but a Cartesian, a Berkeleyan, and so on. The reason for the references to monads is not because Husserl agrees with Leibnizian metaphysics, but because he agrees with a basic characterization of consciousness that Leibniz gives. This is that the subject is a single, unitary *I* defined by its activity, with certain “innate” potentialities. Husserl wants to explain consciousness phenomenologically, but in doing so he is not committed to defending or

⁸⁹ Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.200-201

endorsing the metaphysical elements of Leibniz's monadology. To claim that what Husserl is doing here is using phenomenology to prove the metaphysical claims characteristic of Leibnizian idealism in order to resolve the problem of solipsism is simply false.⁹⁰

One important difference between Husserlian and Leibnizian monads, is that Husserl states time and again that monads have windows. These are not windows that allow for the mental states of others to somehow enter into my monad, but windows of empathy.⁹¹

Husserl writes:

*Monads are not isolated, they have windows, that is windows for subjective influences, that of course are of the type of the effects referred to as spiritual...On the other hand monads have no windows insofar as nothing which is a mental process [Erlebnis] of a subject, acts, data of sensation, etc., can enter into another monad.*⁹²

⁹⁰ Not only is Smith's metaphysical reading inconsistent with the problematic established in the Fourth and Fifth Meditations, it does not fit with what Husserl says at *CM* §62. Husserl writes, "at the beginning I, the meditator, do not understand how I shall ever attain others and myself <as one among others >, since all other men are 'parenthesized.' At bottom moreover I do not yet understand, and I recognize only reluctantly, that, when I 'parenthesize' myself *qua* man and *qua* human person, I myself am nevertheless to be retained *qua* ego. Thus I can as yet know nothing about a transcendental intersubjectivity; involuntarily I take myself, the ego, to be a *solus ipse* and still regard all constitutional components as merely contents of this one ego, even after I have acquired an initial understanding of constitutive performances. The further explications made in the [Fifth Meditation] were therefore necessary. Thanks to them, the *full and proper sense of phenomenological transcendental 'idealism' becomes understandable* to us for the first time. The illusion of solipsism is dissolved, even though the proposition that everything existing for me must derive its existential sense exclusively from me myself, from my sphere of consciousness retains its validity and fundamental importance. Phenomenological transcendental idealism has presented itself as a *monadology*, which, despite all our deliberate suggestions of Leibniz's metaphysics, draws its content purely from phenomenological explication of the transcendental experience laid open by transcendental reduction, accordingly from the most originary evidence, wherein all conceivable evidences must be grounded or from the most originary legitimacy, which is the source of all legitimacies and, in particular, all legitimacies of knowledge. Actually, therefore, phenomenological explication is nothing like 'metaphysical construction'; and it is neither overtly nor covertly a theorizing with adopted presuppositions or helpful thoughts drawn from the historical metaphysical tradition. It stands in sharpest contrast to all that..." (Husserl, *CM*, p.150 <176-177>)

⁹¹ Smith is not ignorant of this fact. He writes: "Husserl points out that his monads, unlike Leibniz's, have windows - 'windows of empathy' that allow monads 'to receive alien influences' (*Int II*, 295). For other monads to exist in community with me is, Husserl says, for them to be 'in connection with me' (157)...None of this, of course, amounts to any 'real relation' of a causal nature holding between monads...[T]he connectedness in question here is 'irreal' or intentional. I am affected by the other in virtue of the *sense* of another and of his particular achievements being constituted in my transcendental ego *as* something *co*-constituted. Although the transcendental community is constituted in me, it is constituted 'as a community constituted also in every other monad' (158)." (Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.232-234) However, Smith again applies a metaphysical interpretation to this theory such that Husserl is intending to prove or posit the necessary existence in-themselves of other egos.

⁹² Husserl, "*Naturwissenschaftliche Psychologie, Geisteswissenschaft und Metaphysik*, A IV 16," in *Issues in Husserl's Ideas II*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Lester Embree, p.12. See also Hua XIII, Beilage LIV, p.470-475. Husserl (in 1920) elaborates this point: „Es ist zwar denkbar, dass ein Ich solipsistisch lebe und dass in sein armseliges Dasein, das dann auch eine armselige Geistigkeit haben muss, nie ein fremdes Subjekt getreten ist,

Every 'I' is *for itself*...Every 'I' is a 'monad'. But monads have windows. They have *no* windows or doors insofar as no other subject can *really* enter into them, but through these (the windows are of empathy) [other subjects] may be experienced how past personal experiences are by remembering.⁹³

A monad also has windows, to accommodate foreign influences. These are windows of empathy.⁹⁴

Every stream of consciousness is something entirely separate, a monad, and it would remain without windows of understanding if not for intersubjective phenomena, etc. This is the condition of the possibility of a world of things, which is one and the same for many egos.⁹⁵

Perhaps Husserl and Leibniz are not be so far apart with respect to the idea that monads have “windows” for communication, or what Leibniz refers to as *resonance*, but determining this would require a detailed look at the historical connections between Leibniz and Husserl, and the evolution of empathy theories through nineteenth century German psychology. This will

und somit ist auch eine Individualpsychologie als Psychologie eines solchen möglichen *solus ipse* denkbar. Aber eine Individualpsychologie des Menschen in der Menschen- und Tierwelt und des Tieres in der Tier- und Menschenwelt ist ein nonsens. Ihre Idee setzt voraus, wie vorhin gesagt, dass man eine Seele zu einer abgeschlossenen Monade macht, deren Lebenszusammenhang ein in sich real abgeschlossener Zusammenhang ist derart, dass keine realen Beziehungen, und zwar von der eigenwesentlichen Gestalt der Motivationsbeziehungen, zwischen ihr und anderen Monaden gestiftet sein könnten. Dann hat man aber den Widersinn, dass man auf der einen Seite in der Erfahrungswelt Freundschaften, Liebschaften, Vereine, Völker, Staaten usw. hat und demgernäss beständig über sie Aussagen macht, die den Anspruch einer vernünftigen Erfahrungswahrheit erheben, und dass man andererseits jeden Menschen zu einem *solus ipse* macht, zu einem Solipsisten mitten in der lebendigen Gemeinschaftswirklichkeit. *Leibniz* sagte, Monaden haben keine Fenster. Ich aber meine, jede Seelenmonade hat unendlich viele Fenster, nämlich jede verständnisvolle Wahrnehmung eines fremden Leibes ist solch ein Fenster, und jedesmal, wenn ich sage, bitte, lieber Freund, und er antwortet mir verständnisvoll, ist aus unseren offenen Fenstern ein Ichakt meines Ich in das Freundes-Ich übergegangen und umgekehrt, eine wechselseitige Motivation hat zwischen uns eine reale Einheit, ja wirklich eine reale Einheit hergestellt. Und die Liebe dringt wirklich von Seele zu Seele, und im Befehl wirkt ernstlich und unmittelbar der eine Wille auf den anderen, fremden Willen, bzw. wirkt das eine Willenssubjekt auf das andere. Schon wenn ich ein Ding sehe, so ist es die einzig richtige Rede zu sagen, das Ding ist in unmittelbarer Beziehung zu mir, und in realer Beziehung, die einzig unmittelbare psychische Beziehung, die es zu ihm von mir aus gibt.“ (Hua XIII, p.472-473)

⁹³ „Jedes Ich ist *für sich*...*Jede Ich Ist eine „Monade“*. Aber die Monaden haben Fenster. Sie haben insofern *keine* Fenster oder Türen, als kein anderes Subjekt *reell* eintreten kann, aber durch die hindurch es (die Fenster sind die Einfühlungen) so gut erfahren sein kann wie vergangene eigene Erlebnisse durch Wiedererinnerung.“ (Husserl, Hua XIV, p.260)

⁹⁴ „*Eine Monade hat also Fenster*, um fremde Einwirkungen aufzunehmen. Es sind die Fenster der Einfühlung.“ (Husserl, Hua XIV, p.295)

⁹⁵ „Jeder Bewusstseinsablauf ist etwas völlig Gesondertes, eine Monade, und sie bliebe ohne Fenster der Verständigung, wenn nicht intersubjektive Phänomene da wären etc. Das ist denn auch die Bedingung der Möglichkeit einer Dingwelt, die eine und dieselbe ist für viele Ich.“ (Husserl, Hua XIII, p.230)

not concern us here. All we need to point out is that while the use of Leibnizian language is misleading here, as is the reference to windows insofar as they conjure up ideas about monads existing in space and casual influences, Husserl is clear that these “windows” of empathy which monads have are conditions of the possibility of the experience of an Objective world. These are transcendental-epistemological claims, not metaphysical ones.

In the ‘Fifth Mediation,’ Husserl himself mentions that he has uncovered some “extremely important metaphysical results.”⁹⁶ This would make Husserl partially to blame for the confusion over how to interpret his transcendental idealism, if not for that fact that just before writing this, as was mentioned at the beginning of the present paper, he also points out that:

Our monadological results are metaphysical, if it be true that ultimate cognitions of being should be called metaphysical. On the other hand, what we have here is *anything but metaphysics in the customary sense*...Phenomenology’s purely intuitive, concrete, and also apodictic mode of demonstration excludes all ‘metaphysical adventure’, all speculative excesses.⁹⁷

It seems clear enough that what some commentators have referred to as “phenomenological metaphysics” is not metaphysics in any customary sense. To be more precise, it is not metaphysics at all, rather, it is transcendental philosophy, which concerns itself not with being in-itself, but with the conditions of the possibility of the cognition of being. For Husserl, this is the only legitimate sense there can be of a science of “being *qua* being” – anything else is dogmatic, speculative, and unscientific.

Husserl summarizes his “metaphysical results” as follows. First, he states that, “*a priori*, my ego, given to me apodictically” is the only thing that I can posit as existing with certainty.⁹⁸ Second, he notes that this ego can only be a world-experiencing ego by being in communion with other subjects like myself. That is, in order to *experience* the Objective world, I must be “a member of a community of monads.”⁹⁹ At the same time, Husserl argues that, “I cannot *conceive* a plurality of monads otherwise than as explicitly or implicitly in

⁹⁶ Husserl, *CM*, p.139-140 <166>

⁹⁷ Husserl, *CM*, p.139 <166>

⁹⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.139 <166>

⁹⁹ Husserl, *CM*, p.139 <166>

communion.”¹⁰⁰ These are not claims about the existence in-themselves of worldly objects or of other subjects, but that in order for me to constitute the external world as the Objective lived-world, I must also constitute it as an intersubjective world which I co-constitute with other psychophysical ego subjects like myself. Like the world, these other subjects actually exist insofar as I constitute them in concrete experience as existing with a particular kind of being-sense, and empathy is the condition of the possibility of this. None of this is meant to contradict the claim that:

[The world] is for me and is what it is for me only insofar as it acquires sense and self-confirming validity from my own pure life and from that of the others who are disclosed to me in my own life. I, as this absolutely posited proper essence, as the open and infinite field of pure phenomenological givens and as their inseparable unity, am the ‘transcendental Ego.’ Absolute positing means that I no longer have the world as ‘given’ to me in advance or with the status of straightforward existence. Instead, from now on what is exclusively given (as a result of my new attitude) is my Ego purely as the Ego that exists in itself and that in itself experiences the world, verifies it, etc.¹⁰¹

Even though the world is an intersubjective and co-constituted world, the world for me still receives its entire being-sense from my experiencing ego and can still be explained entirely by reference to the actual and potential performances of my ego.¹⁰²

Husserl goes on to explain that it is impossible that there could be two or more monads that constitute within experience their own private worlds such that together they constitute two entirely separate spatio-temporal, Objective worlds. Husserl argues that, “there can exist only one Objective world, only one Objective time, only one Objective space, only one Objective Nature. Moreover this one Nature *must* exist, if there are any

¹⁰⁰ Husserl, *CM*, p.139 <166>. Emphasis added.

¹⁰¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.416-417

¹⁰² There is a somewhat confusing passage in the ‘Fifth Meditation’ with respect to the existence in-itself of the external world that reads as follows: “within myself, within the limits of my transcendently reduced pure conscious life, I experience the world (including others) and, according to its experiential sense, not as (so to speak) my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone [*mir fremde*], as an intersubjective world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone. And yet each has his experiences, his appearances and appearance unities, his world-phenomenon; whereas the experienced world exists in itself, over against all experiencing subjects and their world-phenomena.” (Husserl, *CM*, p.91 <123>) Again, this is not a metaphysical claim regarding a world that exists in-itself, but an attempt at explaining the sense that the world has in the natural attitude, i.e., the sense of a world that exists in-itself, by way of transcendental phenomenology. This follows directly from what Husserl says at *CM*, p.61-62 <96-97>.

structures in me that involve the co-existence of other monads.”¹⁰³ According to Husserl, there can be no possible world *for me* other than the one actual world of experience. Anything else is an absurdity. If these arguments are correct, then Husserl is able to avoid the problem of solipsism without adopting any metaphysical presuppositions. In fact, the only outright metaphysical claim he makes is that the transcendental ego necessarily exists in-itself and for-itself, but this is a critical rather than a speculative or dogmatic metaphysical claim. The “metaphysical results” of the ‘Fifth Meditation’ are, at best, minimally metaphysical. Correctly understood, they are transcendental-epistemological claims about the conditions of experiencing or cognizing objects in the way that we do in concrete experience. The stronger interpretation of Husserl’s transcendental idealism, particularly the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ endorsed by Smith need not and should not be accepted.

1.5 Conclusion: The Transcendental Arguments of the ‘Fifth Meditation’

In the present essay I outline and defend Husserl’s characterization of transcendental phenomenology as metaphysically neutral. I have argued that, for Husserl, metaphysical neutrality is an intrinsic limit on the legitimate scope of transcendental phenomenology. This does not mean that transcendental phenomenology has no metaphysical implications, but that it refrains from making any speculative metaphysical claims. According to Husserl, transcendental phenomenology is, “nothing more than scientific self-examination on the part of transcendental subjectivity,”¹⁰⁴ which aims to clarify the conditions and essence of all possible cognition in general, or how all possible and actual phenomena are constituted in and by consciousness. The only metaphysical claim that Husserl seems committed to is that the transcendental ego exists in-itself and for-itself. However, this is not a presupposition of his theory but a critical result which Husserl believes is sufficiently demonstrated not only by the phenomenological reduction and the unity of apperception. It seems that, aside from the absolute existence of the transcendental ego, all other metaphysical claims can be discarded from our readings of Husserl. If we attempt to interpret Husserl’s phenomenology along metaphysical rather than transcendental-epistemological lines, then we cannot make good on

¹⁰³ Husserl, *CM*, p.140 <167>

¹⁰⁴ Husserl, *FTL*, p.273 <241-242>

the claim that, “Phenomenology is the first rigorous scientific form of philosophical idealism.”¹⁰⁵

As a scientific self-examination on the part of the transcendental subject, transcendental phenomenology may be characterized as a monadology. Yet the results of Husserl’s monadology differ greatly from the ones we find in the work of Leibniz. Using metaphysical neutrality as an interpretive tool, I have argued that Husserl’s intersubjective monadology, which he presents as a response to the threat of solipsism, should not be read as an attempt to demonstrate either the existence of other subjects in-themselves or the existence in-itself of the external world. Such a reading is incompatible with the way in which Husserl frames the question, and with the entire project of transcendental phenomenology as it is presented throughout Husserl’s mature writings. As Zahavi notes, Husserl’s transcendental idealism “shows that both metaphysical realism and idealism, together with a lot of traditional metaphysical heritage, are strictly speaking nonsensical.”¹⁰⁶ If phenomenology is able to shed additional light on traditional metaphysical problems, it does so by showing that such problems are the result of equivocations and paralogsms. Equally important is the fact that Husserl wants to show that such proofs are not necessary for thwarting the challenge of solipsism that is typically used by realists to disarm transcendental idealism. I have also attempted to explain Husserl’s novel conception of monads, although I have not given a complete account of this. The take home point is that Husserl is not a Leibnizian, at least not in any ordinary sense. Most importantly, Husserl neither presupposes nor defends a Leibnizian metaphysics.

The present essay certainly suggests more than it brings to completion, especially by way of providing an interpretation and defense of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. However, giving a complete interpretation and defense of Husserl was not my goal. Nor is this essay meant to be an attempt at the arduous task of giving a line-by-line interpretation of the ‘Fifth Meditation.’ The task here was a more modest one, but one which I take to be extremely important. My ambition was to argue for and sketch a tenable interpretive framework for reading Husserl within which more detailed analyses of his texts can be

¹⁰⁵ „Phänomenologie [ist] die erste streng wissenschaftliche Gestalt des philosophischen Idealismus.“ (Husserl, *Hua VIII*, p.310)

¹⁰⁶ Zahavi, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics,” in *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation* p.8

accomplished. This requires that we understand the spirit of Husserl's transcendental idealism and his monadology. The virtue of my interpretive framework is that it makes the 'Fifth Meditation' consistent with Husserl's overall project of transcendental idealism, with his other writing on intersubjectivity, empathy, and the problem of solipsism (with the view that the 'Fifth Meditation' is the culmination of Husserl's evolving thought on these issues). A.D. Smith's attempt at interpreting the 'Fourth' and 'Fifth Meditation' flounders insofar as it forces a metaphysical reading of Husserl that we need not and ought not accept.

Husserl's argument regarding the constitution of the Objective world and of other subjects can be summarized as follows. Possible other subjects are necessary for the experience of an Objective world in general. All possible Objects are constituted not just as being *for me*, but as being *for everyone*, that is, they are intersubjective.¹⁰⁷ Actual other subjects are necessary for the constitution of the actual Objective, shared world. Empathy is the condition of the possibility of the experience of actual other subjects, that is, of constituting certain things as having *Seelenlebens* distinct from my own. However, empathy does not allow me to directly experience the mental-lives of others. Nowhere here does Husserl attempt to demonstrate the existence-in-itself of the world, or of other transcendental egos. As Kevin Hermsberg writes:

The task Husserl sought to accomplish in the Fifth Meditation, then, is an investigation and explication of our experiences of Others, not the metaphysical problem of proving their existence. The problem is "a special one, namely that of the 'thereness-for-me' of others, [a] theory of experiencing someone else" (CM 92), but there is much more at stake than merely making sense of the way in which Others are experienced. A theory like the one Husserl offers as a solution to the problem of experiencing Others "contributes to the founding of a *transcendental theory of the Objective world*" (CM 92). Although the problem is, at base, the special problem of experiencing someone else, it leads to the possibility of an Objective world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Moran writes that: "Adopting the Kantian critical position, Husserl understood transcendental idealism to mean that there is no such thing as 'being-in-itself' or 'objectivity as such'; every form of objectivity, the constitution of everything, from the natural world to the world of spirit, culture and history is constituted, is given its 'being and meaning' (*Sein und Sinn*) by a constituting *subjectivity* or subjectivities acting in consort...The notion of an 'object' is precisely the notion of something publicly accessible, something there 'for everyone' (*für Jedermann*)."¹⁰⁸ (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.56-57)

¹⁰⁸ Kevin Hermsberg, *Husserl's Phenomenology: Knowledge, Objectivity, and Others*, p.49.

There may well be passages in Husserl, even in the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ which are problematic for this reading. I do not want to simply hide behind the fact that the *Cartesian Meditations* are an unfinished work to account for this. But even in the face of such challenges, I maintain that the reading I have pushed should be utilized for interpreting Husserl. The principle of charity requires no more and no less than this. From there, the goal of the commentator can be either one of criticism or apologetics, but neither of these should influence our initial reading of the text.

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2 *The World “for me” and the World “for everyone”:* the Problem of Solipsism in Husserl’s Formal and Transcendental Logic

Research into the problems of intersubjectivity, Objectivity, and solipsism in Husserl’s philosophy has traditionally focused on his *Cartesian Meditations*.¹ In the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ Husserl outlines his intersubjective monadology, and attempts to show the connection between a transcendental theory of experiencing someone else, and a transcendental theory of the Objective world.² The purpose of this is to refute the claim that transcendental phenomenology leads to solipsism. However, the analyses laid out in the ‘Fifth Meditation’ are incomplete and notoriously difficult to interpret.³ Strangely, commentators have overlooked a set of related passages from the *Formal and Transcendental Logic*,⁴ namely §§94-99 and §§102-104, which deal with the same set of problems. In what follows, I will show that these passages on intersubjectivity, Objectivity, and solipsism from the *FTL* provide an important interpretive framework that ought to be utilized when assessing the content of the ‘Fifth Meditation.’ Not only are the arguments in the *FTL* much easier to navigate, they supplement the analyses of the ‘Fifth Meditation’ and they justify adopting an “epistemological” interpretation of transcendental phenomenology. That is to say, in *FTL* Husserl’s phenomenology is not presented as a metaphysical or psychological theory, but a transcendental theory concerning the conditions of the possibility of cognition or the “constitutional *apriori*.”⁵ I contend that reading the *CM* in light of the *FTL* (rather than the other way around) helps to deflate the metaphysical language of the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ and that the “epistemological” interpretation of Husserl is to be preferred.

¹ Hereafter abbreviated as *CM*.

² Edmund Husserl, *CM*, p.90-92 <123-124>.

³ Dissatisfied with the *CM*, Husserl began work on the so-called “German Meditations” and his “System of Phenomenological Philosophy” – the outline for which can be found in Bob Sandmeyer’s *Husserl’s Constitutive Phenomenology* (2009), p.178-186. His assistant Eugen Fink was left with the task of revamping the *CM*, a task which included reworking the ‘Fifth Meditation’ and the writing of two entirely new meditations to be added to the end of the work. None of these projects were ever completed.

⁴ Hereafter abbreviated as *FTL*. Peter Hutcheson makes use of some of these passages in his essay “Husserl’s Fifth Meditation,” *Man and World* 15, pp.265-284 (1982).

⁵ Edmund Husserl, *FTL*, p.246 <218>

Parts of the ‘Fifth Meditation’ appear, at least at first glance, to frustrate the “epistemological” reading of transcendental phenomenology. For instance, there is Husserl’s uncharacteristic remark that “the experienced world exists in itself,”⁶ along with the so-called “metaphysical results” outlined in CM §60 which scholars such as AD Smith and Dermot Moran have pointed to as supporting the notion of a Husserlian metaphysics.⁷ However, notwithstanding the clarifications of these claims that can be found in the *CM* itself, the *FTL* gives us valuable insight into Husserl’s special sense of Objectivity, which is at the heart of all his “metaphysical” conclusions. Husserl defines Objectivity as being not only for me but “for everyone” or as existing for “*everyone* capable of cognition.”⁸ The problem Husserl then faces is explaining what he means by “everyone” if everything that exists is constituted in my own monad. In other words, by separating mind-independence from Objectivity, Husserl must address the problem of solipsism. In what follows I will first examine Husserl’s theory of the Objective as presented in *FTL* §§94-96. I will then discuss how Husserl frames the related problem of solipsism that seems to result from his commitment to transcendental idealism, and why he identifies solipsism as a “*transcendental illusion* [*transzendentalen Schein*].” I conclude that while Husserl is willing to admit that the monadic ego is a *solus ipse*, he may still, paradoxically, avoid the threat of solipsism. In doing so, I hope to supplement the commentaries of Suzanne Bachelard’s *A Study of Husserl’s Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1957/1968), and Dieter Lohmar’s *Edmund Husserls ‘Formale und Transzendente Logik’* (2000).⁹

2.1 The Importance of Husserl’s Formal and Transcendental Logic

Dieter Lohmar notes that *FTL* has been relatively underutilized by scholars in phenomenology and has attracted far less interest than the *CM* and *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. However, *FTL* can and should be

⁶ Husserl, *CM*, p.91 <123>

⁷ A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.200-211; Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.197. However, Moran also admits that, “There are immensely complex and vexing issues regarding Husserl interpretation, especially the nature of his commitment to metaphysics in general and transcendental idealism in particular.” (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.242)

⁸ Husserl, *FTL*, p.240 <213>; p.226 <200>.

⁹ Suzanne Bachelard, *A Study of Husserl’s Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.127, 171, 180-181, 209-210, 219; Dieter Lohmar, *Edmund Husserls ‘Formale und Transzendente Logik,’* p.175-179.

approached as laying the groundwork for the *CM* and *Crisis*, as well as to his other late “logical work,” *Experience and Judgment*.¹⁰ In particular, Part II of *FTL* sets the stage for the later works, so getting a better sense of this work will help to situate Husserl’s subsequent texts within a broader research project.¹¹ If this view of *FTL* is true, then it would follow that in order to fully understand the *FTL*, we cannot claim to fully understand the *CM* either. Robert Sokolowski writes:

the neglect of *FTL* would show that the true substance of *Cartesian Meditations* and *Crisis* would not have been grasped...Husserl’s logical works are not developed independently and in parallel to his more ‘existential’ books, such as *Ideas I*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and *Crisis*; his logical works...are at the source of his entire philosophy.¹²

There is good reason to agree with the view of Lohmar regarding the importance of the *FTL*. The so-called “logical works” play a fundamental role in understanding the epistemological and metaphysical currents that run through Husserl’s mature thought from *Ideas I* to the *Crisis*. In fact, referring to *FTL* as a “logical work” masks an important difference between the content of Part I of the book (which has to do with formal logic) and Part II (which deals with transcendental logic). Large portions of Part II serve as the groundwork for a defense of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. Calling *FTL* a “logical work” might confuse readers into assuming that it is meant to simply be a continuation of Husserl’s earlier logical

¹⁰ There is much more that can be said regarding the important position *FTL* holds in Husserl’s *Nachlass* than Lohmar does here. Husserl wrote the first draft of *FTL* in the winter of 1928/29, just before the *Paris Lectures*. He made a series of corrections and added notes to the text later in 1929 at the same time as he was preparing the manuscripts for the *CM*. Earlier in 1928 Husserl had made his final set of revisions to the manuscript *Ideas II*; a text in which Husserl references his work on “*Transcendental logic*.” (See Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.264. This is likely a reference to manuscript F I 38, now published in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*.) We might also speculate that some of the edits made after 1924 to the manuscript for *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* were made around this time as well. This was an important period for Husserl, in which he sets out to publish works which would defend his commitment to transcendental idealism that was only implicitly revealed in *Ideas*, and to tackle the criticisms that had been launched against that work. Moreover, there is much work to be done regarding the development of *FTL* manuscripts.

¹¹ „Der II. Abschnitt ist dagegen – zumindest das 4. Kapitel [2A4K] – ein detaillierter Plan für die Ausführung der Untersuchungen von *Erfahrung und Urteil*. Doch selbst in dieser Funktion einer detaillierten Ankündigung der Untersuchungen des '2. logischen Buchs' geht dieser II. Abschnitt nicht auf. Er bietet dem Leser ein weit gefächertes Panorama an eng verbundenen genetisch-phänomenologischen Untersuchungen, das eine recht genaue Ankündigung der systematischen Projekte des husserlschen Spätwerkes darstellt. Sowohl die zu diesem Zeitpunkt fast fertig konzipierte deutsche Fassung der *Cartesianischen Meditationen* als auch die prinzipiellen Linien des *Crisis* werden neben den Grundgedanken von *Erfahrung und Urteil* entfaltet. Man könnte also ebenso behaupten, der II. Abschnitt von *Formale und transzendente Logik* sei eine Einleitung in die drei letzten Hauptwerke Husserls.“ (Lohmar, *Edmund Husserls 'Formale und transzendente Logik'*, p.10)

¹² Sokolowski, “(Review) Dieter Lohmar, *Edmund Husserls 'Formale und transzendente Logik'*,” in *Husserl Studies* 18 (2002), p.236.

investigations, and dissuade them from utilizing it in interpreting his “existential” writings. This is regrettable since Part II of *FTL* helps to explain many of the more vexing parts of the ‘Fifth Meditation.’

Commenting on reasons for the neglected treatment of *FTL*, Sokolowski writes that the text is, “highly condensed, almost gem-like in its precision, and it has a far more elegant architecture than Husserl’s other works. Its compression makes it difficult to read; it is a hard nut to crack, and scholars in phenomenology have used it far less than [other works].”¹³ One reason scholars have relied on *FTL* far less than other works from Husserl’s mature period can be at least partially attributed to the fact that, despite its elegance, *FTL* is not an “introduction to phenomenology” like the others.¹⁴ The result is that the work is difficult to interpret in place. In the introduction to *FTL*, Husserl warns his readers of the lack of “completeness” and “self-containedness” of Part II of the work, and claims that it is a text that “suggests more than it carries through to a finish.”¹⁵ Indeed, many of the analyses Husserl begins in Part II appear to be merely sketches of explanations, or conclusions based on analyses that are not made explicit in the text. The reason they appear this way is because they are based on manuscripts that were not published during Husserl’s lifetime. Unfortunately, it is in Part II where Husserl attempts to “dissolve” the problem of solipsism, which he at one point calls “the *transcendental illusion* that from the outset misleads, and usually paralyzes, any attempt to start a consistent transcendental philosophy.”¹⁶

¹³ Robert Sokolowski, “(Review) Dieter Lohmar, *Edmund Husserls ‘Formale und Transzendente Logik’*,” *Husserl Studies* 18 (2002), p.233.

¹⁴ Anthony Steinbock contends that *FTL* is an introduction to phenomenology like *Ideas*, *CM*, and the *Crisis*. (Anthony Steinbock, “Translator’s Introduction,” in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, p.xvii-xxiv.) However, it is unclear to me that Husserl himself considered the work an introductory one. If we think of the analyses of the *FTL* as outlining Husserl’s “transcendental aesthetics,” then it is a *foundational* work for Husserl’s system, but not an introduction. In the ‘Conclusion’ to *FTL*, Husserl writes: “‘*Transcendental aesthetics*’ – in a new sense of the phrase (which we use because of an easily apprehensible relationship to Kant’s narrowly restricted transcendental aesthetics) – functions as the ground level...It deals with the eidetic problem of any possible world *as a world given in ‘pure experience’* and thus precedes all science in the ‘higher’ sense; accordingly it undertakes the eidetic description of the all-embracing Apriori, without which no Objects could appear unitarily...and therefore without which the unity of a Nature, the unity of a world, as a passively synthesized unity, could not become constituted at all.” (Husserl, *FTL*, p.291-292 <256-257>)

¹⁵ Husserl, *FTL*, p.17 <15>.

¹⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>. This may well relate to Husserl’s talk of the experience of the Other as a “transcendental clue” for the constitutional theory of experiencing someone else, (Husserl, *CM*, p.90 <123>), or his discussion of “transcendental aesthetics” and “transcendental analytics” (Husserl, *CM*, p.146 <173>). These moves toward a systematic treatment of transcendental phenomenology using Kantian terminology are interesting, but we will not explore this here in detail.

2.2 *The problem of solipsism in FTL*

On 25 February, 1929, Edmund Husserl addressed his audience at the Sorbonne's *Ampithéâtre Descartes*, stating the following:

We must now deal with the one thought that is truly disturbing. If I, the meditating "I", reduce myself through an *epoché* to my absolute ego and to that which constitutes itself therein, then, do I not become the *solus ipse*? Did not then this whole philosophy of self-examination turn out to be pure solipsism, even though a transcendental and phenomenological solipsism?¹⁷

Since his turn to transcendental idealism circa 1905,¹⁸ Husserl had recognized solipsism as not only one of the recurring challenges for his phenomenology, but as one of the basic problems of philosophy. After two days of lecturing at the Sorbonne, Husserl ended his talk entitled *Einleitung in die transzendente Phänomenologie*, with a short discussion of solipsism and the "transcendental act of *empathy*."¹⁹ According to Husserl, a phenomenological analysis of empathy [*Einfühlung*] would be necessary for addressing the problem of solipsism along with a cluster of related difficulties surrounding his theory of intersubjectivity. The final six pages of the *Paris Lectures* grow to sixty-three by the time they become the 'Fifth Meditation' and 'Conclusion' of the *CM*,²⁰ making them the most reworked part of the lectures.

Husserl returns to the problem of solipsism time and time again in the years between his transcendental turn and the publication of the *CM*, as we see in *Ideas II*, *Erste Philosophie*, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, *Transzendente Idealismus*, and the three volume *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, to name a few.²¹ He maintained that the seeds for a resolution to the problem could be found in his lectures from the winter semester 1910/11 on *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.²² While addressing the problem of

¹⁷ Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, p.34.

¹⁸ Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.26. While Husserl's transcendental turn can be traced back as far as the *Seefelder Blätter* (1905), he does not reveal this turn publicly until 1907, as Moran also notes.

¹⁹ Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.34.

²⁰ I am referring here to the 1931 French edition, *Méditations cartésiennes*, which were translated by Emmanuel Levinas, Gabrielle Peiffer (aka Catherine Kany), under the supervision of Alexandre Koyré. However, Husserl deemed this text inadequate.

²¹ See Appendix I.

²² Husserl refers to these lectures in a note added to *FTL* in July, 1929: "The chief points for the solution of the problem of intersubjectivity and for the overcoming of transcendental solipsism were already developed in

solipsism was clearly important for Husserl, the secondary literature has, for the most part, left this problem untouched.²³ *FTL* is a logical place to begin a systematic treatment of this topic given its place within Husserl's *Nachlass*, and particularly when viewed as foundational for the *CM*. Even though the analyses of the *CM* are incomplete, *FTL* provides us with a framework that limits possible interpretations of those analyses and the conclusions which would legitimately follow from them.

In the *FTL*, Husserl explains the problem of solipsism that threatens transcendental phenomenology as follows: "If everything I can ever accept as existent is constituted in my ego, then everything that exists does indeed seem to be a mere moment of my own transcendental being."²⁴ In other words, if from the transcendental-phenomenological standpoint all that exists for me in any meaningful sense of the word is nothing beyond the actual and potential intentional unities constituted by and inseparable from my consciousness, including the Objective world and other egos, does this not amount to solipsism?²⁵ It seems that Husserl wants to answer in the negative, but with some qualifications. Commentators, however, have argued that Husserl's mature thought cannot escape solipsism. Josef Seifert writes that Husserl recognized, "that solipsism follows, or at least seems to follow, necessarily from idealism."²⁶ Seifert goes on to make the stronger claim that solipsism follows necessarily from any form of transcendental idealism as well, including Husserl's, "if one does not introduce something like a general and absolute consciousness shared by all persons or make another contradictory or untenable

lectures that I gave at Gottingen during the winter semester of 1910-11. But the actual carrying-out required further difficult single investigations, which did not reach their conclusion until much later. (Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.243 <215>)

²³ To date, the problem of solipsism has not received an exhaustive treatment in the secondary literature on Husserl. It has been the theme of a small number of journal articles, and is mentioned in a number of texts on Husserl, such as David Bell's *Husserl* (1990) and Johanna Maria Tito's *Logic in the Husserlian Context* (1991), but there is no one book devoted exclusively to the problem. Works on Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity, such as James Mensch's *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism* (1988) and Natalie Depraz's *Transcendence et incarnation: Le statut de l'intersubjectivité comme alterite a soi chez Husserl* (1995), only indirectly address the problem of solipsism.

²⁴ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>

²⁵ This is a rephrasing of what Husserl says at the beginning of the 'Fifth Meditation.' (Husserl, *CM*, p.89 <121>)

²⁶ Josef Seifert, *Discours des Méthodes*, p.55.

assumption.”²⁷ Before getting into the details of Husserl’s response, let us look at what he says leading into the problem of solipsism in *FTL*.

2.3 The Groundlessness of Naïve Realism and the Transcendental Sense of Objectivity

In *FTL* §§92-93, Husserl outlines his general criticism of traditional theories of evidence and truth. According to Husserl, these theories have uncritically presupposed that there is a mind-independent world that exists in-itself, and that true or genuine knowledge depends on the possibility of cognizing that world. The world of things-in-themselves is the substrate for truths-in-themselves. In this way, Objectivity depends on a mind independent metaphysical realm of things. Even skeptics typically rely on this presupposition, arguing that genuine knowledge is impossible since we lack any access to or evidence of such a realm. In short, Husserl finds that the greatest error in the history of Western philosophy is the naïve acceptance of the very possibility of the existence of a mind-independent external world. However, Husserl also believes that since Descartes philosophers have had the conceptual tools with which to overcome this embarrassment, even though Descartes himself failed to do so. Like Schopenhauer, Husserl believes that most philosophers fail to understand transcendental philosophy and remain, “caught in that natural and childish realism into which we are all born, and which makes everything possible for us *except* philosophy.”²⁸

There are two profound insights that Husserl attributes to Descartes. First is the realization of his naïve acceptance of the fundamental thesis of the natural attitude: the existence in-itself of the external world. In the *Meditations*, Descartes writes that he used to mistakenly assert that, “there were things outside me which were the sources of my ideas and which resembled them in all respects.”²⁹ The Cartesian breakthrough consists of the suspension or bracketing of the thesis of the natural attitude and the reduction to transcendental subjectivity. Following Descartes, Husserl finds that the philosophies and

²⁷ Josef Seifert, *Discours des Méthodes*, p.55.

²⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* V1, p.17 <XXIV>. Husserl made extensive annotations in each of his copies of *The World as Will and Representation* [BQ 419-2; BQ 420-1]. While the passage quoted here was not one of them, the indicating the similarity between Schopenhauer and Husserl here seems warranted.

²⁹ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p.25.

sciences of the natural attitude presuppose not only a real world's being-in-itself but also the possibility of cognizing and knowing, either empirically or *a priori*, a mind independent external world. Husserl takes Descartes' thought one step further. It is not merely the acceptance of the realist thesis that is problematic, but the notion that there even can be any meaningful sense to the type of external world that the realist posits.

The second insight of Descartes, which is hinted at above, is the uncovering of transcendental subjectivity *via* his method of radical doubt. In his search for an indubitable foundation for knowledge, Descartes concluded that the presupposition of the world must be put out of play, and that all Objective cognition must be grounded in the absolute and necessary existence of the *ego-cogito*. For Husserl, this marks the beginning of *transcendental philosophy*.³⁰ Sadly, Descartes failed to realize that, from the standpoint of cognition, the ego he had uncovered "precedes the being of the world."³¹ The *ego-cogito* is not some piece of the world, namely, the *human psyche*, from which the existence of the rest of the world can be deduced. By identifying the transcendental ego as a *mens sive animus* and a *substantia cogitans*, Descartes makes it a piece of the world and thus can be said to have only partially discovered the transcendental ego. According to Husserl, Descartes falls back into realism by making the ego a "*bit of the world*" instead of recognizing that the ego constitutes both the world and itself as a human subject in the world.³²

Husserl also makes two further claims in this section that contribute to his discussion of the problem of solipsism later on. One is the claim that transcendental phenomenology is, essentially, a systematic science of one's own ego. All of the problems that transcendental philosophy can raise and answer are questions concerning the actual and potential accomplishments of my constituting consciousness and the essential structures of consciousness. Thus, the realm of transcendental phenomenology is restricted to transcendental subjectivity. For Husserl, there is no "outside" of this monadic consciousness

³⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.227 <201-202>

³¹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.228 <202>

³² Husserl, *FTL*, p.227-228 <202>. Bachelard drives this point home in her commentary: "The *mens sive animus sive intellectus* is still, actually, a *human ego*, a natural reality, while the *ego* to which the transcendental phenomenological reduction leads us is a *pure ego*. One does not reach the *pure ego* simply by abstracting from physical reality and restricting oneself to the *pure data* of internal experience. Psychic life must fall before the epoché, for it is still a natural reality." (Bachelard, *A Study of Husserl's Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.156-157)

that can be the subject matter of any science. In fact, as was alluded to above, Husserl denies that such an outside even exists.

Husserl's second claim is to have uncovered a "new" and transcendental sense of Objectivity. In the transcendental sense, an Object (or an Objective truth) is an object (or a truth) that is capable of being cognized by, or is a possible object of cognition for *everyone*, that is, "every human being or supposable quasi-human being in the actual world."³³ Such Objects are constituted in consciousness as "transcendent" intentional unities. Husserl intends to argue that to be an Object is to be a possible object of common cognition for every actual cognizing subject in the world, and that such a sense of Objectivity does not depend on the actual existence of such objects in-themselves as mind-independent metaphysical hypostatizations. What it means for something to be an Object is that it is constituted as being, in principle, cognizable by all other subjects like myself. Along with the rejection of the naïve acceptance of the possibility of the existence of a mind-independent external world, this appears to conspire to reduce transcendental phenomenology to solipsism. However, Husserl claims that this resulting solipsism is a "transcendental illusion."

2.4 Formal and Transcendental Logic §§94-95: The Objective World

The first sections of *FTL* Chapter 6 contain a dense but remarkably clear explanation of Husserl's theory of constitution, and a partial defense of his transcendental idealism. The purpose of this section is to explain how it is that every *existent* is constituted in and by consciousness, without lapsing into subjective idealism or transcendental realism. According to Bachelard, in §§94-95 Husserl is attempting to show that:

all existence derives its *sense* and *status* from the transcendental *ego* and...this *ego* is a 'constituting' subjectivity. But, on the other hand, while thus connecting it to the *ego*, it is not necessary to dissipate the transcendent as such and fall into a dogmatic idealism. It must be shown how what unfolds in the immanence of my consciousness can acquire an Objective significance.³⁴

³³ Husserl, *FTL*, p.226 <200-201>

³⁴ Bachelard, *A Study of Husserl's Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.158-159.

In order to avoid both realism and idealism, Husserl begins with a critique of experience that hopes to move past this traditional dichotomy. First Husserl argues that consciousness is not some empty room with windows through which a world that exists prior to and independent of experience may enter.³⁵ Husserl believes that the notion that we experience something that is foreign to experience is countersensical. We never experience a state-of-affairs apart from our experience of it, and therefore we never experience anything alien to consciousness but always something related to consciousness, even in cases where we experience something as being “transcendent.”

After explaining what experience is not, he offers his own positive definition. For Husserl, experience is the act or performance by which an object of consciousness is constituted or becomes *what it is, as it is, for me*. As Husserl writes, “Experience is the performance in which for me, the experiencer, experienced being ‘is there’, and it there *as what it is*, with the whole content and the mode of being that experience itself, by the performance going on in its intentionality, attributes to it.”³⁶ It is in experience that objects receive their entire being-sense, their *Seinssinn*. If what we experience has the sense of “transcendent” being, then it is experience that constitutes this sense. Husserl continues:

it is again experience that says: These physical things, this world, is utterly transcendent of me, of my own being. It is an “Objective” world, experienceable and experienced as the same world by others too. Actuality becomes warranted, illusion rectified, in my concourse with others – who likewise are, for me, data of actual and possible experience.³⁷

If I experience some object of consciousness as “transcendent” then it is consciousness that has constituted that object with that sense, and it is experience that tells me this. If that object is to be part of the Objective world, and not a mere illusion, then it is experience that tells me this also. Experience tells me that the physical things are possible objects of experience for myself in the future from different perspectives, and possible objects of experience for others as well. And experience tells me that this Objective world *actually* exists when others confirm this existence through our mutual and harmonious interaction

³⁵ Husserl writes, “experience is not an opening through which a world, existing prior to all experience, shines into a room of consciousness; it is not a mere taking of something alien to consciousness into consciousness.” (Husserl, *FTL*, p.232 <206>)

³⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.233<206>

³⁷ Husserl, *FTL*, p.233 <206>

with the world. At the same time, however, Husserl remarks here that the others are similarly constituted as what they are, as they are, for me, in and by my consciousness. They are other-subjects insofar as I constitute them as such, and, following what Husserl says in *Ideas I*, beyond that they are nothing for me.³⁸ But such a theory seems to invite the problem of solipsism in that it threatens to reduce all existence, including the existence of other subjects, to intentional unities of a single *solus ipse*, namely, my own. Husserl must explain why this is not the case.

To summarize, Husserl argues that nothing exists for me – not myself, my body, the world, nor others – apart from my own consciousness. This seems to amount to little more than the traditional solipsistic thesis: that nothing exists apart from my subjectivity. According to Husserl:

nothing exists for me otherwise than by virtue of the *actual and potential performance of my own consciousness*. Here the potential performance is the certainty of ‘I can’ or ‘I could’...Whatever I encounter as an existing object [*Gegenstand*] is something that...has received its *whole* being-sense [*Seinssinn*] for me from my effective intentionality; not a shadow of that sense remains excluded from my effective intentionality.³⁹

Everything that I experience as existing, regardless of the manner of existence in question, receives its entire being-sense [*Seinssinn*] from my effective intentionality, of which it is a constitutional achievement. This is *not* to say, however, that what I experience as external or transcendent is in fact a part of me, any more than the chimeras of my imagination are a part of me. Husserl stands-by the fact that, “Just as the reduced Ego is not a piece of the world, so, conversely, neither the world nor any worldly Object is a piece of my Ego, to be found in my conscious life as a really *inherent* part of it.”⁴⁰ The conditions of the possibility of experience are a “part” of my ego, but it does not follow from this that the objects that I do

³⁸ In this infamous passage, Husserl writes, “the whole *spatiotemporal world*, which includes human being and the human Ego as subordinate single realities is, *according to its sense, a merely intentional being*, thus one has the merely secondary sense of a being *for* a consciousness. It is a being posited by consciousness in its experiences which, of essential necessity, can be determined and intuited only as something identical belonging to motivated multiplicities of appearances: *beyond that* it is nothing.” (Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.112 <93>) He calls this type of existence secondary here, since it is only the transcendental ego that exists absolutely or primarily, and thus the existence of everything constituted by consciousness is logically secondary.

³⁹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.234 <207>.

⁴⁰ Husserl, *CM*, p.26 <65>.

actually experience are likewise a part of my ego. In the *CM*, Husserl attempts to explain that the objects of consciousness are part of my concrete monad, but they are not inherent parts of the transcendental ego. The objects of my consciousness are not identical to my consciousness, despite the fact that consciousness is always consciousness of something and that nothing exists apart from my consciousness of it. As Bachelard notes, “In the immanence of the *ego*, transcendencies retain their *sense* as transcendencies.”⁴¹ Husserl’s intention here is discover the innate *a priori* structures of constituting consciousness. These actual and potential intentional structures must be systematically explicated, since they pre-delineate “what I am allowed, and what I am not allowed, to attribute to an object...according to the constituting intentionality from which, as just now said, its whole sense has originated.”⁴² This is the move to transcendental philosophy, which is emphatically *not* a metaphysical theory of being.

After the discovery of the phenomenological reduction, Husserl undertook a serious rereading of Kant.⁴³ With his newly-found appreciation for Kant, Husserl recognized pure phenomenology as belonging to the tradition of transcendental philosophy, and was able to bring his philosophy “into dialogue with modern thinkers, ultimately recognizing them as his ‘precursors’ while also selecting them *a posteriori* as his teachers”.⁴⁴ Husserl explicitly states that his theory of constitution builds upon the Kantian doctrine of *synthesis*. In his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, Husserl writes that *intentional constitution* is nothing other than what Kant had called *passive production* in the A-Deduction.⁴⁵ The intentional object becomes what it is or it receives its being-sense, through

⁴¹ Bachelard, *A Study of Husserl’s Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.158.

⁴² Husserl, *FTL*, p.234-235 <207>

⁴³ In a note from March 6, 1908, Husserl explicitly mentions his indebtedness to an “in-depth study of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*” during the winter of 1907/08. (Husserl, *Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics*, p.499) According to Husserl, what was problematic in Kant’s system was “that he never worked out the profound difference between *pure psychology* (solely on the basis of ‘internal experience’) and *transcendental phenomenology* (on the basis of transcendental experience, which originates from ‘transcendental-phenomenological reduction’) and therefore did not work out the deepest sense of the transcendental problem of ‘*psychologism*’.” (Husserl, *FTL*, p.257-258 <227-228>)

⁴⁴ Angela Ales Bello, “The Transcendental: Husserl and Kant,” in *Analecta Husserliana* CVIII (2011), p.229-230.

⁴⁵ “It is of historical interest to recall here Kant’s brilliant insights that are expressed in his profound but obscure doctrine of the synthesis of productive imagination, above all in his transcendental deduction from the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. When Kant in his great work speaks of an analytic synthesis, he means cognition deployed there in explicit forms of concepts and judgments, and this points back, for him, to a productive synthesis. But, in our view, that is *nothing other than what we* call passive constitution, nothing

my experience of it. The object, however, is nothing over and above that thing which is constituted by consciousness in experience. For Husserl there is no thing existing apart from the object of consciousness to which that object points or refers. The phenomena simply are the “things-themselves,” and to ask what causes them would be both a mistaken use of the notion of causality, which applies only to the relations between phenomena, and a metaphysical question beyond the scope of phenomenology.

The critique of experience found in *FTL* §94 follows from the methods and insights that Husserl develops in *Ideas I*. If we reflect on experience and suspend the thesis of the natural attitude, it is not clear that the object of consciousness is a *representation* of some other “real” object to which it refers. What we have is a *presentification*; something before us. There is nothing in ordinary sense perception to support the metaphysical claim that what we experience as external exists in-itself and is alien to and independent of my consciousness of it. This is a corollary of Husserl’s *principle of all principles*: “*that every originary presentative intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originally (so to speak, in its “personal” actuality) offered to us in “intuition” is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.*”⁴⁶ The thesis of the natural attitude is *not* given in experience, despite the fact that certain objects are constituted as external and Objective. What are given to me in experience are *phenomena*.

other than the team-work (disclosable by our phenomenological method) of the constantly higher developing intentionalities of passive consciousness in which an extremely multiform process of immanent and transcendent sense-giving is carried out passively and is organized into encompassing formations of sense and formations of being, as is the immanent unity of the stream of lived-experience, and with respect to transcendence, the unity of the world with its universal forms. Since Kant was not in the position to recognize the essence of passive production as intentional constitution, and could not yet see the actual task of making systematically intelligible the essential necessities of the constitution of all object-like formations.” (Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, p.410)

It is no surprise, of course, that there would be similarities between Husserl’s *FTL* and parts of Kant’s *CPR*, as the majority of the latter text falls under the title ‘Transcendental Logic’. Much of Part II of the *FTL* is modeled on Kant’s definition of a transcendental logic: “[Transcendental logic], which should contain solely the rules of the pure thought of an object, would exclude only those modes of knowledge which have empirical content. It would also treat of the origin of the modes in which we know objects, in so far as that origin cannot be attributed to the objects....The term ‘transcendental’, that is to say, signifies such knowledge as concerns the *a priori* possibility of knowledge, or its *a priori* employment....[The science] which should determine the origin, the scope, and the objective validity of such knowledge, would have to be called *transcendental logic*, because...it concerns itself with the laws of understanding and of reason solely in so far as they relate *a priori* to objects.” (Kant, *CPR*, [A55B80-A57/B82])

⁴⁶ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.44 <43-44>

The existence of mind-independent “real” objects to which these phenomena are supposedly correlated is not. In the natural attitude we naïvely assume the existence of the “real” world, but from the phenomenological standpoint one must bracket this assumption. In fact, Husserl argues that the notion that experience is of things that are alien to consciousness is simply nonsense. No objects exist for me apart from my experience of them, and existence beyond existence for me is a nonsensical concept. Transcendental phenomenology presents us with a constitutional theory of *Sachverhalt* or *Sachen selbst* – the things-themselves or the state-of-affairs – but not of *things-in-themselves*. For Husserl, there are no things-in-themselves (at least not in any traditional sense). This is the heart of Husserl’s commitment to transcendental idealism; an idealism that ought to be interpreted as an “epistemic” position, not a metaphysical one.⁴⁷ In Husserl’s view, phenomenology is a *transcendental theory of knowledge*,⁴⁸ and such a theory limits what we can legitimately claim as philosophers.

The epistemological interpretation of transcendental phenomenology that we find in *FTL* is corroborated by Husserl’s earlier “logical” works as well. In an appendix to Husserl’s *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, Husserl gives both a concise statement of his vision of transcendental phenomenology, and explicitly endorses the epistemological reading of his work. In this text from 1908, Husserl tells us that transcendental phenomenology has nothing to do with *a priori* real ontology of any kind.

Transcendental phenomenology is phenomenology of the constituting consciousness, and consequently not a single objective axiom (relating to objects that are not consciousness) belongs in it...The epistemological interest, the transcendental interest...*the interest of transcendental phenomenology, aims rather at consciousness as consciousness of objects.* It aims only at “phenomena”...⁴⁹

No one can question that, at least in the passage above, Husserl believes that the interest of transcendental phenomenology is an epistemological one. A transcendental theory of knowledge is, for Husserl, first philosophy, and in attempting such a theory one must bracket

⁴⁷ Husserl suggests as much when he characterizes the critique of intentional structures as *preliminary “epistemological” work*. (Husserl, *FTL*, p.221 <197>)

⁴⁸ Husserl, *CM*, p.81 <115>

⁴⁹ Husserl, *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, p.432.

all metaphysical presuppositions.⁵⁰ Any mind-independent correlate which we might speculate as lying behind the phenomena is excluded from the purview of transcendental phenomenology. Failing to do so is what leads us to enigmas such as solipsism. The task of transcendental phenomenology is to investigate the conditions of all possible cognition, that is, to uncover universal subjective correlations between the constituting acts of intentional consciousness, their objects, and their meaning.⁵¹ It does so by interrogating and arguing from the phenomena as given, taken as “transcendental clues”, to the conditions of the possibility of their being cognized.⁵² All this indicates that, unless one can establish a radical change in Husserl’s conception of his project, the epistemological interpretation of transcendental phenomenology ought to be the framework that we adopted.⁵³

⁵⁰ In the first two essays in Appendix B of *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, Husserl argues for this position in detail. He further argues that skepticism emerges precisely because traditional theories of knowledge have been borne out of dogmatic metaphysical positions. By starting from a theory of the possibility of knowledge, a theory of the possibility of all cognition in general, skepticism is shown to be an absurdity that results from speculative metaphysics. Husserl insists that: “*The task of theory of knowledge is not to refute skepticism, but to put an end to the predicaments into which knowledge lands in reflecting on its own possibility and to elucidate this possibility, the essence of knowledge and the correlations with the object belonging to it. With that, the reasons that urge skepticism are, of course, eliminated.*” (Husserl, *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, p.406)

⁵¹ Husserl, *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, p.434.

⁵² Husserl outlines his doctrine of transcendental clues, which is central to transcendental phenomenological investigation, in the appendix from 1908: “Starting with the different existents, we can always ask the other way around: How is such an existent given? How can it be given as the existent of a category of this kind? And, to what extent is it at times imperfectly given? How does it arrive at full givenness, and to what extent is absolute givenness an infinite task?” (Husserl, *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, p.436)

⁵³ Exactly how we understand Husserl’s transcendental idealism in light of the epistemological reading is not something that scholars agree upon. James Hart characterizes Husserl’s position as follows: “Phenomenology’s claim that being and display are inseparable and that there is no mind-independent thing in-itself as a subject for philosophical reflection is not the absurd claim that knowing is making. Nor is it the claim that the to be (*esse*) of the world is reducible to being perceived (*percipi*), or that the being of what is known is, as truly existing being, dependent for its existence on the knowing’s display. Rather it merely claims tautologically that the actual displaying by mind itself of actual being is a necessary condition for how being gets articulated by mind or how being is manifest to mind. The common sense view that there are mind-independent entities is not contradicted by transcendental phenomenology; it only asserts that if we are in a position to say something about these entities, then we have displayed them, and their being is tied to their display.” (Hart, *Who One Is*, Book I, p.5) If Hart is suggesting here that Husserl leaves open, even as a limiting concept, the possibility that mind-independent things in-themselves exist, then he is confused. Husserl writes that this philosophy “leaves no room for ‘metaphysical’ substructurings of a being *behind* the being intentionally constituting itself in actual and possible achievements of consciousness, whether it be a matter of an in-itself of nature or an in-itself of souls, in-itself of history, an in-itself of eidetic objectivities, and of ideal ones of whatever type.” (Husserl, “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 5:3, p.14) For a more nuanced account of this issue, see Husserl’s “*Esse und Percipi. Einheit und Mannigfaltigkeit. Immanentes Sein und Transzendentes Sein. Das Immanente Sein und der ‚Fluss des Absoluten Bewusstseins‘*,” Hua XXXVI, pp.62-72.) However, Hart is correct in saying that Husserl’s view does not contradict the common sense view; it makes sense of it.

Returning now to the argument found in *FTL* §94, Husserl concludes that one could not “come upon a transcendence that possibly had any sense other than that of an intentional unity making its appearance in the subjectivity itself of consciousness.”⁵⁴ The point here appears to be a trivial one, that anything we experience as transcendent is always an intentional unity for some consciousness, and therefore transcendence is always related back to cognizing subject. Put another way, Husserl finds that it is nonsense to say that a world could exist without there being some I experiencing it.⁵⁵ Such a world of transcendent objects is nothing for me. Husserl is not interested in using the absolute existence of the *ego cogito* as a ground for proving the existence of the world as Descartes did. The existence of the real world does not need to be proved. Its existence is demonstrated by our harmonious experience of it. What needs to be explained is the *sense* of this existence, and the conditions that make experience and knowledge of such a world possible. According to Husserl, this can be achieved only through thorough phenomenological self-explication, since it is my life of consciousness by which “everything receives being-sense for me.”⁵⁶

While everything that I experience, including those objects that we experience as transcendent, receive their entire being-sense from *my* consciousness, Husserl states in *FTL* §95 that the external world is also the world “*for us all*.”⁵⁷ While the world is constituted by us according to certain subjective forms, as an *Objective* world, it has “the *categorical form, ‘once and for all truly existing’*, not only for me but *for everyone*”.⁵⁸ Everything I experience in space is experienced as part of an Objective world *for all of us*. These objects of outer experience are also experienced as possible objects for others. Experience tells *us* that *we* live in the same shared world, and that it is the one truly existing world. What makes the external world an Objective world is that it is constituted in experience as being *intersubjective*. If we think of Kant’s A-Deduction here [A104, A110], then for the transcendental idealist it is part of something being an external object that it be an object of possible experience for others as well. External objects are constituted in experience as

⁵⁴ Husserl, *FTL*, p.236 <208>

⁵⁵ „Also: Sagt man, eine Welt könnte existieren, ohne dass ein sie erfahrendes Ich existierte, so ist das ein Nonsens.“ (Husserl, *Hua* XXXVI, p.119)

⁵⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.236 <209>

⁵⁷ Husserl, *FTL*, p.236 <209>

⁵⁸ Husserl, *FTL*, p.236 <209>

inherently intersubjective. Intersubjectivity makes the harmonious coherence of Objects possible, and to subsequently judge them to be “real”.

Intentional objects can refer to perspectives that are not explicitly manifest to the experiencing subject. In this very strict sense, intentional objects, particularly objects of outer sense, are “transcendent.” External objects are constituted in experience as having aspects which I do not currently have direct access to, but that I *might possibly* come to have such access to. For instance, when I look at my hand in front of me, I anticipate or expect the other side of it, and when I turn it over, there it is. However, in the case of an optical illusion, my anticipations fail to be fulfilled. But we must keep in mind that this does not imply that the object I am conscious of is somehow mind independent. These objects only exist for me insofar as they are constituted by my consciousness.

Husserl’s views on the Objectivity of the external world are bound up with his notion of a *community* of monads. While his concept of individual transcendental egos as monads is distinct from what Leibniz meant by the term, paragraph 57 of *The Monadology* helps us to understand Husserl’s theory of the Objective world. Leibniz writes:

And as the same city looked at from different sides appears entirely different, and is as if multiplied *perspectively*; so also it happens that, as a result of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are as it were so many different universes, which are nevertheless only the perspectives of a single one, according to the different *points of view* of each monad.⁵⁹

For Husserl, there is a single Objective world of experience: the “life-world” that *everyone* experiences. This is the only world that exists, and it exists by virtue of the way in which it is constituted in my consciousness, or in my monad. It is *my world*, in so far as it exists *for me*, but I only have complete and unique ownership over one perspective among an infinite number of perspectives of it. To quote Husserl:

World-experience, as constitutive, signifies, not just my quite private experience, but *community-experience*: The world itself, according to its sense, is the one identical world, to which all of *us* necessarily have experiential access, and about which all of *us* by ‘exchanging’ our experiences

⁵⁹ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 57.

– that is, by making them common - , can reach a common understanding; just as ‘Objective’ legitimation depends on mutual assent and its criticism.⁶⁰

When Husserl talks of “private experience” here, he means my inner experience of something as external, my unique perspective of the world, not my inner experience of something inner. The latter, while part of *my* world, is not part of the *public* world. The public world is the one identical world in which we all have, at least in principal, experiential access to, and which we can have in common. This is not to say that there is an external world existing in-itself that we mutually experience. The claim is only that the external world is constituted as being common to other cognizing subjects. Needless to say, this is not an unproblematic position. There is also a claim here that Objective knowledge/truth arises through an ‘exchange’ of experience.⁶¹ However, Husserl does little in *FTL* to address the concerns that are sure to arise regarding this view of the shared external world. He leaves these problems for the *CM* and *Crisis*.

While it is intersubjectivity that “functions as sense-constituting for the Objective world,”⁶² the Objective world is also *my* world, and the primitive intentional basis for the world is my primordial transcendental ego [*Ur-Ich*]. This “I am”, according to Husserl, is the

⁶⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.236 <209>

⁶¹ Levinas relates the problem of intersubjectivity and the objective world to the notion of objective truth more generally: “It is the essence of objective truth to be truth for everyone; this intersubjective world is thus ideally presupposed in the very essence of truth.” (Levinas, “On *Ideas*”, in *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, p.30) In a supplementary text to the English edition of the *Passive Synthesis* lectures (the text was first published as Text Nr.14 in *Hua XIV*, p.305-308), Husserl discusses his notion of “Objective” truth as intersubjective, or, as he states here, as “universally subjective.” The notion of intersubjective truth seems problematic, since, “After the phenomenological reduction...the ego *can* be solipsistic in a certain sense, namely, insofar as there is said to be no essential necessity that the ego encounter other human-beings and animals.” (Husserl, *Passive Synthesis*, p.647) However, Husserl argues that all that is necessary in order to account for intersubjective truth is “an open unending multiplicity of *possible* pure egos...which stand to me in a possible relation of empathy.” (Husserl, *Passive Synthesis*, p.648) The argument goes that ordinary outer intuition allows for the possibility of experiencing other human-beings and animals as objects in the world. Empathy allows for the further possibility of experiencing/constituting such objects as other lived-bodies. Standing in relation to my ego is, “an open unending multiplicity of other egos as alien to it, but as standing to it in relationships of empathy an in I-you relationships, in relationships of communicative interaction, reciprocal-ego-determination. Likewise, when I do not carry out the eidetic reduction, I not only pronounce my “I am”, but rather, exercising the phenomenological reduction with respect to the factual givenness of alien human-beings, and carrying out phenomenological legitimation by indicating phenomenological *emperia*, I know myself as pure ego and in addition am empirically certain (in the phenomenological field) of co-being and communicative solidarity with other pure egos. But I also therefore recognize that every truth into which I have insight is intersubjectively valid: It is valid above the empirical, namely, it is not merely dependent upon my empirical ego. It remains if I were to modify myself in thought into a randomly altered ego. But it also holds if I take as a basis any random alien pure ego (that is found in every empirical ego). (Husserl, *Passive Synthesis*, p.648) Here Husserl also suggests that the alter ego is me myself with an altered perspective.

⁶² Husserl, *FTL*, p.236 <209>

necessary ground of all cognition, of all that exists for me. Everything receives its being-sense from me, from my experience of it. This echoes Schopenhauer's characterization of the ego: "The *subject* is the seat of all cognition but is itself not cognized by anything. Accordingly it is the support for the world and always presupposed as the general condition of all appearances, of all objects: whatever exists, exists only for the subject."⁶³ "Whether convenient or inconvenient," Husserl writes, "and even though...it may sound monstrous to me," the ego is the primitive intentional basis for anything and everything of which I am conscious of as something existent in any sense.

For children in philosophy, [that 'I am' is the primitive intentional basis for the world] may be the dark corner haunted by the specters of solipsism and, perhaps, of psychologism, of relativism. The true philosopher, instead of running away, will prefer to fill the dark corner with light.⁶⁴

The subsequent sections of *FTL* set out to provide the reader with the ability to illuminate these dark corners, and to show that the specter of solipsism is nothing more than an illusion.

To recap, Husserl has argued that experience tells me that the "external world" is made up of physical things, is transcendent of me, and is an Objective, shared world. It would be groundless speculation to assert that the transcendent being of the world is anything more than the result of the way in which the "external world" is constituted by consciousness. Transcendent objects also carry with them the sense that they are objects of possible experience for subjects other than me. A transcendent thing is not capable of being completely given in experience. Such givenness is only possible in the case of something that is a genuine part of consciousness. Of transcendencies, of the Objective world, I have only one perspective of a seemingly infinite number of possible perspectives. In his summary review of the *Husserliana* volume on transcendental idealism, Thane Naberhaus writes:

Paradoxically, then, the transcendence of the thing, its independence from consciousness, in the end rests on its necessary manner of givenness to consciousness, i.e., on its dependence on consciousness. For it belongs to the essence of transcendent things that they appear, that they "are only and can

⁶³ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 1, p.25 <5>. Husserl makes a number of marginal notes in *The World as Will and Representation*, vol.1, §2 [BQ 419 /2].

⁶⁴ Husserl, *FTL*, p.237 <209-210>

only be given in appearances” (33). In short, “the being of the thing is not an act and is not a piece of consciousness, and yet it is only something that is given and logically justified (*logisch zu Begründendes*) through perception and experience” (37). Expressed in Kantian terms: the transcendent, worldly thing is empirically real but transcendently ideal.⁶⁵

For Husserl, the transcendent, Objective world is an intersubjective world, but also one that receives its entire being-sense from my lived consciousness of it.

2.5 The World for “Everyone” and our Secondary Experience of Others

Building on the results of the preceding sections, Husserl sets out in *FTL* §96 to address the problem of solipsism. In doing so, he distinguishes two worries. First, there is the problem of explaining the existence of an Objective external world. The solution to this problem has already been given, although it might seem to reinforce some sort of epistemological or transcendental solipsism rather than overcome it. Second, he must explain the existence of other subjects, for without other subjects there is no Objective *world for everyone*, but only a world for a *solus ipse*. In a note added to the *CM*, Husserl himself insists that, “transcendental others, as constituted in me, are fundamental to further constitutive functions. Their acceptedness by me, their showing themselves to me, subject to correction, is in continual synthetic connexus with everything else constituted, or in the course of being constituted, in me.”⁶⁶ Again we run into an apparent problem, since Husserl has argued that everything, including others, receives its entire being-sense from me. If every existent receives its entire *being-sense* from my effective intentionality, including others, what does he mean by the “others”?

In the *CM*, Husserl not only characterizes phenomenology as a transcendental theory of knowledge and as transcendental idealism, but as a philosophy that *begins* from “transcendental solipsism.”⁶⁷ However, he aims to show that phenomenology does not remain solipsistic. To do so, Husserl recognizes that he needs to provide a sufficient answer

⁶⁵ Thane Naberhaus, “Husserl’s Transcendental Idealism,” in *Husserl Studies* 23 (2007), p.254-255. Embedded page numbers refer to Hua XXXVI.

⁶⁶ Husserl, *CM*, p.64 <239>

⁶⁷ Husserl, *CM*, p.30 <69>

to the following question: “what about other egos, who surely are not a mere intending and intended in me, merely synthetic unities of possible verification in me, but, according to their sense, precisely *others*?”⁶⁸ Husserl calls the assumption that other subjects are more than synthetic unities of my conscious experience into question in *FTL* §96 when he writes that, in my ego, “every other ego receives sense and acceptance *as* an other ego.”⁶⁹ To exist *as* an other ego is to be experienced as an other ego by me, or to be constituted as such within the horizon of my transcendental subjectivity. Husserl continues:

Someone “else”, others – these have an original relation to me who experience them and am conscious of them in other manners. – With everything naturally that belongs to their sense (their sense for me): Such as that someone else is here “facing me”, bodily and with his own life, and has me now, in like fashion, as *his vis-à-vis*; that I – with my whole life, with all my modes of consciousness and all my accepted objects – am *alter ego for him*, as he is for me; and, in like fashion, everyone else for everyone else; so that “everyone” receives its sense; and, in like fashion, we and I (as “one among others”) as included in “everyone.”⁷⁰

Here, Husserl attempts to flesh out the sense of the word “everyone” that he introduced in connection with Objectivity in the previous section. The Objective world for everyone receives its sense insofar as it is constituted and accepted by me *as* the world for everyone.⁷¹ But “everyone” includes all the others, that is to say, every other possible subjectivity like myself. It also includes myself, insofar as I could be experienced by an other as other. I am constituted *for them, by them* in their respective consciousness as existing as a psychophysical being like themselves. This completes the sense of “everyone” such that I myself am included in it. Just as in the case of Objectivity, Husserl does not argue for “others” in the sense that the realist wants. Instead, he attempts to uncover the meaning of “others” phenomenologically.

Husserl continues by repeating that within the sphere of my subjectivity, I find myself as a psychophysical unity of a body and a subject. I also find related to this unity *others*, psychophysical entities other than me who are “constituted in multiplicities belonging to my

⁶⁸ Husserl, *CM*, 89 <121>

⁶⁹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.237 <210>

⁷⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.237-238 <210>

⁷¹ This is different from my experience of external objects in space and time and the external world *simpliciter*. See *CM* §48 and 55.

intentional life.”⁷² But there are many difficulties here, not just concerning others, but concerning myself. To begin with, in my consciousness the entire world is constituted as an intentional unity, and this includes myself as a subject in the world. This implies that:

I, the constituting Ego [*Ich*], am not identical with the Ego [*Ich*] that is already worldly, not identical with myself as a psychophysical reality; and my psychic life [*seelisches*], the psychophysical and worldly life of consciousness [*Bewußtseinsleben*], is not identical with my transcendental ego [*Ego*], in which the world, with everything physical and psychic that belongs to it, is constituted for me.⁷³

Husserl insists that we distinguish between the pure ego that precedes and constitutes the world from the human psyche which is in the world. However, Husserl realizes that this splitting of the ego is not an easy concept to grasp, calling it the “paradox of subjectivity” at *Crisis*.⁷⁴

The paradox of subjectivity is perhaps even more worrisome in the case of other subjects. If an “other” is constituted in my intentional life, then not only her bodily organism, but her psychic life, “as ‘another’s’ psychic life [*fremdes’ Seelenleben*]”⁷⁵ points back originally to me. How then, Husserl asks, are we to understand her sense as someone *other*? Husserl writes that it is:

a downright enigma, how, in the ego, an *other psychophysical Ego* with an *other psyche* can be constituted; since his sense as other involves the essential impossibility of my experiencing his own essential psychic contents with actual originality, as I do my own. Essentially, therefore, the constitution of others must be different from that of my own psychophysical Ego.⁷⁶

Husserl must give an account of how we constitute others, and how it is that we necessarily ascribe to someone else their own unique mental life that in which they constitute not only an analogous world of external experience, but the *same, shared* world of experience considered

⁷² Husserl, *FTL*, p.238 <210-211>

⁷³ Husserl, *FTL*, p.238 <211>

⁷⁴ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Part III, A. §§53-55, and §§71-72. See also David Carr’s *The Paradox of Subjectivity* (1999).

⁷⁵ Husserl, *FTL*, p.239 <211>

⁷⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.239 <211>

from an alternate perspective.⁷⁷ However, nowhere here is there any mention of demonstrating the existence in-themselves of other egos.

According to Husserl, a proper understanding of the transcendental nature of my pure ego reveals that my psychophysical being is a “self-Objectivation” of my transcendental ego, that is, the object that emerges when I reflect upon my cogitations and make myself an object for myself. This object is a unity of a bodily organism and a subjectivity, which, taken as a human psyche, is a worldly object as well. Husserl asserts then that, by analogy, if another psyche exists, it too points back to a unique transcendental ego of which it is a self-Objectification. If other lived-bodies are psychophysical human beings like myself, then they would have their own transcendental egos that are alien to me just as mine is alien to them. Their psyche would stand in a primary relation not to *my* transcendental ego, but to *another* transcendental ego. This transcendental ego would be the one that someone else would discover through her own phenomenological reduction to be the ultimate basis for the constitution of the world *for her* and her life therein. “Consequently,” Husserl writes,

the problem of others takes on the following form: To understand how my transcendental ego, the primitive basis for everything that I accept as existent, can constitute within himself another transcendental ego, and then too an open plurality of such egos – “other” egos, absolutely inaccessible to my ego in their original being, and yet cognizable (for me) as existing and as being thus and so.⁷⁸

The challenge for Husserl is not to show that other subjects exist in-themselves, but to explain the sense of an open plurality of actual other subjects who co-constitute the world with me, and to argue for the conditions of the experience of these other subjects. The problem of others is thus the problem of understanding the notion of a “community of monads.” The solution to this problem is explaining what it means to constitute an alien transcendental ego in my consciousness.

The world is constituted for me as Objective, as being there for everyone including myself, showing itself to be an “intersubjective cognitive community.” But this Objective world is constituted at a higher level than the fundamental level of my transcendental

⁷⁷ Husserl, *FTL*, p.239 <211>

⁷⁸ Husserl, *FTL*, p.239-240 <212>

subjectivity. The lowest level of experience is my inner world, which is my “*intrinsically first Nature*”. Here experience takes place in subjective time and space, where the objects of my outer sense are mine and mine alone; it is the realm of private experience, of a *solus ipse*. This first world of is not intersubjective, and is constituted in my ego as *my own*, since it includes nothing beyond my original experiences, over which I have absolute ownership. Within this realm there must exist the germ for the constitution of an Objective world, for we constitute the world of outer sense as Objective, that is, for everyone or for others. He states:

[this] sphere of my transcendental ego’s *primordial ownness*, must contain the *motivational foundation* for the constitution of those *transcendencies*, that are *genuine*, that go beyond it, and originate first of all as “others” (other psycho-physical beings and other transcendental egos)⁷⁹

This motivational foundation is the condition of the possibility of experiences that are not my own.

Up until now we have ignored a remark that Husserl makes in *FTL* §94 amidst his argument regarding the Objectivity of physical things. Whatever I encounter as an existent (*for me*) receives its *Seinssinn*, its *being what it is, as it is*, from my effective intentionality [*leistenden Intentionalität*]. My intentionality *provides* or *affords* the *Seinssinn* of the object. Husserl called this “sense-bestowal” in *Ideas I* §55.⁸⁰ But an other is not given in immediate experience in the same way as external bodies. To be sure, we do experience other living-bodies or other psycho-physical beings, that is to say, we do experience some things *as being* lived-bodies or other psycho-physical beings. While I experience my own body as a lived-body, the way in which I experience myself and my body is different from how I experience that of an other. Husserl writes:

Of my self I have experience in primary originality; of others, of their mental-lives [*Seelenleben*] in a secondary fashion, where the alien [*fremde*] is in principle not accessible to me in direct perception [*Wahrnehmung*].⁸¹

⁷⁹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>

⁸⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.244 <216>

⁸¹ „Von mir selbst habe ich Erfahrung in primärer Originalität; von Anderen, von ihrem Seelenleben in einer bloß sekundären, sofern das fremde mir in direkter Wahrnehmung prinzipiell nicht zugänglich ist.“ (Husserl, *Hua XVII*, p.240)

According to Husserl, I have experience of the mental-lives of others in a secondary way because their mental-life (which would point back to their own unique transcendental ego) is not accessible to me in direct perception. This means that the mental-life of another is never directly or immediately grasped in my experience. At the same time, I do constitute certain physical objects as lived bodies with their own mental-life that is hidden from me. Husserl clearly thinks that we do experience other subjects, however, he does not tell us here what this “secondary” experience we have of other subjects might be in *FTL*.

In an appendix to *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* §47 dealing with the constitution of the Objective world, Husserl gives an argument similar to the one in *FTL*. There he writes:

The *animal*, the human being, is experiencable as psychophysical unity only in my lived-body/psychic inner experience; only I can experience my functioning in my lived-body, and thereby my lived-body as lived-body, and in this way, myself in this functional unity with this lived-body. I cannot perceive an alien lived-body as lived-body, and I cannot experience an alien ego as functioning in this lived-body – not genuinely. I experience alien subjectivity and human beings in the world in the mode of ‘empathy’...The Objective world is the psycho-physical world, and it is the cultural world that has received its cultural predicates from functioning human subjectivity bestowing them, predicates that possess their manner of experience and disclosure, but of such a manner of experience and disclosure that it presupposes the Objective experience of alien subjects...⁸²

What is important about the argument as Husserl presents it here is that he explicitly refers to the secondary experience of someone else as experience in the mode of *empathy*. He also mentions here that there is a cultural layer to the Objective world over and above the mere experience of objects in space and time. This further aspect of intersubjective meaning that we experience in the world will not concern us here, as it is not developed in *FTL*.

One might notice that the short passage on the nature of one’s cognition of the alien ego from *FTL* also resembles the following lines from §1 of *Ideas I*. Husserl goes into some detail here about the primary originality of the experience we have of external objects and of ourselves *versus* the experience we have of others:

⁸² Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, p.544.

We have originary experience of concrete physical things in “external perception,” but no longer in memory or forward-regarding expectation; we have originary experience of ourselves and of our states of consciousness in so-called internal or self-perception; not, however, of others and of their mental processes in “empathy.” As belonging to them, we “view the mental processes of others” on the basis of the perception of their outward manifestation in the organism. This empathic viewing is, more particularly, as intuiting, a presentive act, although no longer an act that is presentive of something originary. The other and his psychical life are, to be sure, given in consciousness as “themselves there” and in union with his organism; but they are not, like the latter, given in consciousness as originary.⁸³

Again we see Husserl explicitly referencing empathy as a mode of intuition of the mental-life of others. We do not directly perceive the mental-lives of other subjects, but we do constitute other human subjects in experience as having mental-lives that are united to their physical organism, while the content of these mental-lives is not itself given in experience. It is somewhat striking that Husserl’s views on this issue seem to have undergone very few changes in the time between *Ideas I* and *FTL*. However, it is odd that in *FTL* Husserl makes no (explicit) reference to *Einfühlung*, or *empathy*, as the mode of our intuition of others.⁸⁴

We can use the passages from *Ideas I* and *Passive Synthesis* to help elucidate the corresponding one from *FTL*. To grasp something in experience is to make it *mine* and to constitute it with a particular *being-sense*. But the other, a *genuine* other, cannot be an object of experience in this sense. Other lived physical bodies and the behaviors they exhibit certainly are objects of experience. Furthermore, I constitute some bodies not simply as being animated, but as having their own unique mental-life and corresponding transcendental ego distinct from my own. Insofar as I experience them in such a manner one might say that other subjects actually exist. But I do not, and cannot directly experience the mental-lives of others, and they do not directly experience my mental-life. Concrete foreign mental-lives are not possible objects of perception, even if I constitute certain objects as lived-bodies that have such mental-lives. That is to say, the concrete content of such lives is never directly experienced.⁸⁵

⁸³ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.6 <8>.

⁸⁴ In fact, Husserl only mentions empathy in one other place in *FTL*. In §16a, he mentions empathy in the context of how we understand the beliefs and judgements of others. (Husserl, *FTL*, p.59 <52>)

⁸⁵ In *Experience and Judgment* §38, when explaining the extent to which he agrees with the Kantian thesis that *time is the form of sensibility in general*, Husserl also argues that the objective world, the *life-world*, is the

It is strange that Husserl does not mention *empathy* explicitly in *FTL* §94 or 96, but it is clear that this is what he has in mind given his reference to *CM* and *GPP* at the end of §96,⁸⁶ and the emphasis placed on the role of empathy for the theory of intersubjectivity throughout his mature works. In *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Levinas writes that, “*Einfühlung*, which is an act which reveals the conscious life of others, is a type of intuition different from sensible perception.”⁸⁷ Husserl briefly characterizes empathy as “understanding and living another’s acts after him,”⁸⁸ and as the condition for intersubjective experience in *Ideas I*,⁸⁹ promising a detailed analysis of empathetic intuition and its corresponding evidence in *Ideas II*.⁹⁰

In *Ideas II*, Husserl tells us that in the sphere of original constitution, we are originally given a multiplicity of objects in space and time, but we are also given “ζῶα, including men (“rational” living beings), not as amalgamations of what is given separately, but as two-fold unities, unities which allow two strata to be distinguished therein, unities of things and subjects, along with the subjects’ psychic life.”⁹¹ However, the mental-lives of other subjectivities are not *primally* present to us. The objects that we experience as external to us, the objects of the Objective world are primally present to us as perspectives, and can be given as primally present to all other subjects as we explained above. But my perspective on these objects, is unique to my sphere of transcendental experience, and so too for everyone else. Only the individual subject has original experience of its psychic life. Husserl writes:

intersubjective world *for everyone*. (Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, p.164) There Husserl argues that it is in empathy that “an objective, intersubjectively common time, in which everything individual in lived experiences and temporal objectivities must be capable of being ordered, in constituted.” (Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, p.165) Empathy is doing the work that bridges the gap between my internal time consciousness, between pure duration, and objective temporality. It makes possible the experience of an objective, shared world; both of an intersubjective space and an intersubjective time.

⁸⁶ “The chief points for the solution of the problem of intersubjectivity and for the overcoming of transcendental solipsism were already developed in lectures that I gave at Göttingen during the winter semester of 1910-11. But the actual carrying-out required further difficult single investigations, which did not reach their conclusion until much later. A short exposition of the theory itself will be presented soon in my *Cartesianische Meditationen*. I hope that, within the next year, I shall be able to publish the pertinent explicit investigations.” (Husserl, *FTL*, p.243 <215>)

⁸⁷ Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, p.127.

⁸⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.79 <68>.

⁸⁹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.363 <317>. See also Husserl, *Ideas II*, p. 101 <96>.

⁹⁰ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.336 <292>.

⁹¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.170 <162>.

There are realities that cannot be given to several subjects in primal presence, namely, *animalia*, for subjectivities are included in them. They are Objectivities of a particular kind, given originally in such a way that they presuppose primal presences, whereas they themselves cannot be given in primal presence. Human beings as components of the external world are originally given insofar as they are apprehended as unities of corporeal Bodies and souls. The Bodies which are externally standing over and against me are experienced by me in primal presence just like other things, whereas the interiority of the psychic is experienced in appresence.

In my physical surrounding world I encounter Bodies, i.e., material things of the same type as the material thing constituted in solipsistic experience, “*my Body*”, and I apprehend them as Bodies, that is, I feel by empathy that in them there is an Ego-subject, along with everything that pertains to it...⁹²

This passage gives further insight into Husserl’s notion of the secondary experience we have of others mentioned in *FTL*. What I have in primary experience is another material thing that I experience *as* another Body, i.e., as another lived-body. I therefore experience them as having a mental life of their own, one that I presuppose to be similar to mine, but I experience this subjectivity in a secondary fashion by way of empathy. What is more, I do not and cannot experience the content of their mental life. I only experience them as having a mental life, and empathy appears to be the condition for experiencing objects as having a *Seelenleben*. Most importantly, if I did not constitute others in this way, then, according to Husserl, I could not experience the actual Objective world.

Husserl writes that other psychophysical entities as constituted in experience point back to a transcendental ego in a way similar to how my psyche does. I have privileged, primary experience of myself, and this is what allows me to affirm the existence of my pure ego. I lack this in the case of other subjects. In fact, as we have stated a number of times, Husserl thinks that the mental lives of others are necessarily inaccessible to me. If they were not, then the other would not be alien to me, and thus would not be genuinely other. At *FTL* §102, Husserl repeats that:

other subjects, as transcendental, are not given, within the bounds of my ego, in the manner in which my ego itself is given for me, in actually immediate experience, and that at its first and fundamental level, the systematic structure of a transcendental phenomenology is free to lay claim to other egos solely as

⁹² Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.171-172 <163-164>.

parenthesized, as ‘phenomena’, and not yet as transcendental actualities. Thus, at this *fundamental level*, a remarkable transcendental discipline arises as the *intrinsically first transcendental discipline*, one that is actually *transcendental-solipsistic*.⁹³

The world is constituted solipsistically, but it is not constituted as solipsistic. It is constituted as an intersubjective, shared world. This world is shared by *actually existing* other subjects, but here ‘actually’ does not designate their existence in-themselves. It means that, by empathy, I do experience other lived-bodies, other subjects. I also constitute objects in the world not merely as spatio-temporal objects but as cultural-historical objects that are dependent on others. Higher levels of phenomenological analysis are necessary in order to fully explain this. But again, none of this constitutes a metaphysical argument for the existence of other subjects in-themselves.

2.6 *The Non-Ego*

The Objective world is a world that I do not own like I do my inner, first world. It is the world of *possible* experience, of experiences not yet actualized by me. While the external world receives its entire being-sense from me, it is not constituted as my own.⁹⁴ Husserl ends the discussion of other subjects in §96a by stating that the constitution of other subjects makes possible the constitution of the Objective world in the sense of a “world of the *non-Ego*, of what is other than my Ego’s own.”⁹⁵ He continues:

All Objectivity, in this sense, is related back constitutionally to the *first affair that is other than my Ego’s own*, the other-than-my-Ego’s-own in the form, someone “else” – that is to say: the non-Ego in the form, “another Ego”.⁹⁶

Within my transcendental ego’s primordial sphere of ownness, there is a motivational foundation for the constitution of genuine transcendencies, things that are “other” than me.

⁹³ Husserl, *FTL*, p.270 <238>

⁹⁴ In the ‘Fourth Meditation’ Husserl states that the ego constitutes within itself, “something ‘other’, something ‘Objective’, and thus constitutes everything without exception that ever has for him, in the Ego, existential status as non-Ego.” (Husserl, *CM*, p.85 <118>)

⁹⁵ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>

⁹⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>

This first arises in me in the form of another Ego, or an *alter ego*. However, Husserl does little to explain this move in the *FTL*.

In the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ Husserl elaborates on this same point in greater detail. He writes that, in connection with the constitution of egos that are not part of my concrete being:

there occurs a *universal super-addition of sense to my primordial world*, whereby the latter becomes the *appearance ‘of’* a determinate ‘Objective’ world, as the identical world for everyone, myself included. Accordingly *the intrinsically first other* (the first ‘non-Ego’) *is the other Ego*. And the other Ego makes constitutionally possible a new infinite domain of what is ‘other’: an *Objective Nature* and a whole Objective world, to which all other Egos and I myself belong. This constitution, arising on the basis of the ‘*pure*’ others (the other Egos who as yet have no worldly sense), is essentially such that the ‘others’-for-me do not remain isolated; on the contrary, an *Ego-community*, which includes me, becomes constituted (in my sphere of ownness, naturally) as a community of Egos existing with each other and for each other ultimately a community of monads, which, moreover, (in its communalized intentionality) constitutes the one identical world.⁹⁷

It seems here that it is the pure possibility of there being other Egos and, therefore, of there being something that does not belong to my sphere of primordial ownness, that makes it possible to constitute a transcendent world. Thus, within my own consciousness, the possibility of an Objective world results from the possibility that there is an open, unending multiplicity of other subjects, and thus an infinite number of possible perspectives, which converge to co-constitute the same world. This argument appears to compliment Husserl’s other assertions about the transcendental sense of the Objective world and of other subjects. Here we see Husserl’s argument for the community of monads, each of whom constitutes the entire Objective world, including others, within their own monad, but that each monad constitutes the same world with all the others included within it. Perhaps this is why at *FTL* §103, Husserl writes that:

every existent is relative to transcendental subjectivity. Transcendental subjectivity alone, on the other hand, exists “*in itself and for itself*”; and it exists, in itself and for itself, in a hierarchical order corresponding to the constitution that leads to the different levels of transcendental intersubjectivity. First of all, then, as ego I am absolutely existent in myself and for myself. I exist for another existent, only in so far as it is *someone* else,

⁹⁷ Husserl, *CM*, p.107 <137>

another ego, himself a transcendental subjectivity - who, however, becomes necessarily posited in me as the ego already existing beforehand for himself. In a similar fashion, transcendental intersubjectivity (in the amplified sense), which is constituted (in me, and hence relatively to me) as a plurality of “egos” each of whom is legitimately accepted as intentionally related to the *same* intersubjectivity along with me - this intersubjectivity, according to its sense, also exists, *mutatis mutandis*, “in itself and for itself.”⁹⁸

I will leave the details of Husserl’s intersubjective monadology to be dealt with at a later time.

The point of this argument regarding the non-Ego, as well as the ones pertaining to the Objectivity of the world and the existence of other subjects, is to say that the problem of solipsism as it applies to Husserl, both here and in his other writings, is not the problem of demonstrating the existence in-themselves of other transcendental egos, even if the Objective world has the categorial form of existing for everyone. In the first place, all objects of cognition relate back to me myself as the constituting ego that precedes the being of the transcendent world and of everything in it, including other subjects. The problem is, as Husserl explicitly states, as follows:

To understand how my transcendental ego, the primitive basis for everything that I accept as existent, can constitute within himself another transcendental ego, and then too an open plurality of such egos – ‘other’ egos, absolutely inaccessible to my ego in their original being, and yet cognizable (for me) as existing and as being thus and so.⁹⁹

This is a constitutional or transcendental problem that phenomenology needs to explain, not a metaphysical one.

2.7 Solipsism as a “*Transcendental Illusion*”

In *FTL* §96 Husserl claims that the transcendental phenomenological analysis of the constitution of the Objective world is, at the same time, an attempt at dissolving:

the *transcendental illusion* that from the outset misleads, and usually paralyzes any attempt to start a consistent transcendental philosophy: the illusion that such a philosophy must lead to transcendental solipsism. If everything I can ever accept as existent is constituted in my ego,

⁹⁸ Husserl, *FTL*, p.273 <241>

⁹⁹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.239-240<212>

then everything that exists does indeed seem to be a mere moment of my own transcendental being.¹⁰⁰

Stemming from the claim that everything that exists, including the external world and other subjects, receives its entire being-sense and is constituted in my ego is the *transcendental illusion* [*transzendentalen Schein*] of solipsism. Husserl's choice of words here is worth paying close attention to, as this is a clear reference to Kant. While Bachelard makes no reference to transcendental illusion in her commentary on *FTL*, Lohmar does. He points to a parallel passage from the *CM*:

The *illusion* of a solipsism is dissolved, even though the proposition that everything existing for me must derive its existential sense exclusively from me myself, from my sphere of consciousness retains its validity and fundamental importance. Phenomenological transcendental idealism has presented itself as a monadology, which...draws its content purely from phenomenological explication of the transcendental experience laid open by transcendental reduction, accordingly from the most originary evidence, wherein all conceivable evidences must be grounded or from the most originary legitimacy, which is the source of all legitimacies and, in particular, all legitimacies of knowledge.¹⁰¹

In both texts cited, Husserl claims two things: 1) that solipsism is a transcendental illusion resulting from the fundamental insight of transcendental idealism, and 2) that a phenomenological explication of experience will ultimately dissolve this illusion.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.241 <213>

¹⁰¹ Husserl, *CM*, p.150 <176-177>. Lohmar himself writes: „Der Schein des Solipsismus, der jeder transzendentalen Bewusstseinsphilosophie droht, die es mit dem Anfang im einzelnen Bewusstsein ernst meint, löst sich somit in der Durchführung der intentionalen Analyse auf (vgl. Hua I,§ 62). Der Solipsismus bestände in der Ansicht, dass, weil sich alles Seiende in meinem transzendentalen Ego konstituiert, all dieses Seiende ein bloßes unselbstständiges Moment meines eigenen transzendentalen Bewusstseins wäre. Husserl nennt diese Ansicht einen 'transzendentalen Schein' [248:20-29]. Die Auflösung dieses Scheins beginnt mit der systematischen Aufklärung der Konstitutionsstufen des Anderen.“ (Lohmar, *Edmund Husserls 'Formale und Transzendente Logik'*, p.179)

¹⁰² Eugen Fink talks about the “transcendental illusion” in his famous Kant-studien essay. See Eugen Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Philosophy,” in *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings*, ed. RO Elveton, p.142-145. Fink describes this illusion of a three-fold paradox, the details of which we will not discuss here.

Kant presents his doctrine of transcendental illusion [*transzendentalen Schein/illusion*] as the first section of the Transcendental dialectic, which is the second division of his Transcendental Logic.¹⁰³ Transcendental illusions arise when we take principles that apply to experience and extend them beyond the boundaries of possible experience; when we take “a subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts...for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves.”¹⁰⁴ According to Kant, these sorts of illusions are responsible for many of the problems in traditional metaphysics, namely, the hypostatization of ideas such as God, the soul, and the external world, and the attempt to gain knowledge of a transcendent object by means of a transcendental principle. Kant sought to expose such illusions, although, like sensory illusions, exposing them does not make their appearance go away. Given that in the *FTL* Husserl is concerned with distancing his transcendental idealism from speculative metaphysics, it is no wonder that he references Kant’s doctrine of transcendental illusion, since this was the means by which Kant set out to reject metaphysics.

Husserl’s claim is that the transcendental illusion of solipsism arises from the fact that everything I experience, including the world for everyone and actual other subjects, receive their entire being-sense from my effective intentionality and point back originarily to my constituting consciousness. This is a result of the intentionality of consciousness. As Levinas writes in Husserl’s defense:

Solipsism is neither an aberration nor a sophism; it is the very structure of reason...The intentionality of consciousness allows me to distinguish the ego from things, but it does not make solipsism disappear...[Reason] renders us master of the external world but is incapable of discovering a peer for us there...Reason is alone. And in this sense knowledge never encounters anything truly other in the world. This is the profound truth of idealism.¹⁰⁵

In the case of other subjects, there is a certain epistemic solipsism, but one that is neither surprising nor problematic. The *illusion* of a problem appears when we attempt to make the inference from this transcendental principle to support some sort of metaphysical conclusion. In particular, we arrive at solipsism when we take other subjects to be a kind of *object* that

¹⁰³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.384-393, [A293/B249 – A309/B366]

¹⁰⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.386 [A297/B354]

¹⁰⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p.65-68. Translation modified.

exist-in-themselves, and then conclude that no such objects can exist. In this case it is not that we are led to hypostatize some metaphysical entity or to make some knowledge claim about something that exists in-itself. Rather, the problem is that the transcendental principle seems to annihilate transcendencies altogether, and assert only the existence of a single transcendental ego. However, Husserl argues that this is incorrect, even if this conclusion is natural and unavoidable based on our natural tendency to conceive the world in realist terms.

Husserl's transcendental idealism does not annihilate transcendencies, it merely attempts to clarify the possible sense of such entities. While it seems paradoxical that the Objective world *for everyone* points back originally to my own constituting consciousness, to a world that is *for me*, Husserl's analysis is meant to show that there is no paradox here at all. Whether or not Husserl is successful in dissolving this illusion depends on the strength of his transcendental theories of Objectivity, intersubjectivity, and empathy, the latter two he leaves to develop in the *CM*. But Husserl's analysis of Objectivity, as presented in the *FTL* is meant to give a general framework for resolving such issues, and to convey to the reader that while phenomenological investigations may start from a transcendental solipsistic standpoint, that phenomenology seems to result in metaphysical solipsism is only an illusion. Husserl ends §96 by stating that: "We must rest content here with having made at least roughly understandable the confusingly involved problems of intersubjectivity and worldly Objectivity."¹⁰⁶

Perhaps we can elucidate what Husserl means when he says that (metaphysical) solipsism is a transcendental illusion. Husserl argues that possible other transcendental egos are a necessary condition of the possibility of my experiencing an external world. I cannot constitute an object in space and time without also constituting it as intersubjective, that is, as *being there* for other cognizing subjects like myself. There is no countersense in the existence of other transcendental subjects, however, such subjects in-themselves are never anything for me. Actual other subjects, whom I constitute in experience as other psycho-physical objects but not as transcendental egos in-themselves, are necessary for my experience of the actual Objective world. If these other actual subjects did not exist, and if they were not possible other transcendental subjects with their own unique perspectives on

¹⁰⁶ Husserl, *FTL*, p.243 <215>

is nothing.”¹⁰⁸ However, instead of shying away from this claim, Husserl set out to defend it against criticism. *FTL* was Husserl’s first prolonged attempt to do so in his published work.

One feature of Husserl’s response to the problem of solipsism that must not be overlooked is that he is *not* attempting to prove the existence in-itself of the external world, *nor* does he attempt to demonstrate the existence in-themselves of other transcendental egos. While the realist might think that Husserl must provide such proofs in order to avoid the problem of solipsism, Husserl first attacks the metaphysical assumptions that underlay this demand. In fact, the whole of Husserl’s response to the problem of solipsism consists of a transcendental phenomenological analysis of how it is that I do cognize an external world and other subjects, and the sense that such existents have for me. What Husserl faces here are constitutional problems, not metaphysical ones. According to Husserl, only by “uncovering of the performance that constitutes the being-sense of the given world can we avoid every countersensical absolutizing of this world’s being,” that is, only by rigorous transcendental self-explication.¹⁰⁹ All the problems of transcendental phenomenology are “problems concerning the ‘range’ of cognition.”¹¹⁰

According to Husserl, the Objective world is constituted within my primary intentional sphere of consciousness as having the categorical form of existing not only *for me*, but *for everyone*. Such a world is, according to Husserl, inherently intersubjective: I cannot cognize an Objective world in any other way. Within this world I also constitute other subjects who have mental-lives that are essentially inaccessible to me. Empathy allows me to constitute objects as having their own mental-lives. Since the transcendental phenomenology argues from my concrete consciousness to pure consciousness as such, then if these so-called other subjects are also capable of cognition, they must constitute within their own primordial intentional spheres the same Objective world that I do. However, other subjects constitute this same world from their own unique perspective. At a higher level, this community of egos co-constitutes the cultural-historical layer of meaning in the world. While the details of these constitutional problems are worked out from the solipsistic standpoint of the meditating ego, this does not appear to result in solipsism at all: it provokes

¹⁰⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.112 <93>

¹⁰⁹ Husserl, *FTL*, p.243 <215>

¹¹⁰ Husserl, *FTL*, p.244 <215>

in us simply the illusion of solipsism. Husserl does not shy away from this dark corner of philosophy; he attempts to shed light on it.

Herman Philipse's views are representative of the common understanding of Husserl on the problem of solipsism. He insists that, "Because Husserl's idealism interprets the world as constituted by each individual consciousness, he had to confront the familiar problems of transcendental solipsism and of intersubjectivity. In spite of Husserl's claim to the contrary, I do not think that he was able to solve these problems, which are typical of idealist ontologies."¹¹¹ The problem with this reading of Husserl is that, in the end, Philipse interprets the problem, and therefore also the possible solutions to it, from within the traditional metaphysical framework that contrasts realism with idealism. On such a picture, the idealist always fails to escape the problem of solipsism unless they posit the existence of ideas in the mind of God, or a pre-established harmony, or some other metaphysical underpinning for their idealism. Husserl will always appear to lose this argument, because it does not take place on terms that he agrees to. That we do not know anything about the world or other subjects as they are in-themselves is not a problem for Husserl. The problem is that the realist has no grounds upon which to assert the existence of mind-independent things-in-themselves in the first place. In fact, such a concept is, according to Husserl, nonsense. I hope that my exegesis of *FTL* along with related texts from Husserl's *Nachlass* have explained why and how the constitutional analyses of Husserl's transcendental idealism aim to move beyond this.

¹¹¹ Herman Philipse, "Transcendental Idealism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. Barry Smith and David W. Smith (1995), p.280.

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3 *Husserl's Phenomenological Idealism and its Early Critics: a response to Celms and Stumpf*¹

The criticisms advanced by Husserl's teacher Carl Stumpf in his posthumously published *Erkenntnislehre* (1939), and Husserl's former student Theodor Celms in *Die phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls* (1928), have been cited as two of the best early criticisms of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.² Each of these texts contains what we might identify as the two main points of attack on transcendental phenomenology as it is presented in *Ideas*: 1) that it does not move beyond descriptive psychology, and 2) that it inevitably leads to some form of solipsism. Such criticisms were common during Husserl's lifetime, especially among the realist phenomenologists, and are still pervasive today.³ By revisiting the work of Celms and Stumpf, and outlining Husserl's assessment of these types of criticisms, we can hopefully put them to rest. We discover that Husserl's critics either impose a psychologistic reading on his phenomenological idealism, similar to the one Husserl often imposes on Kant, or they attempt to reduce his position to a "bad idealism."⁴ By way of response, I show that Husserl's distinction between the empirical/human ego and the transcendental ego, along with his statement that the existence in-themselves of transcendent objects is nonsense, are at the heart of his "special sense" of transcendental idealism.⁵ Elaborating what Husserl says regarding these two points is essential for

¹ I would like to give my thanks to Uldis Vēgners, Guillaume Fréchette, and Trevor Bieber for their suggestions and comments on portions of this paper. Thanks also go to Hanne Jacobs for her comments on an earlier version of this material that was presented at a conference at the University of Oslo in June, 2012, and for allowing me to consult her rough translations of selections from Hua XXXVI. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Rochus Sowa who encouraged me to pursue the guiding themes of this paper.

² Kevin Mulligan, "Searle, Derrida, and the Ends of Phenomenology," in *John Searle*, ed. Barry Smith, p. 283. Why Mulligan chooses Celms and Stumpf specifically, and no one else, he does not say. Nor does he give any indication of why we might juxtapose these two criticisms, other than that he considers them to be "the best."

³ Aside from Celms and Stumpf, Alexander Pfänder, Moritz Geiger, Edith Stein, and Roman Ingarden, were all critical of Husserl's transcendental philosophy. Husserl's Neo-Kantian contemporaries were also critical of his transcendental phenomenology, but for somewhat different reasons. This will be discussed below.

⁴ Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, pp.170-174 <152-155>; *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, pp. 68-70, 86-90, 337-338. The examples Husserl gives of "bad idealism" are Berkeley and Hume – the empiricists. Husserl places Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant in a separate category.

⁵ Husserl's transcendental idealism is distinct from, but expressly in the spirit of, the projects of Kant and Fichte.

understanding *his transcendental theory of intersubjectivity* and, subsequently, of Objectivity, *which is his lasting contribution to transcendental idealism.*

According to the standard interpretation, Husserl's transcendental idealism can be summarized as the thesis that, "the existence of real objects, and thus the existence of the real world, is unthinkable without reference to a consciousness which is currently experiencing them."⁶ The purpose of transcendental phenomenology is, therefore, "a radical *epistemological* clarification of our consciousness of the world [*des erkenntnistheoretisch radikal aufgeklärten Weltbewusstseins*]."⁷ However, the form of idealism we get on the standard interpretation is not universally accepted as a tenable position. For instance, David Bell writes, in an overtly pejorative tone, that the overall framework of *Ideas* is, "transcendental solipsistic idealism. It concerns...the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of objective experience in general; and, it turns out, the conditions on which that possibility depends make no essential ineliminable reference either to the independent existence of an extra-mental world, or to the existence of a plurality of conscious beings."⁸ Husserl's effort to rectify this situation in the 'Fifth Meditation' is the unconvincing and impossible attempt at "a solipsistic escape from solipsism."⁹ In a similar vein, Arthur David Smith asserts that the *Cartesian Meditations* culminate in, "an out-and-out idealism...with which very few today will have any sympathy at all."¹⁰ It is clear that, for many commentators, Husserl's later attempts at clarifying phenomenological idealism still suffer from the sorts of problems Stumpf and Celms encountered in *Ideas*. Husserl was generally unsuccessful in convincing critics of the tenability of his position, and these qualms have not been ameliorated over time. However, if we can successfully waylay the criticisms of Celms and Stumpf, we open up new ways for approaching Husserl's texts on transcendental intersubjectivity. While giving a complete interpretation and defense of Husserl's transcendental idealism is beyond the scope

⁶ „Sie besagt, dass die Existenz von realen Gegenständen und damit die Existenz der realen Welt nicht denkbar ist ohne Bezug auf ein aktuell erfahrendes Bewusstsein.“ (Husserl, Hua XXXVI, p.ix) Rochus Sowa points out that while Husserl defends such a view implicitly from around 1908, he did not explain it in terms of *transcendental idealism* until 1918. This interpretation is endorsed by Roman Ingarden in *On the Motives Which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism* (1963), Iso Kern in *Husserl und Kant* (1964), and Dermot Moran in *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (2005).

⁷ Husserl, Hua XXXVI, p.xix

⁸ David Bell, *Husserl*, p.198

⁹ David Bell, *Husserl*, p.215

¹⁰ A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.107.

of the present work, I will bolster the standard interpretation of Husserl by showing why pure phenomenology does not lapse into solipsism or mere descriptive psychology.

This essay begins with an overview of Husserl's own responses to some of his critics as presented in his 'Epilogue' to *Ideas* and in a paper by Eugen Fink. These two texts offer us a critical apparatus for constructing responses to Celms and Stumpf along lines that Husserl himself would have accepted. Following this, I outline the arguments put forward by Stumpf and Celms respectively, providing the historical background relevant for evaluating them, as well as highlighting their realist biases. First, I argue that the arguments Stumpf gives against pure phenomenology are, at bottom, question-begging, and therefore pose no substantive threat to Husserl. Second, I present a case for regarding Celms as the unnamed critic that the 'Fifth Meditation' is meant to address,¹¹ and argue that while Husserl can easily avoid the traditional problem of solipsism, his transcendental theory of intersubjectivity does not necessarily preclude some form of pluralistic-epistemic solipsism. That is to say, Husserl's theory of empathy does not entail that I have knowledge of other concrete subjects as they are in-themselves. However, unlike Celms, I do not believe this is a problematic result for Husserl. In fact, experience seems to corroborate this result in Husserl's favour.

3.1 The 'Epilogue' to *Ideas*, Fink's *Kant-Studien* paper, & what we can learn from them

Two texts in particular stand out from Husserl's published writings as direct responses to the critics of his mature philosophy, namely his 1931 'Epilogue' to *Ideas*,¹² and Eugen Fink's 1933 *Kant-Studien* paper, to which Husserl attached his own name. It is no surprise that these responses appear only late in Husserl's career. It is at this time that Husserl finally felt able to present his philosophy as a system rather than merely a sketch of a larger project, as is evidenced by the outlines for his unrealized *System of Phenomenological Philosophy* from 1930.¹³ Husserl did not publish any explicit responses to the pieces by Celms or Stumpf that

¹¹ To my knowledge, no one in the literature has made this connection.

¹² Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.405-430; Hua V, p.138-162.

¹³ Had Husserl's essay "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy" (1924) been published in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologie* as planned, it would be included here as well. The fact that it

we will discuss below. However, his responses to other early critics can be used as a guide for constructing arguments on Husserl's behalf, following the methods he himself employed. They also help clarify some key concepts that can be employed in framing a response to Celms and Stumpf, concepts that were not made clear in *Ideas* or "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" (1911). What is more, they provide us with a sense of the historical context out of which the criticisms of Celms and Stumpf arose, along with some of the underlying assumptions that contributed to their misunderstandings of pure phenomenology. Discussing the 'Epilogue' to *Ideas* and the Fink essay is therefore an important step in addressing Husserl's unsympathetic readers. In particular, they show us that Husserl's early critics had difficulty interpreting both the *phenomenological reduction* and the theory of *constitution*. Much of this confusion stemmed from their attempt to reconcile the theory presented in *Ideas* with that of the *Logical Investigations*.

Husserl is not explicit as to which critics he has in mind when writing his 'Epilogue' to *Ideas*, although it is likely that the essay is, at least in part, a reply to a series of articles by Georg Misch from 1929/30.¹⁴ However, Husserl's responses are quite far reaching, taking aim at those of his contemporaries whom he took to be engaged in philosophically vacuous projects of psychologism and anthropologism.¹⁵ Husserl writes about, "the general misunderstandings which have obscured the true sense of...transcendental phenomenology. Under the spell of the thinking habitual in the philosophical tradition, people overlook what is radically new in this phenomenology as to its method and field of research."¹⁶ This radical new shift in thinking results from the 'discovery' of the phenomenological-transcendental

was not published perhaps confirms that Husserl waited to respond to his critics in print until after he felt confident that he could present his philosophy as a systematic whole. This, of course, does not discount the importance of that text for understanding Husserl's transcendental philosophy.

¹⁴ Georg Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie. Eine Auseinandersetzung der Diltheyschen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl* (1931). Husserl gives a veiled allusion to Misch early in the essay, referring to the "Philosophy of Life [*Lebensphilosophie*]."

¹⁵ This covers a wide range of thought, from the school of Brentano (see p.427) and the realist phenomenologists, to the Neo-Kantians, to Dilthey, and even Heidegger. We will not go through the rigmarole of explaining each of these topics here, as it is not necessary for our present purposes.

¹⁶ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.405.

reduction, and with it the breakthrough to transcendental philosophy.¹⁷ Husserl warns that his critics have failed to grasp the meaning of this important move and its implications.

Admittedly, the presentation of Husserl's mature thought in the first volume of *Ideas* lacks a proper discussion of the foundations of his phenomenological idealism, as well as "an explicit taking of a position on the problem of transcendental solipsism, the problem of transcendental intersubjectivity."¹⁸ In other words, the *Ideas* lack any substantial account of the objectivity of the world, and appears to collapse into a dogmatic and subjective form of idealism. Because of this, Husserl's work was understood as falling victim to what Kant had called the "scandal of philosophy": the inability to offer a satisfactory proof of the existence of an external world.¹⁹ Husserl lamented that the "scandal" caused by the idealism nascent in *Ideas* and its alleged solipsism "considerably impeded [its] reception."²⁰ In the face of this, Husserl insisted that, "the objection of solipsism would never have been raised, given a deeper understanding of my presentation, as an objection against phenomenological idealism itself; the objection would only be against my incomplete presentation of it."²¹ Husserl was thus aware that these issues were potentially problematic, but was also confident that they could be overcome.

Phenomenology, as it is presented in *Ideas*, is only a sketch of a comprehensive research project and its methodology, rather than a complete and systematic theory. Husserl stressed this point repeatedly in the original text.²² This point aside, Husserl uses the 'Epilogue' to *Ideas* as an occasion to argue that the objection of metaphysical solipsism against his theory lacks any intelligible meaning given a proper understanding of the phenomenological-transcendental reduction.

In *Ideas*, Husserl argues that the phenomenological reduction, or the "bracketing" of our naive acceptance of the natural world, reveals that the world and all of its objects have no

¹⁷ The reduction(s) will be described in more detail later on in the present work.

¹⁸ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.417.

¹⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.121-122 [Bxxxix-Bxli].

²⁰ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.417.

²¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.418.

²² See, for example, *Ideas* §§55, 61, 140 and 153.

absolute or “real” existence.²³ By the universal application of the *epoché*, “*We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being: thus the whole natural world* (which is continually “there for us”, “on hand,” and which will always remain there according to consciousness as an “actuality” even if we choose to parenthesize it).”²⁴ “With a single stroke,” Husserl later adds, “we parenthesize the realm of the in-itself and everything in itself.”²⁵

The phenomenological reduction, Husserl explains, does not bring into doubt the “factual being” of the world. It merely sets aside, or neutralizes any judgments about this factual being. From the phenomenological standpoint, all objects have an intentional existence, insofar as they are immanent objects of experience and thus they exist *for* a subject, but they are nothing beyond this, or, at least, nothing that we can cognize. Here we see the basis for what Roman Ingarden calls the “fundamental thesis” of Husserl’s transcendental idealism:

what is real is nothing but a constituted noematic unity (individual) of a special kind of sense which in its being and quality (*Sosein*) results from a set of experiences of a special kind and is quite impossible without them. Entities of this kind exist only for the pure transcendental ego which experiences such a set of perceptions. The existence of what is perceived (of the perceived as such) is nothing “in itself” (*an sich*) but only something “for somebody,” for the experiencing ego. “*Streichen wir das reine Bewusstsein, so streichen wir die Welt*” (“If we exclude pure consciousness then we exclude the world”) is the famous thesis of Husserlian transcendental idealism which he was already constantly repeating in lectures during his Göttingen period.²⁶

In other words, the radical aspect of the phenomenological reduction consists in the observation that all being is nothing other than intentionally constituted being. All objects receive their entire being-sense from consciousness.

²³ “Reality is not in itself something absolute which becomes tied secondarily to something else; rather, in the absolute sense, it is nothing at all; it has no ‘absolute essence’ whatever; it has the essentiality of something which, of necessity, is *only* intentional, *only* an object of consciousness...” (Husserl, *Ideas*, p.113 <94>)

²⁴ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.61 <56>. Translation modified.

²⁵ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.61n29. Note added in *Copy A* (annotated 1913-1929), and is consistent with further additions to this section made in *Copy D* (1929).

²⁶ Ingarden, *On the Motives Which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism*, p.21

Husserl believes that pure phenomenology is poised to realize the ideal of philosophy as a rigorous science, as a “universal and absolutely foundational science.” Pure phenomenology is the “final form of transcendental philosophy,”²⁷ where transcendental philosophy is defined as the epistemological endeavour of inquiring back into the ultimate source and ground of all formations of knowledge, the *ego*, and investigating its relation to the world.²⁸ Thus, the foundation of pure phenomenology is *transcendental subjectivity* – “the primordial locus of all meaning-giving and validation of being”²⁹ – which the reduction opens up for the first time as the theme of investigation. The task of the *Ideas* is to outline:

an ‘*a priori*’ science...which lays claim to the factual field of experience, of transcendental subjectivity and its factual lived experiences, but which takes them into account merely as pure possibilities, placing them beside pure intuitive possibilities that have been varied completely *ad libitum*, and then extrapolating, as their ‘*a priori*,’ the indissoluble essential structure of transcendental subjectivity pervading all the free variations.³⁰

According to Husserl, pure or transcendental phenomenology is a science that investigates the “*a priori*” structures of transcendental subjectivity, by arguing from appearances, taken first in phenomenological reflection as “pure possibilities” and then as “transcendental clues”, to the universal conditions of the possibility of all objects of cognition. This results in a radical clarification of the meaning-bestowing intentional structures out of which consciousness constitutes its objects.

Husserl is charged with being a solipsist due to his denial that there is any meaningful sense to the notion of a mind-independent external world – a claim which lies at the heart of his phenomenological idealism. In particular, *Ideas* §49 fuelled many of the criticisms aimed at Husserl’s phenomenological idealism. Herein we find the notorious passage where Husserl claims the external world is nothing more than a unified multiplicity of appearances for some consciousness.

[C]onsciousness considered in its “*purity*” must be held to be a self-contained *complex of being*, a complex of *absolute being* into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can slip, to which nothing is

²⁷ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 70.

²⁸ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p.97-98.

²⁹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.406.

³⁰ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.409.

spatiotemporally external and which cannot [itself] be within any spatiotemporal complex, which cannot be affected by any physical thing and cannot exercise causation upon any physical thing – it being presupposed that causality has the normal sense of causality pertaining to Nature as a relationship of dependence between realities.

On the other hand, the whole *spatiotemporal world*, which includes [the] human being and the human Ego as subordinate single realities is, *according to its sense, a merely intentional being*, thus one has the merely secondary sense of a being *for* a consciousness. It is a being posited by consciousness in its experiences which, of essential necessity, can be determined and intuited only as something identical belonging to motivated multiplicities of appearances: *beyond that it is nothing.*³¹

Here Husserl makes a number of bold claims that seem to commit him to some form of solipsism. First, the transcendental ego is characterized as a monad, that is, a self-contained unit into which nothing can penetrate and from which nothing can escape. Second, he bolsters this claim by asserting there is no “outside” of consciousness from which something could penetrate or into which anything could escape. He also argues that the transcendental ego itself is not a part of the world – it is prior to the world. The world, along with me myself in the world as a *human ego* and a *human being*, is the harmonious achievement of constituting consciousness. Finally, Husserl claims that the external world and all the objects in it have merely intentional being, that is, they exist *for* a consciousness as essentially unified multiplicities of appearance.³² Beyond this, worldly objects are “nothing,” by which he means that their being anything beyond being-for-a-consciousness is “a countersensical thought.”³³ Only the pure, transcendental ego exists absolutely. What is so “radical” in Husserl is, as Dermot Moran puts it, “the recognition of sense-giving (*Sinngebung*) and constitution everywhere at work, and this recognition is possible only through rigorous and vigilant application of the *epoché*.”³⁴

The ‘Epilogue’ to *Ideas* attempts to explain how the charge of solipsism against the position outlined above is simply absurd. Transcendental phenomenology neither aims at nor needs to provide a proof of the existence in-itself of a mind-independent external world. It is

³¹ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.112 <93>

³² The appearances are said to be *constituted* rather than *caused*, since the latter implies the existence of mind independent things-in-themselves.

³³ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.112 <93>.

³⁴ Moran, *Edmund Husserl*, p.187

not a skeptical position with respect to the external world *per se*. Husserl's phenomenology aims to systematically uncover the *sense* of the external world taken as phenomena, as a constitutional achievement of intentional consciousness. It seeks to do so as a genuinely presuppositionless and autonomous science of phenomena, the science proper to philosophy, something he felt none of the various philosophical "systems" and "trends" before his were able to do.³⁵ According to Husserl, this had been the aim of philosophy since Plato, and what the realisms and the idealisms following Descartes failed to achieve.

One point which critics seemed to overlook is that transcendental phenomenology is not at all concerned with traditional metaphysical questions.³⁶ What is more, the charge of solipsism against phenomenology rests on a dichotomy between realism and idealism that the *epoché* dispels. This has led to the characterization of phenomenology as an out-and-out *idealism*, rather than *transcendental idealism* – which Husserl believes is primarily an epistemological endeavour.³⁷ Husserl writes:

[W]e must not fail to clarify expressly the fundamental and essential distinction between transcendental-phenomenological idealism versus that idealism against which realism battles as against its forsworn opponent. Above all: phenomenological idealism does not deny the actual existence of the real world...as if it maintained that the world were mere semblance...Its sole task and accomplishment is to clarify the sense of this world, precisely the sense in which everyone accepts it-and rightly so-as actually existing. That the world exists...is entirely beyond doubt. But it is quite another matter to understand this indubitability...and to clarify the ground of its legitimacy.³⁸

The task of transcendental phenomenology is thus to uncover the universal *a priori* conditions of all possible cognition, and in this way clarify the *sense* of the objects of cognition, not to argue for or against their "existence." But whatever the particular *being-sense* of individual objects might be, objects only have such a sense with reference to some transcendental subjectivity.³⁹ Husserl's remarks in *Cartesian Meditations* help to put this in perspective:

³⁵ Husserl, *Ideas II*, pp.428-429

³⁶ Husserl, *Ideas II*, pp.419-420

³⁷ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.66 <60>

³⁸ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.420

³⁹ "The result of the phenomenological sense-clarification of the mode of being of the real world, and of any conceivable real world at all, is that only the being of transcendental subjectivity has the sense of absolute

This idealism is not a product of sportive argumentations, a prize to be won in the dialectical contest with “realisms”. It is sense-explication achieved by actual work, an explication carried out as regards every type of existent ever conceivable by me, the ego, and specifically as regards the transcendency actually given to me beforehand through experience: Nature, culture, the world as a whole. But that signifies: systematic uncovering of the constituting intentionality itself. The proof of this idealism is therefore phenomenology itself. Only someone who misunderstands either the deepest sense of intentional method, or that of transcendental reduction, or perhaps both, can attempt to separate phenomenology from transcendental idealism.⁴⁰

Phenomenological idealism is not the product of a struggle between realism and idealism. It is the result of phenomenological analysis, which is the methodology of a transcendental philosophy that brackets both the real and the ideal in order to understand their sense, not to champion one over the other. Because, as it would seem, critics have not properly understood the phenomenological reduction, they have also not understood the sense of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. As a result, no matter how well motivated or researched these critics might consider their arguments against transcendental phenomenology to be, Husserl finds that he “cannot acknowledge any kind of justification to the objections that have been advanced [by them]: e.g., my intellectualism, the miring of my methodic procedure in abstract one-sidedness, my failure, in general and in principle, to touch upon original-concrete, practical-active subjectivity, and my skirting of the so-called problems of ‘Existence’ as well as metaphysical problems.”⁴¹

Not long after the appearance of the ‘Epilogue’ to *Ideas*, Husserl’s assistant Eugen Fink set out to address the criticisms made against phenomenology by Heinrich Rickert’s students in his essay „*Die phänomenologische philosophie Edmund Husserls in der*

being...whereas the real world indeed exists, but has an essential relativity to transcendental subjectivity, due, namely, to the fact that it can have its sense as being only as an intentional sense-formation of transcendental subjectivity.” (Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.420, translation modified.) When discussing the *being-sense* of objects, Husserl is not always clear on the distinction between the conditions of the possibility of experience of that object and the conceptual categories that that individual object of cognition is subsumed under. However, this distinction need not concern us here.

⁴⁰ Husserl, *CM*, p.86 <118-119>

⁴¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.407

gegenwärtigen Kritik.⁴² In Husserl's preface to the article, he writes that Fink's essay "contains no sentence which I could not completely accept as my own or openly acknowledge as my own conviction."⁴³ Though it is likely that such a strong endorsement was a result of political rather than intellectual motivations, we will look at Fink's essay to better understand the divisions between Husserl and his early critics.⁴⁴ What is more, Fink makes a methodological point near the beginning of his paper that we will keep in mind throughout our discussions. While every philosopher reserves the right to judge other and opposing philosophical standpoints, criticism is only legitimate insofar as the philosophy to be criticized is first understood on its own terms and from its own perspective.⁴⁵

There are a number of points that Fink attacks in his paper, and it is difficult to present them in a systematic way. It is also hard at times to tell which voice Fink is writing in: that of Husserl's critics, or that of an apologist. However, his responses are far more pointed than the one offered by Husserl himself. Fink is concerned that the Southwest Neo-Kantians have misunderstood the relationship between phenomenology and the critical philosophy of Kant, the *phenomenological reduction* and Husserl's theory of *constitution*, the difference between *descriptive psychology* and *transcendental phenomenology*, and the theory of *intentionality*. The root cause of these confusions, according to Fink, is their

⁴² We will not discuss the relationship between Husserl and Rickert here. But one should note that the two were mutually critical of one another: Husserl in his lectures on *Nature and Spirit* (Hua XXXII), and Rickert in 'Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie' (1909), 'Die Methode der Philosophie und das Unmittelbare' (1923), and *Die Philosophie des Lebens* (1920). In the latter, Rickert is critical of Husserl's notion of "immediate 'seeing'" from *Ideas* §19. We should also note that Rickert's son, Heinrich Rickert Jr., studied with Husserl in Göttingen.

⁴³ Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in R.O. Elveton, *The Phenomenology of Husserl*, p. 74. In a latter note to the text, Husserl writes: ("It is quite necessary to come to terms with these critiques - all the more so as the undeniable imperfections in my own presentations...are as responsible for misunderstandings as the presuppositions embodied in those viewpoints by which the critics of phenomenology consciously or unconsciously allow themselves to be led." (Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology 1928-1938* (2004), p.330)

⁴⁴ Despite the many insightful remarks that Fink makes in this essay, it is not entirely compatible with transcendental phenomenology as Husserl had presented it. Fink himself was surprised by Husserl's glowing endorsement, since the essay was meant it as a veiled criticism as well as a defense. He was challenging Husserl's position, though in a sympathetic way. Because of this, some of the passages in Fink's essay disagree not so much with my interpretation of Husserl's position, but with the tenability of such a position. But this is not the place to discuss these matters in detail. My aim here is to draw out only what is useful from Fink's essay for our present purposes. (For more on the history of Fink's *Kant-Studien* paper, see Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*, pp.44-47; pp.107-108; p.553)

⁴⁵ Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," p.75. Fink notes that in the specific case of Husserl the question is whether or not the core content of phenomenology can be understood and evaluated without first performing the phenomenological reduction.

attempt to reconcile *Ideas* with the *Logical Investigations*. Such an approach to understanding pure phenomenology is doomed to fail.⁴⁶

According to Fink, the Neo-Kantians take the main “point of departure” between their project and phenomenology to be one of method. They are convinced that the methodological principles which guide the entire development of Husserl’s thought remain virtually unchanged from the time he authored the *Logical Investigations*. Based on such an interpretive strategy, they claim that, “phenomenology, being solely a pre-philosophical science of what is immediately given...is ‘dogmatic’ and ‘unscientific’.”⁴⁷ If phenomenology limits itself to discussing the “things themselves” as they are given to us in experience, then it results in *intuitionism* and *ontologism*, whereby subjective phenomena are hypostatized and taken as the foundation of knowledge. Their claim is that Husserl does not and cannot escape the realist phenomenology presented in the *Logical Investigations*; that his mature thought reverts back to this position despite Husserl’s efforts to establish it as a form of transcendental idealism. They assert that “phenomenology’s inability to raise the philosophical question concerning the possibility of the theoretical object, a question which transcends all evident self-givenness, and its inability to answer this question, proves it to be a dogmatic philosophy...its dogmatism is shown in a very elementary fashion by its direct postulation of beings as independent of the subject, in its view of things as ‘things in themselves.’”⁴⁸ Phenomenology thus represents a pre-Kantian philosophy that dogmatically upholds a form of realism where things-in-themselves are given to us directly in experience, and that it does not coincide with critical philosophy.

On Fink’s reading, the Southwest schoolmen find that Husserl fails to address the fundamental problem of philosophy, that being “the relationship of the *a priori* structures of being (which hold theoretically) to the non-empirical “epistemological ego” (the “transcendental apperception”), which is *prior* to all experience and which makes experience possible. The orientation toward and mastery of this problem determine the “scientific”

⁴⁶ I find it wrongheaded to think that one can use the *Logical Investigations* only as a guide to understanding Husserl’s work, even if one thinks that the “seeds” from which *Ideas* germinated can be found in it. Instead, as Fink insists, we are better off to interpret the *Logical Investigations* in light of the *Ideas*.

⁴⁷ Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” p.75

⁴⁸ Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” p.80

character of a philosophy.”⁴⁹ But Husserl *does* seek to answer this problem, or at least one similar to it. Fink writes that the *intentional analysis* and descriptive psychology we find in the first edition of the *Logical Investigations* is, “in a broad sense...an exhibiting of the “conditions for the possibility” of the givenness of an object in experience.”⁵⁰ Even in its early stages Husserl saw phenomenology as a broadening of the Kantian project: “We are plainly concerned with a quite necessary generalization of the question as to the ‘conditions of the possibility of experience’ ...with the *a priori* conditions of knowledge.”⁵¹ However, for Husserl and the Neo-Kantians, this question took on a different meaning. After the transcendental turn brought about by the discovery of the reduction, the basic problem of phenomenology became the *origin of the world* along with all of its lived features and meaning acceptances, the conditions of the possibility of all types of experience, rather than merely the *a priori* forms of the sensibly intuited world. On this point, Husserl considered himself to be working more in the spirit of Kant than the Kantians. As Kant had himself pointed out, the critique of pure reason is only the first step in transcendental idealism. Husserl’s phenomenology is the second, or perhaps a more radical first step in this direction.

While phenomenology might begin with a descriptive analysis of the immanently given contents of experience, which we find already laced with meaning, transcendental phenomenology attempts to move beyond this. Phenomenology moves from the world’s concrete being-for-me, to the conditions of the possibility of such being in general, and to the intersubjective constitution of the world.

Comprehensive intentional analyses are necessary in order to be able to understand the inner structure of the world’s being-for-us, this immensely complicated complex of acceptances which is in constant metamorphosis. Not only must we analyze the actual and potential positings of being which belong to our own experience together with the acquisitions of acceptances and the components of habitual opinions which originate with these positings, but also we must above all consider the multiple modes of our taking over acceptances from the experience of others, and so forth.⁵²

⁴⁹ Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” p.80

⁵⁰ Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” p.86

⁵¹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. I, p.149-150

⁵² Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” p.108.

The concrete phenomena are taken as “transcendental clues” from which we can uncover the universal *a priori* conditions of all possible experience – to a science of the pure transcendental ego as such.⁵³ While the *Ideas* might focus on such intentional analysis, this is simply because it is the necessary precursor to *constitutive analysis*. Criticism, however, interprets the notion of *constitution* in Husserlian phenomenology as a hypostatization of intentional objects, and leads to transcendental realism. If phenomenology is a return to “the things themselves” as Husserl had stipulated in the *Logical Investigations*, then phenomenology is, despite its best efforts, still a dogmatic and uncritical realism.

The above confusion regarding Husserl’s theory of constitution highlights the crucial problem with attempting to read *Ideas* in light of the *Logical Investigations*. From the standpoint of *Ideas*, phenomena are the “things themselves”, and are simply *what they are, as they are, for me* – constitutional or *synthetic* achievements of consciousness. What they might be “in-themselves” however is not a question that concerns the phenomenologist. In fact, the metaphysical question of what the intentional objects might be “in-themselves” is nonsensical from the phenomenological standpoint. This is compatible with the notion that intentional objects bespeak the world so long as we do not presume that the world is one of things-in-themselves. Dermot Moran correctly points out that, “Husserl’s idealism...is primarily concerned with the inability to conceive of an object independent of a subject. One must rather think of the object as constituted out of activities and structures of consciousness, according to predetermined essential laws. Husserl’s first published version of this argument is in *Ideen I* §§49-50. There is absolutely no sense to the notion of ‘thing in itself’.”⁵⁴ The version of transcendental idealism present by Husserl in *Ideas* maintains that it is impossible to conceive of an object without relation to some actual or possible subject. He rejects outright the Kantian metaphysical thing-in-itself. There is simply no sense to such a thing. Despite Husserl’s admitted admiration of Kant, he argues that transcendental philosophy must abolish the metaphysical elements of Kant’s system.

⁵³ In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl writes that he is “quite unable to find this ego, this primitive necessary centre of relations.” (Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, v.2, p.92) However, after coming under the influence of Paul Natorp, Husserl proclaims: “I have since managed to find it.” Husserl is also quick to point out that this transcendental ego must be kept distinct from the human ego. Despite his influence on Husserl’s mature thought, Natorp wrote a critical review of *Ideas* for *Logos* in 1917/18, but we shall not go into the details of that review here.

⁵⁴ Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.180.

[W]e must from the outset go beyond all of the, in the worst sense of the word, ‘metaphysical’ stock elements of the critique of reason (like the doctrine of the thing-in-itself, the doctrine of *intellectus archetypus*, the mythology of the transcendental apperception, or of the “consciousness in general,” etc.), that oppose the phenomenological transcendentalism and with it the deepest sense and legitimacy of the Kantian position; and for his still half-mythical concept of the *a priori* we must substitute the phenomenologically clarified concept of the general essence and law of essence...⁵⁵

The rejection of things-in-themselves is indicated in *Ideas*, but, perhaps, there is reason to think that the Neo-Kantians have a legitimate reason for being confused on this point.

The apparent confusion about phenomenology’s realist tendencies on the part of the Neo-Kantians may also stem from Husserl’s formulation of the *principle of all principles*. This principle states that: “every ordinary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originally...offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.”⁵⁶ Taken out of context, this could easily be read as a claim that mind independent things-in-themselves are directly intuited, and that they therefore exist, but that phenomenology is limited to speaking of them only as they are presented to us. They also seem to ignore *Ideas* §22, which specifically renounces the sort of metaphysical hypostatization that would be necessary for this interpretation to work. Fink does not address this possible source of confusion, but Jean Hering, in his defense of Husserl against Lev Shestov, stresses the importance of this aspect of the phenomenological method, and how it constitutes a radical break from Platonism, Cartesianism, and the so called ‘critical philosophy’.⁵⁷ But perhaps what Husserl intends by this principle is only clear if we consider it in connection with the phenomenological reduction, and the suspension of the natural attitude.

⁵⁵ Husserl, “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,” p. 13. Husserl further claims that if we bracket all of the metaphysical elements from Kant’s philosophy, we cannot help but realize that, “Kant’s thinking and research moves *de facto* in the framework of the phenomenological attitude.” (Husserl, “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,” p. 14) Iso Kern also draws attention to this point. See Kern, *Husserl und Kant*, p.75. Or, as Moran writes: “Husserl offers a demythologized version of transcendental idealism: there is no such thing as the ‘thing in itself’; all being and objectivity must be understood as the product of subjective accomplishments, and cannot be thought without them. As he put it in 1908, ‘Transcendental phenomenology is the phenomenology of constituting consciousness’ (Hua 24:425).” (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.6)

⁵⁶ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.44 <43-44>

⁵⁷ Jean Hering, “Sub specie aeterni,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie religieuse* (1927), p.364.

The true sense of phenomenology and of Husserl's transcendental idealism is what Fink tries next to clarify, parts of which mirror the discussion of the phenomenological reduction in Husserl's 'Epilogue' to *Ideas*. Fink adds to this a more detailed discussion of the distinction between the transcendental and the natural attitude, and how this changes the question regarding the conditions of the possibility of experience. "Phenomenology," he writes:

does not pass over the difference, essential to the natural attitude, between the thing in itself and the thing as it is for us: it does not dissolve the world into mere being-for-us, but by suspending the natural attitude it primarily enquires into the transcendental belief from which this difference (and accordingly the antithesis of world and our representation of the world) itself springs.⁵⁸

Pure phenomenology looks at everything which we accept as "existing" in one sense or another in the world and attempts to make sense of this existence by investigating the conditions of experience under which these objects are necessarily constituted with their particular *being-sense*. This is not the thesis that the being of the world is 'subjective' in the sense of *psychical* subjectivity, or that all objects can be reduced to human brain states or some such thing.

Phenomenology is concerned with the being of the world for *transcendental* subjectivity, with "the world's becoming in the constitution of transcendental subjectivity."⁵⁹ Husserl felt that the Neo-Kantian conception of epistemology did not go beyond the mundane position of the natural attitude which considers subjectivity to be essential *human* subjectivity,⁶⁰ and that "it was naive, in that it continued to presume the very givenness of the world (Hua 34: 19-20) and the 'fact' of the sciences as sciences of the world."⁶¹ The Southwest Neo-Kantians thus succumb to the *transcendental dogma* of the belief in the world, which the phenomenological-transcendental reduction reveals. As a result of their own commitment to the natural attitude, the Neo-Kantians have understood the *epoché* as a bracketing of external "reality" in order to investigate a sphere of *psychical* immanence. But

⁵⁸ Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," pp.119-120

⁵⁹ Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," p.130

⁶⁰ Husserl's interpretation of Kant is influenced by the work of Benno Erdmann. It might well be that when Husserl says he is broadening the Kantian project, he is simply rejecting this reading. We certainly do not have to agree with Husserl's quirky reading of Kant.

⁶¹ Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.184.

this is simply wrong, and is precisely the sort of error that leads to psychologistic idealism or transcendental realism. “The reduction,” writes Fink, “is not understood in its transcendental-phenomenological meaning *as long as one directly identifies the ego living within the belief in the world with the ego exercising the epoché*, so that the same ego is posited as first actively involved with the belief in the world and then as inhibiting this belief by ‘bracketing.’ Phenomenology does not disconnect the world in order to withdraw from it and occupy itself with some other philosophical thematic...phenomenology disconnects the belief in the world in order ultimately to know the world.”⁶² By conflating the transcendental ego with the human ego, the Neo-Kantians not only misinterpret Husserl’s phenomenological reduction and theory of constitution, they also fail to achieve the goal of transcendental philosophy themselves.⁶³

Based on the above discussion of Husserl’s ‘Epilogue’ to *Ideas* and Fink’s *Kant-Studien* paper, it is clear that Husserl had identified at least some of the specific points in his first published works on pure phenomenology that critics misread, and was able to give at least a tentative diagnosis of these confusions. Many of these responses develop through the course of Husserl’s lectures and unpublished manuscripts, and were therefore only able to be scrutinized by a small audience. In attempting to clarify the position outlined in *Ideas*, we see an unfolding of the sense of phenomenological-transcendental idealism, its key concepts, and methods of inquiry. We also gain some insight into what Husserl saw as the potential ways of arguing against both the problem of solipsism and the claim that phenomenology is nothing more than (or is at best) descriptive psychology in accordance with the methods laid out in the *Logical Investigations*.

⁶² Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” pp.114-115. Emphasis added.

⁶³ Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” pp.135-136. Husserl’s worry that the Kantian philosophy conflated the empirical subject with the transcendental subject was a longstanding one. In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl writes: “lacking the concept of phenomenology and the phenomenological reduction, and unable to loose himself entirely from the grip of psychologism and anthropologism, Kant did not arrive at the ultimate intent of the distinction that must be made here [between *judgments of perception* and *judgments of experience*]. For us it is not a matter of merely subjectively valid judgments, the validity of which is limited to the empirical subject, and objectively valid judgments in the sense of being valid for every subject in general. For we have excluded the empirical subject; and transcendental apperception, consciousness as such, will soon acquire for us a wholly different sense, one that is not mysterious at all.” (Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p.36-37)

Whether or not Husserl and Fink responded fairly and accurately to the Southwest Neo-Kantians or the proponents of the “philosophy of life” is an important question, but not one we will attempt to answer here. Nor will we present a systematic comparison of the criticisms of Husserl made by the Neo-Kantians with those of Celms and Stumpf.⁶⁴ The aim is to use these discussions to help construct possible responses to Celms and Stumpf along lines that Husserl would accept, and to show how such responses further challenge claims that phenomenological idealism leads to the traditional problem of solipsism or that it is merely descriptive psychology. With this aim in mind, let us summarize the key points from our discussion.

In the ‘Epilogue’ to *Ideas* and Fink’s *Kant-Studien* paper we find an important methodological point regarding how Husserl addressed his critics. Husserl’s overall approach was to identify premises in his detractor’s arguments that he could readily diagnose as misunderstandings of his theory. Even if Husserl admits that such misunderstandings are the result of his own poor wording, he is nevertheless able to cripple their arguments so long as he can offer an alternative account that does not, at least immediately, contradict the main theses of pure phenomenology. In other words, Husserl shows that his critics fail to meet Fink’s requirement, that: While every philosopher reserves the right to judge any other and opposing philosophical standpoints, criticism is only legitimate insofar as the philosophy to be criticized is first understood on its own terms and from its own perspective. This is not to say that you must *accept* a philosophical position before you can give a criticism of it, but that you must at least understand its basis premises. Husserl’s critics might believe they have shown his philosophy to be internally and irrevocably inconsistent, and therefore untenable, but insofar as such arguments can be shown to rely on misunderstandings, they are not legitimate criticisms at all.

As to what these misunderstanding consist in, Husserl points out a number of woeful mistakes. First, Husserl attempts to clarify the notion of “things themselves.” From the phenomenological standpoint, we do not make any claims about the reality of objects insofar

⁶⁴ For example, Rickert’s criticism of phenomenology centres on Husserl’s concept of intuition, and has little to do with the fact that Husserl endorses transcendental idealism (although the two disagree on the scope of such a project). The criticisms offered by Celms and Stumpf, on the other hand, take issue precisely with Husserl’s transcendental idealism.

as they *might* exist apart from intentional consciousness, but we do observe that insofar as all *being-sense* is restricted to intentional structures, it is impossible to give any *meaning/sense* to a mind-independent object or *thing-in-itself*. This is made clear by the methodology developed in *Ideas*. For Husserl the phenomena are the “things themselves,” but there are no *things-in-themselves* in the Kantian sense.⁶⁵ Second, Husserl (and Fink) shows that the haphazard application of terminology and concepts from the *Logical Investigations* to his later works is a pointless interpretive strategy.⁶⁶ Without considering the important changes in the use of those terms and concepts in-light of the change in Husserl’s project, such readings are bound to be utterly confused. Husserl is partially to blame here, since he himself had attempted to re-edit the *Logical Investigations* so as to accommodate his later thought. Third, Husserl’s critics almost always imported their own philosophical presuppositions into their interpretation of his work, in blatant disregard of the demand for a radical bracketing of such presuppositions made by transcendental philosophy. Insofar as these presuppositions are rooted in the natural attitude, critics failed to see how Husserl’s work actually departs from and challenges their theoretical frameworks. Finally, the objection of metaphysical solipsism against Husserl’s transcendental philosophy lacks, according to Husserl himself, any intelligible meaning. The phenomenological reduction does not entail the sort of subjective idealism that this objection seems to rest on. All of the above points are pertinent when discussing Celms and Stumpf, since these potential areas of misunderstanding factor into their respective interpretations and criticisms of Husserl’s pure phenomenology. Considering them as active interlocutors of Husserl helps us to enter the conceptual milieu that he was struggling to both escape from and correct.

3.2 Stumpf’s Criticism of Pure Phenomenology

In a curious note, Kevin Mulligan claims that, “The best criticism of both idealist phenomenology and of Husserl’s new way of doing phenomenology is [given] by the great

⁶⁵ This interpretation of Husserl is not without its problems. For more on this, see Sebastian Luft, “From Being to Givenness and Back: Some Remarks on the Meaning of Transcendental Idealism in Kant and Husserl,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 15:3 (2007), pp.367-394.

⁶⁶ I do not want to say that it is impossible to read the *Logical Investigations* as being connected to the later works, only that we must distinguish between the first edition of the *Logical Investigations* and the later ones, and that the later editions must be understood from the point of view of Husserl’s mature position.

psychologist Carl Stumpf.”⁶⁷ He notes two conclusions Stumpf draws in his *Erkenntnislehre* regarding “pure” phenomenology: that it is a contradiction in itself, and that in *Ideas* Husserl fails to provide any convincing examples in support of his theory. Unfortunately, Mulligan gives no further explanation of Stumpf’s arguments. Robin Rollinger outlines Stumpf’s criticism in *Husserl’s Position in the School of Brentano* (1999), ultimately expressing his sympathy with these complaints and with Stumpf’s alternative version of phenomenology.⁶⁸ By contrast, we find a much less favorable assessment given by Herbert Spiegelberg. He writes that when reading Stumpf’s criticism of pure phenomenology, “one cannot but feel that Stumpf, in pointing out some of its weaknesses and pitfalls, had not kept fully abreast of developments and, specifically, had failed to realize the full meaning and purpose of Husserl’s new procedures.”⁶⁹ Spiegelberg asserts that many of the complaints that Stumpf directed at Husserl are primarily based on misunderstandings.

While I agree that Stumpf might sometimes misunderstand Husserl, particularly with respect to the phenomenological reduction, I argue that Stumpf’s criticism of pure phenomenology stems from his empiricism and his underlying commitment to critical realism.⁷⁰ According to critical realism, there is a mind dependent aspect to our representations of the world, but our representations are ultimately caused by a mind independent external world, which we know only indirectly. Stumpf’s commitment to a rather strict version of empiricism leads him to reject both Husserl’s method of “essential seeing” [*Wesensschau*], which Stumpf labels intellectual intuition, and the notion of a “pure” or transcendental ego. In the first instance, Stumpf commits himself to a version of realism that coincides with the natural attitude, though it is not a straightforwardly naive form of

⁶⁷ Mulligan, “Searle, Derrida, and the Ends of Phenomenology,” p.283.

⁶⁸ Rollinger writes: “...it is indeed sad that so many of Husserl’s admirers and critics nowadays regard an evaluation of [Husserl’s] *pure phenomenology*, and its concomitant notions of a phenomenological reduction and the noema, as the definitive task in deciding the fruits of his philosophical labors. As Stumpf was well aware, [Husserl] had made his most important philosophical contributions long before there was any talk at all of a pure phenomenology.” (Rollinger, *Husserl’s Position in the School of Brentano*, p.121) He ends by suggesting that the *Ideas* might even represent a “degenerate phase” in Husserl’s thought. (Rollinger, *Husserl’s Position in the School of Brentano*, p.123)

⁶⁹ Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 66.

⁷⁰ In this sense, I follow the interpretation of Stumpf’s criticism put forward by Denis Fiset. “What is at stake in [Stumpf’s criticism] is the opposition between two different philosophical positions: the phenomenology of Stumpf is at the service of a philosophy based on a form of critical realism, whereas Husserl’s philosophical program in *Ideas I*, as Stumpf remarks (1939, 189), is akin to Kant’s philosophy...” (Denis Fiset, “Stumpf and Husserl on Phenomenology and Descriptive Psychology,” *Gestalt Theory*, Vol. 31, No.2 (2009), p.184)

realism. In the second instance, Stumpf is arguing against the legitimacy of transcendental philosophy. These two things combined put his own phenomenology and Husserl's pure phenomenology at loggerheads. If this is true, then Stumpf's criticism does not hinge merely on a misunderstanding, but on more fundamental philosophical differences. It would be unfair to Stumpf to call these mere misunderstandings, and dismissing them as such would certainly not satisfy Husserl's critics. I will argue that even if Stumpf does not accept Husserl's rather thin "proofs" for the necessary existence of a transcendental subject based on the unity of consciousness, insofar as Stumpf makes no attempt to bracket his own epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions, his criticisms of Husserl are ultimately question-begging. This is only a partial defense of Husserl's position, but one that should be enough to disarm Stumpf without being completely dismissive, which the misunderstanding defense is.⁷¹ Stumpf's criticism does not count as legitimate in the sense that Husserl and Fink have defined, however, we must be careful here. It does not follow from this that pure phenomenology is incommensurable with any other possible philosophical theory, and is, therefore, impossible to criticize. What is required of Husserl's critics is that they first adopt the transcendental standpoint, and argue from there that we can and ought to reject Husserl's theory. Insofar as he is still clearly attempting to engage Husserl in terms of traditional epistemological and metaphysical debates, Stumpf has not done this.

Given that Stumpf was a formative influence on Husserl's thought, it is easy to be misled into thinking that their philosophical projects were similar. Not only did Husserl write his habilitation thesis at Halle under Stumpf's supervision, Stumpf's own work involved both *descriptive psychology* and *experimental phenomenology*. In the Introduction to the first edition of his *Logical Investigations*, which was dedicated to Stumpf, Husserl defines phenomenology *as* descriptive psychology.⁷² Moreover, a number of topics that Husserl included under the banner of phenomenology in the *Logical Investigations* build directly upon ideas borrowed from Stumpf.⁷³ But while Stumpf himself used the term "phenomenology" as early as 1906 in "*On the Classification of the Sciences*," his work had little to no connection with Husserl's later phenomenology. In fact, Husserl warned readers

⁷¹ We might well wonder what sort of a proof of the transcendental ego Stumpf would even accept.

⁷² Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. I, p.176. Husserl retracts this statement in the 2nd edition of 1913.

⁷³ For instance, see Husserl's work on mereology in the Third Logical Investigation. (Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, p.3-17)

that Stumpf's use of the term was completely different from his own,⁷⁴ and that his teacher remained too close to the work of their common progenitor, Franz Brentano. Though the work of Husserl and Stumpf emerge out of common interests, the shape and end of their respective projects is quite different.

If the subject matter of psychology is psychical or mental acts that are causal connected to an external world, then Stumpf defines *phenomena* as the mental objects correlated with these acts. Phenomenology therefore consists in the study of those objects which are given to us in sensuous intuition (primary phenomena), and the images of these objects as they are presented in memory, phantasy, etc. (secondary phenomena). He further characterizes phenomenology as the neutral, pre-scientific study of these phenomena.⁷⁵ Along with *eidology* and the *general theory of relations*, phenomenology is foundational for both the social and natural sciences.⁷⁶ Phenomenology is also necessarily prior to the other two pre-sciences, insofar as mental content that is formed by the mind rather than given to it, and the relations between phenomena, are dependent on given phenomena.⁷⁷ Stumpf emphasizes that the structures of *consciousness* are the subject matter of psychology, which must be kept distinct from phenomenology despite the fact that the results of experimental phenomenology (as well as the other two pre-sciences) serve as a basis for descriptive psychology.⁷⁸ The study of *phenomena* and the study of the *psyche* are two separate enterprises.

⁷⁴ "Superficial readers...have confused more than once Stumpf's concept of phenomenology (as the doctrine of 'appearances') with ours. Stumpf's phenomenology would correspond to what was defined above as hyletic, except that our definition in its methodical sense is essentially conditioned by the encompassing frame of transcendental phenomenology. On the other hand, the idea of the hyletic *eo ipso* is transferred from phenomenology to the basis of an eidetic psychology which, according to our conception, would include Stumpf's 'phenomenology.'" (Husserl, *Ideas*, p.210 <178-179>)

⁷⁵ Stumpf, *Zur Einteilung der Wissenschaften*, p.26-32. Stumpf's talk of the neutrality of phenomenology and the other pre-sciences may have motivated Husserl's "metaphysical neutrality" requirement as it is presented in the *Logical Investigations*.

⁷⁶ In short, whereas phenomenology deals with simple sensory objects and their images, while higher order mental content formed out of these objects is a part of eidology, and the relations holding between objects (or between their "parts") is left to the theory of relations. For example, phenomenology studies *tones*, while eidology studies *melodies* (which are content *formations*, rather than simple, given content).

⁷⁷ Husserl does not distinguish between these three pre-sciences, and includes elements from all of them in his phenomenology.

⁷⁸ Stumpf's student Wolfgang Köhler followed this type of experimental phenomenology and used it to further research in Gestalt psychology.

Above all else, Stumpf was a staunch empiricist in the Brentanian tradition. He lauded the standard empiricist hypothesis that experience has to do with *sensation*. From this empirical standpoint he argued toward a critical realist position. While in his later writing (after 1900) Brentano had denied that universals really exist, and limits real existence to concrete particulars,⁷⁹ Stumpf was willing to attribute “real” existence to anything which could be empirically determined, from concrete particular phenomena and *Gebilde*, to the laws and relations governing them. This is not to say that these laws and relations exist in the same manner as tables and chairs, but that they are not merely ideal. It must be kept in mind that, “The instantaneously given sensory contents and our own psychic functions are directly experienced, whereas their implications are experienced indirectly.”⁸⁰ Accordingly, our scientific knowledge of the external world which exists independent of consciousness, along with our knowledge of the laws which govern that world, is based on inductions from empirically given phenomena.

The conclusions concerning an outside world independent from consciousness, and concerning the laws controlling it, have the form of probable inductions. The only way in which we can subordinate the phenomena of the mind to definite laws, such as warrant predictions, is by assuming an outside world, strictly subordinate to causal law, in which our bodies with their sensory and motor organs and other more or less similar psychophysical substances exist as parts of the whole...For the naïve, unscientific consciousness, of course, the belief in the outside world is no hypothesis and no product of reflection, but is connected instinctively with the sensuous phenomena. But *that* outside world is immeasurably different from the scientific universe.⁸¹

It is clear that, for Stumpf, the phenomena of experience correspond in some way to actually existing objects in the external world, and, therefore, that Stumpf endorsed a form of critical realism.

Let us briefly outline Stumpf’s critical realism. Stumpf believes that the objects of consciousness – phenomena, *Gebilde*, and relations – are no less real than the “psychical functions” to which they correspond. Therefore, we can empirically ground the three pre-

⁷⁹ This position is often referred to as *reism* and was advocated by Kazimierz Twardowski’s student Tadeusz Kotarbinski. However, Twardowski himself may have also followed Brentano in adopting this position. See Jens Cavallin, *Content and Object: Husserl, Twardowski, and Psychologism*, p.107.

⁸⁰ Stumpf, “Carl Stumpf,” *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, vol. I, p.420

⁸¹ Stumpf, “Carl Stumpf,” *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, vol. I, p.420.

sciences. That said, “whether or not [these objects] can also exist independently of [psychical] functions Stumpf does not want to decide in advance.”⁸² However, he does believe that the objects of consciousness are necessarily related, in some way, to actually existing real things that we perceive. As Rollinger points out, “Stumpf allows for...an inference from the contents of sensation to external things,” that is, to real physical things in the natural sense.⁸³ Such a world may be vastly different from the world we experience, but its existence can be empirically inferred. For Stumpf, phenomena and the relations between them are real, and these phenomena are the correlates of both things belonging to a mind independent external world and a mind that perceives them. This inference from phenomena to the real world behind them plays an important role in the critique of pure phenomenology found in Stumpf’s *Erkenntnislehre*.

The manuscripts for Stumpf’s *Erkenntnislehre* date back to May, 1927. The final version of the text is based on Stumpf’s handwritten manuscripts as well as notes and edits that he dictated to Elisabeth Hohenadel during the final decade of his life.⁸⁴ While Husserl and Stumpf remained friends throughout their lives, the intellectual rift between the two thinkers continually grew. Stumpf complains that Husserl’s *Ideas* are extremely difficult to understand, and that the arguments for “pure” phenomenology are unconvincing. Along with a host of new and confusing technical terms, Husserl fails to provide adequate examples in support of his theory, “and where we do find them, they are downright misleading.”⁸⁵ This is in stark contrast to the reviews of the same work by Bernard Bosanquet (1914) and Emmanuel Levinas (1929), who note, “the sanity and acuteness of [Husserl’s] observations and distinctions,”⁸⁶ and the, “multitude of minute and scrupulous concrete *phenomenological analyses*, which defy summarization,”⁸⁷ found in *Ideas*. Such divergent opinions might lead one to believe that Stumpf had not read the same book. However, this difference can be

⁸² Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p.59.

⁸³ Rollinger, *Husserl’s Position in the School of Brentano*, p.93

⁸⁴ Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, vol.1, p.v-vi

⁸⁵ „Mit diesem Standardwerke wetteifert Husserls Darstellung zwar in der fülle neuer technischer Ausdrücke, die zunächst doch das Verständnis noch erschweren, aber sie läßt Beispiele schmerzlich Vermissten, und wo sich solche finden, sind sie geradezu irreführend.“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd. 1, p.200)

⁸⁶ Bosanquet, “[Review] Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung,” *Mind*, Vol. 23, No. 92 (1914), p.591.

⁸⁷ Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, p.3.

attributed to the fact that both Bosanquet and Levinas (at least at the time he wrote this review) were idealists, whereas Stumpf was a realist.⁸⁸

Stumpf maintains that the possible results of a “pure” phenomenology are extremely limited. As a result, he argues against Husserl that *regional phenomenologies* cannot be excluded from phenomenology. In *Ideas*, Husserl characterizes phenomenology as “an eidetic science, i.e., [a science] which aims at cognition *a priori* rather than factual knowledge.”⁸⁹ Eidetic sciences can be divided into two classes: purely *formal*, and *material*. Phenomenology is to be included among the material eidetic sciences.⁹⁰ Its field of research is pure consciousness, and “it is concerned to be a *descriptive* eidetic doctrine of transcendently pure mental processes as viewed in the phenomenological attitude.”⁹¹ Pure consciousness is all that remains after the systematic, universal application of the *epoché*, and thus the results of all other material-eidetic sciences are excluded from pure phenomenology.⁹² Nevertheless, beginning from pure phenomenology, Husserl believes we can recover the results of the exact sciences through some sort of “phenomenological conversion.”⁹³ According to Stumpf, this is simply impossible.

Stumpf is fully prepared to accept the possibility of *a priori* cognition which is not purely formal. Insofar as these relate to sensory phenomena, these fall under the purview of phenomenology. Insofar as they relate to psychical functions or acts, or to psychical formations, or to relations between phenomena, they belong to psychology, eidology, and the theory of relations respectively. While Husserl is correct to point out that we know *a priori* that a color is not a sound, and that everything material is extended, these are merely the explanation of names.⁹⁴ Stumpf writes that, in a sense, “we may well speak of the essence

⁸⁸ Stumpf’s views are also representative of thinkers at the time who wanted to adapt the successful methods of natural science to settling philosophical issues. However, this point only plays a minor role in what follows.

⁸⁹ Rollinger, *Husserl’s Position in the School of Brentano*, p.114.

⁹⁰ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.161 <133>.

⁹¹ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.167 <139>.

⁹² Husserl, *Ideas*, p.135-139 <111-115>

⁹³ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.143 <119>

⁹⁴ Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd.1, p.189; Husserl, *Ideas*, p.13 <14>.

[*Wesensschau*] of sounds, colors, the flow of time, but not of the essence of liverworts or eye diseases.”⁹⁵

In *Ideas* §9, Husserl states that there corresponds to all the disciplines of natural science an, “eidetic science of any physical Nature whatsoever (*the ontology of Nature*), since there corresponds to *de facto* Nature an Eidos that can be apprehended purely, the ‘essence’ *Any Nature Whatsoever*, with an infinite abundance of predicatively formed eidetic-affair complexes” included in it.⁹⁶ Husserl insists that we must begin by uncovering the *essence* of Nature and, “the essences of all essential sorts of natural objectivities as such,”⁹⁷ which hold for all regions of empirical inquiry as such, before we can study any specific region. Stumpf thinks that the theory Husserl describes has already been accomplished. Kant did precisely this in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁹⁸ But the result is, according to Stumpf, “not an *a priori* science of *natural things* or of *natural processes*, but rather a summary of *sensory phenomena as such* related to *a priori* cognition. And the resulting complex is not some infinite plethora, as are the natural things or natural processes related to empirical truths, but a well-defined number of objective axioms.”⁹⁹ We cannot, however, move from these *a priori* forms of cognition to the so-called “essences” of all the concrete particulars we experience in the natural world.

⁹⁵ „Wir können wohl von einer Wesensschau der Töne, der Farben , des Zeitverlaufes reden, aber nicht von einer Wesensschau der Lebermoose oder Augenkrankheiten.“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd. 1, p.190)

⁹⁶ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.19 <19>

⁹⁷ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.19 <20>

⁹⁸ Husserl makes this comparison himself in *Ideas*, first in §16, where he first acknowledges his intentional allusions to Kant (p.31 <31>), and later when he states that the critical philosophy of Kant actually operates in the realm of phenomenology. “The striving toward phenomenology was present already in the wonderfully profound Cartesian fundamental considerations; then, again, in the psychologism of the Lockean school; Hume almost set foot upon its domain, but with blinded eyes. And then the first to correctly see it was Kant, whose greatest intuitions become wholly understandable to us only when we had obtained by hard work a fully clear awareness of the peculiarity of the province belonging to phenomenology. It then becomes evident to us that Kant’s mental regard was resting on that field, although he was still unable to appropriate it or recognize it as a field of work pertaining to a strict eidetic science proper. Thus, for example, the transcendental deduction in the first edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* was actually operating inside the realm of phenomenology, but Kant misinterpreted that realm as psychological and therefore he himself abandoned it.” (Husserl, *Ideas*, p.142 <118-119>)

⁹⁹ „Eine solche Ontologie oder Phänomenologie der Natur muß es in der Tat geben und gibt es auch bereits in ansehnlichem Umfang. Aber sie ist nicht eine apriorische Wissenschaft von den *Naturdingen* oder auch nur den *Naturvorgängen*, sondern nur die Zusammenfassung der auf *sinnliche Phänomene als solche* bezüglichen apriorischen Erkenntnisse. Und dieser Komplex wäre keineswegs eine unendliche Fülle, wie es die auf Naturdinge oder Naturvorgänge bezüglichen empirischen Wahrheiten sind, sondern eine wohlbegrenzte Anzahl gegenständlicher Axiome. Es wäre genau das, was Kant in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* als apriorische Grundlegung des Naturwissens erstrebte.“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd.1, p.191)

Given the failed attempts of developing an egological science of Nature beginning from the Kantian framework, the individual exact sciences ought to develop their own regional phenomenologies based on the phenomena they choose as elementary. Phenomena themselves are given as complex wholes. In each of the natural sciences we restrict ourselves to the investigation of certain features of the given phenomena, or a certain subset of them. We may conduct phenomenological investigations of sounds and colors, space and time, etc., or of intellectual and emotional states. The first would be a phenomenology of sensuous phenomena, the second of psychic functions, and these, according to Stumpf, must remain distinct. “The first includes the common objective, *a priori* principles of the *research of nature* [*Naturforschung*], the second those of the *research of mind/spirit* [*Geistesforschung*]. And these are indeed phenomenologies, not just ones that are part of the program, but ones that have been developed to a large extent.”¹⁰⁰ One need only look at Stumpf’s own work on tone psychology for an example of the sort of phenomenology he is proposing.¹⁰¹

Next, Stumpf argues that ““*pure*” *phenomenology is a phantom, a contradiction in itself*,”¹⁰² that Husserlian phenomenology is a “phenomenology without phenomena.”¹⁰³ While Husserl is quick to exclude all manner of concepts from the field of pure, transcendental subjectivity – “human”, “soul”, “person”, etc. – Stumpf is left wondering what phenomena remains. What are these transcendently pure mental processes that Husserl seeks to investigate? Moreover, if we exclude empirical phenomena, what is left of consciousness to explore? According to Stumpf, it seems that peering into the “purified” field of transcendental subjectivity, which excludes all transcendent being, is not only like peering into a dark corner, but is really like looking into “absolute nothingness.”¹⁰⁴ If there is something to find here, if Husserl has really opened up a new field of investigation full of

¹⁰⁰ „Immer aber wird man eine *Phänomenologie der sinnlichen Erscheinungen* und eine der *psychischen Funktionen* auseinanderhalten müssen. Die erste umfaßt die gemeinsamen gegenständlich-apriorischen Grundsätze der *Naturforschung*, die zweite die der *Geistesforschung*. Und dies sind ja Phänomenologien, die nicht bloß auf dem Programm stehen, sondern schon in weitem Umfang ausgebaut sind.“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd. 1, p.191)

¹⁰¹ See Stumpf’s *Tonpsychologie* (1883/90).

¹⁰² „*Die reine Phänomenologie ist ein Phantom, ja ein Widerspruch in sich selbst.*“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd.1, p.192)

¹⁰³ Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd.1, p.192.

¹⁰⁴ Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd.1, p.192.

riches, Stumpf fails to see any proof of this.¹⁰⁵ In §60 of *Ideas*, where Husserl speaks of the exclusion of material-eidetic disciplines, all we get is a vague notion of what pure phenomenology does not include, but little by way of an explanation of the “transcendentally purified consciousness” which it claims to deal with. The formulation of the axioms of pure phenomenology is “perhaps in the plan of the unpublished parts of the work. But we fear it will face insurmountable difficulties. For now we are left with an unfulfilled requirement, an empty framework.”¹⁰⁶

Against Husserl, Stumpf is skeptical of the claim that there are phenomena independent of transcendent being. Even if the objects of phenomenological descriptions are experience dependent, it does not follow from this that they are merely the constitutional achievement of intentional consciousness. Insofar as the phenomenological reduction excludes all transcendent being, it excludes all phenomena as Stumpf understands them as well. This criticism appears to be based on a realist theory of perception which is used to account for the presence of phenomena. In addition to this, Stumpf denies that a transcendental subject exists, or at the very least that we have no proof that such a subject exists. Consciousness, or the soul, is for Stumpf nothing more than, “a unity of psychic functions and dispositions.” Therefore, if pure phenomenology does not discuss any of the phenomena which are given in empirical intuition, as these are the subject matter of the other material-eidetic sciences, then it is not phenomenology at all and its subject matter is something nonexistent. Unless Husserl is able to empirically demonstrate the existence of the transcendental ego, of consciousness *as such*, pure phenomenology seems to be not so much an infinite task, but an impossible one.

We will not get into all the details of Husserl’s arguments for the existence of the transcendental subject. In broad strokes, following Kant, Husserl argues that the unity of experience requires the unity of a consciousness, and the unity of the consciousness necessitates the existence of the transcendental ego. For Husserl, transcendental

¹⁰⁵ It was typical of the Brentano School to accept Hume’s bundle theory of consciousness, or, at least, to reject the idea of a pure or transcendental ego.

¹⁰⁶ „Diese Formulierung material-eidetischer Axiome der reinen Phänomenologie...liegt vielleicht im Plane der noch nicht veröffentlichten Teile des Werkes. Aber wir fürchten, sie wird auf unüberwindliche Schwierigkeiten stoßen. Vorläufig finden wir hier nur eine unerfüllte Forderung, einen leeren Rahmen.“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd. 1, p.193)

phenomenology is itself the proof of the necessary existence of the transcendental subject, since nothing can be thought of as existing without reference to such a subject. The bundle theory of consciousness, on the other hand, does not seem to provide a satisfactory account of the apparent unity of consciousness and its objects.¹⁰⁷ In the case of objects, Stumpf is forced to account for their unity by inferring the existence of an external world. Underlying this is an assumption about both the nature the mind and a naturalistic account of causation. Without these metaphysical stock elements, it is unclear why Stumpf's arguments are any better than those of Husserl. In fact, they seem worse, since Husserl's do not assume any particular metaphysical underpinnings. The onus here seems to be on Stumpf, not on Husserl, to provide a satisfactory account of consciousness without reference to a transcendental subject.¹⁰⁸

Concerning what the pure phenomena are that remain after the phenomenological reduction, it is simply false to claim that along with the reduction Husserl has excluded all phenomena. All that the reduction requires is that we suspend judgement as to the *being-sense* of phenomena. Their *sense* is to be explained in terms of how intentional consciousness constitutes its objects in precisely the way that it does. Likewise, this consciousness-as-such that we are describing is not yet the human consciousness in the mundane sense, but pure consciousness, which constitutes both the world and itself as a

¹⁰⁷ Husserl's arguments against Hume here are worth considering. "Unlike Husserl who 'bracketed' the factual existence of consciousness in the indubitable world of straight-forward experience, Hume took our psychic 'perceptions' to be real events occurring in the absolute world-time of the experienced world...From the noematic perspective what is problematic is the primal constitution of the experienced world in time-consciousness. At issue are the identity and unity of external objects or individual things. The deficiencies in Hume's associationistic explanation made Husserl realize that an individual object, and *a fortiori*, the experienced world cannot be constituted originally in a mere temporal series of disparate atomistic perceptions." (Richard Murphy, *Hume and Husserl*, p.136-137)

¹⁰⁸ I must confess at this point that I am not expert of Stumpf. Perhaps he does somewhere present an interesting argument as to why we must reject Husserl's argument for the existence of the transcendental ego, or that we do not need a transcendental ego in order to account for consciousness, or even stronger that the transcendental ego simply does not exist. Even if such arguments occur in Stumpf's writings, I highly doubt that they do not require that we presuppose realism in order for them to get off the ground. If they do not, then not only does Stumpf advance far beyond Brentano, he should be required reading for every undergraduate in philosophy along with Hume and Kant. However, I doubt Stumpf even attempts to address this issue given his views on knowledge. "Following Kant, knowledge without critique is knowledge without laws, without norms and without truth at all. To this, Stumpf replies in a Brentanian manner: 'Knowledge can be not only true, it may be perfectly evident to the one who knows, right up to its last foundations, even if the one who knows has no theory at all of this evidence' (Stumpf, *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie*, p.469)." (Guillaume Fréchette, "Kant, Brentano and Stumpf on Psychology and Anti-Psychologism," in *Kant and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitical Sense*, S. Bacin, A. Ferrarin, C. La Rocca and M. Ruffing (eds.), forthcoming.)

human consciousness and as a person in the world. Husserl's *principle of all principles* necessitates that we do not speculate as to what these phenomena are beyond our consciousness of them. From the phenomenologically reduced standpoint, we then reflect on how consciousness constitutes these objects, a process he calls "essential seeing," and give *transcendental arguments* as to how consciousness must be structured in order to constitute its objects the way that it does. Stumpf seems to have misunderstood the reduction in this sense.

According to Stumpf, the only way to make sense of pure phenomenology is to equate it with descriptive psychology. Stumpf entertains the notion that the subject matter of pure phenomenology might be what Husserl calls *noema*, and that this might be a way to distinguish it from descriptive psychology. The bulk of *Ideas* §§87-127 is devoted to the discussion of *noema*, that is, *the perceived as perceived, the remembered as remembered, the judged as judged, the willed as willed*, and so on.¹⁰⁹ Each moment or act of intentional consciousness has its *sense* or "essence" as precisely the sort of meaning-bestowing act that it is, which is revealed to us in phenomenological reflection.¹¹⁰ However, this proposal is quickly ruled out by Stumpf. Underlying both descriptive psychology and pure phenomenology are the actual contents of experience. There is no noetic structure without *actual* experience, and the structures between consciousness and its objects is the concern of psychology, not phenomenology. Thus, pure phenomenology either investigates nothing at

¹⁰⁹ Husserl suggests as much in "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy": "In its first stage of development, at which, by the way, a number of phenomenologists have stopped, phenomenology was a mere method of purely intuitive description, distinguished above all by the radicalism with which it sought to satisfy the requirement of taking every 'phenomenon' (every 'datum,' everything immediately found), i.e., each and every one that might enter the attentive gaze of consciousness, exactly as it presented itself in the latter, and of fixing systematic concepts that could describe each datum as such, in the 'how' of its givenness...As a matter of principle, all opinions and inquiries that go beyond the realms of pure givenness were hereby excluded. Every such datum is a datum for subjectivity, which directs its view toward it, has it in the presentive consciousness; this *consciousness in its manifold formations is again itself a 'phenomenon'* in the reflection which directs itself thereto..."

Phenomenology began with indefatigable exhibitions of all such subjective 'phenomena'...It took on the whole range of the manifold subjective appearances, modes of consciousness modes of possible position-taking; for it was, for the subject, never given otherwise than in this subjective milieu, and in purely intuitive description of the subjectively given there was no in-itself that is not given in subjective modes of the for-me or for-us, and the in-itself itself appears as a characteristic in this context and has to undergo therein its clarification of sense." (Husserl, "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy," p.10-11)

¹¹⁰ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.213-214 <181-182>

all, or it investigates mental functions (which are not phenomena at all, but accomplishments of the human mind) and is therefore descriptive psychology.

The notion that phenomenology could not go beyond the level of descriptive psychology was a charge that Husserl went to great efforts to exorcise from his philosophy after the *Logical Investigations*. The transcendental philosophy presented in the *Ideas* is an important step in this direction. It is clear, however, that many of Husserl's contemporaries did not accept this turn, and questioned his methodology. Let us consider the example from *Ideas* §88 of the blossoming apple tree, since Stumpf found such examples to be misleading.

In the natural attitude, there is a tree out there in the garden. It exists in the transcendent realm of spatio-temporal actuality, and my perception of it is a real psychological state belonging to a real person. The immanent image of the tree that I see, the *phenomenal* tree, is in some way related to the actual object that I perceive in sensuous intuition, and the relations between my brain and the actual tree, and between my brain and the phenomenal tree are real. This is, more or less, the framework in which Stumpf operates. But from the phenomenological perspective, we put out of play the actual tree that we posit in our uncritical natural attitude.¹¹¹ All we are concerned with is the phenomenal tree, which is in some sense the achievement of intentional consciousness. The tree's *sense* as actually existing out there is the result of a meaning bestowing act of consciousness, in this case, ordinary sense perception. And in this case, there is no tree apart from my consciousness of it. Just as we bracket the actual tree existing out there, we must also bracket the positing of this consciousness as *human* consciousness. Pure phenomenology therefore cannot be psychology, as it is not concerned with the human mind. What we have just accomplished is the phenomenological reduction, and we are now in the field of transcendental subjectivity. I can then reflect on the relationship between consciousness and its object, and argue from this "moment" of consciousness to the conditions on the possibility of my perception of the

¹¹¹ Stumpf's theory would have it that we infer the existence of the real tree based on empirical intuition. But this, of course, this presupposes a theory of perception that is itself rooted in the natural attitude, namely, sense-data theory. Husserl, for his part, does not deny the empirical reality of the tree. He simply calls into question what this empirical reality means. Stumpf assumes a metaphysical framework that bypasses this question.

tree.¹¹² This same process can be performed for any act of consciousness, not just ordinary sense perception.

Stumpf's worry that Husserl's examples of pure phenomenology, such as the apple tree, are obtuse may well be a valid point. Husserl did only intend for *Ideas* to be a general introduction to this phenomenology, not an elaboration of its specific problems. The subsequent sections of the chapter, which discuss the perception of the tree in more detail (§§89-90), are not particularly easy to parse. Husserl claims that the tree is posited as being a physical Object, out there, in space, that what we see is not some picture-Object in the mind, etc. He then says that we must bracket the natural sense of "actuality" that we normally accord to the tree, but at the same time we must acknowledge that such positings are essential to perception. But Husserl is not yet doing transcendental phenomenology proper here. This is only a sketch of the beginning phase of a transcendental phenomenology; of the ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and a phenomenological-transcendental philosophy.

Stumpf argues that the "radical", transcendental phenomenology presented by Husserl in *Ideas*, and summarized above, is nonsense. Husserl's talk of *essences* and the *intellectual intuition* of essences achieved through phenomenological reflection is little more than mysticism. He even compares Husserl's work to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.¹¹³ Stumpf denies that a descriptive account of mental processes can give us a comprehensive theory of nature, or that such a theory should even be called phenomenology. Unless we allow for some type of super-sensuous intuition, we have no evidence on which to base any discussion

¹¹² For our purposes here, we will bypass the distinction between static and genetic phenomenology, and particular problems inherent in the former.

¹¹³ „Zu Anfang des vorigen Jahrhunderts verkündete Schelling ein solches Wissen auf Grund einer „*intellektualen Anschauung*“, durch welche der Philosoph das Absolute und aus ihm heraus die ganze Welt erkennen sollte. Dadurch erfuhr man beispielsweise, dass alle chemischen Elemente nur verwandeltes Eisen seien, dass aber die Tendenz des chemischen Prozesses dahin gehe, alles in Wasser (nicht etwa in Wasserstoff) zu verwandeln, welches schon Pindar das fürnehmste aller Dinge nannte; oder dass unter den Planeten Venus das Gold des Himmels sei, Mercurius aber als der unterste noch ein Übergewicht der Leiblichkeit und Besonderheit an sich habe, und was noch weiter an dergleichen Unsinn auf jedem Blatt der „Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik“ zu lesen steht. Wir sind überzeugt, dass Husserl von solchen Extravaganzen einer am unrechten Orte dichterischen Phantasie weit entfernt ist. Aber allen, die sich durch die Verheissungen der Wesensschau entgegen seinen eigenen ursprünglichen Intentionen zu einer Erneuerung solcher Träume in modernisiertem Gewande verlockt sehen, sei in Erinnerung gebracht, dass es sich in einer richtig verstandenen Phänomenologie überhaupt nicht um weltanschauliche Probleme handelt, sondern um die äusserst trockene und nüchterne erkenntnistheoretische Spezialfrage nach der Existenz und Formulierung gegenständlicher Axiome.“ (Stumpf, *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd. 1, p.200)

of “essences,” and no reason to even think they exist. While Husserl presents pure phenomenology as a rigorous and all-encompassing science, it is really a science without any subject matter. At best, it is descriptive psychology, and as such, it tells us nothing about the world.

Given that Stumpf’s approach to phenomenology demands that all our claims be based on concrete evidence gathered from experimentation on empirical phenomena, which are always in some way related to the sensuous intuition of an external world, it is not surprising that he is critical of “pure” phenomenology. He limits the definition of phenomena, and thus the scope of phenomenology, by presupposing a particular epistemological and metaphysical framework, namely, a critical realist one.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, these convictions are precisely what Husserl insists that we abandon in order to do transcendental philosophy. These standards of evidence and truth, and of what counts as reality must be suspended, and interrogated from the transcendental standpoint.

Insofar as Stumpf remains squarely within the natural attitude, he not only misunderstands the phenomenological reduction, but his arguments against pure phenomenology are question begging. They presuppose the very realism they seek to champion in opposition to Husserl’s transcendental idealism. If we define phenomena as only the object correlates of sensuous intuition, then pure phenomenology is a phenomenology without phenomena. This argument might be valid, but it is not necessarily sound. Husserl would reject the major premise insofar as it assumes the existence in-itself of the external world, even if Stumpf maintains that there is a gap between what we know of the world and how it actually is. Stumpf’s argument that pure phenomenology reduces to descriptive psychology is similarly vacuous, in that it both rejects that mental processes as such can be considered as phenomena, and that the study of mental process/functions is, by definition, psychology (albeit, in this case, one that studies how the mind constitutes its objects according to certain *a priori* laws).¹¹⁵ Stumpf rejects Husserl’s alternate definition

¹¹⁴ Recall that, at the beginning of this paper, we noted that Husserl included this position under the heading “bad idealism.” Even if Stumpf is a critical realist rather than an idealist, Stumpf’s empiricism may make him vulnerable to Husserl’s arguments against Hume. But discussing this point in detail can be left aside for the moment.

¹¹⁵ Husserl elaborates on this point, referring explicitly to the Brentano school, in the *Cartesian Meditations*: “the whole of modern psychology and epistemology has failed to grasp the *proper sense* of the problems

of phenomena, which includes individual moments of conscious acts taken as objects of phenomenological reflection, by claiming that there are no things that satisfy it, at least, not if we stay true to empiricism. If Husserl rejects empirical realism, then he must just be a dogmatic idealist. This hinges on a false dichotomy: that you have to be either a realist or an idealist. Underlying this argument is also Stumpf's orthodox Brentanian view that there is no transcendental subject, but only a bundle of conscious states. In no sense does this argument threaten to undermine Husserl's theory on premises that Husserl would accept.

Stumpf's criticism of pure phenomenology is emblematic of arguments that attack Husserl of psychologism or subjective idealism. David Bell echoes the sentiments of Stumpf when he writes that Husserlian phenomenology, particularly as it is presented in *Ideas*, is intrinsically "one of the most dogmatic of all philosophical standpoints."¹¹⁶ Bell continues:

Having absolved himself in principle from any obligation to provide arguments, proofs, or justifications for his conclusions – indeed, having absolved himself from any obligation to provide *conclusions* at all – the Husserlian phenomenologist is free of all the normal *accoutrements* of objective, rational, philosophical enquiry. In the last analysis, all that a rigorous scientist [i.e., a Husserlian phenomenologist] may do is describe his own intuitions; and the dogmatism and subjectivism inherent in this proposal is not in the least mitigated by the fact that those intuitions are supposed to strike him as self-evident intuitions of essence.¹¹⁷

Such criticisms insist that the egological analysis which is characteristic of pure phenomenology is dogmatic in its insistence that a transcendental subject exists, and that the

[pertaining to pure phenomenology], both *psychologically and transcendentally*...as problems of (static and genetic) *intentional explication*. To grasp it was, after all, impossible even for those who had accepted Brentano's doctrine of "psvchic phenomena" as intentional processes. There was a lack of understanding for the peculiar character of an intentional "analysis" and all the tasks disclosed by consciousness as such, in respect of noesis and noema, a lack of understanding for the fundamentally novel methods these tasks require. About problems that concern the "psychological origins of the ideas of space, time, and the physical thing" no physics or physiology and no experimental or non-experimental psychology that moves similarly in the realm of inductive externalities has anything to say. Those are quite exclusively problems of intentional constitution that concern phenomena which are already given us beforehand as "clues" (or perhaps can become given beforehand, in particular, with the aid of an experiment), but which must now be interrogated for the first time according to the intentional method and within the universal complexes of psychic constitution." (Husserl, *CM*, p.143-144)

¹¹⁶ Bell, *Husserl*, p.197.

¹¹⁷ Bell, *Husserl*, p.197.

results of these analyses can be universalized. All that can result from such a phenomenology is a catalogue of descriptions of one's own subjective states. Stumpf's experimental phenomenology, which concedes that the external world humans experience is subjectively structured in some way, can perhaps overcome this problem, but Husserl's pure phenomenology cannot. But this argument simply denies outright the possibility of transcendental arguments, without explaining why we should not accept such arguments.

One question is still left lingering here: Does Husserl give convincing arguments for the "absolute existence" of the transcendental ego? He certainly does not do so in *Ideas*. Husserl gives thorough arguments to this end in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* §§103-104, wherein he suggests that the capacity for phenomenological reflection proves the absolute existence of the transcendental ego. But even if Stumpf does not accept Husserl's "proofs" for the necessary existence of a transcendental subject based on the unity of consciousness, insofar as Stumpf makes no attempt to bracket the epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions underlying his own version of phenomenology, I argue that his criticisms are moot. In order for Stumpf to legitimately criticize Husserl, he must either disprove the existence of the transcendental ego or adopt the transcendental standpoint, and argue from there that we can and ought to reject Husserl's theory. Insofar as he is still bound up in traditional epistemological and metaphysical debates, Stumpf has not done this.

As we have already stated above, Husserl meant for pure phenomenology to be transcendental philosophy, that is, an epistemological endeavor that enquires into the ultimate source and ground of all formations of knowledge, the pure *ego*, and investigates the relation between this pure ego and its intentional objects. In doing so, it calls into question both traditional epistemology and their criteria for evidence and truth as well as metaphysics, and its presuppositions about the nature of reality. It questions the foundations for all of this. Stumpf argues against pure phenomenology not on terms that Husserl would accept, but from his own philosophical standpoint, and for this reason, they do not actually engage Husserl's theory at all. They simply beg the question regarding what counts as phenomena, what counts as evidence, and what counts as real. That said, Stumpf correctly points out that pure phenomenology is not a science of all concrete phenomena or of the world in the natural sense. Of course, Husserl does not presume it to be any such science. Rather, it is an

investigation into the conditions of all possible cognition. Pure phenomenology is *eo ipso* transcendental idealism.

3.3 Celms' Criticism of Phenomenological Idealism

In *Interpreting Husserl*, David Carr alludes to an “imaginary critic” who charges Husserl with adopting some form of solipsism. This critic, who Husserl addresses in the ‘Fifth Meditation,’ was no figment of his imagination. In all likelihood it was his former student, Theodor Celms.¹¹⁸ While Celms’ *Die phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls* was widely read soon after its appearance, and was endorsed by figures such as Alexander Pfänder and Maximilian Beck,¹¹⁹ history has not been so kind. Aside from Thomas Seebohm’s, *Die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Transzendentalphilosophie* (1962), and Juris Rozenvalds’ “Phenomenological Ideas in Latvia: Kurt Stavenhagen and Theodor Celms on Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology” (2000), protracted discussions of Celms’ critique of Husserlian phenomenology are scarce.¹²⁰ Despite the lack of attention paid to Celms in contemporary literature on Husserl, in his work we find the first systematic presentation of one of the most common criticisms of pure phenomenology, namely, that it cannot escape the solipsistic starting point from which it begins. As the ‘Fifth Meditation’ shows, Husserl’s response to this threat, even if he rejects the conclusion, is quite subtle.

Celms began his philosophical career in Moscow from 1913–20. During this time he studied first under Pavel Novgorodcev and then Georgii Chelpanov, both of whom were

¹¹⁸ There is no explicit evidence that Husserl was responding to Celms specifically in the Fifth Meditation, or when he acknowledges the charge of solipsism made against his idealism in the ‘Epilogue’ to *Ideas* either. However, it is entirely plausible that Celms and those that agreed with him are the intended target, as I will argue below.

¹¹⁹ Maija Kule, et al. *Teodors Celms: fenomenoloģiskie meklējumi*, p.325-326. In his review of Celms’ book, Pfänder writes: “Phenomenology, as a science of pure consciousness, explicitly and according to its essence, forbids any judgment about what might be transcendent to consciousness. However, Husserlian idealism performs just such judgment in declaring that the physical world transcendent to consciousness has no being in itself, but only a being for a consciousness; beyond that, it is nothing. This idealism does not necessarily follow and cannot follow from phenomenology; on the contrary, it forsakes its necessary foundations.” (Pfänder, „(Besprechung) Theodor Celms ‚Der phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls‘,“ *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* II, 1929, p. 2049) Here Pfänder clearly refers to Husserl’s *Ideas* §49.

¹²⁰ The essay by Rozenvalds was published in a Festschrift for Seebohm, *Phenomenology on Kant, German Idealism, Hermeneutics and Logic*, ed. O.K. Wiegand, et al. See also Sebastian Luft’s review of the Rozenvalds’ 1993 edition of Celms book, *Theodor Celms: Der phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls und andere Schriften 1928-1943*, in *Journal Phänomenologie* 7 (1997), pp.61-63.

representatives of the Moscow Neo-Kantian circle.¹²¹ He quickly developed an interest in philosophical idealism, particularly the theories of Plato and Kant. Around 1917, Celms was introduced to Husserl's thought *via* the Russian translation of the *Logical Investigations*.¹²² He immediately took an interest in phenomenology, and eventually relocated to Freiburg to study with Husserl. Celms attended all of Husserl's lectures from the summer of 1922 through to the summer of 1923, most notably *Einleitung in die Philosophie*.¹²³ However, Husserl declined the request to supervise his dissertation. Instead, he recommended Joseph Geysler to oversee the project, and in 1923 Celms received his doctorate from the University of Freiburg with the thesis *Kants allgemeinlogische Auffassung vom Wesen, Ursprung und der Aufgabe des Begriffes*.¹²⁴

Upon returning to Freiburg for the summer semester of 1925, Celms attended Husserl's lectures on *Phänomenologische Psychologie*. Husserl also gave Celms access to manuscripts from his lectures on *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, *Erste Philosophie*

¹²¹ A key figure in this group was Fyodor Stepanov, a student of Wilhelm Windelband. In addition to Celms, Chelpanov was the teacher Gustav Shpet and Alexei Losev, themselves both followers of Husserl. Before working with Husserl in Göttingen, Shpet attended Chelpanov's lectures on phenomenology from 1902-05. (See http://anthropology.rinet.ru/old/3/spet_get.htm) Novgorodcev was the teacher of Ivan Ilyin, who was also influenced by Husserl.

For more details of Celms' early career, see *Teodors Celms: fenomenoloģiskie meklējumi*, p.37-38.

¹²² *Logičeskiya izlydovaniya*, translated by E. A. Bernstein, and edited with a preface by Semyon L. Frank. St. Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'no, 1909. (Note that this is not a complete translation of the *Logical Investigations*; it is only the 'Prolegomena.') While Shpet is sometimes credited with popularizing phenomenology in Russia, he was certainly not Husserl's first Russian student, nor was he responsible for the initial transmission of Husserl's ideas into Russia. This area of research has not been developed in the literature on Husserl. The initial influence of Husserl on Russian thought stems from an interest in Neo-Kantianism. No one person appears to be responsible for bringing Husserl to Russia, but along with the Moscow Neo-Kantians, Nikolai Lossky played at least some role. Lossky was a close friend of Thomas Masaryk, and was also a colleague of Semyon Frank at the time the *Logical Investigations* were translated into Russian. Lossky studied in Göttingen in 1903, but there is no evidence that he met Husserl at this time. However, Lossky refers to Husserl in his own work as early as 1907, and in 1909 he reviewed the Russian translation of the *Logical Investigations*. Lossky also attended Husserl's Prague lectures in 1935 and then in 1939 published *Husserl's Transcendental-Phenomenological Idealism*, wherein he argues against Husserl's conception of the transcendental ego. Semyon Frank was also a close friend of phenomenological psychologist Ludwig Binswanger. In addition, Boris Jakovenko, another student of Windelband and friend of Masaryk, helped spread Husserl's ideas in Russia with his article "Philosophia Edmund Husserlia" (1913).

¹²³ During his first visit Celms also attended Husserl's lectures of Hermann Lotze's *Logik*. Celms' initial stay coincides with that of Aron Gurwitsch, who came to Freiburg to study with Husserl on Stumpf's recommendation.

¹²⁴ Husserl was a referee for the dissertation. It is unclear exactly why Husserl chose not to supervise Celms. Perhaps he simply felt that Geysler was better suited for the task. Geysler was also acquainted with Nicolai Hartmann, so there is perhaps some other connection between Geysler and Latvian philosophy which accounts for this decision. Some have speculated that Celms' Neo-Kantian upbringing was the cause of Husserl's reservations. During his stay in Freiburg, Celms had attended the lectures of Richard Kroner – a critic of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and neo-Kantian sympathizer.

II: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion, and his London lectures, *Phänomenologische Methode und Phänomenologische Philosophie*, from 1922.¹²⁵

Thereafter, Celms went back to Latvia to write his habilitation thesis, *Prolegomena zu einem transzendentalen Historismus* (1926). The idea for this project was met with much praise from Husserl.

It is amazing how deeply your thought has entered into the spirit and aims of my life's work, of which you have only learned fragments....They are even a continuation of this work, exactly following the secure and necessary objectives that I myself have followed since the *Ideas* (even since 1910). Of course, a transcendental phenomenology is also a "transcendental historicism".... You are on the right path. Only a few of my students have seen, as you have, how much [*Grosses*] has been opened up to us by the transcendental reduction, and what commitment and sacrifice [*entsagender*] our work demands. On your detailed work, your ingenuity, your energy, I shall put my hopes.¹²⁶

Husserl was impressed by Celms' apparent depth of understanding of the phenomenological reduction and of transcendental phenomenology. He had high hopes for his Latvian protégé.

¹²⁵ See *Husserl-Chronik*, p.290 and Celms, *PIH*, p.254. Aside from the London lectures, all of the other manuscripts Celms read are referred to only by date. However, we can deduce that the lectures from October to November of 1910 are, of course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* by the following passage from the Celms book: "Oder, wie Husserl selbst das in seinen Vorlesungen vom Okt.-Nov. 1910 formuliert hat: „Mögliche Einfühlung ist die »Spiegelung« jeder Monade in jeder anderen und die *Möglichkeit dieser Spiegelung hängt an der Möglichkeit einer übereinstimmenden Konstitution einer raum-zeitlichen Natur, eines in alle Iche hineinreichenden Index für entsprechende Erkenntniskonstitutionen*.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.404) This passage is from a revision Husserl made to *The Basic Problems* §39, and can be found at Hua XIII, p.229. As for the lectures from WS 1923/24, there is ample evidence in Celms' book that he had read the manuscript for *EP II*. At *PIH* p.290, Celms refers to the discussion of *patent* and *latent* acts in Husserl's lectures from WS1923/24. This can be found in Hua VIII. Also, on p.297, Celms refers to Husserl's distinction between *actual* and *habitual* validities [*Geltungen*], which is also found in Hua VIII. Lastly, Celms quotes the manuscript: „nichts anderes als eine klärende Herausbildung der in den scheinbar so trivialen ersten Meditationen des Descartes verborgenen, und Descartes selbst verborgenen tiefen Gehalte,“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.300-301); „In seinen Vorlesungen im W. S. 1923/24 bezeichnete Husserl diese Idee des »An-sich-Seins« der Welt als ‚ein in der universalen Verlaufsgestalt der Erfahrung motiviertes und solange diese Gestalt gegeben ist, notwendig zu setzendes und nicht abzulehnendes Ideal‘,“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.359); and „*Die Welt braucht nicht unbedingt notwendig zu sein, braucht nicht gewesen zu sein, und braucht selbst wenn sie war und ist, nicht weiter zu sein.*“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.369) These passages can be found at Hua VIII, p.80, p.48 and p.67 respectively (although, the final passage reads as follows in Hua VIII: „die Welt braucht nicht zu sein, braucht nie gewesen zu sein, und braucht, selbst wenn sie war und ist, nicht weiterhin zu sein.“) The London lectures have been appended to *Einleitung in der Philosophie* (Hua XXXV), and it is very likely that Celms had access to the manuscript for those lectures as well (or else he simply took amazing notes for himself when he attended the course). For a brief discussion of the London lectures, see Donn Welton, *The Other Husserl*, p.132-133.

¹²⁶ Husserl, 'Husserl an Celms, 21.X.1926 (Abschrift)', *Briefwechsel*, Bd IV, p.67. *Historism* is the idea that an argument or a concept can only be understood by considering it within its historical context, and cannot be properly evaluated based on its form or content alone. This is distinct from *historicism* in the Hegelian sense of a study of so-called laws of history.

Unfortunately, Husserl's hopes ended up being sorely misplaced. After completing his habilitation thesis, Celms began to have doubts about the consequences of Husserl's transcendental philosophy and phenomenological idealism, and became one of Husserl's most famous critics. They agreed that "phenomenological philosophy turns out to be phenomenological monadology,"¹²⁷ but Celms came to view this monadology as nothing more than a *pluralistic solipsism*.

The exact reason for Celms' apparent change of heart with respect to transcendental phenomenology is not fully understood. Shortly after finishing *Prolegomena zu einem transzendentalen Historismus*, Celms received a scathing review from fellow Latvian Rudolph Jirgens. Much of the content of Celms' 1928 book is an elaboration of points made by Jirgens.¹²⁸ But it might well be that these critical remarks merely calcified worries that had been in the back of Celms' mind for some time which he had inherited from other sources. Geysler, for instance, was critical of Husserl in his book *Neue und Alte Wege der Philosophie: Eine Erörterung der Grundlagen der Erkenntnis im Hinblick auf Edmund Husserls Versuch ihrer Neubegründung* (1916). However, there has been no comparison of Geysler's work and that of Celms.¹²⁹ While sympathetic to phenomenology, Geysler was a critical realist.¹³⁰ This may, in part, explain why Celms' criticism appealed to the realist phenomenologists, and why Celms later aligned himself with Pfänder, to whom he dedicated *Lebensumgebung und Lebensprojektion* (1933).¹³¹ In Geysler's *Erkenntnistheorie* (1922), he characterizes Husserl's theory as a revival of the idealist metaphysics of Plato, calling his theory "logical-metaphysical transcendentalism."¹³² Celms' departure from Husserl might

¹²⁷ Celms, "Edmunds Huserls" (1931), p.154.

¹²⁸ While Celms' habilitation is not extant, Jirgens notes on it are. They will be briefly discussed in a forthcoming paper by Uldis Vegners.

¹²⁹ In particular, Chapter 5 of Geysler's book contains a critical discussion of Husserl's method of phenomenological reflection, and in Chapter 8, he is critical of Husserl's idealism and refers to many of the same passages from *Ideas* that Celms does. In 1924, Geysler also authored a work which criticized Max Scheler's phenomenology of religion.

¹³⁰ Depending on how influential Geysler was on Celms, our points with respect to how Stumpf's commitment to critical realism skewed his reading of Husserl might give additional insight into Celms' criticisms as well. For more on Geysler, see the *Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers*, ed. Brown, Collinson and Wilkinson (1996), pp.273-274.

¹³¹ Maija Kule, "Theodor Celms: Forerunner of the Phenomenology of Life," *Analecta Husserliana* LIV (1998), p.296.

¹³² „Diese erstmalig von Bolzano begründete und dann namentlich von Husserl vertiefte und erweiterte Theorie bezeichne ich als *logisch-metaphysischen Transzendentalismus* und behaupte von ihr, dass sie ein gewisses Wiederaufleben der idealistischen Metaphysik Platos sei.“ (Joseph Geysler, *Erkenntnistheorie*, p.44)

have also been the result of his interest in Rickert, Natorp, Nicolai Hartmann, August Messer, and Wilhelm Dilthey.¹³³ Finally, it should not be overlooked just how much of Husserl's thought Celms had heard and read during his stays in Freiburg. These criticisms are, all other things being held equal, a natural progression in Celms' thought.

In the foreword to *Die phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, Celms notes that Husserl's *Ideas* drew widespread attention, influencing research in both philosophy and psychology. However, due to its basic and decisive idealist tenets, "many researchers on opposing sides (even some supporters of phenomenology) have wanted to reject it."¹³⁴ He claims that because of the impact of Husserl's work, philosophers have a duty to correctly grasp the nature of pure phenomenology. This is the task Celms sets for himself. He then outlines three main questions that will guide his assessment of Husserl's phenomenological idealism:

- 1) Does Husserl's phenomenological idealism follow with logical necessity from the phenomenological method alone?
- 2) Does this idealism meet Husserl's goal of being the one true philosophy, that is, a rigorous science of pure and absolute cognition?
- 3) Is Husserl's transcendental idealism consistent with, or does it correspond to, the transcendental idealism of Kant?¹³⁵

Drawing on *Ideas* and "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," as well as the unpublished works he had accessed while visiting Freiburg, Celms attacks Husserl on two fronts. First, he argues that there are two distinct senses of the phenomenological reduction which Husserl equivocates on, and that the one leads phenomenology to subjective idealism. Second, he

¹³³ Celms mentions all of these philosophers (with the exception of Hartmann) in *PIH*, as well as in his subsequent works. In 1929 Celms went to Heidelberg to study with Rickert. Hartmann and Celms had a close relationship, and he had nominated Celms for a position at the University of Cologne (which Celms had to turn down). As for Celms' relation to Dilthey and the "philosophy of life," little is known. However, in a letter to Husserl in 1925, Celms writes: "In my habilitation...I discuss the essence of phenomenological transcendentalism in contradistinction to all abstract forms of transcendentalism. I venture to employ for it the term 'transcendentalism of life', for if there ever was a philosophy of life of the highest quality, it is transcendental phenomenology." (Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, Bd. IV, p.66)

¹³⁴ „In derjenigen Ausprägung, die die phänomenologische Methode in dem letztveröffentlichten Werke Husserls, den „Ideen“, gefunden hat, verbindet sie sich aufs entschiedenste mit idealistischer Grundauffassung, der gegenüber viele Forscher (sogar manche Anhänger der Phänomenologie) sich ablehnend verhalten.“ (Celms, *Die phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, p.251)

¹³⁵ Celms, *Der Phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, p.251-252. This work will hereafter be cited using the abbreviation *PIH*.

argues that Husserl's theory of empathy either reduces "other pure egos" to nothing more than constructions of my own consciousness, or a "pluralistic solipsism." Husserl might be able to escape these problems by stipulating the existence of other monadic transcendental egos, and by adopting the Leibnizian doctrine of pre-established harmony, but at the cost of being dogmatic and unscientific.

Although Celms' first criticism will not be our focus here, it has some bearing on why he goes on to argue that pure phenomenology leads to solipsism. Following Husserl, Celms identifies the phenomenological reduction as the main pillar of phenomenology. This radical, universal application of the *epoché* is "nothing more" than a clarification of the method laid out by Descartes at the beginning of his *Meditations*.¹³⁶ But Celms thinks there is a "dangerous equivocation" in Husserl's use of the phenomenological reduction. This is not simply a terminological problem, but one that has serious metaphysical consequences. James Mensch summarizes Celms' distinction between the two senses of the phenomenological reduction as follows:

As first noted by Theodor Celms, the reduction has two senses. It is "a leading back of every objectively (transcendentally) directed *consideration* into a consideration of the corresponding modes of consciousness." It is also "the leading back of objective (transcendent) *being* to the being of the corresponding modes of consciousness" (*Der phenomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, Riga, 1928, p. 309). In its *first* sense, it signifies a reduction of our consideration of an object to a consideration of the experiences and experiential connections *through which* the object is given to consciousness. As Celms writes, the second sense signifies "the denial of any positing of what is reduced" - i.e., objective, transcendent being - "as absolute."¹³⁷

Celms distinguishes between the *reduction of consideration* [*Zurückführung der Betrachtung*] and the *reduction of being* [*Zurückführung des Seins*]. The first of these Celms identifies as *phenomenological reflection*, and the second with a full-fledged phenomenological *reduction*. According to Celms, the second sense involves not only an intentional analysis of the objects and their corresponding modes of consciousness, but a reduction of objects *to* those modes of consciousness, and a denial of their existence in-themselves. On the first reading, Husserl remains neutral with respect to the idealism-

¹³⁶ Celms, *PIH*, p.300-301; Hua VIII, p.80.

¹³⁷ Mensch, *Intersubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism*, pp.11-12.

realism question. But in this case, Celms claims that it does not constitute a true philosophy.¹³⁸ Alternatively, if we accept the second interpretation, then Husserl is an out-and-out idealist.¹³⁹

For Celms, what is valuable in Husserl is his method of phenomenological reflection. But he is also of the opinion that, insofar as this method is silent with respect to questions about the genuinely transcendent (the world as it is in-itself, God, and other egos), it is simply unable to constitute a philosophical system in the true sense of the word. Philosophy, in the sense of an absolutely universal science which encompasses every possible thing and every special science (and this is the sense Husserl has in mind), must, according to Celms, also pass judgment about what is transcendent. It is clear that, for Celms, metaphysics is first philosophy. Insofar as Husserl accepts the phenomenological reduction, which does not follow from the method of phenomenological reflection alone, he decides in favor of idealism. According to Celms, we find two basic arguments for Husserl's idealism in *Ideas*. The first is found in *Ideas* §47, and the second is the infamous passage from §49 discussed above.¹⁴⁰ Celms finds one major problem with Husserl's phenomenological idealism: as a

¹³⁸ Celms, *PIH*, p.317. Celms is correct to distinguish between a science and its method. As a methodological tool, the reduction can be, and was, used by phenomenologists of all stripes. But the claim that any true philosophy *must* take a metaphysical stance is, in my opinion, a specious one.

¹³⁹ „Im zweiten Falle, wo also das objektive Sein aufs Bewusstsein reduziert wird, hat man mit einem *prinzipiellen Idealismus* zu rechnen, während man im ersten Falle noch *diesseits der Realismus-Idealismusfrage* steht, sodass diejenigen Resultate, die sich im ersten Falle ergeben, sowohl bei idealistischer als auch bei realistischer Einstellung anerkannt werden können.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.309)

¹⁴⁰ Celms, *PIH*, pp.370-371. The passage from *Ideas* §47 reads: “It must always be borne in mind here that *whatever physical things are* – the only physical things about which we can make statements, the only ones about the being or non-being, the being-thus or being-otherwise of which we can disagree and make rational decisions – *they are as experienceable physical things*. It is experience alone that prescribes their sense... As a consequence, one must not let oneself be deceived by speaking of the physical thing as transcending consciousness or as “existing in itself.” The genuine concept of the transcendence of something physical...can itself be derived only from the proper essential contents of perception or from those concatenations of definite kinds which we call demonstrative experience. The idea of such transcendence is therefore the eidetic correlate of the pure idea of this demonstrative experience. This is true of any conceivable kind of transcendence which could be treated as either an actuality or a possibility. *An object existing in itself is never one with which consciousness or the Ego pertaining to consciousness has nothing to do.*” (Husserl, *Ideas*, p.106 <88-89>) Moran identifies passages near this that commit Husserl to idealism as well: “In *Ideen* I Husserl's commitment to idealism emerges in his Cartesian-style reflection on the self-evidence of immanent perception or of one's conscious processes. He starts by accepting that the *cogito* demonstrates that every conscious experience contains the essential possibility of its being reflected on in such a way that it confirms its actual occurrence in an irrefragable manner. As he puts it: ‘To each stream of mental processes and to each Ego, as Ego, there belongs the essential possibility of acquiring this evidence; each bears in itself, as an essential possibility, the guarantee of its absolute existence (*seines absoluten Dasein*)’ (*Ideen* I §46, p. 101; Hua 3/1: 85, trans. modified). Any conscious process is ‘originarily and absolutely given’, not only in respect of its essence but also with the certainty of its existence.” (Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, pp.178-179)

result of its theoretical underpinnings, phenomenology is unable to escape the solipsistic standpoint from which it begins, despite Husserl's attempt at a theory of intersubjectivity and his discussions of empathy.

According to J.N. Mohanty, Husserl's critics "never make it clear why they think that Husserl's account remains committed to solipsism, when it is precisely by empathy that I experience the other as a wholly transcendent other."¹⁴¹ In the case of Celms, this statement is entirely inaccurate. Aside from Edith Stein, Celms probably knew more about Husserl's theory of empathy and the intersubjective elements of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology than anyone else before the publication of the *Cartesian Meditations*,¹⁴² based on the manuscripts he had access to while in Freiburg in 1925. Celms gives us the first comprehensive critical commentary on this aspect of Husserl's thought.

There is no indication of precisely when Husserl received his copy of *Die phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, although Celms presumably sent it off shortly after its publication in 1928. The dedication Celms inscribed on the inside cover at least suggests that he did not hesitate to send the book to Husserl.¹⁴³ Given the praise expressed by Husserl in his letter to Celms from October of 1926 noted above, it is also likely that Husserl read the book shortly after it arrived in Freiburg. If these speculative claims are correct, then Husserl was perhaps aware of Celms' criticisms before he began writing the Paris lectures in January of 1929, and almost certainly before he authored the version of the *Cartesian Meditations* published in 1931 and "Typescript C" in 1932. Husserl does not mention Celms in the *Cartesian Meditations*,¹⁴⁴ but the clarificatory remarks Husserl makes concerning the divergence between his method and that of Descartes, his relationship of phenomenology to the transcendental idealism of Kant, the discussion of the problem of solipsism, and the allusions to Leibniz, while not new to Husserl's writings, are presented in a manner which might lead one to think that he is responding to Celms. There are also extensive annotations

¹⁴¹ Mohanty, *Edmund Husserl's Freiberg Years: 1916-1938*, p.132.

¹⁴² We might also mention Roman Ingarden here.

¹⁴³ "Herrn Prof. Dr. Edmund Husserl, in tiefster Verehrung und herzlichsten Liebe." [BP 31]

¹⁴⁴ This is, of course, not unusual for Husserl. As we have already discussed, he rarely mentions his critics in his published writings.

in Husserl's copy of the book which show that he read it meticulously.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, there is good reason to think that certain aspects of the *Cartesian Meditations* are aimed at Celms, but perhaps at others as well.¹⁴⁶

Celms' second criticism of phenomenological idealism centres on Husserl decision to equate the transcendental ego with the Leibnizian monad, and, subsequently, with describing transcendental phenomenology as monadology.¹⁴⁷ Understood in this way, Celms believes that Husserl invites a host of problems to haunt phenomenological idealism. For the sake of brevity, we will confine our discussion of *Der Phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls* to Part II: Chapter IV, wherein Celms attacks Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity. Husserl makes two marginal comments in this portion of the text, which are reproduced below.¹⁴⁸

Celms argues that Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity, that is, of an intersubjective world, can only be established if we presuppose pre-established harmony. This is a result of Husserl's phenomenological idealism and the problematic sense of the reduction. First, Celms calls into question what 'other subjects' even are for Husserl. He writes that, according to Husserl, empathic experience motivates us to posit, with presumptive certainty,

¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, Husserl made his annotations and marginal notes in this book in pencil, and so many of them have faded over time.

¹⁴⁶ We must stress that long before Celms wrote his book, Husserl was aware that solipsism posed a threat to his philosophy. Husserl wrestled with this problem for many years. A complete picture of why Husserl was so deeply concerned with solipsism would involve a lengthy discussion of his engagement with figures such as Hans Driesch, Johannes Volkelt, Willy Moog, Wilhelm Schuppe, Max Scheler, and others. We will not attempt this here. But if anyone prior to Celms charged Husserl with being a solipsist in print, I have not found evidence of this. However, it is also likely that Celms based his claims that Husserl's philosophy could not escape solipsism on worries that Husserl had expressed in the manuscripts that Celms had read. If the *Cartesian Meditations* were meant as a response to Celms, he was certainly not convinced by Husserl's attempt at rephrasing his position. In 1939, Celms writes that "the *Cartesian Meditations* do not present anything new but confirm once again how close Husserl is to Descartes." (Maija Kule, "Theodor Celms: Forerunner of the Phenomenology of Life," *Analecta Husserliana* LIV (1998), pp.298-299)

¹⁴⁷ In what follows, I will not be able to discuss all of the similarities between Celms' text and Husserl's manuscripts. That said, the following sections, all of which Celms read, should be kept in mind: *Erste Philosophie II* §56, which Husserl ends by stating that: „Das einzige absolute Sein ist aber Subjektsein, als für sich selbst ursprünglich Konstituiertsein, und das gesamte absolute Sein ist das des Universums transzendentaler Subjekte, die miteinander in wirklicher und möglicher Gemeinschaft stehen. So führt die Phänomenologie auf die von Leibniz in genialem aperfu antizipierte Monadologie.“ (Husserl, *EP II*, p.190); *Phänomenologische Psychologie* §43, pp.216-217; and most importantly *Einleitung in die Phänomenologie* §56, pp.280-284. A thorough comparison of Celms' book and *Einleitung in die Phänomenologie* will be left for future work.

¹⁴⁸ My thanks go to Dr. Thomas Vongehr for transcribing Husserl's marginalia, and to Prof. Dr. Ullrich Melle, director of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven, for allowing me to both access and print these comments.

other psycho-physical subjects, just as ordinary perceptual experience leads us to posit external objects. However, unlike sense perception, empathy is a type of indirect or secondary experience.¹⁴⁹ Celms draws our attention particularly to *Ideas* §46,¹⁵⁰ where Husserl argues for the indubitability of anything which I experience as immanent and the absolute dubitability of anything which I experience as transcendent. From this, Husserl argues, in Cartesian style, for the absolute existence of *my cogito*, i.e., *my pure ego*. The sort of existence that we can attribute to other egos is similar to that of physical things. On Celms' interpretation, this means that other egos exist as immanent transcendences, that is, as things which are constituted in one's consciousness as transcendent, but which may not *actually* exist. In fact, since they are *empirical* unities, other egos, by Husserl's own account, have no absolute existence.¹⁵¹ While Husserl seems to claim that other egos exist in- and for-themselves just as I exist absolutely for myself, what follows from his theory is actually solipsism.¹⁵²

If the above is Husserl's account of other subjects, then his theory of intersubjectivity faces a problem. Celms maintains that any "true" account of intersubjectivity must demonstrate the existence in-themselves of other subjects. Phenomenological analysis of other subjects has, at best, only been concerned with "*one's own consciousness of other subjects*. The other subject as transcendent...has remained, as in all purely phenomenological reflection, completely disregarded."¹⁵³ All Husserl has done is account for the empirically founded existence of other subjects as things in the world, but not their existence in-themselves. Like all other worldly objects, Husserl has reduced them to a harmonious unity of experiences which are constituted in and by a conscious subject. "Everything

¹⁴⁹ This is similar to how Husserl himself sketches empathy in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.233.

¹⁵⁰ Celms, *PIH*, pp.362-363; 388-389.

¹⁵¹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, §§53-55. Celms refers to these sections of *Ideas* throughout his book.

¹⁵² „Nichtsdestoweniger aber behauptet er entschieden, die fremden Iche beständen ebenso »an sich«, wie das eigene Ich. Wir können also mit Recht sagen: Würde dennoch aus der bloss präsidentiven Gewissheit der Existenz des Dingrealen im Gegensatz zur absoluten Gewissheit der Existenz des eigenen Ich die Idealität des Dingrealen gefolgert, dann müsste auch aus der bloss präsidentiven Gewissheit, mit welcher die fremden Iche für das eigene Ich vorhanden sind, die Idealität der fremden Iche gefolgert werden, was ein Verfallen in den Bannkreis des Solipsismus bedeutete.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.362-363)

¹⁵³ „Wir befassten uns ja nur mit der phänomenologischen Analysis des *eigenen Bewusstseins von fremden Ichen*. Die fremden Iche als Transzendenz, ihre Reduzierbarkeit bzw. Nichtreduzierbarkeit auf das eigene Bewusstsein, - all das blieb, wie bei aller rein phänomenologischen Reflexion, völlig ausser Betracht.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.396)

that [Husserl has] said about intersubjectivity,” Celms writes, “is true in fact only of intersubjectivity as presented in the *solus ipse*.”¹⁵⁴

Husserl takes special note of Celms’ claim that “intersubjectivity in the true sense” must be a theory of the “intersubjectivity of subjects which are ‘in-themselves’ not reducible to one another.”¹⁵⁵ Here we see a metaphysical presupposition built into Celms’ argument, namely, that intersubjectivity in the “true sense” relies on the existence in-themselves of other subjects. Celms makes this the centerpiece of his criticism, claiming that Husserl cannot move from the account of intersubjectivity sketched above to an account of intersubjectivity in the natural or “true” sense, that is, intersubjectivity as it is understood from within the natural attitude, without the help of some additional metaphysical presupposition, “which *under no circumstances can be considered a rigorously scientific proposition*.”¹⁵⁶ Perhaps Celms is correct that intersubjectivity in the natural sense cannot be established by transcendental phenomenology without some unwarranted metaphysical presuppositions. But Celms’ criticism overlooks the fact that Husserl has no intention of defending intersubjectivity in the natural sense, just as he has no intention of defending the existence of the world in the natural sense. Nonetheless, even if Celms’ may be confused as to Husserl’s intentions, Husserl still has to make good on his claims from *Ideas* §29 that we share a single intersubjectively constituted world with other human beings whom I accept as other Ego-subjects.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ „All das, was bisher über die Intersubjektivität gesagt worden ist, trifft also eigentlich nur die *Intersubjektivität, wie sie im solus ipse vorgestellt wird*.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.397) In the margin next to this passage, Husserl has written “388”, referencing an earlier section from Celms’ book which he has annotated. It reads: „Die Gewissheit des Dingrealen ist, Husserls idealistischer Überzeugung nach, nur als die Gewissheit eines im *eigenen Bewusstsein konstituierten* Seins anzusehen. Demnach kann auch die Gewissheit des fremden Ich, als eines auf Grund der eigenen Wahrnehmung des fremdem Leibdinges »eingefühlten« Ich, nur die Gewissheit eines *im eigenen Bewusstsein vorgestellten* Ich sein. Wie es sich mit der Gewissheit eines an sich, d. h. unabhängig vom eigenen Bewusstsein bestehenden fremden Ich verhalten mag, bleibt noch offen.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.388)

¹⁵⁵ „Jetzt stellen wir die Frage: Wie kann es auf Grund der bisher schon erörterten prinzipiellen Züge des Husserlschen Philosophierens zur Intersubjektivität im eigentlichen Sinne kommen. d. h. zur *Intersubjektivität von aufeinander nicht reduzierbaren Subjekten »an sich«*? (Celms, *PIH*, p.397. Underlining here and in all subsequent quotations is Husserl’s own.)

¹⁵⁶ „Unserer tiefsten Überzeugung nach ist dieser Übergang *nur mit Hilfe einer metaphysischen Voraussetzung* zu vollziehen, die *auf keinen Fall als ein streng wissenschaftlicher Satz* angesehen werden darf.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.397)

¹⁵⁷ “All that which holds for me myself holds, as I know, for all other human beings whom I find present in my surrounding world. Experiencing them as human beings, I understand and accept each of them as an Ego-subject just as I myself am one, and as related to his natural surrounding world. But I do this in such a way that

Husserl believes that we cannot possibly have an originary intuition of another ego. What we experience originally are only other bodies [*Körper*] which we constitute as other living-things [*Leibdinge*]. According to Celms, the experience of other living-things is the basis for the empathic experience of other subjects. If the experience of anything “transcendent” ultimately refers back to the presence of particular hyletic data which is considered to be objective, then the experience of other lived bodies serve as this data in the case of empathic experience. It follows from this that: “All questions concerning the correct grounds for the positing of other subjects thus ultimately lead back to the presence of particular hyletic data in one’s own consciousness, by virtue of which the other living-thing comes to be given in perceptual experience for one’s own self.”¹⁵⁸ But how do we come to have this curious type of hyletic data? Does it come from outside of consciousness, or from within? Celms argues that Husserl cannot sufficiently answer this question. On this point, Husserl explicitly takes issue with Celms.

If the transcendental ego is not reified, Celms argues that, “it cannot possibly act on other pure streams of experience, nor can it possibly be influenced by others. An interaction between the individual subjects would only be possible if they suppose a substantial being, which would, however, abandon the absolute character of pure consciousness.”¹⁵⁹ Celms

I take their surrounding world and mine Objectively as one and the same world of which we all are conscious, only in different modes. Each has his place from which he sees the physical things present; and, accordingly, each has different physical-thing appearances. Also, for each the fields of actual perception, actual memory, etc., are different, leaving aside the fact that intersubjectively common objects of consciousness in those fields are intended to as having different modes, different manners of apprehension, different degrees of clarity, and so forth. For all that, we come to an understanding with our fellow human being and in common with them posit an Objective spatiotemporal actuality as *our factually existent surrounding world to which we ourselves nonetheless belong.*” (Husserl, *Ideas*, pp.55-56 <52>)

¹⁵⁸ „Alle Frage nach dem Rechtsgrund der Setzung von fremden Ichen führt also letzten Endes auf das Vorhandensein von bestimmten hyletischen Daten im eigenen Bewusstsein zurück, auf Grund derer die fremden Leibdinge für das eigene Ich zur wahrnehmungsmässigen Gegebenheit kommen.“ (Celms, *PIH*, 397-398)

¹⁵⁹ „Wird das phänomenologisch reine Bewusstsein selbst nicht verdinglicht, sondern in seiner absoluten »Reinheit« von allen heterogenen Momenten gefasst, so kann es auch, als ein einem reinen Ich zugeordneter Erlebnisstrom mit seinen noetisch-noematischen Beständen, unmöglich auf die anderen reinen Erlebnisströme einwirken, es kann auch unmöglich von den anderen beeinflusst werden. Eine Wechselwirkung zwischen den einzelnen Ichen wäre nur dann möglich, wenn man ihnen ein substantielles Sein supponierte, wodurch allerdings die Absolutheit des reinen Bewusstseins preisgegeben würde.“ (Celms, *PIH*, 398-399) On these points, Celms seems to be aware of Husserl’s discussion of ‘causation’ at *Ideas* §52. Here Husserl denies that *presentifications* are “caused” by things-in-themselves, and insists that causation is a concept that only applies to the objects of experience.

goes on to write that taken in the absolute sense, “consciousness is a ‘*windowless* and *doorless*’ monad. All action and interaction, all causality and so on, is then only possible on the part of intentional objects of consciousness, and therein only with one another as a relationship between intentionally constituted moments. In other words, it is clear that, for Husserl, consciousness ‘must be regarded as *a self-contained complex of being*, a complex of *absolute being* into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can escape.’ (*Ideas*, §49, p.93)”¹⁶⁰ Husserl makes two comments here. First, he writes that while at the beginning of phenomenological investigation it seems that my consciousness and Ego are solipsistic, it turns out that “‘*windowlessness*’ means only that something lying outside of transcendental intersubjectivity is *nonsense*.”¹⁶¹ Second, regarding the passage cited from *Ideas* §49, Husserl writes that consciousness must be considered in two senses: first egologically, and then intersubjectively.¹⁶² While these statements anticipate and are elaborated in the *Cartesian Meditations* from §41 onward, we will turn our attention instead to the lectures on *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (hereafter abbreviated as *GPP*) and Husserl’s discussion of empathy and intersubjectivity therein, to contextualize both Celms’ remarks and Husserl’s response.

In *GPP* §38, Husserl describes empathy as, “a special form of empirical experience. In empathy, the empathizing I experiences the inner life (*Seelenleben*) or, to be more precise, the consciousness of the other I. He experiences the other I, but no one will say he lives it and perceives it in inner perception...just like his own consciousness.”¹⁶³ Empathy is therefore an empty intention, not an intuiting of the inner life of another subject. Neither the other Ego in-itself nor the contents of its consciousness are directly experienced by the empathizing I. In the immediately ensuing section, Husserl goes on to state that we can

¹⁶⁰ „Wird diese Absolutheit nicht preisgegeben, d. h. wird das reine Bewusstsein selbst für etwas Letztes gehalten, das keiner weiteren Fundierung in einem »Träger« bedarf, so erweist sich dies Bewusstsein als eine »fenster- und türlose« Monade. Alle Einwirkung und Wechselwirkung, alle Kausalität u. dgl. ist dann nur auf seiten der intentionalen Gegenstände des Bewusstseins möglich und nur als ein Verhältnis zwischen den intentional konstituierten Momenten untereinander. D. h. dann wird klar, dass dies Bewusstsein nach Husserl „als ein *für sich geschlossener Seinszusammenhang* zu gelten hat, als ein Zusammenhang *absoluten Seins*, in den nichts hineindringen und aus dem nichts entschlüpfen kann“ (*Ideen*, § 49, S. 93).“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.399)

¹⁶¹ „zuerst scheint das mein solipsistisches Bewusstsein und sol<ipsistisches> Ego zu sein – dann aber zeigt sich, dass die ‚Fensterlosigkeit‘ nur der Intersubjektivität zu kommt und die Bedeutung hat, dass ein ausserhalb der transz<endenten> Int<ersubjektivität> ein Unsinn ist?“ (Husserl, BP 31, p.399)

¹⁶² „Derselbe Sinn für das Ego und in einem anderen Sinn für die Int<ersubjektivität>.“ (Husserl, BP 31, p.399)

¹⁶³ Husserl, *GPP*, p.82-83. Page numbers refer to the English translation by Farin and Hart.

perform the phenomenological reduction in a twofold manner with respect to empathy. First, we can investigate empathy in-itself as a mode of consciousness, like perception, remembering, etc. Second, given that “empathy is experience *about an empathized consciousness*,” we can investigate this empathized other consciousness as a phenomenological datum, and the conditions on the possibility of this experience.¹⁶⁴ Husserl warns, however, that we should not confuse my empathic experience with the other stream of consciousness posited in empathy. The *concrete contents* of that other stream of consciousness cannot, in principle, belong to mine.¹⁶⁵ Nor is the other Ego some inherent part of my own consciousness. What Husserl then needs to explain how one’s own consciousness and the other consciousness posited in empathy both constitute and share the same Objective spatio-temporal world. It seems that this is the question which the transcendental theory of empathy, rather than a descriptive analysis of “empirical empathy,” must strive to answer.

When I perform the phenomenological reduction with respect to the existence of the thing-world (*Dingwelt*) and therefore also other lived-bodies, all being is reduced on the one hand to, “*one (to “my”)* phenomenological I...and, on the other hand, to *other I’s*, posited in empathy, and posited as looking, remembering, and perhaps empathizing I’s....[T]he empathized I’s are posited as belonging to their lived bodies, as center-points of the thingly surroundings, which expand towards the universe at large (*Allnatur*). This universe is the very same that exists for me, too, which I too perceive and also experientially posit.”¹⁶⁶ Every ‘thing’ which I consider from the phenomenologically reduced standpoint, “is also an index for the *empathized I*, an index of the experiential contexts and possibilities of experience belonging to it, and which are empathized in it by me — and so it is for every I.”¹⁶⁷ Of course, as Husserl states in *Ideas*, there is no countersense in the thought that my own transcendental I might be the only one.

¹⁶⁴ Roughly speaking, we can investigate the intentional act phenomenologically in terms of its *noesis* or its *noema*, although Husserl does not use these terms in *GPP*.

¹⁶⁵ “But there is the *law* that, in principle, an empathized datum and the empathizing experiencing belonging to it cannot belong to the same stream of consciousness, that is, the same phenomenological I. There is no channel linking the empathized stream to the stream in which the empathizing itself belongs.” (Husserl, *GPP*, p.84-85)

¹⁶⁶ Husserl, *GPP*, p. 86

¹⁶⁷ Husserl, *GPP*, p. 86. In an appendix to *GPP* §39. Husserl writes: “Each particular stream of consciousness is something completely separate, a monad, and it would remain without windows of communication if there were no intersubjective phenomena, etc. This is also the condition for the possibility of a world of things that is

Husserl's remarks about empathy from *GPP* seem to corroborate at least part of Celms' argument. The empathizing subject does not experience the concrete inner life of the other subject. Also, in empirical empathy the other I is posited based on my experience of another lived-body, just as, in ordinary perception, I posit the object of perception. But when I consider these objects of intentional consciousness from the phenomenologically reduced standpoint, the existence of these objects which I posit as transcendencies existing in-themselves is put in brackets. All of this is, in fact, a discussion of other subjects from the solipsistic standpoint characteristic of the initial phase of phenomenological enquiry.

However, Celms is wrong if he believes that other transcendental I's are thereby reduced to nothing more than some (inherent) part of my own ego. This is not what Husserl claims, nor does it follow from what he has written.¹⁶⁸ His point has been to uncover the *being-sense* of other subjects as they are constituted in empathy. What we discover is that they are constituted as subjects related to a lived-body as I am to my own, themselves capable of performing the phenomenological reduction, and that we share an intersubjective, Objective world which we mutually constitute. As Husserl remarks in the margin of Celms' book, insofar as the Objective world is itself constituted in this way, something lying outside of transcendental intersubjectivity, not just transcendental subjectivity, is *nonsense*. There is no world "outside" of the world constituted in transcendental intersubjectivity.

Even if we grant all of this to Husserl, the spectre of solipsism, in some form, still seems to loom over his phenomenological idealism. Let us suppose that there are other subjects which exist absolutely, in- and for-themselves, just as my own ego does. Celms

one and the same for many I's." (Husserl, *GPP*, p.158) Celms seems to have read this excerpt (see Celms, *PIH*, p.404), and thereby takes issue with precisely the claim Husserl alludes to in his marginal note.

¹⁶⁸ "Just as the reduced Ego is not a piece of the world, so, conversely, neither the world nor any worldly Object is a piece of my Ego, to be found in my conscious life as a really inherent part of it, as a complex of data of sensation or a complex of acts. This "*transcendence*" is part of the intrinsic sense of anything worldly, *despite* the fact that anything worldly necessarily acquires all the sense determining it, along with its existential status, exclusively from my experiencing, my objectivating, thinking, valuing, or doing, at particular times notably the status of an evidently valid being is one it can acquire only from my own evidences, my grounding acts. If this "*transcendence*", which consists in being non-really included, is part of the intrinsic sense of the world, then, by way of contrast, the Ego himself, who bears within him the world as an accepted sense and who, in turn, is necessarily presupposed by this sense, is legitimately called *transcendental*, in the phenomenological sense." (Husserl, *CM*, p.26 <65>)

continues by stating that, if we assume, as Husserl does, that it is impossible for other subjects to be given in immediate intuition, and only come to be given in empathic experience grounded in the perception of other living-things, and if we also assume that this perception depends on hyletic data which is present to consciousness without being caused by the influence of another ego on my own, then we can only get beyond solipsism by positing a Leibnizian pre-established harmony. According to Celms, it is obvious that, “only with the help of the metaphysical presupposition of a *pre-established harmony* can we get beyond the *solus ipse*, namely a harmony as a *predetermined agreement* [Übereinstimmung] *between the ideas of other subjects formed in one’s own absolutely closed ego through empathetic experience, with these subjects themselves, which exist “in-themselves.”*¹⁶⁹

Again, we can find support for such an argument in manuscripts which Celms would have read in Freiburg. In the third London Lecture, Husserl writes that the only conceivable absolutely and independently existing thing is the ego, that is, the concrete transcendental subject, which we might refer to by the Leibnizian name “monad”. It is the subjectivity for which everything else is an Object. No other thing can possibly exist in and for itself.¹⁷⁰ Husserl also claims that pure phenomenology is a monadology, and that there is an essential “harmony” among monads, whereby each monad necessarily constitutes the same world, with and for each other. But, at the same time, he is clear that he rejects the metaphysical monads in the Leibnizian sense.¹⁷¹ Husserlian monads are not substances, they are

¹⁶⁹ „...so leuchtet ein, dass man nur noch mit Hilfe der metaphysischen Voraussetzung einer *prästabilierten Harmonie* über das *solus ipse* hinauskommen kann, und zwar einer Harmonie als einer *vorausbestimmten Übereinstimmung der im absolut geschlossenen eigenen Ich einfühlungsmässig gebildeten Vorstellungen von fremden Ichen mit diesen Ichen selbst, wie sie »an sich« bestehen.*“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.399)

¹⁷⁰ „Das einzige absolut selbständige Konkretum, das denkbar ist, ist danach das absolute Ego, die konkrete transzendente Subjektivität, für welche sehr wohl der Leibniz’sche Name Monad dienen könnte... Sie ist die Subjektivität, für welche alles, was sonst seiend heißen kann, Objekt ist. Andererseits ist sie selbst erkennbar, und in ursprünglicher Erfahrung (der phänomenologischen Selbstschauung) für sich selbst, und nur für sich erfahrbar. Ihr apriorisches Wesen ist es, nur sein zu können in einem Bewusstseinsleben, das nicht nur dahinströmt, sondern für das Ich als dieses strömende dieses Inhalts konstituiert ist. Das Ich ist wesensmäßig für sich Gegenstand möglicher Erfahrung und eventuell möglicher weiterer Erkenntnis. Nur was in dieser Weise auf sich selbst relativ ist, seiend für sich selbst die Bedingungen möglicher Erfahrung und Erkenntnis erfüllt, kann absolut sein. Alles andere Seiende ist subjektiv-relativ, aber nicht selbst Subjekt, ein konstituierendes Subjekt voraussetzend und in ihm als Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis beschlossen, aber nichts in sich selbst und für sich selbst Seiendes, eben kein Absolutes.“ (Husserl, *Hua XXXV*, pp.334-335)

¹⁷¹ „Die Auffassung einer transzendentalen Phänomenologie...als reine Theorie, so ist sie die Wissenschaft von allen reinen Möglichkeiten und den sie regelnden Notwendigkeiten, und damit ist sie die Wissenschaft von allen möglichen Mannigfaltigkeiten und auf Individuelles bezogen, auf alle möglichen Welten und allem möglichen absoluten Sinn von Welten...Die Theorie ist formale, auf rein kategoriale Gestalten bezogen. Das führt zurück

transcendental egos constrained by certain categorial forms such that they each constitute and share the same Objective world. Their apparent harmony is explained by these forms. In a sense, the world and all possible perspectives on it exist in each pure monad potentially or ideally, while each concrete ego is, in actuality, absolutely unique. In Celms' defense, this is not an uncomplicated theory, and perhaps not one that Husserl ever successfully explained.¹⁷²

While Husserl stops short of denying the existence of other transcendental egos, his theory of intersubjectivity only addresses the *sense* of other subjects as they are given in empathic experience, not their existence in themselves. In Celms' mind, Husserl's position seems to not only deny that we can know the particular concrete contents of the mental lives of others, but that we can even know with certainty that genuine other subjects exist. Empathic experience forces us only to conditionally posit the existence of other psycho-physical subjects based on the perception of lived-bodies. Supposing that there are other

zu ihrer Auffassung als absoluter Monadologie oder Metaphysik, aber bloß in Wesenseinstellung, nicht von faktisch wirklichen Monaden und den mit ihnen sich konstituierenden phänomenalen Welten, sondern von möglichen Monaden und was dazu reell und ideell notwendig gehört. So z. B. die wesensmäßige "Harmonie" der Monaden, die miteinander und füreinander nur sein können durch die Konstitution einer ihnen allen gemeinsamen Welt, als in jeder sich übereinstimmend konstituierenden." (Husserl, Hua XXXV, p.304)

¹⁷² If we consider the *Cartesian Meditations* to be Husserl's final word on this issue, it is clear from his later publications that Celms was not satisfied by this response. With the theory of intersubjectivity from the 'Fifth Meditation' in mind, Lossky presents an argument very similar to the one that had been given by Celms in his essay *Husserl's Transcendental-Phenomenological Idealism* (1939): "The failure of Husserl's epistemological idealism is...clearly revealed in his theory of other egos. He places great importance on the notion of the *alter ego* and the related concept of "an *intersubjective* world, actually there for everyone, accessible with respect to its Objects for everyone." (CM, <123>) "Without this idea," says Husserl, one cannot have the experience of "the Objective world." (CM, <127>)...[Husserl] began with the requirement that philosophy be built on the basis of evidence, which <in his theory> consists in the fact that an object [предмет] is present to consciousness originarily [подлиннике] and attests to itself; but he ends his *Cartesian Meditations* with the assertion that without the idea of intersubjectivity it is impossible to have the experience of the "Objective world". At the same time Husserl immediately announces that an alien monad and its mental life cannot be given to me directly in experience: if it were given originarily, then "it would be merely a moment of my own existence, and ultimately it itself and I myself would be the same." (CM, <139>) If this is the case, how is it possible for a presentation of the other I to appear and do we know anything about it with certainty? Without this, the idea of intersubjectivity vanishes into thin air. We have already discussed above what Husserl thinks about this: another monad is "constituted in my monad," (CM, <154>) by way of an apprehension by analogy, transcendental intersubjectivity "is constituted purely within me, the meditating ego, purely by virtue of sources belonging to my intentionality." (CM, <158>) And this merely imaginary intersubjectivity, constructed by means of empathy, is a condition for the idea of Objectivity [объективности]!" (N.O. Lossky, "Husserl's Transcendental-Phenomenological Idealism [Трансцендентально-феноменологический идеализм Гуссерля]," *The Way*, No. 60 (1939), pp.54-55. Translated from the Russian with the help of Uldis Vegners.)

subjects that exist in- and for-themselves, independent of my own ego, lest they be “merely imagined subjects in one’s own consciousness,” Celms repeats that Husserl must assume pre-established harmony.¹⁷³ However, the results of “pure” phenomenology are meant to apply universally; not only to my own phenomenologically reduced ego, but to any ego whatsoever. If these supposed other egos were to perform the reduction, they would see that they constitute the same world as I do in the same manner, and they too would posit my existence based on the experience of my lived-body. Even with this harmony, at best what we get then from Husserl’s theory of intersubjectivity is, according to Celms, nothing more than a *pluralistic solipsism*. For Celms, this is not a “true” theory of intersubjectivity at all.

Celms refers to *Ideas* §48 where Husserl writes that certain conditions on the possibility of cognition for the pure ego guarantee that every concrete ego, an “open plurality [*offene Vielheit*]” of monads,¹⁷⁴ constitutes the same world, although each subject has a unique perspective on the world.

...what is cognizable by one Ego must, of *essential necessity*, be cognizable by *any* Ego. Even though it is not *in fact* the case that each stands, or can stand, in a relationship of ‘empathy,’ of mutual understanding with every other...nevertheless there exist, eidetically regarded, *essential possibilities of effecting a mutual understanding* and therefore possibilities also that the worlds of experience separated in fact become joined by concatenation of actual experience to make up the one intersubjective world, the correlate of the unitary world of mental lives...When that is taken into account the formal-logical possibility of realities outside the world, the *one* spatiotemporal world [of experience]...proves to be a countersense. If there are any worlds, any real

¹⁷³ „Sofern die fremden Iche als an sich, d. h. unabhängig vom eigenen Ich bestehende Iche betrachtet werden, muss überall die soeben erwähnte Voraussetzung zugrunde gelegt werden, da diese fremden Iche sonst zu den *bloss im eigenen Bewusstsein vorgestellten* Ichen werden.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.400)

¹⁷⁴ Celms, *PIH*, p.402. Celms’ reference to an “open plurality” of monads is likely a reference to *Ideas* §151, which reads: “The *next higher level* is then the *intersubjectively identical physical thing* – a constitutive unity of a higher order. Its constitution is related to an open plurality [*offene Mehrheit*] in relation to subjects ‘understanding one another.’ The intersubjective world is the correlate of intersubjective experience, i.e., <experience> mediated by ‘empathy.’ We are, as a consequence, referred to the multiple unities of things pertaining to the senses which are already individually constituted by the many subjects; in further course we are referred to the corresponding perceptual multiplicities thus belonging to different Ego-subjects and streams of consciousness; above all, however, we are referred to the novel factor of empathy and to the question of how it plays a constitutive role in ‘Objective’ experience and bestows unity on those separated multiplicities.” (Husserl, *Ideas*, p. 363 <317>) In his ‘Copy D’ from the fall of 1929, Husserl uses the phrase *offenen Vielheit* in an addition to *Ideas* §48, suggesting that, perhaps, he was reading or had read Celms’ book at the time. Husserl also uses this phrase in the outline of his London Lectures (Hua XXXV, p.373) and in an appendix to the *GPP* (Hua XIII, p.234). So, while Celms would have seen this phrase used by Husserl in a number of places, its inclusion at §48 in ‘Copy D’ is conspicuous, or at least an interesting coincidence.

physical things whatever, then the experienced motivations constituting them must be *able* to extend into my experience and into that of each Ego...¹⁷⁵

Husserl claims here that while the actual experiences of each individual monad are essentially separated, they somehow join to create the Objective world. But Celms is suspicious of how this process is supposed to occur in fact. Not only has Husserl argued that no two subjects can share the same individual moments of mental-content, but if the transcendental egos are not reified, they cannot possibly communicate at all. If this is true, then the Husserlian concept of the transcendental ego not only deserves to be called a monad, but his conception of monads is, according to Celms, even stronger than that of Leibniz.¹⁷⁶

Finally, Celms refers to a note Husserl added to *GPP* §39. Husserl writes that: “Any possible empathy is the ‘*mirroring*’ of each monad in the other, and the possibility of such mirroring depends on the possibility of a concordant constitution of a spatial-temporal nature, as an index for the respective constitutive lived experiences which extends into all I’s.”¹⁷⁷ Celms takes this as an open acknowledgment of the fact that the possibility of the constitution of a single spatio-temporal world in each absolutely closed ego depends on pre-established harmony. Intersubjectivity is simply an illusion: “Only with the help of the metaphysical assumption of pre-established harmony is Husserl able to achieve his phenomenological monadology. This is, strictly speaking, *no overcoming of solipsism*, but only *an extension of ‘monistic solipsism’ to ‘pluralistic solipsism.’*”¹⁷⁸ For Celms, Husserl has argued for the possibility of an open plurality of completely isolated and independent

¹⁷⁵ Husserl, *Ideas*, p.108-109 <90-91>; Celms, *PIH*, p.403.

¹⁷⁶ „Die absolute Geschlossenheit der phänomenologisch reinen Subjekte ist nicht nur so zu denken, dass kein Moment aus dem einen Subjekte heraus- und in ein anderes eintreten kann, sondern auch so, dass zwischen den Subjekten keine Wechselwirkung bestehen kann, da man zu dieser einer substantiellen Unterlage bedürfte, was die Preisgabe der Absolutheit der reinen Subjekte eben als absoluter *Bewusstseins* einheiten bedeutete (vgl. oben, §72). Kurzum, die phänomenologisch reinen Subjekte verdienen im vollen Sinne des Wortes den Namen der *Monad*en, wie sie ja auch von Husserl selbst in seinen Vorlesungen öfters genannt worden sind. Die »Fenster-« und »Türlosigkeit« dieser *Monad*en tritt bei Husserl noch schärfer hervor als einst bei *Leibniz*, da Husserl mit aller Wucht, seiner phänomenologischen Methode nach, diese *Monad*en nur aus immanenten und zwar dem *Bewusstsein immanenten* Momenten bestehen lässt und ihnen alle Substantialität abspricht, während die zur Wechselwirkung der *Monad*en notwendige substantielle Unterlage dem *Bewusstsein* selbst transzendent sein müsste, gewiss nicht als eine *Transzendenz vor dem Bewusstsein*, sondern als eine *Transzendenz hinter dem Bewusstsein*. (Celms, *PIH*, p.403-404) Husserl makes note of this passage in his copy.

¹⁷⁷ Husserl, *GPP*, p.156; Celms, *PIH*, p.404.

¹⁷⁸ „Nur mit Hilfe der metaphysischen Annahme einer prästabilierten Harmonie gewinnt Husserl seine phänomenologische *Monadologie*. Diese ist aber im eigentlichen Sinne *gar keine Überwindung des Solipsismus*, sondern nur *eine Erweiterung des »monistischen Solipsismus« zum »pluralistischen Solipsismus«*.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.404)

monads. For Husserl, the “real” world is much broader than the world as it directly perceived or constituted by each individual consciousness. However, he fails to show that the supposed “community” of monads is a community in the “truest sense.” Husserl’s monads do not depend on each other for their existence, nor do they depend on each other in order to constitute the world. “Each monad is thus ‘*self-sufficient*’ in every respect,” writes Celms. “Instead of an interdependence of its members, without which a community can hardly be thought,” and instead of a single *solus ipse*, Husserl’s phenomenology gives us a plurality of them.¹⁷⁹

To recapitulate, Celms’ first criticism centres on his claim that Husserl equivocates two senses of the ‘phenomenological reduction.’ Insofar as Husserl’s claims are merely epistemological they can be understood in the sense of ‘phenomenological reflection’ (reduction of consideration), a method which is metaphysically neutral. However, phenomenological reflection cannot produce the kind of ‘rigorous philosophical science’ that Husserl thinks it can. The second sense of ‘phenomenological reduction’ (reduction of being) is not metaphysically neutral, according to Celms. It rests on certain metaphysical assumptions, particularly those of a Leibnizian idealism, that are extraneous to mere phenomenological reflection. From here, I transition into Celms’ second argument, that in order for Husserl’s theory of intersubjectivity to work, he must presume metaphysical idealism. The method of pure phenomenology seems to account for the experience of someone else, but not the existence of someone else. Others are reduced to nothing beyond moments in one’s own consciousness. Insofar as the existence of genuine others cannot be established according to the methodology of pure phenomenology alone, and given their central role in Husserl’s account of the external world, Husserl simply posits others and accepts

¹⁷⁹ „Die reale Welt und, die ihr entsprechenden idealen Welten werden ja bei Husserl ihrem *ganzen Gehalt* nach auf *jede einzelne* Monade reduziert, d. h. sie werden als die blossen intentionalen Konstitutionen jedes phänomenologischen Einzelbewusstseins gefasst. Die phänomenologische »Gemeinschaft« der Iche ist gar keine Gemeinschaft im eigentlichen Sinne: die einen Iche bedürfen der anderen weder zu ihrer eigenen Existenz noch zur Konstitution der Welt. Jede einzelne Monade ist also in jeder Hinsicht »*selbstgenügsam*«. Statt einer wechselseitigen Abhängigkeit der Glieder, ohne welche kaum eine Gemeinschaft gedacht werden dürfte, hat man also in der Husserlschen phänomenologischen Gemeinschaft eine Vielheit von *absolut selbstgenügsamen* Ichen, d. h. statt eines einzigen *solus ipse* hat man eine Vielheit derselben. Der Übergang von einem einzelnen *solus ipse* zu einer Vielheit derselben ist also gar keine Überwindung des Solipsismus, sondern, wie schon gesagt worden ist, eine Erweiterung des monistischen Solipsismus zum pluralistischen.“ (Celms, *PIH*, p.404-405)

the doctrine of pre-established harmony. This move, however, does not allow Husserl to avoid some form of epistemological solipsism. At best he can argue for a kind of pluralistic solipsism among monads.

The main misunderstanding on the part of Celms is his conviction that Husserl's theory of experiencing someone else is in any way meant to prove the existence in-themselves of other subjects, or that Husserl's project requires such a proof. This is the sort of claim which Husserl's 'Fifth Meditation' is meant to correct. In the 'Fifth Meditation' Husserl is concerned first with explaining the *sense* of someone else, and then with constructing some sort of transcendental argument, based on empathy, for the possibility of Objective knowledge. This becomes a critical juncture in Husserl's philosophy, as such an integration of intersubjectivity is a major advancement upon the Kantian project. But these are *transcendental* problems, not metaphysical ones. Questions concerning the actual existence of other subjects in-themselves is beyond the scope of a transcendental theory of empathy or a transcendental theory of intersubjectivity.

Celms plays his hand early with respect to transcendental philosophy. Even in his first criticism we saw him touting the opinion that any "true" philosophy needs to take a stand with respect to the metaphysical reality or ideality of transcendent things. Celms' argument against Husserl is based precisely on this dichotomy. All Celms shows is that if we are forced to choose between these two possibilities, and if we choose idealism, then Husserl's pure phenomenology leads to solipsism – either monistic solipsism or pluralistic solipsism. Assuming Celms is correct, what we need to show is that Husserl is not an idealist, or more precisely, that transcendental idealism does not entail a form of metaphysical idealism. Celms also assumes the natural, and metaphysically loaded, sense of "genuine" or "true" other subjects, and of a "true" theory of intersubjectivity in advance. Insofar as he remains bound to the natural attitude here, it is no wonder that he is never satisfied with Husserl's responses. Celms' insistence that other subjects must be things-in-themselves in the usual sense is, like Stumpf's criticism, question begging. Celms is assuming the proposition that other subjects are things-in-themselves exist, and demanding that Husserl be able to demonstrate their existence, when this is the very proposition which Husserl is calling into question.

It may well be that Husserl's transcendental idealism leads to a type of epistemological solipsism, and that Husserl's claim that, "'windowlessness' means only that something lying outside of transcendental intersubjectivity is *nonsense*," does not disarm the threat of such a solipsism, but only qualifies it. I tend to agree that Husserl's transcendental idealism may lead to some form of "epistemic solipsism," but it is not clear why this is problematic. According to Celms, it is one thing to have a plurality of subjects, but it is quite another to have intersubjectivity. This pre-established harmony among monads does not establish the possibility of any real "community" of monads. Husserl's monads, even if they constitute the same world, they do not "share" this world in any sense that we would want. For Celms, this is no theory of intersubjectivity in the "true sense". Solipsism is a problem of isolation, and Husserl has not solved this. But this presupposes that we are not isolated, and that Husserl needs to account for this non-isolation.

Celms has not established that Husserl's account has failed to accommodate some indubitable phenomena, but only that it does not get the results we might want/expect. In particular, it does not account for the existence of other subjects as "genuine transcendencies." While we may indirectly posit other subjects as possible given our empathetic experiences of other lived bodies, we still do not 'know' others exist, and even if they do there is still no way to engage them directly. The assumption here is that this is either inherently problematic, or that it is problematic in that it leads to skepticism. But Husserl's theory is not a form of skepticism. In responding to the problem of solipsism, Husserl is forced to tease out an important subtlety in his theory. While pure phenomenology might start from a solipsistic standpoint, if Husserl's theory of transcendental intersubjectivity is tenable, then it can still account for Objectivity and explain the sense of other subjects. Perhaps we might still call this a solipsistic theory, but it is not solipsism in any familiar sense of the word. Husserl is able to maintain that the objection of metaphysical solipsism against him has no intelligible meaning, as he argued in the 'Epilogue' to *Ideas*. He has an account of an Objective and intersubjective world, and of other subjects, even if they might not mesh nicely with traditional metaphysics. But the sort of epistemic or transcendental solipsism that we might still want to level against Husserl is a different problem, or perhaps no real problem at all from Husserl's standpoint.

3.4 Conclusion: Husserl's "special sense" of Transcendental Idealism

Husserl came to endorse a form of transcendental idealism sometime shortly after his discovery of the 'phenomenological reduction' in 1905. It is generally agreed upon that in the *Ideas* Husserl presents his phenomenology as transcendental idealism, despite the fact that the phrase "transcendental idealism" does not appear in the text.¹⁸⁰ Paul Ricoeur writes: "The phenomenology which is elaborated in the *Ideas* is incontestably an idealism and even a transcendental idealism....But it is ultimately impossible on the basis of the *Ideas* alone to characterize definitively this idealism which is only a project, a promise or claim, depending on the point of view."¹⁸¹ Perhaps Husserl only developed a clear sense of this transcendental idealism and its relationship to the phenomenological method sometime after the publication of *Ideas* in 1913. As we noted at the beginning of the present essay, there is good reason to think that Husserl struggled with developing a systematic account of his philosophy late into his life. Nevertheless, critics at the time did not wait to attack this development in Husserl's thought, and commentators today are still attempting to work out the details of this transcendental idealism from Husserl's massive collection of writings.

Based on the comments made by Husserl's early critics, the sense of this transcendental idealism is not adequately presented in *Ideas*. What is more, Husserl has a difficult time motivating the adoption of the transcendental-phenomenological standpoint, of convincing his readers, especially his fellow phenomenologists, to make the Copernician-esque transcendental turn. In contradistinction to the natural attitude, the phenomenological attitude is decidedly *unnatural*.¹⁸² While basic epistemological concerns gradually lead Husserl to discover transcendental phenomenology, readers were reluctant to follow this

¹⁸⁰ Ludwig Landgrebe includes "Phenomenological Idealism" in the topical index for the 1928 edition of *Ideas*.

¹⁸¹ Paul Ricoeur, *A Key to Husserl's Ideas I*, p.47. This book is a translation of Ricoeur's 1950 French translation of *Ideas*.

¹⁸² "...any transcendental philosophy must, and with essential necessity, create extraordinary difficulties for the natural man's understanding — for 'common sense' — and thus for all of us, since we cannot avoid having to rise from the natural ground to the transcendental region. The complete inversion of the natural stance of life, thus into an 'unnatural' one, places the greatest conceivable demands upon philosophical resolve and consistency. Natural human understanding and the Objectivism [i.e., realism] rooted in it will view every transcendental philosophy as a flighty eccentricity, its wisdom as useless foolishness; or it will interpret it as a psychology which seeks to convince itself that it is not psychology." (Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p.200)

“Cartesian Way” into Husserl’s system, as is evident from our preceding discussions. With these criticisms and their underlying misinterpretations in mind, I will attempt to sketch some of the basic features of Husserl’s transcendental idealism, not necessarily as a way into his system, but as a way out of some of its more confusing elements.

In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl is clear that he considers the root cause of the criticisms of his mature philosophy to be a misunderstanding of the sense of his transcendental idealism. As I have shown above, Husserl is willing to take some of the responsibility for these misunderstanding, due to the rough presentation of transcendental phenomenology found in *Ideas*. In particular, he believes that critics have failed to appreciate the two main features of his philosophy: the *transcendental reduction* and the *eidetic analysis* of intentional-constitutive consciousness. Husserl writes:

phenomenology is *eo ipso* ‘*transcendental idealism*,’ though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense... [It is not] a Kantian idealism, which believes it can keep open, at least as a limiting concept, the possibility of a world of things-in-themselves. On the contrary, we have here a transcendental idealism that is nothing more than a consequentially executed...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. This idealism is not a product of sportive argumentations, a prize to be won in the dialectical contest with ‘realisms.’ It is *sense-explication* achieved by actual work, an explication carried out as regards every type of existent even conceivable by me, the ego...[along with the] systematic uncovering of the constituting intentionality itself. *The proof of this idealism is therefore phenomenology itself*. Only someone who misunderstands either the deepest sense of intentional method, or that of transcendental reduction, or perhaps both, can attempt to separate phenomenology from transcendental idealism.¹⁸³

In *First Philosophy* we find a similar assertion:

Taken fundamentally, there lies indicated already *in advance in the phenomenological reduction*, correctly understood, *the route into transcendental idealism*, as the *whole of phenomenology* is nothing other than the first, *strictly scientific form of this idealism*.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Husserl, *CM*, p.86 <118-119>

¹⁸⁴ Husserl, *EP II*, p. 181

Insofar as pure phenomenology is transcendental philosophy, its concern is primarily an epistemological one. Through the rigorous eidetic-analysis of consciousness from the transcendently reduced standpoint, it seeks to explain the conditions of all possible cognition. What we discover, rather than prove by way of argumentation alone, is precisely the controversial claim made in *Ideas* §49 and which he repeats again in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* §94: that my ego exists absolutely, and that everything else receives its entire being-sense from me, and beyond that is nothing. Husserl's critique of cognition begins from this fundamental insight.

We mentioned at the beginning of this essay that according to the standard interpretation of Husserl's transcendental idealism, "the being of the real world, given to us in an experiential way is dependent on the being and processes of the pure constituting consciousness without which it would not exist at all and, secondly, that it is generally awkward even to ask about the existence of the world 'in itself' as it transcends the real sense of transcendental constitution whose results create the basis for every inquiry and determine the sense of our questions."¹⁸⁵ From this standpoint, it is not only awkward to ask about what the world might be like in-itself, it is complete nonsense to do so. As I have argued, in Husserl's framework, the physical objects we encounter in the external world through sense perception do not belong to a mind-independent sphere of "autonomous being in-itself; they are only something that exists... 'for' the conscious subject performing the perceptive acts. They are only intentional units of sense and beyond that '*ein Nichts*' (nothing)."¹⁸⁶ In other words, one cannot conceive of the existence of an object without reference to some conscious subject for whom it exists. Even those objects that we constitute as essentially transcendent receive their entire *being-sense* from intentional consciousness.

Like Kant before him, Husserl tried to distance his so-called *transcendental* idealism from previous forms of philosophical idealism, which he collectively referred to as "bad idealism."¹⁸⁷ As Moran explains, transcendental philosophy is not concerned with

¹⁸⁵ Ingarden, *On the Motives which led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism*, p.27

¹⁸⁶ Ingarden, *On the Motives which led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism*, p.32

¹⁸⁷ Husserl, *FTL*, p.170 <152>. Suzanne Bachelard identifies *FTL* §§66-67 as containing Husserl's "refutation of idealism" (Bachelard, *A Study of Husserl's Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p.110) Moran notes in this connection that, "Husserl's specific targets become (a) *transcendental realism*, the view that 'things in themselves' - the 'world as such' - exist entirely independently of subjectivity; and (b) *psychological idealism*

elaborating a metaphysical account of the objective world, but rather with providing, “a justification of our sense of that world as objective. It is a formal inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of knowledge.”¹⁸⁸ However, as we noted in the section on Stumpf’s criticism above, Husserl believed that pure phenomenology was not purely formal, but was a material eidetic science of transcendently pure mental processes considered from the standpoint of the phenomenological reduction. For Husserl, with the phenomenological reduction we discover, “the only conceivable solution of those deepest problems of cognition concerning the essence and possibility of an objectively valid knowledge of something transcendent.”¹⁸⁹ This being the case, phenomenology carried out as a rigorous science of pure consciousness is the foundation for transcendental philosophy. What is more, solipsism emerges in Husserl’s work as one of these deep problems of cognition.

While the standard interpretation of Husserl’s transcendental idealism is not wrong, it is certainly minimalist and not particularly nuanced. The standard interpretation is also not widely understood among phenomenologists, aside from those whose research is primarily focussed on Husserl. Some work has been done in developing our understanding of Husserl’s transcendental idealism by way of comparing and contrasting his writings to those of Descartes, Kant and Fichte. This work is indeed important, and ought to be broadened to include other historical figures that Husserl explicitly drew upon, such as Leibniz and Berkeley. Yet, this work also needs to be supplemented by research into Husserl’s exchanges with his peers. These discussions are just now starting to gain popularity, especially regarding Husserl’s relationship with the Neo-Kantians. Of course, that particular area of research has a longstanding tradition, beginning with Iso Kern’s work *Husserl und Kant* (1964). Studies on other thinkers who directly interacted with Husserl, such as Celms and Stumpf, are few and far between. The lack of such discussions has had a negative effect on contemporary literature regarding Husserl’s theories of empathy and intersubjectivity.¹⁹⁰

(CM §41), the view that the world depends on, or is enclosed in, psychological subjectivity (5: 154).” (Moran, p.175-176)

¹⁸⁸ Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, p.175

¹⁸⁹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, p.239 <204>.

¹⁹⁰ Even if Husserl’s ‘Fifth Meditation’ was not written as a direct response to Celms, we would certainly do well to read it in light of Celms’ criticism. All too often, the Fifth Meditation is regarded by commentators as

All too often these discussions lapse into either disputes about psychological theories of empathy, or attempts to prove the existence of other subjects in-themselves. As I have argued above, those disputes are not ones in which Husserl is engaging. Husserl himself recognized the importance of understanding his special sense of transcendental idealism for interpreting his work in these areas, i.e., in order to understand his *transcendental* theory of empathy (the conditions of the possibility of experiencing someone else), and *transcendental* intersubjectivity (as a condition for the possibility of Objectivity). I hope that amidst the largely historical and exegetical discussions above, these points have been brought to the forefront.

Let us now consider a rather peculiar definition of transcendental idealism that Husserl himself proffers in a text from 1921 which bears the title *Argument für den transzendentalen Idealismus*.

Transcendental idealism means: a nature is not *thinkable* without co-existing subjects of possible experience of this nature; possible experiential subjects do not suffice. If we leave it at mere possible subjects of possible experiences of nature, then infinitely many incompatible natures are equally possible.¹⁹¹

In light of what I have argued above, I take the meaning of this passage to run as follows: the existence of other subjects is a condition of the possibility of experiencing an Objective world. This is not an explanation of what it means to be simply an object of consciousness, but to be the sort of object that we label from the standpoint of the natural attitude as “real.” I cannot conceive of an object actually existing in space and time without simultaneously conceiving it as being a possible object of experience for other subjects. This is just what it means for an object of consciousness to be an Object. The Objective world here must not be confused with a mind-independent external world that exists in itself. Husserl is arguing that the world is the constitutional achievement of subjects in community, not that it exists in-itself. Now, does this mean that Husserl needs to demonstrate the existence of other

either an outright failure or entirely opaque. When juxtaposed with Celms’ criticism neither of these two interpretations are fair.

¹⁹¹ „Der transzendente Idealismus sagt: Eine Natur ist nicht denkbar ohne mitexistierende Subjekte möglicher Erfahrung von ihr; es genügen nicht mögliche Erfahrungs-subjekte. Bleiben wir bei bloß möglichen Subjekten möglicher Naturerfahrungen, so sind unendlich viele inkompatible Naturen gleich möglich.“ (Husserl, HuaXXXVI, p.156) Translations of this and subsequent passages of Hua XXXVI are courtesy of Hanne Jacobs,

transcendental subjects that exist in-themselves? I do not think so. It simply means that I cannot cognize a world without cognizing it as the same possible world of experience for other subjects like myself. As Arthur David Smith writes, we might interpret Husserl as claiming here that an intersubjective community of monads “must exist *given that* my transcendental ego enjoys harmonious empathetic experience.”¹⁹² For Husserl, the *sense* of such a community of monads, “is implicit in my experiencing a world with an objective sense, and that the actual existence of such a community is conditionally apodictic – being inconsistent with an ultimately harmonious experience.”¹⁹³

While there are an infinite number of possible perspectives on the world, Husserl argues that there is only one Objective world. There cannot be an infinite number of possible worlds, since these worlds would be impossible with one another. Husserl writes:

A nature is only thinkable as a unity of possible harmonious experiences of an experiencing subject; and we see that evidently one and the same subject, when we assume that it experiences a nature and consequently in such a way that the presumptive experiential positing is harmoniously confirmed etc., cannot also have a second nature given in this way. Two different natures that are in the same subject incompatible possibilities could only be compatible if we presuppose in addition two subjects as subjects possible and confirming experience.¹⁹⁴

We can only think of a world if we think of it as a harmonious unity of experience, and this means harmonious experience across all subjects which constitute that world. This coincides with what we find in §60 of the ‘Fifth Meditation.’ There Husserl explains that different monadic subjects each have their own unique “surrounding worlds” of experience over which they have sole ownership, but these are “aspects of a single Objective world, which is common to them.”¹⁹⁵ Husserl exclaims that the results of this are wonderful: “the possibility of a subject in coexistence with me (as I am absolute given to myself) prescribes laws to my

¹⁹² Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.234.

¹⁹³ Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, p.234.

¹⁹⁴ „Eine Natur ist nur denkbar als Einheit möglicher einstimmiger Erfahrungen eines erfahrenden Subjekts; und wir sehen, dass evidenterweise ein und dasselbe Subjekt, wenn wir annehmen, es erfahre eine Natur und konsequent so, dass sich die präsumtive Erfahrungssetzung einstimmig bestätigt etc., nicht auch eine zweite Natur so gegeben haben kann. Zwei verschiedene Naturen, die im selben Subjekt unverträgliche Möglichkeiten sind, könnten also verträglich nur sein, wenn wir zwei Subjekte als Subjekte möglicher und bestätigender Erfahrungen dazu voraussetzen.“ (Husserl, Hua XXXVI, p.160)

¹⁹⁵ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.140 <167>

essential content and prescribes a common nature, first in the very general and indeterminate form of a ‘common’ sphere of transcendent objects transcendent to each of us and still identical and identifiable.”¹⁹⁶

Husserl worried that many of his critics misunderstood the nature and aims of his transcendental phenomenology. He was not wrong in his assessment. As a result, his published works consist of a series of “introductions” to pure phenomenology whose primary goal is to provide readers with various ways into his system and to clarify its presentation. At the same time, many of the detailed analyses Husserl was carrying out remained incomplete and unpublished at the time of his death. Unfortunately, clarity is not often a virtue of Husserl’s writing, and this indirect approach to addressing his critics only compounded their confusions and fuelled their complaints. While we can diffuse Stumpf’s criticism that pure phenomenology is at worst a science without any subject matter and at best descriptive psychology by showing that this criticism is simply question begging with respect to both the existence of the external world and the nature of consciousness, a response to Celms requires a nuanced discussion of the nature of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. It raises questions about how we ought to be reading certain parts of Husserl, and points to specific aspects of transcendental phenomenology on which contemporary phenomenologists and historians need to do further research. Specifically, in what sense does phenomenology support a type of solipsism. This is not a trivial question. Addressing Husserl on the problem of solipsism is central to understanding the nature of his transcendental idealism, as well as developing satisfactory phenomenological theories of empathy and intersubjectivity.

¹⁹⁶ „Es scheint sich jedenfalls Wunderbares zu ergeben: Die Möglichkeit eines Subjekts in Koexistenz mit mir (der ich mir selbst absolut gegeben bin) schreibt meinem Wesensgehalt Gesetze vor und schreibt eine uns gemeinsame Natur vor, zunächst in der sehr allgemeinen und unbestimmten Form einer ‚gemeinsamen‘ Sphäre transzendenter, jedem von uns transzendenter und doch identischer und somit auch identifizierbarer Gegenstände.“ (Husserl, Hua XXXVI, p.166)

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Appendix I: The Problem of Solipsism in the *Husserliana*

The following Index lists the explicit references to the problem of solipsism made by Husserl in the critical edition of his complete works (the *Husserliana*), omitting his correspondence (Hua Dok III.1-10). I have done my best to ensure that this list is comprehensive, but it is likely that some instances have been missed.

Solipsism (*solipsismus*; *solipsistisch*):

- Hua I: 4, 12, 34-38, 45, 69, 121, 174-177, 170, 196, 306, 341, 344-346, 385, 181, 192-193, 198-200, 231, 235. 390, 575, 578, 584, 591, 597.
- Hua II: 20. Hua XV: 3, 20, 32, 50-52, 109, 252, 463, 561-562, 654, 685, 727.
- Hua IV: 70, 73-74, 77-82, 89-90, 144, 161, 164-67, 202, 215, 216. Hua XVII: 244, 248-250, 263, 276, 344, 484.
- Hua V: 125-128, 150-151, 164. Hua XXVII: 178.
- Hua VI: 265, 432-433, 448. Hua XXVIII: 193.
- Hua VII: 69, 221, 257, 331, 343. Hua XXXII: 146.
- Hua VIII: 59, 64-69, 173-190, 310, 434, 482-497, 550, 586. Hua XXXV: 280-284, 360, 371, 648, 669.
- Hua IX: 623. Hua XXXVI: 14, 130-131, 164, 175-176.
- Hua XIII: 154, 245, 360-363, 368, 368-396, 370-372, 376, 382, 385, 387-389, 398, 406, 408-410, 412, 419, 421-424, 430, 433, 472-473, 534-535, 537. Hua XLI: 246, 344.
- Hua XIV: 6-10, 60-63, 68, 72, 75-77, 78, 81-87, 105, 110, 122-126, 131-133, Hua Dok II.1: 135, 216.
- Hua Mat IX: 279, 289, 305, 383, 421. Hua Dok II.2: 28.

solus ipse:

Hua I: 12, 34, 121, 176.

Hua IV: 81, 87.

Hua VIII: 492, 496.

Hua IX: 216-217, 384.

Hua XIII: 11, 154, 382, 409, 421, 472-473.

Hua XIV: 8, 63, 82, 131-134, 311-312,
350, 547, 580.

Hua XV: 3, 29, 51-52, 371, 401, 550.

Hua XVII: 259.

Hua XXXV: 282, 360, 650.

Hua XXXIX: 222, 607, 610, 612, 800,
908-911, 915.

Hua Dok II.1: 241.

Hua Mat IX: 18-19, 272-274.

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