

It would be an exaggeration to claim that Husserl managed to solve the very perplexing problem about the birth and death of subjectivity, but his sporadic reflections on these issues can nevertheless serve as an illustration of the constant development of his thinking. Ultimately, it must remain an open question whether we are dealing with an issue that can be treated by phenomenology at all, or whether, rather, we are faced with something that can only be addressed by speculative metaphysics.³²

C. Intersubjectivity

Husserl considered intersubjectivity to be a topic of immense importance, and, from a purely quantitative point of view, he devoted more pages to this issue than any of the later phenomenologists.³³ For a number of reasons, Husserl's analysis of intersubjectivity deserves a detailed treatment, not the least because it constitutes an important corrective to his 'system.' To be more precise: Only a consideration of his analysis of intersubjectivity permits a correct understanding of Husserl's transcendental-idealistic position. Although Husserl has often been regarded as a *methodological solipsist*,³⁴ he in fact undertook what Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas have later become known for: *An intersubjective transformation of transcendental philosophy*.

Solipsism

Husserl's phenomenology has very frequently been accused of being solipsistic in nature. By solipsism one normally understands a position that either claims that there only exists one single consciousness, namely one's own, or that argues that it is impossible to know whether there are in fact any other subjects besides oneself. But why this criticism? Because the very effectuation of the epoché and the transcendental reduction seem to restrict the field of research of phenomenology in advance to the phenomenologizing individual's own consciousness and phenomena. If the purpose of the intentional-constitutive analysis is to investigate the world's givenness for me, how should it then ever be capable of disclosing the world's givenness for another subject, not to speak of the self-givenness of this foreign subject? If one is meaningfully to speak of a foreign subject, of an Other, it is evident that we are dealing with something that cannot be reduced to its mere givenness for me. But if phenomenology calls for a return to that which is evidentially given to me, there appears to be a problem.

To be more precise, Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity seems to be confronted with two interrelated difficulties: 1) How should I ever be able to constitute the Other, since the Other qua Other must be more than a mere product of constitution? 2) How should it phenomenologically be possible to describe the givenness of the Other, since the Other qua foreign subjectivity is characterized by its inaccessibility, by always transcending its givenness *for me*?

These problems are increased the moment Husserl begins arguing that the phenomenologist must start as a solipsist (Hua 8/176, 17/276) and necessarily, at least initially, effectuate a so-called *primordial* reduction, that is, a reduction that has the aim of isolating the *sphere of ownness*—the totality of all that which can be constituted by an isolated ego without the contribution of any other subjects (Hua 1/124, 17/248). For, as he writes, only thereby will it be possible to comprehend the *constituted* ontological validity of the Other (Hua 15/270–271).

All in all, these considerations seem to unequivocally support the standard criticism: Husserl remained caught in a solipsistic paradigm, and, in contrast to later phenomenologists, failed to appreciate the importance of intersubjectivity.

However, the actual situation is considerably more complex. Let me show why.

Transcendental Intersubjectivity

The easiest way to introduce Husserl's analysis of intersubjectivity is in connection with his theory of intentionality. According to Husserl, my perceptions present me with intersubjectively accessible being, that is, being that does not exist for me alone, but for everybody (Hua 9/431, 14/289, 390, 17/243, 6/469). I *experience* objects, events, and actions as public, not as private (Hua 1/123, 15/5). Husserl consequently claims that an ontological analysis, insofar as it unveils the being-sense (*Seinssinn*) of the world as intersubjectively valid, leads to a disclosure of the transcendental relevance of foreign subjectivity and thus to an examination of *transcendental intersubjectivity* (Hua 15/110). As he ultimately formulates it:

Concrete, full transcendental subjectivity is the totality of an open community of I's—a totality that comes from within, that is unified purely transcendently, and that is concrete only in this way. Transcendental intersubjectivity is the absolute and only self-sufficient ontological foundation [*Seinsboden*], out of which every-

thing objective (the totality of objectively real entities, but also every objective ideal world) draws its sense and its validity (Hua 9/344, transl. modified).

It is in the light of such considerations that Husserl can characterize the intersubjective-transcendental sociality as the source of all real truth and being (Hua 1/35, 182, 8/449, 9/295, 474), and occasionally even describes his own project as a *sociological* transcendental philosophy (Hua 9/539), writing that the development of phenomenology necessarily implies the step from an egological to a *transcendental-sociological* phenomenology.³⁵ Transcendental phenomenology is only *apparently* solipsistic, and the reason for introducing the primordial reduction is methodological in nature. It is only possible to realize the full extent of the significance of intersubjectivity when we realize how *little* the single subject can manage on its own. In other words, a radical implementation of the transcendental reduction will eventually lead to a disclosure of transcendental intersubjectivity (Hua 1/69, 9/245–246, 8/129).

Given this background, it is fairly easy to show why Husserl occupied himself so intensively with the issue of intersubjectivity. He was convinced that it contained the key to a comprehension of the *constitution* of objective reality and transcendence, and since Husserl regarded that as one of the most important tasks of transcendental phenomenology (Hua 8/465), it should be obvious what kind of systematic importance his analyses of intersubjectivity possess and how much is actually at stake. If transcendental phenomenology for some reason were prevented in principle from accounting for intersubjectivity (eventually because of its alleged methodological solipsism or subjective idealism), the consequence would not merely be its inability to carry out an investigation of a specific and clearly demarcated problem, but its failure as a fundamental philosophical project.

Husserl's phenomenological investigation of intersubjectivity is an analysis of the *transcendental* or constitutive function of intersubjectivity, and the aim of his reflections is precisely to formulate a theory of transcendental intersubjectivity and *not* to give a detailed examination of the concrete sociality or the specific I-Thou relation. The reason why this must be emphasized is that the major part of the critical assessment of Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity (which has often restricted itself to an analysis of his account in the Fifth *Cartesian Meditation*) has focused on exactly these aspects. Thus, it has been customary to discuss, on the one hand, whether Husserl's concept of empathy (*Einfühlung*) implies a direct

or an indirect experience of the Other, and whether this account is phenomenologically sound; or, on the other, whether Husserl's (idealistic) model of constitution could at all establish a symmetrical relation between the I and the Other, a discussion that was often quite inadequate, since one did not at the same time analyze the actual meaning of constitution, but simply presupposed a (flawed) interpretation of it.³⁶

It would be wrong to claim that these problems are completely irrelevant, especially since Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity is in fact a concept of *inter*-subjectivity, that is, the relation between subjects. Consequently, it implies an examination of empathy—how can I experience another subject? According to the phenomenological approach, intersubjectivity cannot be examined adequately from a third-person perspective, but must be analyzed in its experiential manifestation from a first-person perspective. As Husserl writes in *Krisis*, intersubjectivity can only be treated as a transcendental problem through a radical 'mich-selbst-befragen' (Hua 6/206); only my experience of and relation to another subject, as well as those of my experiences that presuppose the Other, really merit the name 'intersubjective.'

The reason why it is still problematic to proceed in the customary manner is that one confuses the way to and the aim of Husserl's analysis of transcendental intersubjectivity. One overlooks that the latter, to some extent, is independent of his analysis of the actual process and constitutive structure of empathy. Even if his account of empathy were to fail, it would not have meant the wreck of the rest of his investigation. Furthermore, as will be shown in a moment, Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity is more complex than normally assumed. He operates with several *kinds* of intersubjectivity and is, for that reason, able to guard against the type of critique which, by questioning his account of the bodily-mediated intersubjectivity, assumed that the entire foundation of his analysis would break down.³⁷

Let me say a few words about Husserl's description of the concrete experience of the Other before I turn to what I believe is the really essential part of his analysis of intersubjectivity—his account of constituting intersubjectivity.

The Experience of the Other

The concrete experience of the Other is, for Husserl, always an experience of the Other in its bodily appearance, for which reason concrete intersubjectivity must be understood as a relation between incarnated sub-

jects. I will not account in detail for Husserl's precise analysis of the complex structure of empathy (which would imply an extended discussion of such notions as appresentation [*Appräsentation*] and pairing [*Parrung*]),³⁸ but let me merely mention that Husserl takes empathy to presuppose a certain similarity between the foreign embodied subject I encounter and myself. Were I not myself a bodily subject, I would never be able to recognize other embodied subjects. This does not imply, however, that my experience of the Other is, in reality, a case of an analogical inference (Hua 1/141, 13/338–339). We are not dealing with any kind of inference, but with an actual *experience*, the structure of which Husserl attempts to uncover. He therefore refuses to take the experience of the Other as a basic, unanalyzable fact (something he accuses Max Scheler of doing [Hua 14/335]). On the contrary, its genesis and specific presuppositions have to be clarified. We need to uncover the conditions of possibility for empathy, particularly those that concern the nature of the experiencing subject. Thus, as Husserl for example points out, it is exactly the unique subject-object status of my body that permits me to recognize another body as a foreign embodied subjectivity (Hua 8/62). As I already mentioned in my presentation of Husserl's phenomenology of the body, when my left hand touches my right hand, I experience myself in a way that anticipates the way in which I would experience an Other and an Other would experience me.

This focus on the importance of the body also comes to the fore when Husserl writes that the experience of the body (one's own as well as the body of the Other) constitutes the foundation and norm for all other experiences (Hua 14/126). Thus, Husserl occasionally speaks of the mother-child relation as the most original of all relations (Hua 15/511, 15/582, 15/604–605), claiming that it precedes the experience of physical objects. In other words, the central question is not how I can get from the experience of a physical object to the experience of a foreign subject, but how my experience of incarnated subjectivity (my own as well as foreign) conditions the experience of mere objects (Hua 15/637).

That I have an actual experience of the Other, and do not have to do with a mere inference, does not mean that I can experience the Other in the same way as the Other experiences himself or herself, nor that the consciousness of the Other is accessible to me in the same way as my own is. But this is not a problem. On the contrary, it is only because the foreign subject eludes my direct experience in this way that he or she is experienced

as an Other at all. As Husserl writes, had I the same access to the consciousness of the Other as I have to my own, the Other would have ceased being an Other and instead have become a part of myself (Hua 1/139). The self-givenness of the Other is inaccessible and transcendent to me, but it is exactly this limit that I can experience (Hua 1/144, 15/631). When I have an *authentic* experience of another subject, I am exactly experiencing that the Other—in contrast to objects—eludes me. To demand more, to claim that I only experience an Other the moment I can gain access to the first-personal givenness of the Other's experiences is a fundamental misunderstanding that far from respecting the *transcendence* of the Other as Husserl is constantly doing, seeks to abolish it.³⁹

Thus, although Husserl would argue that we do experience the Other, this does not imply that the Other is reduced to a mere intentional object. On the contrary, we are dealing with a subject-subject relation insofar as the Other is exactly experienced in its subjective inaccessibility. It is essential to the phenomenological description of the subject-subject relation that it involves an *asymmetry*. There is a difference between the experiencing subject and the experienced subject. But this asymmetry is a part of any correct description of intersubjectivity. Without asymmetry there would be no intersubjectivity, but merely an undifferentiated collectivity.

This clarification makes it possible to understand what Husserl actually meant when he said that the ego constitutes the Other. It is impossible to meet the Other and to respect the irreducible alterity of the Other unless the Other appears. One cannot speak meaningfully of the absolutely foreign unless this alterity appears as a phenomenon one way or another.⁴⁰ To speak of an Other or of something foreign is to use concepts of relation whose meaning presupposes the ego as contrast. The foreign is exactly foreign for me, the Other is exactly an Other in relation to me—and not in relation to itself. When Husserl speaks of the constitution of the Other, he is referring precisely to this fact. But Husserl would never claim that the ego constitutes the *self-givenness* of the Other, a self-givenness that is characterized by the same kind of immediacy and certainty as my own self-givenness (Hua 15/43). As Husserl repeatedly emphasizes, I do not create, invent, or produce the Other when I constitute him (Hua 1/168, 17/244, 258, 15/13). If this were not the case, it would have implied a denial of foreign subjectivity and Husserl would not have been able to escape solipsism.

These considerations will have to be corrected on one single point. To a certain extent, the self-being of the Other does, in fact, depend upon

me, namely, to the extent that the self-being of each and every subject depends upon its relation to other subjects. As will become clear in the following, Husserl attributes a decisive importance to intersubjectivity when it comes to the self-constitution of the transcendental ego. This holds true for all egos, not only for my own. In its full concretion no subject (not even the Other) can exist independently of Others. In this regard, Husserl advocates a strong symmetrical relation between the ego and the Other.

The Constituting Intersubjectivity

Let me now turn toward the central issue. As already mentioned, Husserl claims that the objectivity and transcendence of the world is constituted intersubjectively and that a clarification of this constitution consequently demands an analysis of transcendental intersubjectivity, and more concretely an examination of my experience of another subject. Why is it, however, that a subject can only constitute objectivity after having experienced an Other? Why is the Other a necessary condition of possibility for my experience of an objective world? Why is my experience of objects changed radically the moment I experience foreign subjectivity? Basically, Husserl's thesis is that my experience of objective validity is made possible by my experience of the transcendence (and inaccessibility) of foreign subjectivity, and that this transcendence, which Husserl designates as the first real alterity and as the source of all kinds of real transcendence, endows the world with objective validity (Hua 14/277, 15/560, 1/173).

Here we have the only transcendence that is genuinely worthy of its name, and everything else that is also called transcendent, such as the objective world, rests upon the transcendence of foreign subjectivity (Hua 8/495).

All Objectivity, in this sense, is related back constitutionally to what does not belong to the Ego proper, to the other-than-my-Ego's-own in the form, 'someone else'—that is to say: the non-Ego in the form, 'another Ego' (Hua 17/248 [241, transl. modified]).

Why is foreign subjectivity such a fundamental condition of the possibility for the constitution of transcendent objects? Why are objects only able to *appear* as transcendent through the Other? The explanation offered by Husserl is that the objects cannot be reduced to being merely my intentional correlates if they can be experienced by Others as well. The intersubjective experienceability of the object guarantees its real transcendence, so my experience (constitution) of transcendent objects is necessarily mediated

by my experience of its givenness for another transcendent subject, that is, by my experience of a foreign world-directed subject. (It is exactly for this reason that the Other's *transcendence* is so vital. If the Other were only an intentional modification or an eidetic variation of myself, the fact that he experienced the same as I would be just as conclusive—to use a Wittgensteinian example—as if one found the same report in several copies of the same newspaper.) Only insofar as I experience that Others experience the same objects as myself do I really experience these objects as objective and real. Only then do the objects appear with a validity that makes them into more than mere intentional objects. Now they are given as real (objective, that is, intersubjectively valid) intentional objects. Whereas every concrete encounter with an Other is fallible—what I took to be a valid experience of an Other could turn out to be a mere hallucination—the very constitutive relation between intersubjectivity and objectivity is a priori in nature.

That which in principle is incapable of being experienced by Others cannot be ascribed transcendence and objectivity. But even if one is willing to concede that there is a connection between intersubjectivity and reality there is, however, an unsolved problem. Under normal circumstances, I still experience that which I accidentally experience alone (for instance this computer that I am writing on now) as transcendent, objective, and real, although I am not simultaneously experiencing this object as being experienced by Others. And this is even implicitly admitted by Husserl, who writes that, even if I knew with absolute certainty that a universal plague had destroyed all life but my own, my worldly experience would still be dependent upon co-functioning transcendental intersubjectivity (Hua 1/125, 15/6, 6/81). The problem can be solved, however, if one differentiates between our first primal experience of Others—which once and for all makes the constitution of objectivity, reality, and transcendence possible, thus *permanently* transforming our categories of experience—and all subsequent experiences of Others. This does not mean that all these subsequent experiences are insignificant, but their contribution is of a different nature. They no longer make the constitution of the categories of objectivity and transcendence possible, but rather, *fulfill* them. To phrase it differently: Although my solitary experience of the computer is an experience of it as real and objective, these components of validity are at first only given *signitively*. Only the moment I experience that Others are, in

fact, also experiencing it is the validity-claim of my experience fulfilled intuitively, that is, in evidence.

As I have indicated, it is important that my experience of another subject be an experience of another *experiencing* subject. Indeed, Husserl even claims that the validity of the other subject's experience is accepted along with my experience of that subject (Hua 14/388).⁴¹ This can be illustrated by reference to Husserl's analysis of the body, where Husserl claims that the experience of another as incarnated subject is the first step toward the constitution of an objective (intersubjectively valid) shared world (Hua 14/110, 15/18, 15/572). The reason for this is that my experience of something as the body of another must be accompanied by another's experience of the *same* as her own body (Hua 13/252, 14/485). In the experience of the body of another, one is confronted with a congruity between one's own experience and the Other's experience—a congruity which, according to Husserl, is the foundation of every subsequent experience of intersubjective objects, that is, objects that are also experienced (experienceable) by Others.

Husserl continues his analysis by describing a special kind of experience of the Other, namely, those situations where I experience the Other as experiencing myself. This kind of 'original reciprocal co-existence'—which Michael Theunissen has named '*Veränderung*'⁴²—in which I take over the Other's objectifying apprehension of myself, in which my self-apprehension is mediated by the Other, and in which I experience myself as alien, is of decisive importance for the constitution of an objective world. When I realize that I can be an *alter ego* for the Other just as he can be it for me, a marked change in my own constitutive significance takes place:

The difference between oneself and the foreign I vanishes; the other apprehends me as foreign, just as I grasp him as foreign for me, and he himself is a 'self,' etc. Parity thus ensues: a multiplicity of feeling, willing I's that are alike in kind and each independent in the same sense (Hua 13/243–244; cf. 15/635).

In my encounter with an Other I come to realize that my perspective on the world is only one among many, but in coming to this realization, I can no longer uphold my privileged status in relation to the objects of experience. Whether I or an Other is the subject of the experience makes no difference in principle for the validity of that experience (Hua 17/245, 15/645, 1/157).

Husserl consequently claims that my experiences are changed when I experience that Others experience the same as I, and when I experience that I myself am experienced by Others. From then on, my object of experience cannot any longer be reduced to its mere being-for-me. Through the Other, it has been constituted with a subject-transcendent validity. No longer do I experience it as being dependent on me and my factual existence. On the contrary, as an intersubjective object, it is endowed with an autonomy of being that transcends my own finite existence (cf. Hua 15/218, 8/495, 13/242).⁴³

To summarize: Husserl claims that the sense and the categories of *transcendence*, *objectivity*, and *reality* are constituted intersubjectively. These categories of validity can only be constituted by a subject that has experienced other subjects. Husserl also stresses, however, that the same is the case for the categories of *immanence*, *subjectivity*, and *appearance*. His line of thought is the following: When I realize that my object of experience can also be experienced by Others, I also realize that there is a difference between the thing in itself and its appearance for me (Hua 6/167, 4/82). Thus, it only makes sense to speak and designate something as a mere appearance, as merely subjective, when I have experienced other subjects and thus acquired the concept of intersubjective validity (Hua 9/453, 13/382, 388–389, 420–421).

The structures that have been emphasized so far (my experience of the world-directed transcendent foreign subject, and my experience of the Other's experience of myself) take up a decisive place in Husserl's account of the transcendental-constitutive function of intersubjectivity. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that Husserl understands intersubjectivity as something that is exclusively attached to concrete bodily mediated interaction. If this had been the case, one might criticize him by pointing to the fact that exactly this kind of experience seems to be both contingent and fallible—which Husserl himself admits (Hua 14/474–475)—and exactly for that reason, not the most convincing foundation for a transcendental philosophy.⁴⁴ Husserl, however, does not operate with only one kind of transcendental intersubjectivity—a common assumption—but with several different kinds. Apart from the kind that has already been described, Husserl also argues for a place for intersubjectivity in the very intentional relation to the world, that is, he occasionally argues that my intentionality already implies a reference to other subjects prior to any concrete experi-

ence of them, that is, *a priori*. Finally, Husserl also claims that one should ascribe a constitutive function to the anonymous community, which manifests itself in our inherited linguistic normality (in our tradition).

To account in detail for these last two kinds of intersubjectivity would exceed the limits of this section. Let me, however, briefly outline Husserl's ideas.⁴⁵ Concerning the first and most fundamental kind of intersubjectivity, Husserl writes that the analysis of the transcendental ego ultimately leads to a disclosure of its *apodictic* intersubjective structure (Hua 15/192).⁴⁶ Why is that? Because, as Husserl claims, each and every one of my perceptual objects not only implies a reference to myself as experiencing subject, but also to the Others as co-subjects (Hua 6/468). As he puts it in the manuscript C 17:

My experience as mundane experience (that is, already each of my perceptions) does not only entail Others as mundane objects, but also and constantly in existential co-validity as co-subjects, as co-constituting, and both are inseparably intertwined (Ms. C 17 36a).⁴⁷

Husserl's reasoning seems partly to be based on an investigation of horizontal intentionality. My perceptual objects are characterized by their horizontal givenness. They are not exhausted in their appearance for me; rather, each object always possesses a horizon of co-existing profiles which, although being momentarily inaccessible to me—I cannot see the front and the back of a chair simultaneously, for instance—could very well be perceived by other subjects. Since the perceptual object is always there for others, too, whether or not such other subjects do in fact appear on the scene, the object refers to those other subjects, and is, for that very reason, intrinsically intersubjective. It does not merely exist for me, but refers to a plurality of possible subjects, as does my intentionality whenever I am directed at these intersubjectively accessible objects. That is, my perceptual intentionality contains a reference to Others, regardless of whether or not I experience these Others, and, indeed, regardless of whether they actually exist or not. Thus my perceptual intentionality can be said to contain an *a priori* reference to something that Husserl occasionally calls 'open intersubjectivity.' As he writes in *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II*:

Thus everything objective that stands before me in experience—and primarily in perception—has an apperceptive horizon of possible experience, my own and foreign. Ontologically speaking, every appearance that I have is from the very beginning a

part of an open, endless, but not explicitly realized, totality of possible appearances of the same, and the subjectivity belonging to this appearance is open intersubjectivity (Hua 14/289. Cf. 9/394 and 15/497.).

If these considerations are combined with Husserl's account of the actual, *horizontal* experience of another bodily subject, it is obvious that the a priori reference to the open intersubjectivity is already presupposed. Prior to my concrete encounter with the Other, intersubjectivity is already present as co-subjectivity, for which reason Husserl's analysis of perceptual intentionality can be said to demonstrate the untenability of a solipsistic position. Perhaps Husserl was referring to this when in the manuscript C 17 he wrote: 'When empathy occurs, is the community, the intersubjectivity there already in advance, and is empathy merely a disclosing performance?' (Ms. C 17 84b).⁴⁸ A question Husserl then goes on to answer in the affirmative.

So far we have been dealing with two types of intersubjectivity, and it is important to emphasize that the concrete experience of the Other, although it presupposes the intersubjectivity at work in horizontal intentionality, is still transcendental, that is, constitutive. Thus, the concrete experience of the bodily Other is not a mere intramundane episode, since it is only here that I can experience the true alterity and transcendence of the Other and take over his objectifying apprehension of myself. According to Husserl, it is precisely these experiences that are conditions of the possibility for the constitution of true objectivity.

Husserl, however, also operates with a third type of transcendental intersubjectivity different in kind from the previous two, although it presupposes both.⁴⁹ Thus, as I will show in more detail in the next section dealing with Husserl's concept of the *lifeworld*, Husserl also claims that certain types of self-and world-apprehension are only made possible by a linguistically sedimented and traditionally handed-down *normality*. Thus, normality qua anonymous community also possesses constitutive implications.

Subjectivity—Inter/subjectivity

So far it has been amply demonstrated that Husserl took intersubjectivity very seriously. Thus, when he claims that the subject can only be world-experiencing insofar as it is a member of a community (Hua 1/166), that the ego is only what it is as a *socius*, that is, as a member of a sociality

(Hua 15/193) and that a radical *self*-reflection necessarily leads to the discovery of absolute intersubjectivity (Hua 6/275, 472), the general line of thought is indicated. Husserl takes transcendental subjectivity to be (at least in part) dependent on transcendental intersubjectivity. This interpretation can be substantiated by numerous passages in Husserl's work. In *Erste Philosophie II*, for instance, he writes that transcendental subjectivity in its full universality is exactly *inter*-subjectivity (Hua 8/480). In a research manuscript from 1927 (published in *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität I*) Husserl writes that the absolute reveals itself as the intersubjective relation between subjects (Hua 13/480). Thus, Husserl's recurrent point is that a sufficiently radical carrying out of the transcendental reduction leads not only to subjectivity, but also to intersubjectivity (Hua 9/344), and it is no coincidence, that at certain points, with reference to Leibniz, he called his own theory a *transcendental monadology* (Hua 8/190), thereby stressing the *plurality* of constitutive centers.⁵⁰

As already mentioned, Husserl's view on the transcendental ego differs from Kant's. Husserl not only advocates the heretical standpoint that it is possible, that is, *coherent*, to talk about a plurality of transcendental egos, ultimately he even strengthens this assertion, claiming that it is *necessary*, insofar as 'subjectivity is what it is—an ego functioning constitutively—only within intersubjectivity' (Hua 6/175 [172]). The claim that subjectivity only becomes fully constitutive, that is, fully transcendental through its relation with Others is in striking contrast with any traditional Kantian understanding of transcendental subjectivity. Curiously enough, it is exactly this traditional understanding which A. Schütz tacitly accepts in his well-known criticism of Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity. Thus Schütz writes:

It must be earnestly asked whether the transcendental Ego in Husserl's concept is not essentially what Latin grammarians call a 'singulare tantum,' that is, a term incapable of being put into the plural. Even more, it is in no way established whether the existence of Others is a problem of the transcendental sphere at all, i.e., whether the problem of intersubjectivity does exist between transcendental egos . . . ; or whether intersubjectivity and therefore sociality does not rather belong exclusively to the mundane sphere of our life-world.⁵¹

Husserl, however, takes issue with this position in a manuscript now published in the supplementary volume to *Krisis*, where he explicitly states that the possibility of a transcendental elucidation of subjectivity and world is

lost if one follows the Kantian tradition in interpreting transcendental subjectivity as an isolated ego, thereby ignoring the problem of transcendental intersubjectivity (Hua 29/120). This remark could easily have been ascribed to Apel. It is of utmost importance to notice, however, that Husserl, in contrast to the philosophers of language, does not conceive of his own phenomenology of intersubjectivity as a break with (a correctly understood) philosophy of subjectivity. Moreover, it is possible to find reflections concerning the fundamental significance of intersubjectivity in his manuscripts side by side with remarks concerning the importance of the transcendental ego, and even statements saying that the transcendental primal ego (*Ur-Ich*) cannot be pluralized (Hua 6/188).

To say the very least, this seems to imply an inconsistency at the very core of Husserl's reflections. Two popular 'solutions' have consisted in claiming either that Husserl changed his mind within a few years, alternately attributing priority to the ego (in *Cartesianische Meditationen*) and to intersubjectivity (in *Krisis*); or, alternatively, that Husserl never abandoned his egological point of departure, for which reason his treatment of intersubjectivity remained superficial and without any real radicality. Both of these interpretations are, however, encumbered with some obvious problems. The first is problematic because it is possible to find the alleged alternatives within both *Cartesianische Meditationen* and *Krisis*. In both works Husserl speaks about the fundamental importance of both ego and intersubjectivity. The second is also problematic since it is confronted with a large number of passages (some already quoted) where Husserl seems quite unambiguously to ascribe a fundamental and decisive role to intersubjectivity.

A closer reading reveals that the ascribed inconsistency is only apparent. It disappears the moment we realize that Husserl's emphasis on the uniqueness of the primal ego does not clash in any way with his intersubjective transformation of the transcendental philosophical project. Quite the contrary. Once more the character of Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity has to be stressed. Transcendental intersubjectivity is not an objectively existing structure in the world that can be described and analyzed from a third-person perspective, but a relation between subjects in which the ego itself participates. To phrase it differently: Transcendental intersubjectivity can only be disclosed through a radical explication of the ego's structures of experience. This indicates not only an intersubjective structure to the ego, but also the egological rootedness of intersubjectiv-

ity.⁵² Husserl's accentuation of the fundamental importance of the ego must, in other words, be seen as an accentuation of the fact that intersubjectivity, my relation to the Other, presupposes my own subjectivity as one of the relata. Only from this point of view is intersubjectivity and the plurality of constitutive centers phenomenologically accessible.

The remaining problem is to explain how Husserl can persist in designating the transcendental primal ego as unique. An examination of the manuscript B I 14, however, can solve this problem. Husserl writes that the 'I' does not admit of any plural as long as the word is used in its original sense. Others can experience themselves as I, but only I can experience myself as I. Besides myself there is no other I about which I can say 'this is me.' Precisely for that reason, it is impossible to speak about *an* I as long as 'I' really means I. I is absolutely unique and individual (Ms. B I 14 138a). When Husserl mentions the absolute uniqueness of the ego and denies that it can be put into plural, he is obviously referring to the unique egocentric givenness of my own consciousness. I am only self-aware of myself and can never ever be self-aware of anybody else. This uniqueness, however, is of a kind that admits of Others: 'The unique I—the transcendental. In its uniqueness it posits 'other' unique transcendental I's—as 'others', who themselves posit others in uniqueness once again' (Ms. B I 14 138b.⁵³ Cf. Hua 14/212.). Of course, Husserl would deny that this first-personal uniqueness is merely a contingent linguistic fact. On the contrary, we are dealing with a transcendental necessity ultimately connected to the crucial issue of self-givenness and inner time-consciousness. 'I am' is the intentional ground for the ego that thinks it. It is, as Husserl says, the primal fact that, as a philosopher, I must never overlook (Hua 17/243–244, 14/307, 29/165).

This is offered merely as a demonstration of the consistency of Husserl's position. When he speaks about the absolute priority of the ego, this does not contradict his reflections concerning transcendental intersubjectivity as the absolute field of being. Transcendental intersubjectivity is a transcendental foundation, but, as Husserl says, it possesses a necessary I-centering (Hua 15/426). Intersubjectivity can unfold itself only in the relation between unique subjects, and it is for this reason that Husserl writes that the disclosure of transcendental subjectivity effectuated by the reduction is ambiguous, since it leads to subjectivity as well as to intersubjectivity (Hua 15/73–75). Far from being competing alternatives, subjectivity and intersubjectivity are in fact complementary and mutually interdependent notions.

At this point, it would have been appropriate to provide a more detailed investigation of the role played by intersubjectivity on the most fundamental level, namely, when it concerns the self-temporalization of the subject. On the one hand, it is important to emphasize the significance of intersubjectivity when it comes to the self-constitution of the subject. On the other hand, it is also important to insist on the fact that each single subject must possess a certain amount of ontological autonomy—since a complete elimination of this would make the very concept of intersubjectivity impossible. If the difference between the subjects were negated, there would not be any plurality and consequently no inter-subjectivity (Hua 15/335, 339). Thus, if one wants to preserve intersubjectivity and keep the plurality of individual and transcendent subjects, it is necessary to reject the proposal that they have their ground of being in a prior unity.⁵⁴ However, a detailed analysis of Husserl's complex account of the ego's many structural moments (including a differentiation between those that are intersubjectively constituted and those that must be presupposed *sui generis* in order for the notion of intersubjectivity to be at all coherent) would be beyond the scope of this book. Let me only mention that Husserl's position apparently is that the very temporal flow of consciousness, which constitutes the most basic level of subjectivity, is a process that does not depend on the relation to the Other (Hua 14/170–175). At the same time, however, he occasionally seeks to found the very openness toward Others in the very structure of temporality. As he points out, there is a structural similarity between empathy and recollection (cf. Hua 1/144, 3/325, 8/175, 6/189, 13/188, 15/447, 15/641, 15/416). Recollection entails a self-displacement or self-distanciation, qualities that are needed if I am to be capable of empathy, that is, if I am to meet the Other as a self. This line of thought is continued when Husserl speaks of the affinity between the de-presentation effectuated by original temporalization and the self-alienation taking place in empathy:

Self-temporalization through de-presentation [*Ent-Gegenwärtigung*], so to speak (through recollection), has its analogue in my self-alienation [*Ent-Fremdung*] (empathy as a de-presentation of a higher level—de-presentation of my primal presence [*Urpräsenz*] into a merely presentified [*vergegenwärtigte*] primal presence) [transl. modified] (Hua 6/189 [185]. Cf. Hua 15/642, 634).

Thus, Husserl appears to regard the step from de-presentation to self-alienation as an intensification of alterity, and, more generally, he seems to

consider the ecstatic-centered self-differentiation brought about by the process of temporalization to be a condition of the possibility for empathy, for an openness toward the Other.⁵⁵

D. The Lifeworld

Husserl's analysis of the lifeworld (the prescientific world of experience) constitutes one of his best-known investigations and is among those that have found widest acceptance outside of phenomenology—for instance, in parts of sociology.⁵⁶ In attempting a brief summary of the main ideas to be found in these extensive analyses, it is natural to emphasize three lines of thoughts: 1) First of all, Husserl's analysis of the lifeworld is a clarification of the relation between scientific theory and the prescientific practically oriented experience. This clarification questions the rampant *objectivism* and *scientism* that is so widespread today. 2) Second, Husserl's analysis of the lifeworld can be regarded as a new introduction to or way toward the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, a way that radically questions a number of Cartesian motives in Husserl's thinking and that understands the relation between subjectivity and world in a very different manner than *Ideen I*. 3) Finally, Husserl's analysis of the lifeworld can be seen as a radicalization of his analysis of intersubjectivity, insofar as concepts like *historicity*, *generativity*, *tradition*, and *normality* are given a central transcendental-philosophical significance.

The Lifeworld and the Crisis of Science

Although Husserl's concept of the lifeworld and its accompanying topics can already be found early on in his writings,⁵⁷ its most systematic treatment is to be found in his last work, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. What 'crisis' is Husserl referring to? To put it slightly paradoxically, one could say that the positive sciences, and, more specifically, the objectivistic paradigm of science, have been too successful. A crisis not only reveals itself in dramatic breakdowns, but also in a smoothly functioning mindlessness. According to Husserl, the positive sciences have had such immense success that they are no longer reflecting on their own foundations and eventual limitations, but merely concerned with advanced technical issues. The fundamental problems pertaining