

## Towards a Phenomenology of Objects: Husserl and the Life-World

*Peter R. Costello*

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In this paper, I explore Edmund Husserl's account of the life-world for evidence that he posits it as the living flesh of the transcendental ego and thus as our primordial object-relation. In so doing, I attempt to rehabilitate and defend Husserl's notion of transcendental subjectivity, of the *a priori*, by noting how one's embodiment in many concrete experiences calls for and bears witness to this transcendental foundation of itself. After developing my reading of Husserl's account of the life-world, I then turn to the phenomenological psychology of John Russon in his book *Human Experience* to show how Husserl's life-world as the primordial object-relation opens us onto a very concrete vision of intersubjectivity.

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*The long-term trade in truth no longer  
involves thought: strangely enough, it  
now seems to involve things.*

Jacques Lacan speaking as Truth<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In this paper I will argue that for transcendental phenomenology the “long-term trade in truth” indeed “involves things” and that meaning as such can only appear as that which is generated by a transcendental, *fleshly* subject in an original intertwining with its own original “Thing,” its life-world (*Lebenswelt*).<sup>2</sup> To make this claim about the relevance of the tran-

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1. “The Freudian Thing” 115.

2. This insight has been already noted by Sartre: “As such, the body is not distinct from

scendental ego and of its unity with its original object, its life-world, I will examine Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. In this work, Husserl makes a particular claim that the life-world appears as living, as a kind of organic whole. This claim, coupled with Husserl's general discussion of the life-world as embracing both the pre-scientific and the various sedimentary layers of the senses of consciousness and its objects, could suggest that Husserl holds such a view on the relationship between the transcendental ego and the life-world, one that is largely different from the one usually attributed to him.

As I read him, Husserl argues that the transcendental ego constitutes the life-world as the changing, developing, and expanding *way* in which the objects of experience can call out to and intertwine with the ego, can draw the ego into a mood, and can even serve as the ego's memorial cells. And to constitute the life-world as the *way* objects matter is to constitute it in an analogous manner to the lived body, since the lived body too appears as the very way in which particular objects come to hold meaning for consciousness, as graspable or visible and to what extent they appear as such. However, if Husserl is indeed arguing that the life-world is the flesh of the transcendental ego, is analogous to the lived body, then this would allow transcendental phenomenology not only to show that truth "involves things" but also, more importantly, to offer an intriguing account of truth's back and forth movement between subject and object, of how things can (and do) think themselves into me as much as I think about (and think myself into) them.

### **The General Argument - Life-World and Intersubjectivity**

Now of course one of the first challenges to portraying the transcendental ego as having any kind of *a priori* flesh is Husserl's description of ego-hood as such. Husserl states clearly in *Crisis* that "being an ego through the living body is of course *not* the only way of being an ego" (108). However, given that "none of its ways can be severed from the others" (108), I believe there is still room for a discussion of the transcendental ego, which is presumably

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the situation of the for-itself, since for the for-itself to exist and to be situated are one and the same; on the other hand, the body is identified *with the whole world* inasmuch as the world is the total situation of the for-itself and the measure of its existence" (408-9, my emphasis). However, I want to claim that the recognition of the logical notions of situation, of for-itself, and of world is possible only insofar as the transcendental ego is necessary and only insofar as its world is a more bodily and *a priori* notion than Sartre would admit.

the most salient additional “way of being an ego,” as having something like a body.

Husserl must be correct when he claims that the ego does not merely act through its *Leib*. After all, the experience of one’s own living body, like all experience, could show up only against some background. That this background is there is evident in that my body makes sense to me, even as it expands and constricts in its acquisition and loss of habits and capacities.

Merleau-Ponty gives a salient example of a blind person learning to use a stick.<sup>3</sup> The body incorporates things into itself, and I feel the world there, at the edge of the stick, and no longer simply in my hand. How is such an ongoing, coherent experience of bodily expansion possible? How is the expansion (and constriction) of bodily experience something I make sense of? It is possible only if the acquisition and loss of habits are not entirely surprises, only if *a priori* my subjectivity placed its body within a larger or higher reference of ownership.

But how does this “higher” point of reference function? And, if it functions as a location of subjectivity *outside of* the lived body, then how can the subjectivity with this “higher reference” constitute or connect with its particular, lived body? How does the transcendental ego come to be able to recognize *this* lived body as *its* lived experience of consciousness, as *its own* “animate organism [that is] uniquely singled out” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 97)?

The Husserlian phenomenologist can answer this last question in particular only insofar as she experiences evidence of an analogy<sup>4</sup> between life-world and lived body. That is, insofar as the *conditions and structures* for the experience of her own body are *themselves* experienced and themselves “kin” to embodiment, the phenomenologist can simultaneously be united with her body and gain the necessary “distance” needed to constitute it.

Let me develop an example: my experience of my lived body is that of a pre-scientific unity of life that nevertheless allows me to incorporate sci-

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3. See Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*: “The blind man’s stick has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity” (165).

4. Some evidence of Husserl’s own recognition of this parallel between lived body and transcendental flesh comes in the second book of *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*. One exemplary passage reads as follows: “the structure of the acts which radiate out from the Ego-Center or the Ego itself, is a form which has an *analogon* in the centralizing of all sense-phenomena in reference to the Body. In absolute consciousness there is always a ‘field’ of intentionality, and the spiritual ‘focus’ of the attention ‘directs’ itself now onto this, now onto that” (112, my emphasis).

entific habits of self-reflection into my very experience of myself. As I grow up, I learn not to fear the doctor and not to feel too comfortable in my body but to develop an internal “searchlight” for disease and to go to her every time I feel a certain way. How could this experience of progressively sensing my embodiment according to the perspective of science be achieved? How can I incorporate a facet of the life-world into my own life?

This experience, this incorporation, could be achieved only if the entire life-world itself were already lived by (my) transcendental ego as *both* the condition for and the product of my lived bodily experience. And, according to Husserl, this is just the way that the life-world does appear. On the one hand, the life-world appears as the transcendental ego’s object-like horizon, as the guarantee that any particular object-relation will have a background on which to appear. As this condition and horizon, the life-world appears as pre-scientific, immediately simple and unitary. On the other hand, the life-world appears as ongoing activity, that of receiving lived bodily experience and of guiding the body’s ongoing object-discovery. As this reception and guidance, the life-world appears as sedimentary, mediately multiple, and as referring backwards and forwards towards an overarching, synthetic whole that is only *a priori* by continually concretizing new meanings out of its relation with lived bodily perception.

But if I experience the life-world as not only the condition but also the reception and guidance of lived bodily activity, then I experience a connection between the two. My body too is a condition for perceptual and kinaesthetic experience. And my body too receives and guides these experiences into habits, memories, anticipations, and capacities. The body, it would seem, is a microcosm of the life-world. Or, to put it another way, my lived body, like a smaller Russian doll, nests within the life-world.

The life-world and my body, then, are both given *a priori* as the same kind of whole - a whole that only become *more explicit in its wholeness* through incorporating my ways of living them. However, this connection, their nesting, their similarity as wholes, would not be experienced as such without the recognition of other subjects and other bodies. It is not in the body itself that I see the connection between my body and its life-world. It is, rather, in the effects that others have on my body that the life-world opens up as relevant, as connected. It is as a body that is challenged, affirmed, and experienced by others that I recognize that my body nests within a flesh that surpasses it.

Let us return to the example of being in the doctor’s office. Under her watchful eyes, within a society’s medical and pharmaceutical gazes, I feel

my body alter, expand, or take on a new power. What is this expansion, this power? It is the ability of my body to become intersubjective, intercorporeal in a particular way. It is the ability of my body to take on more than one perspective at a time, to overlay perspectives onto one another, and to emerge as a newly constituting human being who bears a new relationship to what is pre-scientifically his.

This self-constitution as an internal searchlight is the experience of an *increase* in my experience of world. But this experience of *increase* is not merely an experience of quantity growing larger but an experience of the expansion of the very qualities of ownership and involvement. The others have not just been experienced as indifferent to my body and my world. They have been incorporated as the very intertwining of body and world. It is the others who have given me the occasion and necessity for seeing the life-world as the background on which my lived body relies. It is the others who make it necessary to turn towards the life-world for further guidance in my appropriations.

One might say my lived body “opens up,” becomes “shaken” and becomes “familiar again” through my experience of relating with others and relating, through them, to the life-world. As I “settle with” the doctor’s new and medically sensitive gaze, I pass into a more sophisticated recognition of the relations that have always already been passively guiding my sense of my body. At the same time it (this medical layer of the life-world and all of its correlates) becomes embodied *in my own gaze* and receives a concretion that cannot but affect its ongoing presence as such a layer. The life-world does not remain unchanged by my incorporation of its medical layer through my dealings with the doctor. Its ongoing coherence can be altered by my particular explication, by what I do with it.

In fact, it is this experience of the world being opened up and incorporated successfully and specifically (I may, for example, discover and articulate for the first time a political insidiousness that operates in Western medicine) which points to the life-world as being my own flesh. It is the encounter in the doctor’s office, in the imbibing of television commercials for pharmaceuticals over and over again, that sustains, motivates, and impedes me as I pass into and through the relationships I discover with others.

In sum, the experience in which I engage the doctor is really a salient moment within the ongoing experience of the overlaying of the life-world and my own self-experience. Only if my point of view on my body was always already able to become the perspective of the doctor or of science as such, only if *I equally claimed all objects and perspectives as my own fa-*

*miliar flesh*, could I begin to feel myself immediately and empirically in those ways.

### **Life-World as Alive**

According to Husserl, the life-world is what one has as “*einer geistigen Gestalt*” (*Gesammelte Schriften Band 8* 115),<sup>5</sup> as a style or as “the unity of a living organism” (“*eines lebendigen Organismus*”) (*Crisis* 113; *Krisis* 116). To the question of whether the description of a life-world truly (and not simply metaphorically) appears as a *Gestalt* or an *Organismus*, I believe Husserl to have answered in the affirmative.

First and foremost, the life-world must appear as alive in order for the transcendental ego to constitute itself as alive. For in order to experience itself as alive, the transcendental ego needs to constitute itself as having a history, as having been the same whole that now had its hand as an organ and now as an object. But without the life-world *itself appearing* as historical, as organic, the correlates or acts or layers of sense that the transcendental ego entrusts to that world would be preserved without any internal organization, without the character of historicity as such, and thus the transcendental ego could not itself retrieve those historical acts or even encounter itself *as historical*.

That the life-world does appear as historical, as the very ability of things to retain their references to life and historicity, is shown in that one can *accidentally* dig up *any* archaeological site and immediately experience the objects found as historical. Any experience “in the world” hearkens back to the life-world; any experience of the life-world must be that of organicity.

In addition, to argue that flesh has no place in the ultimate self-constitution of the transcendental ego is to take away, as I have argued above, the means by which one could understand how that transcendental ego could become objectified in particular human subjects. And to do that, to take away the comprehensibility of the relation between the transcendental ego and the particular humans who claim it as their own is to commit Kant’s error; i.e. it is to “distinguish this transcendental subjectivity from the soul” (Husserl, *Crisis* 118) in such a way as to leave philosophy for myth.

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5 All further references to the original German of this text, since it has been coupled with the *Cartesianische Meditationen* in the collected works in German, will be cited as *Krisis* in the text.

In order to prove the transcendental ego has its flesh, then, I will show how the only candidate for its flesh, the life-world, is more than metaphorically alive. For the transcendental ego to constitute or recognize the life-world is to recognize that the life-world is pre-given as the foundation of all objective meaning, yet, as pre-given, it nevertheless builds itself up anew as the particular experiences of world, as “objective” truths that multiply *in order to return us to a shared experience*. The life-world is something that means to us a kind of agency; we experience it as “pulling” “all of science . . . along with us” into itself (130-31). It builds itself; it pulls us - the experience of the agency of the life-world suggests that it is experienced as alive.

The life-world’s organic agency, in fact, and its ability to both ground our activities and contain them, is what allows us to be alive *qua* objectified or *qua* human subject. Much as we are aware of only one of our organs or limbs at a time in conscious focus, we are also aware of only one of our vocations, one of our life-projects at a time. The life-world is the flesh that preserves the other projects of our embodied subjectivity that we deposit there for the time being. The life-world is the flesh that we “entrust” with our own as human beings.

Indeed, we have a body as a whole only insofar as we (the human, natural egos) cede full rights to its constitution, only insofar as our body is also constituted in relationships, in families, in cultures, in a world and in a universal subjectivity that entwines itself in us. We take on projects and push others into the background only insofar as we already claim that our own flesh is a much more complex affair than what is immediately apparent.

To write a paper now is to foreground one project with the co-experience of having faith that the other projects I also care about do not *thereby* die but remain secure. My friends will still call me, my wife will walk back to the room a few hours from now, etc. - these concerns or projects do not appear to be in danger of being erased solely by my sitting down to work. To act with the whole of my subjectivity in one particular way is implicitly to acknowledge the way the world maintains the other directions of my constitutive acts, just as the body maintains my eyes when I am focusing on listening to the music in my headphones, etc.

To turn our attention, as Husserl suggests, to the life-world as such a guardian of our own constitution is to gain a further insight into the very process of correlation between things and our syntheses. The life-world is the confluence of things and syntheses that stand “in an inseparable synthetic totality which is constantly produced by intentionally overlapping

[*übergreifende*] horizon-validities; and the latter influence each other reciprocally” (145). To constitute the life-world, then, is to constitute the whole of ourselves-with-things; to constitute the life-world is to see, perhaps for the first time, the life of the whole in which we are implicated.

Just as an organism is a unity of its own organs and systems, members and acts, so too is the life-world. It is not a “totality,” if by that word one means an adequately grasped and closed set of meanings. However, it is a whole, given as such just as our body is, not as simply an ideal object, not as simply *any* kind of object. Recognizing the whole of the life-world as a correlation of our ultimate subjectivity makes clearer why the “naïve faith” in the world as preserving whatever projects we are not currently engaged in is not immediately a misguided optimism. The life-world is just the flesh in which our human flesh is free to submerge itself (as our memory deposits itself in concrete objects) in order to return, when we switch directions, to another position that continues to matter to us.

Just as *we* are unities of kinaestheses responding to things and just as *things* are unities of adumbrations responding to us, so too the whole of our constituting life responds to this life of the world and this world responds to us. Ultimately, then, the life-world is entwined with the life of the transcendental ego. It, the life-world, is *not deduced* as the *a priori* flesh of the transcendental ego; rather, it appears, it is immediately experienced, as the very necessity, the field and reference of subjectivity. The life-world demands, as it were, that subjectivity recognize itself within its layers.

### **The Life-World as the Very Life of Intersubjectivity**

Having suggested how the life-world demands its organic agency be recognized as the transcendental ego’s own flesh, I will now go on to talk more specifically about the particular ways in which the life-world comes to be recognized in this way. In particular, I will show how the life-world reveals itself within one’s own bodily experience of intercorporeality or intersubjectivity.

First, however, I will restate with Husserl what the life-world is *not*. The life-world is not simply the *lebendigen Horizonhaftigkeit* of our particular acts in the natural attitude (*Krisis* 152). It is more than this horizon that makes possible the life of the subject as having particular objects and vocations. The life-world is more than “a single indivisible, interrelated complex of life [*Lebenszusammenhang*]” (*Crisis* 149; *Krisis* 152).

These remarks about what the life-world is *not* make sense, life in the



natural attitude makes sense, our ability to change from one vocation to another makes sense, only if the experience of the life of the life-world is much more than a simple attachment of the word “living” to rather abstract ideas like “horizon” or “complex.” The life-world is not alive from without; it is an organism, which the transcendental ego lives as its own from within. However, given the transcendental epoche, the life of the life-world is also not necessarily anything like the idea of life in the sense of the natural sciences. The transcendental notion of life and the notion of the transcendental ego’s body both precede the natural-scientific concepts and ground them.

Husserl begins to describe the notion of life that the life-world *is* when he says that “our exclusive task shall be to comprehend precisely this style [*Stil*], precisely this whole merely subjective and apparently incomprehensible ‘Heraclitean flux’” (*Crisis* 156; *Krisis* 159). A style, a flux - a flow that is not random but one that would “push us on to inquire into new correlations inseparably bound up with those already displayed” (*Crisis* 159) - this is the beginning of the description. But the life-world’s agency is more than an external force that moves us from experience to experience as singular subjects. The life-world lives as the very sustenance of our mutual interpenetration. Its *internal* agency displays itself as the internal links between subjects.

The life-world is alive insofar as it makes us aware that what we perceive is already perceived by others. The experience of this life-world’s own life, then, is the experience of an *internally regulated* flow and style that compel us towards one another as co-subjects, the flow and style that make things elide any one person’s full grasp. The life of the life-world is the life that allows a thing to appear but at the same time to remain a thing “which no one experiences as really seen, since it is always in motion” (164). We become aware of the life-world as having an internal determination, as being itself alive, through the way in which it compels us to see our own internal determinations, our own extensions into the lives of one another.

The life-world’s life is experienced as the life that sustains the phenomena that occur *between* ourselves, the life of the “between” that most of the time gets immediately and concretely constituted as the “separate” life of intimate relationships, families, and societies. Each experience of a relationship appears to us as having a “life of its own.” Each relationship appears as having a kind of agency that we belong to, that we help to flesh out, but that we do not singularly or perhaps even together necessarily control. We experience the life-world as that which is responsible for these separate lives of our interpenetration, responsible for their very appearance, for the

larger notion of their “higher level personality” or life. The life-world is alive in the sense that it “organizes” us, compels us towards, sustains or challenges our relationships with others. This is why the life of the life-world is not given adequately to us in the natural attitude; the life is only viewable from the standpoint of the whole of the transcendental ego, the one that is already intersubjective.

Agency, flow, style, internally-regulated organism - these are the words that can be used to describe the life-world. These characteristics re-appear in particular ways in the experience of things and of one’s own lived body. My own body and any other experienced thing each appears, each in its own way, as “an index of its systematic multiplicities” and “a harmonious flow of manners of givenness” only because I recognize the world as the flow of flows, the index of indices, only because I am fundamentally a transcendental ego that recognizes itself as a correlation between subject and world, between subject and other (166).

The life of the life-world that is also my own as transcendental ego is never simply that of an organism plugged into its environment, an environment on which and in which it equally thrives and suffers. Rather, the life of the life-world is that of an organism that *is* its environment, that is at once both the condition for the possibility of that environment and the direct production of it. Only such an experience of life could then be separated into two terms, organism and environment, that stood to face one another. Only such an experience of life could be separated into different subjects, into subjects and objects, with the subject discovering just how *demanding* other subjects and objects can be.

The life of the life-world is intersubjective; it is a life in which “all the levels and strata through which the syntheses, intentionally overlapping [*übergreifende*] as they are from subject to subject, are interwoven [*verflochten*] [and] form a universal unity of synthesis” (*Crisis* 168; *Krisis* 170). The life of the life-world is a reaching-over, an inter-weaving. It produces the very possibility of this lived body here to overlay other bodies, other things and to identify them. The life of the life-world is at once the life of all of us, the life of intersubjectivity, and also the life that is accessible only when we see that we form, together, a kind of universal subjectivity, a subjectivity that we own (much as we own our family, our university, our country) only by also being produced by it as its particular layers.

The life-world has its own time, just as each of us lives through our sickness or health in a particular way. The life-world also has its own space: “the world is a spatiotemporal world; spatiotemporality (as ‘living [*leben-*

*dige]*' not as logicomathematical) belongs to its own ontic meaning as life-world" (*Crisis* 168; *Krisis* 171). The life-world lives its own time and space. And it does so as the universal subjectivity that is interwoven in and correlated with it.

Only if I live, on the one hand, as a human *within* and *on* the organism of the life-world, only if I, on the other hand, *also am* the whole transcendental subjectivity that *is* its world as *its own flesh* does it make sense how my own experience of my anxiety appears as conflicting with the experience of the "objective" space and time of a flight from Chicago to Italy. The relationship between my experiences of objective time and of my own personal lived time indicates the relationship between my own lived time and that of the life-world. My own lived time (this personal anxiety) as this person here and now in the plane is made possible by an experience of time that embraces all human relationships, that is lived on behalf of all consciousness, even the "objective" one. My ability to experience the fact, even within the throes of my anxiety, that she lives this flight differently than I do - she can sleep! - is possible only if an experience of time on behalf of the whole of intersubjectivity is possible and given. The transcendental ego lives the time of the entire life-world as its own. Hence, I can make changes in my own lived time, can work through my anxiety, can let her ability to sleep calm me.

Only if the life-world is an original organism, does it also make sense that I have a lived experience of space that conflicts with the objective one. My own body sustains ever-new experiences of its own synthetic unity (this toe hurts because I have walked too far for the past two days) and of its relations to others (physical proximity and intimacy with a spouse is never simple and never finishes being described and delimited even if the size of the apartment never changes). This ever-new experience of lived space - the experience of the airplane as not a number of square meters but as a prison or a bedroom - is possible only if my experience of my lived space appears as conflicting with my experience of objective space and of the lived space of others. But again this experience of conflict presupposes an experience of space that is the unity of these separate spaces. We, as the transcendental ego, do not simply have space or time as a "program" in our ego; rather, we live it as an experience that embraces all modes of space. We live the space and time of the life-world.

As an internally regulated organism, as a separate experience of time and space, the life-world sustains and then takes up our experiences into itself. In a sense it is the perfect organism in that it feeds on what it has yielded. Indeed this transcendental life, this life-world only feeds and expands or

changes according to self-defined limits: “But however it changes and however it may be corrected, it holds to its essentially lawful set of types, to which all life and thus all science, to which it is the ‘ground,’ remain bound. Thus it also has an ontology to be derived from pure self-evidence” (*Crisis* 173). As the ego’s flesh, the life-world is not without limits. And yet the ego must still discover those limits as if for the first time.

Although the life-world is experienced as an organism, although it has an ontology of its own, still the life-world only appears as such because it is *limited by the transcendental ego’s original activity*; only as delimited by the transcendental ego as its correlate can the life-world be experienced as itself alive. The life of the life-world is therefore not that of a foreign organism; it is that of a unity of ourselves, our deepest functioning “yes” to the entirety of experience insofar as it can appear as our own lives. Any difference the life-world presents, then, is a kind of self-alienation; one that is addressed by our coming back to experience it. Hence, the life-world is an organism that appears on the one hand as one’s own (transcendental) life and yet appears *qua oneself as this person* as a separate, ongoing experience.

Ultimately, I claim that the body of the transcendental ego just is the life-world. Its flesh is just as surely its syntheses and correlations, its flow and style, as Archie Bunker’s body extends to the chair in which he habitually sits (as evidenced in the uncomfortable glances Edith and Gloria give to Mike when he sits in it). However, this argument needs to be further developed by showing *both* how one moves from the lived body to the life-world *and* how one moves back from the life-world to the body.

### ***Leib and Lebenswelt***

In *Crisis*, Husserl describes how the relation of psychology and transcendental phenomenology, and thus the relation between the natural-attitude person or psyche and the transcendental ego, is one “of the alliance of difference and identity” (205). That relationship, the alliance of difference and identity, is exactly what one could use to describe the relation between organs and systems in the body, between an organism and its environment, between persons in an intimate relationship. And indeed, Husserl makes it clear that any activity the transcendental ego can perform, such as looking from above at the life-world as a living whole, must be located again “in a psychological internal analysis”; in other words, the transcendental ego’s acts and insights “would be apperceived as something belonging to the real soul as related in reality to the real living body” (206).

The transcendental ego and its intertwining with the life-world must reappear as the relation between soul and body. It is in this sense then that the transcendental ego has its flesh, is related to its flesh. Not simply, not just as I am living out my own body here and now in the natural attitude, in the writing of the paper. But in such a way as to constitute the entirety of what appears as in a sense my own, as close to me as my body is. That the transcendental ego and its insights would have to be an appearance in my own soul-body relationship must mean that the transcendental ego is not foreign to flesh, is not a mythical logos that has nothing to do with what it encounters. Rather, there is a notion of flesh, an experience of it, that the transcendental ego has that is translated into embodiment: “everything that has newly flowed in is now concretely localized in the world through the living body, which is essentially always constituted along with it” (210). The world and my body, Archie and his chair - these co-constituted unities of experience are only possible together because the transcendental ego has its transcendental flesh already within it. But what’s more, the insight I have into the life-world now gets translated into a new, developing kind of lived bodily life.

This new, developing bodily life is in part the process of memory, of being able to return to the things in the world and to re-view, re-invest, re-claim them as my own. John Russon in his excellent book *Human Experience: Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life* has argued how memory is really the way we have deposited ourselves into things: “Our memory, most fundamentally, is what we experience *as* the determinateness of objects that communicates to us what we can and cannot do. Our objects, rather than our brain cells, are the ‘files’ that retain our past” (41). For Russon, truth moves through the things that are attached to us. Our body’s sense of location, its historicity, its future, is mapped out in its intricate threads that bind it to things, other people, and situations.

What Husserl would offer as an addition to Russon’s claim is that particular objects could appear to us as the sedimentations of our particular experiences *only if* the entirety of our memory, our historicity as such, were already experienced as a function of the total flesh of the life-world. Memory is not “most fundamentally” an experience of standing aloof from the world in order to remain locked within oneself. Rather, memory is acknowledging the world *as* one’s self, as sustaining the very connections between, for example, the present picture of a lyre and the thought of one’s absent friend that follows in an instant. The life-world is the network of paths we have carved out from object to object in response to their claims to similarity or

difference. And we have left those paths there where we found them, namely in objects, since it has become clear to us that the world is close enough to us that it will continue to carry us forth from one object to another.

As Russon notes, if the objects wear down, and the picture fades, and the neighborhood changes, the memories are gone (41). In such an experience of loss, we have made explicit the fact that we have always already attributed the force of our memory to the world, that we have implicitly agreed that our subjectivity is not simply inside this body but is in all that we grasp. Such a life-world is not simply an indifferent container or sum. It is the very life by which memory works its way, its organizational features that make particular associations possible.

Specific relations, cultures, societies - these and the projects and insights that are part of them - are alive and relevant to transcendental subjectivity only insofar as that transcendental ego is immediately a memorial flesh, insofar as the transcendental subject can deposit its significances in all of its bodily extremities (that is into all objects and other persons) and move back and forth among them. However, this transcendental ego, in order to remember itself in its deposits, must also give over its process of memory to these objects and these others. Its flesh must be a dispersed flesh, a Diaspora. Its flesh, its memory, must be multiple and intersubjective - its memory must be performed by the things and the others who call it (the transcendental ego) to respond.

Only then, in confronting itself with itself in the pairing with other persons (who also remember these relations, cultures, and societies) can the transcendental ego pass through its body and its things to responsible truth. Only in always already co-extending itself into the lives of the others who share a body (in sharing a family, a society, a humanity) can the transcendental ego return and grasp as if for the first time the new insights that it has given to itself as the space of life-world and the time of life-time.

To speak as Russon and Husserl do of the mutual internality of all subjects in transcendental intersubjectivity is to speak of an experience of an organicity that is not a totalitarian state. To speak of the life-world is not to speak of an organism by which the transcendental ego objectifies and memorializes itself as individuals that are merely to be its organs. For memory, like medicine and indeed every act that the life-world guides and sustains, is impossible without the very real gaps and separations, the spaces that constitute the possibility and necessity of coming back, of reinterpretation, synthesis, and continuity. When the transcendental ego lives its life-world (when it constitutes itself as the very *method and possibility*

of depositing itself into objects, relations, and world), it is far from totalizing. Instead, when it lives its life-world, the transcendental ego takes *risks*.

By being the subjectivity that makes deposits, that sediments, the transcendental ego can claim no special status to the relation between itself and its life-world: “In the concreteness of transcendental intersubjectivity, in the universal interconnection of life, the pole, or rather the system of poles which is called the world, is contained as an intentional object *in exactly the same way* that any intention contains its intentional object” (Husserl, *Crisis* 262, my emphasis). Just as a body can be wounded or become ill, the situation *as such* of the ego and the life-world can unravel. It may be that the traces that the transcendental ego has crafted in its historical Diaspora will be lost and their re-enactment impossible.

No, the claim that *the flesh of the transcendental ego, the life-world, is our flesh* is more the announcement of a task than of an established truth. The life-world is not our flesh in the sense of an abstract essence of the normal, human form; not our flesh as simply this particular human body or that one. But the transcendental ego’s flesh, the life-world, is just the way that I can remember or be “in” the music, be “towards” my death, be “bothered” by others’ bad driving. The transcendental flesh of the life-world is the very possibility of being a body.

The life of the body within the life-world, though sketched out in advance, is never given beforehand in its concrete details. Rather, a body, the one that this flesh makes possible, is the object that reaches beyond itself in new ways towards other objects, those that have already begun to matter, to call, to be interpreted, to be incorporated. The body then offers something to the life-world, offers new explications that the life-world takes over as if always already a part of it, and the body therefore allows this most original of things, the life-world, to continue to secrete layers of bodily life for me and for others.

In conclusion, it is because the whole life-world has, from the beginning, been united with (my) transcendental ego as its flesh, that I can move on from this paper, can remember or forget it, can deposit its sense for the sake of others. In moving on, the life-world is enriched, and preserves, as if in unconscious traces and possibilities for further analysis, the layers of meaning that bodily experience offers it.

*Providence College  
United States of America*

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