

INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN THE WORKS OF HUSSERL

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## FOREWORD

Husserl's Phenomenology is probably best understood by a consideration of his treatment of Intersubjectivity, because there, one is most likely to challenge and hence clarify his own understanding of Phenomenology. Many Phenomenologists have failed to stay with Husserl in his treatment of Intersubjectivity because in my opinion they have never understood the point of his method.

Phenomenology is perhaps the most misunderstood of all philosophies. The worst form of misunderstanding is the misunderstanding of the one who thinks he understands. Husserl himself complained of this type of misunderstanding when he wrote:

"All the critiques with which I have become acquainted miss the basic meaning of my phenomenology to such an extent that it is not in the least affected by them, despite their direct quotation of my own words." 1

It is only when one has understood the phenomenological standpoint, as against the standpoint of the "natural attitude", and realizes that the phenomenological standpoint is unique, that he is in a position to approach the phenomenological treatment of any subject. Once the phenomenological standpoint has been appreciated, it is important to stay with it. The present thesis is an effort to see the topic of "Intersubjectivity" from the phenomenological standpoint,

and to adhere rigorously to the phenomenological standpoint and its consequences. The phenomenological standpoint then will be the key to understanding Husserl and the criterion for assessing what others have said about him.

Footnote

- 1 See Preface by Edmund Husserl, to Eugen Fink's article "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism" in The Phenomenology of Husserl p. 73.

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## PREFACE

My interest in Phenomenology springs from a practical need. As a Catholic priest I have to communicate with the world. Whenever one communicates a message of any kind, hidden in his words is a philosophy. One must realize this in order to distinguish between the message, the language in which it is clothed and the philosophical categories in which it is expressed. In order to communicate with people of the twentieth century, one must use the language of the twentieth century and speak in the philosophy of the twentieth century. Phenomenology is one of the outstanding trends in philosophy at the present day. I have chosen to write on "Intersubjectivity" because it is a difficult topic for Phenomenology and I feel that by the time I have fathomed its implications I will appreciate Phenomenology all the better.

I am grateful to McMaster University, to the School of Graduate Studies and particularly to the Department of Philosophy and its Chairman Dr. John Thomas, for making this study possible. I am also grateful for the use of the Mills Memorial Library as well as the services of its Inter-Library Loan Department. Above all I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Dr. G. R. Madison who supervised my work and who has helped me most in the formation of the ideas expressed in the following pages, and also to Dr. N. L. Wilson for his many helpful suggestions.

Michael J. Brosnan

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## Introduction

In this thesis it will be my concern to understand and appreciate more profoundly, Husserl's Phenomenology, and to expound its application to the rather difficult question of Intersubjectivity. I will be concerned primarily, with the texts of Husserl available to me, and to see how his approach to Intersubjectivity is consistent with his treatment of <sup>the</sup> earlier stages of his Phenomenology. Other authors will be considered in so far as they throw light on Husserl's treatment of Intersubjectivity. They will therefore be chosen from among the followers of the Phenomenological tradition.

I might say, at this stage, that I back Husserl, all the way, and that I consider adverse criticism of him, as arising from misunderstanding of his objective and his method.

The thesis falls into two parts. Part I is an exposition of Husserl's thought, culminating in an exposition of his thinking on Intersubjectivity, in Chapter IV. The first three chapters of Part I, I consider as a lead up to, as well as a necessary background for an understanding of Chapter IV. In Part II, I hope to clarify my understanding of Husserl's thought, by considering principally some adverse criticisms in Chapter I, his most notable opponent, Alfred Schutz in Chapter II, and his most notable supporter,

Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Chapter III.

## PART I

### INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN THE WORKS OF HUSSERL

Intersubjectivity takes Phenomenology to its limit, since in unfolding my own consciousness, I discover a consciousness which is not my own, and if I proceed to consider the contents of this other consciousness, surely I must then wonder whether I am still within the confines of my own consciousness or whether I have gone outside of it. Phenomenology, as an unfolding of consciousness, should ultimately reveal to me everything that I know; and I can know nothing apart from consciousness. Some philosophers have busied themselves with how such and such an item has got into my consciousness. Husserl is concerned with unfolding what is there. Some concern themselves with whether we can know other minds. Husserl takes the line of unfolding, exploring, expounding what he finds in consciousness including other minds. Thus the problem, whether we can know other minds or how we can know other minds, is not Husserl's problem. That is not the form of solipsism which worries him. He simply foresees that others not yet versed in his method might consider as solipsist, the person who explores his own consciousness, as the foundation of all that he knows. To consider a person solipsist because he concerns himself with exploring his own consciousness, is to treat consciousness

as the type of thing which it is not. Consciousness is not something physical like a room, the exploration of which leaves us confined in the room and never leads us out of it. The analogy of exploration falls short if we think of consciousness merely in physical terms. Consciousness is something altogether different. It is more a question of interrogation rather than exploration, of asking consciousness honestly what it tells us and of taking its answers seriously. This is the core of the phenomenological method.

And what does consciousness tell us? It tells us about a world; in other words it is "intentional". It also tells us the world we live in is not merely a physical world, it is a "life-world," *Lebenswelt*. We can never get away from the social aspect of our surroundings. This is the answer to Husserl's problem of solipsism. Consciousness tells me about others and that is final - just as "intentionality" is his final answer to the problem of idealism.

You might be tempted to ask: does consciousness tell me the truth, and can I believe it? This is a futile question to which there is no answer. Consciousness is the final court of appeal. There is nothing more fundamental in terms of which I can check consciousness. It is the ultimate test. You may of course ask: does consciousness really tell me such and such? We can be deceived and we are frequently deceived. Phenomenology takes a closer look to make sure. A more prolonged interrogation of consciousness will be necessary to

check and fill in the details. That is what the Phenomenological Movement is about, which would be quite a lengthy study. Meanwhile I will go back to the works of Edmund Husserl, and take an overall glance at his life and works, giving a very brief survey of developments in his Phenomenology and pin-pointing what for me are the highlights. This will occupy Chapter I. In Chapter II I will give a brief outline of Husserl's Phenomenology. In Chapter III I will treat of Intersubjectivity, following his works in chronological order. In Chapter IV I will discuss the topic in a more organized way.

## CHAPTER I

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF EDMUND HUSSERL

It is interesting to follow the development of Husserl's ideas through his life and works, not only because he was a mathematician whose interests gradually veered towards philosophy, but because he claims to be a revolutionary in philosophy itself. We expect a revolutionary to stand for something definite. A revolutionary continually in revolt is the personification of futility and frustration. One major revolution is about as much as the normal human being can be expected to bring about in his way of thinking in a life-time. While a man may go on changing his mind right through his life and claim this as some sort of privilege, we expect a man of ability and character to stabilize his thinking as time goes on and not to be tossed around by every wind of opinion that blows his way nor to be upset by every problem that crops up. Problems repeat themselves, and after some time nothing is new and we tend to stabilize our thinking.

If we ask, at what point Husserl's Phenomenology has definitely taken shape, we will without doubt refer to the little work, The Idea of Phenomenology , containing the five lectures he delivered at Gottingen between April 26 and

May 2 inclusive in the year 1907. He tells us himself<sup>1</sup> that he had given the chief points for a solution to the problem of Intersubjectivity and for overcoming transcendental solipsism in his lectures at Gottingen during the winter semester of 1910 - 1911. These lectures, however, are not available to me. The period 1906 - 1911 is therefore obviously a key period in the life of Husserl the Phenomenologist.

Born on the 18th of April 1859 in Prossnitz, a village of Czechoslovakian Moravia his first academic interests were Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy. He studied in Leipzig, Berlin and Vienna, receiving his Ph.D. in 1883 at the University of Vienna. He wrote his doctoral thesis on an aspect of modern differential calculus.

From 1884 on, he took an interest in Psychology, Logic and Philosophy, and in 1900 his "Logical Investigations" rejected any form of "psychologism" in the realms of Logic and Mathematics. In 1900 he joined the Philosophy Faculty at the University of Gottingen, where his Phenomenology took shape, where the lectures already referred to were given and where he reached what I have already termed a "key period" in his thinking.

In 1913 Ideas I appeared and from then until 1928, when his Formal and Transcendental Logic was published, I would term the maturing period of his thinking, the work Formal and Transcendental Logic itself enjoying the

advantage of coming at the end of this period.

Husserl was forever amending his texts. He was a perfectionist, and this accounts for the fact that a major work like Ideas II was not published in his lifetime. It dates roughly from the time of Ideas I, deals with the topic of Intersubjectivity, but was not available to me at the time of writing. However, prolific writer that he was, the gap is easily filled from other sources. Paul Ricoeur and Alfred Schutz also have chapters on it.

The years of his retirement 1929 - 1938 I consider a most fruitful period. From it come, The Paris Lectures 1929, Cartesian Meditations 1931 and The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, published in 1954 after his death. It is the period when his philosophy flowered, when he writes with a confidence that comes from a maturity and conviction backed up by a long life of reflection.

At this stage I would like to make a very important suggestion to my reader. Do not lightly judge the mature vision of a man who through his life, has consistently pursued an idea, a revolutionary idea in philosophy, an idea which forms the basis of an all-encompassing view of the world and of life. Do not judge him from the point of view of another philosophy, until you have first understood exactly the stand he has taken, the point of view from which he writes. His philosophy shows such a consistent development, is the fruit of a lifetime of thought, embodies an original

approach, and deserves to be seen from the personal point of view of its author. Take pains to see that point of view exactly. Realize the approach is novel, an approach from which a whole movement takes its origin, namely the Phenomenological Movement; and try to suspend for the moment your personal philosophical preferences.

To sum up this chapter: Husserl started his academic life as a mathematician and scientist. He received his Ph.D. in Mathematics in 1883. From 1884 he took an interest in philosophy. From 1900 he worked at his idea of Phenomenology. The period 1906 - 1911 saw the achievement of his pure Phenomenology which went on maturing until 1928 and flowered in the period of his retirement until his death in 1938.

The works of Husserl with which I will be chiefly concerned are as follows:

The Idea of Phenomenology , 1907.

Ideas I , 1913.

Formal and Transcendental Logic , 1928.

The Paris Lectures , 1929.

Cartesian Meditations , 1931.

The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology , published 1954.

#### Footnote

- 1 Formal and Transcendental Logic , p. 243, footnote.

## CHAPTER II

### A BRIEF OUTLINE OF HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

Volumes could be written on Husserl's Phenomenology and it would be very easy to become controversial in doing so. The following brief account of Husserl's Phenomenology in general is meant as essential background for an understanding of his treatment of the topic of "Intersubjectivity" in particular. Now the standpoint he adopts is a new one in the history of philosophy and it colours his approach to everything which comes later, and hence must be taken into account in our interpretation of his writings. The standpoint is revolutionary. Still he has to use the philosophical terms available to him and we must realize all the time that the point of view colours the meaning of the words used.

It will therefore be my policy to treat all objections from the phenomenological point of view. Objections from another point of view will be treated as misunderstandings. To answer them directly would be merely to argue at cross purposes. The only answer to such objections is to point out that they miss the point of view and therefore are not serious objections and to urge that an effort be made to understand Husserl before criticizing him. The complaint of Husserl on this point, already quoted, is well known and very

much to the point.<sup>1</sup>

Philosophy had run into insoluble difficulties and that is why a new approach was needed. To take but a few examples: Descartes in his efforts to find a solid foundation for philosophy, because of his preconceived ideas found himself as far away from his ideal as ever. Body and mind for him were two different kinds of substance, and he had insurmountable difficulty explaining how they were joined together. He had to posit innate ideas to explain knowledge and his whole system depended on the existence of a god for which he had anything but satisfactory proof. Leibniz had to posit a system of monads which had no contact one with the other and proposed "a pre-established harmony" to explain what appeared to be communication between them. Locke distinguished between knowable accidents and an unknowable substance which he called "I-know-not-what". Hume dropped the latter idea as logically untenable, and Kant brought it back as the "noumenon", an unknowable thing in itself.

#### The Phenomenological Point of View

Husserl was dissatisfied with theories, no matter how reasonable they might appear and the world of philosophy was full of them. There were theories about elements, theories about union of body and soul, theories of knowledge etc. None of them appealed to Husserl. They all posited something outside of what we know to explain what we know.

Husserl wanted to keep to what we know, a principle expressed in his motto: "back to the things themselves".

Husserl also realized that in our daily lives we make a lot of suppositions, we fill in gaps, we build up our knowledge, read past experience into the present, we are so influenced by our cultural milieu etc. etc. We live our lives from the "natural standpoint" which has as much theory in it as science or philosophy. It is the purpose of Phenomenology to clarify what it is exactly we experience, and distinguish it from what we impose on experience or what is imposed on us by culture.

Human knowledge is full of confusion and uncertainty; it is so changeable. Phenomenology seeks a firm foundation for philosophy. There are so many theories, so many assumptions, so much deduction; Phenomenology is looking for what is evident and underived. Mind you theory, assumption and deduction all have their place in life, and will continue to have their place in life; Phenomenology will examine each one of them in turn "as facts of our environment"<sup>2</sup> in order to get to the foundations of knowledge which are intuitively given in consciousness. Prior to this investigation, we live in what Husserl calls the world of the "natural standpoint". With my attention focussed on the objects around me, "I find continually present and standing over against me the one spatio-temporal fact-world to which I myself belong".<sup>3</sup> Also ""The" world is as a fact-world always there" and "To know it more comprehensively, more trustworthily, more perfectly

than the naive lore of experience is able to do, and to solve all the problems of scientific knowledge which offer themselves upon its ground, that is the goal of the sciences of the natural standpoint".<sup>4</sup> Viewing the world then from the "natural standpoint" means paying attention to the world and to objects in themselves, thus investing them with a certain absolute character.

From the Phenomenological standpoint, on the other hand, consciousness is treated as the absolute. Phenomenology is a critique of cognition, not of the world. Our link with the world as knowing subjects is through cognition and apart from cognition or consciousness, the world means nothing to us. It is not presuming too much to say that the same object appears differently to different people. One is enthusiastic for instance about a beautiful flower which leaves another cold. The natural unit then for the phenomenologist is not the object, but the object and the subject in the act of cognition, or consciousness. In the words of Morujão:

"o termo da consciência intencional é o noema que, embora objectivo, não se dá sem a noese, formando com esta uma unidade".<sup>5</sup>

which could be freely translated: "the term of consciousness is the object, which though objective is never given apart from the act of consciousness, forming with it a certain unity". He had already defined consciousness as "that part of life which experiences the world" ("o de vida-que-experimenta-o-mundo"). They are correlative then, consciousness and the world and to separate them is to create an

abstract or unreal situation.

I look around me and I see houses and trees, clouds, people, moving objects, living objects and so on. I have learned a lot in the past which helps me interpret and understand the present. My consciousness is not of isolated objects. Although I may focus my attention on this or that I am there in the midst of a whirl of activity, with a past and a future, my certainties and my mistakes. I live my life more or less successfully without formal philosophical reflection. But always as a human being I am conscious, and it is my consciousness which directs me through life, and by means of which I appreciate and enjoy life. In short consciousness is the most valuable possession I have. It is in the exercise of consciousness that I live. It is only when questions arise regarding such things as the reliability of my knowledge, because of error or uncertainty that it occurs to me to examine the reliability of consciousness itself. This questioning of consciousness is different from anything that has gone before. Consciousness normally concerns itself with other things. It now turns back on itself - a slightly abnormal activity, but still consciousness is capable of it.

Phenomenology is concerned with consciousness. It is consciousness thinking about itself. Therefore any questions about houses and trees, clouds and people etc. are not questions for phenomenology except in so far as these things appear in consciousness. The next step is to purify this consciousness

of all vagueness and confusion, putting it to the rigorous test of phenomenology, eliminating what does not stand up to the test and focussing attention on what does. This is done by means of the various "reductions". But what exactly is the test? There is one test and one test only. We are examining consciousness by means of consciousness. Consciousness looks reflectively at itself consciousness alone is the test. Anything else is but a method or an aid to consciousness, to see itself more clearly. We don't want to eliminate all vagueness, we want to see consciousness for what it is. The epoche or the various reductions do not change consciousness, they merely help us to see it for what it is.

Consciousness is the basic fact. I have no way of knowing anything outside of consciousness. As soon as I become aware of anything, it is in my consciousness. You might say that you will know things to-morrow that you do not know to-day. That is either a practical assumption of the "natural attitude" or it is already in my consciousness in some way. Consciousness is the basic fact of life. It has horizons which are constantly receding but I can never know anything beyond the horizons. It could be put like this: consciousness is knowledge, and I can never know anything beyond or outside of my knowledge. Consciousness is the absolute. I am presented with the global fact of consciousness not with an object and certainly not with a mind.

Now it is this view of consciousness as absolute

that distinguishes Phenomenology as a philosophy. While many philosophies treat minds and objects as separate facts, Phenomenology finds them together and treats the fact of consciousness as the basic fact. Some consequences follow:

a) If consciousness is absolute, then it must be listened to. We can question consciousness about what it says, but consciousness itself remains the one and only criterion available.

b) Phenomenology continues to use old words, because it has to address people in the language they know. But these words are always used in the phenomenological context and must be understood in a phenomenological way. For example, it uses the word "subject" and it uses the word "object" but they must always be understood in the context of and relative to consciousness, the word "object" always meaning the object found in consciousness and the word "subject" always meaning the subject of consciousness, the correlate of the object within the more basic fact of consciousness. Phenomenology uses the words "here" and "there" but these words do not mean anything in themselves as they do in the "natural attitude" of daily life. They have a meaning only within the context of consciousness. Phenomenology uses the word "intersubjectivity". There is a temptation to think it refers to a relationship between two subjects taken absolutely; but no, everything consciousness says has always to be referred back to the basic fact of consciousness, the absolute.

That is what Husserl means by saying that objects are constituted in consciousness. It does not mean that they are created in consciousness or produced some way or other in consciousness. What it does mean is, (to paraphrase the words of Morajão) that it is only through the activity of consciousness that the sense of existence of transcendent being can possibly be announced to me.<sup>6</sup> What concerns Phenomenology is the answer to the question: "What does consciousness say?" The answer to that question points to an object,<sup>to</sup> a noema. That is what is meant by saying consciousness is "intentional" but it is an intentionality within consciousness because we can never go outside of consciousness.

#### Consciousness is "Intentional"

All consciousness is "intentional". That means that consciousness has an object as well as a subject. Consciousness is always of something. The type of object of course varies enormously. We can be conscious of real things; we can be conscious of imaginary things; we can be conscious of material things; we can be conscious of states of mind etc. Consciousness can always be analysed into what Husserl calls a noesis or knowing act, and a noema or object of knowledge. In daily life my attention is normally on the object of consciousness, and in daily life I deal with these objects, live among them, manipulate them, am affected by them. In daily life I am a realist and wouldn't want to be otherwise.

I am concerned with the world and forget that it is the correlate of consciousness. I drive through the traffic, stop at the red light, swerve suddenly to avoid the dangerous driver, and if I fail to get out of his way I am left in no doubt about the impact one car can make on another. I meet people, or visit an art gallery or a zoo. I become so absorbed in things, they are reality for me. If I am an outgoing person I will forget about myself completely, for long periods at a time. That is how to live. But sometimes I stop to think. Sometimes I have doubts. Sometimes I make mistakes. Sometimes in a thoughtful mood I question things, question myself, question my way back to absolute consciousness. And in that consciousness I find all the things I have mentioned, as the correlate of consciousness. I find them there as a whole, constituted in consciousness, while sometimes this object, sometimes that grips my attention, just as passing through a field, I am aware of the field as a whole but from time to time I become absorbed now in this flower, now in this tree etc. At the phenomenological level, I realize that everything I know, I know through consciousness, that consciousness is absolute. This is the philosophic or thoughtful state of mind which I push into the background at other times in order to live.

Now Phenomenology is not concerned with practical living as such. It is concerned more with the ultimate questions and the ultimate answers to be found in consciousness.

Does any other philosophy treat consciousness in precisely this way? What is the merit of Phenomenology? What exactly is the revolution of Phenomenology we hear so much about? In what way does it differ from all other philosophies?

Every other philosophy is based on some theory or other, on speculation. Phenomenology is not. We are immediately present to consciousness. Therefore there is no need for theories about it. All we have to do is observe. All sorts of complications can arise within consciousness, but the basic facts themselves of consciousness are ultimate, and require neither theory or explanation. It is the absolute in which everything appears, the criterion against which everything can be checked, it alone cannot be called in question. There is a place for theories in advancing our knowledge, but that is on a different level, and if they cannot be checked by consciousness, then they remain on the level of speculation. They belong to "natural thinking". As Husserl put it:

"Natural thinking in science and everyday life is untroubled by the difficulties concerning the possibility of cognition" 7

Phenomenology is concerned with a critique of cognition. But

"when we think naturally about cognition and fit it and its achievements into the natural ways of thinking which pertain to the sciences we arrive at theories that are appealing at first. But they end in contradiction and absurdity." 8

In other words, cognition cannot be examined in the same way as the objects of natural science. It can only be

examined by reflection on cognition itself, that is on consciousness, by exploring the field of consciousness.

### The "Eidetic Reduction"

A certain amount of direction and organization is necessary in order to explore the field of consciousness. Attention has to be focussed if we are to get anywhere. Merely to describe the singular thoughts and feelings passing through the mind by introspection could hardly be described as a science. We are interested more in general essences than in mere facts. Neither are we satisfied with empirical generalizations attributable to mere psychological mechanisms. What we are after is the "invariant" element in our experience. It involves the use of memory phantasy etc., but the final result stands before the mind, as for example the idea of "horse" or "flower" etc. common to all the samples encountered or even possible, or the invariable notions found in mathematics. These are facts of experience just as much as the particular examples, and the method of singling them out is called by Husserl the "Eidetic Reduction."

### The Phenomenological Reduction and the "Epoché"

In consciousness we find so much uncertainty, so much hypothesis, so much presumption, so much reading into the facts, so much imposed on our picture of the world by our culture, so much imposed from past experience, we have to distinguish the primordial world of our experience from all these other impositions. This is called the "Phenomenological

Reduction". The "Phenomenological Reduction" consists in assessing the different components of my consciousness and sorting out what is primordial from what is culturally imposed. This is often difficult to do. One method which helps is known as "Epoché", or "bracketing out" from my attention certain portions of my consciousness which present a problem. Where Descartes used doubt, Husserl used "Epoché" or suspension of judgment. Husserl always leaves the door open for the return later of what he has "bracketed", whereas Descartes seems to make his doubt a permanent attitude. To take an example of how it works, Husserl "brackets" the objective world in which we commonly believe. He cannot however "bracket" consciousness. With his attention focussed more sharply on consciousness, he finds first of all that all consciousness is "intentional", consciousness is always consciousness of something and among the things of which he is conscious he finds objects and an objective world. What difference does this make to our view of the world? After the "reduction" the world is seen in a new way, it is seen no longer as something absolute in itself but as the correlate of consciousness and that arising simply from the nature of our knowledge.

Finally as Morujão points out every intentional constitution of an object has an element of the temporal in it, and even those objects which we consider as "supratemporal" are really more accurately described as "omnitemporal".<sup>9</sup> And

at the heart of my consciousness I discover myself the transcendental-ego as "a necessary permanence",<sup>10</sup> shorn of everything that is not me, namely the objective world, my body as an item of the objective world, and even the noesis or act of consciousness.

To conclude this chapter, Phenomenology is a critique of cognition, which lays the foundation of certainty for all the sciences. Phenomenology proper is not concerned with the problems of the other sciences, but rather with the basis of knowledge itself. It sees everything from the point of view of consciousness, and so brings a new attitude to bear on all science and all knowledge. Particularly in the case of the human sciences it lays emphasis on experience rather than on an unreal objectivity. Even in the matter of the physical sciences, the attitude towards them becomes more human, in that they are seen from the point of view of human experience rather than as dealing with a detached objective reality. Scientific knowledge is an aspect of culture; we all know this. The phenomenologist is more likely to be aware of it, while those who take the objective point of view are more likely to think of science in terms of atoms, rocks, reptiles etc.

In the next chapter I will take up the topic of this thesis more explicitly, which is "Intersubjectivity", seen from the phenomenological point of view or Phenomenology applied to Intersubjectivity and I will first consider it

as found in the works of Husserl, taken chronologically.

#### Footnotes

- 1 The Phenomenology of Husserl , p 73.
- 2 Ideas I par 30, p 95.
- 3 Ibid., par 30, p 96.
- 4 Ibid., par 30, p 96.
- 5 Subjectividade e Intersubjectividade em Husserl ,  
p 89.
- 6 Ibid., p 89.
- 7 The Idea of Phenomenology , p 1.
- 8 Ibid., p 1.
- 9 Op. cit. p 90.
- 10 Ibid., p 92.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE QUESTION OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY AS DEVELOPED IN THE WRITINGS OF HUSSERL TAKEN IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Starting with consciousness as the absolute, the question now arises: how does the notion of "Intersubjectivity" fit into consciousness. As everything is seen by Husserl from the peculiar point of view of Phenomenology, so too must Intersubjectivity and its related problems. The point of view is, that everything is seen in terms of consciousness, immediately present, intentional in character, with its noetic-noematic structure. Everything in consciousness is immediately present to me. Consciousness is not something locked up inside my head, with the things I know, at a distance. My consciousness is as much in the car driving down the road, the aeroplane flying overhead, the most distant star in the heavens of which I am aware, in the consciousness of the person to whom I am talking, in the consciousness of the poet I am reading, even if he be centuries dead, in my plans for the future, in my speculations about the meeting I will have to attend to-morrow or even next year. To treat consciousness, as though it were something located in my brain, is to misunderstand it and to

apply to it categories of an all too "natural" kind, of an all too material kind. Consciousness belongs to the realm of spirit even if it be a spirit immersed in material surroundings. But to think of Intersubjectivity in terms of two embodied spirits, separated in space, communicating through material media is to reduce the human situation to something which does not do it justice. It is to reduce it to something like two telephones each with mouthpiece and earpiece connected by a live telephone wire. No doubt there is an analogy, but it doesn't go far enough. The analogy tells us nothing about consciousness. It is the one thing the telephone hasn't got. The analogy tells us a certain amount about what happens but misses the most important point of all, namely consciousness which is the aspect on which Phenomenology concentrates.

Now Intersubjectivity in so far as it is a problem is the problem of solipsism, and the formulation or explanation of that problem depends on one's philosophy. If one's view of human nature and communication is based on the scientific outlook, then a break-down in communications is comparable to a break-down of the telephone system, and questions or doubts regarding the dependability of my communication with others can be compared to question regarding the fidelity of music I hear on the radio for instance. Since we have taken the view that consciousness is absolute and immediately present to us, then a break-down

or questions of the above kind cannot occur. The only problems which can arise will be problems of explicating the consciousness, which is immediately present to us.

In actual fact the only problem of Intersubjectivity for Husserl is the problem of such explication. Solipsism is not really a problem for him as will be seen later. But an apparent problem of solipsism arises, before he has fully unfolded the experience of personal relations as seen in consciousness. If my own consciousness is something immediately present to me and the only thing immediately present to me, then the question arises: how do I get in touch with another consciousness? Am I not locked within my own consciousness even if I am not locked within the confines of my own brain? This problem is but a hang over from the scientific attitude to consciousness described above, and is answered by looking more closely at consciousness itself, rather than at imperfect analogies.

The development of Husserl's treatment of this question is one which covers a long span of his lifetime. As I have already pointed out, his Phenomenology took final shape between the years 1906 - 1911, but his explanations and formulations developed and became more vivid right up to his death in 1938. Unfortunately his first treatment of Intersubjectivity in his lectures at Gottingen, during the winter semester of 1910 - 1911, is not available. We would however expect to find echoes and hints of his treatment of it in his other works coming from the same period.

The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness

edited by Martin Heidegger and coming from the fairly lengthy period covering the years 1901 to 1913 is not a great help. As the title implies it is concerned more with the field of immanence<sup>en</sup>. Emphasis is on the constitution of objects and of time and these are treated in terms of a single constituting mind, or the intentionality of a single mind. There are references to some of the basic conclusions of Phenomenology e.g. transcendent objects appear as "constituted unities".<sup>1</sup> There is special attention given to those phenomenological statements involving the constitution of time e.g. "The appearance of a house is a temporal being which endures".<sup>2</sup> There is one reference to "the intersubjective identical thing"<sup>3</sup>, a notion which plays an important role in his later treatment of Intersubjectivity.

The Idea of Phenomenology (1907), while an excellent summary of basic Phenomenology does not tackle the question of Intersubjectivity, though it lays the foundation for a treatment of any topic phenomenologically.

Ideas I appeared in 1913. Since Ideas II was intended to deal specifically with the topic of Intersubjectivity, there is no formal treatment of it in Ideas I. Unfortunately Ideas II did not appear until long after his death. Ideas I however gives quite clear indications as to Husserl's mind on the matter. The word "empathy" appears

many times as also the notion of a commonly constituted world mediating the process. Husserl's special use of the word "empathy" should be clarified at this stage. Obviously he must mean it to be taken in the phenomenological sense, as describing namely, something which appears in consciousness. It is not "empathy" in the psychological sense, of a mutual unexpressed feeling for each other between two people, nor in the sense in which it is used in aesthetics as the projection of one's thoughts, feelings, and will into an impersonal object. For Husserl it is a species of perception.

"Thus we describe and determine with rigorous conceptual precision the generic essence of perception generally or of subordinate species such as the perception of physical thinghood, of animal natures and the like; likewise of memory, empathy, will and so forth ..." 4

He ascribes to "empathy" "a basic kind of self-evidence"<sup>5</sup> and what is given in "empathy" "is given in a primordial and absolute sense"<sup>6</sup>. In his unfolding of consciousness he finds many types of object, and among them are objects which are also subjects. I can never completely grasp the other. I can never experience the other's consciousness as I experience my own. He will always remain other for me. Still while experiencing him as other, I experience him as a subject, and I experience him immediately. This is what is meant by "empathy". "Empathy" is the constitution of another consciousness in my consciousness.

Secondly, it is "only through the connecting of consciousness and body into a natural unity", that "empathy"

between subjects in a common world is possible and that "only thereby can every subject that knows, find before it a full world containing itself and other subjects, and at the same time know it for one and the same world about us belonging in common to itself and all other subjects".<sup>7</sup> We must of course see all this in a phenomenological way. In consciousness through "empathy" I find other subjects, other consciousnesses. They are constituted in my consciousness. They are constituted as located in a common world with one another and with myself, and we are all constituted as in touch with one another through that common world. The mistake would be to think I was explaining "empathy", when we have already declared it "given in an absolute sense" with "a basic kind of self-evidence". Both the common world and subjects are constituted as a unity and there is no question of either being derived from the other or explaining the other. When we view experience more closely we find both interwoven. In fact we cannot experience one without the other. I experience the world. I experience other subjects. They experience the world. They experience me. I experience them, experiencing the world and experiencing me. The world is constituted in my experience. It is also constituted in my experience through the experience of others. The result is, a common community constitution of the world, an intersubjective world, and the "intersubjective world is the correlate of the intersubjective experience mediated that

is through "empathy".<sup>8</sup>

Suffice it to say of Ideas II from a perusal of Paul Ricoeur's book and the papers of Alfred Schutz, that it contains the chief landmarks and signposts, leading to a Husserlian understanding of Intersubjectivity, namely:

- 1) a consideration of the community of "animalia" and of the place of the body in intersubjective communication.
- 2) the givenness of our fellow man through "empathy".
- 3) that "empathy" is not complete givenness. The other is given as other. I am "here" while he is "there".<sup>9</sup>
- 4) I cannot experience his experience but we both experience the same world.
- 5) Only through Intersubjectivity is the objective world fully constituted.<sup>10</sup>

In his Formal and Transcendental Logic (1928) he makes a point not yet encountered. He applies his notion of objectivity to logical truth. "A judgment is not true at one time and false at another, but true or false, once for all".<sup>11</sup> He equates "objective" truth with an "intersubjectively identical truth", and Logic he says makes this concept "extend to all the propositions that it erects in its theory: its axioms and also its theorems." They all claim accordingly, to be valid "once for all and for everyone".<sup>12</sup> This is an important point since it clarifies further his notion of

"objectivity" which has an important bearing on his notion of Intersubjectivity.

In Part II, Chapter 6, he starts by asserting the phenomenological viewpoint that "every existent" is "constituted in the subjectivity of consciousness".<sup>13</sup> Everything I know is somehow or other given to me in experience and it cannot be otherwise.

"experience is the consciousness of being with the matters themselves, of seizing upon and having them quite directly. But experience is not an opening through which a world, existing prior to all experience, shines into a room of consciousness; it is not a mere taking of something alien to consciousness into consciousness" 14

This is merely to emphasise that experience is the absolute to which we must always come back, and it is by looking into experience that I know what I know. Even if something appears to me as transcendent it is experience that tells me so, and if I want to understand Intersubjectivity, I must go back to experience, "back to the things themselves." The problem, "how in the ego, another psychophysical Ego with an other psyche can be constituted"<sup>15</sup> must be solved, "purely by a systematic uncovering of ones own intentional life and what is constituted in it".<sup>16</sup> The problem is:

"To understand how my transcendental ego, the primitive basis of everything that I accept as existent, can constitute within himself another transcendental ego, and then too an open plurality of such egos" 17

This is a paradox as long as I impose on consciousness the Logic of things forgetting that consciousness is different.

To think that concentrating on my consciousness confines me within myself or condemns me to solipsism is to misunderstand consciousness, because consciousness is not confining in any way. When faced with the problem of how the transcendent world could be constituted within my consciousness, we solved it by means of a "reduction", and found that consciousness far from confining us opened up the transcendent world to us.

The answer is clear. Do what we did before regarding the simple transcendent world. Focus attention on my solipsistic world, the world of my "ownness". I find that I cannot, no matter how I try. I am left with "The illusion of transcendental solipsism,"<sup>18</sup> and Husserl triumphantly asks: "Can the transcendental illusion of solipsism withstand this onward march of mere concrete explication?"<sup>19</sup>

In Cartesian Meditations (1931), Meditation V, is found Husserl's most comprehensive treatment of "Intersubjectivity". He repeats much of what we have seen already and goes into greater detail. He answers the accusation of "solipsism", expounds the idea of "objectivity" seen phenomenologically as "thereness - for - everyone",<sup>20</sup> invokes a special "epoché" to cope with the constitution of other egos, finding within "the sphere of original self explication",<sup>21</sup> both the transcendent world and other subjects. The new sense of objectivity involving other subjects, adds another dimension to my primordial world. Eventhough I use analogy

describing my/ of/ in/understanding/ the other, "empathy" itself is not "an inference from analogy;"<sup>22</sup> it is merely used by "a genesis at a higher level."<sup>23</sup> The other always remains other for me. This does not contradict the fact that "empathy" gives me a direct and immediate apprehension of the other. I apprehend the other immediately in consciousness, but consciousness tells me he is "other" and always remains "other". "Appresentation" rather than "presentation" is the word which best describes this presence of the other in my consciousness namely with a sort of givenness which is not complete. He goes into the idea of "an open community of monads which we designate as transcendental intersubjectivity"<sup>24</sup>, bringing together the notions of "monad" from a supposed state of solipsism and "community", as revealed in the unfolding of consciousness. He also goes into an analysis of the various cultural communities which can be treated as "personalities of a higher order"<sup>25</sup>.

In this treatment nothing essentially new has been added to that of Formal and Transcendental Logic, and that is not surprising, for the essential basis of a phenomenological treatment of Intersubjectivity had been laid in Formal and Transcendental Logic, namely, the recognition of "empathy" as a feature of consciousness. The central idea of course can be made more vivid by deeper insight or its consequences can be worked out in detail. This is the type of development we can hope to find in later writings.

The Paris Lectures, like Cartesian Meditations come from the period of Husserl's retirement. We would therefore expect them to contain his mature insights, but in lectures of this kind one does not look for new speculation, and that is how it is. We find in them on the topic of Intersubjectivity a very clear, condensed and succinct account which leaves nothing out, but adds nothing new.<sup>26</sup>

The "Crisis" on the other hand is a pretty large volume put together after his death and in such a volume one would expect to find some gems of insight. He goes into some details about the "communalization of experience"<sup>27</sup> and how we can see the world through the eyes of others as well as through our own, and how the "intersubjectively identical life-world-for-all"<sup>28</sup> can serve as a criterion for checking our uncertainties and doubts etc. Community experience also helps us to go beyond present and past personal experience to possible experiences giving us new horizons through "empathy" with our fellow men, and contact with civilization in general, and it is in this context that common language arises. But at no time must we lose sight of "the absolute singularity of the ego and its central position in all constitution".<sup>29</sup>

The final volume of Husserliana has not yet appeared, but it will most certainly have more to say, and further insights to offer on the topic of Intersubjectivity.

Having seen something of the chronological develop-

ment of Husserl's ideas on Intersubjectivity let us now scrutinize these ideas themselves in more detail.

#### Footnotes

- 1 The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness  
p 100.
- 2 Ibid., p 101.
- 3 Ibid., p 98.
- 4 Ideas I, par 75, p 192.
- 5 Ibid., par 140, p 360.
- 6 Ibid., par 46, p 130.
- 7 Ibid., par 53 p 149.
- 8 Ibid., par 151, p 387.
- 9 Collected Papers III , Alfred Schutz p 26.
- 10 Ibid., p 26.
- 11 Formal and Transcendental Logic p 194.
- 12 Ibid., p 195.
- 13 Ibid., p 232.
- 14 Ibid., p 232.
- 15 Ibid., p 239.
- 16 Ibid., p 238.
- 17 Ibid., p 239.
- 18 Ibid., p 241.
- 19 Ibid., p 242.
- 20 Cartesian Meditations , n 43, p 92.
- 21 Ibid., par 47 pp 104.
- 22 Ibid., par 50, p 111.
- 23 Ibid., par 50, p 111.
- 24 Ibid., par 56, p 130.
- 25 Ibid., par 58, p 132.
- 26 The Paris Lectures , pp 34-36.
- 27 The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology , par. 47 p 161.
- 28 Ibid., par 50, p 172.
- 29 Ibid., par 54, p 186.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SAME TOPIC TREATED IN MORE DETAIL

#### The Problem of "Solipsism"

I will now deal in more detail and in a more organized way with the topic on hand, namely, "Intersubjectivity in the Works of Husserl", and let me start by clarifying what the problem really is. For want of a better word, Husserl has called it the problem of "solipsism". Now "solipsism" is really a problem of the "natural attitude". Husserl starts off the fifth Meditation by answering the objection that Phenomenology entails "solipsism". But the real difficulty is that his opponents have not taken the trouble, or at least have not succeeded in seeing his point of view, and the answer to their objection consists in nothing more than a phenomenological explication of our experience of other subjects. The problem of "solipsism" arises from one way of looking at the world, the body, the mind. The answer consists in looking at them in another way.

Two bodies containing two minds co-exist in a common world. Nobody will doubt that some communication takes place between them. But how can I be sure, for example that "A" understands exactly what "B" intends to convey? Is it merely a question of his consciousness being stimulated somehow or other by some sort of message which

originates in the consciousness of "B", and that his response is presumed to correspond to the original message, but that the original message itself never really reaches him? The telephone provides a good analogy of the point of view which prompts such questions. "B" speaks into the telephone producing mere sound waves which are presumed to express his thoughts. These sound waves cause a magnet to vibrate in an electrical field, and as a result electrical waves are sent along the telephone wires. At the receiving end the opposite process takes place. Electrical waves cause the vibration of a magnet, which in turn produces sound waves corresponding to "B"'s voice and it is these sound waves that "A" hears. Note that "A" does not hear "B". Now the same kind of thinking casts doubt on the existence of the "thing-in-itself", and on the possibility of knowledge, as on the existence of other subjects, and the possibility of communication with them. The history of philosophy from Descartes to Kant is full of such vexing questions despairing of a satisfactory solution. Descartes doubts everything but his own thought despite the fact that many of the things he doubts form the contents of his thoughts. Locke speaks of substance as something, "I-know-not-what" because in his way of thinking it is at the end of a series of processes which he takes as a description of knowledge. Berkeley is consistent in this way of thinking and becomes the celebrated solipsist. Leibniz with a different emphasis cannot see how the process of communication as we know it could possibly

convey ideas from one subject to another; the result was a picture of the subject as isolated, but each subject mirrored every other subject, and apparent communication between subjects was the result of "a pre-established harmony" amongst them. All this skepticism arose out of a certain way of looking at man and his experience, which was attributable to and dominated by the successes of physical science. It consisted in treating man as though he were an object of physical science and no more, locating a mind in his body, preferably in his brain and imposing on it the same limitations as physical objects are subject to. For instance it is physically very difficult to get a man on the moon, and it is physically impossible to hear the actual sounds he makes when he gets there, principally because of the physical distance between earth and moon. Still thinking in terms of physical separation, my mind and yours are separated by physical distance, they can never come together, an idea cannot be transferred from one to the other, nor can they communicate except through some physical medium. A message like that passing through a physical medium has to be interpreted, weighed, assessed, and thinking in these terms two minds can never communicate directly. Then there is the possibility of misunderstanding and deception and if there is the possibility of misunderstanding, then there is uncertainty, and if there is uncertainty then I may begin to think the other does not exist and the more I think along these lines the less

grounds I have for believing in the existence of other minds and the reliability of communication with them. And if I go on thinking in this strain the most reasonable philosophy is "solipsism". But it contradicts everyday experience; therefore I must now examine experience critically, and examining experience critically is nothing other than Phenomenology.

When I come to think of it, all these other ideas which lead to solipsism whether they come from my scientific picture of the world, or otherwise imposed by culture, are ultimately based on experience. Therefore I will have to recheck them in the light of experience, and see where they fit into the totality of my "world". My life-world is bigger than and includes the world studied by physical science. Its study requires a method which goes beyond the method of physical science, a method which is freer and less confining. We call it transcendental. It is concerned with knowledge or consciousness itself.

A serious problem arises due to the fact that when speaking of consciousness, I have to use the words available to me, and these for the most part are taken from the vocabulary we use in describing the world e.g. "field", "unfolding" etc. Words like "empathy" which describe experience have to be explained and the explanations so often call for words of a worldly nature. This is a limitation we cannot escape; the important thing is to be aware of it.

When Husserl asks:

"When I, the meditating I, reduce myself to my absolute transcendental ego by phenomenological epoche do I not become solus ipse?" 1

he is posing a question the average intelligent person might ask. By concentrating on my consciousness, on my subjectivity and by looking to it alone for an explanation of all things, am I not confining myself within my own mind? The more I purify this consciousness, the more I "reduce" it by eliminating for example predicates implying a transcendent world do I not seem to destroy, all the more, any possibility of ever getting out of the prison of my own consciousness? The very word "prison" is taken from the language of physical things and is an imposition. Consciousness is not a confined space like a prison. It is an experience, and I must look into that experience and let it speak for itself. The method of "reduction", the "epoché" is likewise an imposition on consciousness, but it "brackets" rather than eliminates the aspects of consciousness in question and the brackets are only provisional. In other words, when consciousness is allowed to speak for itself the brackets can be dropped and consciousness is allowed the final say.

The accusation then of "solipsism" arises from thinking of consciousness in physical terms. The answer to it is to let consciousness unfold itself, display itself for what it is, to reflect and explicate honestly what we see consciousness to be.

"can the transcendental illusion of solipsism

withstand this onward march of mere concrete explication?" 2

Solipsism is an unreal problem because consciousness reveals "Intersubjectivity", and consciousness is the final court of appeal. It is a question of realizing the full implications of the fact that consciousness is not a physical thing and must be dealt with differently all the way. When you realize this you have got the point of Phenomenology. Solipsism arises from a failure to realize this fact.

### "Objectivity" seen Phenomenologically

"...nothing exists for me otherwise than by virtue of the actual and potential performance of my own consciousness." 3

So writes Husserl in Formal and Transcendental Logic in a section headed: "Every existent constituted in the subjectivity of consciousness".<sup>4</sup> Now "constitution" is not "creation" but it does imply some dependence of the object on consciousness, at least to the extent that an object does not exist for me unless it is constituted in consciousness and exists for me to the extent that it is so constituted. We have here the sobering thought of Phenomenology, that not only must we start with experience, but we can never go beyond it; and if we seem to go beyond experience, either the movement is invalid, or we haven't really gone outside of experience, but only seemed to as we followed the lead of consciousness. It remains to explore a little more what we can then mean by "objectivity" in terms of consciousness and constitution.

When Husserl had performed the "epistemological reduction", he did not deny the objectivity of things. He merely placed it in brackets, assigned it "the index of indifference" whereby "the existence of all these transcendencies, whether I believe in them or not, is not here my concern."<sup>5</sup> Is "objectivity" more than "transcendancy"? It is not very clear just at the moment. "Objectivity" however would seem to be a stronger word, and since everything I know is constituted in consciousness, both the transcendent and the objective would seem to depend to that extent on consciousness. Now "Intentionality" brings back the transcendent with a difference. The brackets are gone and so is the "natural attitude". "Transcendancy" is now "transcendancy" within consciousness. That is the very meaning of "intentionality" in phenomenology, and "transcendancy" within "immanence" is possible because consciousness is not the confining thing that the "natural attitude" would have us believe. In fact it is the exact opposite; it is continually expanding and roaming including within itself everything it already knows as well as the possibility of further endless expansion.

But if I can only know things as constituted in my consciousness, and so it would seem as dependent on consciousness, can I speak of "objectivity" in any significant sense? The whole point of Phenomenology was a shift of emphasis from viewing the world as absolute and objective, to viewing it within and in relation to consciousness.

Objectivity implies an independence and in the "natural attitude" it is quite easy to think of things as things in themselves and independent of any knowing mind. What does the "phenomenological attitude" have to say about "objectivity"? It is only by reflecting on consciousness that I can answer this question. It is not a question of working out the implications of "intentionality", but of having a second look and seeing it more clearly. And when I reflect on consciousness, the consciousness in which everything I know is constituted, I find paradoxically within the confines of constituting consciousness,

- 1) that consciousness tells me about things, it is "intentional".
- 2) that many of these things are "transcendent", "out there", as it were.
- 3) that these "transcendent" things have an existence of their own independent of me, in other words they are "objective".

"The Objective world is constantly there before me as already finished, a datum of my living continuous Objective experience ..."<sup>6</sup>

Consciousness is clear about that even from the point of view of a single constituting consciousness, but it becomes all the clearer when we come to consider the matter from the point of view of many subjects, or intersubjectively. Husserl for example attributes objectivity to the truths of Mathematics not only because they are "valid once for all" but also "for everyone".<sup>7</sup>

Before going into the question of "Empathy" I would like to delay a little while on this question of "objectivity" seen in the light of "intersubjective experience". No doubt, the intersubjective experience adds a new dimension to the notion of "objectivity". It severs as it were once for all the apparent dependence of the objective world on my own personal constituting consciousness. In the light of the "intersubjective" experience I see the same objects constituted equally by other subjects and by my own consciousness. Hence they would exist even if I never existed, and that is clearly "objectivity". If I didn't exist, then my consciousness wouldn't exist, but we are already prepared for the paradox:

"...on the one hand consciousness should be the Absolute, within which everything transcendent is constituted, and in the last resort the whole psychological world; and on the other hand consciousness should be a subordinate real event within this world." 8

It is another example of consciousness going out of itself and refusing to be confined. Consciousness is absolute to us, but it in turn points to an absolute outside of itself. Neither is consciousness content to confine itself at any time to a consideration of any chosen object, or to any part of consciousness. My consciousness is a whole and as the "reductions" show that whole keeps coming back in spite of any effort to "reduce" it to something less. And so,

"...within myself, within the limits of my transcendently reduced pure conscious life, I

experience the world (including others) . . . not as (so to speak) my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone, as an intersubjective world actually there for everyone . . ." 9

Neither can consciousness confine its attention to other subjects only, and for the same reason

"...I experience other minds as real and not only do I experience them in conjunction with nature, but as interlaced into one whole with nature." 10

I will know more then about nature through my knowledge of other subjects:

"...a transcendental theory of experiencing someone else, a transcendental theory of so-called "empathy" . . . . contributes to the founding of a transcendental theory of the Objective world..." 11

Since my experience of other minds and my experience of nature are "interlaced", then rather than one depending on the other we will expect them to be mutually dependent, and that is how it is. "Intersubjective" experience and my experience of the objective world, are so wrapped up in each other that either is impossible without the other. All subjects, myself included, belong to the objective world. Communication is possible because we belong to the same world; that is a fact of experience. Communication is possible because I am an incarnated consciousness and thus an object in the world; that is also a fact of experience. But there is even more to it than that. Consciousness without an object cannot exist, because all consciousness is "intentional". Consciousness without the objective world cannot exist. Subjectivity without the world is nothing and all the more

so "Intersubjectivity". This may seem to be in the form of an argument, but it is merely an explication of the fact that we communicate with others through the medium of the world and at the same time through our individual experiences of a common world.

At the same time the full meaning, the full constitution of an object is elaborated by the linking up of many personal constitutions of it, including all such possible constitutions.

"...every real natural thing is represented by all the meanings and significant positions . . . through which . . . it figures as the correlate of possible intentional experiences; represented by . . . the system of all possible 'subjective modes of appearing', in which it can be noematically constituted as self identical. But this constituting relates in the first instance to an essentially possible individual consciousness, then also to a possible community-consciousness i.e., to an essentially possible plurality of personal centres of consciousness and streams of consciousness enjoying mutual intercourse, and for whom one thing as the self-same objective real entity must be given and identified intersubjectively." 12

and that is how Phenomenology sees "objectivity".

### "Empathy"

The problem to which "Empathy" is the answer is stated by Husserl as follows:

"To understand how my transcendental ego, the primitive basis for everything that I accept as existent, can constitute within himself another transcendental ego, and then too an open plurality of such egos - 'other' egos, absolutely inaccessible to my ego in their original being, and yet cognizable (for me) as existing and as being thus and so." 13

Regarding the external world:

"I necessarily ascribe to someone else . . . not a merely analogous experienced world, but the same world that I experience;" 14

and regarding his relations with me and the world:

". . .I mean him as experiencing me in the world and, moreover, experiencing me as related to the same experienced world . . ." 15

This is the problem, as posed in Formal and Transcendental Logic . It is posed again in Meditation V as follows,

"When I, the meditating I, reduce myself to my absolute transcendental ego by phenomenological epoche do I not become solus ipse . . . ?" 16

From what we have seen of Husserl and Phenomenology so far, and from the answer we expect him to give he is here merely providing a setting in which he is going to expound his notion of "Empathy" by reflectively unfolding the true meaning of a consciousness which undoubtedly exists, namely consciousness of other subjects as other. Waltraut Stein in his preface to the English version of Edith Stein's On the Problem of Empathy points out that there is a change of emphasis in Husserl's treatment of "Empathy" between Ideas II and Cartesian Meditations, the former concentrating more on a phenomenological description of "Empathy", the latter questioning the possibility of the other. Whatever the approach, the answer will be essentially the same, namely an unfolding of consciousness by reflection. "Solipsism" as I have already said is not a question for Phenomenology. The only questions that concern Phenomenology are questions in the form: "What does consciousness say about . . .?"

Having asked the question, Husserl himself in effect implies that the question is not very relevant.

"The very question of the possibility of actually transcendent knowledge - above all, that of the possibility of my going outside my ego and reaching other egos . . . - this question cannot be asked purely phenomenologically." 17

which shows that Husserl does not really take the problem he has posed, as a problem. Perhaps the best way to put it is that there are no problems for Phenomenology, just questions. The questions may be difficult to the extent that we may not be clear about what consciousness says, and we have to clarify our vision by reflection, but in Phenomenology we do not have to think out answers as we do in Mathematics, nor think up answers as we do say in economics, politics or engineering. Husserl almost invites us back to the "natural attitude" by bringing up the problem of "solipsism". He leaves himself open to misunderstanding, in fact he invites it, and that is why, in my opinion he meets with such enthusiastic opposition. The best analogy I can think of to explain Phenomenology is looking at a detailed picture to discover what exactly, it portrays, without asking "How?" or "Why?", just simply, "What does the picture portray?" Take an example: You may see in a picture a group of children being followed by a policeman. This is simply a fact. You may even see indications of the reason why they are being followed, as for example, the last of the children is still getting down off an apple tree, but this likewise is simply a fact. But as soon as I

give reasons, I am reading meaning into the picture, imposing meaning on it rather than simply describing it. So too Phenomenology reads off what it sees in consciousness without imposing interpretations, and will read off meaning too if it finds it but never impose it.

So consciousness tells me: I am aware of other minds like my own; I am conscious of other consciousnesses which are not my own, and I seem to think that this involves some sort of contradiction, that there is something foreign to my consciousness in my consciousness, namely other subjects and their consciousness. If I reflect I will discover that I am imposing on consciousness a Logic which may have validity in another sphere, instead of patiently taking pains to find out what exactly consciousness has been trying to say to me. The ultimate check for all knowledge is consciousness. There is a temptation, that having followed up one particular line of investigation e.g. Chemistry or Mathematics or Logic, to come back and impose its categories on consciousness as a whole, instead of trying to see how they fit in to the overall picture of consciousness. For instance Mathematics is a very exact science, its findings are universally true, once and for all and for everyone. But Mathematics is an abstract science and is useful only with modification in real life, and you don't impose it absolutely on the carpenter, for instance. Logic too is valid once for all and for everyone, but as everyone knows, "life is larger than logic".

When I find in consciousness something that goes against my way of thinking, I must reflect, analyse it and find out whether it is a genuine datum of consciousness or whether I am imposing on the freedom of consciousness, something already learned. When as a result of careful reflection I find in consciousness, something I consider odd or unusual, again I must check on its source. When I find in consciousness something for which I have no name I must not therefore throw it out; that would be a form of imposition. Rather I must try recognize it, describe it, and if necessary give it a name. When Husserl reflects on his immediate knowledge of other consciousnesses, he finds it is unique and not reducible to any more primitive experience, he has to name it and he calls it "Empathy". Quentin Lauer comments: "Unfortunately this notion seems to have been contrived in order to fill a need."<sup>18</sup> I reply: Of course it has been contrived to fill a need and that is in keeping with the rigorous nature of Phenomenology. Surely he is not going to deny something he sees in consciousness, simply because he hasn't got a name for it, and impose instead a pre-defined name, carrying a pre-conceived idea, with a resulting refusal or failure to see what is there.

So the problem then of how in my consciousness another consciousness is constituted is not like the problem of explaining how the earth goes round the sun in an elliptical orbit, but is more like the question: "What is that curious object on the top right hand corner of the

picture?" You might have to use a magnifying glass to find out. Husserl uses an "epoché" to examine "Intersubjectivity".

There are two aspects to an "epoché". You bracket out a certain amount of consciousness in order to concentrate on what is left. To take an illustration: I want to concentrate on the horse's head. I bracket out his body. There before my imagination, I see the movements of his eyes, his eye-lashes, his nostrils, his ears; I see the brown hair of his skin with a white star on his forehead and a black mane hanging down to one side. I pat him on the nose and give him an apple which he snaps and eats and I forget about every other part of him except his head. But somehow this requires an abnormal effort. The swish of his tail keeps coming to mind, the movement of his legs, a certain restlessness because he is irritated by the fly on his flank. Then I wonder where his head ends and where his body begins. Somewhere along the neck I suppose, and I settle for half way. But then I ask what does this point of division look like. It cannot be bleeding and I don't want it to be disgusting in any way, so in my mind's eye I seal it off neatly with healthy skin and hair. But then, that is not a horse's neck; it is a fabrication. No matter what I do, I cannot get away from the fact that the horse has a body as well as a head, not from my knowledge of Biology but simply from the fact that a horse's head apart from his body is not an item in my consciousness. I am conscious of a horse. While admiring his head I am aware of his body and

I have emphasised this by bracketing his body and concentrating on his head.

Or take a beautiful Oak tree in the fall. It is the most natural thing in the world to admire it, to become absorbed in it and forget everything else around. I notice the leaves with their beautiful shades of green, brown, yellow etc. I note its majestic stand and its almost planned irregularity, its roaming branches anchored to the trunk. Then a bird comes on the scene, the wind blows away some of the leaves. I cannot get away from these intrusions. Then I see foreground and background and begin to realize that the tree wouldn't look the same without them. If I saw nothing but the tree then everything else would be darkness, and that is certainly not what I see. I bracketed out the surrounding world, but I cannot keep it out. I can learn something about the tree by concentrating on it, but I am always aware of the surroundings and this is highlighted by my efforts to exclude them.

Husserl had bracketed the transcendent world of the "natural standpoint". "Intentionality" brought it back. Consciousness was still aware of it in a transcendent objective way. He found the transcendent world within consciousness. In Chapter 3 of Ideas I, speaking of the "phenomenological reduction" he emphasises that he doesn't deny the "world" as if he were a sophist, or doubt it as if he were a skeptic, but as a phenomenologist merely refrains from using judgements from the "natural standpoint" about it.

In Formal and Transcendental Logic he speaks of the "motivational foundation" for transcendency, in the reduced sphere. Husserl's whole idea of the "reduction" is to show that when he brackets out certain things the "motivational foundation" for their recovery remains at the heart of consciousness no matter how much it is "purified" by "epoché". Consciousness is One. It cannot be successfully divided and any attempt to do so merely assists us in seeing the whole more clearly.

He is now going to perform another "epoché". He is going to bracket 'other subjects' and everything belonging to them. He is going to reduce consciousness to the sphere of his "ownness" - Eigenheitlichkeit.

The "phenomenological reduction" was not adequate to deal with the question of other minds. Its purpose was to deal with transcendency and that it did quite successfully; even Schutz will admit that. I find myself at the centre of my world. My consciousness is the centre in terms of which I see everything else, and it cannot be otherwise for me. Now to admit several such centres raises certain problems. At least it upsets the comfortable simplicity of my view until now. I know of course that the question will have to arise some time, because indications of other possible subjects keep crowding in on me. Until such time as I come to consider them I am in a phenomenological situation best described by the word "monad". Husserl exploits this idea

in his reduction of the world to the sphere of my ownness (eigenheitlich reduzierte natur), putting in brackets every reference to or indication of other subjects. Morujão quoting from Husserl's Erste Philosophie says that the reduction to the "ego Cogito" is a reduction to my own transcendental ego, to the ego which performs the reduction and my own personal life, and concludes,

"como fenomenólogo, sou necessariamente solipista, embora num sentido diferente daquele que na atitude natural se inculca." 20  
 (As a phenomenologist, I am necessarily solipsist, though it be in a different sense from that of the word's use in the natural attitude)

It is a kind of methodological solipsism

"For the present we exclude from the thematic field everything now in question: we disregard all constitutional effects of intentionality relating immediately or mediately to other subjectivity and delimit first of all the total nexus of that actual and potential intentionality in which the ego constitutes within himself a peculiar ownness" 21

He is putting the idea of a "monad" on trial, those windowless inventions of Leibniz into which nothing can enter nor from which anything depart so that "the natural changes of the monads proceed from an internal principle" 22

On first thought this reduction to the sphere of my "ownness" does not seem to involve very much, just eliminating indications of other minds and seeing the world as if it all belonged to me. It is somewhat reminiscent of Sartre's picture of a man sitting alone in the park. All his surroundings are his until such time as another man appears on the scene as a competitor. 23 The sphere of my ownness is

something like that, and I now reduce my consciousness of the world to "the sphere of my ownness", where I have no competitors for its possession or its meaning.

Once however I get through this process of reduction, what is left is very bare indeed, because in my world there is so much evidence of other human beings so much that receives meaning from others. I do not banish objects from my consciousness, only their reference to other human beings. I would really have to go some place where there are no human beings or never were any human beings to feel any way comfortable in this sphere of my ownness.

Roads and houses, cities and stores, lawns and fountains, electric and telephone wires, television antennae must all be thought of in abstraction from the society of human beings in which I find myself. Books and manuscripts, machinery automobiles and buses, what kind of consciousness can I have of these things when I try to think of them in abstraction from other subjects? Finally I see men, women and children, but I still don't give in to the pressure of evidence that they are other subjects, because after all I can think of them as animal natures and animals I don't admit are subjects like myself. Still their behaviour is different and I reckon that their behaviour in certain circumstances is similar to my behaviour in similar circumstances. And since my behaviour is accompanied by certain states of consciousness I could infer by analogy that their behaviour ought to be accompanied by similar states of

consciousness. In Phenomenology, however, this argument from analogy carries no weight. What I want to see in my consciousness is other subjects not evidence for them. There is plenty of evidence, and it is difficult for me to remain in the "sphere of my ownness" against overwhelming evidence. Still the existence of something outside of consciousness, because of evidence in consciousness makes no sense in Phenomenology. I have plenty of evidence for the existence of other countries which I have never visited. This type of knowledge has value in the "natural attitude", and will have some value in Phenomenology when I have established the "communalization of experience", but as evidence in experience for something outside of experience it is valueless. But as the pressure of evidence mounts a picture builds up before my mind. The "reduction" of consciousness to the "sphere of my ownness" puts pressure on me to look directly into my consciousness.

And as I examine my consciousness I become aware that when I speak to another person I am not just in touch with the conclusion of a syllogism but with a subject. That is what consciousness tells me. It doesn't tell me how it is possible or how it happens. It is just a fact of experience every time I speak with another person. This experience is so basic that it cannot be reduced to more primitive experiences. Every explanation of it is therefore bound to fail. It is something to be experienced and used as a basis of life but it is futile to try to explain it.

It is one of those items on the picture of consciousness which we read off by simply reflecting on consciousness. And that is why Husserl had to find a word for it. He called it "Empathy".

So consciousness cannot remain reduced to the "sphere of my ownness"

"What is specifically peculiar to me as ego, my concrete being as a monad, purely in myself and for myself with an exclusive ownness, includes (my) every intentionality and therefore, in particular, the intentionality directed to what is other . . . . In this pre-eminent intentionality there becomes constituted for me the new existence-sense that goes beyond my monadic very-ownness; there becomes constituted an ego, not as 'I myself', but as mirrored in my own Ego, in my monad . . . . constituted as 'alter-ego' " 24

Consciousness is quite definite about the existence of other subjects, and above all I am conscious of communicating directly with them, and because this is so, the analogy argument and the argument from evidence of other subjects makes sense and the avalanche of pressure forcing me out of the "sphere of my ownness" into an intersubjective community of monads, makes sense. My consciousness of the other though direct, may involve the use of instruments such as a telephone or a violin, may involve appreciation of the same beautiful flower for instance, but all these aids or media are taken up by, accompany, but are not themselves consciousness of the other and therefore cannot explain it. They are however the milieu in which intersubjective communication takes place, but this communication is itself something higher, something superior to any of them. There

has not been "inference by analogy" but "a genesis at a higher level" giving us "the sense of 'alter-ego'" over and above the "primordial sphere".<sup>25</sup>

"...the sphere of my transcendental ego's primordial ownness, must contain the motivational foundation for the constitution of those transcendencies that are genuine, that go beyond it." 26

Thus the "epoché" and the various arguments used help us focus attention on a very real item in our consciousness namely other subjects and we call this item "Empathy", and strange and even contradictory as it may seem by our usual way of thinking, we accept it as a fact because we see it as a fact, and rather than impose our way of thinking on consciousness, we adjust our thinking in the light of a clarified experience. In the language of monadology, "another monad becomes constituted appresentatively in mine".<sup>27</sup> I do not say this is impossible but rather adjust my idea of a monad. It still contains two truths. Firstly it points to another centre of consciousness and secondly to the fact that no matter how independent the other may be of me, I must always see him from the point of view of my centre of consciousness. But above all the fact of the other is incontestable because I have found him in my consciousness as other.

"neither the other Ego himself, nor his subjective processes or his appearances themselves, nor anything else belonging to his own essence, becomes given in our experience originally. If it were, if what belongs to the other's own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same" 28

and surely that is the essence of "Empathy", that the other's life and experience are his just as my life and experience are mine, and I know them as such.

Still his experience can enrich my life. I can experience his experience in a secondary sense through "Empathy" and thus extend my experience. In this way we can pool our experience and our pooled experience can help to establish the objectivity of things as true "once-and-for-all-and-for-everyone". Once the intersubjective community has been opened up, and I think in terms of my own primordial experience as well as my secondary experience of others and their experience, I am in a position to understand the cultural world phenomenologically.

Just as the relationship between another monad and myself can be extended to my relationship with many others and their relationship with one another, "they are experienced also by one another as Others...and I can experience any given Other not only as himself an Other but also as related in turn to his others and perhaps . . . related at the same time to me".<sup>29</sup> Thus we have an "open community of monads, which we designate as transcendental intersubjectivity",<sup>30</sup> which is similarly constituted in every other monad.

Husserl speaks of the constitution of various kinds of communities as "spiritual Objectivities" and "personalities of a higher order"<sup>31</sup> and points out that the cultural world possesses a "genuine though restricted kind of Objectivity"<sup>32</sup> and also that there is,

"a kind of 'empathy' by which we project ourselves into the alien cultural community" 33

"Empathy" having brought other monads within the range of my subjectivity, I can now proceed to see from a transcendental point of view all the complexities of society and social relations, I once saw from the "natural standpoint". In other words I see them all as constituted in my subjectivity

"...phenomenological explication does nothing but explicate the sense this world has for us all, prior to any philosophizing, and obviously gets solely from our experience - a sense which philosophy can uncover but never alter ..." 34

We are living in an "intersubjective" world, we are living in a cultural milieu, we are living in a "life-world" (Lebenswelt). This is a fact from the start and nothing is going to change it. The "intermonadic community" of Husserl merely reflects the approach by which he establishes this fact. "Intermonadic-community" is a contradiction. The "monadic" aspect is an abstraction from real life, the "community" aspect puts this abstraction back into life. We are living in the Lebenswelt, not in the objective world of natural science which is likewise an abstraction.

One would think that reflection on and description of consciousness, the object of Phenomenology should be an easy matter. Far from it. The reason is that consciousness consists of so many layers. It has been built up from the experiences of our lifetime. Now the difficulty with consciousness sometimes is, that past experience at times tends to narrow rather than broaden our view of things. To

think too much in terms of past experience rather than keep an open mind about present experience is the greatest threat to our doing justice to experience. Once we realize this then at least we can be on our guard. As well as that, techniques such as those invented by Edmund Husserl, help us to analyse experience more exactly. As well as that there is always the time element. It takes time to develop or change an attitude.

As our attitudes develop, even our certainties can be changed; we can have doubts, questions, illusions.

"But in living with one another each one can take part in the life of the others. Thus in general the world exists not only for isolated men but for the community of men; and this is due to the fact that even what is straightforwardly perceptual is communalized." 35

and

"in the consciousness of each individual, and in the overreaching community consciousness which has grown up through (social) contact, one and the same world achieves and continuously maintains constant validity as the world which is in part already experienced and in part the open horizon of possible experiences for all." 36

and

"If one attends to the distinction between things, as 'originally one's own' and as 'empathized' from others, in respect to the how of the manners of appearance and if one attends to the possibility of discrepancies between one's own and empathized views, then what one actually experiences originaliter as a perceptual thing is transformed, for each of us, into a mere representation of (Vorstellung von) 'appearances of' the one objectively existing thing" 37

These passages from the "Crisis" represent a flowering of Husserl's thoughts on "Intersubjectivity". They express a

genuine advancement in his Phenomenology. The same passages might very well have been written by a non-phenomenologist and make perfectly good sense. Coming from Husserl however, they must be understood in a strictly phenomenological sense. Phenomenology as originally understood seems to reduce all experience to originary personal experience. Here, however, Husserl seems to be checking personal experience against community experience. This is perfectly valid once we accept "Empathy" as an originary form of experience and therefore a perfectly valid standard by which to check other experience. "Empathy", once expanded, includes a community of minds and an objective world. And so Husserl can point to an "objective" criterion, but of course "objective" in the phenomenological sense.

"...the intersubjectively identical life-world-for-all-serves as an intentional 'index' for the multiplicities of appearances, combined in intersubjective synthesis." 38

The "intersubjective Synthesis" or "intersubjective constitution" of the world for him means "the total system of manners of givenness, however hidden, and also of modes of validity for egos".<sup>39</sup> But if Phenomenology is to be consistent this "givenness" must always and ultimately be referred back to "givenness to me".

To go one step further we can go beyond actual experience to possible experience as an index. But of course the possible must be given in some way before I can use it, and

"The total multiplicity of manners of givenness, however, is a horizon of possible realizable processes, as opposed to the actual process..." 40

To conclude this chapter the words of Husserl himself found at the end of both The Paris Lectures and Cartesian Meditations are appropriate: "One must first lose the world through epoche' so as to regain it in universal self examination. Noli foras ire, said St. Augustine, in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas"<sup>41</sup> - "Do not go out, but enter into yourself, for truth resides in the inner man."

#### Footnotes

- 1 Cartesian Meditations par. 42, p. 89.
- 2 Formal and Transcendental Logic p. 242.
- 3 Ibid., p. 234.
- 4 Ibid., p. 232.
- 5 The Idea of Phenomenology p. 31.
- 6 C. M. Par. 48, p. 106.
- 7 F. T. L. p. 195.
- 8 Ideas I par. 53, p. 149.
- 9 C. M. par. 43, p. 91.
- 10 The Paris Lectures p. 34.
- 11 C. M. par. 43, p. 92.
- 12 Ideas I par. 135, p. 346.
- 13 F. T. L., pp. 239.
- 14 Ibid., p. 239.
- 15 Ibid., p. 239.
- 16 C. M., par. 42, p. 89.
- 17 Ibid., par. 42, p. 90.
- 18 Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect p. 152, footnote.
- 19 Ideas I par. 32, p. 100.
- 20 Subjetividade e Intersubjetividade em Husserl p. 93.
- 21 C. M. par. 44, p. 93.
- 22 The Philosophical Works of Leibnitz p. 309.
- 23 Being and Nothingness p. 254.
- 24 C. M., par. 44, p. 94.
- 25 Ibid., par. 50, p. 111.
- 26 F. T. L., p. 241.
- 27 C. M., par. 52, p. 115.
- 28 Ibid., par. 50, p. 109.
- 29 Ibid., par. 56, p. 130.
- 30 Ibid., par. 56, p. 130.
- 31 Ibid., par. 58, p. 132.
- 32 Ibid., par. 58, p. 132.
- 33 Ibid., par. 58, p. 135.
- 34 Ibid., par. 62, p. 151.

- 35 "Crisis" p. 163.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 163.
- 37 Ibid., p. 164.
- 38 Ibid., p. 172.
- 39 Ibid., p. 168.
- 40 Ibid., p. 167.
- 41 The Paris Lectures, p. 39.

PART II  
A DISCUSSION OF SOME CRITICISMS

Needless to say Husserl is not without his critics, even amongst the adherents of the Phenomenological Movement. In this Part, I will discuss some of them confining myself to members of the same movement.

Even some who accept his Phenomenology as such, find fault with his treatment of "Intersubjectivity". I maintain that Husserl's Phenomenological Method is a valid approach to an understanding of cognition and that he applies it consistently in his treatment of "Intersubjectivity".

In Chapter I, I will deal briefly with a number of critics including Quentin Lauer, Herbert Spiegelberg, Emmanuel Levinas and John Sallis. In Chapter II, I will take up the criticism of Alfred Schutz found in his Collected Papers Vol. III. In Chapter III, I will discuss the favourable criticism of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

## CHAPTER I

### SOME POINTS OF CRITICISM MADE BY QUENTIN LAUER, HERBERT SPIEGELBERG, EMMANUEL LEVINAS AND JOHN SALLIS

Let us first consider Quentin Lauer's book, "Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect". In it Lauer says:

"...it is impossible to escape the impression that the numerous pages consecrated by Husserl, in both his published and unpublished works, to intersubjective constitution add no explanation whatever to the problem of objectivity. Rather intersubjective constitution is but an extension of the theory of objective constitution, concerned with an object which is constituted both as an object and a subject" 1

Such criticism I don't take very seriously. The original effort to understand the constitution of the world is naturally open to improvement, advancement, refinement. If on looking closer the field of consciousness reveals within it, intersubjective as well as objective elements, it is a matter of revising our original picture of constitution, and while we find as we go along a very definite distinction between the two types of constitution, they both find a place within the field of constitution taken as a whole, which we failed to see properly at the first "reduction". I would agree then, in the light of this reasoning, with Lauer that intersubjective constitution is but an extension of objective constitution, but in the

process, objective constitution itself has changed to include all the angles of the object seen by all possible subjects, in other words the object has now been constituted intersubjectively.

The details as worked out by Husserl, leading up to his vision are not so important. There is room for disagreement and error in detail; it is the vision that counts. What is important in the present context is to see that "the experience of others must form part of my intentional life, without at the same time being my experiences".<sup>2</sup> Once this is accepted as forming part of an overall intentional life Husserl has been vindicated. His basic contention is that I find the world and other subjects by looking into my intentional life. He has to find an intentional category for the experience of others. He calls it "Empathy" and "Empathy" does give another dimension to "objectivity". My contention is that the terms "intentionality" and "constitution" have been extended to include a different type of experience and to that extent have altered their meaning.

Lauer does not think Husserl is satisfied with "Empathy" as the final explanation of "intersubjective" experience:

"Husserl does not pretend in his explanation that empathy is a known phenomenon, whose essence, he has intuited; rather it is a sort of tentative explanation of what he is convinced will be ultimately explained intentionally" 3

I don't see that Husserl could accept "Empathy" as anything

other than a "known phenomenon". Although admittedly he goes to all sorts of rounds to explain it, he always ends up by accepting it. This seems to me to be in the nature of the case, and also seems to be what Fink had in mind when according to Lauer he says: "Husserl had no intention of interpreting empathy but merely of using it".<sup>4</sup>

I turn next to Herbert Spiegelberg's The Phenomenological Movement. He says that after bracketing the external world and other subjects,

"The subsequent discovery that the objective world was ultimately the achievement of the transcendental subject constituted by his intentional acts would seem to make the conclusion inevitable that the other ego is really only a projection of the solus ipse".<sup>5</sup>

Spiegelberg would seem to have misunderstood the meaning of the word "constitute", and would seem to have fallen back into the "natural attitude". Is "constitution" "creation"? Certainly it is not "creation" of a "thing". When we say that objects are constituted in consciousness, ultimately, we can mean nothing more nor less than what consciousness tells us about them, and we can certainly question whether consciousness ever told us they were "projections" of itself. Consciousness tells us they are there, and it is in that sense that they are "constituted" in consciousness. This is further emphasised later on, when the notion of "objectivity" in terms of the "intersubjective community" emerges, giving the object a certain independence of the subject in whose consciousness it is

constituted. And when we are conscious of other subjects, by "Empathy", we have to be careful to listen attentively to what consciousness is saying to us. Consciousness constitutes other subjects for us, in the sense that it tells us they are there and at no time tells us they are projections of ourselves. I have no experience of solipsism, no experience of others as projections of my solus ipse, but I have experience of others as other and I can look at this experience phenomenologically.

When Spiegelberg writes:

"...the intersubjective community of egos is introduced as the very presupposition of the 'objective' world of common sense and of science"<sup>6</sup>,

I don't think it is true. Phenomenology makes one presupposition and one presupposition only namely that consciousness is the absolute. It is a matter of questioning consciousness. Again I think Spiegelberg has fallen into the "natural attitude". He seems to think that the "intersubjective community" proves the 'objective' world. Certainly if one admits the existence of other minds, and if one admits that we know the same things, there is an argument for "objectivity". Phenomenology however is not a matter of argument but of intuition. An intuition which gives me a world and other minds who share it with me gives me that world as "objective". In fact every intuition of the world gives it to me as "objective". Certainly the intuition of other subjects and of a common world gives Husserl a basis for his definition of "objectivity" as "true-once-and-for-

all-and-for-everyone" but this is all seen within the intuition of consciousness, the one and only presupposition in which the object and the intersubjective community appear together rather than one presupposing the other. The objection is therefore a pseudo objection.

"whether this theory represents an adequate solution of the solipsistic problem is a point on which Husserl himself seems to have remained uneasy" 7

Here again Spiegelberg misses what Husserl is doing. Husserl is exploring consciousness and all his discussion is aimed at this exploration. He is not trying to prove anything by argument, he is only trying to see the contents of consciousness more clearly. If he can show you "Empathy" as an item in your consciousness, then he has succeeded. True Husserl seems to show uneasiness, and often seems to be trying to prove his point by argument. It is only when you have seen the point of his Phenomenology that you realize he is not, only when you appreciate the phenomenological standpoint that you can recognize the natural attitude hidden in such texts as the one just quoted.

"...the other ego while not accessible as directly as its body, can be understood as a modification of our own pure ego by which we put ourselves into his body - as if it were in his place". 8

Is this not also a misleading statement? Does it not look like the argument from analogy which though it might find a place in phenomenology, could never be its basis? It could never reveal the other to me as other. This is an experience requiring a new name, "Empathy" because it is not explainable in terms of any other experience. To call on the argument

from analogy is to revert to the natural attitude. Once you grant the phenomenological viewpoint, the only questions that can arise are questions of explication of consciousness, and the only answers possible are those of the unfolding of consciousness.

In his book Totality and Infinity, Emmanuel Levinas takes a different approach from Husserl. He emphasises the separation of the mind from its object and "the radical impossibility of seeing oneself from the outside and of speaking in the same sense of oneself and of the others"<sup>9</sup>. The other remains opaque and is condemned to remain a mystery I will never penetrate, always at a distance. This is definitely a challenge to Husserl's point of view. Nobody can deny that the other is a mystery, and that I do not know him in the same way as I know myself. But whatever I do know about him, I know through consciousness, and consciousness is always immediately present to me, never separated never at a distance. Furthermore I must be content with what I know about the other or can know about him. There is no way at all that I can talk about what I don't know. To attempt to do so is completely unacceptable to Phenomenology because it can only rest on groundless assumptions. In the natural attitude I may not be able at all times to justify my assumptions but I must have some insight into the apparently unknown to motivate me into action. Now it is this glimmer of insight which

justifies my action and which is open to phenomenological research.

Husserl would say: "Follow up these glimmers of insight, reflect on them, and when you talk about the unknown at a distance realize that you couldn't talk about it unless you knew something about it". To speak about the unknown then always carries with it the challenge: "how do you know even that much?" As soon as you know anything about it, then it is experience and to that extent, is not at a distance but absolutely present.

The fact that the other remains other and a mystery may be misleading. In the natural attitude the other as other is unknown to me and at a distance. From the phenomenological standpoint I experience the other as other, I experience the mystery of the other. I don't experience him the way I experience myself but the fact that I experience him means he is present to me and not at a distance, that is what consciousness tells me. Absence and distance make no sense in Phenomenology. They are categories of the "natural attitude" into which Levinas has fallen, as for instance when he points out the sense of distance, the sense of absence in the questioning glance of the other.<sup>10</sup> Husserl sees a presence in that same questioning glance. It is a good illustration of the difference between the "natural attitude" and the "phenomenological attitude". The "natural attitude" considers things, and considers the mind as a thing, and things are de facto

separated; and mind considered as a thing and things are separated. The phenomenological attitude considers consciousness, and consciousness is intentional present wherever its object is.

In his article, "On the Limitations of Transcendental Reflection or Is Intersubjectivity Transcendental?"<sup>11</sup> John Sallis brings up the following argument:

"To require a reduction to a sphere of ownness radically excluding whatever is in any fashion related to intersubjectivity would then, amount to imposing upon reflection an ideal which it is inherently incapable of realizing" 12

I agree, and this is the key to Husserl's reduction; the fact that it is impossible to achieve, proves what it sets out to prove, namely that the individual is not confineable to the sphere of his "ownness", by the very fact that he is essentially intersubjective.

But, the argument goes on:

"If the other is always already implicated even at the most primordial levels of constitutive activity, then the sense 'other self' cannot be exhibited as constituted; rather the other self is always already there bound up in the very constitutive activity which would be its constitutive origin". 13

This is but to emphasise the fact that "constitution" is not the work of reflection. Paul Ricoeur commenting on Ideas II says that it

"is not constructing, even less creating, but rather the unfolding of the intendings of consciousness which are merged together in the natural, unreflective, naive grasp of a thing" 14

Constitution then is in consciousness; it has to be unearthed,

discovered, elucidated in consciousness. Reflection on the sphere of my "ownness" fails, because consciousness of "Intersubjectivity" keeps asserting itself, the "unreflective naive grasp" of "Intersubjectivity" keeps asserting itself and that for me is the constitution of "Intersubjectivity" in my consciousness. This to me, is the aim of the "reduction"; reflecting on the sphere of my "ownness" is only the means.

"What is proposed is a reflection which establishes the limitation of reflection". 15

This in effect means that reflection is limited by what it finds in consciousness, and cannot pick and choose its field. When I reflect on the sphere of my "ownness", I have gone beyond that limit. My reflection fails and I am forced into what Sallis calls a "second reflection".<sup>16</sup>

To think I can control reflection instead of letting consciousness lead me is a peculiar version of the "natural attitude", which when disposed of reveals an important aspect of the phenomenological approach. In the natural attitude we tend to be logical, organized etc., we set ourselves objectives which we set out to achieve, and above all we want to be consistent. Of course we are prepared, to accomodate ourselves to the unexpected, but it is not the dominant motif of our investigations. In the "natural attitude", we like things to go according to plan. In the phenomenological approach on the other hand the unexpected is encouraged; it is the very thing we are after. In the

phenomenological approach, we do a certain amount of man-  
 ouvering with consciousness, we follow out a plan to a  
 certain point, then stand back and let consciousness  
 operate, and in so doing it does not have to be in the  
 slightest consistent with the original manouvering. This  
 is what Sallis calls the "second reflection" and it is in  
 this "second reflection" that occurs "the elucidation of  
 intersubjectivity as constituted"<sup>17</sup> which the first  
 reflection failed to achieve.

This approach of Sallis throws some light on the  
 paradox of Phenomenology whereby the failure of the  
 "reduction" turns out to be its success.

Let us now go on to a consideration of one of  
 Husserl's most notable opponents on the question of  
 "Intersubjectivity", namely Alfred Schutz.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect p. 151.
- 2 Ibid., p. 152.
- 3 Ibid., p. 153.
- 4 Ibid., p. 153.
- 5 The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. I. pp. 157.
- 6 Ibid., p. 158.
- 7 Ibid., p. 158.
- 8 Ibid., p. 159.
- 9 Totality and Infinity, p. 53.
- 10 See Introduction, op. cit. by J. Wild, p. 13.
- 11 The Monist April '71. Vol. 55, par. 2  
pp. 312-333.
- 12 Ibid., p. 318.
- 13 Ibid., p. 318.
- 14 Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology  
p. 9.
- 15 Loc. cit. p. 319.
- 16 Ibid., p. 319.
- 17 Ibid., p. 319.

CHAPTER II  
THE CRITICISM OF ALFRED SCHUTZ

Alfred Schutz had been in close association with Husserl for twenty-five years and therefore should be in a position to criticize his thought. I do think however that he missed the central point of Husserl's approach. No doubt the work contains his own personal insights, but they are of little help to us in understanding Husserl. The reason I think lies in the divergence of their interests. Schutz was in the phenomenological tradition, but his interests lay more in the field of sociology, while Husserl's prime interest was in a critique of cognition. Sociology like Physical Science works more within the "natural attitude" and what has happened, to my mind, is that the Sociologist has attacked the Phenomenologist. Like so many, he thought he understood Phenomenology, but he didn't understand it well enough to stay with it on the question of "Intersubjectivity".

Schutz's article in Vol. III of his Collected Papers entitled "The Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity in Husserl" is an all out attack on Husserl's understanding of "Intersubjectivity". The attack is so brilliant that one is left wondering, but so detailed that one begins to doubt his credibility. He has lists and series of "difficulties", "questions" and "deficiencies" and sums up at the end with "a

partial catalogue of the main difficulties connected with transcendental intersubjectivity."<sup>1</sup> One is tempted to ask if Husserl could possibly have been so lacking in perceptiveness.

I don't propose approaching this mass of criticism by taking every item on the catalogue singly, as though they were all of equal importance. Instead a certain amount of sifting and organizing will be necessary to find out firstly what is the key to Schutz's approach, and secondly if any serious blow has been struck at the foundation of Phenomenology, or at its extension to the area of "Intersubjectivity". Schutz from his reading of Husserl holds that Husserl's Phenomenology prior to his treatment of "Intersubjectivity" is valid. If his treatment of "Intersubjectivity" is an extension of, an application of his Phenomenology, which I maintain it is, then it is Schutz who is inconsistent and not Husserl. But let me proceed.

Schutz clears the way very early by referring to par. 140 of Ideas I in which Husserl promises to "ascribe a basic kind of self evidence to empathy".<sup>2</sup> Schutz concludes: "Empathic evidence thus excludes, in principle ordinary verification".<sup>3</sup> Schutz likewise concludes from his reading of Husserl:

"The main thesis of transcendental phenomenological idealism ... is that only transcendental subjectivity has the ontological status of absolute being, while the real world is essentially relative to it." 4

Thirdly he concludes quoting from Husserl:

"Transcendental intersubjectivity is thus the one in which the real world is constituted as objective, as existing for everyone." 5

He then goes on to state, paraphrasing Husserl<sup>6</sup>:

"The task is to answer 'the painfully puzzling question' of how another psychophysical ego comes to be constituted in my ego, since it is essentially impossible to experience mental contents pertaining to other persons in actual originarity" <sup>7</sup>

Thus the real problem for Schutz and in a way for Husserl is the constitution of one consciousness in another. But it is "painfully puzzling" only as long as we remain in the "natural attitude", and until such time as we re-adjust our phenomenological outlook or focus it on the question of other minds. The pain arises only because of the violence we do consciousness in the "natural attitude". What we have to do is allow consciousness to reveal itself. Husserl's concern all along is to give consciousness this chance. "Empathy" is not the prime concern in Meditation V. It is primarily concerned with the unfolding of consciousness. This is in keeping with Fink's interpretation.

"According to Fink, the goal of the analysis of the experience of the other, offered in the Fifth Meditation, was not a thematic interpretation of 'empathy' but an exposition of the transcendental reduction." <sup>8</sup>

He next sets out in detail, in three stages Husserl's treatment of the question which has by now become banal, namely:

"How can the objectivity of the world as a world for everyone, and the existence of others be established within this egological cosmos? How is it possible to derive the intersubjectivity of the world from the intentionalities of my own conscious life?" <sup>9</sup>

The first stage concerns the "second epoché", the reduction of the world to the ego's proper sphere, excluding  
1. other egos, 2. cultural predicates and 3. any thought of the

world as a world for everyone. The transcendental sphere is thus divided in two.

The second stage is concerned with the process of analogy, whereby I experience my own living body (mein Leib), and then bestow this sense of "living body" upon other human beings who first appear as mere bodies (Körpern). The process involves analogy but is not an inference by analogy.

The third step according to Schutz is that "another monad becomes constituted appresentatively in mine".<sup>10</sup> "Both are functionally joined in a single perception that is at once presenting and appresenting".<sup>11</sup> I perceive his body from my point of view; he perceives it as his body. And the same world is both primordially given to me, and at the same time appresentatively given i.e. as it appears to the other, and as such cannot be verified by me; and this synthesis "serves to institute the co-existence of my I and of the Other's I and thereby a common time-form is instituted."<sup>12</sup>

Schutz criticizes all three stages, and in my opinion, falls down at each step because of his misunderstanding of the phenomenological method, and of not definitively crossing over to the "phenomenological standpoint" from the "natural attitude". He therefore, for instance, falls into the trap of misinterpreting even the problem of how one consciousness can be constituted in another. Seen from the "natural standpoint", this problem appears in one way, seen from the "phenomenological standpoint" it appears differently. It is not a question of bringing two things together this is how the problem appears from the

natural standpoint; it is rather a question of analysing consciousness.

In his criticism of the "second epoché" Schutz brings up five "major difficulties" all of which would make sense if consciousness were some thing to be divided into two parts, namely, what is properly of the ego and what is not. Consciousness is neither a thing nor is it divisible and the "epoché" is not a job of dividing it. The "epoché" is an effort at understanding it. Therefore lack of clarity in identifying either part, or ambiguity in defining the "other" are not really problems. We are groping and hope that by the time we are finished we will understand a little more about consciousness. The difficulty arising out of finding the "other" in the sphere of what is properly my own would be serious, again if we were dealing with things or even if we were dealing with a consciousness which could be clearly divided into two, if we could cut it in two with a scalpel as it were. Instead, what we are doing could better be compared to examining something under a microscope; we try to focus attention on one aspect of consciousness rather than another, but the other always keeps coming in. You don't really separate the two spheres, just as you don't separate the three egos referred to by Fink<sup>13</sup> namely, the mundane ego, the transcendental ego, and the detached observer who performs the "epoché". Consciousness is one and indivisible and undetachable from the "ego" in all its versions. To treat it like a divisible detachable material thing is to misunderstand it.

When Husserl comes to the analogy argument he is not depending on it to prove anything. It is something seen in consciousness with the intersubjective experience. Hence, the difficulties brought up by Schutz about the analogy issue are not valid, whether it be the difficulty of establishing what is congruent behaviour, or the fact of the variation of "normality" for young, for old, for different cultures etc., or the point brought up in later discussion, how difference of sex could pose an insurmountable difficulty, if we depended on analogy for an intersubjective understanding between the sexes. All these difficulties are beside the point when we realize that we are inspecting consciousness and that there is as much or as little intersubjective experience as consciousness reveals and that the analogy issue arises as part of a wider issue, with its place in intersubjective relations, but not as its basis. If I were to make of analogy the foundation of intersubjective experience I would be open to all the criticism Schutz makes of it, as well as all the difficulties of Analytic Philosophy regarding the question of other minds as for instance the question: Is there a difference between pain behaviour with pain and pain behaviour without pain? Phenomenology avoids such issues by concentrating on consciousness, and with consciousness as the absolute I can know as much or as little about other minds as consciousness tells me.

Regarding stage 3, "another monad becomes constituted appresentatively in mine"<sup>11</sup>, he finds it "hard to see how along with the appresentation of another's animated body as

'of the Other' his primordial world, the sphere of what is 'properly' of his ego can be appresented as well".<sup>15</sup> This is a typical statement of a non-phenomenologist. He is looking for reasons where the phenomenologist would look into consciousness. I would not argue with him or try to persuade him of what I see in my consciousness, but ask him to reflect on his. We all have experience of communicating with others, of getting into the mind of others as it were. Does he really think this experience is deceptive or meaningless? He has difficulty seeing "how the temporality of the other essential to the constitution of the other monad might be disclosed."<sup>16</sup> Does he want a reason? How it can be so matters little by comparison with what consciousness discloses as facts. And when he says that the "instituting of a common and objective nature presuppose a we-relationship"<sup>17</sup> he leaves himself wide open to the accusation of treating things apart from consciousness, in other words of reverting to the "natural attitude". In Phenomenology, everything I know is seen in relation to consciousness, and to my own consciousness at that, the transcendent world, the relationship of others to the world to myself and to one another. In fact I can know nothing outside of its relationship to consciousness including Schutz's "we-relationship".

Basically I think all of Schutz's criticisms stem from his misunderstanding of the aim of Phenomenology, namely to see exactly what consciousness is saying to us, with a corresponding misunderstanding of "constitution" which is nothing more than

"finding something in consciousness", or simply "to be in consciousness", and finally a gross misunderstanding of the technique of "epoché".

Schutz's brilliance certainly makes the second "epoché" look silly. By the time he is finished it is a complete failure. But is that not what it was originally meant to be? Is Schutz not treating it too rationally? As I have understood the "reduction", it is simply a method of focussing attention on certain aspects of consciousness, simply a method of clarifying intuition, and intuition is the essential thing in phenomenology. Anything else is but an aid to, and accidental to intuition. The method of "epoché" says in effect: You want to prove something? "bracket it out, focus your attention away from it and see if you can eliminate it from your consciousness, and if in fact you try and fail, you have proved your first point." Paradoxically the failure of the "epoché" is its success. Merleau-Ponty<sup>18</sup> and John Sallis<sup>19</sup> come to the same conclusion. Schutz has shown the failure, the inconsistency etc. etc. of the "second epoché". There is no such thing as "the sphere of my ownness" because consciousness and the world are "intersubjective" from the very beginning, because there is an originary experience called "Empathy", and when I try to eliminate it, it becomes all the more vividly present to me. Criticize the "reduction" if you will, but recognize its validity as a technique.

All this discussion points to the fact that the intersubjective experience is something apriori and fundamentally

unexplainable and that Husserl's "attempts" to explain it simply highlight this fact, and help to throw light on what we should expect from the "reductions", namely, not coherent argument but a more vivid intuition of what appears in consciousness.

I would like to quote at length and comment on remarks from Schutz's concluding section, as I think it will reveal further his misunderstanding and serve as a peg on which to hang for the last time my understanding of Husserl.

"As a result of these considerations we must conclude that Husserl's attempt to account for the constitution of transcendental intersubjectivity in terms of the operations of the consciousness of the transcendental ego has not succeeded. It is to be surmized that intersubjectivity is not a problem of constitution which can be solved within the transcendental sphere, but is rather a datum of the life world. It is a fundamental ontological category of human existence in the world and therefore of all philosophical anthropology." 20

Schutz is rejecting phenomenology as an explanation of intersubjectivity and substituting in its place "a datum of the life world". But how does he know this "datum"? Is it not in his consciousness? Once you have accepted Husserl's position, once you have accepted consciousness as absolute, then ultimately everything you know is referred back to ordinary experience in consciousness; either it is constituted in consciousness, or you do not know it at all. And Schutz will have to accept this if he wants to call himself a phenomenologist. He speaks of intersubjectivity as a "fundamental ontological category of human existence in the world", but if it is, as such it is found in consciousness, it is constituted in consciousness,

otherwise I would never know it.

"It can, however, be said with certainty that only such an ontology of the life-world, not a transcendental constitutional analysis, can clarify that essential relationship of intersubjectivity which is the basis of all social science ..." 21

This is but to repeat a mistaken notion regarding ontology, to assume there is more than one absolute, more than one foundation for knowledge, more than one basic reality for me. It is ultimately a question of how seriously he takes the original phenomenological stand of seeing all things in consciousness, because it is the one thing that is immediately present to me and anything else is present through consciousness. And from remarks of this kind it would seem that Schutz never really accepted this standpoint.

"But how can the appearance of solipsism come about? Obviously only by artificially suspending the hidden intentionality of the founding mundane intersubjectivity and eliminating, by means of the reduction the essential content of the world accepted by me as a world for everyone" 22

I agree that solipsism comes about only through the suspension of "hidden intentionality". From his studies in child psychology Merleau-Ponty points out that "a sort of wall between me and the other" appears not at the beginning of the child's psychic life but only later.<sup>23</sup> Solipsism forgets what consciousness has revealed. This is what Husserl is trying to bring out in the "second epoché", it is its whole purpose. The "reduction" far from creating the problem, faces a problem created by the "natural attitude". Perhaps Schutz and Husserl meet at this point in agreeing that solipsism is

an artificially created position "by artificially suspending ... hidden intentionality", which Husserl bases in consciousness, but which Schutz bases on an "ontology of the life-world"

"What does require clarification is the desperate attempt to escape from the appearance of solipsism by introducing the second epoché leading to the primordial sphere - since it is precisely this attempt which gives rise to that appearance" 24

For both Husserl and Schutz solipsism is only an appearance. Why then the "desperate effort"? Perhaps it is attributable to the fact that Husserl was a mathematician, and mathematicians like to disprove even the absurd. They have a method called "reductio ad absurdum". The "epoché" is a "reductio ad absurdum", but with a difference. The "reductio ad absurdum" in mathematics is a form of argument. The phenomenological version is not. The "reductio ad absurdum" in mathematics amounts to taking the absurdity, deducing its consequences, and seeing how they contradict known facts. The phenomenological version takes an absurdity, tries to see it in consciousness, fails, and sees instead its opposite. Both depend on a kind of abstraction. The "reduction" is an abstraction. It does not exist in concrete reality, nor in concrete consciousness, but you can consider it in an abstract way, in isolation, as mathematicians do with their abstract concepts, for the purpose of clarifying the contents of concrete consciousness.

By now we are familiar with the approach and method of Phenomenology, and we should be in a position to distinguish between statements of genuine Phenomenology and misunderstandings. I will take some quotations from Schutz to emphasize

once again his misunderstanding of Phenomenology and follow up with appropriate quotations from Husserl revealing the true spirit of Phenomenology.

(1) Having explained the method of "epoché" or bracketing, Schutz asks if anything at all remains unbracketed, and replies that what remains "is nothing less than the universe of our conscious life in its integrity"; and having found the world again in consciousness through "intentionality" he concludes

"Thus the whole world is preserved within the reduced sphere in so far, but only in so far, as it is the intentional correlate of my conscious life" 25

and he adds

"with the radical modification, however, that these intentional objects are no longer the things of the outer world as they exist and as they really are, but phenomena as they appear to me" 26

Schutz has here lapsed into the way of speaking of the natural attitude, and leaves one wondering if he ever really accepted the phenomenological attitude in which, "the things of the outer world as they exist and as they really are" makes no sense. In phenomenology these "objects" become once for all "noemata".

Compare the above quotations with what Husserl has to say:

"Absurdity first arises when one philosophizes and, in probing for ultimate information as to the meaning of the world, fails to notice that the whole being of the world consists in a certain "meaning" which presupposes absolute consciousness as the field from which meaning is derived" 27

(ii) In Collected Papers III on "Transcendental Intersubjectivity", Schutz writes:

"It is to be surmised that intersubjectivity is not a problem of constitution which can be solved within the transcendental sphere but is rather a datum (Gegebenheit) of the life world" 28

This again shows misunderstanding, because constitution and knowledge are co-extensive. The very meaning of "constitution" is, that what is constituted, is found in consciousness. Schutz is left with the problem of explaining what is "a datum of the life world" if it is not a constitution of consciousness. True, you may consider the life world from the natural standpoint.

As Husserl says  
 / "All objective consideration of the world is consideration of the 'exterior' and grasps only 'externals', objective entities." 29

But he adds

"The radical consideration of the world is the systematic and purely internal consideration of the subjectivity which "expresses" or "externalizes" itself in the exterior" 30

(iii) In Chapter 3 of The Phenomenology of the Social World Schutz writes:

"As we proceed to our study of the social world, we abandon the strictly phenomenological method." 31

and in a note at the end of Chapter I:

"In ordinary social life we are no longer concerned with the constituting phenomena as these are studied within the sphere of the phenomenological reduction. We are concerned only with the phenomena corresponding to them within the natural attitude." 32

True, you can consider the social world within the natural attitude, but is he forgetting that phenomenological constitution is all-encompassing and that we can never really go outside it? A return to the natural attitude is equivalent to saying he

never really took the phenomenological attitude seriously. I quote from the conclusion of Cartesian Meditations :

"We can now say likewise that, in apriori transcendental phenomenology, all apriori sciences without exception originate with an ultimate grounding, thanks to its correlational research, and that, taken with this origin, they belong within an all-embracing apriori phenomenology itself, as its systematically differentiated branches." 33

(iv) In Schutz's Collected Papers III we read:

"Within the transcendentially reduced sphere as an intentional constituent of the phenomenal world of experience one must be able to identify it as such in order to be able to abstract from it." 34

This is one of the many difficulties Schutz finds with the second reduction. What he is really asking for as a condition of the second "epoché" is the understanding of intersubjectivity we hope to achieve by means of the reduction. What the reduction leads us to is a clearer vision of what is already in our consciousness. To this extent Schutz is right: we must see the conclusion before we start. But if the reduction is to have any meaning at all, we start with a vague understanding which in the course of the reduction gives way to clearer understanding. It is not surprising if Husserl gives the impression of groping, for that is what he is doing.

"As Ego in the transcendental attitude I attempt first of all to delimit, within my horizon of transcendental experience what is peculiarly my own" 35

Note the word "attempt".

"The transcendental ego emerged by virtue of my 'parenthesizing' of the entire Objective world and all other (including all ideal) Objectivities." 36

Note the word "emerged".

To conclude, Schutz grossly misunderstands Husserl and Phenomenology, so much so that he need not be taken too seriously by phenomenologists. He has obvious merits as a sociologist, but he so obviously misunderstands Husserl, that I think Husserl himself would not have answered him.<sup>37</sup> However, a consideration of his criticism did help to highlight some genuine aspects of Husserl's Phenomenology, and particularly of the Phenomenology of "Intersubjectivity".

Let us now pass on to the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Collected Papers III p. 75.
- 2 Ideas I par. 140, p. 360.
- 3 Op. cit. p. 52.
- 4 Ibid., p. 53.
- 5 Ibid., p. 53.
- 6 Formal and Transcendental Logic p. 239.
- 7 Op. cit. p. 54.
- 8 Ibid., p. 55.
- 9 Ibid., p. 55.
- 10 Ibid., p. 67.
- 11 Ibid., p. 67.
- 12 Ibid., p. 67.
- 13 Ibid., p. 60.
- 14 Ibid., p. 67.
- 15 Ibid., p. 67.
- 16 Ibid., p. 69.
- 17 Ibid., p. 69.
- 18 As for instance when he describes "solipsism" as a "thought experiment". See "The Philosopher and His Shadow" in Signs p. 173-174.
- 19 Loc. cit. p. 319.
- 20 Schutz Loc. cit. p. 82.
- 21 Ibid., p. 82
- 22 Ibid., p. 83.
- 23 See "The Child's Relations with Others" in The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays p. 120.
- 24 Schutz Loc. cit. p. 83.
- 25 Collected Papers I p. 106.
- 26 Ibid., p. 106.
- 27 Ideas p. 153.

- 28 Collected Papers III p. 82.  
29 Crisis p. 113.  
30 Ibid., p. 113.  
31 The Phenomenology of the Social World p. 97.  
32 Ibid., p. 44  
33 Cartesian Meditations par. 64, p. 155.  
34 Collected Papers III pp. 58-59.  
35 Cartesian Meditations par. 44, p. 95.  
36 Ibid., par. 45, p. 99.  
37 See Preface by Husserl to Eugene Fink's article  
in The Phenomenology of Husserl

### CHAPTER III

#### THE INSIGHT OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

In this chapter I propose looking at Maurice Merleau-Ponty's treatment of Intersubjectivity and the problem of solipsism, principally from the chapter of the Phenomenology of Perception entitled "Other People and the Human World". I will compare it with Husserl's stand and try to show that Merleau-Ponty's insight is a development, an advancement and hence an approval and support of Husserl's view.

Like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty views the question of the appearance of other subjects on my horizons as a refinement or modification of my view of nature. The cultural world and the natural world are one and the same thing, at least to the extent that we find them together from the very start.

"Just as nature finds its way to the core of my personal life and becomes inextricably linked with it, so behavior patterns settle into that nature, being deposited in the form of a cultural world" <sup>1</sup>

Man leaves his imprint on the world, "like some sediment, outside himself"<sup>2</sup> in the form of houses, roads, implements etc. I am aware of this. I am aware of different cultures, but first of all I am aware of my own, and it would seem that it is through my experience of my own culture that I understand alien cultures; the "one" and the "we" are

understood through the "I". The analogy issue arises immediately. If I understand the other only in terms of myself, do I really understand him?

"how can the word 'I' be put into the plural, how can a general idea of the 'I' be formed, how can I speak of an 'I' other than my own, how can I know that there are other 'I's, how can consciousness which, by its nature, and as self-knowledge, is in the mode of the 'I', be grasped in the mode of Thou, and through this, in the world of the 'One'?"<sup>3</sup>

It becomes clear before long, that analogy poses rather than solves the question of my relationship with others, and that the question remains unanswered as long as we think in "natural" terms.

"The existence of other people is a difficulty and an outrage for objective thought."<sup>4</sup>

This is the essence of the problem of solipsism, and the answer to the problem lies in going back to real experience, what Husserl called "back to the things themselves". In actual fact, it is more a question of getting away from something, of getting away from the abstractions of classical physiology and philosophies based on a similar outlook.

"The physiological event is merely the abstract scheme of the perceptual event."<sup>5</sup>

It is a question of getting away from "objective thought".

Merleau-Ponty sees a little more clearly than Husserl himself what Husserl was about. He is drawing out the "unthought-of element"<sup>6</sup> in the writings of Husserl. Husserl had to some extent let himself open to criticism. Merleau-Ponty aims at eliminating the last vestiges of

anything resembling "objective thought". Even within Phenomenology, it is possible to think of other subjects in a more or less objective way, to think for instance of two or more minds in touch with one another through "empathy" as though the subjects were absolute. This of course is to misunderstand "empathy". It is also possible, for an element of the "objective" to linger on in one's view of "constitution", and while allowing that the object and subject are one in the act of consciousness, of thinking of the different items in consciousness in separation from one another. True, Husserl has developed a notion of "objectivity", but the unity of consciousness comes before any such notion, and once the unity of consciousness is recognized, many problems vanish. It is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty is wary of the notion of "constitution" of the object and prefers to think of perception in terms of "our inherence in things".<sup>7</sup>

"If I experience this inhering of my consciousness in its body and its world, the perception of other people and the plurality of consciousnesses no longer present any difficulty." <sup>8</sup>

Because I am immersed in my body and in the world, perception becomes "a gaze at grips with a visible world."<sup>9</sup> Like a true disciple of Husserl he is intent upon appreciating this gaze. True reflection on this gaze is simply to re-enact the gaze, but as soon as I dissect it into abstractions, problems arise. The problem of solipsism does not exist originally as is shown by a study of the psychology

of the child.

"He has no awareness of himself or of others as private subjectivities, nor does he suspect that all of us, himself included, are limited to one certain point of view of the world" 10

"For him men are empty heads turned towards one single, self-evident world where everything takes place, even dreams, which are, he thinks, in his room, and even thinking since it is not distinct from words." 11

It is only when the child becomes an adult and rationalizes his experience that thoughts become private possessions. Similarly Merleau-Ponty holds that it is only retrospectively, looking back on the shared experience of dialogue, that I turn this experience into a private and unshared consciousness. Husserl could lead us to think of consciousness in this way, when he invites us to look inward to the inner man where the truth dwells. Merleau-Ponty takes us back out into the world, to our original experience of the world. The adult through rationalization has dulled his experience of the world. Particularly he has objectified thought and introduced problems whereas the whole idea of a perceptual gaze is completely free of problems. Problems arise only through objective thinking including the problem of solipsism. We are not presented with solipsism. It is a "thought experiment."<sup>12</sup> We have to think our way to solipsism by a process resembling the second reduction without facing up to its conclusion, stopping short before it collapses. The process is made easy by the fact that we have become so used to "objective thinking" in our scientific culture. "Objective" and abstract thinking is not bad in itself, provided we do

not allow it to blind us, or become an obstacle to that "gaze at grips with a visible world".

When I affirm an alien consciousness over against my own then my consciousness becomes "a private spectacle". While for Husserl everything is constituted for me in my consciousness, for Merleau-Ponty, I really do not feel that I occupy a privileged position because there is so much in my consciousness which does not originate with me.

"It is true that I do not feel that I am the constituting agent either of the natural or of the cultural world: into each perception and into each judgment I bring either sensory functions or cultural settings which are not actually mine." 13

No doubt, there is a solipsistic aspect to consciousness and that is why Husserl speaks of a community of "monads" and Merleau-Ponty speaks of "a solipsism rooted in living experience and quite insurmountable".<sup>14</sup>

If there is an answer to "solipsism" it is to be found by going back prior to constitution to the simple "gaze at grips with a visible world", i.e. to perception, to the body, to the world all wrapped up in one, forgetting that I am looking at my consciousness, and returning to the point of view of the child who "has no awareness of himself or of others as private subjectivities, nor does he suspect that all of us, himself included, are limited to one certain point of view of the world"<sup>15</sup>. "Constitution" emphasizes the personal. Obviously we cannot get away from the personal completely. What we have to do is de-emphasize it, realize

that it is associated with rational thinking, that the problem of solipsism which it poses cannot be solved by rational thinking, that that problem was not originally there and that its solution lies in going back to the origins of experience.

"What we do in effect is to iron out the I and the Thou in an experience shared by a plurality, thus introducing the impersonal into the heart of subjectivity and eliminating the individuality of perspectives." 16

Hence the solution might more aptly be called a "prevention" avoiding the situation where we have to "try to think ourselves into the other".<sup>17</sup> I must lose myself to some extent as a person because "The other person is never quite a personal being, if I myself am totally one"<sup>18</sup>. It is a question of suspending abstract rationality and getting back to the pure gaze which is after all the ideal of Phenomenology, the very thing Husserl had in mind. It is a question of purifying that gaze by removing not only distortions, but any impositions which compel me to think this way or that or taboos which prevent me going back on my steps to the origins of thought to questioning even my rational conclusions. Objective thinking tends to become 'fossilized' thinking, and even the first steps which establish me as a person have got me into an enigma from which I can never extricate myself as long as I consider rational conclusions more sacred than the intuitive gaze.

"My awareness of constructing an objective truth would never provide me with anything more than an objective truth for me ..." 19

Whereas at the level of "my intuitive gaze fallen upon a living body in process of acting ... the objects surrounding it immediately take on a fresh layer of significance:"<sup>20</sup>

because:

"...the other body has ceased to be a mere fragment of the world, and become the theatre of a certain process of elaboration, and, as it were, a certain 'view' of the world" 21

But above all,

"...as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other person's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously" 22

The question arises whether in concentrating on the "universal subject" rather than on the personal subject, I am identifying myself with God. But as I know well "this finite and ignorant self which recognizes God in itself"<sup>23</sup> cannot really be identified with God. I recognize other subjects. "Other people have for me at least an initial significance"<sup>24</sup>. This universal subject becomes God for me only when I force the issue.

"Consciousnesses present themselves with the absurdity of a multiple solipsism, such is the situation which has to be understood." 25

This is reminiscent of Husserl's "community of monads".

"Solitude and communication cannot be the two horns of a dilemma, but two 'moments' of one phenomenon, since in fact other people do exist for me." 26

This is the mystery of Husserl's Einfühlung. The other is given to me but not completely. Rationalize the experience and I lose him. Simply look into my experience and I find

him. My experience of him is without doubt even while my knowledge of him is imperfect, and the difficulty arises from objective thought.

"It is false to place ourselves in society as an object among other objects, as it is to place society within ourselves as an object of thought, and in both cases the mistake lies in treating the social as an object. We must return to the social with which we are in contact by the mere fact of existing, and which we carry about inseparably with us before any objectification." 27

and I would lay emphasis on the word "before".

How does Merleau-Ponty's approach compare with that of Husserl? While Merleau-Ponty was not satisfied with Husserl's transcendental idealism and while the notion of 'constitution' seemed to him to involve solipsism, he formulates a philosophy of the intersubjective after Husserl's own heart, one that to my mind would certainly have won Husserl's approval. Merleau-Ponty is at heart a phenomenologist who sought enlightenment in the exploration of consciousness rather than in reason. We know that Husserl himself was not altogether happy about his formulation of the philosophy of "empathy" as is clear for example from the fact that IDEAS II was not published in his lifetime, and I think he would have welcomed the insight of Merleau-Ponty. The first reduction clarified our consciousness of the world. The second reduction clarified our consciousness of other subjects. But when I say that everything I know including other subjects is constituted in my consciousness, have I fallen into solipsism? It all depends of course on

the meaning I give to the word "constitute", and it is this difficulty Merleau-Ponty is trying to overcome in his approach. Personally I believe the same insight could be incorporated into the philosophy of "constitution" and "empathy". Perhaps it could be argued that the words smacked too much of objective thinking and Husserl certainly would not have wanted that. What is far more important for Husserl is what is given in consciousness, and the end result of his investigation is a primordial experience which he calls "empathy". What Merleau-Ponty does is to investigate this experience to expand and clarify it, to emphasize more its primordial nature, but above all to point out that any attempt to rationalize it only results in it eluding our grasp. To say that the social world is constituted in my consciousness is already to have moved one step from the intuition itself. But in holding that the intersubjective experience is a primordial experience of consciousness Husserl and Merleau-Ponty are at one.

Merleau-Ponty makes no secret of his respect and appreciation for Husserl's Phenomenology, and his criticisms are by way of expansion and clarification rather than a rejection of his outlook. If one has any doubts in this regard he should read "The Philosopher and his Shadow"<sup>28</sup> in which he very clearly identifies his own philosophy with that of Husserl. He accounts for the apparent contradiction of the reduction, rejects outrightly the "blosse Sachen" or "things simply as they are", agrees with Husserl in effect

on the question of objectivity when he writes that the things perceived "would really be being only if I learned that they are seen by others, that they are presumptively visible to every viewer who warrants the name"<sup>29</sup>. He fills in the "unthought-of element" in Husserl when he writes: "...there is no constituting of a mind for a mind, but of a man for a man."<sup>30</sup> He attributes to Husserl the saying, "The transcendental subjectivity is intersubjectivity"<sup>31</sup> and states with approval:

"For the 'solipsist' thing is not primary for Husserl, nor is the solus ipse. Solipsism is a 'thought-experiment'; the solus ipse a constructed subject."<sup>32</sup>

And it is significant that "The Philosopher and his Shadow" appeared in 1959, just two years before Merleau-Ponty's death and can therefore be regarded as a mature work of its author.

My conclusion then is that Merleau-Ponty far from opposing Husserl gives unqualified support to his approach. He took up where Husserl left off and clarified and extended his thinking. The importance of Merleau-Ponty for this discussion is his stamp of approval for Husserl. He approves the essentials; his criticisms of detail e.g. of constitution, are constructive and along Husserlian lines. It would be a poor disciple indeed who did not add something to his master's thoughts. Merleau-Ponty of all the critics of Husserl I have read on the topic of "Intersubjectivity" is the one who to me understands his Phenomenology best while adding his own insights.

## Footnotes

- 1 The Phenomenology of Perception p. 347.
- 2 Ibid., p. 348.
- 3 Ibid., p. 348.
- 4 Ibid., p. 349.
- 5 Ibid., p. 350.
- 6 "When we are considering a man's thought, the greater the work accomplished ...the richer the unthought-of element in that work" - quoted by Merleau-Ponty from Heidegger on p. 160 of Signs
- 7 The Phenomenology of Perception p. 351.
- 8 Ibid., p. 351.
- 9 Ibid., p. 351.
- 10 Ibid., p. 355.
- 11 Ibid., p. 355.
- 12 Signs p. 173.
- 13 The Phenomenology of Perception p. 358.
- 14 Ibid., p. 358.
- 15 Ibid., p. 355.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 355-56.
- 17 Ibid., p. 356.
- 18 Ibid., p. 352.
- 19 Ibid., p. 355.
- 20 Ibid., p. 353.
- 21 Ibid., p. 353.
- 22 Ibid., p. 354.
- 23 Ibid., p. 359.
- 24 Ibid., p. 359.
- 25 Ibid., p. 359.
- 26 Ibid., p. 359.
- 27 Ibid., p. 362.
- 28 In Signs pp. 159-181.
- 29 Signs, p. 168.
- 30 Ibid., p. 169.
- 31 See The Phenomenological Movement by H. Spiegelberg Vol. 2 p. 557.
- 32 Signs p. 173.

## CONCLUSION

My conclusion is clear. It is in favour of Husserl without reservation. Husserl introduces a new philosophy, with a new point of view. To understand Husserl, or judge him one must understand his point of view. He has made it quite clear that he is adopting a new approach to philosophy. He takes consciousness as absolute, absolutely present, and all-encompassing, so that everything we know, we know through consciousness, and whatever is outside of consciousness means nothing to us. Phenomenology is an unfolding of consciousness, an inspection of consciousness, a scrutiny of consciousness, nothing more, nothing less.

The important thing to realize, however, is that consciousness cannot be thought of in the same way as things. Most of our thinking is about things, and we must be careful not to impose on consciousness our way of thinking about things. We must rather, be absolutely honest and see consciousness for what it is, allow consciousness to present itself.

Ask the phenomenologist about the absolute object, or the absolute subject. He has no answer, because he only knows subject and object united in consciousness. Even when he tries to limit that consciousness by "reduction", he fails, because consciousness remains one and absolutely

irreducible; you must accept it in its entirety.

We find, simply by reflecting on consciousness, that it is "intentional" and that it is "intersubjective", and consciousness being the final court of appeal, there are no further questions to be asked and no alternative verdict is possible.

The important thing is to see the phenomenological point of view, to understand the phenomenological method, to realize that the reduction is but an aid to our reflecting on consciousness, and to realize also that reason takes second place to intuition and can in fact be an obstacle to our vision of "the things themselves". Phenomenology aims at removing all such obstacles to our vision, all impositions on and distortions of our consciousness.

The first reduction reveals consciousness as "intentional". The second reduction reveals consciousness as "intersubjective". "Empathy" is the key word to Husserl's understanding of "Intersubjectivity" and "empathy" is something to be experienced rather than explained or defended. In fact every effort at explaining or justifying it is bound to fail since it is a primordial experience involved in our experience of the world around us and is not reducible to any more primitive experience, and that is why Husserl just names it "empathy". Husserl, needless to say, does not have the last word either as regards Phenomenology or our experience of other people. Merleau-Ponty takes up and develops his Phenomenology and clarifies the phenomenological position on "Intersubjectivity". He is

even more phenomenological than Husserl in emphasizing the intuition in which we find other people and recognizing that solipsism has its origins in reason. He is clearer than Husserl on this point, and goes back further than Husserl in his search for the origins of our experience of others, back to the experience of consciousness which is prior to reason, prior even to consciousness of self as a private experience. It is there he finds the experience of others and once found at so fundamental a level it is secure, more secure in fact than any of the findings of reason. Husserl found the same experience, although he did not express it as clearly as Merleau-Ponty, and called it "empathy".

How then does the problem of solipsism arise? It arises simply from trying to rationalize experience, for while intuition is intersubjective, reason is certainly personal, private and solipsistic. It arises because objective reason is based on our dealings with objects, and imposes objective thinking on consciousness, and it succeeds until such time as this flaw is noticed, and we recognize that there cannot be an objective science of subjectivity.

No doubt Husserl's own mental make-up has strongly influenced the presentation of his insights; in fact the insights, the mind which produces them and their presentation are inseparable. He seems rather analytic or abstract. Explication, of its very nature is abstract in the sense that if you want to go into detail you must

separate parts or aspects of your vision from the whole, isolate them for attention. That is what he does by the "reductions", and it is involved in the very meaning of the words "ownness", "pairing", "appresentation", even the word "empathy". But deep down the intuition of the whole field of consciousness means far more to him than analysis. A clarification of the whole field of consciousness is what he is aiming at, and is the ultimate outcome of his writings. A detailed explication should help us see the complete picture more clearly. Rather than criticize the process we should judge the approach by its end result, and the end result for Husserl I maintain was a clearer picture of consciousness and included in it is "empathy".

THE END

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