‘Let’s Look at It Objectively’: Why Phenomenology Cannot be Naturalized

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Abstract
In recent years there have been attempts to integrate first-person phenomenology into naturalistic science. Traditionally, however, Husserlian phenomenology has been resolutely anti-naturalist. Husserl identified naturalism as the dominant tendency of twentieth-century science and philosophy and he regarded it as an essentially self-refuting doctrine. Naturalism is a point of view or attitude (a reification of the natural attitude into the *naturalistic attitude*) that does not know that it is an attitude. For phenomenology, naturalism is objectivism. But phenomenology maintains that objectivity is constituted through the intentional activity of cooperating subjects. Understanding the role of cooperating subjects in producing the experience of the one, shared, objective world keeps phenomenology committed to a resolutely anti-naturalist (or ‘transcendental’) philosophy.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, some philosophers and cognitive scientists have argued that phenomenology, as a descriptive science of conscious experiences as they manifest themselves to conscious, embodied subjects, is compatible with the broadly naturalistic thrust of the scientific project.[1] Although there are many different forms of naturalism, broadly speaking the naturalistic project is committed to understanding consciousness as part of *nature* (itself understood as whatever is revealed by the physical and biological sciences).

[1] See Francisco J. Varela, ‘The Naturalization of Phenomenology as the Transcendence of Nature. Searching for Generative Mutual Constraints’, *Alter* **5** (1997), 355–81; Jean-Michel Roy, Jean Petitot, Bernard Pachoud, and Francisco J. Varela, ‘Beyond the Gap: An Introduction to Naturalizing Phenomenology’, in J. Petitot, Francisco J. Varela, B. Pachoud, and J.-M. Roy (eds.), *Naturalizing Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1–83. See also in Dan Zahavi, ‘Naturalizing Phenomenology’, in S. Gallagher and D. Schmicking (eds.), *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 2–19.

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Indeed, it has become customary to concede that the first-person experiential dimension of consciousness with its 'how' of appearing (its 'phenomenality') and its qualitative feel present special problems; but these problems are not thought to be insuperable and in general 'future' science is credited with the capacity to accommodate consciousness.[2] In other words, naturalism with its overall objectivist explanatory approach can be expanded to include the first-person perspective. Of course, there are many different versions of naturalism[3] as there are many different versions of phenomenology[4], but in this paper I shall argue against the possibility of completely absorbing the descriptive science of consciousness into the naturalist project. The peculiar manner in which the world and objects in the world appear to consciousness, their 'phenomenality', is not simply an objective fact in the world but rather an accomplishment of an interwoven web of subjectivities that in this sense *transcend* the world and are presupposed by the sciences that study the world (what Husserl would have called 'mundane' sciences). Phenomenology cannot be naturalized because it tells the story of the genesis and structure of the reality that we experience but in so doing reveals subjective stances and attitudes which themselves can never be wholly brought into view, cannot be objectified. Constituting subjectivity and intersubjectivity cannot be included within the domain of nature. Indeed, the very notion of 'nature' especially as that which is the object of the natural sciences is itself—as Husserl's analyses

[2] See, for instance, David Chalmers, 'Phenomenal Concepts and the Explanatory Gap', in T. Alter, and S. Walter (eds.), *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Manuel Garcia-Carpintero, 'Qualia that It is Right to Quine', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **67** (2003), 357–77.

[3] See Geert Keil, 'Naturalism' in Dermot Moran (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy* (London & NY: Routledge, 2008), 254–307. Aside from denying their very existence, at least part of the naturalist argument to accommodate qualia turns on whether qualia are representations or information- or content-bearing states. The assumption here is that objective third-person information can be extracted even from first-person states.

[4] See D. Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000) and S. Gallagher and D. Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008). Broadly speaking phenomenology can be divided into descriptive, hermeneutical, and existential.

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in his *Ideas* II[5] and in the *Crisis of European Sciences*[6] makes clear – is itself the product of a particular distillation of scientific method. In his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl makes clear that nature and culture are constituted together – along with the very being of the subject or ego. He writes:

> The ego constitutes himself for himself in, so to speak, the unity of a "history". We said that the constitution of the ego contains all the constitutions of all the objectivities existing for him, whether these be immanent or transcendent, ideal or real. […] That a Nature, a cultural world, a world of men with their social forms, and so forth, exist for me signifies that possibilities of corresponding experiences exist for me, as experiences I can at any time bring into play and continue in a certain synthetic style, whether or not I am at present actually experiencing objects belonging to the realm in question.[7]

2. Phenomenology's Critique of Naturalism

One of the most consistent traits of philosophy on the European continent over the twentieth century has been its resolute *non-naturalism* and its associated *anti-realism*. Phenomenology in this regard is wedded to anti-naturalism. Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who founded phenomenology, was to the forefront in identifying

[5] E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, Husserliana IV, Marly Biemel (ed.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1954 reprinted 1991), trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer as *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989). Hereafter '*Ideas* II' followed by English pagination, Husserliana ('Hua') volume and German pagination.

[6] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, Husserliana VI, W. Biemel (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1954), trans. D. Carr, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). Hereafter 'Crisis' followed by English pagination and Husserliana volume and page number.

[7] E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, Husserliana I, Stephan Strasser (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), trans. D. Cairns; *Cartesian Meditations* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993). Hereafter 'CM' with English pagination followed by the Husserliana volume and page number. The citation here is CM, 75–6; Hua I 109–10.

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naturalism as the dominant philosophical position of the age. In his famous paper 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science'[8] (1910/1911) he defined naturalism and demanded that it receive a 'radical critique'[9], which he explained as a 'positive critique in terms of foundations and methods'.[10] Husserl's relentless critique of naturalism began roughly around 1905 with the discovery of the phenomenological reduction, which allowed him to contemplate the meaning-constituting character of subjectivity freed from our natural convictions about the existing 'real' world, continued and intensified to the very end of his life. Husserl believes very strongly that naturalism – which he associated with a parallel commitment to physicalism and, in his day, to sense-data positivism – was a betrayal of the very essence of science. In the *Crisis* §13 (1936), Husserl speaks of 'physicalistic naturalism' and extended the term 'naturalism' to cover every 'objectivistic philosophy'.[11] Already in his 1906/7 *Lectures on Logic and Epistemology*[12] he characterises psychologism as the 'specifically epistemological sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost of philosophy, and unfortunately also the original sin that human beings awakened from the state of epistemological innocence necessarily lapse into'.[13] It is the original fall from grace to misconstrue consciousness: 'the mixing up of consciousness and mind, of theory of knowledge and psychology'.[14] The critique of psychologism is extended into the critique of naturalism. Naturalism betrays the very essence of science. It misunderstands the world because it misunderstands the subject's necessary role in the project of knowledge, and in the very constitution of objectivity. One cannot subtract the knowing

[8] E. Husserl, 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science,' trans. M. Brainard, *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* **2** (2002), 249–95; originally *Logos. Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Kultur* **1** (1910–1911), 289–341, reprinted in E. Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge 1911–1921*, Husserliana XXV, H. R. Sepp and T. Nenon (eds.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1986), 3–62. Hereafter 'PRS' with English pagination, followed by Husserliana volume and page number.

[9] PRS, 253; Hua XXV, 8.

[10] PRS, 253; Hua XXV, 8.

[11] *Crisis*, 194; Hua VI, 197.

[12] E. Husserl, *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie. Vorlesungen 1906/07*, Husserliana XXIV, U. Melle (ed.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1985); trans. Claire Ortiz Hill, *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge. Lectures 1906/07* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008). Hereafter 'ELE' followed by English pagination and the Husserliana volume and page number.

[13] ELE, 173; Hua XXIV, 177.

[14] ELE, 173; Hua XXIV, 177.

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subject from the process of knowledge, and treat the desiccated product as if it were the real world. The real world, for Husserl, as for Kant, always involves a necessary intertwining of subject and object. This is an essential transcendental point of view and it has been present in European philosophy at least since the eighteenth century, and – if we are to believe Husserl – it is in fact inaugurated with Descartes' breakthrough discovery of the *cogito ergo sum*, which unfortunately he then went on to misconstrue in a naturalist manner.

3. The Transcendental Approach

In his critique of naturalism, Husserl found an ally in the Neo-Kantian movement. Thus, in a letter dated 20 December 1915 to the leading Neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), Husserl commented that he found himself in alliance with German idealism against the 'our common enemy' (*als unseren gemeinsamen Feind*) – the 'naturalism of our time'.[15] Just a few years earlier, the Neo-Kantian Jonas Cohn (1869–1947) had written to Husserl in 1911, after his *Logos* article appeared, to emphasise their broad agreement concerning their 'battle-position (*Kampfstellung*) against naturalism and historicism'.[16] At the other end of his career, in his 'Vienna Lecture' of May 1935 Husserl claims that the very 'rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason' is required to overcome naturalism once and for all.[17] Husserl's answer to naturalism, then, is to take a resolute and consistent transcendental stance involving the application of a bracketing of existential commitments and a refocusing of awareness. As he writes in 1928: 'The transcendental problem arises from a general turning around of the natural focus of consciousness […]'.[18]

[15] E. Husserl, letter to Rickert, 20 December 1915, in *Briefwechsel*, K. Schuhmann (ed.) in collaboration with E. Schuhmann. *Husserliana Dokumente*, **10** Volumes (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), vol. 5, 178. See also Iso Kern, *Husserl und Kant. Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), 35.

[16] See Jonas Cohn's letter of 31 March 1911 to Husserl, in Husserl, 1994, vol. 5, 17. On Husserl's relationship with Cohn, see Reinald Klockenbusch, *Husserl und Cohn. Widerspruch, Reflexion und Telos in Phänomenologie und Dialektik*, Phaenomenologica 117 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989).

[17] *Crisis*, 299; Hua VI, 348.

[18] E. Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–31), The Encyclopaedia Britannica*

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In the *Crisis* Husserl characterises the transcendental attitude as follows:

> An attitude is arrived at which is *above* [*über*] the pregivenness of the validity of the world, *above* the infinite complex [*Ineinander*] whereby, in concealment, the world's validities are always founded on other validities, above the whole manifold but synthetically unified flow in which the world has and forever attains anew its content of meaning and its validity of being [*Sinngehalt und Seinsgeltung*]. In other words, we have an attitude *above* the universal conscious life (both individual subjective and intersubjective) through which the world is "there" for those naïvely absorbed [*für die naiv Dahinlebenden*] in ongoing life, as unquestionably present, as the universe of what is there (*als Universum der Vorhandenheiten*).[19]

In the *Crisis*, moreover, Husserl explicitly claims that transcendental idealism is the only philosophy to have successfully resisted the lure of naturalism.[20] This, of course, is simply restating a commitment that began at least as early as 1908[21] but which was first articulated in print – much to the disappointment of Husserl's realist followers—in the programmatic *Ideas* I (1913).[22] True phenomenology

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Article, The Amsterdam Lectures "Phenomenology and Anthropology" and Husserl's Marginal Note in Being and Time, and Kant on the Problem of Metaphysics, trans. T. Sheehan and R.E. Palmer; Husserl Collected Works VI (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 238; Hua IX 331. Hereafter '*Trans. Psych.*' followed by English pagination and Husserliana volume and page number.

[19] *Crisis*, 150; Hua VI, 153.

[20] *Crisis*, 337; Hua VI, 271.

[21] The full commitment of Husserl to transcendental idealism can be seen from the texts gathered in E. Husserl, *Transzendentaler Idealismus. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908–1921)*, Husserliana XXXVI, R. Rollinger and R. Sowa (eds.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003) and also in Husserl's Afterword to Boyce Gibson's translation of *Ideas* I, see E. Husserl, 'Nachwort zu meinen *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*', *Jahrbuch für Philosophic und phänomenologische Forschung* vol. **XI** (1930), 549–70; reprinted in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Drittes Buch: *Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, Husserliana V, M. Biemel (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1952), 138–62; trans. as 'Epilogue', in *Ideas II,* 405–30.

[22] E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Erstes Buch*: Allgemeine Einführung in die*

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must become a resolutely anti-naturalistic 'pure' or 'transcendental' – the terms are equivalent in *Ideas* I – science of subjectivity, focusing on the essential nature of epistemic achievements, expunged of all reference to 'worldly' or 'mundane' events.

The transcendental viewpoint is a way of bypassing the kinds of epistemic and metaphysical commitments that are embedded in the attitude of naïve natural experience. The transcendental phenomenologist no longer focuses on the fully formed products of conscious experience – the *objects* of knowledge – but on the constituting role of intentional subjectivity and intersubjectivity, seeking to identify the modes of appearing, the syntheses, associations, and intertwinings, that are at work in the constitution of the stable abiding world. In other words, transcendental inquiry focuses on how objectivity – and the objective world that we naïvely experience and take for real – comes about, how it is constituted, how it is 'meaning loaded' as it were. Indeed Husserl believes the solution to all perennial philosophical problems requires a transcendental non-natural inquiry into the *life of consciousness* (*Bewusstseinsleben*) – something empirical psychology, which hitherto had claimed that function, is utterly ill-equipped to do. As Husserl proclaims in a 1924 lecture to the Kant Society in Frankfurt:

> One thing is clear from the outset: there can be only *one method of really answering all such* questions and of obtaining a real understanding of the relationships between cognized being and cognizing consciousness. One must study the cognizing life itself in its own achievements of essence (and that, naturally, in the wider framework of the concretely full life of consciousness in general) and observe how consciousness in itself and according to its essential type constitutes and bears in itself objective sense and how it constitutes in itself "true" sense, in order then to find in itself the thus constituted sense as existing "in itself," as true being and truth "in itself".[23]

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reine Phänomenologie 1. Halbband: *Text der 1–3. Auflage*, Husserliana III/1, K. Schuhmann (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), trans. Fred Kersten, *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1983). Hereafter '*Ideas* I' followed by English page number of Husserliana volume and page number.

[23] E. Husserl, 'Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy', trans. T.E. Klein and W.E. Pohl. *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* **5** (1974), 9–56.

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Husserl's basic principle is transcendental idealist: priority must be given to the activities of intentional consciousness in the constitution of the world: '[…] nothing exists for me otherwise than by virtue of the *actual and potential performance of my own consciousness* [*Bewusstseinsleistung*]'.[24]

4. Husserl's Critique of Psychologism and Naturalism

What exactly did Husserl mean by naturalism? Initially, his target in the *Prolegomena to Pure Logic*, the first volume of his ground-breaking *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901)[25] was the psychologism prevalent in the logical theories of J.S. Mill, J.E. Erdmann and others. Here Husserl sided with Frege in sharply distinguishing between the psychological processes that engender thoughts and the ideal objective validities that the thoughts instantiate. Later, when he spoke of naturalism, he meant specifically the positivism of his contemporaries especially Auguste Comte and Ernst Mach, but he also traced the tendency back to the atomistic 'sensualism' of Hobbes and Locke, Berkeley, Hume and even a 'naturalised Kant'.[26] As we shall see, Husserl thought the Neo-Kantians in particular had been seduced into a naturalistic misinterpretation of their master's thought. Naturalism, for Husserl, is really an interconnected cluster of notions. In general, naturalism embraces the view that the methods of the natural sciences provide the only road to truth; as Husserl says: 'the naturalist […] sees nothing but nature and

[24] E. Husserl, *Formale und transzendentale Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft. Mit ergänzenden Texten*, Husserliana XVII, Paul Janssen (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), trans. Dorion Cairns, *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969). Hereafter 'FTL' followed by the English page and the Husserliana volume and page number. The citation here is FTL, 234; Hua XVII, 241.

[25] E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*. Erster Band: *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*. Text der 1. und der 2. Auflage. Hrsg. E. Holenstein, Husserliana XVIII (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975); *Logische Untersuchungen*. Zweiter Band: *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*. In zwei Bänden. Hrsg. Ursula Panzer, Volume XIX (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1984). The English translation is *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay, edited with a New Introduction by Dermot Moran and New Preface by Michael Dummett, 2 vols. (London & New York: Routledge, 2001).

[26] Curiously Husserl sees Hume as a transcendental thinker and even thinks the transcendental motif as kept alive in a strange way even in Mill, and especially in Avenarius (*Crisis*, 195; Hua VI 198).

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first and foremost physical nature'.[27] Naturalism, for Husserl, is the outlook that assumes that the physical sciences give an accurate account of the furniture of the world. He saw it also as including inherently a commitment to *physicalism* – the view that the natural sciences (and especially physics) give the best account of the furniture of the universe. Sometimes Husserl distinguishes between the natural attitude of all humans in their approach to the world – characterized as *Weltglaube* or 'belief in the world' – and the specifically 'naturalistic attitude' which is a product of a reification of the point of view of the natural sciences. Indeed, it is part of Husserl's diagnosis of the evolution of modern philosophy that the natural attitude, which predates philosophical inquiry and underpins all scientific inquiry, has been systematically transformed into the naturalistic attitude – whereby nature is construed according to the framework of the sciences. This subtle shift in the nature of the natural attitude in complex modern societies is responsible for the complete inability to understand the life of consciousness.

With regard to modern philosophy, Husserl sees naturalism as emerging from the empiricist commitment to the flow of conscious experience as being analyzable into atoms of sense-data ('sensualism'). The *Crisis* describes the progress of objectivism in modern philosophy until it foundered on the rocks of Hume's critique. Thereafter a new transcendentalism – initially opened up by Descartes but immediately obscured – emerged to challenge objectivism.[28] Concerning Hobbes, for instance, Husserl writes in the *Crisis* that Hobbes is a physicalistic naturalist: 'The naturalism of a Hobbes wants to be physicalism, and like all physicalism it follows the model of physical rationality. This is also true of the other sciences of the modern period'.[29]

Interestingly in a footnote Husserl distinguishes this kind of physicalism from the physicalist philosophies of the Vienna Circle Logical Positivists:

> When I use the term "physicalism," here and elsewhere, I use it exclusively in the general sense which is understood throughout the course of our own investigations, i.e., to stand for philosophical errors resulting from misinterpretations of the true meaning of modern physics. Thus the word does not refer here specifically

[27] PRS, 253; Hua XXV, 8.
[28] *Crisis* §14.
[29] *Crisis*, 62–63; Hua VI, 63–64.

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> to the "physicalistic movement" ("Vienna Circle," "logical empiricism").[30]

In a supplementary text to the *Crisis*, Husserl identifies naturalism with physicalism:

> Naturalism looks at man as filled-out extension and thus considers the world in general only as nature in a broader sense. The duration of a man's spirit is taken as an objective duration, and the soul is taken at every phase of the duration as being, though not actually spatially shaped in a way parallel to the shape of the body, nevertheless a coexistence of psychic data, a being simultaneously which can somehow be coordinated to simultaneity in the form of what coexists in spatial extension and what coexists spatially in general.[31]

A major problem here, as Husserl notes, is that the peculiar syntheses of our temporal consciousness are not taken into account in the objectivist understanding of temporality in nature. As Husserl often acknowledges, the British philosopher John Locke is, for him, the archetypal naturalist, but even the Irish immaterialist George Berkeley is accused of being trapped in a *tabula rasa* naturalism following Locke.[32] Husserl writes that Locke ignored the Cartesian discovery of intentionality (*cogito-cogitatum*) and misunderstood consciousness as a place where experiences are recorded: '[…] in naïve naturalism the soul is now taken to be like an isolated space, like a writing tablet, in his [Locke's] famous simile, on which psychic data come and go'.[33]

In Husserl's version of the history of modern philosophy, David Hume, on the other hand, both completes and at the same time, by his relocation of causation in mental habit and association, overcomes Berkeley's naturalism.[34] Hume's naturalism of consciousness resolves subjectivity into atoms of consciousness, into final material elements which are organised under material rules of co-existence and succession,[35] but at least he sheds light on the deep associative

[30] *Crisis*, 63; Hua VI, 63.
[31] *Crisis*, 315–16; Hua VI 294.
[32] E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*. Erster Teil: *Kritische Ideengeschichte*, Husserliana VII, R. Boehm (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965), 150.
[33] *Crisis*, 85; Hua VI, 85.
[34] Hua VII, 155.
[35] The German reads: '*So löst der Bewußtseinsnaturalismus die Subjektivität in ähnlicher Weise in Bewußtseinsatome auf, in letzte sachliche*

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links that stitch experience together into a coherent whole. Husserl writes about Hume in his 1924 *Kant Gesellschaft* lecture 'Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy':

> It might further be shown that the *Essay* [*sic*] of David Hume, by which Kant was "awakened from his dogmatic slumber," stands far behind the systematic *Treatise* – which Kant obviously did not know, or not from his own thorough study – and that in this brilliant work of Hume's youth a whole system of transcendental problematics is already outlined and thought through in a transcendental spirit – even though done in the negativistic form of a sensationalist skepticism that nullifies itself in its pervasive absurdity.[36]

In the *Crisis*, even Franz Brentano, the discoverer of intentionality and Husserl's own teacher, is criticised for his naturalist tendency:

> Unfortunately, in the most essential matters he remained bound to the prejudices of the naturalistic tradition [*in den Vorurteilen der naturalistischen Tradition*]; these prejudices have not yet been overcome if the data of the soul, rather than being understood as sensible (whether of outer or inner "sense"), are [simply] understood as data having the remarkable character of intentionality; in other words, if dualism, psychophysical causality, is still accepted as valid.[37]

In the *Crisis* Husserl also singles out the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt as buying into the new kind of 'monistic naturalism':

> We have a perfect example of the sort of epistemological-metaphysical interpretations which follow in the footsteps of science in the reflections of Wundt and his school, in the doctrine of the "two points of view" of the theoretical utilization of the one common experience through a twofold "abstraction." This doctrine appears to be on the way toward overcoming all traditional metaphysics and to lead to a self-understanding of psychology and natural science; but in fact it merely changes empirical dualistic naturalism into a monistic naturalism with two parallel faces – i.e., a variation of Spinozistic parallelism.[38]

Elemente, unter bloß sachlichen Gesetzen der Koexistenz und Sukzession' (Hua VII 158).

[36] Husserl, Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy', 17–18.

[37] *Crisis*, §68, 234; Hua VI, 236.

[38] *Crisis*, 232; Hua VI, 235.

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Already in *Ideas* I (1913), Husserl had come to identify naturalism with empiricism (as is clear from the analytical index compiled by his student Gerda Walther – naturalism 'see also empiricism').[39] In his Introduction to that work Husserl says that phenomenology must be conceived as an a priori science of essence and a defence of eidetic intuition 'in opposition to naturalism'.[40] He acknowledges the praiseworthy motives of 'empiricistic naturalism' as a 'radicalism of cognitive practice' in seeking to overcome the 'idols' (a reference to Francis Bacon's *Novum Organon*, where he identifies four idols: idols of the Tribe, idols of the Cave, idols of the Marketplace and idols of the Theatre) of tradition and superstition.[41] In particular, however, classic empiricism is deficient because it does not understand the nature of essences (here he is repeating his analysis as found in the Second Logical Investigation), and indeed in this regard empiricism is a form of nominalism. Empiricism recognises individuals and not universals and, by misunderstanding the nature of categorial intuition, has no ground for making the claim that 'all valid thinking is based on intuition'.[42] The fundamental theses of empiricism need more precise grounding. In *Ideas* III §8, Husserl refers to the 'naturalism predominating so greatly among psychologists, as among all natural scientists'.[43] Empiricism and naturalism must be given up if one is to understand the true nature of essence inspection or 'essence viewing' (*Wesensschau*).

Even Kant does not escape the diagnosis of naturalism. Husserl's assessment that the version of Kant being promulgated by the Neo-Kantians of his day was imbued with *naturalism* is most interesting given the resurgence of interest in a naturalized Kant in the work of John McDowell and other contemporary Kantians.[44] Interestingly, in Husserl's day, German debates about naturalism primarily revolved around the issue of whether the methods of natural science were sufficient for all systematic knowing or whether they needed to be supplemented by the separate methodologies of the cultural sciences or *Geisteswissenschaften* (Dilthey, Rickert, Windelband). Part of the power of Husserl's 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science' essay is that he is not satisfied merely to criticise

[39] Hua III/1, 395.
[40] *Ideas* I, xxii; Hua III/1, 8.
[41] *Ideas* I, 35; Hua III/1, 41.
[42] *Ideas* I, §20.
[43] *Ideas* III, 33; Hua V, 38, cf. 43; V, 50.
[44] See R.A. Maakreel and S. Luft (eds.), *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana U. P., 2010).

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naturalism in favour of embracing a cultural approach. In fact, he is equally vigorous in criticising what he sees as *historicism* (Dilthey – without naming him) as itself being caught up in the same snare as naturalism, and as also leading to sceptical relativism. Historicism tends also to lock the meaning of an event into the worldview that revealed it. It is thus a form of relativism.

5. Naturalism in the Sciences of Culture and the Phenomenological Concept of the Life-World

It would be useful to raise the issue of the methodology – and indeed the object – of the cultural sciences in relation to contemporary naturalism, although it cannot be discussed more fully here. In recent decades, evolutionary biology as well as applications of the neurosciences (e.g. 'neuro-economics') have been brought to bear on explanations in the study of culture,[45] but much of this work is speculative and indeed highly questionable in terms of the kind of explanatory model it tries to impose on what it understands as 'culture'. In other words, it understands culture in purely objectivist terms in terms of a limited number of concepts such as inherited 'traits', 'behaviour', tool-use, and so on, and does not grasp the notion of a living intersubjective world of signification and meaning-making. Husserlian phenomenology, on the other hand, recognises that human beings start from the already given and meaningful 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*) which is also the world of 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*) in which temporality is lived out according to its own peculiar pattern.[46]

In this life-world, there is no split between nature and culture. Husserl speaks of the 'intertwining' (*Verflechtung*) or interpenetration between nature (as the object of the sciences and natural experience) and spirit (as culture) in the life-world.[47] The life-world is always the intentional correlate or *counterpart* of human experiencing,

[45] See, *inter alia*, D. Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (London: Blackwell, 1996) and J. Barkow, L. Kosmides and J. Tooby (eds.), *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[46] See D. Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction*, Cambridge Introductions to Key Philosophical Texts Series (Cambridge & New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially 178–217.

[47] See E. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*, Husserliana IX, W. Biemel (ed.) (The Hague:

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acting and valuing, of life in the natural and personal attitudes. The life-world, then, has to be understood as including the overlapping sets of objects which surround us in life as perceptual objects, instruments and tools, food, clothing, shelter, art objects, religious objects, and so on. The life-world therefore encompasses both the world of what has traditionally been designated as 'nature', as it presents itself to us *in our everyday dealings* with it, including rocks, mountains, sky, plants, animals, planets, stars, and so on) as well as what is usually known as the world of 'culture', including ourselves, other persons, animals in their social behaviour, social institutions, artefacts, symbolic systems such as languages, religions – in others words, our overall natural and cultural environing world.

The life-world resists a complete description and analysis; it cannot be entirely delineated, because, as human subjects, we belong to the life-world and cannot take a stance (other than as an artifice of method) to step outside the life-world to which we essentially and necessarily belong. Furthermore, the life-world cannot be understood as a static context since it includes the idea of historical evolution and development; it somehow includes and shades off into the 'non real' horizon of past and future. The life-world is a world of cumulative tradition acquired through what Husserl calls *sedimentation* (*Sedimentierung*),[48] according to which certain earlier experiences become passively enfolded in our on-going experience, just as language retains earlier meanings in its etymologies. As Husserl says in an associated late text 'Origin of Geometry', 'cultural structures, appear on the scene in the form of tradition; they claim, so to speak, to be 'sedimentations' (*Sedimentierungen*) of a truth-meaning that can be made originally self-evident'.[49] Indeed, Husserl also characterises 'sedimentation' as 'traditionalisation'.[50] For every intentional act, there is a background of inactive presuppositions that are sedimented but still functioning implicitly.[51] Sedimentation is in fact a necessary feature of temporal, historical, and cultural life. The present contains traces of the past; our language, similarly,

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Nijhoff, 1968), trans. John Scanlon, *Phenomenological Psychology. Lectures, Summer Semester 1925* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), esp. §16.

[48] *Crisis*, 362; Hua VI, 372.

[49] *Crisis*, 367; Hua VI, 377.

[50] *Crisis*, 52; Hua VI, 52. Husserl usually employs the verb 'to sediment' (*sedimentieren*) or the verbal noun 'sedimentation' (*Sedimentierung*), see, e.g., *Crisis*, 149; Hua VI, 152; *Crisis*, 246; Hua VI, 249; *Crisis*, 362; Hua VI, 373.

[51] *Crisis* §40.

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necessarily preserves meanings[52] that can be accessed and taken over by us as speakers. This dynamic meaning making – rather like a snowball rolling downhill and gathering what it encounters into its own form – needs to be understood in its own terms.

6. The Misconstrual of Experience in Naturalistic Psychology

Much of the time, Husserl is less interested in naturalism in philosophy as whole, rather than in the pernicious effects of naturalism in psychology, which had assumed the role of the science of consciousness and subjectivity. Psychology, for Husserl, is the bastard science that has lost its way. In his *First Philosophy lectures (1923–24)* he writes:

> Without overcoming psychologism and objectivism (without positivism in a good sense) no philosophy of reason is possible at all, and that means equally no philosophy at all. But without the overcoming of sensualism, of consciousness-naturalism, it is not even possible at all to have psychology as a genuine objective science.[53]

Naturalistic psychology misunderstands or ignores the peculiarities of the temporal flow of conscious experiences, with its real and non-real ('ideal') parts – whether they be the ideal meanings or the non real parts of retentions, protentions and other 'horizonal' features of experience. Indeed, the very concept of the horizon of our experience – whether this means the non-disclosed empty significations involved in our perceptions or the temporal retentions and protentions that accompany and make sense of present experience – is something which naturalism cannot accommodate. Naturalism also reifies the ego. A full catalogue of the activities of consciousness, what Husserl calls the 'ABC of consciousness' cannot be carried out by a

[52] *Crisis*, 362; VI, 373.

[53] My translation, Hua VII, 125. The German reads: '*Ohne Überwindung des "Psychologismus" und des Objektivismus (<ohne> Positivismus in einem guten Sinn) überhaupt ist freilich keine Philosophie der Vernunft möglich – und das sagt ebensoviel wie eine Philosophie schlechthin. Aber ohne die Überwindung des Sensualismus, des Bewußtseins-Naturalismus, ist nicht einmal eine Psychologie als echte objektive Wissenschaft möglich. Eine Psychologie, die das Grundfeld aller psychologischen Erfahrungstatsachen, das des Bewußtseins, nur in naturalistischer Mißdeutung, also seinem ursprünglichen Wesen nach überhaupt nicht kennt, werden wir uns weigern müssen, als eigentliche Wissenschaft anzuerkennen*,' in Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*, 215.

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naturalistic psychology. It misconstrues the essential nature of psychical acts and operations.

> In psychology, the natural, naïve attitude has the result that human self-objectifications [*Selbstobjektivationen*] of transcendental intersubjectivity, which belong with essential necessity to the makeup of the constituted world pregiven to me and to us, inevitably have a horizon of transcendentally functioning intentionalities [*Horizont von transzendental fungierenden Intentionalitäten*] which are not accessible to reflection, not even psychological-scientific reflection.[54]

It is clear that psychology does not understand the horizonal and meaning-constituting features of consciousness with its syntheses, intertwinings, and so on. Husserl claims that his new *phenomenological psychology* offers an entirely new way of describing subjectivity in terms of its intentional acts, meaning-constitution, syntheses, and intentional implicated horizons, and essential structures in their living interconnections, an account on a completely different level to anything achievable by scientific psychology, trapped as it is in its naturalistic and sensualist paradigm. As he puts it in the *Crisis*, psychology and transcendental philosophy are 'allied with each other in a peculiar and inseparable way' due to the complex relations between the psychological, 'worldly' or 'mundane' ego and the transcendental ego.[55] For Husserl, psychology and transcendental philosophy share an interest in the nature of the ego, its self-consciousness, and its intentional consciousness directed not just at objects in the world but at others (in empathy), all considered within the constant backdrop of a universal world-horizon. It is equally important to note, as Husserl repeatedly stresses, that transcendental insights can be misconstrued (and indeed were misconstrued in the tradition stemming from Hume and Kant) as psychological insights in a naturalistic setting. While translation is possible, so also is misunderstanding, and to date, philosophy has not properly understood the transcendental domain.

7. Objectivism and the Recognition of Point-of-View

Husserl correctly sees that naturalism is really a kind of generalised objectivism which thinks of the world exclusively from the point of

[54] *Crisis*, 208; Hua VI, 212.
[55] *Crisis*, 205; Hua VI, 209.

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view of science, what is often called 'the view from above' or 'God's eye perspective'. In *Ideas* I he speaks of the reification' (*Verdinglichung*) of the world, and its 'philosophical absolutizing' (*Verabsolutierung*).[56] Husserl thinks that naturalism and objectivism are self-contradictory positions because they assume a standpoint that thinks it is not a standpoint, a point of view – what Thomas Nagel calls 'the view from nowhere'[57] which takes a very particular slant on experience and identifies only certain features, disregarding especially the contribution that comes from the point of view itself. One might consider the analogy with a map which represents the streets as seen from above. Naturalists assume that this kind of objectivist perspective can be supplemented – with ever increasing detail (e.g. Google's 'street-view') – such that it can be made comprehensively objective. Phenomenology, on the other hand, wants to point out that each perspective – including the 'street-view' – occupies a particular (and uninterrogated, often undisclosed) point of view which must be assessed and evaluated in its own terms. It is this attention to perspective that pushed post-Husserlian phenomenology in an hermeneutic direction.

For Husserl, objectivism takes a stance that does not know it is a stance. Consider the sentence that we often hear from scientists and public commentators: 'Let us look at it objectively'. How is it possible to say this? How is it possible for an embodied subject or group of subjects, embedded or 'thrown' into a time, place, history, embodiment, language and educational formation, to take a position (to look at something or consider it) that transcends one's own subjectivity and claims to be not just *an* objective but *the objective* way of seeing the experience? To be objective in this manner means to engage in a kind of cancellation of one's own subjectivity, to engage in self-transcendence or some kind of self-cancellation. In what sense is it possible for the subject to do this? Of course, modern scientific method claims to be a set of procedures that precisely uncouples the subject from the experience and allows for an objective view of the situation. A certain kind of transcendence of the particular subjective experience is an inalienable part of all experience, phenomenology itself recognises. Every experience can be reflected on, put in context, modified by memories and so on. In fact, the phenomenological approaches of Husserl and Heidegger like to emphasize a

[56] *Ideas* I, 129; Hua III/1, 107; see also Hua XXXIV, 258 where he accuses anthropologism of 'falsely absolutizing a positivistic world'.

[57] T. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

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particular kind of transcendence involved in the very act of intending, in the fundamental act that makes consciousness reach beyond itself, very well described in metaphorical terms by Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance. The idea that human consciousness has to negate or transcend itself in order to reach the 'in itself' is at the very core of Sartre's philosophy. But this self-transcendence is understood by phenomenology as precisely that which makes possible the transcendental stance. This is very puzzling and difficult to articulate. Husserl speaks of the 'splitting of the ego' (*Ich-Spaltung*). It clearly gives the notion of the transcendental quite a different sense to the one encountered in Kant for instance. Husserl – like Kant – defends the naïve ('empirical') realism of our everyday experience in the life-world while at the same time defending a transcendental idealism or anti-realism, according to which the spatial, temporal, causal and sensorial organisation of our experience is something that comes from the a priori structures of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

It is here that the notions of the phenomenological and transcendental reductions become operative, which takes Husserl far beyond Kant. Husserl recognised that it must be possible to reflect on experience in a way that the original structures that permeate straight-forward experience (and especially its 'world-belief') can be suspended. Husserl wants straightforward natural reflection to be recast methodologically as a transcendental reflection where the contribution of the participating subject is highlighted in the constitution of the experience. Husserl writes in the *Crisis*:

> The correlation between world (the world of which we always speak) and its subjective manners of givenness never evoked philosophical wonder (that is, prior to the first breakthrough of "transcendental phenomenology" in the *Logical Investigations*), in spite of the fact that it had made itself felt even in pre-Socratic philosophy and among the Sophists – though here only as a motive for skeptical argumentation. This correlation never aroused a philosophical interest of its own which could have made it the object of an appropriate scientific attitude.[58]

In other words, although the ancient sceptics in particular raised the question of the mode of being and mode of validity of the very experience of the world, this sceptical questioning was never harnessed to become the application of the phenomenological-transcendental *epochē* that allows the structural a priori of subjectivity in its contribution to world formation to come to light. Yet the realm of these a

[58] *Crisis*, 165; Hua VI, 168.

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priori correlations is immense – and potentially infinite. Already in his 1917 Inaugural Address to Freiburg University Husserl had spoken of this a priori correlation: 'To every object there correspond an ideally closed system of truths that are true of it and, on the other hand, an ideal system of possible cognitive processes by virtue of which the object and the truths about it would be given to any cognitive subject.'[59]

One of the distinctive features of the French philosopher Quintin Meillassoux's recent discussion of correlationism is that it removes the reference to idealism.[60] Husserl is undoubtedly a correlationist in Meillassoux's sense – indeed the arch-correlationist. There is no objectivity without subjectivity and no subjectivity without objectivity. However Husserl makes a further claim (hence his *idealism*) that consciousness is absolute and 'unsurpassable' (*Unhintergehbar*) which is not at all the case with objective being, which for him is always secondary to the life of temporal consciousness. While Husserl is a confirmed Platonic realist about the kinds of idealities required in all thinking – and especially in mathematical and scientific thinking – he is an *anti-realist* and a *transcendental idealist* about the manner in which these idealities come to be. Indeed, in his later works, the problem of 'being' (*Sein*), of 'reality' or 'actuality' (*Wirklichkeit*) for Husserl always resolves into the question of how we constitute or consider it – its 'being-sense' (*Seinssinn*). In this regard, Husserl's masterful insight which disarms much of previous philosophy is to claim that reality or being is precisely a particular sense that belongs to objects as they appear or are made manifest in *the natural attitude*. What is primary is not the real but precisely the view, the *attitude*, the mind-set, the approach, the manifestation, the givenness, not what is given in the givenness. Husserl refers to this taking of perspectives as 'positing takings' (*Stellungnahme*) and calls a point of view or perspective an *Einstellung* ('attitude' or 'mind-set'). Husserl's student Eugen Fink (1905–1975) points out that an attitude is more than a stance in life or even a world view. It is something that holds through all the attitudes; it is the 'default' position of human beings. The natural attitude is what makes us

[59] See E. Husserl, 'Pure Phenomenology: Its Method and Field of Investigation', trans. Robert Welsh Jordan, in *Husserl. Shorter Works*, P. McCormick and F. Elliston (eds.) (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 10–17.

[60] See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay On The Necessity Of Contingency*, trans. R. Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008).

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human; it is the specifically *human* attitude (and of course it intersects with the attitudes of animals). Fink writes:

> The natural attitude is the attitude that belongs essentially to human nature, that makes up human being itself, the installation of man [*das Eingestelltsein des Menschen*] as a being in the whole of the world, or [...] the attitude of mundanized subjectivity: the natural being of man in and to the world in all his modes.[61]

For Fink, this is best expressed by his term *Befangenheit*, a term that can mean shyness or prejudice or bias, but is best translated as 'captivation' by the world. In the natural attitude we are captivated by the world and the natural sciences explicate this world in formalised terms.

8. Ineliminable Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

Husserl was deeply influenced by the philosopher and psychologist Paul Natorp (1854–1924) who had insisted that consciousness was in essence non-objectifiable since it is the seat of manifestation, and can only be reified or objectified when it becomes the specific focus of knowledge.[62] While conceding that there is a peculiar and ineliminable subjective element to knowing, Husserl maintains that through careful phenomenological methodology we can uncover the structuring features of subjective consciousness (without objectifying the ego and its activities).

For the mature Husserl, objectivity is a peculiar achievement of subjectivity and indeed of subjects cooperating together in harmonious intersubjectivity. Husserl was one of the first to diagnose that 'science' is not just an objective process of the accumulation of knowledge that proceeds by itself along its own objective causal rules, but is driven by human interests, by finite, limited subjects. The peer reviewing process which is currently the foundation stone for scientific objectivity might be a good example to illustrate how a consensus style of objectivity is arrived at by the intertwining of the efforts of very subjective and partial participants. The peer-reviewing system drives scientific discovery as much as complex instrumentation,

[61] Eugen Fink, 'Vergegenwärtigung und Bild I', in E. Fink, *Studien zur Phänomenologie 1930–1939*, Herman Leo Van Breda (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966), 11, my translation.

[62] See, for instance, Paul Natorp, 'On the Subjective and Objective Grounding of Knowledge', trans. L Phillips and D. Kolb, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* **12** (1981), 245–266.

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formal statistical methods and laboratories. But the peer reviewing system is a system of subjectivities functioning together – and one can examine it critically from many different standpoints including ones that identify sociological factors, ideology, state interference, systems of domination, and so on.[63] Just as the objectivity of the sciences depends on subjective and intersubjective practices, Husserl's concept of objectivity is equally one of shared intersubjective consensus, agreement or disagreement (we can agree to disagree, append minority reports, and so on – there are procedures for negotiating lack of agreement). The transcendental approach to scientific knowledge recognises that researchers arrive at the truth more or less in the manner in which a scientific committee or a jury arrives at a final decision.

Husserl does recognise the peculiar openness to others even of our most supposedly private subjective experiences. Thus in his analysis of perception, it is a fundamental feature for Husserl that I perceive objects as perceivable by others. When I perceive a physical object through a particular profile or 'adumbration' (*Abschattung*), as when I see the table from my standpoint in the room, at the same time, I recognise through a special kind of accompanying intuition, that the object is something in principle perceivable by others in the same situation as myself. Furthermore, there are other sides or profiles of the object which others may in fact perceive directly but which I intend only in an empty manner. Husserl analyses this perceptual situation with great subtlety. There is an 'excess' (*Überschuss*) already built into perceptual experience. There is an inherent openness to others inbuilt in my experience that prevents my experience being entirely private.

In his *Thing and Space* lectures of 1907[64] Husserl gives his most detailed analysis of the essence of the perception of spatial objects. Here and elsewhere he points to an essential and 'a radical incompleteness' (*eine radicale Unvollständigkeit*) of perception.[65] We have the sense of a 'more' attaching to the object. Husserl speaks elsewhere of a

[63] See, for instance, H. Longino, *Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[64] E. Husserl, *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907*, Husserliana XVI, U. Claesges (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), trans. R. Rojcewicz; *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*, Husserl Collected Works VII (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997). Hereafter 'DR' with the English pagination followed by the Husserliana volume and page number.

[65] DR, 44; XVI, 51.

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plus ultra given in the empty horizon of our perception.[66] Husserl prefers to speak of it as an excess, an overflowing. There is an 'excess' which is a permanent structural feature of external perception. The perception of its essence always promises more than it actually supplies: 'External perception is a constant pretension to accomplish something that, by its very nature, it is not in a position to accomplish'.[67]

Husserl distinguishes between what is 'properly' or 'genuinely' (*eigentlich*) or narrowly given in perception and what is improperly co-intended. We see the front side of a house but we grasp it as an object possessing other sides. There can be no 'proper' intuition of an object from all sides. A material, spatial thing unveils itself in endless profiles. Husserl maintains that even an infinite all knowing God can perceive a physical thing only according to unfolding profiles because this belongs to the very essence of perception.[68] Similarly a material thing also reveals itself in perception in a series of temporal moments. Not even God can alter this eidetic truth.[69] There is then no God's eye perspective; there is no complete objective picture of reality which gives it all at once. Existence and the unfolding of experience are essentially and inescapably temporal and partial.

Furthermore, the nature of conscious experience is such that there are non-real or possible dimensions of meaning that can become actualised by the subject in ways that transform the nature of the experience. Consider a child playing with a banana and pretending it is a telephone. Is the child a complete fantasist who thinks the banana really is a telephone? If the child is asked 'who is talking on the phone?' she may answer that she is talking to her doll or whatever. She will continue the game. But if she asked to eat the banana she may very well respond by eating it. If she is asked to eat the telephone she may hesitate. There is a dual perception involved even in many of our simplest experiences. Psychologists struggle to identify these more precisely and there is much disagreement about whether children can detach themselves from their own attitudes to look at

[66] E. Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918–1926)*, Husserliana XI, M. Fleischer (ed.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), 11; trans. A.J. Steinbock as *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, Husserl Collected Works Volume IX (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 48. Hereafter 'APS' with the English pagination followed by the Husserliana volume and page number.

[67] APS, 38; Hua XI, 3.

[68] *Ideas* I, 362; Hua III/1, 315.

[69] DR, 55; Hua XVI, 65.

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them askew as it were. But it is clear that experience involves the occupation of many different stances – many of which are also intertwined.

9. The Phenomenon of Worldhood and the Personalistic Attitude

A large puzzle for Husserl is how we have a *sense of world* at all. Thus in the *Crisis* he asserts:

> I am continually conscious of individual things in the world, as things that interest me, move me, disturb me, etc., but in doing this I always have consciousness of the world itself, as that in which I myself am, although it is not there as is a thing, does not affect me as things do, is not, in a sense similar to things, an object of my dealings. If I were not conscious of the world as world, without its being capable of becoming objective in the manner of an [individual] object, how could I survey the world reflectively and put knowledge of the world into play, thus lifting myself above the simple, straightforwardly directed life that always has to do with things? How is it that I, and each of us, constantly have world-consciousness [*Weltbewusstsein*]?[70]

How self-consciousness and world-consciousness are possible are themselves *transcendental* questions.

One of the main features of Husserl's transcendental and anti-naturalist approach is that he emphasises the primacy of what he terms in *Ideas* II the *personalistic attitude*. First and foremost, the naïve natural attitude of everyday living in the world is actually a personal or interpersonal attitude. The world we experience is a human social and cultural world. The personalistic attitude is defined by Husserl as follows: '[…] the attitude we are always in when we live with one another, talk to one another, shake hands with another in greeting, or are related to another in love and aversion, in disposition and action, in discourse and discussion'.[71]

The world we experience in this personalistic attitude is absolutely *not* to be identified with the world of physics (construed in terms of energy, mass, etc.) or the world as construed by naturalism (human beings understood as biological systems in organic contact with a biosphere). It is a life-world of common-or-garden use objects. For

[70] *Crisis*, 251; Hua VI, 254–55.
[71] *Ideas* II, 192; Hua IV, 183.

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instance, gardeners divide plants into weeds and flowers; these are not botanical classifications but classifications that arise in gardening practice. Husserl writes:

> The bodies familiar to us in the life-world are actual bodies, but not bodies in the sense of physics. The same is true of causality and of spatiotemporal infinity. These categorial features of the life-world have the same names but are not concerned, so to speak, with the theoretical idealizations and the hypothetical substructions of the geometrician and the physicist.[72]

In this sense, Husserl is deeply opposed to the kind of naturalising programme that was proposed by the Vienna Circle manifesto which promoted a 'scientific conception of the world'.[73] According to the *Manifesto*: 'The scientific world conception is characterized not so much by theses of its own, but rather by its basic attitude, its points of view and direction of research. The goal ahead is unified science'.

It is interesting to note that the Vienna Circle positivists see the scientific conception as a specific *attitude*, correcting and replacing the naïve attitude of experience, namely, precisely what Husserl would have termed the 'natural attitude'. The proposed methodology of the Vienna Circle – logical analysis – was in part inspired by the logical atomism of Bertrand Russell. Indeed, Russell is quoted in the *Manifesto* as proposing the steady replacement of life-world 'generalities' with more precise verifiable statements:'It [Logical atomism] represents, I believe, the same kind of advance as was introduced into physics by Galileo: the substitution of piecemeal, detailed and verifiable results for large untested generalities recommended only by a certain appeal to imagination.'[74]

Contemporary versions of this programme of substitution can be found, for instance, in the eliminative materialism of the Churchlands.[75] But it is precisely this programme of attempting to remove the life-world and replace it with an entirely scientific

[72] *Crisis* 139–40; Hua VI, 142–43.

[73] See *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung. Der Wiener Kreis* (1929); translated as 'The Scientific Conception of the World. The Vienna Circle', in S. Sarkar (ed.), *The Emergence of Logical Empiricism: from 1900 to the Vienna Circle* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1996), 321–40.

[74] 'The Scientific Conception of the World. The Vienna Circle', quoting B. Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1914, reprinted 1922), 14.

[75] See, for instance P.S. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

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superstructure that is challenged by phenomenology. For Husserl, the rich domain of lived cultural experience will never be understood if it is seen as merely constructed on top of a pre-existing natural order which is regarded as prior and even as more real. Husserl writes: 'A univocal determination of spirit through merely natural dependencies is unthinkable, i.e. as reduction to something like physical nature [...] Subjects cannot be dissolved into nature, for in that case what gives nature its sense would be missing.'[76]

Rather it is the case that what we consider as real depends on our own intentions and interests: 'All real mundane objectivity is constituted accomplishment in this sense, including that of men and animals and thus also that of 'souls''.[77] And similarly Husserl writes in the *Cartesian Meditations*: 'Every sort of existent itself, real or ideal, becomes understandable as a "product" of transcendental subjectivity, a product constituted in just that performance'.[78] It is the function of transcendental philosophy to display 'the essential rootedness of any objective world in transcendental subjectivity'.[79]

Husserl's transcendental idealism is not, however, a solipsistic idealism. The experience of the ego is at the same time the experience of other egos. For Husserl, it is impossible to conceive of an ego except as belonging to a community of other egos or what he calls, borrowing from Leibniz 'monads'. To conceive of two communities of monads separated from one another is a priori impossible because I as ego am jointly conceiving both.[80] A community of monads, then, is possible only as a unity and hence the objective world which is constituted by the community of monads can only be one world.

For Husserl, it is a major problem for transcendental phenomenology to analyse how the objective world is constituted out of the intersubjective community of monads. Husserl speaks of monads 'implicating' or 'implying' each other. His overall answer seems to depend on the notions of position-taking, modifying a position, and implication. Transcendental life can only be expressed in terms of personal and interpersonal life, which is, in Husserl's terms, a life of 'implication' (something like the 'space of reasons' expanded to include the 'space of motivations' and the 'space of associations'), reciprocity' and 'analogization'. In other words, the entire experience of the world, including the experience of the natural world (wherein

[76] *Ideas* II, 311; Hua IV, 297.
[77] *Crisis*, 204; VI, 208.
[78] CM, 85; Hua I, 118.
[79] CM, 137; Hua I, 164.
[80] CM §60.

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naturalism is focused), is something which is constituted by the harmonious intersection of subjectivities.[81] Phenomenology's emphasis on this transcendental intersubjectivity challenges the naturalist programme in the most fundamental of ways. In his writings on empathy as collected in the *Intersubjectivity* volumes, naturalism in psychology is criticised for its commitment to psychic individualism which misunderstands completely what German idealism called *Gemeingeist* or social spirit – collective unities that Husserl also calls 'personalities of a higher order' (*Personalitäten höherer Ordnung*), e.g. social institutions that can act in the manner of persons.[82] As he puts it: 'Living is always living as human beings in the horizon of co-humanity' (*Leben ist immerzu Leben als Menschen mit dem Horizont der Mitmenschlichkeit*).[83]

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can acknowledge that Husserl recognizes a certain truth in naturalism – human beings are physical, corporeal objects in a physical corporeal world. Through their bodies, humans interact causally with that world and are subject to the same forces (e.g. gravity) as other physical objects. Human beings also have minds or psyches which also are – through embodiment—real parts of the world. But the world has 'being and sense' not because of these worldly dwelling but precisely because of the achievements of the transcendental ego and indeed the open-ended plurality of transcendental egos acting in consort. It is the central problem of

[81] It has to be recognised that a number of naturalist philosophers, e.g. John R. Searle, have attempted an account of social constitution that remains within the naturalist perspective. Searle, for instance, defends the existence of a mind-independent world and argues that 'it simply does not follow from the fact that all cognition is within a cognitive system that no cognition is ever directly of a reality that exists independently of all cognition', J. Searle *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Allen Lane, 1995), 175. But it is precisely the claim of phenomenology that the 'mind-independent world' is an achievement of transcendental constitution.

[82] E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil. 1921–1928*, Husserliana XIV, Iso Kern (ed.) (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), 90.

[83] Hua XXXIX 320, my translation. See E. Husserl, *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916–1937)*, Husserliana XXXIX, R. Sowa (ed.) (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), see especially 404.

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transcendental phenomenology how human beings can both be *in* the world and also *for* the world.

For Husserl, the transcendental conditions which make life possible (as common life within a shared world) can only be uncovered by a deliberate change of direction or orientation on intention, one that itself belongs to the nature of transcendental life. As he writes in the first draft (Draft A) of his *Encyclopedia Britannica* article on 'Phenomenology':

> The transcendental reduction opens up, in fact, a completely new kind of experience that can be systematically pursued: transcendental experience. Through the transcendental reduction, *absolute* subjectivity, which functions everywhere in hiddenness [*in Verborgenheit fungierende absolute Subjektivität*], is brought to light along with its whole transcendental life [*mit all ihrem transzendentalen Leben*] […].[84]

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[84] *Trans. Phen.*, 98; Hua IX, 250.

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