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Solipsistic and Intersubjective Phenomenology¹

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It is commonplace, among philosophers acquainted with Husserl's works, to speak of the distinction between "solipsistic" and "intersubjective" phenomenology. Indeed, Husserl himself writes of phenomenology in these terms. Sometimes discussion of this distinction is within the context of criticisms of Husserl's phenomenology. It has been said, for example, that Husserl does not (or cannot) make the transition from the solipsistic to the intersubjective stage of phenomenology, since he fails to answer the problem of intersubjectivity. I intend to argue that the distinction between the solipsistic and intersubjective stages of phenomenology is at best misleading and, at worst, simply mistaken. Paradoxically, I shall argue that this is so on Husserlian grounds. I shall defend one of Husserl's depictions of phenomenology against some of his critics by showing that other things he says about it are false.

1. Let us begin with Husserl's two attempts to draw the distinction, only thereafter turning to other attempts. Husserl notes that a phenomenologist must begin by (in part) "parenthesizing" the distinction between his or her ego and other egos, adding that this involves, apparently, a commitment to solipsism, "albeit a transcendental solipsism." Lest one think that Husserl thinks that the adverb "apparently" means that there is no commitment to "solipsism," one should note Husserl's works in the next paragraph.

As beginning philosophers we must not let ourselves be frightened by such considerations. Perhaps reduction to the transcendental ego only *seems* to entail a *permanently* solipsistic science; whereas the consequential elaboration of this science... leads over to a phenomenology of transcendental intersubjectivity... As a matter of fact... a transcendental solipsism is only a subordinate stage philosophically; though, as such, it must first be delimited for purposes of method, in order that the problems of transcendental intersubjectivity, as problems belonging to a higher level, may be correctly stated and attacked.²

¹I read an earlier version of this paper at the annual meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy on November 1, 1979.

²Edmund Husserl. *Cartesian meditations* (Dorion Cairns, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, pp. 30-31.

Husserl is suggesting that the reduction to the transcendental ego does not entail a permanently solipsistic science. However, he regards it as entailing a temporary solipsistic science, a stage of phenomenology that Husserl hopes to overcome. But what is solipsistic science? How does it differ from a phenomenology of transcendental intersubjectivity?

Solipsism can be classified in two categories, metaphysical and epistemological. Metaphysical solipsism is the thesis that only I and my ideas exist, whereas epistemological solipsism is the thesis that it is impossible to prove that metaphysical solipsism is false. An epistemological solipsist maintains that he is the only mind of whose existence he has any knowledge. A solipsistic science, then, would seem to be a science in which one of the theses is (provisionally, at least) that either epistemological or metaphysical solipsism is true. A metaphysical solipsistic science that is temporary would be odd indeed, since it would involve asserting and later denying one and the same thesis. Epistemological solipsism of the provisional variety does not encounter this particular difficulty, provided it is construed as the thesis that the philosopher does not know (at a given time) how to prove that there are other minds. Otherwise epistemological solipsism of a temporary variety would include the contradictory theses that it is both possible (since we anticipate the proof) and impossible to prove that there are other minds. Thus, either the notion of a temporary solipsistic science is self-contradictory, or there must be some modification of the meaning of "solipsism." The necessity of modifying the meaning of "solipsism" is our first indication that the distinction between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology is misleading.

It may be objected that Husserl wrote of *transcendental* solipsism, rather than what we ordinarily understand by "solipsism." This objection presents no particular difficulties. One can simply substitute "transcendental ego" for "mind." A temporary transcendental solipsistic science, then, would be a science in which (if it is consistent) one of the theses is that the philosopher does not know how, at the given time, to prove that there are other transcendental egos.

Although that is an odd proposition to include among the constituent claims of a science, my interpretation of a consistent transcendental solipsism conforms to what Husserl says about it within the context. "But, at this point in our meditations, we can make no definite decision about this matter [whether the solipsism is temporary or permanent]; nor can the advance indications given here reveal their full significance before we have carried our meditations further" (Husserl, 1973, p. 31). This remark follows Husserl's repeated insistence, in the first meditation, that the phenomenological reduction requires abstaining from any preconceived notions about the form that one's philosophy will take. Evidently that is part of what Husserl took (at the time, at least) "presuppositionlessness" to mean.

By contrast, the intersubjective stage is the point at which one knows how to solve the problem and does so. Again, this interpretation fits well with the text.

And yet it is quite impossible to foresee how, for me in the attitude of reduction, other egos—not as mere worldly phenomena but as other transcendental egos—can become possible *as existing* and thus become equally legitimate themes of a phenomenological egology. (Husserl, 1973, p. 30, emphasis mine)

But this way of striking the distinction is misleading. Let us see why.

If it were legitimate to draw the distinction between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology in the way sketched above, then it would be a foregone conclusion that phenomenology is a permanently solipsistic science. For Husserl does not solve, nor attempt to solve, the problem of other minds in the fifth meditation or his other works. I have argued for this position more extensively elsewhere.³ A brief summary will suffice here. Despite the misleading passages cited above, as well as other passages at the beginning of the fifth meditation, Husserl shows that he understood quite well that the problem of intersubjectivity had nothing to do with the existence (or non-existence) of other transcendental egos at the end of *Cartesian Meditations*.

At *no point* was the transcendental attitude, the attitude of transcendental epoché, abandoned; and our “theory” of experiencing someone else, our “theory” of experiencing others, *did not aim at being and was not at liberty to be anything but explication of the sense, “others,”* as it arises from the constitutive productivity of that experiencing: the sense, “truly existing others,” as it arises from the corresponding harmonious syntheses. (Husserl, 1973, p. 148, emphases mine)

One should not be misled by the fact that Husserl says “truly existing others,” since he is talking about *a sense*, rather than existing others. Husserl’s use of mention quotes around “truly existing others” is not accidental. Elsewhere Husserl explicitly says that he cannot assert that others exist (Husserl, 1973, p. 52n). This holds, incidentally for denials that others exist as well.

Why is this so? Shouldn’t we simply dismiss Husserlian phenomenology as solipsistic, as incapable of solving an important philosophical problem? I do not think so, and shall presently show why.

The reason why Husserl cannot assert the existence (or the non-existence) of other subjects, transcendental or otherwise, is that phenomenological reduction—the methodological device with which Husserl begins philosophical analysis—requires (in part) neutrality on existential questions. A minor consequence of this point is that Husserl must remain neutral with regard to the existence of other subjects.

³Husserl’s problem of intersubjectivity, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1980, 11, (2), pp. 144–162, especially pp. 145–150.

This prohibition against using or asserting anything about the existence of others does not prevent Husserl from talking about what he (or anyone) *takes* to be evidence of their existence. With regard to other subjects, Husserl wants to clarify what we take to be sufficient reason for believing that there are other subjects. That is why Husserl can speak of the sense “truly existing others,” but not truly existing others. Indeed, if “conceptual analysis” is construed sufficiently broadly, then Husserl’s phenomenology is a kind of conceptual analysis. I say “sufficiently broadly,” since intensions are not, for Husserl, primarily linguistic, though they are secondarily so. That is a peculiarity of Husserl’s theory of meaning that need not concern us here. It is a kind of conceptual analysis, since Husserl tries to clarify the way we conceive the world and things in it. In this respect, Husserl’s philosophy bears some resemblance to some forms of recent Anglo-American philosophy.

We are now in a position to respond to the question about the worth of Husserl’s philosophy. No, we should not dismiss Husserl’s phenomenology on the grounds that it cannot offer a solution to the problem of other minds, since that is not the point of Husserl’s analyses. It is as if one criticized a philosopher who devoted a work to the clarification of religious discourse for not arguing for the existence (or non-existence) of God.

The upshot of this argument is that since phenomenological reduction requires neutrality on existential questions, it is misleading to suggest that “solipsistic” phenomenology can be distinguished from the intersubjective variety along existential lines.

It is fair to object that the passages I have been citing were deleted. Indeed, in both the German text and English translation, one finds notes indicating that this is so. The very reasons that I have presented are, perhaps, the explanation for the fact that Husserl (presumably) deleted them. Perhaps this only shows that Husserl understood his enterprise better than some of his critics, who complain that Husserl cannot escape solipsism, as if the reduction committed him to it.⁴

Unfortunately, that is not the only place in which Husserl suggests that the distinction between “solipsistic” and “intersubjective” phenomenology is to be drawn in terms of the existence of other (transcendental) subjects. Consider the following passage, which includes both of Husserl’s principles for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology.

What about the logic that furnishes norms for the transcendental investigations that clarify positive logic? One conceives concepts, one forms judgments, drawing them from

⁴Paul Ricoeur. *Husserl: An analysis of his phenomenology* (E. Ballard and L. Embree, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967, pp. 116, 130. Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and nothingness*. (Hazel Barnes, Trans.). New York: Washington Square Press, 1953, p. 318. Stephan Strasser. *The idea of a dialogal phenomenology*. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, p. 19.

transcendental experience . . . ; one has empty and fulfilled judgments, one strives for truths and attains them by adequation, one deduces too, and it may well be permissible to proceed inductively: What about truth and principles of logic there, where true being is “merely subjective”? Truth, at least in the province of the most fundamental—the “purely egological”—phenomenology . . . is no longer “truth in itself” in any normal sense, *not even in a sense that has relation to a transcendental “everyone”*. To make this statement understandable I may mention again that other subjects, as transcendental, are not given, within the bounds of my ego, in the manner in which my ego itself is given for me, in actually immediate experience, and that, at its first and fundamental level, the systematic structure of a transcendental *phenomenology is free to lay claim to other egos solely as parenthesized, as “phenomena”, and not yet as transcendental actualities*. Thus, at this fundamental level, a remarkable transcendental discipline arises as the intrinsically first transcendental discipline, one that is actually transcendental-solipsistic: *with eidetic truths, with theories, that hold good exclusively for me, the ego—that is to say: truths and theories that can rightfully claim to hold good “once for all” but without relation to actual or possible other egos.*⁵

Again Husserl maintains that the existence of transcendental subjects is a principle for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology. Other transcendental subjects figure only as phenomena at the “solipsistic” level of phenomenology, whereas one is free to claim that they are transcendental *actualities* at the intersubjective stage. But if this were true, then the intersubjective stage would amount to disregarding the phenomenological reduction; and if, as Husserl insists, the reduction must remain in force in order for one’s analyses to be phenomenological, the “intersubjective stage of phenomenology” is not phenomenology *at all*. This criterion for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology, then, will not do. If there is any means for striking the distinction, it will have to be along other lines.

2. Another suggested criterion is contained in the long passage just cited. Husserl says that truth is not truth in the sense that has relation to a transcendental everyone. At first this seems to be a straightforward consequence of the first criterion. Truth has no relation to a transcendental everyone at the solipsistic level because at that point one considers other subjects only as phenomena. Only at the intersubjective stage does one assert that other (transcendental) subjects are “actualities,” and thus subjects to which phenomenological truths stand in a certain relation. If this were the only way to interpret the passage, then the suggestion would be objectionable for the same reason as Husserl’s first criterion.

But Husserl says more. It is noteworthy that at the end of the passage Husserl says that the truths of solipsistic phenomenology are true without relation to actual *or possible* other egos. He asserts this elsewhere. “It should be noted that, in the transition from my ego to an ego as such, neither the

⁵Edmund Husserl. *Formal and transcendental logic*. (Dorian Cairns, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, pp. 269–70, emphases added and deleted.

actuality *nor the possibility* of other egos is presupposed" (Husserl, 1973, p. 72, emphasis mine). This suggestion is altogether different from the criterion considered above. Now we are supposed to distinguish between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology along different lines. At the solipsistic stage truths are "without relation" to *possible* other subjects; and the *possibility* of other subjects is not presupposed. By contrast, the intersubjective stage includes the use of the presupposition of the possibility of other subjects, and truths at this stage do stand "in relation" to other possible subjects.⁶

Now this second suggestion is not subject to the criticism I made earlier. Phenomenological reduction requires that one remain neutral regarding the *actual* existence of other subjects. But that is a far cry from requiring neutrality with respect to the *possible* existence of other subjects. This second criterion, however, is subject to another criticism. Although there are a couple of ambiguous expressions in the passages I have cited, I think they can be clarified to the extent that I can argue that there *cannot* be a solipsistic stage of phenomenology if we accept Husserl's second criterion.

The two expressions that need to be discussed are "other ego" and "without relation." David Carr has provided a clarification of "other ego" in order to make sense of Husserl's claim that he presupposes neither the actuality nor the possibility of other egos. Carr distinguishes between *different* and *other* egos. Briefly, a different ego is an ego that is the same in kind but numerically different. In treating his own consciousness as exemplary of the kind transcendental ego, Husserl presupposes the possibility of different egos. Husserl conceives of consciousness as a system of compossibilities, not all of which are compossible with all others. Accordingly, the concept of a monad makes no sense except by reference to different possible systems.⁷

An other ego, on the other hand, has a further characteristic; it is an ego that stands "in intentional relation" to me. That is, an other ego is an ego that is taken to exist and who is taken to be someone that intends, or can intend, me. An other ego is someone for whom one can be an intentional object. It has been suggested that although Husserl presupposes the possibility of different egos before the fifth meditation, he does not presuppose the possibility of *other* egos (Carr, 1975, p. 88).

Carr's distinction between different and other egos enables us to make considerable headway in ascertaining what Husserl means by "without relation to other possible egos." Presumably he means, at least in part, that phenomenological truths at the solipsistic stage do not bear any intentional

⁶Edmund Husserl. *The Paris lectures*. (Peter Koestenbaum, Trans.) The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967, pp. 11-12.

⁷David Carr. *Phenomenology and the problem of history*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, pp. 87-88.

relations to other *possible* subjects. That is to say, phenomenological theses at the solipsistic stage are true, despite the fact that it is not necessarily true that other possible subjects can intend them. Only at the intersubjective stage of phenomenology does the concept of other transcendental subjects come into play.

I suggest that there cannot be a stage of phenomenology in which the concept of other subjects is not an operative concept. For to identify a proposition as true is necessarily to identify it as having a characteristic identifiable by anyone; Husserl, of course, identifies some propositions as true at the “solipsistic” stage of phenomenology.

Let us clarify this. Husserl himself offers us a clue in one of the many passages on truth and evidence in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*.

These, when actualized, are the unqualified truths as themselves given; cognitional acquisitions, abiding from then on, capable of again becoming accessible to insight at any time, and accessible in this manner to *everyone* as a rationally thinking subject, even as they were before their “discovery”. Every “scientific statement” has this sense *from the start*. It is already addressed to this “everyone” and states what the substrate-objectivities are in truth—as *everyone can see*. (Husserl, 1969, pp. 125–26, all but first emphasis mine)

The passage is subject to a mundane interpretation to the effect that scientists always presuppose that there are other scientists who can see the truth of what they say by consulting the evidence. If this were all that the passage meant, it would have no relevance to our question, since we take for granted that it is possible to remain philosophically neutral about the existence of others.

But the passage has a significance for phenomenology, an enterprise that Husserl calls a science. In what sense do *Husserl's* scientific statements have the sense “there for everyone” from the start? To identify propositions as true is to be committed, necessarily, to two propositions: (1) it is *possible* that there are *other rational* subjects, and (2) these subjects can have evidential consciousness of the truth of these propositions. It is noteworthy that neither of these propositions include anything about the *actual* existence of other rational subjects. Only their possibility is included, such that the propositions in question are compatible with the non-existence of every rational subject but the philosopher. Imagine someone claiming that a proposition is true and that no one else *can* have access to its truth. No such proposition could be a constituent of a science. Hence, there is a sense in which Husserl implicitly says, at the *outset* of his philosophical inquiry, that “*anyone* can consult his experiences and see that what I say is true.” These other possible subjects are rational, which is to say that certain abilities—such as the ability to recognize relevant evidence—are required in order to make sense of the phrase “see that what I say is true.” One can see the truth of a proposition only if one can distinguish relevant from irrelevant evidence and do other things associated with rationality.

Thus, if being without relation to actual *or possible* other subjects is the criterion for being a solipsistic science, then there cannot be a solipsistic science. I say *other* subjects advisedly, since if such possible others can intend the truth of a proposition, they can be intended by and can intend me. Therefore, Husserl's second criterion for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology is at best misleading. What is more, passages from Husserl's works, suitably interpreted, show that the second criterion is awry.

My insistence that Husserl must presuppose the possible existence of other subjects may not seem to be consistent with my characterization of phenomenology as strictly an analysis of meanings. The point can be put differently: Husserl has to take for granted from the outset that the meaning of "other transcendental rational subject" is *not* self-contradictory or countersensical, to borrow a word from Husserl. That is, the meaning cannot be like "round square," whose meaning is such that there cannot be a referent of that expression. The meaning of "other transcendental rational subject" must be such that there can be a referent, which is to say that there possibly exist other transcendental rational subjects. Questions about meaning can be distinguished from questions about actual existence; that is, after all, part of the point of the phenomenological reduction. But questions about meaning cannot be separated in all cases from questions about possible existence. Husserl himself endorses this position. In *Formal and Transcendental Logic* Husserl argues that a formal apophantics is, at the same time, a formal ontology. They are two sides of the same discipline, considered in different ways (Husserl, 1969, pp. 119–48). I have chosen the "ontological" mode of expression only because Husserl speaks of not presupposing the possibility of other subjects.

3. Even if it is granted that one necessarily presupposes the possible existence of other rational subjects at the "solipsistic stage" of phenomenology, possible subjects who can recognize the truth of the scientific statements, it could still be objected that I misrepresented the intersubjective stage of phenomenology. Rather than being the stage at which one makes use of the *presupposition* of the possibility of other subjects, intersubjective phenomenology requires that the concept of other subjects has been clarified. If by "presupposition" we understand "an unidentified and unclarified assumption," then there is no presupposition of the possibility of other subjects in intersubjective phenomenology. Rather than being presupposed, the concept of other subjects is clarified, once one has reached the intersubjective stage of phenomenology.

This criticism offers another criterion for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology. While granting as false Husserl's claim that he does not presuppose the possibility of other subjects, my interlocutor suggests that solipsistic phenomenology is to be distinguished from

intersubjective phenomenology on grounds of clarification. At the solipsistic stage the concept of other subjects is unclarified or presupposed, whereas at the intersubjective stage the concept *is* clarified. To my knowledge, Husserl never invokes this as a criterion, although there are passages that invite this interpretation.

But this suggestion does not provide us with a principle that justifies speaking of solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology any more than other sorts of phenomenology. If clarification of a concept (or the lack of such clarification) were sufficient for categorizing different sorts of phenomenology, there would be a new kind of phenomenology for each concept that is clarified. But Husserl does not introduce, say, "physical object phenomenology" upon clarification of the appropriate concept, nor is the stage that precedes the analysis "non-physical object phenomenology." The suggestion does not provide us with a feature of intersubjectivity in particular, a feature that justifies talk of solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology without, at the same time, opening the door to all other sorts of "phenomenologies." Although this suggestion could serve as a means for *naming* what Husserl calls solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology, it does not provide us with a *principle* that picks out the relevant feature of intersubjectivity. Besides, it is worth repeating that this suggesting is not in Husserl's works.

It may be objected that all that is necessary to strike the distinction is a name, and that no principle is necessary. So, generalizing the suggestion is off the point. My reply is that the use of the adjective "solipsistic" and "intersubjective" to modify phenomenology involves commitment to two kinds of phenomenology. If there are two kinds, a principle is necessary whereby we can distinguish between the two. By arguing that attempts to draw the distinction are either misleading or false I am, of course, suggesting that there is only *one* kind of phenomenology, with a method and foundations that remain the same throughout.⁸

4. Another suggestion of a criterion for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology is that objects are constituted solely as correlates of my actual and possible perspectival views of them as the

⁸I am, in effect, endorsing a position that Harrison Hall has recently defended. "The conclusions I will be aiming for are that the 'Fifth Meditation' adds nothing to Husserl's phenomenology which requires either a shift in method or a re-evaluation of foundations, and that, in the relevant respects at least, the *Crisis* is perfectly continuous with the *Cartesian Meditations*." Harrison Hall. Intersubjective phenomenology and Husserl's Cartesianism. *Man and World* 1979, 12, (1), p. 14. Yet Hall is willing to speak of solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology. Hall does not trace the problem in Carr's article to an attempt to make something of the distinction between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology which, if I am right, cannot be done. Rightly or wrongly, I think that the terms in question strongly suggest, misleadingly, that there are two phenomenological methods.

solipsistic level, whereas they are constituted as correlates of the actual and possible views of a community at the intersubjective level (Hall, 1979, p. 13). But this suggestion does not work, since objects are constituted as the correlates of an open community at the solipsistic level. I continue to take (physical) objects to be publicly accessible from different and simultaneous perspectives post-phenomenological reduction. Husserl simply has not clarified that constitution prior to the analysis in the fifth meditation. Phenomenological reduction does not alter or distort the constitution of objects, as the criterion seems to suggest. It only allows one to become aware that it is taking place. Besides, truths are objects in Husserl's sense of the term, about which I have already commented.

5. It has been suggested, lastly, that one takes a community, rather than one's individual consciousness, as one's point of departure in intersubjective phenomenology. I have already pointed out one respect in which a phenomenologist must take a community as his point of departure from the outset. By identifying some propositions as true, a phenomenologist is committing himself to the possible existence of other rational subjects who can recognize their truth.

"Taking a community as one's point of departure" may, on the other hand, mean that one abandons the first-person point of view. But that does not square with Husserlian phenomenology. "Imperturbably I must hold fast to the insight that every sense that any existent whatever has or can have for me—in respect of its "what" and its "it exists and actually is"—is a sense *in* and *arising* from my intentional life . . ." (Husserl, 1973, p. 91). Although the truths of phenomenology are for a possible *us*, a Husserlian phenomenologist bases his claims on a descriptive analysis of his own experiences. A Husserlian phenomenologist, then, never abandons what I have called "the first-person standpoint." Thus, the suggestion does not offer a principle for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology.

To sum up, Husserl's two principles do not permit us to distinguish between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology. The three other suggestions I have considered also fail to provide us with a principle for distinguishing between the "two sorts" of phenomenology. The distinction, if there is one, has not been adequately clarified.

What are the *philosophical* consequences of these criticisms of Husserl's proposals for distinguishing between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology? I think that there are two.

First, some commentators have misinterpreted Husserl's project in the fifth meditation and elsewhere. Perhaps they take their cue from Husserl's misleading remarks about the distinction between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology.⁹ Now that we see that the distinction cannot

⁹I have in mind those commentators I mentioned in footnote 4, among others. Since Ricoeur is correct in observing that solipsism has always been an objection to idealistic philosophies, I also

be drawn along the lines I have considered, we not only have a better understanding of Husserl's works, but of the problem of intersubjectivity as well.

The second point is more difficult to explain, but is more important. If it is granted that a phenomenologist must presuppose the possibility of other egos, an objection that could be raised against a Husserlian solution to the problem can be blocked. Explaining the objection requires clarification of the concept of transcendence, which plays an important role in Husserl's writings on intersubjectivity.

David Carr has distinguished between transcendence in the weak sense and transcendence in the strong sense. The weak sense of "transcendence" means "not reducible to one's actual acts of consciousness" (hereafter: transcendence₁). Something transcends₁ my consciousness if it retains its identity throughout my actual acts. This sheet of paper transcends₁ my consciousness, insofar as it is the same sheet of paper that I see now, could see later, remember, or think about. This sheet of paper also transcends my consciousness in the strong sense (hereafter: transcends₂). That is to say, it is not reducible to my *possible* acts. I see only one side of this sheet of paper; yet it is the same sheet of paper, the other side of which can be seen at the same time. Since it is impossible for me to see the other side while simultaneously seeing this side alone, this sheet of paper transcends₂ my consciousness. Truths also transcend my acts in this way, since they are the same truths that can be intended (entertained, insightfully thought about, etc.) at the same time that I do not intend them. I hope it is clear that one can account for transcendence₂ only by reference to another possible subject. Only another subject can see the other side of this sheet of paper at the same time that I do not. As commentators have recognized, Husserl tries to give clarification of transcendence₂ in his writings on intersubjectivity, thereby hoping to clarify the related concept of objectivity.

Now, let us suppose that Husserl does not presuppose the possibility of other subjects. In that case, Husserl could (at most) account only for the transcendence₁ of the alter ego. David Carr recognizes this in his

have in mind those commentators who interpret Husserl's philosophy as a kind of idealism that is opposed to realism. Roman Ingarden is probably the leading proponent of the idealistic interpretation. Cf. Roman Ingarden, *On the motives which led Husserl to transcendental idealism*. (A. Hannibalsson, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975. There are some philosophers who have adopted Ingarden's interpretation. Others take Husserl to be an idealist, although I have no reason to believe that they adopted it from Ingarden. These include Peter Koestenbaum (Husserl, 1967, pp. LX-LXI), William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (introduction to their translation of Husserl's *The idea of phenomenology*, pp. xvii-xx), Richard Holmes has noted that there are other commentators who think that Husserl is an idealist in *Is transcendental phenomenology committed to idealism?* *Monist* (January, 1975, 59 (1), pp. 98-114. Proponents of the idealistic readings of Husserl are inclined to take Husserl to be a solipsist and to take his writings on intersubjectivity as an attempt to solve the problem of other minds.

interpretation of the fifth meditation. "What must be understood about this whole account is that, while the alter ego makes it possible that the 'rest' of the world exceeds my actual and possible consciousness, the alter ego does not *himself* exceed my actual and possible consciousness" (Carr, 1974, p. 97).

But can the alter ego make it possible for the rest of the world to transcend₂ my consciousness if he only transcends₁ mine? In order to make the transcendence₂ of "everything else" possible, the alter ego must be someone for whom the world is "there too." And if I identify the alter ego as someone who constitutes the world along with me, I have thereby identified things as being for him, even if he is not for me, actually or possibly. My death would amount to the cessation of my actual and possible consciousness; yet that can be true while things continue to be for another constituting subject. To identify someone as another constituting subject is to identify him as existing independently; and to take someone to exist independently is to be committed to his transcendence₂. If it were possible for public objects to be for another subject that merely transcends₁ my consciousness, then it would be possible for me to see the other side of this sheet of paper while I do not see it. The reason is that transcendence₁ is explained by reference to my possible acts; an object is not reducible to my actual acts only because it can be the referent of a possible one. Now another subject is someone who can see the opposite side of this sheet of paper simultaneously. If the other subject merely transcends₁ my consciousness, then any possible act of his is one of my possible acts. Thus, since the other subject can see the opposite side of this sheet of paper at the same time I do not, it would be possible for me to do so. Clearly, that is not possible. Thus, another subject must be identified as transcending₂ one's consciousness. In short, Husserl *cannot* fully clarify the sense "other constituting subject" or the related concept of objectivity, if he can clarify only the transcendence₁ of the other subject. The only way Husserl (or any Husserlian phenomenologist) can account for the possibility of the other subject's transcendence₂ is by making use of the concept of other subjects, who can co-constitute the transcendence₂ of the other subject that is the theme of the analysis.

Thus, if one thinks Husserl's claim that he does not presuppose the possibility of other subjects is false, one can respond to an objection to a Husserlian analysis of intersubjectivity. This is not even to mention the objections concerning the concept of truth, which can also be avoided. This suggestion for avoiding some difficulties also provides a sense for the expression "the primacy of intersubjectivity." Intersubjectivity is primary in the sense that one cannot make sense of one's philosophy as consisting of a body of truths, nor can one clarify the concept of another subject fully, unless one supposes the possibility of other subjects.

This line has a difficulty of its own. It is fair to object that this renders the analysis of the sense "other subject" circular. The analysis is supposed to yield

the clarification of the concept of another subject. Yet it has been argued that the concept must be presupposed. A first response is that it is not circular in the same way that an argument is. For although there are arguments in Husserl's writings on intersubjectivity (or, more properly, Husserlian writings, since we have abandoned Husserl's line), the overall structure of such an analysis is not an argument. Rather, it is a clarification of a sense. So the "circularity," if there is any, is much more like a circular definition, a definition that is uninformative because it uses the term (or a synonym) to be defined.

This difficulty, I think, can be resolved by pointing to the distinction between a clarified and an unclarified concept. One need not presuppose that the concept of another subject is already clarified at the outset. It is necessary to take for granted only a pre-philosophical understanding, which the analysis is supposed to transform into philosophical clarity. That is, in part, what I have done by identifying the necessity of the presupposition. This suggestion is close to, if not identical with, Heidegger's remarks in *Being and Time*.

It is fair to object with the following challenge: If the fifth meditation (or Husserl's other writings on intersubjectivity) do not initiate a shift from solipsistic to intersubjective phenomenology, then what is Husserl doing? My reply is simple. Husserl is merely trying to clarify something that has been implicit in his philosophy *all along*, the sense "other transcendental rational subject." As I said, there is but one kind of (Husserlian) phenomenology.

One last objection should be considered. Husserl does not use the terms "solipsistic phenomenology" and "intersubjective phenomenology" frequently, preferring instead to use the term "purely egological phenomenology." Even in passages where he is discussing the problem of intersubjectivity, Husserl sometimes uses the term "purely egological phenomenology" rather than "solipsistic phenomenology." It is true that "purely egological phenomenology" does not suggest that the problem of intersubjectivity is the problem of proving that there are other transcendental egos. But it does suggest, misleadingly, that there are two kinds of phenomenology, insofar as Husserl uses the term as a synonym for "solipsistic phenomenology." Since this is so, Husserl is subject to the challenge "What is the principle whereby one can distinguish between purely egological phenomenology and the other kind of phenomenology?" I do not think that it is accidental that there is no term, paired with "purely egological phenomenology," as there is for "solipsistic phenomenology." I suggest that the explanation is that there is no other kind, at least no kind that can be distinguished with a principle, rather than simply named. This paper, then, should be considered as a criticism of the misleading overtones of "purely egological phenomenology" as well. Although some sciences are classified in terms of their subject matters, the subject matter of "purely egological

phenomenology” is not sufficiently different from “intersubjective phenomenology” to justify talk of two different phenomenologies. For Husserl’s distinctive method is *the same* in “intersubjective” phenomenology, and the subject matter is fundamentally the same, too. “Other subject” is one noema among others.¹⁰

The thesis of this paper is independent of the particulars of any of Husserl’s analyses. I sought only to clear the way for a Husserlian solution to the problem of intersubjectivity by exposing some unjust criticisms and arguing that Husserl was ill-advised to use the terminology I have discussed.

¹⁰Although my quotations from Husserl’s writings on intersubjectivity has been selective, I do not think that Husserl’s *Nachlass* is (at least *prima facie*) as worthy of the claim to be Husserl’s official position as the works that Husserl had published during his lifetime. Moreover, evidence suggests that Husserl thoroughly approved of *Formal and transcendental logic*, from which the central quotation in this paper comes. Likewise, Husserl’s vacillation about the distinction between solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology does not militate against the fact that, in most of the passages I have cited, Husserl said false or misleading things about phenomenology. Besides, I have argued that Husserl vacillated between statements that imply that his remarks about solipsistic and intersubjective phenomenology are false or misleading, and those false or misleading statements themselves. Hence I have not suggested that Husserl’s position on this matter is unchanging. I am suggesting, rather, a different terminology, one that is free from misleading overtones. Lastly, I am only secondarily concerned with Husserl’s position. My primary concern is to defend what I consider to be a proper understanding of phenomenology, and to correct the host of commentators who may have been misled by some of Husserl’s statements.