



Husserl's Preemptive Responses to Existentialist Critiques

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Abstract

Existentialist thinkers often publicly acknowledged Husserl's phenomenology as one of their main points of departure for treatment of such themes as intentionality, comportment, transcendence, and the lifeworld. Several central elements of Husserl's approach were adopted by the Existentialists, but equal to their gratitude were vigorous declamations of Husserl's mistakes, dead-ends and failures. Many of the Existentialists' criticisms of Husserl's project are well-known and have been rehearsed in various surveys of 20th century thought, but less well-remarked are the discrepancies between their complaints about Husserl's aborted achievements and what Husserl actually delivered. This paper attempts to uncover the accuracy of some of their assessments of Husserl's alleged failures and mistakes, whether or not Husserl actually held the position they claim he did, and especially whether or not Husserl was himself aware of some deficiency in his thematic analysis, and thus would have been able to offer a cogent response to critique. In doing so, a good case can be made that Heidegger, for example, quietly adopted some of Husserl's main insights without credit, slanted his picture of Husserl's work so that his own reversals had better purchase, or overlooked evidence that Husserl had already moved beyond that position. At least on some key topics, Husserl emerges as an exceptionally self-critical philosopher who had already gained the perspective more usually associated with an Existentialist orientation.

Existentialist thinkers since the 1930s owe a great deal to Husserl's phenomenology; Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Ortega all repeatedly acknowledged in print that one of their points of departure was Husserl's phenomenological approach. The central elements of Husserl's approach adopted by these Existentialists are as follows: first, the rejection of Cartesian substance dualism, i.e., the doctrine that the mind and body are distinct things with determinate essences, causally and hence contingently connected (although this was not as evident until the publication of *Ideas Second Book*.) Second, the core doctrine of intentionality according to which the distinctive feature of consciousness is that it is mentally directed towards its 'objects'. Third, the discursive prohibition not to employ traditional philosophical vocabulary and instead to describe the phenomena exactly as and only as they

appear to conscious being. Fourth, Husserl's repeated summons to make philosophical understanding *one's own* through a process of self-discovery and self-liberation (Cooper, 1999, pp. 46-47). And fifth, an insistence on the priority of the lifeworld over the theoretical world of the natural sciences. Equal to the Existentialists' acknowledgment of their debt to Husserl was their vigorous declamation of his mistakes, dead-ends and failures. It seems to have been vitally important to thinkers in the 1920s and 1930s to create as much distance as possible between themselves and their former 'master'. Less well-remarked perhaps is the discrepancy between the Existentialists' complaints about Husserl's aborted achievements and what Husserl actually delivered.

This paper argues that it is *not* a mere academic point whether Heidegger or Sartre accurately characterize

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Husserlian arguments in their condemnation, since *any* positive claim which is founded on the rebuttal of a negative claim must be weighed in part on the ‘purchase’ of the prior negative claim. In other words, your criticism of an incorrect claim is (at least partly) dependent on how accurately you have assessed the original position. Husserl’s protracted reflections on any given issue are peculiarly difficult to expound, and collaterally it is often very hard to identify a specific doctrine or discursive position in such a way that it is clear *what* assertion his critic is attempting to rebut. At any given time, Husserl the meditator was rarely satisfied with the present state of his written work; his analytic studies were “a process of endless corrections and revisions.” The few works that he published in his lifetime look like “purely momentary states of rest, or ‘condensations’ of a thought movement that was constantly in flux” (Bernet, Kern & Marbach, p. 2). It is thus a tricky business to hold still one ‘moment’ long enough to say, “if this stands, then it’s wrong”. Husserl’s thought on core phenomenological notions never stood still; he was, in his own memorable image, “an endless beginner”, and would be the first to open a new path when the woods became lost in the trees. In some cases, his thought movement was already running ahead of his critics, far enough into the future that today, although there are few (if any) avowed Existentialists, there are very many Husserlian phenomenologists. Heidegger’s constant early references to pathmarks, pathways, and so forth (see esp. van Buren, 1994, pp. 5-9) are preceded by Husserl’s own favorite imagery of phenomenology as a series of paths, a journey, or a voyage (see MacDonald, 2000, pp. 82-85).

Some of the Existentialists’ specific criticisms of Husserl’s assumptions and approach are as follows. First, for Husserl, the dominant dimension of intentional directedness is cognitive, that is, analysis of the total unity of intentional act-and-object is calculative and componential. Second, he accords the greatest epistemic weight for human understanding on rational insight and higher-order intuition, specifically the ability to *reflect* on one’s experiences. Third, the transcendental ego as uncovered through the reduction is a detached spectator, unengaged with the common sense world and its everyday things. Fourth, consciousness is conceived as a monadic unity through which, or into which, nothing can penetrate; this conception leads to an irretrievable solipsism. Fifth, the final stage of the reduction is meant to bring about an exact science of essences, i.e., material and spiritual essences, correlative to the categories of a formal ontology; but one thing, human being, resists such categorization since it does not *have* an essence. Sixth, and perhaps most damning, the absolutely necessary technique of phenomenological epoché that

brackets the world’s being cannot be fully performed, that is, at least not without seriously damaging the actual relation that conscious beings have with their world.

This capsulated critique, however, does not take adequate account of Husserl’s own answers to some of these charges; though, of course, like any thought-capsule it’s handy for didactic purposes. Over and over again, for more than twelve years, between 1912 and 1915, Husserl worked on clean copies of the Second and Third Books of the *Ideas*. One after the other, his personal assistants prepared new drafts, only to have them returned later revised and corrected; they despaired that the other parts of his great work would never reach publication. But Heidegger read the manuscript version two years before the publication of his *Being and Time* in 1927 (Heidegger, 1962, p. 469, note ii), and Merleau-Ponty read them, in “a near rhapsody of excitement” (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, Appendix), just before the outbreak of war in 1939. Many of the charges leveled against Husserl have responses in these texts, and more than just responses, they *further* Husserl’s project into an emergent existential and inter-subjective phenomenology. What Husserl in *The Crisis of European Sciences* (1936) calls the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) in *Ideas Book Two* he calls the surround-world (*umwelt*), an idea conveyed very nicely by the word *environ*-ment. (See D. W. Smith, in Smith & Smith, 1995, pp. 360-362; J. C. Evans, in Nenon & Embree, 1996, pp. 57-65.) The *umwelt* is one’s immediate environment; the world which surrounds an animate conscious being is already structured in determinate ways, i.e., things and persons and events already have value *before* predicative judgments are made about them.

The surround-world is in a certain way always in the process of becoming To begin with, the world is, in its core, a world appearing to the senses and characterized as *on hand*, a world given in straightforward empirical intuitions and perhaps grasped actively. (Husserl, 1989, p. 196)

This low level, non-reflective engagement with handy things, items that fit in one’s hand, is not just gauged in use-terms, it also uncovers the direct grasp with value-terms. Husserl continues:

The ego then finds itself related to this empirical world in new acts, e.g. in acts of valuing or in acts of pleasure and displeasure.... There is built upon the substratum of mere intuitive representing an evaluating which (if we presuppose it) plays in

the immediacy of its lively motivation, the role of value-perception ... in which the value character itself is given in original intuition. (ibid.)

Husserl's comments on the cognitive grasp of use-value that is embedded in ordinary worldly entities is strikingly similar to Heidegger's better known exposition of the different 'kinds' of items found in one's environment. Such ordinary mundane items are either *available*, 'at' hand (*zuhanden*), or they are *occurrent*, 'for' hand (*vorhanden*); for example, the hammer grasped as an item imbued with use or service, in contrast with an 'inert' piece of metal or wood. This notion of originary value-perception is hardly surprising since Husserl goes on to illustrate the notion of an object "apprehendable as in the service of the satisfaction of such needs" as hunger and warmth with "heating materials, choppers, hammers, etc." He then goes on to say that such items-on-hand are directly grasped as use-objects, in contrast with those that do not have use-value, objects just lying about. This is not an operation of explicit awareness, no judgment is formed by means of which one could *infer* or derive value; it is thus a *pre-predicative* awareness, or as Sartre has put it, *prereflective* consciousness. These useful items are associated in the surround-world through "a web of intentions", interlinked by way of meaningful indications, much in the same fashion that Heidegger describes the enviroing world of the ready-to-hand as "a referential totality." One's experience of the manifold connections of all use-objects, artifacts and cultural products, says Husserl, is an experience of *motivated* relations.

Long before the earliest draft of the sections of *Being and Time* devoted to this topic (e.g. in the lectures on the History of the Concept of Time), Husserl had clearly underlined the need to make explicit, or bring to the fore, the pre-theoretical 'meaning' attached to or embedded in useful versus inert objects. In his Lectures on Nature and Spirit from 1919, he states,

I understand the significational unity that the word 'hammer' expresses by relating it back to that which posits the end, to the subject creating at any time useful means for purposeful productions of a definite type.

The practical and bodily grasp of useful meanings, i.e., items endowed with meaning *for use*, is built on an essential understanding of motivational relations which extend through and beyond those particular items.

All significance objectivities and significance predicates are judged in their manner of correlation as rational and irrational. [In this sense of 'rational'] the hammer is 'to be useful', but it can be a good or a bad hammer.... The 'is to be' expresses the pretention [forward-directed intention], it expresses that it stands under the ideas of reason. (Husserl, in Nenon & Embree, 1996, pp. 9, 10)

In his exposition of this and associated texts, Ulrich Melle quotes from another manuscript:

in our everyday experience we apperceive our environment so immediately with spiritual predicates of meaning, "that these predicates are downright designated as perceived, as seen, as heard, etc., just as the real predicates which are given in the most immediate sensuous experience. (ibid, 1996, p. 24)

Husserl does make an attempt to account for human practical understanding of use-endowed items in the world of its immediate concern. The use which an item has for its user motivates (not causes) one to take it up, as well as inspiring other motivations tied in with other use-objects.

They now engage [the ego's] interest in their being and attributes, in their beauty, agreeableness, and usefulness; they stimulate its desire to delight in them, play with them, use them as a means, transform them according to its purposes, etc. ... In a very broad sense, we can also denote the personal or motivational attitude as the *practical attitude*. (Husserl, 1989, p. 199)

Edmund Husserl's endorsement of the importance of practice, moreover the *background* of shared practices (much discussed recently by Hubert Dreyfus and John Searle) leads us to an answer to one of the other charges against Husserl, that is, his alleged emphasis on theory at the expense of practice, and of reflection to the detriment of lived action (see Barry Smith, in Smith & Smith, 1995, pp. 413-415). However, to denigrate Husserl's supposed reliance on theoretical insight in his elaboration of intentional structures of consciousness is to ignore his explicit subordination of theory in the transition to consideration of the human being in its psychological constitution.

What we are seeking does not lie in the consequences of theoretical, mediate thinking but in its beginnings; we are looking for its most originary presuppositions... Legitimate

theory cannot accomplish anything other than the predicative determination, in mediate thinking, of that which was first posited by originary presenting intuition (in our case experience)... There what the 'analysis of origin' has drawn from originary intuition as the originary sense of the object cannot be annulled by any theory. It is the norm which must be presupposed and to which all possible theoretical cognition is rationally bound. (Husserl, 1989, pp. 96-97)

To adopt a theoretical or detached attitude towards pre-theoretical, pre-reflective consciousness is like attempting to compel an umpire or referee to perform *his* function while acting like a player on the field. One cannot surreptitiously import a detached observer who is obliged to report on what it feels like (from the inside, so to speak) to be an engaged, unreflective agent in a field of action and motion. Husserl himself was aware of the possible slippage between a theoretical attitude *about* the origins and structures of the lifeworld into a belief that a theoretical attitude can be found *within* the lifeworld. The danger here is that one might be tempted to unwittingly insert backward into one's lifeworld analysis an observer's point-of-view which is then 'discovered' to be in place *after* reflection. Perhaps the Cartesian meditative ego, contingently connected to its body, could become detached enough from its surroundings, and could indeed "float above this world, above this life", but Husserl's human being is intimately bound together with its body.

However, it is *another* serious question whether or not Heidegger's exposition of the meaning of being as the preeminent phenomenon of human being-in-the-world can be *reduced to* or entirely explained in terms of the background of social practices, as Hubert Dreyfus has attempted in *Being-in-the-world*. Dreyfus' highly influential interpretation of Heidegger's criticisms of Husserl's concepts of intentionality, the detached spectator, the self-constituting subject, and so forth, grossly fail to take account of other relevant Husserlian texts on the issues in question. Follesdal reported that after Husserl came to Freiburg in 1916,

he clearly became more and more aware that our practical activity is an important part of our relation to the world.... There is, according to Husserl, "an infinite chain of goals, aims, and tasks" that our actions and their products relate to.

Follesdal attempts to descry who deserves the credit for first grasping the phenomenological significance

of human understanding via the circumspect background of practical activities, about which he states,

Husserl had ideas similar to those of Heidegger long before *Being and Time* was published. These ideas started appearing in Husserl shortly after he arrived in Freiburg and met Heidegger in 1916. It is possible that Husserl influenced Heidegger in this 'practical' direction.... However, it is also possible that it was Husserl who was influenced in this direction through his discussion with the younger Heidegger. (Follesdal, 1979, pp. 372, 376)

Dreyfus quotes Mark Okrent in his footnotes to the effect that

As soon as one realizes that, for Heidegger, intentionality is always practical rather than cognitive and that the primary form of intending is doing something for a purpose rather than being conscious of something, the structural analogies between the argument strategies of Husserl and Heidegger become apparent. (Okrent, 1988, p. 10, in Dreyfus, 1992, p. 345, note 6)

Even with such well-informed guiding clues, Dreyfus is dismissive and contemptuous; he says that the question raised by Follesdal is "irrelevant" (1992, p. 48) and that Husserl "never worked out a theory of action." (ibid, p. 55) It seems eminently clear that Dreyfus was completely oblivious of Husserl's *Ideas Second Book* (available in German since 1952, and translated into English in 1989), with its thorough and fine-grained analysis of action; Kristana Arp (in Nenon & Embree, 1996, pp. 161-171) and Lester Embree (in ibid, pp. 173-198) have presented some of Husserl's central arguments in a fashion which effectively demolishes Dreyfus' claims.

Herman Philipse has argued very strongly against both the *unitarian* interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy of being, according to which there is one more or less precise meaning of the overarching question that remains the same through all his philosophical career, and against the *patchwork* interpretation according to which Heidegger employs disparate and sometimes incompatible materials where the being-question is "a chameleon that changes its meaning from passage to passage." Philipse considers Dreyfus' interpretation to be one of the best known (and most misleading) of the unitarian expositions, one that basically falsifies and distorts *both* Heidegger's reliance on core Husserlian

insights and the character of Heidegger's genuine and special transformation of traditional philosophical inquiry. Dreyfus' interpretation of Heidegger's later works, he stridently says, is "altogether implausible." In arguing vehemently against his efforts to bring Heidegger in from the cold, Philipse does not mince his words.

Dreyfus' Heidegger is a domesticated Heidegger, made *salonfähig* ["lounge-safe", respectable] for American academic circles by reducing him to a pragmatist or to a Wittgensteinian philosopher. In order to domesticate Heidegger, Dreyfus has to exorcise those aspects of Heidegger's later thought which suggest that the "ungrounded ground" of all intelligibility does not reside in social practices at all, but in Being as some kind of absent god. This latter, "theological" interpretation... squarely contradicts Dreyfus' conviction that according to Heidegger the source of all intelligibility is not hidden but lies open to view in our background practices. (Philipse, 1998, p. 69)

In contrast to the unitarian and patchwork interpretative approaches, Philipse proposes an approach focused on the *leitmotifs* in Heidegger's oeuvre (as in Wagner's operas):

there are a number of leitmotifs that are skillfully interwoven to produce the desired effect. One may be deeply impressed by these texts and feel that something important is going on, but will not clearly understand what it is unless one analyzes the leitmotifs and studies their interweavings. (Philipse, 1998, p. 75)

He claims to have identified five such leitmotifs, which are: (a) the meta-Aristotelian theme, (b) the phenomenological hermeneutic theme, (c) the transcendental theme, (d) the Neo-Hegelian theme, and (e) the post-monotheist theme. However, lest this approach seem equivalent to the patchwork approach, the author quickly points out that all five themes have formal unity;

the five fundamental structures of Heidegger's question of being are interconnected by means of a formal analogy, or by a common 'grammar', which consists of nine formal features. In each of the five leitmotifs, these formal features are provided with a somewhat different semantic content. (ibid, p. 76)

It is not pertinent for our present study to outline and evaluate these nine formal features; rather, our attention is focused on the substantial evidence offered in support of the second theme, which is the Husserlian phenomenological motif. Fred Olafson has strongly objected to the sorts of conclusions that Philipse draws from this approach and asserts that his account of Heidegger's concept of being is basically mistaken. In treating Heidegger's concept as an amalgam of previous themes, Philipse offers no hint of "the utterly different ontology of the human subject that is [his] most original contribution." For Olafson, Philipse's Heidegger has appropriated the best features of Husserl's insights into formal indication, categorical intuition, and intentional comportment, and Kant's transcendental grounding of metaphysical inquiry, the result of which is that the world is supposed to be constituted by the meaning-giving activity of the transcendental subject.

The whole conception of human being as Dasein and being-in-the-world goes by the board.... The only sense in which the author's evident intention of demolishing every thesis Heidegger defends succeeds that nothing recognizably Heideggerian emerges from the account he gives. (Olafson, 1999)

The recent publication of Heidegger's lecture notes from the Marburg years preceding the early drafts of *Being and Time* has provoked some radical reassessments of Heidegger's dependence on the Husserl unpublished lectures and private meditations. (Our current knowledge of this material is largely the result of archival digging by Theodore Kisiel.) Dermot Moran, for example, has argued that this lecture material shows that Heidegger has creatively *developed* crucial elements in his mentor's approach to the ontological dimension of intentionality, and not *reversed* or *abandoned* Husserl's account. Further, Husserl's account of cognitive intentionality, while recognizing the importance of the disinterested theoretical attitude for scientific knowledge, was underestimated and misunderstood by Heidegger, who treats scientific cognition as a deficient form of practice (Moran, 2000). Steven Crowell has persuasively argued in several papers that archival sources behind the ill-fated Encyclopedia Britannica article on phenomenology, edited and resubmitted by his assistant, do not show that Heidegger rejected Husserl's transcendental position, but rather that the younger philosopher disagreed over the status of the ego; in preferring to treat the ego as an ontological achievement, Heidegger shows his dependence on Husserl's transcendental reduction regarding the constitution of meaning (Crowell, 1990). In another

paper concerned with the early Marburg lectures, Crowell argues that Heidegger's attention to the categories of factual life was motivated by the transcendental question of the possibility of knowledge in the philosophical sense. As such, Heidegger's hermeneutic method, extolled in the Introduction to *Being and Time*, is another creative development, rather than rejection of the phenomenological notion of reflection (Crowell, 1999).

Daniel Dahlstrom has opened a line of inquiry about whether Heidegger fairly presented Husserl's thought on intentionality and inner time consciousness, and whether he actually overcomes and corrects these alleged failures. Heidegger portrayed Husserl as the Moses of traditional philosophy,

at once its liberator and its victim, pointing the way out of the desert through a clarification of intentionality, but unable to enter the promised land of existential analysis. (Dahlstrom, in Kisiel & van Buren, 1994, p. 231)

According to Heidegger in these early lecture notes, Husserl's phenomenology leaves unanswered the question of the ontological status of intentionality, or more properly, intentional being, and the meaning of being as such, both themes central to Husserl's exposition of the primary reality of consciousness. According to his protégé's critique, Husserl accepts and then employs a traditional prejudice that separates at the deepest level the being of consciousness and the being of particular existents.

Husserl's specific characterization of being in a primary sense, as what is absolutely given in pure consciousness, is based on an attempt to elaborate, not what "to be" means, but rather what is necessary for consciousness to constitute an "absolute science". For the phenomenologist above all, the failure to raise the question of what "to be" means is of a piece with a failure to unpack what "to be" means in the case of a particular sort of being (*Seiendes*), namely, consciousness, understood as "intentionality". This twin failure is, moreover, the direct result of an infidelity to phenomenology's most basic principle. (ibid, p. 237)

Heidegger does acknowledge Husserl's unpublished work after *Ideas First Book* (1913), made efforts to go beyond some of the difficulties identified above, and admits that some of his own criticisms may now be outdated. But in spite of his mentor's best efforts the basic, more general objection still holds with

respect to phenomenology's cardinal direction - "to the things themselves". Heidegger alleges that Husserl determines the meaning of 'thing' according to a traditional preconception; in doing so Husserl fails to bracket the naturalistic concept of 'being' and reduces consciousness to a natural being in the world, instead of existentially being-in-the-world. Dahlstrom asks,

How fair is Heidegger's criticism? On the one hand, despite his enthusiasm for Husserl's intentional analysis of knowing, Heidegger's criticism effectively discounts the essential role Husserl accords the mere, or even empty, intending of things in the constitution of primary significance of 'truth' and 'being'. Yet this fundamental feature of Husserl's analysis belies the reproach that he crudely equates being with sheer presence. Heidegger's critical exposition of Husserl's phenomenology is, moreover, highly selective, ignoring several other nuances and details of its analyses and development. On the other hand, ... there are certainly grounds for Heidegger's contention that the basic structure of objectifying acts or, more specifically, an ontology of presence dominates the horizon against which accounts are given of truth, being, and intentionality. (ibid, p. 239)

There is some evidence that in the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas First Book* the basic structure of 'objects' of intentional acts are construed within an ontological frame of presence, a schema that accords primacy to the givenness of 'objects' as lying over against consciousness. But in attempting to overcome Husserl's alleged position on this large-scale issue, Heidegger deploys another formal schema, the temporal horizon of human being, without acknowledging Husserl's long-running, meticulous investigations of inner time. Dahlstrom responds on Husserl's behalf against Heidegger's spurious claims:

Husserl plainly addresses the ultimate horizon for objectifying acts that is accordingly itself neither an object nor an act. There is still a kind of consciousness involved, but it is not the objectifying consciousness of intentionality that Heidegger criticized as prejudicially scientific; if anything, internal time consciousness is pre-scientific, even 'pre-objective', starkly contrasting with the sketch Heidegger gives in his lectures of Husserl's account of intentionality. Nor is Heidegger unaware of this significance. In

the preface to the published part of these manuscripts he writes that what is particularly telling about them is “the growing, fundamental clarification of *intentionality* in general”, a remark that must have surprised the students who listened to him during the summer semester of 1925. (ibid, pp. 239-40)

Various reasons have been advanced for why the younger philosopher remained silent about the elder thinker’s outstripping these criticisms; but irrespective of the motive or rationale, it is clearly the case that Heidegger both misrepresents Husserl’s position and obviates the grounds for his disagreement.

Rudolf Bernet has advanced an argument to show that another central feature of Husserl’s approach, one that Heidegger explicitly repudiated, is at work in *Being and Time*. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Husserl blamed the existential version of phenomenology, and especially Heidegger, for abandoning the most important and fundamental point of method, the phenomenological reduction. Husserl’s comment and Heidegger’s supposed condemnation have entered academic folklore, the oral record of this period of dissension and overthrow. One can then imagine the astonished and puzzled reaction when the published version of Heidegger’s contemporary lectures appeared in 1975. Here Heidegger said that, “the phenomenological reduction is the basic component of the phenomenological method.” Although he distanced himself from Husserl’s transcendental *version* of the reduction, he extols his own existential version:

For us, phenomenological reduction means leading phenomenological vision back to the apprehension of being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of the being of this being (projecting upon the way it is unconcealed).

Bernet argues that not only is the reduction at work in *Being and Time*, but that as Heidegger construes his own version, it is not that different from Husserl’s more mature version, one worked out with his assistant Eugen Fink. In the Sixth Cartesian Meditation, the task of the reduction is

to bring to light the “transcendental” correlation between constituting consciousness and the constituted world. And it is true that making this correlation manifest also means showing that it was already at work in the anonymity of ‘natural’ life without natural life realizing it. But

this in no way gives Heidegger the right to say, as he does repeatedly, that Husserl is not interested in the issue of the being of constituting consciousness. On the contrary, by revealing the correlation between constituting consciousness on the one hand and the constituted world on the other, the phenomenological reduction thus makes manifest precisely the (pre-)being of this consciousness and the being of this world as well as the difference between them. (Bernet, in Kisiel & van Buren, 1994, p. 255)

Merleau-Ponty observed that

far from being ... a procedure of idealistic philosophy, phenomenological reduction clearly belongs to existential philosophy; Heidegger’s being-in-the-world appears only against the background of the phenomenological reduction. (1962, p. xiv)

Bernet’s exegesis is not designed to show that Heidegger’s use of the reduction is *the same as* Husserl’s use, nor that their conception has the same ground and orientation. For Heidegger, Dasein’s natural life assumes the form of circumspective concern with available items in its familiar environment. In the ordinary course of events Dasein does not pay attention to the way in which equipment refers to the world or to its own concerned existence, nor to the way in which this existence inserts itself into the world. When natural life malfunctions and things go wrong the *first* reduction reveals the correlation between Dasein’s inauthentic or improper existence and the world to which it and the items it uses refer. In line with the Sixth Cartesian Meditation, this first existential reduction

makes manifest the equipment’s intrawordly being in its relation to the being-in-the-world of concerned Dasein, reveals the hidden being of the world and Dasein, their difference and their bond.

The revised Husserlian version of the transcendental reduction takes another step in elucidating the being of the subject by asserting that the subject’s life is not limited to its constituting activity. By bringing out the hidden work of the world’s constitution, the next step “effects a split within this subject”; it is both the constituting subject and an observer of the activity of this constitution, an observer that does not pre-exist in its natural life.

While one may speak of constituting consciousness operating unknowingly within natural life, there is no phenomenological

spectator that does not know itself, that is, does not know what it is doing. (This same point regarding the Sixth Cartesian Meditation is made by Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xx.)

Bernet draws the inference from Heidegger's employment of an existential version of the second reduction, that Heidegger indeed must reach similar conclusions; in doing so Bernet clearly puts his finger on one of the most distinctive existential themes – *anxiety*.

In the experience of *anxiety*, Dasein realizes how ridiculous and futile its unceasing concern for things within-the-world can be. In anxiety and especially the call of conscience, Dasein discovers itself divided between, on the one hand, the flight into the everyday affairs of worldly life ... and, on the other, the care it preserves for its own proper potentiality-for-being. Even if anxiety cannot abolish Dasein's being-in-the-world and eradicate the world as such, the fact remains that the concerns by means of which Dasein usually fits into a familiar, anonymous, and common world are put aside. Like the phenomenological reduction in Husserl and Fink, anxiety therefore sees to it that Dasein, when confronting itself and alone with itself, meets for the first time not only a new self, but also the phenomenon of its own authentic or proper being. (ibid, p. 256)

Bernet also argues that the revised Husserlian reduction provides an insight into another distinctive existential theme – the *leap into a higher realm* – through the difference uncovered between worldly beings and the being of constitutive consciousness. The ontological difference between the two

requires a “leap” (*sprung*). But this leap out of natural life is ventured, dared by the subject who *wants* to know more, who *wants* to have a clear mind, who *wants* to give a verdict in the name of scientific evidence. There is nothing of this sort in Heidegger. (ibid, p. 258)

In addition to the above, Husserl's doctrine of categorical intuition governs Heidegger's problematic of fundamental ontology at its very core, including the preeminent question about the self (subject or Dasein), according to Jacques Taminiaux (in Kisiel & van Buren, 1994). Heidegger directed his students, and later readers, without overt criticism, to the Sixth Logical Investigation, “Expression and Signification”,

where Husserl draws an important distinction between significance (or reference, in the more standard English translation) and the symbolic. At the root of this distinction is the difference between authentic presentation of an ‘object’ *in propria persona*, and the inauthentic presentation by means of mediate entities of more complex ‘objects’. In the Introduction to *Being and Time* the author places great emphasis on the notion of indication insofar as it falls under appearance (*Erscheinung*), itself the root sense of the idea of phenomenon, defined as “the occurrences which show themselves and which in this very self showing ‘indicate’ something that does not show itself.” Taminiaux says that

it is not unjustified to decipher Heidegger's distinction of *Erscheinung* as a mere terminological transposition of the Husserlian description of *Anzeige*, indication.... These expressions are nevertheless interchangeable, for they respectively signify the same thing. (ibid, pp. 271-272; see van Buren, 1994, pp. 207-208)

In his *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger credits Husserl with three important discoveries: intentionality, categorical intuition, and the apriori. Taminiaux has scrupulously examined the points of supposed divergence between the two thinkers, and draws the following parallel about the close equivalence between the subject and Dasein.

Husserl, it goes without saying, does not name this nothingness [the soul as the world's supplement]; nothingness is simply not one of his themes. For Heidegger, however, it became imperative to name this “supplementary nothingness” and to make it a central theme precisely in accordance with his ontologization of Husserl's discoveries, especially the categorical intuition of being. This discovery teaches us that being is not a real predicate, that therefore it has *nothing* in common with *beings*, and that it nevertheless gives itself to a seeing in this very difference. If the understanding of being is the task of phenomenology, then the epoché ought at the same time to assume the appearance of a reduction to nothingness [*néantisation*]. And if this understanding ... concerns each Dasein in its mineness at the level of what it is proximally and for the most part, in the same way that Husserl's transcendental ego is what the empirical ego presupposes, then it is imperative to demonstrate at various depths the ontic and pre-ontological attestation of this

ontological reduction to nothing that constitutes a metamorphosed epoché.

In the intimate knowledge which this inner seeing demands the authentic being of the self stands forth, and this shows that the phenomenon and the logos are joined in one self-directed intuition; in doing this, "Heidegger remains faithful to the spirit of Husserl" (ibid, pp. 286-287; also identified by Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 426).

Given the foregoing examination of congruent perspectives on core ideas in the phenomenological analysis of self and world, it is little wonder that Husserl wrote in the margin of his own copy of *Being and Time* that, "Everything here is a translation and transposition of my thought" (Husserl, 1997). With his unprecedented knowledge of Husserl's unpublished manuscripts at the time, Merleau-Ponty could make the highly confident assertion as early as 1945:

the whole of *Sein and Zeit* springs from an indication given by Husserl and amounts to no more than an explicit account of the *natürlicher weltbegriff* [natural concept of world] or the *Lebenswelt* [lifeworld] which Husserl, towards the end of his life, identified as the central theme of phenomenology, with the result that the contradiction reappears in Husserl's own philosophy. (1962, p. vii)

In his minute discussion of the spatial 'sense' of one's own body, Merleau-Ponty reiterates this doctrinal diagnosis:

In our opinion Husserl's originality lies beyond the notion of intentionality; it is to be found in the elaboration of this notion and in the discovery, beneath the intentionality of representation, of a deeper intentionality, which others have called *existence*. (1962, p. 121 note 5)

One cannot imagine the existentialist project for articulating the concept of corporeal intentionality and the motile actions of the lived-body, for example in Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, without the exceptional recasting of the terms of debate in Husserl's *Ideas Second Book*. Husserl rejected the false dilemma that an explanation of mind-body union must be either an interactive account or some version of parallelism. He radically recasts the terms of the standard debate by introducing two terms for body, the object or inert-body (*Körper*) and the lived-body (*Leben*); the first is the subject-matter of physical sciences such as medicine and biology, the second is the subject's

matter *through* which the human being lives in the world (see D. W. Smith, in Smith & Smith, 1995, pp. 323-327). In this context, Husserl's key concept of intentionality undergoes a transformation into *comportment*, the same term that Heidegger uses in his critique or overcoming of Husserl's 'pure' phenomenology, and the same sense conveyed by Sartre's concept of *conduct*. The notion of comportment in *Ideas Book Two* refers to the most pervasive, most general manner in which embodied conscious beings orient themselves in the surround-world (Husserl, 1989, pp. 201-202). In addition, the originary apprehension of other conscious beings in an inter-subjective community allows for *empathy*

accomplished as one with the originary experience of the [lived] body as indeed a kind of presentification, one that nevertheless serves to ground the character of *co-existence* in the flesh. (Husserl, 1989, p. 208)

The internal states of embodied beings who are the source of their own motivation are basic moods or affective adjustments to the surround-world, in a sense similar to Heidegger's concept of attunement (*Befindlichkeit*). Husserl says that there are two layers to the personal ego, one is the intellectual agent, the free ego of its free acts, but also there is the personal underlying basis, constituted from associations, drives, feelings and tendencies that are played out by an embodied being. These are *habitual modes of behavior*, properties of the person as an individual, and this individuality is

the *total style and habitus of the subject*, pervading as a concordant unity all his modes of behavior, all his activities and passivities, and to which the entire psychic basis constantly contributes. (Husserl, 1989, p. 290)

Husserl's thought here reaches back to Nietzsche's assertion that a free spirit's optimal control of its drives appears as a personal style (*Gay Science*, sec. 290), and reaches forward to Merleau-Ponty's famous claim that an individual's movements through the lifeworld are characterized by a personal style (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 85, 150, 180, 281).

Given the Existentialists' claim that Husserl's vision of phenomenology as an exact science of essences constrains him to an interpretation of everything under the heading of timeless, fixed essences, the following statement from the final section of *Ideas Second Book* may come as a shock. According to an objective assessment of the thing-like qualities of things, is it not the case that how some thing can

behave, and further, how it will behave, is pre-delineated by its own essence?

But does each thing ... *have such an essence of its own in the first place?* Or is the thing, as it were, *always underway*, not at all graspable therefore in pure Objectivity, but rather in virtue of its relation to subjectivity, in principle only a relatively identical something, which does not have its essence in advance or graspable once and for all, but instead has *an open essence*, one that can always take on new properties according to the constitutive circumstances of givenness? But this is precisely the problem, to determine more exactly the *sense of this openness*, as regards, specifically the "Objectivity" of natural science. (Husserl, 1989, pp. 312-313)

He goes on to state clearly that consciousness is the universal characteristic of the spiritual (or psychological) dimension of human being and that, as such, it has an essence, an essence that eidetic analysis is designed to reveal. But human being also has an underlying basis in its lived body and habitus; it is this basic stratum that serves to individuate each person in his or her individuality, and, as such, the human person does *not* have an essence in advance, but instead is underway, a being open to its future.

The pregivenness of the world signifies the persistency of a universal world-conviction, a world-possession, which at the same time is a presumption of being and is always givenness of being, indeed as givenness of a being which has *its true being only ahead of itself*. (Husserl, 1989, p. 363)

From my standpoint, this statement is a clear precursor to Existentialist claims made by Heidegger, Sartre and Jaspers that Dasein is underway, ahead of itself, and open to the future. In the Fourth Appendix to the *Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl clearly links his concept of the individual not having an essence in advance, an embodied being that is underway and always becoming, to the core concept of an internal, self-realized freedom – and, in doing so, clearly captures the Existentialist concept of freedom (see especially Edie 1984).

This life, as personal life, is a constant becoming through a constant intentionality of development. What becomes, in this life, is the person himself. His being is always forever becoming.... Human personal life proceeds in stages ... up to the point of seizing in

consciousness the idea of autonomy, the idea of a resolve of the will to shape one's whole personal life into the synthetic unity of a life of universal self-responsibility and, correlatively, to shape oneself into the true "I", the free, autonomous "I" which seeks to realize his innate reason, the striving to be true to himself, to be able to remain identical with himself as a reasonable "I". (Husserl, 1970, p. 338)

On the rare occasions when Husserl reflects on the possible ground which could motivate the philosopher to perform the phenomenological reduction he refers to "the irrational fact of the world's rationality" (Bernet, Kern, & Marbach, 1992, p. 10), and the "clarification of the world leads back to the task of systematically setting out the final irrationality of the world-constituting consciousness" (Husserl, in Nenon & Embree, 1996, p. 12). From my point of view this startling remark gestures toward the radical contingency at the basis of human existence, albeit in this instance, the uniquely human feature of questioning the tacit thesis about the world's being. This *ungrounded ground* is not far from Kierkegaard's reflections on the deeply disturbing apprehension of the absurd, and Nietzsche's vertiginous gazing into the abyss. Even more existentially flavored is Husserl's immediate response to the challenge posed by this utter lack of inherent reason, namely, the resolve to carry through with the reduction and all that this entails; philosophical determination conducted under the title of "my fullest freedom".

Note: An earlier, much shorter version of this article appeared in the Introduction to *The Existentialist Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

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