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Revisiting Husserl's Transcendental Ego: Existence and Praxis

*Rosemary R.P. Lerner*  
*Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú*

§1. *Preliminary words*

My purpose in this occasion is to play down two views that characterized the mainstream reception of Husserl's work, based mostly on what he published during his lifetime. On the one hand, that his method and phenomenological philosophy remained dependent of the Cartesian paradigm and the models of *theoretical* sciences; on the other hand, that his eidetic method and phenomenology, were caught in a "logicism of *essences*." The publication of his 1936 *Crisis* and, later on, the careful historical-critical editing of his *Nachlass* in the *Husserliana* series did not wholly reverse these two earlier impressions, but rather gave rise to a widespread bewilderment, generally interpreted as unsurmountable tensions, or even inconsistencies in his overall transcendental project. Thus, the view prevailed that his work was unable to address concrete existence, historical facticity, ethical life, and metaphysics.

In what follows I will address the origin and underlying arguments of these two conventional interpretations. I will then attempt to shed a new light on both claims, first by arguing that Husserl's theoretical enterprise is not only driven by "the universal storm of the passion of thinking" (Fink 1966), but that it unveils the eminently *practical* nature of Husserl's transcendental subjectivity as a *functioning* active (constitutive) *ego*, within the "intentional network of consciousness's life" (Aguirre 2002). And secondly, after clarifying Husserl's reasons to focus on the *essential* structures and *sui generis* "scientific" approach to the transcendental *ego*, I will attempt to show how he envisioned the *existential roots* of his transcendental *ego*, and their place within his "idea of philosophy." I believe that both claims stand together. The upshot of both my claims, is to favor a "unitary" interpretation of Husserl's work.

§2. *The "conventional" interpretation*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The expression—the "conventional" Husserl—was introduced by San Martín (2015: 31 ff.), inspired by Welton (2000), who spoke of the "established interpretations" *versus* the "new Husserl." These views were later developed by the contributors of Welton, 2003.

George Heffernan (2015/2016) has pointed out two phenomenological “schisms” surrounding the reception of Husserl’s transcendental turn during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both were intimately related, not only in their content—in that they dealt with Husserl’s 1913 publication of *Ideas I*—but also in their continuity, despite the temporal gap between them. He contends that the second, “Phenomenological-Existential Schism,” between 1927-1933, triggered by Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, could not have taken place without the first “Great Phenomenological Schism,” between 1905–1913. Indeed, the early München and Göttingen schools of phenomenology, inspired by Husserl’s 1900-1901 *Logical Investigations*, slowly perceived a change in the master’s courses and correspondence. None seemed to understand Husserl’s doubts concerning his *Logical Investigations*’ account of the correlation between immanence and transcendence since 1903, which finally lead him to introduce as early as 1904/05 the phenomenological reduction.<sup>2</sup> This move was interpreted by his early followers as abandoning his earlier “realism of essences” compatible with a theory of knowledge founded on phenomenology as descriptive psychology. Thus his “transcendental idealism,” “developed during the decisive years from 1903 to 1910” (Kern 1964: 180), was interpreted as a relapse into a sort of subjective relativism. Heidegger—also “fascinated” by Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (Heidegger 1969: 82)—already took distance with Husserl since 1913, and thus shared with Scheler, Pfänder, Stein, Ingarden, Reinach, and others, the same “perplexity” “at the perceived primacy of theory over practice, reflection over action, logic over ethics, essence over existence, eternity over history, science over life, objects over things, or, in a word, *Bewusstsein* over *Dasein*” (Heffernan 2016: 236). Yet the first external sign of the estrangement between Husserl and Heidegger was their “failed attempt (...) to compose together an article on phenomenology for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1927-1928)” (Heffernan 2016: 238).

Heidegger’s 1925 Marburg lectures on the *History of the Concept of Time*, highlights not only the virtues of the *Logical Investigations* (also acknowledged by Dilthey) (GA 20: 30) but also of *Ideas I*’s third and fourth parts as an “essential advance beyond all the obscurities prevalent in the tradition of logic and epistemology” (GA 20: 67). Yet he carries out in the same lectures a demolishing “immanent critique” of *Ideas*

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<sup>2</sup> On the cover of the “Seefeld Manuscripte und ältere über Individuation. Seefeld 1905” (Ms. A VII 25: 2a; *Hua* X: 237) a remark of later date states that since 1905 Husserl has achieved “already the concept and correct use of the ‘phenomenological reduction’.” See also *Hua* 24: 156, 179, 181.

I's second part, especially §§39, 44, 46, and 49. His arguments are similar to those that will later appear in his failed collaborative draft to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* article on phenomenology. The “fundamental” question that “must precede any phenomenological deliberation and is implicit in it,” so Heidegger, is the meaning of “the *absolute being*” of the region or “sphere of consciousness,” as opposed to the relative “being of the transcendent world” (GA 20: 140-141). He thus criticizes one by one what he deems are *Ideas I*'s four determinations of “pure” or “absolute consciousness.” The first determination characterizes consciousness as “an *immanent being*,” whereas the other three, which depend on the first, characterize it as an “*absolute being*”: *first*, for it is *absolutely given*, hence there is a “real inclusion” between the reflective and the reflected acts; *second*, because “it needs no *res* in order to be,” so that all transcendent entity is *relative* to it—as in the case of the “*a priori* in Descartes’s and Kant’s sense” (“constituting being is absolute”) (GA 20: 144-145); and *third*, it is *absolute* because, being “pure” “in the sense of being the essence, the ideal being of lived experiences” (GA 20: 140-141), “consciousness is no longer regarded in its concrete individuation and its tie to a living being (...); every reality and realization in it is disregarded (..) because it is defined as *ideal*, that is, *not real being*.” (GA 20: 145-146). The reduction, so Heidegger, segregates intentionality from the soil of the “natural attitude,” and from the fact that the particular individuated lived experiences “are mine” (GA 20: 149–151). Hence, *Ideas I* fail, and they do because “*the question of the being of the intentional*” and “*of being itself*” are “*left undiscussed.*” (GA 20: 157-158).

These criticisms underlie Heidegger’s position in *Sein und Zeit* (SZ)—which despite its dedicatory he writes “against Husserl” (Heidegger & Jaspers 1990: 71)—for it explicitly develops a phenomenological hermeneutic of *practical* life. Transcendental phenomenology and “pure consciousness” are there replaced by a “fundamental ontology”—a hermeneutics of the meaning of *Dasein*'s *being* in its “radical individuation” and factual life—as the preparatory course towards a “general ontology,” which was meant to finally explicit the philosophical meaning of the *Being* (*Sein*) of beings (*Seiende*) or entities in general. These criticisms play out against Husserl as follows. *Primo*, *Dasein* as an eminent “entity” (*Seiendes*), a “who” that relates to itself by understanding its own *being* as a being-in-the-world—existing in a surrounding world-horizon (SZ: §§ 14–18 *passim*)—sharply contrasts the “what” of Husserl’s alleged disembodied, “ideal” consciousness. *Secundo*, Husserl’s theoretically detached, “bloodless,” and “scientific” attitude (Heidegger 2005: 57; in Heffernan

2016: 253) is implicitly criticized by purporting that *Dasein*'s originary—albeit *improper*—understanding of itself takes place in its “ready-to-hand” (*zuhanden*) encounter with other innerworldly entities and tools, and other *Dasein* (SZ: §15)—and by pushing back, to a *secondary* level, all theoretical “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*) access to them (SZ: §15). *Tertio*, Heidegger stresses the *triple* existential constitution of *Dasein*'s *Da*—“affectivity” (*Befindlichkeit*), “understanding” (*Verstehen*), and “discourse” (*Rede*) (SZ: §§29–34)—emphasizing the first of the three, and highlighting the role of dread (*Angst*) (§40) as the privileged form of affectivity that leads to the unveiling of *Dasein*'s unitary existence as Care (*Sorge*) (SZ: §41). Further on, dread also opens the way for *Dasein*'s resolve (*Entschlossenheit*) (SZ: §§61–62) to come to terms with its finitude (SZ: §§47–53)—whereby it gains access to its authentic self-understanding (SZ: §§63–64) “within the solitary vision of its own mortality” (Taminiaux 2004: 44). Thus, the “ready-to-hand” access of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world, along with dread and resolution—namely, the emotional and volitional dimensions of existence—are phenomenologically more seductive ways of addressing the greatness and richness of life (“the things themselves”), than those of a “mere logician” in search of “the absolute” (Heidegger 2005: 57; in Heffernan 2016: 253). *Quarto*, the unveiling of timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*) as the *meaning* of *Dasein*'s finite *being* as Care, and its immediate connection with its historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) (SZ: §§61–77), contrasts sharply with Husserl's apparent atemporal, ahistorical, “universal, and neutral criterion of the *ego*” (Taminiaux 2004: 36).

Hence, as Heffernan remarks, “Heidegger's *Being and Time* is not only the starting point of a schism but also the end point of a schism” (Heffernan 2016: 260), *Ideas I* being the point of contention of both. The earlier 1905–1913 schism between Husserl and his early followers extended until 1926; whereas the later 1927–1933 schism developed between 1917–1927 (Heffernan 2016: 261–262). Both schisms agreed in rejecting Husserl's transcendental turn.<sup>3</sup>

So, the “conventional” view of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology stemmed mainly—but not exclusively—from Heidegger's critiques and appraisals which were already underway since his 1919 to 1928 lectures at Freiburg and Marburg.

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<sup>3</sup> But Husserl mistakenly conflated criticisms stemming from both schisms (such as Stein 1917, Heidegger 1927, and Scheler 1928) as “existentialist” or “anthropological” attacks on his phenomenology, for Heidegger also rejected being assimilated to those philosophical positions, as Heffernan points out.

Notwithstanding the fact that his acquaintance with Husserl's work,<sup>4</sup> though keen and acute, was extremely fragmentary, his interpretation spread rapidly as the most authoritative and canonical among his disciples and followers, thanks to his brilliant teaching, the impact of *Being and Time*, and his skillful manipulation of his proximity to the "Master" in order to obtain the latter's support to succeed his chair in Freiburg. This appraisal was retrieved and transmitted *mutatis mutandis* in Germany by the Diltheyan Georg Misch (1929), to the hermeneutical tradition, through Gadamer<sup>5</sup> and his followers; to Spain and Latin America through Ortega y Gasset and Gaos;<sup>6</sup> and to France, first through Emmanuel Levinas—who spent his 1918-1929 academic year in Freiburg<sup>7</sup>—, and then Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter, mostly French and some German continental philosophers, all propagated *mutatis mutandis* the same critiques to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as a "deception," and as failing the promise to return to the "things themselves"—that Heidegger's ontology accomplished, and towards which Husserl's failure "necessarily" lead to (Granel 1968: 113, 263–264).

This conventional view took place in two directions: an *ontological* one, and an *ethical-existential* one. According to the *ontological* line of interpretation, the notions of reduction, constitution, egology, lead to a "logocentric" "metaphysics of presence" and a "dogmatic" and "solipsistic" "idealism"—oblivious of the question of Being and

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<sup>4</sup> Heidegger had only read the *Logical Investigations*, the *Logos* 1910/11 paper on "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," *Ideas* I, some posthumously published manuscripts such as *Ideas* II, presumably Husserl's 1904/05 lectures on time-consciousness which he published in 1928 with a cursory introduction, and finally the 1931 "Epilogue" to *Ideas* I's.

<sup>5</sup> For a more thorough account of Gadamer's critical reception of Husserl's phenomenology—with a shy approval, but mostly negative appraisal under Heidegger's influence, including Husserl's later account of the *Lebenswelt*, intersubjectivity, embodiment, and life—see Lerner 2012: 425–442.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Orringer (2001: 149) reported that both Ortega y Gasset and Gaos, influenced by Misch, contrasted Husserl's *epoché* to Heidegger's analytics of *Dasein*.

<sup>7</sup> Levinas attended Husserl's last seminar in Freiburg before his retirement. He also attended Heidegger's course "Introduction to Philosophy," which motivated him to work intensively on *Being and Time*. Both this book, strengthened by Misch's 1929 interpretation of phenomenology, left a mesmerizing impact on Levinas, reflected in his 1929 review on Husserl's *Ideas* I, and in his Ph D dissertation defended in Strasbourg (1930). He also attended Husserl's 1929 lectures in Paris and Strasbourg and collaborated with Gabrielle Pfeiffer on the first translation of the first four *Paris Lectures* under the title *Méditations cartésiennes* (1969/1931<sup>1</sup>). Although Levinas always considered himself a phenomenologist, kept acknowledging that Husserl was "at the origin of his writings" (1991: 75), and remained loyal to "his spirit," as well as to several elements of his phenomenology, he remained a critic of Husserl's alleged preeminence of *theoretical* "representations," "objectifying intentionality," "absolute knowledge," "constitution," and the immanent centralized *ego*, advocating instead for the primacy of ethics, alterity, and passivity (1949, 1968, 1987). His distancing from Heidegger was later motivated by the latter's 1933 engagement with Nazism.

<sup>8</sup> Sartre—who claimed that he was introduced to Husserl's phenomenology and *Ideas* I both by Levinas and Raymond Aron (Sartre 1964: 192)—spread in France the opinion that Husserl's notion of reflection is essentially objectifying (1943), whereas our most original phenomena or experiences are either non-objective or pre-reflexive (Sartre 1948).

human finitude—that stripped the world of its ontological density and alterity, reducing it to a mere “shadow” (Ricoeur 2004: 13–15, 163–164, 168, 170, 182, 334, 337; Granel 1968: 113; Granel 1976: vii; Derrida (1967), etc. Whereas the *ethical-existential* line of critiques highlighted Husserl’s preference for a theoretical scientism (Biemel 1959),<sup>9</sup> prolonging Western’s “‘theoretical’ paranoia,” underplaying the roles of affectivity, volitions, and pre-reflective phenomena (such as feelings, desires, instincts, drives), and placing them—alongside the problem of intersubjectivity and embodiment—under the “dictatorship” of objectifying representations (Sartre 1948: 49–91; Ricoeur 2004: 340; Levinas 1968: 95; Granel 1976: vii).<sup>10</sup>

In sum, Heidegger’s reading of Husserl’s work perpetuated in the most important continental thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wolin (2015) calls them “Heidegger’s children,” since “for phenomenological reasons,” they “judged it necessary to explain themselves with Heidegger” (Taminiaux 2002: 7). Assuredly, Husserl’s terminological and expository deficiencies in introducing the uniqueness of his transcendental method and scope, and his incapacity to integrate his lifelong investigations into a coherent presentation of his “idea of philosophy”<sup>11</sup> wherein transcendental phenomenology was supposed to be only one—albeit basic—component, was another essential factor that isolated Husserl from his contemporaries.

Husserl’s contemporaries were themselves bewildered by the contrast among the different works he published—with significant time gaps—during his lifetime. First, by the changes between his 1900-1901 *Logical Investigations*, and his 1913 *Ideas I*. Originally, Husserl meant to elucidate the correlation between the *objective* validity of (logical-mathematical) scientific discourse, on the one hand, and its realization in mental, *subjective* processes, on the other—or between logical *truth*, and

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<sup>9</sup> Referring to Husserl’s 1910/11 *Logos* article, Biemel focuses on Husserl’s distinction between a scientific philosophy, and a *Weltanschauung*’s philosophy, and relates this expressions to his contrast with Heidegger: “Echte Wissenschaft kennt, soweit ihre wirkliche Lehre reicht, keinem Tiefsinn (...) Tiefsinn ist Sache der Weisheit, begriffliche Deutlichkeit und Klarheit Sache der strengen Theorie. (...) Dass dies ein Punkt ist, an dem nachher die Trennung zwischen Husserl und Heidegger vollzogen wird, braucht wohl nicht unterstrichen werden.” (1959: 207).

<sup>10</sup> In his 1923/24 Marbourg lectures (GA 17 [2006<sup>2</sup>]), reading Husserl’s *Ideas I*, Heidegger retrieves—twisting it—Paul Natorp’s critique to phenomenological reflection with regards to its “scope.” According to Natorp, it is impossible to gain access to the living stream of consciousness without freezing and distorting it. Heidegger turns this critique into an “indictment of the very possibility of Husserl’s conception of transcendental phenomenology as radical philosophy” (Hopkins 2015: 2).

<sup>11</sup> In his letter to Paul Natorp (Feb. 2, 1922), he regrets that “(...) the greatest part of my life’s work is found in my manuscripts. I almost wish that my incapacity would end, and that now, so late, (...) I could be forced to rework it all out again. (...) Maybe I am working, straining my strength as humanly as possible, for my posthumous work. This could be, only if I fully succeed, and if it is not too late” (*Hua Dok III/5*: 151–152)

epistemological *certainty*. In his 1906/08 diary entries (Husserl 1956: 294–302) Husserl is already aware that his 1898 discovery of the “universal *a priori* of correlation” (*Hua* VI: 161–169) concerns the intertwined *totality* of human experiences (theoretical, volitional, and emotional) in their universal correlation with the surrounding world. But this was not perceived by his readers, neither by those who were seeking *objective* validity at the expense of the subject’s “banishment” (such as Frege), nor by those that had already vindicated a new approach to metaphysical problems, and to the concretion of existence, life, or history (such as Dilthey, the Baden school of neo-Kantians, and a little later Heidegger himself). Yet deeper perplexities ensued with the 1928 publication by Heidegger of Husserl’s early time lectures (1905-1917) (*Hua* X), his 1929 *Formal and Transcendental Logik* (*Hua* XVII), and the 1930 *Nachwort* to his reedition of *Ideas* I. The 1931 *Méditations cartésiennes* only contained four meditations, not the fifth one that deals with intersubjectivity, and was only accessible in French until it appeared in 1950 (*Hua* I) in an integral form. Finally, in his 1936 *Crisis*, within the framework of an existential, metaphysical, and historical interrogation, Husserl reintroduced his transcendental phenomenology connecting it to the—in Gadamer’s expression—“magical” new term *Lebenswelt*, as the “forgotten meaning-fundament of natural science.”<sup>12</sup> Whereas *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and the *Cartesian Meditations* seemed to radicalize Husserl’s “logicism of essences” and the “idealistic, absolute foundationalism” claimed by his *Ideas* I, the time lectures and the *Crisis*, signaled a “favorable” evolution (mostly paradoxical), probably influenced by his own brilliant successor at Freiburg.<sup>13</sup>

After his death, the fragmentary character of his early publications, added to the *Husserliana* volumes that started to appear since 1950, unleashed new interpretations. Some, flatly denied the possibility of “another” or a “new” Husserl (San Martín 2015: 35; Ortega 2006: 3–29).<sup>14</sup> Others, attempted to provide several accounts of the “stages”

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<sup>12</sup> “In Husserl’s late work the magical word *Lebenswelt* appears—one of those rare and marvelously artificial words (it had not appeared before Husserl) that have found their way to the general linguistic consciousness, bearing witness to the fact that they bring to language a non-acknowledged or forgotten truth. Hence, the word *Lebenswelt* has reminded us all of the presuppositions that underlie all scientific knowledge” (Gadamer 1998: 55).

<sup>13</sup> This impression was fostered in a veiled way by Heidegger himself—when taking notice of some of Husserl’s manuscripts since 1917 (GA 20: 167–168).

<sup>14</sup> The first interpretation was that by José Gaos, who translated the *Logical Investigations* into Spanish in 1929, the *Cartesian Meditations* in 1942, and *Ideas I* in 1949 (“destined to the ‘philosophers’ museum”), as well as translating Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (“the summit of a still living and current philosophy, bustling with a conceptual gestation”) (Zirión 2013: 6, 9.). Ortega y Gasset and Gaos were influenced by Heidegger’s interpretation of *Ideas I* thanks to Georg Misch, as Nelson Orringer suggests (Orringer 2001,

of his “evolution” (Biemel 1959; Funke 1966), or used “a genetic method in which the text of Husserl’s work as historically dated is accepted as the only authority” (De Boer 1978: xx). Others, detected paradoxes, tensions, or outright contradictions, between his “logicism of essences” and the opacity of human experiences, life, time and history.<sup>15</sup> Already in 1989, Marc Richir—when commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Husserl’s death—remarked that “the mass of Husserlian manuscripts too fast or easily eclipsed by Heideggerian steep summits and abysses” begins to be “critically interrogated,” “already free of a certain fascination” that Heidegger’s thought had always exerted. “The withdrawal of time allows us to suspect that things are decidedly more complex than what a certain ‘legend’ of the ‘phenomenological movement’ allowed us to glimpse” (Richir & Escoubas 1989: 1). So new distinctions started to gain strength.

## §2. The “new,” the “other,” and the “unitary” Husserl

Since 1989, as the *Husserliana* volumes appeared, based both on systematic and chronological criteria, two clear periods in Husserl’s radicalization of his phenomenology started to be mentioned. During the first, from 1887 to approximately 1917, Husserl develops his method and philosophy within a “static-descriptive” program, basically as an epistemological foundation of sciences, which he gradually expands to other disciplines, such as ethics and axiology. The second period, from 1917 to 1938, he radicalizes his methodological framework within a “genetic-descriptive” program in which he uncovers the most primitive, unitary origin of spiritual and natural sciences within the totality of mankind’s cultural and historic life—within the universal horizontal correlation between incarnate subjects and the world (“life-world”); and by digging into the subject’s temporal life as radically individuated, embodied, personal, and intersubjective (Bernet, Kern & Marbach 1989).

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149, cited by San Martín 2015, 64). Ortega y Gasset even purported that Husserl’s *Crisis* had not been written by him, but by his assistant, Eugen Fink (Ortega 2006: 3–29; in San Martín 2015: 35). Similarly, in the 1963 *XIII International Philosophy Congress* in Mexico, where a “Symposium on Husserl’s Notion of the *Lebenswelt*” took place, attended by Ludwig Landgrebe, Enzo Paci, and John Wild, Gaos—sticking to his Cartesian view of Husserl—refused to admit that transcendental phenomenology had any relationship with the historicity of the *Lebenswelt* (Landgrebe), with the lived body (Wild), or with Marxism (Paci), which flustered him the most (Zirión 1999: 35; San Martín 2015: 53).

<sup>15</sup> Merleau-Ponty, in Taminiaux 1985: 117–118; Ricoeur 1949: 280–316; Ricoeur 1980: 167–177; Granel 1995: 141–145. Merleau-Ponty (1945)—in Taminiaux’s rendering—recognized in Husserl’s manuscripts a tacit break with the “logicism of essences” and an increasing acknowledgement that phenomena resist the classical notion of an “intellectual adequation.” Whereas Ricoeur argued that a sharp distinction should be drawn between Husserl’s method as “*practiced*,” which tended to “deepen the original attitude engaged with the world,” and as “philosophically *interpreted*,” which was caught in a “*dogmatic* idealism” alienated from the world (Ricoeur 2004: 185, 168).

Since then, Husserl's notion of a "rigorous" science is gradually understood not as following the Modern, Cartesian, deductive-mathematical model, but as a *meditative* attempt to retrieve the lost *unity* of every human achievement endowed with meaning and validity, being this the sense of his retrieval of Plato's and Descartes's notion of *episteme* as a "theory of science" (*Hua* VII: 3–16; *Hua* XVII: 5–21; *Hua* XXXV: 50 ff). In the meantime, it has already become clear that Husserl introduces the term *Lebenswelt* in 1917, "two decades before the *Crisis*"—increasingly gaining meaning in his philosophy (*Hua* XXIX, Smid: xiii)—, and that the historical introduction to his *Crisis* "is the result of being occupied with the problem of history for many years" (*Hua* XXIX, Smid: xiv), having dealt with history since 1905, a topic later elucidated as a transcendental problem. Hence, the "ahistoric Husserl"—as Husserl refers to himself ironically November 27, 1930, in a letter to Georg Misch, "only occasionally had had to take some distance from history, for he always had it in mind" (*Hua Dok* III/6: 283–284). And his earliest teleological texts—within his initial attempts at pitching a teleology of reason and monadology—begin to be developed since 1908, only later more soundly articulated with intentionality and temporality (*Hua* XLII: 160–168). Be it what it may, there still remains the tendencies to refer to Husserl's work as somewhat dissociated, in two stages. As Bruzina phrases it, "*Ideen* I does not get us there yet" (Bruzina 213: 246). This may still be the spirit behind the titles used since 2000, "the new Husserl," and "the other Husserl" (Welton 2000; Welton ed. 2003).

There is no question that even towards the end of his life Husserl kept emphasizing the preeminence of "theoretical" rationality and philosophy (*Hua* VII: 204; *Hua* VIII: 7; *Hua* VI: 6 [8]), and of the transcendental and *eidetic* nature of phenomenology as *first* philosophy (*Hua* XVII: 217–219 [245–248]); *Hua* I: §34; *Hua* IX: 278–285, 295; *Hua* V: 141–143, 149–155). Neither there is any point in denying the fact that he kept considering Dilthey's brand of *Lebensphilosophie* and "existential philosophy" as a "falsifying dislocation" and a "countersense," for he firmly believed that to posit "human existence as the sole basis for the reconstruction of phenomenological philosophy" amounted to slide again into a "new sort of <psychologistic> anthropology" (*Hua* XVII: 224 [253]; *Hua* XXVII: 164).

Notwithstanding, the 2013 publication of *Husserliana* XLII finally offers a glimpse into the full scope and complexity of Husserl's philosophical project from 1908 to 1937. The draft of a "systematic field of work" (an *Arbeitsphilosophie*) begins to take

shape against the puzzling thematic dispersion of the previous volumes and correspondence.

In this way I will risk a preliminary “unitary view” of the vast scope of Husserl’s “idea of philosophy,” within which, on one side, transcendental phenomenology plays a *central* and foundational—albeit limited—role, and, on the other, the existential and practical dimensions of his thought appear as inextricable elements related to his philosophy.

### §3. *Phenomenological Philosophy as Theory or as Practice?*

Since 1902–1903 Husserl starts shaping his idea of philosophy, starting with a radical “critique of reason” to which he assigned different tasks (*Hua* XXVIII, xxi–xxii).<sup>16</sup> In 1906 he clearly states that such a critique must embrace every sphere of reason: the theoretical, practical, and evaluative in general (Husserl 1956: 297).<sup>17</sup> This critique has already in mind the development of an “idea of philosophy” that—as he states in his 1910/11 *Logos* article—has to be configured as a “universal and ‘rigorous’ science in a radical sense” (*Hua* V: 139 [406]). In 1913, he already views “transcendental phenomenology” as having to “claim to be ‘first’ philosophy and to offer the means for carrying out every possible critique of reason” (*Hua* III/1: (136[148])). He reiterates this idea until his 1931 *Cartesian Meditations*. He there avows that this task, to be complete, should include a “critique of transcendental *self*-experience” (*Hua* I: §13); however, due to the inextricably insurmountable intertwinement and complexity of human experience, he admits that this task still remains to be done (*Hua* I: §63, esp. 178).<sup>18</sup> It is finally postponed *ad calendas graecas*.

Be it what it may, from the start, “transcendental phenomenology”—as *first* philosophy in the manner of a “radical self-meditation”—was to have a *central* role (*Hua* VIII, 4) in Husserl’s nascent “idea of philosophy,” for it was called to lay bare the

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<sup>16</sup> See letter to W. Hocking from Oct. 11, 1903. Ullrich Melle points out that Husserl already registered the parallel tasks assigned to the different branches of a critique of reason in his 1902–1907 lectures (*Ms.* F I 26), partially reproduced in *Hua* XXIV, *Hua Mat* III, and *Hua Mat* V.

<sup>17</sup> See his September 26, 1906 entries in his personal diary (reprinted *Hua* XXIV: 442–449), and other documents of that time; see also *Hua* VIII, 23, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Incidentally, *Ideas I*’s introduction announced that the topic of the third, never published volume, was to the presentation of “transcendental phenomenology” as *first* philosophy. This postponed task emerges again in his 1922 *London Lectures*, in his 1922/23 course *Introduction to Philosophy*, his 1923/24 lectures on *First Philosophy*; and in the 1928 *Encyclopædia Britannica* article. A footnote of his 1928 *Formal and Transcendental Logic* mentions his 1922/23 course as having retrieved this task and the need of a “critique of transcendental self-experience” (*Hua* XVII: 295). His 1929 *Paris Lectures* and finally his 1931 *Cartesian Meditations* retrieves this, still unfinished, task.

apodictic “ultimate foundations”—that of “ultimate self-responsibility”—upon which such a “system” or “idea of philosophy” had to be built (*Hua V*, 139 [406]). Nevertheless, in Husserl’s mind, as he clearly stated in a 1914 draft of a letter to Karl Joël, this “in no case” meant to “reduce philosophy to a theory of knowledge and a critique of reason in general, much less to a transcendental phenomenology” (*Hua Dok III/6*, 205). While his transcendental phenomenology was already taking shape, Husserl was simultaneously sketching the metaphysical and ethical horizons of his “idea of philosophy.” In this, Husserl may have been influenced by his early readings of Fichte’s popular works (especially the latter’s 1800 *The Destination of Man*) to which he devoted with increasing appreciation seminars and courses in 1903, 1915, and 1918. But he kept this aspect of his philosophy in reserve (in his ethic courses, and from his 1908 and 1909 manuscripts on).<sup>19</sup> He *only* made public the need for his “critique of reason”—to which he temporarily and “willingly limited himself” (*Selbstschränkung*)—and not his whole philosophical project, because he first wished to lay down the apodictic basis of an “elementary grammar” for “transcendental philosophy” to accomplish its task as a *first* philosophy: to provide the solid grounds upon which he could edify his system of philosophy, and then develop the metaphysical and ethical problems that constituted the “realm of desire” (*Reich der Sehnsucht*) towards which his work had been oriented since the beginning (*Hua Dok III/6*, 60)<sup>20</sup> and that laid “much closer to [his] heart” (*Hua Dok III/3*, 418).<sup>21</sup>

Leaving aside his attempts at developing an ethics (praxeology) and theory of values (axiology) as specific disciplines within the wide scope of his “idea of philosophy” (*Hua XXVIII*; *Hua XXXVII*), and exclusively paying attention to his notions of a “critique” of knowledge and reason, it must be stressed that Husserl never understood this endeavor as merely “theoretical,” in a segregated, Kantian sense—or in Arendt’s contrast between a *vita contemplative* and a *vita activa*. Not only because transcendental phenomenology’s sense of “ultimate foundations” is that of an “ultimate self-responsibility.” But also because Husserl unwaveringly maintains until his end “that reason”, as the highest form of consciousness—permanently and inextricably

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<sup>19</sup> He had already discovered his “transcendental reduction” in 1905, and in 1908 he already described his phenomenology in terms of a “transcendental idealism” (*Hua XXXVI*). Simultaneously, in two texts from 1908 and 1909, strongly inspired by Leibniz, he begins to outline his “metaphysics” on monadological, teleological, and theological problems (*Hua XLII*, Texts Nr. 10 [1908–1909] and Nr. 11 [1908]).

<sup>20</sup> Husserl to Hans Driesch, 18.07.1917

<sup>21</sup> Husserl to Dietrich Mahnke, 5.09.1917.

attached to its pre-conscious and irrational genesis—“allows for no differentiation into ‘theoretical,’ ‘practical,’ ‘aesthetic,’ or whatever,” and that humankind “is rational in “striving toward reason” (*Hua* VI, 275 [341]; *Hua* III/1: § 139). The problems of *reason*—of *true* knowledge, *true* valuation, *truly* good deeds, of history’s sense or *reason*, of God as absolute *reason*, of the immortality and freedom of *rational* soul—are all in his sense metaphysical problems in the broadest sense, precisely those that positivism “decapitates” (*Hua* VI, 7 [9]). “Science in the Platonic sense,” he said, is *rooted “in principles”* appertaining to the “radicalness of scientific responsibility” and to “the universality with which all sciences are inseparably connected as branches of one *sapientia universalis* (Descartes)” (*Hua* XVII: 1-4 [1–4]). “We cannot separate genuine humanity and living with radical self-responsibility, and therefore cannot separate scientific self-responsibility from the whole complex of responsibilities belonging to human life as such” (*Hua* XVII: 5 [5–6]). “For the Socratic Plato, so Husserl, philosophy in a wide and pregnant sense is not a mere science, and theory or reason has its dignity only in rendering possible practical reason” (*Hua* XXXV: 314). This self-responsibility is assumed in the reflective turn towards the subject that he learned from Descartes. Both Plato and Descartes were then a source of inspiration for what he called the “*ethical-cognitive* turn to the subject,” although he acknowledged that Descartes reflective method lacked the specifically “*ethic side of Plato’s* philosophical *ethos*” (*Hua* XXXV: 314).

But reason is only the highest form of human consciousness. So, “knowledge, when seen in its full extension, contains reason and unreason, the intuitive and non-intuitive, etc., the total sphere of judgment, the predicative and pre-predicative, all sorts of egological acts of belief, (...) and all the modalities of belief. (...) <Nevertheless> (...) there still remains a fairly rich residue of other genres of egological acts, such as loving and hating, feeling pleasure or rejection, desiring, longing, willing” (*Hua* VIII, 193). So, when speaking succinctly of “scientific knowledge, it is clear that its acts are not mere judgments, but (...) that here everywhere judgment and willing, even valuations penetrate each other, as long as truth as the correlate of insight is the practical goal of will, as positively valued” (*Hua* VIII: 23-24). Assuredly, in the *specific* context of “scientific purposes,” *theoretical* reason comes to the fore, here as well as in *Ideas* I (*Hua* III/1: §§95, 118, 121–127), *precisely* because “theoretical truth (...), and also valuative and practical truth, are *expressed in a predicative form*, (...) and as such assume the grounding forms of knowledge” (*Hua* VIII: 25; I underscore). The

*theoretical* form of “validation,” of “foundation” (“validity foundation”)—typical of a conscious, active, and rational life—requires to be *expressed* in the *predicative* form of judgments. This is the “epistemological responsibility” and “dignity,” that appertains to the properly theoretical dimension of rational life. But in those same contexts he asserts that the “supreme justification,” the “highest and ultimate responsibility corresponds, in knowledge, (...) to the achievements (*Leistungen*) of affectivity, which are ultimately constitutive” (*Hua VIII*: 25, 194).<sup>22</sup> In this sense, “Cognitive reason is function of practical reason, and the intellect is servant of the will” (*Hua VIII*: 201).<sup>23</sup> Hence, if philosophy as transcendental phenomenology is the source of a double ultimate justification—not only of the totality of knowledge and culture, but also of itself—it is because it draws its ultimate rational justification from the most radical and absolute *self-responsibility*, which is itself of an essentially emotional and practical character (*Hua VIII*, 195–196).<sup>24</sup>

But let us finish our initial argument. Husserl keeps referring to Descartes as a source of inspiration for his notion of *first* philosophy until 1931. Why? Because he believes that “(...) the Cartesian notion of the philosopher preserves the radicalism that belongs to the essence of ethical consciousness, and has a form that I wish to value, one that truly admits of being interpreted ethically or founded ethically” (*Hua XXXV*, 314–315). Descartes does indeed proclaim that every human being is summoned once in his or her lifetime to abandon a naïve mode of existence and decide, by means of a radical,

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<sup>22</sup> “Herewith universality emerges, whereby the reign of knowledge includes every sort of activity *that originates* in a sentient and willing subjectivity; admittedly a correlative similar involvement also <emerges here>, whereby the evaluative disposition (*wertende Gemüt*) and the striving will and action *embrace the totality of subjectivity* and all of its intentional functions” (*Hua VIII*, 193–194, italics mine; see also 23–25). In this context

<sup>23</sup> In a 1919 letter to Arnold Metzger, Husserl explicitly states: “I do not consider truth and science as the supreme values. On the contrary, ‘the intellect is the servant of the will,’ in the same way that I am the servant of those that configure our practical life, as leaders of humanity” (*Hua Dok III/4*, 409 [361]; cf. *Hua VIII*, 201). And earlier, in his 1910–1911 lectures on Logic and Theory of Knowledge— notwithstanding his avowal that he has nothing yet in the direction of a scientific ethics, praxiology and axiology—he points out that the highest interests of humanity depend on building these disciplines. Thus the most valuable personality is the one that orients and configures itself and the world through practical reason, in conformity with the highest rational ideals (see *Hua XXX*, 303–304; *Hua XXVIII*, xliii–xliv). In this connection, much could be mentioned regarding Husserl’s reflections since *Ideas II* of the problem of rational and irrational “motivations” of our conscious life (*Hua IV*: §56, 220–236; *Hua XXXVII*: §23, 107–110, 331)—in relation to primary and secondary passivity, and to the role of *attention* within the *interwoven horizon* of the perceptual, emotional, and practical activities (*Hua IV*: §§4–5).

<sup>24</sup> Thus, theoretical philosophy deals with the cognition of things; practical philosophy, with human action and norms; and axiology, with ethical and aesthetic values. Yet cognition is never devoid of valued decisions, decisions are never devoid of valued cognitions, and valuations are never devoid of cognitive volitions. Husserl’s Leibnizian sense of a universal ontology embraces precisely this sense of reason (*Hua V*, 139 [406], *Hua XXVIII*, 170–176, *passim*).

autonomous, and responsible meditation, to take charge of his or her life. Thus, even if not explicitly, Descartes's work opens the only way "whereby human beings can become truthful and ethical human beings" (*Hua* XXXV, 58), *resolving themselves* for a new way of life, absolutely justified and expressed by an ethical-cognitive regulative idea. And this requires the Cartesian demand to overthrow (*Umsturz*) all former unfounded and unjustified convictions. Husserl's version of this *Umsturz* is the "transcendental reduction" as providing the entrance gate to philosophy (*Hua* XXXV, 60). Obviously, an ethical reduction is also possible within the natural attitude, such as each time we resolve not to live passively, being carried away by pre-given validities or blind instincts, but decide to live a critically conscious, and evaluative life (see *Ms. F I* 24, 70b). Yet it is only thanks to the ethical dimension of *transcendental reduction* that one is able to perceive the *continuity* between the ethical life of the natural attitude, and the self-responsible awareness brought about by transcendental life, without denying nor diminishing the former.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, it is only thanks to transcendental reduction, as a *resolution* to adopt an authentic life in this radical sense, that the subject first *discovers that its life is transcendental, namely, sense-constitutive*. Transcendental reduction unveils its sense-constitutive *activities* (either as purely theoretical praxis, or diverse cultural achievements, and worldviews), and enables the subject to take responsibility for them. In this precise sense, it differs from any mundane responsibility, bearing "within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to [humankind] as such" (*Hua* VI, 140 [137]). The metaphor of the opposition between the "life of surface" and the "life of depth" illustrates the contrast between the natural attitude and the transcendental attitude, rather than the Heideggerian opposition between authentic and inauthentic existence.<sup>26</sup> Thus only the "life of depth" promises to unveil the primary sources of meaning, "the realm, never before entered, of the 'mothers of knowledge,'" according to a myth of Goethe's *Faust* (*Hua* VI, 156 [153]).<sup>27</sup> In other words, transcendental reduction involves the decision to become conscious of our own

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<sup>25</sup> The possibility and actuality of ethical responsibility in the natural attitude is neither denied nor diminished; it simply does not have the same sense, nor it is interchangeable with the ethical responsibility pertaining to transcendental life, in the sense that in Husserl's view, the latter is comparable to a total existential transformation, similar to a religious "conversion" (*Hua* VI, 140 [137]).

<sup>26</sup> Husserl implicitly refers in the *Crisis* to Helmholtz's well-known image of a cylinder projecting its shadow from two of its sides upon two plane surfaces: from one of the cylinder's sides the projected shadow will appear as a rectangle; from its bottom, the projected shadow will appear as a circle. None of the cylinder's surface projections represents its true nature.

<sup>27</sup> See also Goethe, *Faust*, "Finstere Galerie", Part II, Scene 4, Act 1, 6216.

universal productivity in our relation to the world's horizon, namely, it is an invitation to "know what we're doing"—in Arendt's expression—a somewhat violent summons to authenticity calling us to assume, in an act of bravery, the "risk" of "dying" (*meletê thanatou*) to the natural life of constituted objectivities or graspable certainties, in order to be "born" to the difficult commitment to the ethical ideal of absolute self-responsibility.

But even if one admits that transcendental subjective life is sense-constitutive, thus a fundamentally *practical* one—even when theorizing—the "transcendental reduction" performed by the phenomenologist, is not. Indeed, the phenomenological attitude is that of an impartial spectator that merely unveils the transcendental life imbedded in everyone's natural attitude and its activities, to "describe" them. In other words, thanks to the transcendental reduction,<sup>28</sup> the phenomenologist (namely, the divided or split transcendental subject) is able to recognize and describe the essentially practical character of his or her own life. However, even if the phenomenologist can freely change attitudes at will and reassume his or hers daily chores, interests or cares, the transcendental reduction is paramount to an "existential conversion," whereby the phenomenologist's daily theoretical, practical, or evaluative "position-takings" (in the natural attitude) will have a deeper sense of self-awareness and self-responsibility. This is not the case of the mathematician who returns home after having worked at the office in the "mathematical attitude" (*Hua* VI, 140 [137]), or from any other occupation. This is the sense in which phenomenologists are for Husserl "functionaries of humanity."

Thus, as Donn Welton puts it, the purpose of transcendental reduction "is not to dissolve the world but to break its fetishism (...) in order to gain its presence and to open its meaning" (Welton 1977, 54–55). And although transcendental reduction is an act of solitary resolution that splits the *ego* into a subject that is naïvely interested, on the one hand, and an uninterested spectator on the other, it is only from the standpoint of the latter and its new "interest" that one can learn *how* this transcendental life is intersubjectively committed to the world. Curiously, this procedure is quite the reversal of Heidegger's movement from inauthentic existence (the "towards-which" of the being-in-the-world-with-others) to authentic existence (in the solitary, primordial monologue "for-the-sake-of-which," "the very Being of *Dasein*"). Husserl proposes a

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<sup>28</sup> "As is the case with all undertakings which are new in principle, for which not even an analogy can serve as guide, this beginning takes place with a certain unavoidable naïveté. In the beginning is the deed" (*Hua* VI, 158 [156]); once again Husserl is referring to Goethe's *Faust*, Part I, 1237.

seemingly solipsistic procedure that involves momentarily suspending the general thesis of the natural attitude (wherein communities are merely perceived as “the serious mutual exteriority of ego persons,” “in a pregiven world”) in order to discover transcendental life as “intentionally related” to its “surrounding world” in an intentional intertwining with the lived experiences of others—both synchronically in the present and diachronically in a historical “being-in-another, being-with-another, being-for-another”<sup>29</sup> throughout the generations<sup>30</sup>—namely, in “an inward being-for-one-another and mutual interpenetration” (*Hua* VI, 346 [298]).

#### §4. *Transcendental-eidetic phenomenology and its existential-metaphysical roots*

We have dealt with Husserl’s role of *first* philosophy, its eidetic nature, and the *practical* dimension of transcendental subjectivity unveiled by the transcendental reduction—the “method of retrospective interrogation”—that allows the “ascent from mundane subjectivity (...) to ‘transcendental subjectivity’” (*Hua* 5: 140 [407]). The “universality” of this new philosophical enterprise is ensured by the intuitive descriptions of the eidetic structures and functions of the purely lived *first-person* experiences—namely, the pure ego, temporality and intentionality. Beyond a preliminary *static* approach to these experiences, Husserl radicalizes his method and deepens his analysis. First, he manages to describe these structural processes in a dynamic and integrated manner (*Hua* I: §§14–22), within the “universal synthesis of transcendental time” (*Hua* 1: §18). And secondly, deepening his analyses, he unveils the unconscious, *passive*, and associative processes that underlie conscious, *active* lived experiences—theoretical, practical, and volitional—. This experiential unconscious, irrational, synthetic-associative background of conscious and rational life also manifests itself around a *passive* and pre-objectifying *egological* center connected to our conscious, rational, and *active ego*, whose constitutive intentions are never “individual” but integrate “intentional systems” that slowly configure a surrounding human world (*Hua* 1: §§ 30–33; *Hua* 3/I: §80; *Hua* 4: §§ 22–29, 50). Human subjects are therefore understood as embodied minds that develop onto- and phylogenetically (*Hua* 15: 595–

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<sup>29</sup> “All souls make up a single unity of intentionality with the reciprocal implication of the life-fluxes of the individual subjects (...); what is a mutual externality from the point of view of naïve positivity or objectivity is, when seen from the inside, an intentional mutual internality” (*Hua* VI, 260 [257]).

<sup>30</sup> Husserl deals with the problem of historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit, Historizität*) throughout the *Crisis* in relation to “generativity” (*Hua* VI, especially in §6, *Abhandlungen* II and III, *Beilagen* 3, 5, 13, 23, 24, 26, 27) and in manifold earlier unpublished manuscripts and courses.

596; *Hua* 39: 653–666) in their organic bodies, interacting with the psycho-physical and cultural surrounding world, and connected both synchronically and diachronically with the lives of other transcendental co-subjects, with whom cultural traditions are constituted and transmitted throughout the generations.

In the context of *first* philosophy, ontologies are *constituted* cultural products, just as well as sciences are. Transcendental phenomenology thus unveils the *constitution* of ontologies and sciences, and their fundamental categories whereby we refer to their *eide* accordingly characterized as belonging to different regions of entities that we encounter in our surrounding world. Thus, the *eide* belonging to *facta* are inseparable from them. In general, they are “morphological,”—thus, not exact as mathematical *eide* (*Hua* III/1: §§ 2, 5–7, 71–75). Natural sciences since Galileo’s and Newton’s time have *methodologically* applied exact *eide* to *morphological* types, constituting thus the rigorous (albeit not exact, nor ontologically final) “laws of nature,” which are merely “essential generalizations” of existing *facta* (*Hua* III/1: §6). Theoretical sciences need to focus on *eide* in order to achieve their goals. And transcendental phenomenology unveils our *constitutive* access to them. Husserl adds that *first* philosophy is the universe of methods for the *second*, and is related back into itself for its methodological grounding (*Hua* IX: 298–299 [177]). Hence, *second* philosophy deals with the *facticity* that is dealt with by sciences, which is eidetically founded in *first* philosophy. He also gives this second philosophy—which he starts to work on since 1909—the name “metaphysics,” for it deals with “*facticity*” or “*existence*.” It is thus a “philosophy of reality” (*Wirklichkeitsphilosophie*), or a “factual philosophical science” of “existences” (*Metaphysik als absolute Wissenschaft von der faktischen Wirklichkeit*) (*Hua* XXVII: 229; see also *Hua* XLII: lxi).

The problem of facticity, reality or existence will serve Husserl for two purposes. On the one hand, it will allow him to interpret the given world of experience *metaphysically*, and therein “find the guidelines that may lead to the metaphysical ideas of God, freedom, immortality, etc.” (*Hua Dok* III/3, 410)—namely, to the “metaphysical” problems in a *second* sense, which are the “highest and ultimate questions” (*höchste und letzte Fragen*) corresponding to the Kantian postulates and to the genuinely ethical problems dealt with by the great philosophers of the past. These *Höhenprobleme* will allow him to “close” his “philosophical system.” Yet, on the other hand, since his 1923/24 lectures on *First Philosophy*, he starts reflecting on the problem of *facticity* from another angle. He speaks of “(...) the irrationality of the transcendental

*factum*, which becomes manifest in the constitution of the factual world and the factual life of the spirit: thus metaphysics in a new sense” (*Hua* VII, 188 n.). By this he means the “irrational fact” of the *correspondence* between rational (theoretical and practical) *ideality* and *reality* (*Hua* VII, 385; *Hua* VIII, 490), namely, the “irrational *factum* of the world’s rationality” (Kern 1975, 338) that—by way of the *totality* of monads (transcendental intersubjectivity) (*Hua* VIII, 506)<sup>31</sup>—embraces every problem related to fortuitous facticity.

This, of course, poses a problem, for if an “eidetic possibility” is allegedly independent of its effective realization, how can Husserl contend that the *factum* embraces everything that lies “beyond” and precedes all *eidē*—namely, that it precedes the eidetic domain as a whole? In 1931 Husserl unequivocally asserts that there is a *sui generis* unique case that lies precisely at the starting point of his philosophy, for “the *eidos* transcendental I is unthinkable without the transcendental I as factual” (*Hua* XV: 385). Thus the “ultimate necessities, the primal necessities,” the “ultimate facts” or “primal facts,” the mere possibility of asking back (*Rückfrage*) starting from the world, of executing the reduction, of practicing the eidetic, imaginary variation, and so forth, all depend on the *fact* that the *ego* “exists” (*Hua* XV, 385). Furthermore, as Husserl states in 1921, “absolutely considered, each *ego* has its *history*, and exists only as a subject of (...) its history. And each communicative community of absolute (...) subjectivities has its ‘passive’ and ‘active’ *history*, and exists only in this history. *History is the grand fact (große Faktum) of absolute being*” (*Hua* VIII, 506).<sup>32</sup>

Crucial consequences arise from this revelation, which may explain why Husserl writes the following to Dorion Cairns in 1930 regarding his phenomenology: “since *Ideas I* I have worked tirelessly improving, refining, radically verifying my stances, always prepared to abandon them (*preiszugeben*), including methodologically” (*Hua Dok* III/4, 23).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the *factum ego* is characterized by a core of “primal contingency” (“*Urzufälligem*”) in the essential forms of its achievements. (*Hua* XV, 386). We cannot *overcome* our own factual being, much less our originary being-with-another. Our *absolute reality* consequently “has its own ground in itself, and in its being without ground

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<sup>31</sup> The thesis of absolute *egos* as world-bearers (as subjects *for* the world without whom it could not be asserted that “real” reality *is*) who are not part of the world has its factual—and paradoxical—counterpart in that they also are “*egos* for one another,” beings for-another alongside other worldly beings. Each *ego* is thus an index of a communal relation and has, in its concretion, an active history (as a subject of it) and a passive history (as being given *only* in it, in a sedimented tradition, etc.). See *Hua* VIII, 506.

<sup>32</sup> See also Landgrebe’s essay on the subject (1974).

<sup>33</sup> Letter to Dorion Cairns, March 21, 1930.

(*grundlosen Sein*) it has its absolute necessity” (*Hua XV*, 386).

In my view, this means that Husserl acknowledges the entwining of necessity and contingency, namely, of a fortuitous dimension (*ein Zufälliges*) in the systematic launching of his “idea of philosophy.”<sup>34</sup> Many other aspects could be added regarding these issues,

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<sup>34</sup> “The irrational factum is fortuitous as opposed to the essence, but the factum is apodictic, for subjectivity in its oneness is apodictic and, as faculty of every essential generality, it also carries within itself that of its own essential form. (...) The irrational is fortuitous—it has other possibilities beside itself—, but it is necessary—the form must have a content—, thus it must be one of the possibilities” (*Hua XLII*, 102–103).

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but have been necessarily excluded. To close my arguments, I wish to stress only two points. On the one hand, that Husserl's phenomenological *pathos*, his passion of thinking driven by responsibility, always remains related to the world of human affairs, not dissociated from it. And, on the other, that in his view, philosophy, *ergo* "rationality," is an endless task, a limit-idea or *telos* that lies in infinity, and can achieve only partial, imperfect, and temporal validities during an endless historical process—a task to be assumed by a living community willing to keep working, as Husserl did, "preserving the habit of an inner freedom even regarding his own descriptions" (*Hua* III/1: 224).

#### NOTES

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