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Phenomenology of death: subjectivity and nature in Husserl's genetic phenomenology

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Phenomenology of death:

Subjectivity and Nature in Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology

María Celeste Vecino

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The following abbreviations will be used throughout the dissertation for references to Husserl's work. Those works pertaining to the *Husserliana* critical editions (The Hague/ Dordrecht 1950ff.) are abbreviated as Hua followed by the Arabic numeral corresponding to the volume. *Husserliana Materialien* (Dordrecht 2001ff.) are abbreviated as Hua/Mat and *Husserliana Dokumente* (Den Haag/Dordrecht 1977ff.) as Hua/Dok, also followed by their corresponding Arabic numeral. All translations are the author's and are followed by the original German, unless reference is made to existing translation. In such cases, the English translation has been cited. The reference to the page number(s) of the English translation follows a semicolon (;) after the German in-text reference. All references to Husserl's unpublished manuscripts are given according to the official Husserl-Archiv signature and page number.

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Introduction

Das ist ja das Rätsel des Lebens. Das eigentliche Rätsel ist nicht die Entstehung des organischen Wesens als physischen Dinges, und selbst dass die ⟨physischen Vorkommnisse⟩ in objektiver Betrachtung etwa als organische zu spezifischen Vorgängen der Fortpflanzung, der Ernährung, des Stoffwechsels etc. sich ausbilden, ist nicht das Rätselhafte. Ob man nun mit gewöhnlicher Physik ausreicht oder nicht: Das allein prinzipiell über Physik Hinausgehende sind die Erlebnisse organischer Wesen, ⟨ist⟩ die Beseelung.

Hua 42, 141

i. Transcendental phenomenology vs. scientific naturalism

The dispute between the naturalist and the transcendental standpoints echoes a number of discussions starting in the 20th century but having precedents throughout the history of philosophy. One can trace the kind of dualism that opposes consciousness to nature all the way back to ancient philosophy, and even if the focus has changed significantly there is something that remains of this primary opposition. Is consciousness another product of nature or is it something radically different? Can we study it like we would a natural entity?

Recently, the debates around the relationship between nature and intentionality or nature and normativity bring back the issue of how to account for conscious thought from a scientific perspective and of whether it is even possible. The starting point of these debates are the alleged insufficiencies of a physicalist perspective when it comes to explaining subjective experience. This is the point David Chalmers (1996) makes when discussing what he terms "the hard problem" of consciousness, i.e. the problem of explaining how physical data and sensations can give origin to subjective feelings and how to account for them. The so called "explanatory gap" (Levine 1983) between physical properties and subjective states

seems to be the inevitable outstanding balance left by scientific explanations of the mind or consciousness. However, scientists who support a strong naturalism consider that solving these challenges is only a matter of time. Defining the problematic areas for scientific practice, Huw Price (1997) refers to the four M's: meaning, morality, modality and the mental. What these dimensions of experience have in common is that they can't be sufficiently understood from the third-personal type of perspective that characterizes science. This perspective aims at obtaining a neutral, objective and external account of facts that can be applied to any and all possible cases. On the other side of the spectrum, phenomenology stresses the importance of adopting a first-personal perspective to account for conscious experience. The type of first-personal eidetic analyses of experience that phenomenology carries out provides the content left missing from third-personal scientific analyses. But phenomenology does not seek to simply fill in the gaps left by science; rather, it constitutes itself as a discourse that holds a priority over science and that grounds scientific practice. This is because, as a transcendental type of philosophy, phenomenology holds that everything, and not only the four M's, should be defined in relation to consciousness[1]. And assuming consciousness is only truly given in first-personal terms, the first person will become foundational for every possible knowledge.

Now, not unlike its counterpart, this priority comes at the cost of creating a gap or disconnection between two dimensions: on the one hand, between the study of subjectivity in first-personal terms (phenomenology) and the study of human beings in third-personal terms (science); and on the other, between consciousness itself considered as the subjective feeling of experience, and the body as the entity that can be affected by observable stimuli.

In contemporary philosophy and science, there are many who attempt to bring these dimensions together and soften the contrast between them. However,

[1] Because the meaning of terms like 'subjectivity' and 'consciousness' is precisely at stake in the development of this dissertation, it is difficult to provide a definition of them up front. It should be noted, however, that what Husserl terms transcendental consciousness is broader than what in the analytic tradition can be referred to as consciousness, which is more focused on *qualia* and the subjective feel of experience. I will opt to use 'subjectivity' whenever it is possible rather than consciousness, and when consciousness is used, it should be understood in this broader manner, as the ability to interact with meaning.

because of their very definition, which rely on their mutual exclusion, this proves to be a difficult task. As Havi Carel and Darian Meacham put it in the introduction to their volume on *Phenomenology and Naturalism*: "*The problem is that in the philosophical tradition the two approaches do not seem able to accommodate one another in a manner that doesn't reduce nature to consciousness (transcendental idealism) or consciousness to nature (reductive physicalism*)." (Carel & Meacham 2013).

The common feature of these two approaches is a conception of nature that ultimately stems from the Cartesian division between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, thought to be at the root of the modern conception of science and the mind-body problem. In contemporary phenomenology and philosophy of cognition, one of the strategies used to bridge this gap (mainly aiming at establishing a dialogue between phenomenology and science) turns the focus to the notion of nature and points out that a more accurate and richer description of the natural realm softens or erases the radical divide between nature and consciousness. This is done by locating intentionality already at the lowest levels of animated life. These approaches, however, do not work within the methodological constrains of phenomenological inquiry since they go beyond the first-personal approach and use empirical third-personal descriptions as a starting point. In Husserl's view, these descriptions are valid but only from a particular perspective, adopting a particular attitude that is not the truest, most appropriate way of speaking about our specific way of being (Hua 1, 131; Husserl 1960, 100). In Husserl's account, this derived point of view is common to all sciences but philosophy. But by leaving it aside in accounting for ourselves and undermining scientific findings about human nature we might risk overlooking some important features that influence the way we experience the world such as our drives, our bodily makeup, and the influence of our social environment. In the late stages of his work, Husserl has struggled to integrate these aspects into the transcendental sphere, straying from the strict methodology that characterized his earlier work yet still attempting to anchor every result in first-personal givenness. The results, as we will see, are less than fully satisfactory, as he seems to engage in "*all aporetic efforts*" (Hua/Mat 8, 351) when facing issues such as the genesis of affection and temporalization.

In today's secular world, it does not seem controversial to say that the possibility for conscious thought is a feature of our species, a trait that developed over time as a way of adapting to the environment. And yet, this particular feature is what allows us to tell a story about nature, about ourselves and the history of our species. Consciousness is at the same time the product and the producer of nature. How should we consider this relationship?

This dissertation will not attempt to tackle such a broad and fundamental question, but only to contribute in a small way to the debate by reflecting on these issues within the framework of phenomenology. This means that my point of departure presupposes the transcendental principle and the privileged relevance of the first person, although throughout this research their role will be problematized and reconfigured. I will attempt to do this by focusing on a type of experience that has a problematic relation to the phenomenological method as Husserl conceived it: the experience of death.

ii. Phenomenology of death

Along with other limit-cases (*Limesfälle*) as Husserl calls them (Hua 42, 1), such as birth and deep sleep, death has the peculiar character of being, by definition, non-experienceable. Since it is precisely the disappearance of the experiencing subject, as subjects we cannot be present when it occurs, and thus we cannot have a first-personal perspective on it. And yet, there is certainty[2] about the actual occurrence of these events: I know I have been born and I will die, just as I know, whenever I wake up, that I have been asleep and the world has continued to exist during my absence. However, because of the importance granted to the first-personal perspective in Husserl's work, it is difficult to give a phenomenologically coherent account of these cases. When it comes to death, Husserl considers that it has a paradoxical character, insofar as the absence of a first-personal perspective of it prevents us from fully accepting its certainty: we know that we will die, and yet we feel as if we were to live forever (Hua/Mat 8, 96).

[2] What I call certainty here only refers to the fatal character of our demise, regardless of the different religious, spiritual or philosophical interpretations that can be made of it or of a possible "after life", which I will not deal with here.

The tension between these two aspects is resolved in favour of the subjective present experience, leading Husserl to conclude that consciousness does not die; that it is, in a sense, "immortal" (*unsterblich*) (Hua 29, 338).

Firstly, we must address the immediate response one might provide to this statement, namely that it must be merely a type of metaphor that holds that we cannot actually live through our own demise. If the immortality of the subject means that consciousness lives on in any kind of worldly manner after the body ceases to be animated, then we must agree that this statement is of a speculative nature, and does not agree with the principles of phenomenological enquiry. What we are discussing here is not whether immortality in a traditional or religious sense is possible, but rather whether, for the special kind of being that is consciousness, mortality is. Husserl, and the phenomenological tradition in general, have made a point of examining the being of consciousness and how it relates —identifies to, differs from, requires or denies— the body. The opposition between the two terms that is characteristic of the more Cartesian strand of Husserlian phenomenology, shines through in Husserl's dealings with limits and death and leads to the larger questions of the relationship between transcendental and empirical subjectivity, spirit and nature, constitution and naturalism. A phenomenological account of death requires that we address these founding issues, so while we can understand Husserl's statement as metaphorical, we are forced to go further and inquire about what this metaphor might be trying to account for.

Through this reflection we will become confronted with the need to reconfigure, rethink and overcome the stark division between the two dimensions that a subjective reflection and an objective science of subjectivity represent. Limit-cases are a privileged gateway into this type of enquiry. Even though we don't have a first-personal experience of these events, the certainty attached to them does not seem to stem from entirely third-personal sources either. I don't learn that I will die in the same way I could learn about the frequency of planetary movements or even how my own immune system works. The experience of my own death is tightly related to the particular experience I have of my own body, which is one of fundamental ambiguity: I am my own body, while at the same time I can experience it as something alien. The demarcation of the inside/outside of my body and myself

is not simply a matter of shifting between one perspective and the other, or at least it seems most the time it is not so easy to circumscribe our experience of it to one or the other. By focusing on this type of experience it is possible to draw attention to the hybrid character of self-awareness, its way of being both objective and subjective, which is not reserved to limit-cases but encompasses all of our experience.

Now, given the importance that Husserl gives to the first person as foundation for knowledge, this type of conclusion might risk undermining the whole of the phenomenological method. As will become evident throughout this research, my aim is not to erase the first person entirely, but rather to hold on to the valuable insights that animate Husserl's phenomenology understood as a transcendental philosophy, without committing to some of its unworkable consequences. It will nevertheless be necessary to address these methodological issues, and in this sense, the question of death leads, as Eugen Fink has pointed out already, to a phenomenology of phenomenology (Fink 1995, 8). This meta-reflection will have its place in this investigation, insofar as immortality plays a crucial methodological role in Husserl's system.

iii. Thesis and development

Does the subject die? This thesis argues that a Husserlian (i.e., a philosopher who holds on to Husserlian methodological principles) can only make sense of the phenomenon of death by considering the constituting subject as a (transcendental) person. As an outcome, I will propose the idea of immortality be retained only as a methodological key, that is meant to convey the ineliminable character of a lived perspective. This lived perspective does not function as an absolute foundation, as Husserl conceived it, and it does not entail the immortality of the subject, since its life is a *Faktum* whose origin is not the subject herself.

It is important to point out that my aim is neither to produce an account of death that would hold well within Husserl's thought, nor to use the case of death as a weapon against it. Rather, death is the Ariadne's thread that will allow me to address a problematic that arises throughout Husserl's genetic work, not due to

any shortcomings on his part but rather to the complex nature of consciousness. Nevertheless, since this alternative account of death challenges some of Husserl's interpretations of key topics —specifically Subjectivity and Nature—, one might expect this thesis to be providing an immanent critique of Husserlian phenomenology. This shall indeed constitute a secondary aim of this dissertation. However, it is here a matter of proposing a critique of the traditional, idealistic strand we find in his phenomenology rather than of Husserl's thought as a whole, and I attempt to do that from a particular angle, namely the problem of death for a transcendental consciousness.

Regarding Husserlian and phenomenological scholarship, I try to show that conscious experience, although always centred around "myself", can never be purely first-personal, since our own way of being embodied subjects in the context of a life-world already exceeds this perspective. However, I will attempt to present a potential reworking of the issues at stake that still 'plays by Husserlian rules', meaning that respects his methodological principles as much as possible. Specifically, I will try to maintain a balance between two main principles or meta-principles of Husserlian phenomenology that appear to be threatened when we consider limit-cases and the nature of constituting subjectivity: one is the need to consider things as they are given to intuition, and the other is to consider experience from a first-personal perspective, in order to preserve the transcendental standpoint. I try to stick to these principles as much as possible, which sometimes will require even going against Husserl himself. For the sake of the first principle, I will contend with Husserl's more idealistic strain, which, as will become evident, can lead to a kind of speculative metaphysics. For the sake of the second principle, I will try to offset a tendency, common in post-Husserlian French phenomenology, that attempts to overcome the ego-centred character of Husserl's system by positing a being that would be prior to the subject, whether it is desire, life, flesh or simply being. Although I will not directly analyse the philosophies of particular authors taking part in this movement, I will refer throughout this dissertation to the work of Merleau-Ponty, not only as a leading and initiating figure, but as a valuable antecedent for the problems that this research touches on. To a large extent, the issues raised here echo a number of Merleau-Ponty's own

concerns about Husserl and the phenomenological method. Throughout this dissertation I will attempt to point out some of the limitations of his own philosophy, and for the following tradition that pursues his movement from epistemology towards ontology. The cost of this movement is that it abandons the transcendental standpoint when it claims it can describe a type of being that is not ontologically dependent on any subjective perspective. I attempt to walk the narrow path between the French abandonment of the transcendental standpoint and Husserl's tenacious defence of it. The purpose of maintaining this balance is simply to be true to phenomenology's mission of *going back to the things themselves*. Intuitive givenness and the first-personal standpoint are tools to guarantee a faithful description of experience but, as I mentioned above, there are times when they seem to be at odds with each other, since they sharply exhibit the limitations of both extremes. The study of limit-cases brings forth this tension, and thus requires that we find a middle way. When it comes to explaining limits, Husserl struggles to give an account of them that doesn't rely on naturalistic assumptions –namely, that the body's breakdown entails the dissolution of consciousness and vice versa–at the cost of flirting with speculative theories when he states that transcendental life somehow extends beyond worldly life. Both ways of approaching the topic seem problematic, which ultimately relates to the dualism at play in the understanding of nature and subjectivity as two excluding and opposed terms.

In order to accomplish these goals, the thesis will be divided into three parts: a general presentation of Husserl's phenomenology and the problem of limits, an in-depth analysis of subjectivity in its different dimensions, and a reflection on nature and death that proposes a reconsideration of these key topics in light of previous results.

The first part builds up the framework to understand the problem of limits and presents Husserl's treatment of them.

In the first chapter, I provide an introductory view of phenomenology as transcendental philosophy and its relationship to scientific naturalism, sketching out the tension between the first-personal type of analysis that phenomenology proposes and a third-personal study of conscious experience that represents

psychologism and naturalism. I explain the importance that a first-personal perspective has for Husserlian phenomenology and introduce the problem of limits in this context by explaining briefly Husserl's first mention of the immortality of the subject. In the second chapter I present the so called "paradox of human subjectivity", which deals with the problematic relationship between the transcendental subject (consciousness) and the empirical subject (the human being). The paradoxical understanding of ourselves as being at the same time subjects and objects for the world translates into a paradoxical understanding of our death as both unavoidable and impossible: unavoidable for humans, impossible for consciousness. Therefore, the paradoxical encounter with death can be interpreted as an instantiation of the paradox of human subjectivity, therefore dealing with the relation between transcendental subject and human being. Moreover, in this section I will analyse the resolution Husserl finds in the form of a separation between transcendental and empirical subject. Since death is interpreted by Husserl as "*the separation of the transcendental ego from its self-objectification as human*." [das Ausscheiden des transzendentalen Ego aus der Selbstobjektivation als Mensch] (Hua 29, 332), it is not only a case of this paradox but in fact it serves as a proof of the separability of the two dimensions of the subject. I will argue that this response is problematic insofar as it entails that the constituting subject is not embodied, and that the transcendental subject is not fundamentally involved with the world.

The third chapter of the first part presents Husserl's treatment of limit-cases through the analysis of his texts and manuscripts. I start by presenting the different stages of Husserl's work and the different methodological tools associated with them. Limits become a topic of investigation in the context of genetic phenomenology, which, unlike the static phenomenology that characterizes Husserl's first works, deals more directly with temporal phenomena and time-constitution in general. In this sense, many of the manuscripts that deal with death are primarily dedicated to thinking about time. I distinguish between two approaches to death: a genetic and a generative one. While the genetic approach deals more directly with these reflections on time-constitution and limits as they are conceived from an individual standpoint, the generative approach considers these

issues from the perspective of a community. Because it focuses on intersubjectivity, it is able to consider birth and death as a part of the transcendental sphere —which wasn't possible in the genetic approach— insofar as they are revealed as necessary traits of the world, parts of the *a priori* of the world. However, even when generativity supposes an advancement regarding the genetic approach, it does not go against the idea of immortality but only reconfigures it in such a way that it becomes possible to conceive of the death of the individual subject but not of transcendental life in general.

It becomes necessary to understand, then, how Husserl characterizes subjectivity and life, in order to understand who dies and what remains, and what the relationship between those parts is. I dedicate the second part of this dissertation to exploring four different notions associated with Husserl's description of subjectivity: the primal I, the Monad, the person and the body. In chapter 4, I take a look at the problem of the retrospective character of reflection and the anonymous character of the functioning subject. I argue that the attempt to identify this purely functioning subject with constituting subjectivity falls into some inconsistencies insofar as, deprived of all objectification, the primal I is a non-being that cannot be manifested and cannot constitute on its own. Chapter 5 focuses on Husserl's monadology. The notion of Monad has the advantage of being inclusive and admitting within itself the noematic correlates of experience. However, as it becomes apparent upon closer analysis, Husserl's monadological theory ultimately rests on a speculative ground that is also at the basis of the idea of immortality. After revisiting this idea, I consider a possible reading of it that does not entail any metaphysical commitments, but ultimately rule it out as it is inconsistent with Husserl's position. I then turn to the notion of person in chapter 6, and focus on the "transcendental person" as a possible candidate to think of the concrete subject that is embedded in a life-world. I complement this by reflecting on the ambiguous nature of embodiment in chapter 7. Through the idea of the ambiguity of the body, it is possible to understand subjectivity as the concrete unity of the subjective and the objective dimensions of experience while overcoming the speculative element of the monadological view. This will be revisited in chapter 9, where I present this notion of subjectivity in comparison with three other possible interpretations in the

tradition. Before that, chapter 8 deals with the question of nature and a possible redefinition of it as the realm of primal facticity that genetic questions ultimately lead to. This allows us to consider nature a part of the subject while retaining its irreducible character.

Finally, chapter 10 comes back to the question of death and reconsiders it in light of the previous analysis. The first-personal access to reflection and the transcendental principle are reconsidered. Through an analysis of Fink's position in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, I consider whether immortality can be applied to the transcendental onlooker (the subject of phenomenologizing) instead of the constituting subject, but I conclude that the notion of immortality should in no way serve as a criterion to split the subject, even though it is useful to retain it as a methodological warning against naïve naturalism.

The overall conclusion of the thesis amounts to the recognition of life as an unsurpassable *Faktum* that underpins the inter-dependency of the subjective and objective poles of constitution, that is to say, of the *a priori* of correlation. I conclude that a Husserlian can only make sense of the phenomenon of death by considering the subject as transcendental person.

Part 1

In this first part, I introduce some key concepts of Husserl's phenomenology, focusing on the methodological principles that guide it. I lay out two tensions: one between the first-personal approach to the subject that phenomenology is based on and the third-personal approach that characterizes naturalistic science (chapter 1); and another one between subjectivity considered as constituting or transcendental and subjectivity considered as constituted or empirical (chapter 2). The problematic of death, which will function as a guiding clue throughout this dissertation, is introduced in this section. I present here its relevance for the task of understanding the tensions and nuances in the account of subjectivity, along with a detailed description of Husserl's own dealings with the subject (chapter 3).

Chapter 1: First and third person

In this first chapter I will introduce some basic concepts in Husserlian phenomenology that will be essential for the development of my thesis, and sketch out the tension between Husserlian transcendental idealism and naturalism. In the context of Husserl's critique of naturalistic descriptions of consciousness made in the third person, phenomenology arises as a first-personal eidetic analysis of conscious experience that puts into question the foundational character of psychology and natural science. In this context, limit-cases such as death pose a problem for Husserl insofar as they cannot be experienced intuitively in the first person. They would be the indication of a limit for subjective constitution, and therefore of something that remains external to consciousness. This is problematic because it would mean admitting something like a thing-in-itself, thus falling back into a scheme that phenomenology aimed to overcome. Taking limit-cases in their significance as moments of passage between consciousness and unconsciousness, they cannot be analysed through the straightforward scheme that normally characterizes phenomenology's method of inquiry. Because they are not a proper object of constitution, such limit-cases pose a challenge to the phenomenological principles that lay at the basis of Husserl's philosophy: first-personal access, lack of presuppositions and intuition as foundation. Husserl's response to this concern is to postulate the immortality of the subject–the monad, as he calls it here—as a solution that would preserve the priority of subjectivity over objectivity. In this sense, limit-cases, amongst which I will focus on death, can serve as a leading clue to explore the limits of the method and a possible reconfiguration of the gap between first- and third-personal perspectives on subjectivity.

1.1 Phenomenology as a response to naturalism

There are different ways of answering the question of what phenomenology is, but it is a common *locus* to trace its development back to Husserl's dispute with naturalism, and there are good reasons for it. From the *Logical Investigations* all the way to his late unpublished manuscripts, Husserl's rejection of the naturalistic

view takes on many different forms but never stops being an important issue. Now, there are many different types and degrees of naturalism but, broadly speaking, we could say that naturalism seeks to explain the mind in merely physical or causal terms. Ontologically, a strong naturalistic view affirms that everything from mental processes to social norms can be reduced to physical entities and processes. Methodologically, it holds that the best way to study the world is through the method of the natural sciences. Husserl battles against these two dimensions of naturalism all his life. From early on, he understands, firstly, that what is truly given in an original manner in experience is not exhausted by physical entities. If that were the case, we would have no way of justifying the universal validity of things like logical and mathematical truths. Instead, these would be considered mere psychological laws that emerge from experience and can eventually change. In the *Prolegomena to the Logical Investigations* Husserl extensively criticizes this psychologism, mainly because he thinks it leads to relativism. Against this view, he claims that logical laws are ideal objects that have a being of their own, even if they can only appear to a consciousness (Hua 18). Secondly, Husserl believed that a naturalistic view ultimately rests on unjustified presuppositions that need to be clarified, first of all, by philosophy. For example, the universal thesis that all valid knowledge must come from perceptual experience cannot itself be justified through perceptual experience (Hua 3-1, 43; Husserl 1983, 37). It is the task of philosophy to clarify those principles in the first place. If naturalism believes that physical reality is the object of all true knowledge, phenomenology will inquire about what *reality* means in the first place; if naturalism appeals to causal processes to explain our experience, phenomenology will ask about the meaning of *causality*. In a sense, phenomenology deals with meaning, but not just linguistic meaning; rather, the question of meaning puts into question the very basic forms of our experience, the very *being* of the world. It does so by approaching the analyses of experience without any presuppositions, going back to "the things themselves" and their original ways of being given. This is what the "principle of all principles" expresses:

> *that each intuition affording [something] in an originary way is a legitimate source of knowledge,* that *whatever presents itself to us in "Intuition" in an originary way (*so to

> speak, in its actuality in person*) is to be taken simply as what it affords itself as,* but *only within the limitations in which it affords itself there*. (Hua 3-1, 51; Husserl 1983, 44)

This might not seem so different from the principles of naturalistic science, since it too claims to proceed merely through intuition or 'observation'. However, as Husserl points out, a scientific description of a perceptual object often includes elements that are not actually present to intuition, such as the appeal to 'vibratory frequencies' to explain the perception of a melody, or to the variety of a tree to describe it (Hua 19/1, 647). For Husserl, intuition points to what is actually present. It is in a sense narrower, and in another sense broader, since it includes also the intuition of essences, and in general anything that can be contained in the specific way it is given.

The way to inquire about that givenness will be through an examination of first-personal experience. While the reductive kind of empiricism that Husserl criticizes will attempt to explain, for example, perceptive experience appealing to the causal effect that sensory data produce in our senses, phenomenology will draw the attention to certain elements that make up the structure of our experience and that cannot be traced back to those available to the third-personal point of view of science. If we take the paradigmatic example of the perception of a cube, in analysing our experience from said point of view we notice that what we actually receive as sensory data is not the whole cube but only certain sides of it. It could always be the case that when we turned to the back of the cube we find a round side, or nothing at all—that it was a hologram, etc., but that doesn't keep us from experiencing simply a whole cube. This means that in some way we presuppose what we don't see as being coherent with the experience of what we do. Husserl calls these 'presuppositions' co-intended or co-meant (*Mitgemeinte*) (Hua 1, 85; Husserl 1960, 48) aspects of what is experienced. When we experience an object, consciousness intends it, which means it is directed to it through an act. But objects are always given through profiles or adumbrations (*Abschattungen*), which means that our ability to refer to an object as a whole entails the capacity to bring together in a unity the seen and the unseen aspects of it. If it turned out that the cube I intended as actually present was in fact a hologram, my prior intentions would be

failed ones and I would have to correct my own experience, namely admitting that I wasn't seeing a cube but an illusion. The non-perceived sides of an object form what Husserl called its *internal horizon*, and the realm of other objects that this one refers to form its *external horizon*. Horizons are necessary yet subjective traits of our experience. They show we have a key role in how we perceive the world. This is how the subject, in Husserl's terms, *constitutes* reality. The *intentionality* of consciousness, which is its necessary directedness towards something, is one of Husserl's ground-breaking ideas. To put it simply, he understood that consciousness is not an entity, and therefore not a recipient for external things manifesting themselves in it, but simply the way in which these things are unveiled. This is why phenomenology can never be regarded as a traditional form of idealism: the objective world is never created or even co-created, but rather illuminated by consciousness in its own way of being. Because consciousness is always consciousness of something, and so always directed towards something that isn't itself, it can disclose the objectivities it is directed to in a better or poorer way, in a more or less faithful way, in relation to both its internal and external horizons. Although Husserl does not use the term 'normativity' to describe consciousness in a direct manner, one can interpret the search for fulfilment of intentions in this way; and his own late reflections on normality confirm this interpretation. When I perceive an object at a distance, or in a poorly lit room, I have an experience of it that is less faithful than the one I would have had if I had seen it in the daylight and up close. The fact that consciousness pursues a goal by being directed towards something is what makes intentional consciousness an inherently normative consciousness. Lastly, the criterion that determines what makes a better or worse disclosure of the object, namely its sense or *noema*, although it refers to the proper mode of givenness of the object in question, cannot itself be considered a *datum*, a part of the object's materiality. It is for Husserl an unreal component of the experience of the thing, born of the correlation with the intending act. Because we perceive (imagine, remember, love, etc.) objects under a certain meaning, i.e. we see a book, a desk, a person, and not just a bundle of sense-data, consciousness is revealed as being meaning-constituting.

It is the focus put on these subjective conditions for the experienciability of anything at all that makes phenomenology a transcendental reflection. And since these are conditions given *within* experience, the transcendental standpoint is closely linked to a first-personal approach. What is referred to as the normative structure of our experience–that is its teleological orientation to fulfilment and truth—is what transcendental analyses conducted from a first-personal perspective exhibits, and what cannot be accounted for from the naturalistic perspective of science.

In the context of phenomenology, then, consciousness can be characterized as being intentional, normative and constituting. It is intentional because it is always directed towards something, and so it aims at a certain fulfilment. It is normative because this search for fulfilment can be more or less achieved according to the degrees of givenness of the object. And it is constituting because it grasps unities of meaning and not mere loose data. Meanings are neither created by consciousness altogether nor can be found as things-in-themselves in the world; they are rather located in the encounter of consciousness and world, of subject and object—that is to say, in what Husserl calls 'correlation'. These features of consciousness are not such as can be observed in the third person, but rather they become evident in the type of first-personal reflection that phenomenology carries out, and therefore they contest the naturalistic understanding of conscious experience. Considered as the basic way to account for and explain conscious experience, the characterisation of consciousness as intentional, normative, and constituting, excludes the naturalistic perspective.

1.2 Phenomenology as transcendental inquiry

One of Husserl's earlier recognitions is that it doesn't make sense to say something can be given without it being given to a subject. Therefore, experience is always subjective experience: "*What is must be able to be brought into being; every possible object, understood in the broadest sense, has a possible intuition as a correlate, in which it, as it is, would be intuitable* (..)" [Was ist, muss sich zur Gegebenheit bringen lassen; jeder mögliche Gegenstand, das Wort in weitesten

Sinn <verstanden>, hat als Korrelat eine mögliche Anschauung, in der er, so wie er ist, anschaulich würde] (Hua 36, 94) As Tengelyi glosses: "*This 'principle of identifiability' is a premise of Husserl's train of thought that is not justified. However, one might think that it does not need to be justified, since it results directly from the basic beliefs of phenomenology*" (Tengelyi 2014b, 205)[3]. It would make no sense to speak of something that is but cannot be given in conscious experience; this would be something like a thing in-itself, a notion that Husserl rejected strongly (Hua 7, 232). At the same time, there cannot be a consciousness without it being consciousness *of* something, since the very definition of consciousness is, as we have seen, this reference to something other, i.e., intentionality. This realization is what constitutes the *a priori of correlation*, a self-evident meta-principle that states that "*whatever exists, whether it has a concrete or abstract, real or ideal, meaning, has its manners of self-givenness and, on the side of the ego, its manners of intention in modes of validity*" (Hua 6, 161; Husserl 1970, 166). It doesn't make sense, then, to speak of a reality that is beyond the scope of consciousness, which is what the thing-in-itself stands for. These kind of realist assumptions ultimately rest on a naturalistic point of view, as Husserl clearly saw when discussing the dispute between realism and idealism and its overcoming by transcendental idealism (Hua 5, 154). As long as we are thinking of consciousness as merely natural, the question of whether it relates properly or not to the outside world makes sense, while if we consider it as transcendental we would have to recognize, following the principle of correlation, that there is nothing "outside" of it which it should properly accommodate:

> *An* absolute reality is no more or less valid than a round square*. "Reality" and "world" here are just headings for certain valid unities of sense, namely, unities of the "sense" related to certain connections of the absolute, pure consciousness*. (Hua 3-1, 120; Husserl 1983, 129)

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[3] Dieses »Prinzip der Ausweisbarkeit« ist eine nicht weiter begründete Prämisse von Husserls Gedankengang. Allerdings ist es, so könnte man meinen, auch nicht begründungsbedürftig, da es sich aus den Grundüberzeugungen der Phänomenologie unmittelbar ergibt.

The way to reach this pure consciousness is through the performance of the phenomenological reduction, the method whose formulation marks Husserl's so-called transcendental turn in *Ideas 1*. After having suspended any interest or belief in the existence of the world through the performance of the *epoché*, we encounter what is given as phenomena, that is, as a correlate to our intentional activity, and focus on *how* it is given. Understanding the world and objectivity as phenomena means understanding them as meaning-formations that refer to ourselves as the ones that give or to whom that meaning is given; in Husserl's words, as the ones that *constitute* that meaning. The reduction (from the Latin *reducere*: to lead back) then, reconducts phenomena to the constitutive activity of subjectivity. It is in this sense that we have to reject the idea of an absolute reality, a world in-itself beyond consciousness[4]. But this is precisely how we understand *nature* in the natural attitude: something that exceeds and precedes consciousness, that from which we come from. When we perform the phenomenological reduction, we reveal *the true nature of nature*: its being a correlate to our constitutive activity, and so a constituted meaning. This results in swiftly dismissing any pretension of originarity given by science to natural processes, and considering ourselves natural beings only in a secondary, constituted way. But what does it mean for nature to be a constituted meaning? Let's take for example the perception of a seemingly natural thing. An explorer hiking through a virgin area might encounter a mountain that no one has seen before, and think they are coming across 'brute nature'. However, if only because what they see is "a mountain" and not a manifold of sensory data, what they perceive is already meaningful and not just brute nature. In fact, if what we mean by 'nature' is something beyond the meaningful organization of our experience, then nature is inaccessible by principle. Even if minimal, this organization of experience points to the subject as the source of meaning-constitution, and the reduction makes this constitution thematic.

[4] Husserl recognizes Kant as the author of the Copernican revolution that inaugurates the transcendental tradition, but he is very critical of certain aspects of his theory. The distinction between phenomenon and thing-in-itself is one of them, since in his view it perpetuates a useless "metaphysics" (Hua 7, 235).

From the standpoint of transcendental phenomenology, nature and its self-sufficiency are constituted senses. But this does not mean that it is contingent that we think of nature as independent or in-itself; rather, this is how nature is necessarily given. And with this realization a tension is born between how nature is disclosed and the disclosure itself. This is the tension that leads to the aforementioned dichotomy between reducing consciousness to nature or the other way around; where Husserl opts for the latter.

While showing the constituted character of all transcendence, the transcendental reduction at the same time points to the realm of constituting subjectivity as that which is required in order for there to be transcendence, that is to say, as the conditions of possibility for the experience of transcendence in general. Transcendental or constituting subjectivity is thus defined as that which is in principle distinct from constituted objectivities in the world, and this distinction is what will generate what Husserl calls the 'paradox of human subjectivity', which I will explore in depth in the next chapter. The mutual exclusion and, at the same time, the interdependence of transcendental and empirical subjectivity represent a problematic knot in Husserl's account of subjectivity. This problematic division relates, in turn, to the distinction between first and third person, and between the subjective and objective poles of experience. If anything that is given is given to a consciousness, it follows that there is always a subject of experience, a transcendental consciousness, subjectivity, or life. Whether this subject is an ego, that is to say, whether the transcendental realm has an egological structure, is a matter of interpretation and is subject to changes across Husserl's works. However, it is experienced and disclosed only through a first-personal analysis since "*To be a subject is to be in the mode of being aware of oneself*" [Subjektsein ist, in der Weise seiner selbst bewusst zu sein, zu sein.] (Hua 14, 151).

Insofar as the transcendental features of experience can only be disclosed in the first person, we are faced with two types of problems. Firstly, the problem of describing the transcendental subject, which requires that we objectify what is by principle non objectifiable, what is in essence different than an object. Secondly, the problem of accounting for the constitution of what seems not to be given in the

first-person, which would be the case of death and limits in general. Husserl's phenomenological reflection shows that I, as transcendental, do not die. Death is never *mine* because it happens to my empirical self, to my body as a thing. In a sense, death happens to me in the third person. I do not undergo death because that would mean surviving it. And yet, there are a number of other experiences I do not undergo in a thematic sense. As Husserl's genetic analysis will gradually show, a large part of what can be counted as first-personal experience happens "in the background", in the passive realm, where every constituted object is passively pre-given and there is not a formed person yet —it is strictly speaking, pre- or im- personal. So how should we interpret the first-personal perspective?

1.3 First-personal perspective

In "Qu'est-ce que'une phénoménologie en première personne?", Natalie Depraz (2014) identifies two criteria for identifying what in the phenomenological tradition is presented as the first person: first, a negative criterion that indicates that the first person is what is given in a different mode than a thing; and second, a linguistic criterion according to which the first person is the one that can say "I". Depraz finds both these criteria problematic and goes on to challenge the notion of the first-personal approach in traditional phenomenology. Attempting a minimal description of the first person, Dan Zahavi separates the first-personal access from its articulation in a personal pronoun, and claims that phenomenology is focused on understanding first-personal perspective as "*the distinctive way in which mental states are given to the subject whose states they are*" (Zahavi 2006, 13 quoting Shoemaker 1996, 157). The common element is a certain connection between the first person and the realm of immanent awareness, which is a crucial element of phenomenological analysis.

In a trivial sense, anything can be first-personal as long as I perceive it and reflect on it, but when phenomenology stresses the importance of the first-personal approach, it aims at uncovering a dimension that third-personal science excludes when trying to grasp the true, objective sense of the world. A first-personal access allows us to reflect on the meaning of certain basic elements of our experience like, for example, time. There is a lot that science can tell us about time; but its true

nature, its meaning, is not in its objective expressions but in the *experience* of time, which is essentially subjective. However, the subjective or immanent character of such experiences should not lead to the conclusion that these are merely private experiences: their validity for every subjectivity taking part in the transcendental community can be shown, but for Husserl this must always be done by keeping a foothold in primal experience.

This leads us to another element that makes a first-personal access a privileged one: its immediacy. For Husserl, consciousness and reality are given in essentially different ways, and while objects are given as dubitable and transcendent, the mode of givenness of *cogitationes* is immanent and apodictic. The first person is thus intimately tied with the validity of phenomenology's findings. As Husserl states in *Ideas 1*:

> *Thus in every manner it is clear that whatever is there for me in the world of physical things is necessarily only a* presumptive actuality *and, on the other hand, that I* myself*, for whom it is there (I, when the "part of me" belonging to the world of physical things is excluded) am absolute actuality or that the present phase of my mental processes is an absolute actuality, given by an unconditional, absolutely indefeasible positing (Hua 3-1, 86; Husserl 1983, 102)*

Even if one could object that Husserl's position here is still very Cartesian and that in later texts, he will become critical of it, the foundational character of first-person experience will never be put into question. In 1930 Husserl states: "*The original source of the "seeing" of all possibilities of a transcendental subject, however, always lies in myself, in the modifications of my own inwardness. Through modifications, possibilities also arise in a higher-level "intuition" as limit-cases*." (Hua/Mat 8, 105)[5]. This is in line with Husserl's insistence on phenomenology being a presuppositionless reflection, that is based solely on what is intuitively given. If we consider the principle of all principles presented earlier, we can appreciate that the criterion it provides is naturally related to this anchoring

[5] Die Urquelle der „Anschauung" für alle Möglichkeiten eines transzendentalen Subjekts liegt aber immer in mir selbst, in den Abwandlungen meiner eigenen Innerlichkeit. Möglichkeiten durch Abwandlungen ergeben sich auch in höherstufiger „Intuition" als Limesfälle.

in the first person, since it is in the first person that we find accountability for the evidence given by intuition. This idea will be important once the contrast with the Post-Husserlian French tradition is made explicit, since the main difference to explore there will be the gradual marginalisation of the first person as the intrinsic meaningfulness of the world becomes more important. This is a movement that, as we will see, characterizes Merleau-Ponty's philosophical development. Methodologically, it entails a deviation from transcendentalism, partly motivated by the various problems that arise from the insistence on anchoring all possible knowledge in first-personal evidence. First, as I have mentioned, the analysis of passivity will show that constitution occurs at a pre-personal level, and that functioning subjectivity, in its most fundamental form, is anonymous. The privilege of the first person is weakened by the fact that the mineness and self-awareness of these fundamental achievements is given only retrospectively (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, the attempt to isolate a pure first person, that is to say, a constituting but not constituted subject (*"I, when the 'part of me' belonging to the world of physical things is excluded"*) results in the explanatory gap between who I am as a subject and who I am as an object or entity in the world, which proves to bring some difficulties when considering the experience of my own body (chapter 7). Some phenomena, as is the case of birth and death, make this difficulty manifest and force us to reconsider the stark separation between a first and a third-personal approach. If death is understood as the passage to complete unconsciousness, then there is no subject *to whom* death is given, because death is the limit of said subject. And yet, arguably my own death concerns me in a special way that cannot be reduced to a third-personal understanding. Providing a phenomenological account of the *subjective* experience of death is a challenge that puts Husserlian philosophy to the test, since it involves answering some fundamental questions about the nature of this subject. In this context, Husserl will struggle to find a way to make sense of limit-cases while retaining the privilege of the first-personal point of view and the integrity of the transcendental principle. Eventually, as I will explore in this dissertation, these and other genetic questions will threaten the stability of these phenomenological principles by putting into

question the notion of subjectivity they depend on, namely the notion of a pure consciousness that can be considered independently of its worldly character.

1.4 Birth and death as natural phenomena and the challenge to the transcendental principle

By revealing that everything given is a correlate of our intentional activity, the reduction places intentionality at the most fundamental level. Without the constituting activity of consciousness nothing at all could ever be given. From this Husserl concludes that consciousness is absolute: everything rests on it, and it rests on nothing. However, certain facts of existence point to a limit of the constitutive activity of subjectivity insofar as we cannot become aware of them through first-personal intuition, and thus we cannot properly constitute them. This is the case with birth and death. So long as we encounter ourselves always in the midst of existence, having already began and being always still present, we cannot by principle live through our own limits. Does this mean that consciousness is not absolute in the end? For Husserl nothing can threaten the absolute character of consciousness, since something that would lay beyond its scope is nonsense, and even nonsense is a type of sense unveiled only by transcendental subjectivity (Hua 1, 117). This is an idea he stresses over and over again against the common notion of an independently existing reality or nature. Birth and death appear in this context as an upsetting element that reignites the tension at the heart of transcendental phenomenology. This is because they are what I will propose to call *natural phenomena*. Since they point to a realm of which we can make no more sense – namely, "*the problematic being before birth, death and 'after death'*" [das problematische Sein vor der Geburt, der Tod un das „nach dem Tod"] (Hua 15, 608)—and thus demarcate the limits of constitution, they seem to point in the direction of a dependency of consciousness on certain material conditions–i.e. embodiment—that would allow subjectivity to be operative[6]. Furthermore, the meaning that birth and death bestow upon our realm of experience comes from a

[6] At this stage, it is not clear if such "material conditions" should be cashed out in subpersonal or organic terms, or in constitutive or ontological terms. This vagueness can be considered a flaw of the naturalistic perspective (that often takes subpersonal conditions as ontological ones) rather than a lack of nuance in Husserl's part.

second-hand experience of them: we observe the birth and death of other people or we are told about birth and death in the world before even seeing it ourselves. The idea of a dependency of consciousness on bodily conditions both supports and is fully supported by a naturalist perspective on consciousness, and so it becomes a challenge to think of limit-cases in a phenomenological key or without falling into any kind of naturalistic explanation. As Roman Ingarden explains it, the essence of consciousness (intentionality) is radically different than that of material things, and so it cannot be causally conditioned by them (Ingarden 1975, 29). This, I believe, is the motivation behind Husserl's controversial claim about the eternity of the transcendental subject. It becomes quite clear when we analyse the first references to the immortality of consciousness in Husserl's work, that date back as far as 1910. I will present briefly the arguments he makes in this manuscript entitled "Die monadische Ansicht. Versuch, die Fakten wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis ins Monadische umzudeuten" included in volume 42 of *Husserliana*, the first in which he addresses this topic. This is important because, even when later on Husserl refines and modifies his view on the matter, something of the motivation that lies behind his thinking about the issue remains. Husserl offers in this text a description of his monadological metaphysics inspired by Leibniz. He identifies individual consciousness as a monad, while committing to the idea of its eternal character: "*Each ego-consciousness is an 'immortal monad'*" [Jedes Ichbewusstsein is eine „unsterbliche Monade"] and therefore "*my individual consciousness is immortal*." [Mein individuelles Bewusstsein ist unsterblich] (Hua 42, 154). Further in the text, he refers to the immortality of souls [*die Seelen*], thus identifying souls with consciousness; although in later years he will always maintain a clear distinction between the two and affirm that the soul dies along with the body (Hua 35, 420) while consciousness proper does not. He goes on to explain that, even when monads cannot have had a beginning in time, they were not always "awaken" and this is the reason why there was a period in objective time where conscious humanity had not yet emerged. The notion of a sleeping monad that precedes birth and follows death will be recurrent in Husserl's dealings with these topics from now on, although the exact interpretation one should provide of this monadology remains unclear. We will see later on (chapter 5) that

monadological theory involves a lot of speculative features, but for now Husserl warns us that his account entails no “mysticism” but that it simply expresses transcendental idealism’s cornerstone notion of the spirit as necessarily preceding what is called nature in-itself:

> *What we want to say is only that there is nothing but "spirits" in the broadest sense when we understand the "is" in the absolute sense, and that bodies and other physical things are only in the sense of "nature", i.e. as units of experiential knowledge* (Hua 42, 158)[7].

This is the first of many references to the immortality of consciousness in explicit relation to the transcendental principle. Admitting a possible end of consciousness would mean posing a threat to its transcendental status, since it would point to a realm outside of its reach, namely that of nature in itself: *“the transcendental I cannot die; he can’t insofar as there is nothing exterior to him and death must precisely come from outside (…)”*[8] (Montavont 1999, 167). This becomes especially clear in this text, where Husserl talks about nature as the “rule of awakening” (*Regelung der Erscheinungen*) of souls (Hua 42, 158), meaning it is not something beyond consciousness but only a way of understanding consciousness’ development in objective time. There, he even refers to the immortality of the monad as a *solution* to the problem of explaining natural history in transcendental terms:

> *It is said that "nature" is eternal, and that nature had epochs in which no scientific ground allowed for the things of that epoch to receive psychic consciousness. And knowledge of nature also leaves the question open, if there weren’t alternative periods in natural history in which animals, animated organisms, already formed organic life, so souls (as attached to organisms) were present first and then annihilated. The task is to reinterpret all this given, founded, scientific knowledge into the monadic.* We solve this

[7] Was wir sagen wollen, ist nur dies, dass es gar nichts anderes gibt als „Geister“ im weitesten Sinn, wenn wir das „gibt“ im absoluten Sinn verstehen, und dass Leiber und sonstige physische Dinge nur sind im Sinn der „Natur“, d.h. als Einheiten der Erfahrungs-erkenntnis.

[8] Le moi transcendantal ne peut pas mourir; il ne le peut pas dans la mesure où il n’y a rien d’extérieur à lui et où précisément la mort doit venir de l’extérieur.

task by trying the following approach: Each ego-consciousness is an "immortal monad".[9] (Hua 42, 154) (emphasis is mine).

What seems to be explicitly expressed here is that the immortality of the constituting subject must be posited in order to avoid granting nature the status of the in-itself. In the same spirit, but now in the context of a reflection on time, he writes in a text from 1932:

Can I ever have started? Can having started make sense if it's not in time? I can have a first "awakening" and a final "awakening" - but a beginning as a streaming "living" present? Without it nothing has being, not the others implied in it or the world with human birth and human death. (Hua/Mat 8, 22)[10]

Again in 1936, he stresses this idea by moving in a circular manner and stating that, even when a functioning body is necessary to have a functioning ego; without this functioning ego, nothing -including embodiment- could be given:

But what is birth? The conditions of possibility of awaken life are fulfilled however by life itself. What are these conditions - a corporeality of an ego is there or a distant "analogue" of it. But corporeality dies - it becomes a mere body; corporeality of a certain concrete structure is a condition for life, for egoic being; but without life, without ego there is no world, no corporeality, no space-temporality etc. (Hua 29, 334)[11]

This could be summed up in the formula "*No death without life*" [Ohne Leben

[9] Die „Natur", heißt es nun, ist ewig, und die Natur hatte Epochen, in denen kein wissenschaftlicher Grund es gestattete, den Dingen dieser Epoche ein seelisches Bewusstsein einzufühlen. Und die Naturerkenntnis lässt es auch offen, ob nicht in der Geschichte der Natur Perioden abwechselten, in denen bald Tiere, beseelte Organismen, vorhanden waren, bald alles schon gebildete organische Leben, also Seelenleben (als an Organismen geknüpft) völlig vernichtet ⟨war⟩. Dies alles nun als ein Gegebenes begründeter, wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis ins Monadische umzudeuten, das ist die Aufgabe. Wir lösen diese Aufgabe durch den Versuch des folgenden Ansatzes: Jedes Ichbewusstsein ist eine „unsterbliche Monade"

[10] Kann ich je angefangen haben? Hat Angefangen-Haben Sinn, wenn nicht als Haben in einer Zeit? Ich kann ein erstes „Erwachen" haben und ein letztes „Erwachen" – aber einen Anfang als strömend „lebendige" Gegenwart? Ohne sie hat nichts überhaupt Sein und so die in ihr implizierten Anderen und die Welt mit menschlicher Geburt und menschlichem Tod.

[11] Aber was ist Geburt? Bedingungen der Möglichkeit des Wachlebens erfüllen sich aber für das Leben selbst. Was sind das für Bedingungen - eine Leiblichkeit eines Ich ist da oder eines entfernten „Analogons" davon. Aber Leiblichkeit stirbt - es wird ein bloßer Körper, Körperlichkeit gewisser konkreter Struktur ist Bedingung für Leben, für Ichsein; aber ohne Leben, ohne Ichsein ist nicht Welt, ist nicht Körperlichkeit, ist nicht Raum-Zeitlichkeit etc.

kein Tod] (Hua 42, 22). Now, despite his emphatic defence of the idea of the immortality of the Ego, Husserl will struggle to find a suitable description of limit-cases in transcendental terms. Here, it seems, "*the transcendentality of the retrospective question does not lead us to the goal. It leads only to death and birth as transcendental riddles*" (Hua 42, 81)[12]. This is because limit-cases challenge the transcendental principle by challenging the principle of all principles. Indeed, if consciousness is only given first-personally, in order to describe conscious experience we must stick to what is given to us in intuition. How could we, then, make sense of the limits that are, by principle, not given to intuition? Evidently, these are not experiences we can have as such: "*Wanting to experience death as death is an absurdity*" [Tod als Tod erfahren wollen, ist dann win Widersinn] (Hua/Mat 8, 438), but Husserl often wonders whether it suffices to leave them aside as mere events of the constituted world with no transcendental relevance. In a manuscript from 1931 he asks: "*Can objective time-space and world be constituted without all this, are death, etc., accidental factual occurrences of the world? Strange facts!"* [*Kann sich objektive Zeiträumlichkeit und Welt ohne all das konstituieren, sind Tod etc. zufällige faktische Vorkommnisse der Welt? Merkwürdige Fakta*!] (Hua 42, 427). More often than not, Husserl would start his reflections on these topics by presenting the distinction that, as we will see, lies at the bottom of the paradox of subjectivity, namely between empirical and transcendental subject. Death is then an event of the empirical realm but not the transcendental: "*Death is not an occurrence in the "I am" of the transcendental Ego, but an event in the human world*" [Tod ist kein seiendes Vorkommnis im „Ich bin" des transzendentalen Ego, sondern ein Ereignis in der Welt des Menschen] (Hua 42, 78). In the following chapter, I will analyse this division and its paradoxical outcome.

[12] Aber die Transzendentalität der Rückfrage von der seienden Welt führt, scheint es, nicht zum Ziel. Sie führt nur zum Tod und zur Geburt als transzendentale Rätsel

Chapter 2: Limits and paradoxes

In the first chapter, I have laid down the guiding principles of phenomenology and explained why limit-cases can be considered a threat to them. To summarize the results, we can say that if phenomenology seeks to be a foundational theory of knowledge based on first-personal evidence, limit-cases undermine that enterprise insofar as they are not given to oneself, and thus seem to require a different type of explanation (namely, a third-personal one). For Husserl, this means limits are not proper phenomena but occurrences of the constituted world that affect the subject only as empirical human being and not as transcendental or constituting. This leads me to examine the relationship between these two dimensions or ways of thinking about subjectivity, and so in this chapter I turn to the paradox of human subjectivity. The paradoxical way of thinking about subjectivity is characteristic of Husserlian thought, and it is what shapes his own views on death, as his own presentation shows. I will here begin by focusing more specifically on death, as a problematic case where the limits and tensions of phenomenology in general are exhibited, and lay down some key issues that I will take up throughout the rest of this dissertation.

2.1 Introduction

The tension between the third-personal account of the human provided by naturalistic science and the first-personal approach of transcendental phenomenology is replicated throughout Husserl's work in different forms and in relation to different specific topics. Most notably, it is at the basis of one of the biggest issues developed in his last published work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), namely the problem of the paradox of human subjectivity. As Husserl famously declares in the third section of the *Crisis*, the performance of the *epoché* reveals that every objectivity in the world can be traced back to the constituting activity of transcendental intersubjectivity; only, because transcendental intersubjectivity is no different from humankind, it is considered at the same time an objectivity in the world, therefore presenting us with the paradoxical idea that a part of the world "*swallows up, so to speak, the*

whole world and thus itself too" (Hua 6, 183; Husserl 1970, 180). The paradox touches on the issue of the relationship between transcendental subjectivity and the empirical human being, and the possibility of it being solved depends on a more thorough clarification of this bond. In this chapter I will examine this paradox in light of the tension between these two forms of approaching subjectivity, along with two other paradoxes that, I will argue, are also the expression of the larger tension between first-personal and third-personal accounts of experience. One is the "crazy paradox" Merleau-Ponty points to in his analyses of Husserl's reflection on the notion of Earth as ground in the text "Foundational investigations of the phenomenological origin of the spatiality of Nature: The originary ark, the Earth, does not move". The other is the paradox of death, that consists of the contradictory understanding of my own death as being certain yet unconstitutible. Because these are expressions of the same over-arching tension, what is at stake in them is essential to phenomenology's way of thinking about experience, and, as Husserl himself states, the power of phenomenology lies in its ability to resolve them:

> *From the beginning the phenomenologist lives in the paradox of having to look upon the obvious as questionable, as enigmatic, and of henceforth being unable to have any other scientific theme than that of transforming the universal obviousness of the being of the world –for him the greatest of all enigmas- into something intelligible. If the paradox just developed were insoluble, it would mean that an actually universal and radical epoché could not be carried out at all, that is, for the purposes of a science rigorously bound to it.* (Hua 6, 184; Husserl 1970, 180)

The resolution of the paradox of human subjectivity is attained through the idea of self-apperception or self-objectification. I will examine this notion and turn to the paradox of death as an especially relevant case in which the tensions that underlie phenomenology are exhibited. Because death is a limit for constitution, the resolution cannot be applied in the same straightforward manner in which Husserl faces the paradox in the *Crisis*, and yet it functions as a kind of proof for Husserl's solution. Because death is "*the separation of the transcendental ego from its self-objectification as human*." [das Ausscheiden des transzendentalen Ego aus der

Selbstobjektivation als Mensch] (Hua 29, 332), Husserl's way of approaching death –together with birth- show to what extent he is committed to a conception of the transcendental subject that is radically distinct from the empirical human being. I will present a preliminary idea of Husserl's developments on death and argue that its peculiarities present a challenge for the phenomenological method as a whole, and for the distinction between transcendental subjectivity and the empirical human being; then I will offer a preliminary analysis of the Merleau-Pontian diagnosis of Husserl's philosophy as well as Merleau-Ponty's own way out of the paradox, and point out some of its insufficiencies.

2.2 The paradox of human subjectivity

As soon as the *epoché* makes an appearance in Husserl's work, the question about the relationship between the psychophysical human being and consciousness thought of as the residue left by its performance is raised. Already in *Ideas 1* we can find the following formulation of the paradox:

> *Thus, on the one hand consciousness is said to be the absolute in which everything transcendent and, therefore, ultimately the whole psychophysical world, becomes constituted; and, on the other hand, consciousness is said to be a subordinate real event within that world. How can these statements be reconciled?* (Hua 3-1, 116; Husserl 1983, 124)

As in the *Crisis*, the context of the question is that of Husserl's articulated criticism of naturalism, physicalism, and the scientific view of the world. The paradox then does not present a *new* problem but is rather the phenomenological expression of the larger dispute with the naturalistic perspective applied to the subject. In the *Crisis*, where it receives its complete formulation, it is presented in the context of Husserl's description of the ontological way to the phenomenological reduction. Unlike the Cartesian way to the reduction that characterized Husserl's early presentation of the method, this doesn't start with the possibility of doubting or putting the external world in question, but with the recognition of some tensions arising between our common experience of the world and the scientific view of it.

Science tells us that the world we commonly experience is a world of appearances, contaminated by our subjective perspective and concealed by it. Unlike what our common life reveals, the scientific world is the real objective world reached through rigorous method of inquiry. Husserl points to Galileo (and Descartes after him) as responsible for the mathematization of the world that proves to be foundational for modern science. The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century brings about a change in ontological thinking since it considers truth as something that must be completely stripped of subjective elements, thus undermining our immediate – necessarily subjective- experience of the world. But Husserl will point out, in a counter-movement, that science itself is performed in the context of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), that is the world of common immediate experience, and thus presupposes it. Science does not uncover the true world, but rather throws "*a garb of ideas*" over the lived world and calls this method the truth (Hua 6, 52; Husserl 1970, 51). This is why, for Husserl, Galileo is a "*discovering and concealing genius*" (Hua 6, 53; Husserl 1970, 52), since the truths that he reveals through scientific method do not examine the 'obvious' which they deem illusory, while it is precisely in this obvious common experience that the origins of these truths can be found. The explanation for this is that the notions operating at the basis of the scientific idea of truth are constituted in common experience: what it means to be real, objective, physical, material, necessary, causal, etc., can only be cashed out by turning our attention to the most basic ways of givenness. This is precisely what phenomenology does, and since it has to protect itself from the *metabasis eis allo genos* (Hua 18, 22) that constantly wants to reintroduce the scientific understanding of these notions in order to explain their very meaning, it employs the *epoché* as a way of bracketing or putting these concepts out of play, in order to focus solely on the way in which what is given is given. Once we have bracketed the scientific understanding of the world and we focus on the *how* of its givenness, the correlation between its modes of appearance and the subjective modes of constitution becomes explicit, and thus the *epoché* leads to the reduction. Now, when we think of the re-conducing of constituted meanings to constituting subjectivity, a new issue regarding the *status* of subjectivity itself arises. Namely, since we ourselves are also entities in the world, it would seem as if correlation

happened between two objectivities, two parts of the world, thus leading to the question: How can we be at the same time objects *in* the world and subjects *for* the world? (Hua 6, 185; Husserl 1970, 181). To answer this question, we must look more closely into the meaning of this *we*. In the same manner in which we bracketed 'objective' truths about the world given to us, we must leave aside any assumptions about our own being as subjects. Through the performance of the *epoché*, we ourselves become "phenomena" with specific manners of givenness correlated to intentionality, and this intentionality cannot be accounted for in already constituted terms. Thus in the *epoché* "*nothing human is to be found, neither soul nor psychic life nor real psychophysical human being*" (Hua 6, 187; Husserl 1970, 183), because these are notions that already belong to the realm of natural and scientific knowledge. From a transcendental standpoint, constituting subjectivity is not identified with any mundane description. It must be, in a way, "outside" the world. It is nevertheless necessary that we consider ourselves as the entities we are in the world, but we can inquire back once again into the way this self-constitution unfolds, and this possibility proves that functioning subjectivity does not coincide with empirical humanity, and so we are at the same time inside and outside the constituted world. Understanding world-constituting subjectivity in a presuppositionless manner requires, then, that we go as far as possible in the genesis of constitution to reach the absolute functioning subject in its non-worldly origin. In effect, the regressive question of constitution ultimately leads to a subject Husserl refers to as "supernatural" (*übernatürliches*) (Hua 14, 86), indicating its disconnection to any sort of objective nature. Husserl points in this direction in the *Crisis* by mentioning a return to the primal Ego in its "*absolute singularity*" and the need to perform a second reduction that leads from transcendental intersubjectivity to the unique Ego that constitutes it (Hua 6, 190; Husserl 1970, 186), but he does not go into a lot of detail. In order to fully understand the resolution of the paradox we need to go beyond the *Crisis* to look into the way the constitution of others as transcendental Egos and the constitution of myself as a human being develops. The classical account of this process shows that constitution of the self and of

others is achieved through different stages[13] that begin with transcendental subjectivity's self-objectification as a psychophysical being, that is, as a unity of body and soul. This is how the previously "supernatural" consciousness first comes to be a part of nature and is constituted as the ruler of a body located in space. Consciousness considered as a temporal flow becomes "annexed" to a body considered as material object:

> *Only by virtue of its experienced relation to the organism does consciousness become real human or brute consciousness, and only thereby does it acquire a place in the space belonging to Nature and the time belonging to Nature –the time which is physically measured.* (…) A peculiar kind of apprehending or experiencing, *a peculiar kind of* "apperception"*, effects the production of this so-called "annexation", this reification {Realisierung} of consciousness*. (Hua 3-1, 117; Husserl 1983, 125)

We have at this stage the Ego in its primordial sphere, that is, in its sphere of ownness where the presence of others is cut off. Without this first step, constitution of alter-egos is not possible because this one is given through a process of pairing (*Paarung*), a type of passive synthesis that starting from the recognition of the other's animate body in my sensory field attributes to this body a connection to a transcendental subject of its own in analogy with my own (Hua 1, 141 ff.). Thus "*it is unthinkable that the knowing Ego can experience another without experiencing itself and the other Ego as animal.*" [Es ist undenkbar, dass das erkennende Ich ein anderes Ich erfahren kann, ohne sich selbst und das fremde Ich als animalisches zu erfahren] (Hua 14, 98). After constituting myself as a psychophysical being I can do the same with the other, and ascribe to it a transcendental subject in a similar manner as that in which I can perform a reduction to my past self as transcendental. I reach in this way the transcendental community of subjects that constitutes the world, but since I needed to go through their constitution as objects in order to get to it, Husserl says it is "*wrong, methodically, to jump immediately to transcendental intersubjectivity and to leap*

[13] I follow here Roberto Walton's systematic account of this topic in *Egología y Generatividad (2004).* There are, however, heterogeneous interpretations of the process of self-constitution. Most notably, Hanne Jacobs (2014) has argued that in order to constitute itself as psychophysical unity, the subject must constitute itself as a *person* first, and this type of constitution is given through the subject's action in the world. I will come back to this in the section on the person (chapter 6).

over the primal "I" (*Ur-Ich), the ego of my epoché, which can never lose its uniqueness and personal indeclinability*." (Hua 6, 188; Husserl 1970, 185)[14]. Because the primal I is not a part of nature, and thus not a part of the world, the second reduction is what guarantees the strong separation between subjectivity as constituting and as constituted that provides for Husserl the resolution of the paradox. The characterization of the primal I is a complex issue that I will address in depth in chapter 4, but for now it will suffice to say that Husserl considers it the Ego-pole of the living-present (*lebendige Gegenwart*), the last level of temporalization that, being the source of time, is itself outside of time. It is the pure present that constantly renews itself at the heart of temporalization, thought of independently of retention and protention, that is, of past and future horizons. It remains an open question whether we can say something truthful about it since, due to its character, it can only be experienced retrospectively -therefore when it is no longer a pure present. Moreover, we can for these reasons question the idea of it being Ego-centred, since the impossibility of having an intuitive experience of it in its true form makes it *anonymous*, hence why the primal I "*is actually called "I" only by equivocation -though it is an essential equivocation*" (Hua 6, 188; Husserl 1970, 184). Out of time, of nature, and of the world: these are the characteristics that make up constituting subjectivity in its most fundamental level. Through the process of its self-apperception as a human being this subject becomes the entity that it is in the world, so that transcendental subject and empirical human are the same and not the same at once. In agreement with David Carr's interpretation of this relationship as being one between two different types of self-consciousness (Carr, 1999), Dan Zahavi writes: "*It is the difference between being aware of oneself as a causally determined known object, as a part of the world, and being aware of oneself as a knowing subject, as –to paraphrase Wittgenstein- the limit of*

[14] It should be noted here that authors like Zahavi (2001) and James Mensch (1988) have drawn attention to the presence of intersubjectivity in the *a priori* sphere of subjectivity independently of the contingent appearing of the concrete other (Zahavi), and at the lowest levels of constitution, namely already at the level of the living present (Mensch), contesting the view that places in empathy the first encounter with the other. However, suggesting that the primordial sphere is already intersubjective could lead to an erasing of the difference between I and other. For Husserl, as we will see further on, the primal Ego as an individual stream seems to be always presupposed, thus explaining his remark on the indeclinability of the singular Ego. For a general view on this topic see Cabrera, Celia (2013) "Intersubjetividad a priori y empatía" in *Ideas y Valores* vol. XLII, pp 71-93

the world." (Zahavi 2001, 104). This is a problematic explanation for two reasons. One is that, as we will discover in the following sections, if we follow Husserl we will come to realize that the awareness of oneself as a subject is incompatible with the anonymity of pure subjectivity. A purely subjective experience of oneself would be an experience of the spontaneous 'welling up' of the stream of consciousness. This experience cannot be given thematically, but only 'lived through'. Admittedly, when we speak of subjective self-awareness we do not speak of a thematic consciousness of oneself but precisely of this 'living through', which is nevertheless a type of awareness. However, there is a fundamental sense in which this self-awareness cannot take place independently of an objective type of self-awareness, and this is why Husserl insists that this equivocation is "essential". Rather, the two types of awareness need each other and form a concrete whole that can only be separated by abstraction. We will come back to this later on. The other reason why this is problematic is that, starting from this separation of the subjective and the objective pole of awareness, one has to provide a plausible account of how they interrelate in a second step. This means coming up with an ad hoc answer to the question of what makes up the unity of the subject, and what brings together such distinct forms of awareness. According to Husserl, transcendental and empirical subject are one and the same, and yet it seems we need a criterion to explain how they relate. Because transcendental subjectivity is disembodied, we cannot point to the body as a unifying entity, and insofar as Husserl considers the constituting subject to be absolute and independent, it seems that at least in some way they are in fact not the same. If we consider the nexus to be the necessary character of self-objectification we face two subsequent issues: first, how is this necessity given? If we only have either a subjective experience or an objective experience of ourselves, we lack phenomenological evidence for their connection. In this connection, in the following sections I will explore the idea of a hybrid experience of oneself that is neither purely first personal—the perspective that characterizes subjective self-awareness—nor purely third personal—the perspective that characterizes objective self-awareness.

This issue leads us to the problem of death. Husserl explains death as the final separation between these two modes of being or awareness which seems to break

the necessary bond of self-apperception:

> *In the real phenomenology founded in the transcendental reduction, in the phenomenology that starts from the absolute sources of evidence (in which all objective evidences become objects of absolute subjective evidence), death is the separation of the transcendental ego from the self-objectification as a human being* (Hua 29, 332)

This view of death is at the same time a consequence and a reason for the stark distinction between transcendental and empirical subject, and in order to be elucidated, it requires an elucidation of their relation.

2.3 The paradox of death

We are faced with a paradox: we need to both explain two distinct ways of being and the necessity to affirm the kind of worldly self-apperception that ties them together. I have mentioned that for Husserl a strong separation between empirical and transcendental subjectivity is what resolves the paradox. This strong division is essentially due to the fact that the body is bracketed in the *epoché* and considered a constituted objectivity of the world, not essential to subjectivity as constituting. The reification of consciousness mentioned above consists of it considering itself as annexed to a body that gives it a place in nature. This means that purely functioning subjectivity is not originally embodied[15]. As a result, every bodily occurrence belongs to the subject insofar as she constitutes it as something occurring to her, that is, insofar as she discloses their meaning; but because these meanings have to be taken up in some way or other, there is always a distance between consciousness and the body, even if it is necessarily myself that I experience in my body. A good illustration of this idea can be found in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1978), where he speaks of consciousness or the *for-itself*

[15] As long as we consider the primal I (*Ur-Ich)* as the most fundamental level of transcendental subjectivity, we should say that it is not embodied insofar as it is previous to the constitution of objectivity. But this still portrays a classical reading of these issues, one that has become a point of discussion in the contemporary literature. In the sixth and seven chapter of this dissertation I will explore the thesis endorsed mainly by Steven Crowell according to which the transcendental subject is embodied but only in a subjective manner. This presupposes and deepens the Husserlian distinction between lived body and material body, that will be address in chapter 7.

as being always beyond or elsewhere (*ailleurs*) from its own facticity—that is, the facts related to their spatio-temporal existence, which includes the body as an object *in-itself*. This separation is meant to explain that while consciousness or the for-itself is intimately related to the subject's own body and facticity, she can never fully coincide with it since her way of being is to transcend the in-itself, and so it remains separated from it, although not by something positively characterized but actually by *nothingness*. This leads to the idea of complete or radical freedom, which can only mean that, thanks to this unbridgeable distance, consciousness is not bound by any external causes but it is responsible for every meaning it discloses insofar as it is the source of their constitution. So for example, if I feel thirsty and reach for a glass of water, I might consider this to be an urge that is imposed on me, borne out of a physical need of my body; and while this is true insofar as my experience of thirst reveals it as having those characteristics, it requires that consciousness discloses it as such to appear in this way, and so there is no immediate causal reaction to it; what exists in fact is a *motivation* to act in a certain way. This is true of all bodily occurrences: instincts, emotions, urges; all require that consciousness constitute them as what they are. As Husserl states about hunger: "*it is still the same instinctive happening, striving performance, but 'understood' as eating*" [Es ist noch dasselbe instinktive Geschehen, strebende Tun, aber „verstanden" als Essen.] (Hua 42, 106). As it happened with the perception of a mountain in the example of our previous chapter, the experience of my thirst is meaningful and thus, subjective from the outset. However, in these cases we are always considering something given to intuition that can be taken up in one way or another by constituting consciousness. "*Hyletic sensation*" (Husserl expression to refer to the materiality given to intuition in a case of perception) is entangled in an intimate way with meaning, but it is there. If we now focus on the case of death, this picture becomes more complex. As Depraz and Mouillie state: "*In the case of death, the* telos *of donation is itself put into question, because what appears, even teleologically, is more like the Faktum of non-donation that is at work*

in death" (Depraz & Mouillie 1991, 109)[16]. As it happens with other limit-cases as birth and deep sleep, there is no actual experience of them because they are precisely transitions from and to unconsciousness understood as a point of zero affection where nothing stands out to the Ego and it remains purely passive. In the case of sleep, which is present to us in our daily life, we have the experience of the previous moments leading up to sleep and we wake up with the feeling of *having been* asleep, but there is no intuitive content of the actual transition or the moments of deep sleep. And yet these are phenomena that have a meaning to us, and that strikingly *give* meaning to our lives, as is arguably the case with death. But their constitution is, at best, indirect. As Husserl points out, we first constitute the death of others, and by analogy apply this knowledge to our future self[17]. This constitution does not provide us, of course, with an experience of the ending of consciousness, but rather with a breakdown of the other's body that ceases to be animated, and that we interpret as a separation from his or her consciousness. From first or second-hand experience of the death of others, and from common knowledge imparted in our life-world, we learn about the inevitability of death in our own case, and the certainty that we will at some point stop ruling in our bodies as well: "*Death is not a life-worldly experience of a boundary. One* knows *only that one will die*." (Schutz and Luckmann 1983, 126). However, having its origin in third-personal knowledge, this notion will be permanently second-guessed by our first-personal experience. Since we don't have any personal experience of the transition to complete unconsciousness, we live in a state of constantly renewed affection, and we can only come close to the idea of its complete absence by considering our own experience of approaching the limits of affection, such as when we are about to fall asleep, when we faint or become ill (Hua/Mat 8, 147). On the basis of these experiences we can *imagine* what our death would be like, but never live through it. Thus, as Epicurus has famously stated, we can never coincide with our death:

[16] Or, dans le cas de la mort, ce *telos* de la donation est lui-même remis en question, puisque ce qui apparaît, même téléologiquement, c'est bien plus le *Faktum* de la non-donation à l'œuvre dans la mort.

[17] Der Tod der Anderen ist der früher konstituierte Tod. Ebenso wie die Geburt der Anderen (Hua 42, 3).

as long as we are, death is not; and when it comes we are no longer there[18]. However, the conclusion drawn by Epicurus is that, in virtue of this necessary displacement, death is completely foreign to us and we should not consider it in any way. For Husserl however, the conclusion that should be drawn is that the ego is immortal:

> *the transcendental I cannot die; he can't insofar as there is nothing exterior to him and death must precisely come from outside. Death as what comes to me from the outside, she is the unconstitutible* par excellence *because "*the transcendental I has no exterior*", because "*the intentional inside (…) is at the same time outside (Montavont 1999, 167)[19].

If death as a limit demarcates an *inside* and an *outside* of consciousness, a realm within the reach of constituting subjectivity and a realm beyond it, then transcendental consciousness would not be the all-encompassing absolute mode of being, but instead it would be relative and secondary to the life it is given. In other words, constituting consciousness would only be functioning as long as it is alive and has a functioning body. Naturally, such conclusion couldn't stand in the context of Husserlian phenomenology, and thus Husserl finds himself in the position of differentiating, once again, between transcendental and empirical subjectivity, and restricting death only to the latter. Death, then, is a worldly event that concerns the human being (not consciousness); it is her demise that is at stake but not that of consciousness as constituting. The transcendental subjectivity that the *epoché* unveils does not die; it is, in a sense, "immortal", because dying for it has no sense etc." [„*unsterblich*"*, weil das Sterben dafür keinen Sinn hat etc*.] (Hua 29, 338).

The phenomenological proof for the endlessness of consciousness is to be found in the analyses of temporality. Let's recall that the reduction to the living-present previously mentioned gives as a result a continuously renewed present

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[18] *Letter to Menoeceus*, trans. By Cyril Bailey in *Epicurus: the extant remains* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926).

[19] "Le moi transcendantal ne peut pas mourir; il ne le peut pas dans la mesure où il n'y a rien d'extérieur à lui et où précisément la mort doit venir de l'extérieur. La mort étant ce qui arrive au moi de l'extérieur, elle est l'inconstituable par excellence puisque "le moi transcendantal n'a pas d'extérieur", puisque "le dedans intentionnel (…) est en même temps dehors". The last two phrases between quotation marks correspond to manuscript MsBIV6 and Hua 15, 556.

moment that is not susceptible of beginning or ending because it is not strictly speaking *in* time. Once it gains a duration through retention, we encounter the stream of inner-time consciousness where every present impression necessarily has a horizon of retention and protention. This means that there cannot be a moment preceded or followed by nothingness because the structure of our temporality does not allow for it, explaining therefore in more technical terms our inability to experience any transition to unconsciousness.

So while we know that as human beings we will die, from a first-personal perspective we will not be able to constitute the end of our own time, and this creates a paradox in our understanding of death: *"But isn't this paradoxical: being in the streaming present, I must inevitably believe that I will live, when I know that my death is approaching." [Aber ist das nicht paradox:* lebend in strömender Gegenwart seiend, muss ich unweigerlich glauben, dass ich leben werde, wenn ich doch weiß, dass mein Tod bevorsteht.] (Hua/Mat 8, 96). We can think of this paradox as an applied case of the greater paradox of subjectivity. If before we inquired about the possibility of being objects in the world and subjects for the world, we would now pose the question of the possibility of constituting death as well as suffering it; and it appears as though this more precise inquiry requires a more dramatic solution, for the straightforward constitution of death is not possible. So the appeal to the division between the two aspects of subjectivity has to be carefully thought out in order to guarantee that transcendental subjectivity does not get conflated with empirical subjectivity, or turned into a kind of supernatural entity that would survive its self-objectification in time. Transcendental subjectivity is not immortal in the way a religious narrative would portray our soul to be, and Husserl is explicit about this:

> *The soul of the body is not immortal, strictly speaking, it is not necessary to think of it as immortal. In fact, common experience shows us that the soul really dies. But each human-I has in them, in some way, their transcendental I, and this does not die and*

does not come into being, it is an eternal being in becoming" (Hua 35, 420)[20].

But to say that it is immortal because it cannot constitute its own limits (so merely in a negative sense) is simply sweeping under the rug the problem that death confronts us with, namely the insufficiency of this familiar scheme of constitution to address certain types of experiences related to self-constitution. As I will try to show in the rest of this dissertation, even when limits can't be given as objects to the subject in the first person, there is an experience of them that cannot simply be reduced to a third-personal perspective. If we exclude death from the transcendental sphere, overlooking the fact that we make sense of this limit — albeit in an obscure way— as the end of our conscious life, we fail to address the particular character of subjectivity, which is to be an indivisible whole of transcendental and empirical dimensions. How we consider death from a phenomenological point of view represents an important theoretical decision (a decision that only we are able to make because there appears to be no evidence to settle the matter). As Ronald Bruzina clearly states, death confronts us with an alternative:

> *Either transcendental constituting "subjectivity" is structured by the beginning and end of life humans undergo or else humans as individuals cannot be identified with that "subjectivity". Yet is not that identification at the very heart of phenomenology's whole investigative track and procedure insofar as the openness to being that is intrinsic to intentionality, and correlative in the phenomenality of beings, is structurally constitutive of human experience and hence is the fact that allows proposing a reflective investigation of constitution in the first place?* (Bruzina 2001, 374/5).

While the paradox reveals a tension between the *experience* of endlessness and the *knowledge* of finiteness, if we reflect on our actual experience of death, we may find that we have neither, or rather both at a time. Death seems to conjugate

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[20] Die Seele des Leibes ist nicht unsterblich, prinzipiell gesprochen, d. h. sie ist nicht notwendig als unsterblich zu denken, und sie stirbt ja wirklich nach alltäglicher Erfahrung. Aber jedes Menschen-Ich birgt in sich in gewisser Weise sein transzendentales Ich, und das stirbt nicht und entsteht nicht, es ist ein ewiges Sein im Werden.

an experience of endlessness and finitude, and a knowledge marked by a necessary "mystery"; whether we are aware of ourselves as constituted or as constituting. I interpret this as the exhibition of subjectivity's resistance to the division, making death an especially suitable candidate to explore this overarching issue. This is an idea already explored by Eugen Fink in his *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. The special "coincidence" (Fink 1995, 61) that he spoke about between transcendental and empirical subjectivity shows itself in a striking way when it comes to limit-cases such as death, and calls for a rethinking of the phenomenological method. As I will show in chapter 10, death will be the gateway to a phenomenological reflection on the methods and limits of phenomenology, i.e., to a *phenomenology of phenomenology*.

2.4 Merleau-Ponty's assessment

A specific proposal for a reconsideration of the relationship between transcendental and empirical subject can be found in Merleau-Ponty's reinterpretation of Husserl's work. In his course on Husserl and the origin of geometry of 1959-60, he reflects on the origin of what he calls Husserl's "*crazy paradox*" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 76). There, he analyses Husserl's text from 1934 "Foundational investigations of the Spatiality of Nature: The originary Ark, the Earth, does not move"[21], which coincidentally includes a brief comment about death. Husserl refers there to the paradoxes that arise from the phenomenological consideration of the subjective constitution of the world in relation to the objective order of the sciences. In the case of the Earth, the text is meant to underline the precedence of the lived Earth which is a ground (*Boden*) that does not move, in relation to the Copernican or scientific Earth as a body amongst others that is in constant movement. As was the case of death, our scientific *knowledge* of the Earth as a moving body contradicts our immediate *experience* of it as being always at rest: "…*the Earth itself is really the ground and not a body. The Earth does not move; perhaps I may even say that it is at rest."* (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 122) In the same way that our body is primarily *Leib* and not *Körper*; that is, that it is

[21] Included in the edition of Merleau-Ponty's course on Husserl: *Husserl at the limits of phenomenology*, 2002, Northwestern University Press

experienced as *lived body* and not as an object in nature, the Earth is the ground that is always in the same place. Husserl's strategy is once again to claim "*a priority of life over the physical world*" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 75) stating that the moving Earth is contained in the original still Earth which is its condition of possibility. In virtue of the transcendental principle that holds that "*(t)he ego lives and precedes all actual and possible beings*" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 131) the subjective order is held to be prior to the objective one. The text ends on a declamatory note as Merleau-Ponty writes:

> *But one may find it a little extravagant, frankly crazy, to contradict all natural scientific knowledge of actuality and real possibility (…) But even if one found in our attempts the most unbelievable philosophical hubris, we would not back down from the consequences for the clarification of necessities pertaining to all sense donation for what exists and for the world. We do not back down even when confronting the problems of death in the new way phenomenology conceives them*. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 131)

Merleau-Ponty finds here the "crazy paradox" that stems from the consideration of the Earth as not moving. He locates the source of this paradox in the specific way of setting the problem, which can be traced back to the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. According to Merleau-Ponty, as long as we start with a dichotomy between the order of causes (the physical world) and the order of conscious experience (reasons) we will not be able to solve the tension (Chouraqui 2016, 60). This separation will inevitably lead us to one of two options: either conflating the two by reducing one to the other, or keeping them apart but not being able to account for any communication between them; so either pure identity or pure separation.

Merleau-Ponty follows Husserl in saying that the moving Earth is only possible because we have the experience of the still Earth as ground, and therefore the objective scientific Earth cannot be the original object. However, he goes one step further to state that, in a counter-movement, the earth as ground does not make sense without considering the earth as moving object either. Without this latter notion, we wouldn't be able to think of earth as being at rest, since both rest and

motion are relational terms that need each other. Under Husserl's framework, it would not be possible to account for our lived experience of the Earth as being either at rest *or* in movement. Merleau-Ponty's solution will be to focus on the dynamic between the two terms and point to it as the original sense of being; a dynamic consisting of the mutual precedence of the two orders, "*a movement of antecedence of the concerned terms*" (Carbone, 2015, 58) where one necessarily leads to the other as preceding it. Contrary to what Husserl believed, both the objective order and the subjective order would be relative under this scheme, and it would be necessary to go back further to the original movement of being that supports them both:

> *The Earth which is first is not the physical earth (by definition, it is homogenized); it is the source Being, the* Stamm und Klotz *being, in pre-restfulness; the mind which is first is not the absolute Ego of* Sinngebung*. It is the* Denkmöglichkeit *and they are* Ineinander*, entangled*. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 76)

In the idea of entanglement between objectivity and subjectivity, flesh and idea, lies the cornerstone of Merleau-Ponty's take on Husserl's philosophy and of phenomenology in general. Following on Husserl's texts but reappropriating them in an unorthodox way, he takes the somewhat lateral notion of *Verflechtung* (interweaving or entanglement), from the text on *the Origin of Geometry* and places it at the centre of his own reflections. The *Verflechtung* between language, world and humans that Husserl mentions in that text[22] becomes the *chiasm* in Merleau-Ponty's thought, the necessary interdependence of nature and consciousness. It is the *chiasm* that is originary and not transcendental subjectivity thought of as the Ego of *Sinngebung,* of sense-giving. This Ego is an "idealization". This would also explain why it cannot die.

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, in order to overcome the irresolvable tension, we need to move beyond the cogito as the starting point of inquiry and transition to ontology, that is, to a description of being beyond the subject. But this entails a

[22] "*Thus humans as humans, fellow humans, world -the world of which humans, of which we always talk and can talk- and on the other hand, language, are inseparably intertwined [verflochten].*" (Hua 6, 370; Husserl 1970, 359)

reconfiguring of the method entirely. First of all, let's recall that Husserl stated that if the paradox could not be solved in the way he presented it, this would mean "*that an actually universal and radical epoché could not be carried out at all, that is, for the purposes of a science rigorously bound to it"* (Hua 6, 184; Husserl 1970, 180). This is precisely the conclusion one arrives at when following Merleau-Ponty. Already in the preface to *Phenomenology of perception*, he speaks of the impossibility of performing a complete reduction (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, lxxvii) due to the fact that we are essentially intertwined with the world, therefore not susceptible of being thought of as a pure subject disconnected from it. The *epoché* could not give us as a result the "supernatural" consciousness that Husserl seems to find because consciousness finds itself always already in nature. This is an intuitively appealing conclusion, but one that might be considered challenging for the transcendental principle. Due to the close relationship between transcendental principle, first-personal perspective and evidence, in the context of Husserlian phenomenology it would be a priori problematic to maintain transcendental evidence while at the same time stepping beyond the first person. The effort to overcome the ego-centred character of Husserl's phenomenology characterizes not only Merleau-Ponty's work but post-Husserlian French phenomenology in general. Broadly speaking, there originates a turn from epistemology towards metaphysics, in the sense that the appearing of phenomena begins to be considered independently from the constituting subject, as self-constituting being (Tengelyi 2014, 50). In the Husserlian context, on the contrary, even if my first-personal reflection reveals a necessary intertwinement with the world and language, this necessity is of the same kind as that of self-objectification, meaning that inasmuch as an absolute non-worldly consciousness is conceivable, we wouldn't be able to think of the world or language as co-originary with it. Consciousness is necessarily objectified in order to be given to itself, but conceptually speaking it can still be told apart from its objectification. The difficulty amounts to a methodological problem: if we are able to posit a being that is previous to the subject–i.e. nature or the world in itself—,we would be able to enquire once again about the subject positing it, and would fall back on transcendental subjectivity. In order to legitimately transition from the subject that

inquires to the being he reaches as originary without jumping over the methodological issue—that is, while still playing by Husserlian rules—we need a guiding clue that leads from one to the other, and that stands ultimately on the grounds of first personal experience. As Fink already noted, death is a possible candidate to achieve this task. In the following sections I will examine this possibility further.

Chapter 3: Limit-cases in Husserl's work

In this chapter, I present an exegetic view of Husserl's treatment of limits in general, and death in particular, following Husserl's different philosophical stages (static, genetic, generative) and his usage of different methodological tools (description, reduction, reconstruction). The paradoxical character of death is further clarified in terms of the constitution of time from an egological perspective, and immortality gains a new dimension through intersubjectivity. I will address the different problems that arise with each approach, and show that throughout them all and until the end of Husserl's philosophical career, death continued to be a problematic issue, and Husserl's desire for resolution shows him pushing towards a stronger and more questionable type of idealism. Indeed, what is common to these different attempts to find a definitive answer to the problem of death is that they remain, in the end, subjected to the first-personal perspective in a somewhat crippling way. This is true even in the case of those texts that take a generative (intersubjective and historical) approach. Although being respectful of Husserl's methodological principles —first-personal evidence and intuitive givenness— is a requirement I have set for myself in this research, the question of limits faces us with a choice when it comes to interpreting and balancing those principles. This allows different paths to open up in front of us. This chapter aims to identify Husserl's own path(s) and their limitations, in order to clear the way to our own possible solution.

3.1 Introduction

As long as phenomenological inquiry is rooted in first-personal evidence, limit-cases (*Limesfälle*) or limit problems (*Grenzprobleme*) as Husserl calls them remain enigmatic and problematic. They are, in fact, not referred to as *phenomena* since they are not given to intuition and thus they are not proper objects for reflection; not, at least, in their true meaning as moments of passage to or from consciousness. So the question arises of how, if not through intuition, we can ascribe a meaning to them. "*Can 'thinking' bear the cost of this constitution*?" [kann das „Denken" für diese Konstitution aufkommen?] (Hua 42, 427). Birth and death

will gain their sense through other paths, namely through an indirect constitution that requires abandoning a purely solipsistic realm by considering the experience of others as a type of evidence. Yet even when we step beyond the personal Ego as a source of evidence, Husserl strives to maintain it as a point of departure, to which we can still, through a longer route, go back to. This is what the reconstructive method, that works through intentional modifications of non-present experiences, relies on to obtain a valid phenomenological account of limits. Whether he achieves this or not is a point of contention between Husserl scholars and the phenomenologists that followed; and a key to understanding if his general project holds.

In a broad sense, limit-cases refer to everything that cannot be given as content of a present experience but rather as a modification of one; this means that not only birth and death as the limits of our own existence fall under this category, but also sleep, the unconscious, the other (and especially 'abnormal' cases like mentally ill people and infants). Additionally, the animal and time can be treated in the same way, since in all these cases we are working at the limits of sense-constitution. However, birth and death are liminal in a double sense, because they also represent the limits of our own ego-centred existence, and for this reason they concern us in a special manner: "*once knowledge of death has been acquired, it enters into the horizon of all experience*" (Schutz & Luckmann 1983, 127). Alongside these, sleep is usually treated by Husserl as an analogical case to make sense of them, although this doesn't make it less enigmatic.

The paradoxical conception of death that we presented previously marks the spirit of Husserlian reflection on limits, and Husserl will often start by presenting them as events in the constituted world, and posing the question of their transcendental meaning and relevance. Husserl scholars (Geniusas 2010, Fraccaroli 2013, Steinbock 2017) have generally identified two different approaches to the question of birth and death in Husserl's work: the first, "genetic/egological" approach analyzes limits "from within" the egological perspective, focusing on temporality and the contradictory experience of subjective and objective time. There, birth and death are seen as ideal limits that we make sense of through analogy with other experiences such as sleep, sickness and

aging. The second, "generative/intersubjective" approach focuses on limits from the perspective of the intersubjective community. This perspective broadens the scope of analyses beyond the egological realm and allows for limits to become proper objects of transcendental inquiry. In this context, birth and death are seen as necessary features of worldly experience and the unconceivability of our own finitude from an internal perspective is contrasted with their newfound transcendental necessity. However, generativity does not undermine the results given by the first approach about the immortality of the subject, but in fact supports them through a new route, since Husserl will speak of the immortality of the constituting community and the sedimentation of individual accomplishments in the unity of tradition.

I will begin this chapter by briefly describing Husserl's methodological development in general, the different stages in his work as well as the methodological tools that correspond to each of them. The classification I propose here does not intend to be exhaustive or final, but simply a guiding scheme that attempts to show the methodological advances made by Husserl regarding his first, canonical formulation of the phenomenological method, the basic principles of which, nevertheless, he always stays faithful to. The deepening and broadening of Husserl's method is what allows for questions regarding limits to be posed in the first place, and for their reflection to become richer and richer; while at the same time, the need to address these and other issues is what motivates Husserl to expand his methodological horizons. I will then present Husserl's account of limits from a genetic and a generative perspective, as they lead to certain *aporiai* that cannot be settled in their own context. In the genetic-egological perspective, death exhibits the paradoxical character that I presented in the previous chapter, insofar as it is transcendentally "impossible" yet undeniable. [23]

[23] The different approaches to death in Husserl's work that I assess in this chapter can all be framed in the context of his genetic phenomenology. Another alternative account, however, can be found in the discussion around Monadology in chapter 5, where I consider the possibility that the eternal character of the flow of experience is given as a *Kantian idea.* In discussion of subjectivity as process in chapter 9, I briefly discuss the possibility of thinking of a subject independently of the world. In both cases I conclude that this may offer an account of immortality, but not of death. Both of these sections analyze the issue from the point of view of eidetic phenomenology. I do not go into this as a separate heading, however, because it does not constitute a separate approach to the question of death but could rather be thought of as

3.2 Methodological stages in Husserl's work

There is a well-established (Biemel 1958) division of Husserl's work into static and genetic phenomenology that he himself points to as he makes his turn towards genetic questions (Following Walton 2015, 47 we can trace it to Hua 1, 110 ff.; Hua 11, 336-345; Hua 14, 40 ff.; Hua 15, 613-618; Hua 17, 315 ff.). While static phenomenology characterizes his first works, genetic phenomenology is developed around the year 1917 as a new type of perspective that goes beyond the static analyses and inquiries about the genesis both of objects and of the constituting subjectivity[24]. As far as objects go, Husserl finds that any present perception is partly shaped after previous ones and that past intentional acts contribute to our general way of experiencing the world by configuring a horizon of anticipation involving a system of remissions through passive associations. This means that a static account of perception is simply not enough to explain the different "layers" (Hua 13, appendix XLV) that are involved in the perception of something, and thus it is necessary to enrich those analyses by taking time into consideration. On the other hand, regarding the genesis of subjectivity, the possibility for these past experiences to be brought back is given because they remain a part of the I, they constitute a sedimented ground of habitualities that give each I their own personal style. Contrary to a static account, which considers a pure ego facing an objective pole in a present moment, genetic phenomenology thinks of the ego as affected by the sum of its past acts:

> *But it is to be noted* that this centring Ego is not an empty pole of identity*, any more than any* object *is such. Rather, according to a law of "transcendental generation", with every act emanating from him and having a new objective sense, he* acquires a new

underlying many of Husserl's insights as they are presented in the context of this dissertation. Indeed, a possible way of framing the problem of death would be to consider it as constituting a frontier between the eidetic and the existential "sides" of subjectivity, which I attempt to reconcile.

[24] Although the standard classification points to the Bernau manuscripts on time as the first set of texts where Husserl applies a genetic methodology, in the forthcoming Husserliana volume on *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins* which dates backs to 1908 there seems to be already a genetic enquiry at play. I thank Zachary Hugo for pointing this out to me.

abiding property. (Hua 1, 100; Husserl 1960, 66).

Husserl defines genetic phenomenology as a "*phenomenology of the monadic individuality*" (Hua 14, 34), taking up the Leibnizian legacy and characterizing the monad as a transcendental subjectivity with a particular sedimented history, that is to say, as a substrate of habitualities and predispositions that mark a unique style of performing acts.

These habitualities configure a particular horizon for experience that differs in each case and is permanently under modification, having an objective correlate in the empirical types that organize the experience of transcendent objects. For both sides of the correlation, genetic analyses take time into consideration and focus on the becoming of the subject and the world. In this sense, it is not casual that it is in the Bernau manuscripts on time that this perspective is first developed extensively. Husserl comes to realize that his previous reflections on the subject of time retain too much of a formal character and fail to account for the *content* of what lasts in time, that is, of anything given to consciousness in a given time all the way to the perception of the originary impression and the living present. When confronted with the question of the origin of these contents, Husserl concludes that through this system of associations and remissions consciousness constitutes itself, making the topic of self-constitution into the main focus of genetic phenomenology.

Regarding the problem of limits, one of the main consequences of the implementation of genetic analyses is that thanks to its ability to spread over time it allows one to take into consideration certain events where consciousness seems to be interrupted such as sleep, fainting, certain bodily inhibitions, etc., that static analyses couldn't take into account. These phenomena will serve Husserl to speak in an analogic way of birth and death, mostly paired up with sleep.

The most decisive contribution, however, of genetic phenomenology to the study of limit-cases, is the transformation of the notion of consciousness through the inclusion of a sphere of passivity. While static phenomenology thinks of consciousness as pure activity, genetic phenomenology unveils a different dimension underlying conscious activity and making it possible to tie different experiences together through a common aspect in a spontaneous, pre-intentional

way. This idea of a passive ground of subjectivity will later reach new depths in what Husserl calls an "unconscious" (*Unbewusstsein*), characterized as that which remains during sleep, before birth and after death, a minimal form of consciousness that serves as guarantee for the possibility of keeping these phenomena within the realm of subjective constitution.

After static and genetic phenomenology, generativism is sometimes used to characterise the third stage in Husserl's work. It is developed in the 30s and it deals with intersubjective, historical, social and normative phenomena that involve collective sense-institution and transmission which cannot be reduced to individual constitution. Some authors like Anthony Steinbock consider that generativity is an autonomous sphere of reflection that surpasses both static and genetic analyses, and that it is the only way to fully account for limits (Steinbock 2001 in his introductory study to Husserl 2001, xxxiv). However, generative analysis remains tied to the first person as a starting point, and it is developed following the concerns that lie behind the genetic turn. This gives us more reason to think of it as a radicalization, but not an abandonment, of genetic phenomenology (Walton 2002; Bower 2014).

On top of this first classification which focuses on the types of phenomena under examination, it is possible to apply a different kind of classification, one that focuses on the specific methodological tools that Husserl uses throughout the different stages of his thought. In this second classification belong the constructive or reconstructive method, which is of great importance for the topic of limits. Constructive phenomenology is defined against the previous methodology as the way to address anything that is not given to intuition. In this sense, reconstruction can be distinguished in the first place from phenomenological description, tied to static analysis, and from a regressive analysis that goes from a lived experience to its conditions of possibility in subjectivity (active and passive). While the former tries to account for a present lived experience in a direct manner; the latter starts with the constituted objects and takes them as leading clues to move to the constituting realm through the performance of the *epoché*. According to the scheme Eugen Fink presents in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation,* transcendental phenomenology is composed of i) a transcendental theory of elements, divided into

regressive phenomenology (transcendental analytic and aesthetic) and constructive phenomenology (transcendental dialectic); and ii) a transcendental theory of method. Fink stresses the deconstructive character of regressive phenomenology (*Abbau-Analyse*) that goes from the constituted object to constituting subjectivity, as opposed to constructive phenomenology (*Aufbau-Analyse*) that doesn't have a constituted object. This classification, inspired by the organization of the Kantian system in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, would assign to constructive phenomenology the role that the transcendental dialectic plays for Kant, dealing with what is not given. Remarkably, Fink speaks of birth and death as exemplary cases for constructive phenomenology to be put to work on. Reconstruction would allow to, so to speak, pick up where regressive analysis leaves off, i.e. the examination of the sphere of primordiality and the unfolding of primal temporalization. In Husserl's work, developments on limit-cases would be the only example of what a constructive methodology would look like.

Now, even in the cases where we have to do without constituted phenomena as leading clues to go back to the way they are constituted, reconstructive analysis is not, according to Husserl, a matter of mere speculation. Reconstruction is often described by Husserl as a kind of analogic process where we take the experience from others as a type of leading clue, and apply it to the obscure regions of ourselves such as our childhood. In this sense, reconstruction relies heavily on generativity and is intimately tied to it:

> *So, after all, isn't this whole distinction between direct and indirect path inappropriate, and dictated by the whole state of affairs as the only direct way to unveil world constitution in the primordial ego the following way?*
> *1) The disclosure of the constitutive structures that belong to the "human" ego until early childhood, as far as it can be known; while*
> *2) starting from there the path goes through other humans and the generative connections experienced from the outside*. (Hua 39, 482)[25]

[25] Also ist doch diese ganze Unterscheidung zwischen direktem und indirektem Weg nicht schließlich unangemessen, und durch die ganze Sachlage vorgeschrieben als einzig direkter Weg zur Enthüllung der Weltkonstitution im primordialen Ego ⟨der folgende Weg⟩?
1) Der der Enthüllung der konstitutiven Strukturen, die zum „menschlichen" Ego bis zur frühen Kindheit, soweit sie erkennbar ist, ⟨gehören⟩; während

Because we are necessarily and originally immersed in an intersubjective community, we can trust others' experience to provide the answer for the questions lying beyond our individual intentionality. But even when Husserl is claiming here that the division between the two paths is "inappropriate" (*unangemessen*), he still regards this reconstruction as relying on experience "from the outside" (*von Außen*), thus opposing it to direct first-personal reflection. In the case of limits, both these paths are explored, although in a simultaneous and sometimes competing manner. Unlike in the case of my childhood, where I wouldn't doubt the testimony of others about the existence of my own early years, or my own experience of others developing from babies to children in the world; in the case of limits, experiencing the birth or death of other people still does not provide an insight into the transition from consciousness to unconsciousness, since something like this could only be experienced in the first person (that is, if it wasn't in principle impossible to live through). We will now explore Husserl's dealing with birth and death from a genetic and a generative perspective in order to see how these different approaches are put into play.

3.3 Genetic approach to limits

In appendix VIII of volume 11 of *Husserliana* on passive synthesis (1922) we can find one of the first formulations of the strongest argument in favour of the immortality of the transcendental subject, namely the one that rests on the study of temporality. Husserl develops there an analysis of remembering (*Wiedererinnerung*) whose end is to demonstrate that memory is a valid source of certainty and as such represents a possible access to past transcendental life. The importance of this demonstration consists in the possibility of stepping out of the momentary cogito, of the "*absolutely sterile 'I am'*" (Hua 11, 366; Husserl 2001a, 452) in order to add another temporal dimension to immanent perception, that will imply analogically its extension towards the future. Through the idea of the double

2) von da der Weg über andere Menschen geht und die von außen her erfahrenen generativen Zusammenhänge

reduction that takes place in remembering, Husserl asserts that even when we could have doubts about the content of our past experiences, we cannot doubt that they belong to us, that is, to our past ego. Now, just like in a present perception, every memory has a protentional tendency to continue the sequence of memories as they happened originally. This has to do with the temporal dynamic of consciousness according to which every present moment arises from a previous anticipation that turns into a present impression giving place to a new anticipation, etc. Having this dynamic in mind, Husserl concludes that

> (…) *the structure of the progressing time-consciousness and the structure of the constitution of new presents is certainly a fixed necessity. This implies that the process of living on, and the ego that lives on, are immortal* –notabene*, the pure transcendental ego, and not the empirical world-ego that can very well die*. (Hua 11, 378; Husserl 2001a, 467)

The same thing happens regarding the past with the retentional forms that precede every present moment, having as a result an eternal ego in both ways. In this sense, Husserl argues that even if it was possible to imagine an undifferentiated void prior to birth or posterior to death, the very idea of something prior or posterior presupposes already applying these temporal categories, and the thing we imagine is not nothing but rather something obscure that takes place in time. To put it otherwise, any projection of this nothingness-stage implies that I would be there as a spectator to testify to it, which results in the impossibility of imagining my own death (De Warren 2009, 197). Of course, the necessity of this dynamics doesn't entail that the ego has or is able to retrieve an eternity of memories; rather, Husserl infers that beyond the limit of what can be remembered, the transcendental ego has "*a mute and empty life*" (Hua 11, 380; Husserl 2001a, 469) similar to a deep slumber in which there is no subjective activity.

A similar case is made in appendix XX of Husserliana 14, also from 1922, where Husserl stresses the impossibility of stepping out of the temporal dynamic by showing that there can be deception of a particular anticipation but it is always

within the boundaries of temporality, therefore it only affects the content and not the form of time. There can be change but every change needs the perpetuity of the flow to exist. In the same way, Husserl will say that I can conceive myself as being different in some way, but I cannot conceive of myself as not being at all.

Finally, the argument is repeated in manuscript nº 21 of the C-group, of the year 1930. There are a number of writings that address birth and death amongst the C-manuscripts, mostly from a genetic perspective. Written between 1929 and 1934, these texts deal with matters related to the flow of consciousness, the constitution of the world and the search for the absolute; and they focus on the notion of living present as the last level of temporalization and its relation to the Ego. In this particular one Husserl states that it is conceivable to think of every possible change in experience and even of a radical transformation of the form of world-experience, but it is not possible to think of my ending as a transcendental ego, since the form of the temporal flow admits of change only within the flow (Hua/Mat 8, 97). Along with the thematization of the living present, Husserl reflects on the notion of primal Ego (*Ur-Ich*) as the subjective pole of this stage of time. This notion, that has come up already in the context of the paradox of subjectivity, is key to understanding the limitlessness of consciousness. As a description of the origin of temporalization, the living present, and the primal Ego operating in it, are not themselves in time, but in a way are "*supratemporal*". At this elemental stage, the constituting and the constituted coincide: the primal Ego turns to primordial *hyle* and thus temporalizes itself by transforming an impression into a retention. Before this, there was no Ego; but once there is, we have to say it was there all along, because without it there would have been no subject to be affected by the impression, and thus no time. Since we can only grasp it in a retrospective way, the ego in its original functioning remains *anonymous*. If we could experience the primal Ego as we do any object, it would mean that there is another, more originary form of the time-flow, in which this Ego is given as an objective pole, which would lead to an infinite regress. I will go into more detail about this in the next section, but it is understandable that in this context the functioning Ego should be, in a way, eternal, since it appears on scene already with a past-horizon and it can only be grasped in a retrospective mode, thus hindering the possibility of setting a starting

point or experiencing an ending point. At this point, it should be noted that several notions relating to time might risk getting conflated in our account. The idea that the flow cannot reach its beginning or end point is for Husserl an indication of an aprioristic feature of temporalization rather than of the de facto limitlessness of time. If the latter was the case, we would be talking about the immortality of something like a soul, that is to say, of an infinite endurance of our psyche *in* eternal time. This can't be the case here since such talk of immortality already presupposes the existence of an objective time where this endurance would take place. Since the subject that is at stake here is precisely the one who constitutes time–since she is, so to speak, at the edge of time–her immortality is not of this kind, but rather is closer to a kind of a-temporality or supratemporality, which would be the reason of her "eternal" character.

However, we do represent death to ourselves in some way, and according to Husserl this is not only because I experience other people dying. It actually happens prior to this. Although he refers to the death of another as "*the first constituted death*" (Hua 42, 3), if we abstract from others and remain in the sphere of ownness we could still make sense of death as an ideal limit. In manuscript nº 43, which he refers to as the best account of limits (Hua/Mat 8, 159) he sets out to reflect on birth and death as they are seen "from within", that is, as they are constituted by the individual subject without considering intersubjectivity, mainly through an analogy with sleep. In the case of birth, Husserl thinks we reach a necessary beginning of conscious life by going back to past experiences and noticing the increasing impoverishment of the Ego which points to a limit in which we must have had a "first awakening". In the case of death, we represent it by taking a clue from sleep, on the one hand, and from experiences of sickness and aging, on the other. We can imagine that the loss of control over our bodies that we go through occasionally would turn, in death, into a complete absence; and that the loss of connection to the world during deep sleep that we retrospectively find when we wake up, would never cease. The idea is that, even if we didn't know about birth and death as worldly events, just by the mere fact that we regularly fall asleep and wake up we tend to imagine a first awakening and a last sleep as possibilities for ourselves.

Is this, however, enough to account for our understanding of limits? The insights presented here are the product of the performance of a primordial reduction, which differs from the phenomenological reduction in that it does not just highlight the way in which experience unfolds, but involves the imaginative exercise of leaving aside everything that is intersubjective, including things like language: "*we disregard all constitutional effects of intentionality relating immediately or mediately to other subjectivity and delimit first of all the total nexus of that actual and potential intentionality in which the ego constitutes within himself a peculiar ownness*" (Hua 1, 124; Husserl 1960, 93). One can wonder if the results gained by the performance of this reduction are valid; or if it's at all possible, since it seems an experience without any involvement of another is simply not something we could grasp. What Husserl claims here is that we could understand sleep even in isolation; this is theoretically possible insofar as, even if we cannot experience anything during deep sleep, we wake up with the feeling of having spent time sleeping while we corroborate that the world remained the same way. However, two issues can be raised here. One is the objection made to the primordial reduction in general: ultimately, we cannot know what "sleep" would be in a world without language, or what experience would be in general for that matter. As we saw in the previous chapter, Husserl recognized a fundamental intertwinement of the human, the world and language. Although this did not mean for him that consciousness was dependent on these, the notion of a worldless consciousness clashes with these types of considerations. This notion is intimately related with the idea of primordiality Husserl has in mind: if reaching a primordial solipsistic dimension of the subject is possible, it is because constituting consciousness does not need to be in the world in an essential sense. As will become clearer in the following sections of this dissertation, the fact that intentional experience requires an egological and a non-egological dimension for there to be experience at all does not automatically mean that subjectivity is in any way bound to the world, although it can become a clue leading us in that direction.

The second objection is that, even if we accept the validity of this reduction, it only proves a certain necessity when thinking about birth but leaves death as a possibility: I *might* fall asleep and not wake up again, but there is nothing in the

primordial sphere indicating the fatality of death. This, of course, contributes to creating for Husserl the paradox between the certainty of death and the experience of a potential limitlessness. Now, acknowledging the inevitable presence of others in the most fundamental core of experience should at least serve to soften the claim that such an experience of limitlessness exists and can be discerned. This is important because the purity of the first person is tied to the possibility of isolating this primordial sphere where something can have a different and even opposed meaning to the one it has in the lifeworld.

The radicalization of the genetic question that leads to the generative approach will, among other things, stress the importance of senses that are passed on through generative ties, and help us respond to the two issues raised before. By going beyond the egological sphere, it will provide a way of understanding death as a transcendental element of experience, although this will not modify the first perspective but rather complement it from a different angle.

3.4 The Generative approach

Death is not an occurrence in the "I am" of the transcendental Ego, but an event in the human world" [Tod ist kein seiendes Vorkommnis im „Ich bin" des transzendentalen Ego, sondern ein Ereignis in der Welt des Menschen] (Hua 42, 78). Husserl is still presenting matters in this way in 1934, although he is at the same time making his way to the recognition of limits as transcendentally relevant, as he begins to adopt a generative perspective. Because "*a world and humans without birth and death are unthinkable*" [eine Welt und Menschen ohne Geburt und Tod undenkbar sind.] it seems that they cannot be mere factual occurrences but rather essential parts (*Wesensstück*) of the constituted world (Hua 15, 172). From the perspective of generativity, it is possible to step beyond the egological and focus instead on the intermonadic community of which every man is a part of– so much so that everyone is born with certain inherited traits and dispositions. In this approach, the birth of every new man is not an absolute beginning but an awakening to the community, and death a separation or an elimination from that community that doesn't cease to exist when a member dies (Hua/Mat 8, 442). This understanding of my own death as a constituted phenomenon that doesn't entail

the ending of the world comes from the empirical experience of the death of others, and becomes transcendentally relevant by considering these others as transcendental subjects like myself, which means they will continue being constituting subjects even if my own experience comes to an end. In the brief appendix VIII to Husserliana 15 from the year 1930 Husserl stresses the importance of these limit-phenomena for the constitution of the world as we experience it:

> *Now, birth and death enter the scene in a new way in this stage of experience: they are formative of the meaning of men and the world. The certainty of my own being regarding the future, as a man living in the world amongst other men, and that of the being of each one admits an insurmountable limit, and the same thing happens, correlatively, with the certainty of memories of the past human and of men living in the world.* (Hua 15, 171)[26]

It is the notion of reconstruction through empathy that works as the condition of possibility of the adoption of this perspective:

> *Building the operation of empathy as the experience of others and of myself amongst others, the effective and possible foreign experience is presented immediately as a way of presentification that possesses a validity of being, and as a modified experience in relation to my originary primordial experience* (Hua 15, 171)[27]

Now, the generative bond requires there exist a mutual implication of monads that allows each personal experience to contribute to the historical sedimentation, which is transmitted from older to newer generations. The endlessness of the generative process marks another form of immortality for the transcendental subject, that lives on in the community through what Husserl calls the "*unity of the*

[26] Nun tritt aber in die Erfahrung dieser Stufe neu ein als sinnbildend für Menschen und Welt der Tod und die Geburt. Die Zukunftsgewissheit vom eigenen Sein als weltlebender Mensch unter Menschen und vom Sein eines jeden Anderen bekommt eine unüberschreitbare Grenze und ebenso korrelativ die Erinnerungsgevvissheit vom menschlichen Vergangensein und Menschen in Weltleben.

[27] Im Aufbau der Leistung der Einfühlung als Erfahrung von Andern und meiner unter Andern weise ich zunächst fremde wirkliche und mögliche Erfahrung auf als eine Weise der Vergegenwärtigung, die Seinsgeltung hat, und eine abgewandelte gegenüber meiner primordial-originalen Erfahrung.

tradition" (Hua/Mat 8 438). It is in the context of ethical concerns that Husserl will usually raise generative issues, including birth and death seen from this perspective. There is a kind of comfort found in the face of death when we know we belong to something larger, and that acts as a moral incentive. Remarkably, Husserl gives the example of the loss of a child during war, which is what had happened to him with his son, and underlines the asymmetry of that loss from a personal perspective or from the perspective of the community: even if for the parents it is something unbearable, the nation requires these sacrifices (Hua 42, 400-401).

One of the latest texts in which Husserl deals with death is a manuscript from 1936 entitled "Die anthropologische Welt" (Hua 29), where he speaks of space and time as a "superficial" *a priori* of the world of experience. The structure of the *Lebenswelt* and its requirement that everything real has to be corporeal indicates that in order to have a world, men have to fulfil certain empirical conditions such as possessing a body and "reigning" over it. In this scenario, death – defined as the breakdown of our bodies and as the loss of the ability to experience- appears as an anomalous experience that challenges the normality of the perceived world, for how could we make sense of it if when we die we can no longer experience anything? Indeed, death is absurd or "has no meaning" for the transcendental subject. But if we go one step beyond the empirical laws of the *Lebenswelt* we will find that the true transcendental *a priori* structure of the world involves intersubjectivity, and with it, generativity. This means that the death of others has a transcendental value that can be transferred to my own experience, although it is not the experience of the end of transcendental subjectivity or life but that of my exit as personal ego from the community. At this point Husserl mentions Heidegger and what he considers to be his excessive stress on death, which "*in the authentic phenomenology founded on the transcendental reduction (…) consists in separating the transcendental ego from its self-objectification as a man*" (Hua 29, 327)[28]

[28] in der Phänomenologie aus den absoluten Evidenzquellen (in denen alle objektiven Evidenzen zu Gegenständen absoluter subjektiver Evidenz werden) ist der Tod das Ausscheiden des

From this perspective, death is revealed as a transformation of the body that suppresses the conditions of possibility for empathy and stops expressing a psychical being. But because it affects only the empirical subject and not the transcendental, Husserl reaches the same conclusions as before, only this time he talks about transcendental "life" as the ultimate ground in which the generative movement of birth and death is given:

> *Humans can't be immortal. Humans die necessarily. A human has no mundane pre-existence, in the spatio-temporal world she wasn't anything before, and she will not be later. But original transcendental life, the life that in the end creates the world and its ultimate I, can't come from nothing and return to nothing, it is "immortal", because dying has no meaning here, etc.* (Hua 29, 338)[29]

How exactly can we describe this transcendental life and how does it differ from transcendental subjectivity? If we consider life to be the pure givenness of conscious experience, of course it does not make sense to say it can be born or die; rather, humans are born and die and during their time on Earth they are part of a world-constituting community that will outlive them indefinitely. Each individual monad has a beginning and an ending (an awakening and a falling asleep), so they are finite "in the simultaneity", but the monadic whole always continues, so they are immortal "in the succession" (Hua 42, 23)[30]. One could ask, as Husserl himself does, what might happen if every human being in the world were to die:

> *But if all human beings were to die now, I would see that the transcendental subjectivity that makes a future world possible is extinguished. The future being is open. Certainly, but only if people live and not all die. But is the death of a human being death of his*

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transzendentalen Ego aus der Selbstobjektivation als Mensch.

[29] Der Mensch kann nicht unsterblich sein. Der Mensch stirbt notwendig. Der Mensch hat keine weltliche Präexistenz, in der zeit-räumlichen Welt War er früher nichts, und wird er nachher nichts sein. Aber das transzendentale urtümliche Leben, das letztlich weltschaffende Leben und dessen letztes Ich kann nicht aus dem Nichts werden und ins Nichts übergehen, es ist „unsterblich", weil das Sterben dafür keinen Sinn hat etc.

[30] Meine Stromzeitlichkeit hat Anfang und Ende und so jeder Monadenstrom. (…) Aber die Totalität der Monaden, kann sie anfangen und enden? (…) Könnte nicht in der Simultaneität Endlichkeit bestehen, aber in der Sukzessionszeit Unendlichkeit?

transcendental monad? What could one really develop from constitutive phenomenology? (Hua 42, 431)[31]

Here we find again the tension between an empirical account of consciousness and a transcendental one: if constituting subjectivity was nothing more than an empirical product, that is, the result of a contingent natural development, then in the unlikely event of a complete destruction of humanity, subjectivity and the world would vanish forever. If this is not the case, then transcendental "life" should somehow be independent of its own objectification. But does this mean life is something *beyond* the intersubjective community, in the sense that it could be conceived without it –as the absolute consciousness could exist independently of the world? And if so, what then does the necessary character that Husserl had ascribed to birth and death mean?

Husserl seems to be aiming during this period at broadening the scope of the transcendental sphere in order to accommodate intersubjective phenomena (perhaps due to the influence of *Lebensphilosohie* and *Existenzphilosohie* that were current during this time), but if we take as an indication the case of death we can see that, even when he claims death is part of the *a priori* structure of any world—and so in a way it could be considered transcendental—, in another more fundamental sense, it is not. Husserl retains still the notion of a primal Ego or life that is timeless, and so it becomes a task to understand what this timeless life could be. Before closing this chapter and moving to the next section, where I will reflect on this issue further, I would like to briefly address Anthony Steinbock's interpretation of generative phenomenology. Because in Steinbock's account, generativity is more fundamental than the self-temporalization of the subject. It is a path, as he claims, that would allow for an account of birth and death as transcendental phenomena. However, because it strays from first-personal evidence, it might not be an entirely valid path.

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[31] Aber wenn alle Menschen jetzt stürben, so sähe ich doch, dass die transzendentale Subjektivität ausgelöscht wäre, die eine künftige Welt sein lässt. Das künftige Sein ist offen. Gewiss, aber doch nur, wenn Menschen leben und sich nicht alle den Tod geben. Aber ist der Tod eines Menschen Tod seiner transzendentalen Monade? Was könnte man aus der konstitutiven Phänomenologie wirklich erschließen?

3.5 Anthony Steinbock's Generative phenomenology

At this stage, one may wonder why a solution of the type proposed by Steinbock shouldn't be endorsed. Let me take a moment to address this possibility. In his book *Home and Beyond. Generative phenomenology after Husserl (1995)*, Steinbock interprets generative phenomenology as an entirely different stage in Husserl's philosophy that becomes independent from genetic analysis. He presents a non-foundational reading of Husserlian phenomenology that takes the dyad homeworld/alienworld to be the true constitutive condition for the emergence of sense and subjectivity. It is non-foundational insofar as it rests in the co-foundational structure of this pair, and not in the constituting activity of an individual subject: "*A generative phenomenology does not begin with individual sense consciousness to reach a universal We, but takes as its departure the generative structure homeworld/alienworld* from within *the homeworld*." (Steinbock 1995, 269). Insofar as Steinbock is looking to take off the weight of constitution from the individual Ego, his attempts at developing a "heretic" phenomenology beyond Husserl are in line with some of the proposals I will develop in this dissertation. However, as it happens with many post-Husserlian accounts, especially those inspired by Merleau-Ponty and the French tradition[32], the abandonment of the Ego as the foundation or final ground for constitution comes at the cost of abandoning the first-personal attestability of the enquiry, which might not merely be going beyond Husserl but, in an important sense, going beyond phenomenology. In any case, it involves violating the rules of the game as set by Husserl and as I endorsed them earlier. In the case of Steinbock, without the abandonment of such principles, Generativity could not become an independent type of research, because it would

[32] In "Le sens du sensible. La question de la hylè dans la phénoménologie française", Bruce Bégout speaks of the importance given in French post-Husserlian phenomenological tradition to the question of *hyle* and the attempt to find "*an absolute foundation for the appearing that is not the Husserlian transcendental subject*" [la quête d'une fondement absolu de l'apparaître qui ne sois pas le sujet transcendantal husserlien] (Bégout 2004, 35). If something like a general character of French phenomenology can be discerned, I relate it to this general spirit that in the previous section I also referred to as a turn towards metaphysics.

need to remain tied to the evidence provided by the individual Ego that is conducting the research.

On the other hand, even if this methodological approach was correct (or appropriately phenomenological) we could even dispute, as Ronald Bruzina (2001) does, that the pair homeworld/alienworld be seen as truly fundamental, since this structure concerns "*coherent systems of in-the-world events, things, values, institutions, etc*." but does not deal with the constitution of the world-horizon as such. (Bruzina 2001, 372), and therefore "*The problem [of limits] is not superseded but only set aside by moving to a "generative" account of historical, communal, and intercommunal constructions of cultural "sense".*" (Bruzina 2001, 375). A truly fundamental enquiry about limits would entail elucidating the relationship between the world-constituting process that is constituting "subjectivity" and the human being as natural. I will come back to this throughout the rest of this thesis.

Conclusions to part 1

In this first part, I have presented some key concepts and ideas of Husserl's phenomenology, and explained why, in the phenomenological context, death poses a problem. Death is a personal experience that is indubitable in one sense, but impossible on the other. This ambivalence is related to the division of the subject into an empirical and a transcendental form of being or awareness. These two aspects form a concrete unity throughout the extent of a personal life, but, according to Husserl, they come apart in death. The reason behind this is, ultimately, the way in which Husserl seems to always place constituting subjectivity outside or beyond spatio-temporality. Whether he refers to it as absolute consciousness or transcendental life, as his thinking evolves he appears to always hold on to this characterization to describe the most fundamental part of consciousness. We can now go deeper into a reflection on subjectivity, in order to understand why this constituting subject is, for Husserl, immortal; as well as explore other notions and their potential relevance for a reconsideration of the paradox of subjectivity and death.

Part 2: Levels of life

When it comes to explaining what subjectivity is, it is hard to find an answer that both meets transcendental demands and does not entail two or more disconnected forms of subjectivity: when we point to the meaning-giving capacity of consciousness, we seem to be implicitly excluding the empirical dimension from the description of subjectivity, since at least for Husserl, transcendental and empirical appear to be incompatible; but at the same time, by disconnecting these two dimensions we risk dividing the subject in such a way that we can no longer understand it as a unity or whole. Radical genetic phenomenology puts some basic assumptions about transcendental subjectivity to the test, in particular regarding its giving priority and absoluteness to the world. Within it, limit-cases are a way to test the integrity of our beliefs regarding ontology, and death in particular is a sort of *shibboleth* that crystallises the dichotomies around which this dissertation revolves. Is there a way of reconciling the two aspects of the subject that death seems to tear apart?

I have ended the first part with an open question about the worldlessness and timelessness of the constituting subject in Husserl's account. His characterization of subjectivity is not, however, a straightforward matter; and according to the period and/or the question he was addressing, many different notions and figures of subjectivity appear in his writings. In this section, I will focus on four of these: the primal I, the Monad, the person and the body. While the Monad or the person can be considered proper names for subjectivity as a whole, the primal I or the body are, in principle, perceived as aspects or dimensions of the subject. Each part has a particular aim that is not merely descriptive, but rather has a role in the development of my thesis. If in our previous chapter I showed Husserl's own chosen path dealing with death and its limitations, this part will go deeper into what lies behind that choice, namely a concern with maintaining the purity of constituting subjectivity in the face of its constituted counterpart so as to avoid naturalism, which commits Husserl to the infelicitous outcome of leaning into a strong idealism. I will lay the foundation for the development of a different path, allowing for a better

understanding of death and mortality. What I hope to have proven at the end of this part is that, contrary to the overtly idealistic tendencies of the Husserlian view, subjectivity ought to be thought of in its concrete integrality, which includes both a subjective or first-personal aspect, and an objective or third-personal aspect; that is to say, we should think of the subject as a 'transcendental person'.

The first chapter of this part will deal with the primal I, which is the Ego-pole of the living-present. In Husserl's account, conscious experience is ultimately the unfolding of time, and so the final form of the subject is the final form of time, the most elemental level of time-constitution. This fundamental layer where subjectivity is rooted is anonymous and lies out of time. It is, ultimately, a non-being that is presupposed but not intuited, which seems to be problematic in the context of phenomenological methodology. The supratemporal character of the primal I is at the basis of Husserl's conception of the immortality of the subject. What I will contend, once I have laid down the basis for my own interpretation, is that it is misleading to try and isolate this primal sphere of temporalization without recognizing its co-dependency on the objective dimension of temporal existence. Arguably, this is an error that Husserl himself sometimes falls into.

Chapter 5 will deal with Husserl's monadology. Insofar as the Monad is portrayed as a concrete unity of subjective and objective poles of experience, it represents an attempt to overcome the dualistic perspective on consciousness that is at the root of the paradoxes of phenomenology. However, even in this context death becomes problematic and in dealing with it, we have a chance to inquire more deeply into Husserl's monadological theory, which proves to be highly speculative. My interpretative hypothesis is that this is not accidental but in fact one is pushed towards such metaphysical conclusions in order to preserve the absoluteness of the subjective or first-personal aspect of experience.

Chapter 6 enquires into the possibility of taking the person as another concrete type of subject-notion that encompasses both subjective and objectives sides of experience. The notion of personhood seems to lend itself to this type of interpretation, although Husserl himself does not explicitly endorse this reading. Since the person is, for Husserl, the one who dies, it is worth exploring the

hypothesis that it may also be the true concrete transcendental subject. This, I will argue, is a correct and fruitful interpretation as long as we take into consideration the proper way of understanding the person's embodiment.

Chapter 7 will deal with this last condition. Drawing on Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, I reflect on the body as a fundamentally two-fold phenomenon and the locus of the subject's own twofoldedness. I argue that subjectivity's embodiment in its objective dimension should be regarded as equally originary to the subjective dimension, which I associate with the anonymous primal I. Ultimately, this is the element that has been neglected in Husserl's account of limits, and what provides the unity of first and third-personal perspectives on the transcendental person. Considering subjectivity as an embodied transcendental person means that immortality can no longer be ascribed to it–at least, not without some important nuances. This part thus paves the way for a reconsideration of mortality in the following and last part.

Chapter 4: The primal I

This chapter deals with the notion of Ur-Ich as the most fundamental dimension of subjectivity, upon which all constitution ultimately rests. I attempt to show that due to its presupposed character, it cannot serve as foundation, and it cannot be given without its constituted counterpart (be it an object or the self-objectification of the Ego)

4.1 Introduction

We have seen that for Husserl it is only the empirical Ego that dies, while transcendental subjectivity does not. Yet this does not mean that consciousness ends altogether: "*In death I become nobody (Not-I) but not an absolute nothingness*" [Im Tod werde Ich zum Niemand (Nicht-Ich) aber nicht zu einem absolutes Nichts] (Hua 42, 21). Husserl makes a distinction between a personal life that ends and a transcendental life that continues. But a realm beyond personal life is not only posited before birth and after death, but also during the whole of the Ego's waking life, functioning in the background. Many important accomplishments take place in this background, such as affection and time-constitution, and they are passive accomplishments that serve as the condition of possibility for the emergence of active intentionality. The presence of a personal Ego, which is already a stable and somewhat active centre of identity, presupposes all these prior layers. Now, this topology suggests that transcendental life, precisely since it stretches beyond personal life, would be something like a pre-personal or impersonal life.

The idea of an impersonal consciousness is not uncommon amongst phenomenologists, especially in the French tradition: Levinas and Henry, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, all work with some notion of an ego-less domain where personal consciousness originates and develops. The problem with these usages of the pre- or im-personal is that it is not easy to provide proper justification for them. In effect, that this inert background is prior to the personal realm suggests that it is also prior to the emergence of the first-person, and thus to the related evidence on which our affirmations should stand. In the first chapter of this

dissertation, I characterized the first person as that which is given in a different manner than objectivities, and that can be ascribed to myself as the "I" of enunciation. This first-personal givenness of experience is for Husserl intimately tied to the apodicticity of phenomenological evidence, that should always be grounded in this way. When it comes to the passive, anonymous ground of conscious experience, we face a peculiar problem, namely that through first-personal reflection we seem to reach a non-personal consciousness. We do not, however, encounter this consciousness as a content of experience, and this is precisely what makes it anonymous. It is, in fact, our own consciousness regarded as an operating consciousness: once we turn it into the object of our reflection, it ceases to be operating since now the operating consciousness is the one conducting the act of reflection. This makes it impossible to identify the functioning consciousness as my own *while* it is functioning, and so it is described as anonymous. At the same time, because it is an anonymity that is given to *me*, and it is retrospectively identified with myself, Husserl holds that this pure passive field is nevertheless centred around an I, namely the primal I (*Ur-Ich*):

> *The flow of consciousness is unthinkable in its primal originality without the primal original I-pole. This is there even in anonymous living conscious experience. The act of reflection reveals the unreflective living experience and its I-pole in the mode of the just-now; but in coinciding both are the same pole.* (Hua 15, 350)[33]

4.2 The living present

Husserl's reflections on the primal I are closely linked with his developments on time, whose constitution is at the very bottom of the unfolding of conscious experience. This is clear from the fact that Husserl speaks of the primal I mainly in the Bernau manuscripts on time (Hua 33, from 1917/18) and in the C-manuscripts (Hua/Mat 8, from 1929-1934). In the elemental levels of experience, subjectivity

[33] Bewusstseinsstrom in seiner Uroriginalität <ist ›undenkbar ohne ur-originalen Ichpol. Er liegt auch im anonymen Bewusstseinserlebnís. Der Reflexionsakt enthüllt das im Modus Soeben unreflektierte Erlebnis und seinen Ichpol; aber beides in Deckung derselbe <Pol>.

and time get conflated in such a way that being able to thematize the primal I would be like witnessing the beginning of time. The anonymity that is reached through reflection can also be accounted for in terms of the impossibility of reaching the ever functioning source of time, that Husserl will address in the late manuscripts on time under the name of "living present" (*Lebendige Gegenwart*), a perpetually self-renewing present that gives rise to the flow of time by becoming modified in retention. This living or flowing present is one of the names Husserl uses to describe the ultimate structure of consciousness, which he had partially previously addressed under the notions of primary temporalization, originary impression, absolute consciousness or subjectivity, etc. Husserl defines this structure as the originary source from which time emerges or, more accurately, as the movement of temporalization itself from which consciousness is developed along with every temporal transcendence, the "*originary stream*" (*Urström*), the originary ground on which "*the last originary source of the spatial world and its form of spatio-temporality lie*." [Der Urstrom der lebendigen Gegenwart ist die Urzeitigung, in welcher der letzte Ursprung der raumzeitlichen Welt und ihrer Form der Raumzeitlichkeit liegt] (Hua/Mat 8, 4). One of the senses of 'primal I' is the Ego-centring of this living present.

The living present is at the same time flowing and static because, while being the origin of the flow of time, it cannot itself be *in* time. It is an eternal present and not a passing present moment. If it were the latter, it would become a duration or a temporal content, thus presupposing the flow that it gives rise to. Once it has been retained, the I is already *in* time and so it is no longer the first layer, the origin of time. The living present has to be thus in a way outside of time or, as Husserl puts it, it has to be "trans-temporal", the same as the primal I:

> *The I [as identical centre, the pole, to which the entire content of the stream of experience is related] is "trans"-temporal. It is the I for which time is constituted, that for which there is temporality, that is, that for which there is the individually singular objectivity in the intentionality of the sphere of experience; but the I itself is not temporal. In this sense it also is not "being," but the opposite to all being, not an object over against, but the primal carrier for all objectivity. The I should properly not be called I; it should not be named at all, because then it is already something objective. It is the*

nameless, beyond all not as standing over everything, nor is it hovering, nor being, but rather 'functioning," as conceiving, as valuing, etc. (Hua 33, 277-278)[34]

Husserl puts forward this idea as a way to solve a problem concerning a potential infinite regress in the constitution of time. In the lectures on internal time-consciousness, he distinguishes between the constitution of objects that have a duration in time and the acts through which they are constituted. He realizes these acts, that he calls 'lived experiences' (*Erlebnisse*) exhibit a temporal character of their own. Indeed, lived experiences have a beginning and an ending in time, they relate to one another in the flow of internal time-consciousness, they are organized temporally and brought together by the common feature of being *my* experiences. In order for them to be brought together and organized in such a way, they must be manifested or given to consciousness in some way. The absolute time-constituting flow is where these acts are themselves constituted. In order to avoid an infinite regress, the flow cannot be given in the same way as the experiencing acts, since this would entail there is another flow constituting this one, and so on. Therefore, the absolute flow must itself be at once constituting and constituted. How exactly this occurs can be difficult to explain, since "*The constitution and the constituted coincide, and yet naturally they cannot coincide in every respect*" (Hua 10, 83; Husserl 1991, 88).

We can find in the upsurge of time the same type of paradox that characterized the description of subjectivity and of death. In a manuscript from the C-group, Husserl uses this term to describe the living-present, as that which can only show itself as non-temporal once it is temporalized: "*Now, however, the paradox is that the temporalizing also temporalizes itself, that the living present itself, as present*

[34] (…) das Ich als identischer Pol für alle Erlebnisse und für alles in der Intentionalität der Erlebnisse selbst ontisch Berschlossene (z.B. die vermeinte Natur als vermeinte) der Pol ist für alle Zaitreihen und notwendig als dar „über"-zeitlich ist, das Ich, für das sich die Zeit konstituiert, für das Zeitlichkeit, individuell singuläre Gegenständlichkeit in der Intentionalität der Erlebnissphäre da ist, das aber nicht selbst zeitlich ist. In diesem Sinn ist es also nicht „Seiendes", sondern Gegenstück für alles Seiende, nicht ein Gegenstand, sondern Urstand für alle Gegenständlichkeit. Das Ich sollte eigentlich nicht das ich heßen, und überhaupt nich heißen, da es dann schon gegenständlich geworden ist. Es ist das Namenlose über allem Fassbaren, <das> über allem nicht Stehende, nicht Schwebende, nicht Seiende, sondern „Fungierende", als fassend, als wertend usw.

living-present, continuously passes into the living present that has just been, etc. This paradox must also be clarified" (Hua/Mat 8, 50).[35]

I will follow here John Brough's reconstruction of this matter on "Notes on the absolute time-constituting flow"[36], although I will later depart from it. In Brough's account, the basic constitution of internal time through lived experiences would already presuppose the absolute flow of time, and so this primal level must be posited. Thus, after the lectures on the internal time-consciousness, in a text written between 1907 and 1909 (Hua 10, 73) Husserl starts differentiating between three levels of time-constitution and most notably, identifying a basic level corresponding to the absolute time-constituting flow. These levels would then be: 1) objective time, where the objects of experience are constituted, 2) internal consciousness, the immanent flow of lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*), and 3) the absolute self-constituting flow where experiences are themselves constituted. The third and most fundamental level is not, however, in need of a new flow to constitute it, since it is not itself temporal. According to Brough, the absolute flow is what will become the "living present" in the late manuscripts on time, and he notably describes it as "*merely the potentiality to experience all things*" (Brough 2010, 44), a formulation that, as we will see in the next chapter, echoes the description of the transcendental subject after personal death (the sleeping monad).

The self-constitution of the flow is accomplished through what Husserl calls its double intentionality, and particularly through *Längsintentionalität* (generally translated as lengthwise or longitudinal intentionality) as opposed to *Querintentionalität* which is the "transverse" intentionality directed at the objects of experience. The acts through which objects are intended via transverse intentionality have the temporal structure *retention-primal impression-protention*. Lengthwise intentionality reaches beyond the actual phase–the primal impression—through retention and protention (although Husserl seems to focus mainly on retention) to the past and future phases of the flow, ensuring its continuity

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[35] Nun aber ist das Paradox, dass auch die Zeitigung sich zugleich selbst verzeitigt, dass lebendige Gegenwart selbst wieder, als gegenwärtige lebendige Gegenwart, in soeben gewesene lebendige Gegenwart kontinuierlich überleitet usw. Auch diese Paradoxie muss zur Klärung kommen. (I'd like to thank Jing Shang for drawing my attention to this passage.)

[36] In *On time, New contributions to the Husserlian Phenomenology of Time*, Lohmar & Yamaguchi (eds), Springer, 2010.

and the connection between phases within it. This is simply because retention and protention, as the consciousness of the just elapsed or the next phase of the flow, reaches every phase of the flow by the same act of reaching the immediate ones (since retaining the last phase means retaining the phase that the last phase was retaining, and so on).

Dan Zahavi (1999) objects to Brough's (and Sokolowski's[37]) views that the absolute time-flow is a separate level of time-constitution. Zahavi argues that awareness of the lived experiences is nothing more than the pre-reflective self-awareness of the acts that characterizes consciousness. He claims that the flaw in Brough's account, even though he might be interpreting Husserl in the right way (since his unfinished theory of time-constitution allows for multiple readings) is that he considers the experiencing acts as objects with temporal phases of their own, and for them to be constituted in this way—*in* time—, another level of the flow must be posited. However, Zahavi considers that only the objects of experience have temporal phases while the experiencing acts are experienced as *quasi*-temporal. Experiencing acts are only temporal objects when we reflect on them:

> *it is only in reflection, where we are confronted with a relation between two different acts, the reflecting and the reflected, that the latter can appear as transcendent vis-à-vis the first. On the prereflective level, where there is only one experience, it cannot appear as a temporal object, since it cannot appear as transcendent in relation to itself*. (Zahavi 1999, 77)

So, the absolute flow and the flow of immanent time would be the same flow seen as constituting or constituted. In this sense, Zahavi stresses the impossibility of a self-manifestation of the absolute flow. This is, indeed, true, but it does not necessarily conflict with the distinction between levels presented by Brough. In fact, Zahavi admits the difference between their readings could be simply a matter of emphasis (Zahavi 1999, 234). If we consider the absolute flow to be what Husserl refers to as the living present, then it is obviously not possible for it to

[37] In this text, Zahavi discusses mainly John Brough's "The emergence of an absolute consciousness in Husserl's Early writings on Time-consciousness" (1972), and Sokolowski's *Husserlian Meditations* (1974)

manifest itself as such, but so is the case for pre-reflective self-awareness. It is through reflection that the pre-reflective givenness can become a theme. Before that, it is "*unexperienceable, unsayable*" [unerfahrbar, unsagbar] (Hua/Mat 8, 269). However, it is still for Husserl an (primal) Ego. Brough's view on the matter might be closest to Husserl's own position insofar as it would seem he does intend to isolate this third absolute level of time (this would happen, for example, in death). The different emphasis Zahavi refers to could be, then, defined in terms of how we conceive of subjectivity in its coincidence with temporalization: whether as an unsayable timeless being, or as a concrete stream inseparable from its lived experiences. So, for Brough, some form of subjectivity is maintained even in death or unconsciousness. For Zahavi on the other hand, there can only be a subject when there are temporal experiences.

4.3 Primal I as a non-being

Going back to the question of the anonymity of the flow, we can now say that if the flow is anonymous, it is because, technically speaking, it is not *given*. In its functioning aspect, the flow (pre-reflective experience, constituting consciousness) is only lived through; and when it manifests itself, it loses its originary character and it becomes objectified or 'ontified', that is to say, it is presented as a thing or an entity. It is also at this moment that it reveals itself as mine. In this sense, "primal I" is here a way to name what retrospectively appears as having been mine but in its originarity was not given as such. As Rudolf Bernet (1982) points out, the flow has a way of givenness characterized by its retrospective character; what he translates as "post-factuality" (*Nachträglichkeit*). On these grounds, Bernet argues that the present is always unconscious[38]. In a similar line, Bernhard Waldenfels considers the pure present as "*a plain chimera*" (Waldenfels 2017, 422), and places this impossibility of the present to coincide with itself at the bottom of a reconfiguration of Husserlian phenomenology.

The retrospective structure of the flow can also be an argument in favour of

[38] This might turn out to be problematic when it comes to explaining how it is retained, since, according to Husserl, retention of an unconscious content is impossible (Hua 10, 119). Husserl's own views about the unconscious depicts it not as the opposite of consciousness, but as a limit within its spectrum.

defending the notion of a pre-egological stream of consciousness. This is, for example, the position that Sartre takes against Husserl in *the Transcendence of the Ego*, where he claims consciousness is pre-personal and the Ego a transcendent object as opaque as the Ego of another person. However, as Zahavi points out in response to this argument, the egoless structure of the stream means that temporalization is a completely passive process where the Ego is not actively involved, "but although the passive syntheses are not initiated by me, they still happen to me, not to somebody else or to nobody" (Zahavi 1999, 153). As regards the possibility of passive syntheses happening "to nobody," Zahavi points out that the danger of admitting a pre-individuated stream would be mainly related to the theory of intersubjectivity: if the primal stream is pre-individual, it would mean all subjects participate in the same stream, thus levelling-off their differences and not recognizing the radical transcendence of the other. Epistemologically, this would undermine the objective status of the intersubjectively constituted world. Ethically, it would entail the other is simply grasped as a copy of myself, and thus what counts for me should count for anyone, which could be problematic. On the other hand, it cannot be said that the stream is precisely characterized by being individuated, because individuation only comes along once I find myself in relation to others: for there to be an "I" there has to be a "you". But the constitution of others, as we have seen, already requires that there be a primal Ego, which is the ultimate source of constitution. Therefore, this primal Ego cannot be one amongst many.

Shigeru Taguchi (2019) argues against both the position that holds that the absolute stream is individual, and against the opposite that holds that it is plural, and points out that at the stage of primal temporalization, the difference between being one or many does not apply, precisely because others have not yet been constituted, and so it is a meaningless distinction. He also argues that is shouldn't be construed as a preindividuated stream, for the primal I expresses a primal perspective, a living point of view that is always mine, and so it is first-personal. If we consider this first-personal character to be given only retrospectively, however, this can lead into a circular argument. There is a logic of presuppositions functioning here, such that the primal I is found to be a pre-condition for my irreflective experience of things and my reflective experience of myself:

If we consider the transcendental I, or if I consider myself as to how I am presupposed *in all my prejudices, in all that is existent for me, as the proto-condition for the sense of being those things have, then I find myself as the flowing present*.[39] (Hua/Mat 8, 41) (emphasis is mine)

In another manuscript Husserl repeats this idea and even refers to the constituting anonymity as a non-being:

The universe of pre-given being (Seins) is the universe of what is given to me in the form of the final validation, i.e., of the abiding "relevance" of what is constituted being for me. What goes beyond that, in the manner of constituting anonymity, in latency, is a meon*; it is not a thesis, but rather a "presupposition" of being from out of a forgotten temporalization which is not yet the temporalization of* an *on. Thus it is something to be subsequently uncovered and recognized as necessary to the knowing function and as necessary for the very possibility of there being something existing (and thereby it is something to be made evident through a subsequent temporalization).* (Husserl, MS B III 3 (1931?), 30b, transcription p. 7)[40]

As Eugen Fink points out in the Sixth Cartesian Meditation

The first person that phenomenological reflection unveils is at the same time the source of phenomenological reflection and a product of it. Phenomenological experience does not cognize something which is already existent*, as what and how it is; it cognizes* the sort of thing which is 'in itself' not existent*"* (Fink 1995, 76).

The pre-being that works as the pre-given horizon that makes experience possible is not something already existent that the reduction unveils but it is in fact produced by the phenomenologizing subject. Fink refers to this as a "*secondary (or non proper) enworldment of phenomenologizing*" (Fink 1995, 116) different from primary enworldment in that it is not the process by which transcendental subjectivity objectifies itself into man, but the necessary objectification of the

[39] Betrachten wir dieses transzendentale Ego, oder betrachte ich mich, als wie ich allen meinen Vorurteilen, allem für mich Seienden, voranzuset- zen bin, als Urbedingung für ihren Seinssinn für mich, so finde ich mich als strömende Gegenwart

[40] Quoted by James Hart in *Who one is. Book 1. Meontology of the I: a transcendental phenomenology*, Springer, 2009, p. 269

results of the phenomenological inquiry.

The idea that, at bottom, constituting subjectivity is a *meon*, a non-being, might be problematic not only for methodological reasons –namely that it is not given to intuition but presupposed – but also because it is hard to see how such a non-being could perform constitutive functions, given that–and Husserl would agree with this in his later period–constitution requires a sort of being-in-the-world. This is a critique that Steven Crowell (2012) puts forward against Husserlian genetic phenomenology and the notion of primal I in particular. He proposes to take the person rather than the I to be the true constituting subject, and leave aside the genetic question about the origin of temporalization. I will address this discussion in chapter 6 and argue that genetic phenomenology cannot be simply forgotten. Thus, for now, I will follow Husserl deeper into the genetic question.

4.4 "Inside" the living present

How exactly, in Husserl's view, do we get from the non-being of primal temporalization to the flow of immanent time? In manuscript C 10, Husserl explores what would be the inner structure of the living present and the most basic levels of affection.

The living present is characterized by a purely passive non-intentional consciousness. The primal ego, as we have seen, is referred to as the ego-pole of the living present, but sometimes it is also plainly identified with it. This is because at this stage the Ego is not separated from its counterpart in primal experience. As far as every lived experience is double-sided, that is, it has an Ego side and a non-ego side, Husserl posits the existence of an hyletic pole in the living present, that in its most basic aspect is referred to as primal or proto-hyle (*Urhyle*), the core of material sense that sets temporalization in motion. At this point this core is indistinguishable on its own: "*The I is not something for itself and the not-I [das Ichfremde] is not something set apart from the I, and between the two there is no*

room for a movement of turning towards." (Hua/Mat 8, 350)[41]. The positing of a material core that will gradually become differentiated from the Ego pole is not an addition to the living present but merely the result of taking a closer look at what the primal mode of experience should look like. It is, once again, presupposed by the regressive analysis of the already formed experience but not given as such:

> *Of course, we could not know that [there is such a core] if it were not constituted, even though it was pre-existing, and thus in its own way could affect the ego, the same ego-poles, and become thematic -and so on in infinitum. That is, the self-constitution of transcendental subjectivity leads to the beautiful infinite regressions with which I already tried to cope in Bernau*. (Hua/Ma 8, 189)[42]

The genetic account of the primal sphere aims at ending this infinite regress, via a reconstruction of the beginning of temporalization. We find, at the "bottom" two primal sources (*Urquellen*) corresponding to the functioning Ego (*Ich als fungierendes*) and to the non-ego (*Nicht-Ich*) (Hua/Mat 8, 199). In order for them to become separated, the Ego must turn towards the *Urhyle*, which thereby becomes sensation-hyle (*Empfindungshyle*) affecting the I. This turning-towards of the Ego is motivated, in Husserl's account, by a primal instinct (*Urinstinkte*) described as an instinct of objectivation (Instinkt der Objektivierung) that is directed in a general manner to hyletic data. (Hua/Mat 8, 258). Through this turning of the Ego that can now be affected by *Hyle*, "*the hyletic proto-flowing, the proto-impressional*" becomes a "*new impressional*" and gets retained, putting time in motion. In the lessons on the phenomenology of internal time consciousness, Husserl characterizes the primal impression as the absolute beginning of the generation of modifications that is time, and he states:

> *One can only say that consciousness is nothing without an impression (...) it [impression] is the primally generated, the "new", that which comes into existence*

[41] Das Ich ist nicht etwas für sich und das Ichfremde ein vom Ich Getrenntes, und zwischen beiden ist kein Raum für ein Hinwenden.

[42] Nun könnten wir das natürlich nicht wissen, wenn es, obschon selbst vor- seiend, nicht konstituiert wäre und somit in seiner Weise ebenfalls das Ich, den selben Ichpol affizieren könnte und thematisch werden könnte – und so in infinitum. Also die Selbstkonstitution der transzendentalen Subjektivität führt auf die schönen unendlichen Regresse, mit denen ich schon in Bernau fertig zu werden versuchte.

foreign to consciousness, that which is received as opposed to that which is generated through the spontaneity proper to consciousness (Hua 10, 100; Husserl 1964, 131)

This might seem like a strikingly naturalistic account of the origin of time, experience and consciousness, but a closer look at Husserl's later analysis of affection reveals that it is the Ego's movement of turning-towards that the whole dynamic rests upon; and so even if this is an instinctual movement, this instinct is, in Husserl's view, not opposed to consciousness but actually a proto-form of it. In this sense, Osswald (2016) stresses the immanent character of affection and goes against interpretations made by Zahavi (2002) and Montavont (1999)—ultimately resting on Merleau-Ponty's—which take these passages as proof of an equi-primordiality of Ego and World. These interpretations could be summed up roughly in the following way: if at the most basic level of experience there is a fundamental union of (ur)Ego and (ur)Hyle, then this means that speaking of a worldless consciousness and making constitution fall exclusively on her side is a falsification of this fundamental implication of subjectivity and world. Osswald warns against identifying *Urhyle* and the world too quickly however; in fact, when we talk about the world we are always referring to a constituted world, that as such cannot be involved with subjectivity at the elemental level reserved for the ur-hyle. This does not mean, however, that constitution does not require the presence of a non-egoic element, that becomes the basis on which nature and the world, are constituted. As László Tengelyi states:

The association that Husserl interprets in the outcome of his intentionality theory as a passive synthesis makes it understandable how a slumbering sense sediment is awakened by new sensations, but it does not make it understandable how new sensations can arise at all. A meaning given by intentional consciousness cannot serve as an explanation here because the question relates to an event in which an intention arises in the first place (Tengelyi 2014b, 193)[43].

[43] Die Assoziation, die Husserl im Ausgang von seiner Intentionalitätstheorie als passive Synthesis deutet, macht zwar verständlich, wie ein schlummerndes Sinnsediment durch neu aufkommende Sinnregungen erweckt wird, aber sie macht keineswegs verständlich, wie überhaupt neue Sinnregungen aufkommen können. Eine Sinngebung durch das intentionale Bewusstsein kann hier deshalb nicht als Erklärung dienen, weil die Frage sich auf ein Ereignis bezieht, in dem überhaupt erst eine Intention entsteht.

So even if the world is constituted, *Urhyle*, at least the way Husserl presents it, appears to be a given. Could this be enough to rethink Husserl's more subjectivistic/idealistic streak?

In a complex and thorough article on this topic[44], Ronald Bruzina draws attention to what he finds to be a certain naturalism that is "not simply allowed but *needed*" (Bruzina 2010, 118) in Husserl's late phenomenology. It requires, however, a different understanding of what nature is. I will address this further in chapter 8, but this new understanding of nature would essentially involve: a) thinking of nature as already 'spiritualized' and therefore not opposed to spirit, and b) phenomenologically accounting for the 'impositional' character of nature, which is exhibited in the fact that this hyletic core does not enter temporality but is found always already there. Even if *Hyle* is not to be immediately identified with the world, according to Bruzina and against Osswald it is also important to consider that this hyletic core is the basis for the constitution of objective nature, which is the first layer of the objective world. Let's recall that this whole genetic explanation of primal temporalization is merely a way of accounting for what, in pregiven experience, we find already at play. Transcendental life is always "*already in the midst of world-constitution*" (Fink 1995, 58), and what a radical genesis attempts is to disclose this "absolute 'fact'" (*absolute "Tatsache*") (Hua 15, 403). "Absolute" because, even if what we find is factual, and so, as it would seem, *not* necessary, it is not simply the actualization of a possibility amongst others, but that which makes all possibilities possible. As Klaus Held holds in his study on the living present:

> *The last-functioning ego is the original fact; it does not have the character of the accidental and singular opposed to the absolute essentiality and generality of the Eidos, but as the absolute starting point of all action, as the apodictic goal of the phenomenological inquiry it must itself be called "absolute fact*. (Held 1966, 148)[45]

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[44] Bruzina, R. "Husserl's naturalism and genetic phenomenology" *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* X (2010): 91-125

[45] Das letztfungierende Ich ist Urfaktums schlechthin; es hat nicht den Charakter des Zufälligen und Singulären gegenüber der absoluten Wesensnotwendigkeit und Allgemeinheit des Eidos, sondern als absoluter Ausgangspunkt alles Fungierens, als apodiktisches Ziel der phänomenologischen Rückfrage muss es selbst "absolutes Faktum" genannt werden.

Husserl also speaks about the absolute fact of the world as being the fundamental ground for all experience:

> *Is it then "contingent" that there are humans and animals? This world is as it is. But it is countersensical to say accidental, because an accident includes a horizon of possibilities in which the accidental means one of the possibilities, precisely the one actually occurring. "Absolute Factum" —the word factum is used here with its sense inverted, precisely a "done fact' ["Tatsache"], here there is no doer [kein Täter]. It is precisely the absolute that also cannot be designated as "necessary,"' that lies as the ground for all possibilities, all relativities, everything conditioned and gives them their sense and being."* (Hua 15, 668)

Are these two absolute facts –the being of the world and the being of the subject—the same? Because at this elemental stage primal Ego and primal *Hyle* are not differentiated (not until the Ego turns toward *Hyle*), there are elements that would indicate so. However, identifying the primal Ego with the givenness of the world in general can be problematic when it comes to explaining individuation of the primal stream. I will come back to the issue of primal facticity in chapter 8, and once again to the relationship between the primal ego as absolute functioning subjectivity and the personal ego in chapter 9.

4.5 A note on primordialities

I have decided in this section to address the primal mode of the Ego in a general way, but it is possible to distinguish various different forms of primordiality. In fact, 'primal I' is not something defined once and for all but a somewhat empty way of referring to the I-centring in the primordial dimensions of experience. In the specialized scholarship, there has been some debate around what form of primordial Ego is, so to speak, more primordial. These classifications are not relevant for my general point on the primal I, which is why I have left them out until now. However, both scholarship-wise and for the sake of making my choice transparent, I will briefly address this debate before concluding this chapter.

According to the specialized literature, at least two senses of the primordial Ego can be distinguished: the proto-ego (Ur-ich) and the pre-ego (Vor-ich). Roughly speaking, the pre-ego is more developed in the Bernau manuscripts (1917-18) and the proto-ego in the C-manuscripts (1929-1934). While the pre-ego seems to be employed when Husserl addresses the genesis of the ego in the past, the proto-ego is a genetic figure in the present. In this sense, Lohmar (2012) draws attention to the fact that the pre-ego is often employed to talk about the first stages of the development of the empirical ego in childhood, and Roberto Walton (2015) distinguishes between two forms of primordiality (*Urtümlichkeit*) that the past pre-ego and the present proto-ego represent.

Regarding their difference, there is potential disagreement in the scholarship as to which one is most originary. Geniusas (2012) finds in the Vor-Ich the most fundamental form: it is "more basic" than the other figures of the Ego because it is the correlate of primal temporalization, meaning it is the one that 'starts' time. Having said that, if we stick to the interpretation of the living present as being outside of time and originating time, this is not enough to trace a fundamental difference between the two. Walton, on the other hand, states that, even when the pre-ego can be thought of as a more basic figure, methodologically the proto-ego is the primary one:

> *The historical-genetic origin is reconstructed starting from a cognitive origin. This is why the reconstructive process presupposes the proto-ego. Unlike the pre-ego that must be reconstructed, I am already the proto-ego as a condition of possibility of reconstruction, as an originary place of all sense donation and validity, as anonymous and non-thematic presupposition of all experience, emotion or volition, and as the last source of all horizons.*[46] (Walton 2015, 80)

Walton marks an interesting difference between the methods for reaching both these primordial spheres: *reconstruction* of the pre-ego and the *presupposition* of

[46] *El origen genético-histórico es reconstruido a partir de un origen cognoscitivo. Por eso el proceso de reconstrucción presupone al protoyo. A diferencia del preyo que debe ser reconstruido, soy ya el protoyo como condición de posibilidad de la reconstrucción, como lugar originario de toda asignación de sentido y validez, como presupuesto anónimo y no-temático de toda experiencia, emoción o volición, y como fuente última de todos los horizontes.*

the primal-ego, which I will talk more about in the next chapter. Neither of these primal figures are actually given, but they are in one way or another connected to what is and, in Husserl's view, required by it. They could not be given because neither of them is in time, but at the edge or the beginning of time. This is why the primal I does not begin or end, why it is "immortal"[47].

According to the classification made by Dieter Lohmar (2012) and generally followed by Saulius Geniusas (2012), It is also possible to identify a different usage of the primal-ego in the *Crisis*, a result of performing a reduction to the primordial sphere that leaves aside all intersubjective events. This primal-ego of the primordial sphere is the Ego of the living present. I think this is correct as long as we are thinking of the *concrete* living present and not the living present as it is presented in the C manuscripts. The concrete living present excludes past and future dimensions as they are given thematically but it is a present *in* time and thus it cannot exclude them completely. In the primordial sphere time is already in motion, and the difference with normal experience is that we focus on what is given in the present without recourse to intersubjectively constituted objectivity. But the concrete present is not the living present as it is thematized in the C manuscripts. Here, the primal-present cannot be given because it is trans-temporal. Once it becomes a concrete present it loses its originary character. Because Lohmar and Geniusas think of the living present as concrete, they take the Ego of the C-manuscripts to be *prior* to the living present. The Primal ego would then be the ego of primal temporalization, that does not coincide with the living present. Because I believe the main sense of the living present denotes the original source or welling-up of time, and this coincides with primal temporalization, I do not agree with this interpretation[48].

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[47] Once again, the meaning of immortality here can be closely linked with timelessness and not with an infinite duration in time, as would be the case with a more intuitive, perhaps religious notion of immortality.

[48] It is, however, as Lohmar himself puts it, a question of different focuses and not different entities (Lohmar 2012, 302) His functional interpretation of the Ego suggests that "*The precise meaning of each of these arch-egos can only be determined in the concrete context of research in respect of different and ever deeper levels of constitution* (…)" (Lohmar 2012, 302). If we consider that most of these writings are manuscripts and not systematic works, it is even easier to understand the diverse array of perspectives on the Ego.

As I have suggested in this section, I find that the primal Ego in its most fundamental aspect is, as Walton states, the proto-Ego; and this proto-Ego is the primal Ego of the living-present that coincides with primal temporalization. However, I would not describe this figure of primordiality as opposed or entirely different than, for example, the pre-ego; and in fact Husserl sometimes presents similar descriptions under both names. Therefore, I have chosen to leave aside these classifications, in order to focus solely and clearly on the problem that lies behind them.

What may come across through our review of different readings of the process of primal temporalization and the living-present within the scholarship, is that Husserl's treatment of the issue could have followed a different path. In this sense, we can consider Husserl's own view of the matter as an interpretative *choice*, namely, the choice to consider the primal I, the Ego that turns toward primal *Hyle* in the living-present, as the most fundamental and elemental dimension of constitution. This choice would arguably be motivated by the desire to preserve the transcendental principle and the integrity of the first person at all costs, which ultimately runs the risk of leading to an overly idealistic view. By contrast, the genetic investigation has reached an absolute *Faktum*, that involves not only the egological but the hyletic side of the experience, which means Husserl's interpretative choice is by no means a necessary one. Considering the unity of these two poles is nonetheless a difficult task. In the next chapter, I will turn to the notion of Monad as the concept through which Husserl might have been able to think of their complementarity.

Chapter 5: Monadology

This reflection on the living-present and the primal I has shown that, for Husserl, "*The I in its most original originality is not in time"* [Das Ich in seiner ursprünglichsten Ursprünglichkeit ist nicht in der Zeit] (Hua/Mat 8, 197). Paradoxically, however, in order to show itself as that which is not in time, it must become temporalized (Hua/Mat 8, 50). Genetic analysis leads us to the necessary entanglement of the temporalizing and the temporalized, which in their most basic dimension remain undifferentiated. In this chapter, I turn to the notion of Monad as a candidate for dealing with subjectivity in a manner that, in principle, accomodates both dimensions of the process. I will conclude that Husserl's Monadological theory, however, rests on a speculative basis that becomes apparent when considering death. After assessing this outcome, I abandon this notion as a suitable candidate for our task.

5.1 Introduction

The dualistic, Cartesian strand of Husserlian phenomenology that is often a target of criticism, starkly separates transcendental from empirical subjectivity, *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, mind and body. The primal I, insofar as it is the most basic and subtle form of Ego-pole to be found in Husserl, and is defined against *Hyle*, can be considered as belonging to the context of such dualistic view. From now on, I will work towards bringing these two poles together, working with the hypothesis that not only this would be a more accurate description of the givenness of conscious experience, but that in so doing it will be possible for us to provide a better account of death and limits from a phenomenological perspective.

Husserl uses the concept of Monad as a way of referring to the unity of the constituting subject and her constituted world, and so as a way to think about these two poles coming together in one unity. To put it correctly, Monad would *be* the constituting subjectivity, as including in herself all her objective accomplishments. That is, at least, in principle.

The first time Husserl speaks about birth and death, he does so in relation to Monads. He states in a text from 1910 (Hua 42, 154) that Monads are immortal and indestructible, and that this claim solves the problem that conceiving a nature prior to consciousness would bring about, namely, the admission of a being in-itself. The way in which monadology would solve this problem is by integrating nature inside monadic being, so that the realms of consciousness and physicality are not seen as competing but as part of the same whole. Insofar as this is so, thinking of subjectivity as a Monad means that we stop identifying it with just the noetic pole of experience. Since the notion of Monad aims at the correlation between noesis and noema as what makes subjectivity what it is and not just as one of its poles, it restores some integrity to the psychophysical being regarding its relationship to the transcendental subject. A potential result of this is that the paradox of subjectivity loses some of its sting: we are, naturally, subjects and objects at a time because "we" are not something different than the experiencing of the world—which is the world itself. The separations made on the inside of the Monad can be deemed functional, preliminary, or partial; transcendental and empirical subject are in fact *abstractions* from the concrete monadic whole (Hua 1, 102; Husserl 1960, 67-68).

The monadic whole, however, is arguably shaped under the characteristics of this noetic pole, and inside the Monad the hierarchies between noetic and noematic poles seem to be maintained, which might undercut the benefits that this perspective could bring. This becomes evident when Husserl discusses death in relation to monads, and states that when a monad ceases to be ego-centred, namely when death occurs, they go on being but *fall asleep*.

But what is a sleeping monad, anyway?

In this chapter, I give a general presentation of Husserl's monadological theory and present two possible readings of it in order to answer this question: a metaphysical, ontological reading, and a metaphorical, epistemological reading. In the metaphysical interpretation, monadology is taken in its literal sense and interpreted as a strong idealistic account of reality, tied to a theological view. Even though there are elements in favour of this interpretation in Husserl's writings, it is clearly at odds with the principles of phenomenology as I have endorsed them so

far, and so I pursue a more charitable reading. In the metaphorical reading, I take the immortality of the monads to be a manner of expressing the methodological primacy of the subject that enquires into transcendental life, that is, the phenomenological onlooker. Even if this interpretation does not commit to any ontological or speculative claims, it reproduces the separation within the subject and goes against considering it as a concrete whole, as was intended in the context of a monadological theory.

After pointing out the flaws in both these readings, I propose to follow Tengelyi (2014) in embracing the notion of a primal facticity as a point of departure that cannot receive further justification.

5.2 Monads and physical nature

The first mention of Leibniz' monadology appears in a text from 1908 (Hua 13, 5) where Husserl relates monads to atoms in the contemporary understanding of the world. It is not fully clear at first whether Husserl considers subjectivity to be one single monad or a group of monads guided by one, as a more classical interpretation of Leibniz would suggest; but he stresses that physical reality only acquires its being within the Monad. He writes in this text titled "Monadology":

> *Development of the world is development of consciousness, and everything physical is itself only a relation between consciousness whose essence is such that we have to put it in our thinking in the form of physical matter, forces, Atoms, etc* (Hua 13, 7)[49]

The monad can encompass all of reality because it would be the subject in its full concreteness, including "*the whole of actual and potential conscious life*" (Husserl 1960, 68; Hua I, 102). This means that subjectivity as monad includes both noesis and noema, as well as hyletic data. It includes therefore nature and the world not as real entities but as phenomena, the point being precisely to reject the ontological duplication resulting from positing something else behind the

[49] Entwicklung der Welt ist Entwicklung des Bewusstseins, und alles Physische ist selbst nur eine Beziehung zwischen Bewusstseinen, deren Wesen so geartet ist, dass wir in unserem Denken sie setzen müssen in Form der physikalischen Materien, Kräfte, Atome etc.

phenomenon. This is not a new idea, but rather, monadology helps Husserl stress the importance of the correlation and the relative being of objective reality. A subject (a monad) is a particular world-experience, and it includes everything that makes up that experience. In principle, this should all be disclosed from a first-personal perspective. The Monad includes both the Ego pole and the non-Ego pole of experience: "*Each monad belongs to the unity of an ego, whose identity and all relative to it extends over the entire period of time, and furthermore an alien and yet "subjective", a necessary alien field of monad*"[50] (Hua 14, 14). Since genetic analysis has shown that no singular lived experience can be considered in isolation, but that rather it is interconnected with other past, present and future experiences, monads are a whole with indivisible parts. They also include obscure and inadequate phenomena such as sleep or seemingly lost memories, because these also have a role in the totality of the experience. The monad is all-encompassing, which means it stretches beyond what is intuitively given: "*The monad is larger than the sphere of clear and distinct evidence, and it even reaches upon experiences (and objects) which can barely be considered conscious.*" (Altobrando 2015, 71). The fact that it includes these unconscious experiences does not mean they are presented or they can be known in some way, but rather they must be presupposed based on present experience. However, they have to be somehow connected to the present, or they wouldn't be disclosed at all.

A similar methodological move is performed when it comes to birth and death, where Husserl states that the immortality of monads is a "presupposition" (*Voraussetzung*) (Hua 34, 471) on the basis of which we can make sense of worldly birth and death. The question is, then, why is it necessary to presuppose this immortality instead of thinking of a monad as something that arises and vanishes.

Monadology also seems to stray from first-personal givenness insofar as, in Husserl's monadological writings, it often appears as a metaphysical theory about the whole of life. For example, in a text from 1930:

[50] Zu jeder Monade gehört Einheit eines Ich, über die ganze Zeitdauer erstreckte Identität des Ich mit allem Ichlichen, ferner Ichfremdes und doch „Subjektives", ein notwendiger ichfremder Bereich der Monade.

Could we not do without the real infinity of the world, in the patent constituted way, in relation to the temporal sequence as a necessary form of "historicity", while we take the coexistence as finite, the diversity of the monads as a finite "amount", we would have the following picture and application of the Idea of sedimentation.

1) The universality of the monads in originally instinctive communication, each living in their individual lives forever, and thus each with a sedimented life, with a hidden history, which also implies the "universal history". Sleeping monads.

2) development of the monadic history; awakening monads and development in alertness with a background of asleep Monads as a permanent foundation.

3) Development of human monads as world-constituting, as a process in which the monadic universe comes through in an oriented form towards self-objectification, monads come to reasonable self-consciousness and human consciousness and understanding of the world etc. (Hua 15, 609)[51]

Monadology serves here the purpose of providing an explanation for the emergence of consciousness in the world, that eludes the scientific-naturalistic explanation.

As was mentioned before[52], the hypothesis of an eternal monad first comes up when Husserl considers the question of a nature in-itself prior to consciousness. Because considering such a being in-itself exists would be against the basic principle of transcendental phenomenology according to which everything that is given must be given to a consciousness (*a priori* of correlation), Husserl considers it necessary to confront the alleged absolute being of nature with the true absolute

[51] Können wir auf die wirkliche Unendlichkeit der Welt, der patent konstituierten, nicht verzichten, und zwar hinsichtlich der Zeitfolge als notwendiger Form der „Historizität", während wir die Koexistenz als endlich nehmen, die Mannigfaltigkeit der Monaden also als endliche „Menge", so hätten wir folgendes Bild und folgende Anwendung der Idee der Sedimentierung.1) Die Allheit der Monaden in ursprünglich instinktiver Kommunikation, jede in ihrem individuellen Leben immerfort lebend, und somit jede mit einem sedimentierten Leben, mit einer verborgenen Historie, die zugleich die „Universalhistorie" impliziert. Schlafende Monaden. 2) Entwicklung der monadischen Historie; erwachende Monaden und Entwicklung in der Wachheit mit einem Hintergrund schlafender Monaden als ständiger Fundierung.3) Entwicklung menschlicher Monaden als Welt konstituierend, als worin das Monadenuniversum in orientierter Form zur Selbstobjektivation durchdringt, Monaden zum vernünftigen Selbst- und Mensch-heitsbewusstsein und zum Weltverständnis kommen etc.

[52] As was mentioned in the first chapter, both the notion of immortality and Monad are introduced by Husserl around the same time (1908-1910), explicitly in relation to the problem of a nature in-itself for a transcendental philosophy. (Hua 42, 154)

being of consciousness, thus claiming that monads were there all along in prehistoric times, only they were “sleeping”. This would be also the case of a monad after its worldly death: it falls “asleep”. This means its Ego goes out of function, although, as we will see in the following, sleep is an equally enigmatic phenomenon and does not bear an explanatory power regarding death. In a manuscript from 1929 Husserl writes:

> *Each monad is individual as a monad and is indestructible, whether it begins to live objectively in an animalistic way in the context of the universal monadic causality or ends its life and is now dead. It is also as a dead soul-monad in its own being. The limits of awakening, even if only as limits, are necessarily present as life, a life in which nothing "happens", in which there is no development*. (Hua/Mat 8, 177)[53]

Real existence of conscious humans in the world means monads that are awake, and the opposite, sleeping monads:

> *Starting from the given monads with their given set of sensations and perceptions, we must say that fixed nature means for the human monads certain rules of their actual appearances and of those inactual phenomena which they might have according to their "psychophysical constitution."*
> *And "nature before all awakening consciousness" means that for all sleeping monads there are certain rules of connection that make themselves known to us through analogical formations and phenomena, and that there is a law that develops the monads to "awake" consciousness.*[54] (Hua 42, 158)

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[53] Jede Monade ist individuell als Monade und ist unzerstörbar, ob sie auch in animalischer Weise sich objektivierend zu leben beginnt im Zusammenhang der universalen monadischen Kausalität oder ihr Leben endet und nun tot ist. Sie ist auch als tote Seelenmonade in ihrem eigenen Sein. Den Limes des Erwachens stellen wir ja, obschon nur als Limes, notwendig doch als Leben vor, ein Leben, in dem nichts „passiert“, in dem keine Entwicklung statthat.

[54] Von den gegebenen Monaden mit ihrem gegebenen Empfindungs- und Wahrnehmungsbestand ausgehend, müssen wir sagen: Die feste Natur bedeutet für die Menschenmonaden gewisse Regeln ihrer aktuellen Erscheinungen und derjenigen inaktuellen Erscheinungen, die sie nach ihrer „psychophysischen Konstitution“ haben könnten.
Und „Natur vor allem erwachten Bewusstsein“ besagt, dass für alle schlafenden Monaden gewisse Regeln des Zusammenhangs bestehen, die sich uns vorstellig machen durch analogische Gebilde und Erscheinungen, und dass eine Gesetzmäßigkeit besteht, welche die Monaden emporentwickelt ⟨zu⟩ „wachem “ Bewusstsein

When dealing with death from a generative point of view, Husserl asked himself what would happen if every human were to die and humanity came to an end. To answer that thought experiment now, we must say that if humanity was completely destroyed, monads would go on being, but they would fall asleep.

Now, how would we, in this context, interpret the Monad and her continuing life after death? It can be of use to consider how Husserl characterizes sleep within active life in order to understand the use of this analogy.

5.3 Sleep

When considering sleep, Husserl characterizes it as a state where affection is at a zero point but where the ego has the potential to re-awaken. In the context of a reflection on time, sleep poses a problem insofar as it is an interruption of the normal course of experience that nonetheless doesn't seem to alter the unity of consciousness, which regains as it wakes up its past and future horizons as they were before falling asleep. The experience of waking up to the same life with the same memories and anticipations is for Husserl the evidence that during the time we were asleep some minimal form of our own subjectivity must have been operating. How otherwise could we explain the fact that we wake up? As Nicolas de Warren puts it: "*Consciousness can only awaken on the condition that consciousness has put itself to sleep, taken in its transcendental significance: consciousness has constituted a temporary retirement from itself*." (De Warren 2010, 293). Husserl will often describe transcendental life before mundane birth and after death in these terms, the key concept being the sleeping monad. As it happens with the sleep we experience within factic life, we may be unconscious but this does not mean we are nothing. The closest we can come to a definition of what the sleeping monad is in Husserl's work would be something like the following:

> *a mute and empty life, so to speak, a dreamless, empty sleep, is conceivable as a life that also had this necessary structure and that appeared in perception in a passive and interior manner, but without any prominence, and therefore without any apprehension [of it] by the ego, without any play of single affections and acts such that the ego did*

*not come on the scene, so to speak, and the slumbering ego was mere potentiality for the ego cogito. (*Hua 11, 380; Husserl 2001a, 469)

If the slumbering ego is the mere potentiality of the ego cogito, then the life beyond birth and death is a potential life. But what exactly is this potentiality? Can it mean something in itself? It is only when we wake up that we can recognize the previous state of sleep as our own, so in order to recognize the potentiality that was there, we need a present actuality. In fact, it is the present actuality that leads us to this recognition and that, in a way, demands it: it is because there is consciousness in the present that we must look into the prehistorical past and find consciousness already there. And if we were to imagine a future time where humanity does not exist anymore, isn't it the case that such a future can only have meaning because we are, today, imagining it? It is the same privilege given to the present that lies behind the resistance to consider our own demise, and what constituted the first argument made in favour of the immortality of transcendental subjectivity in the genetic approach: because I cannot escape the constant renewal of the present moment, I cannot conceive of my time ever ending. But this does not say anything more than the following: while I am myself performing the epoché, while I am recognizing myself as a constituting subjectivity, I am eternal. From the perspective of subjective time death cannot be absolute, it cannot entail my destruction because I am the one for whom this destruction can have its meaning. I can imagine all sorts of possibilities for the future, but all these possibilities can only be what they are for me in the present, which is another way of saying that while change is admitted within the flow of time, the flow itself must remain unchanged. In manuscript C8 Husserl wonders about life after death and even reincarnation, but he concludes by drawing attention to this elemental fact:

that the foundation of all considerations of possibilities belonging to transcendental subjectivity is the I-am in the ordinary sense, and that the phenomenological reduction first gives us no other transcendental subjectivity than our own, first my own and from my living present, then that of others constituted for me. (Hua/Mat 8, 105)[55]

[55] dass das Fundament aller Erwägungen von Möglichkeiten, die zur transzendentalen Subjektivität gehören, das Ich-bin im gewöhnlichen Sinne ist, und dass die phänomenologische Reduktion uns

This leads us to the realization that the immortality of the subject is paradoxically only exhibited in the present[56]. This purely present awareness is the type of self-awareness that was presented in the paradox as solely subjective. In this sense, our previous dealings with the primal I as the Ego of the living-present fit into the present scheme: to be subjects for the world, excluding all awareness of ourselves as objects, means to be primal Egos, the pure present in its primal up-welling. Only, the primal I is the source of a present that is impossible to grasp in its originality, and thus a non-being. If we follow this reading, this means the mere potentiality of an Ego cogito would be the non-being of the primal I. But since the monad is intended to be a unity of objective and subjective poles, would it be legitimate to separate the two? With the sleeping monad, the unity is broken and we seem to be sent back to the dualistic view that we were trying to overcome. Is this a valid move?

5.4 Transcendental and personal life

In the context of Husserl's monadology, the body is not primarily a physical entity but "*a system of real and possible sensations*" [Der Leib ist aber selbst ein gewisses System wirklicher und möglicher Empfindungen] (Hua 13, 7). The monad thus attempts to achieve the reconciliation between transcendental and empirical subject by including both without allowing for any real division within itself. Monads are wholes without parts, so even when the body as object is a correlate of intentional activity, it is the correlation that makes the monad and not one of its terms. We can think of the relationship between the subjective and the objective pole in terms of what Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* calls moments

zunächst keine andere transzendentale Subjektivität gibt als unsere eigene, zunächst meine eigene und von meiner lebendigen Gegenwart aus, dann die der für mich konstituierten Anderen

[56] In fact, it entails that in general all genetic inquiries stretching to the past and the future can in fact only attempt to reproduce what is given in the present in a more or less uniform way. This is a point of criticism some posthusserlian phenomenologists focus on, putting forward in turn the notion of "event" as that of an experience that breaks with the uniformity and predictability of the present. Birth and death are precisely presented as paradigmatic examples of what can be considered an event. See Dastur, F., "Phenomenology of the event: Waiting and surprise" *Hypatia*, volumen 15, 2000, 178-189

(*Momenten*) which are non-independent parts of a whole, as opposed to *Stücke* which are independent, properly speaking parts (Hua 19/1, 272). Color and extension, for example, are *moments* of an object and not parts, as they can only be separated through abstraction. In the concrete whole that is the Monad, we can think of constituting subjectivity and her self-objectification as psychophysical human being as moments that are neither independent nor concrete. This is, I believe, the best possible way of understanding monadology and the relationship between transcendental and empirical subject. But it seems to be at odds with the idea of a sleeping monad. If we think–as Husserl does—that death entails the loss of bodily functions and an interruption of intentional activity, to say that one part can be postulated as continuing without the other would be nonsensical.

And yet, there are two modes of "I" that Husserl distinguishes within the Monad and that he thinks get separated in death. In the late (1934) text nº 35 of volume 34 of Husserliana he states that within the Monad, it is "*The Ego as personal Ego, equal to animal, worldly Ego*" [Das Ich als personales, gleichwertig animalisches, weltliches Ich] that dies, while "*The Ego as Ego-life*" [Das Ich als Ichlebens] (Hua 34, 471) does not. At the same time, he claims that

> *The whole transcendental monadology arises for me as an ego, which lives in constant worldliness, has a world in the "objective" space-time, as a valid formation(…)* The apodicticity of the ego implies the apodicticity of my human being in my world*, from my familiar environment. So my life and death and that of all my fellow human beings (in their open horizon) in current correlation*. (Hua 34, 474)[57] (emphasis in the original)

He allows here for the empirical occurrences of birth and death to permeate the space of the transcendental and inform it. And later on:

> *In it [primordiality] I find transcendental birth and death as the human occurrences in the world phenomenon, but correlatively transcendental being and life as the one that*

[57] Die ganze transzendentale Monadologie entspringt für mich als Ego, das irı ständiger Weltlichkeit lebt, Welt in der „objektiven" Raumzeitlichkeit hat, als Geltungsgebilde (…)In der Apodiktizität des Ego ist also impliziert die Apodiktizität meines menschlichen Seins in meiner Welt, von meiner heimischen Umwelt aus. Also meine und aller Mitmenschen (in ihrem offenen Horizont) Geburt und Tod im Geltenden, Korrelat.

constitutes the validity of the world with the sense of the world - the transcendental ego in its streaming life, in its primal present implicating all intentionally (…)[58] (Hua 34, 474)

In passages like this, it is clear that Husserl acknowledges the interdependency of transcendental and personal life, so how should we interpret the insistence on the eternal character of transcendental life if it isn't to entail personal immortality?

5.5 Two readings of monadology

It can be puzzling to try and understand the status of the life that does not die and that goes on as a "*dead soul-monad*" [tote Seelenmonade] (Hua/Mat 8, 177). There is no question that Husserl's writings on monadology can get very speculative, and it is possible to interpret the whole of his monadological theory in these terms. This metaphysical reading entails considering the sleeping monad as a substance that actually endures beyond worldly existence. This would unbind the potentiality of the sleeping monad from the actuality of the waking monad, thus losing the anchor in the present. This is a crucial step that would mark a crossing over into a speculative domain, since, having lost our footing in present evidence, the only thing that could work as a guarantee of the results of this quest is some kind of metaphysical truth. Even if this seems like an extreme interpretation, there are elements in Husserl's writings that allow for such a traditionally idealist reading. The fact that it is inspired by Leibniz should already give us a hint in this direction. Monads are also characterized as "transcendental substances" [transzendentale Substanzen] (Hua/Mat 8, 174); and in a manuscript from 1934 Husserl wonders: "*Are the worldly events "birth" and "death" transcendental indexes of a non-worldly, supernatural way of being of Monads, of a transition to a mode of being that is in*

[58] Darin finde ich transzendentale Geburt und Tod als die humanen Vorkommnisse im Weltphänomen, korrelativ aber das transzendentale Sein und Leben als das die Weltgeltung mit dem Weltsinn konstituierende -das transzendentale Ego in seinem strömenden Leben, in seiner urtümlichen Gegenwart alles intentional implizierend (…)

principle inaccessible to the methods of worldly knowledge?" (Hua 42, 81)[59]. Finally, the references to God and the divine that usually accompany his notes on monadology reinforce the idea that there is a religious motif behind the idea of immortality:

> *Immortality in the ordinary sense is impossible. But man is immortal like every monad, his participation in the process of self-realization of the deity is immortal, his continuous influence in all things genuine and good is immortal. He is also immortal, insofar as in his monad the whole "inheritance" contained in him remains latent in his soul and carries with him specific functions, not in a full awakening that allows self-identification with the former living person, but in the harmony of the divine world.* (Hua 15, 610)[60]

The topic of God was not systematically treated by Husserl, but there are some indications throughout his work of his interest in it in relation to the metaphysical questions of the meaning of the world and human life. In a manuscript from 1934 on teleology and theology, he speaks of philosophy as a non-confessional path to God [inkonfessioneller Weg zu Gott], and of the coinciding of philosophy and religion in infinity (Hua 42, 259-260). Despite the fact that human beings and their particular communities are perishable, reason and culture are the eternal truths of humanity:

> *From the beginning man has knowledge of the world, but having it he must first acquire it in infinite work as truth lying in infinity. From the beginning man is the rational being, he has reason, but he must first acquire reason in the course of his history, in stages of his historical modes of being (in his historicity). He is human from the start and has to become human. As a rational being, man has "culture" from the beginning, but in his historicity he must first develop culture. All development is based on truth, true culture*

[59] Sind die Weltvorkommnisse „Geburt" und „Tod" transzendentale Indizes für eine unweltliche, übernatürliche Seinsweise der Monaden, für einen Übergang in einen Seinsstil, der in den Methoden der weltlichen Erkenntnis prinzipiell unzugänglich ist?

[60] Also Unsterblichkeit in gewöhnlichem Sinn ist unmöglich. Aber unsterblich ist der Mensch wie jede Monade, unsterblich ist sein Anteil an dem Selbstrealisierungsprozess der Gottheit, unsterblich ist sein Fortwirken in allem Echten und Guten. Unsterblich ist er auch, insofern als in seiner Monade die ganze „Erbschaft", die er in sich birgt, aller seelische Erwerb in ihm latent erhalten bleibt und besondere Funktionen mitübt, obschon nicht in der vollen Weckung, die Selbstidentifikation ermöglicht mit dem früher lebenden Menschen, in der Harmonie der Gotteswelt.

(Hua 42, 260)[61].

The natural inclination human beings have towards reason is explained as the work of God, considered by Husserl as "*not the monadic universe itself, but the entelechy that inhabits it, as the idea of the telos of infinite development, that of "humanity" from absolute reason, necessary to regulate monadic being, and to regulate it from within each one's own free decision*." (Hua 15, 610)[62]. This sort of "divine inspiration", however, must be realized through the means of science, that is to say, philosophy. In a letter to an unknown addressee from 1935 he writes:

> *Man lives as a finite being, but is finite on the horizon of infinity. It is his fate to become fully aware of this infinity and to take it fully upon himself - the function for this is absolute science, and this gives him free opportunities to live ethically as an acting person - towards the absolute ideal of being moved specifically as the god of religion.[63] (Hua dok III/9, 521)*

Ultimately, in this reading the development of monads is guided by a divine teleology that goes from "inanimate" nature to reason, and this forms the complete picture of Husserl's late philosophy. Regarding the problem of the limits of consciousness, the ontological reading of monadology provides an answer that allows Husserl to achieve a well-rounded system with the loose ends neatly tied up. However, it is at the cost of stepping beyond what is intuitively given in the direction of a speculative metaphysics. That is to say that, paradoxically, in order to protect phenomenology's methodological principles, he betrays them.

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[61] Von Anfang an hat der Mensch die Welterkenntnis, aber, sie habend, muss er sie in unendlicher Arbeit erst erwerben als im Unendlichen liegende Wahrheit. Von Anfang an ist der Mensch das Vernunftwesen, er hat Vernunft, aber er muss im Wandel seiner Geschichte, in Stufen seiner geschichtlichen Seinsweisen (in seinen Historizitäten) sich Vernunft erst erwerben. Er ist von Anfang an Mensch und muss Mensch werden. Der Mensch als Vernunftwesen hat von Anfang an „ Kultur ", aber in seiner Geschichtlichkeit muss er Kultur erst entwickeln. Alle Entwicklung geht auf Wahrheit, wahre Kultur.

[62] Gott ist das Monadenall nicht selbst, sondern die in ihm hegende Entelechie, als Idee des unendlichen Entwicklungstelos, des der „Menschheit" aus absoluter Vernunft, als notwendig das monadische Sein regelnd, und regelnd aus eigener freier Entscheidung.

[63] Der Mensch lebt als endliches Wesen, aber ist endliches im Horizont der Unendlichkeit. -Sein Schicksal ist dieser Unendlichkeit voll bewusst zu werden und sie vollbewußt auf sich zu nehmen- die Funktion dafür ist die absolute Wissenschaft, und diese ihm frei Möglichkeiten schaffend, als handelnder Mensch ethisch zu leben - in Richtung auf das absolute Ideal, das sein Gemüt konkret als Gott der Religion bewegt.

It might be worth it, however, to attempt a different reading of monadology that could allow us to hold on to its positive elements and to remain within the requirements of phenomenology as I have set them out earlier. I have said before that the immortality of the monad is tightly related to what Husserl regards as the methodological necessity of contesting any naturalistic explanation of world history. If we don't take this immortal character to be a metaphysical statement, the potentiality of an ego that continues in the sleeping monad could be regarded as a type of metaphorical postulate that does not claim to be based on intuition, but belongs rather in the logical order. The monad would not be immortal in a positive sense, namely as a type of supernatural entity, but *from our standpoint* we could recognize a need to presuppose it as always having been there and always remaining. This would be like saying that even if we don't have evidence that monads are immortal, we should proceed *as if* they were, in order to preserve the transcendental principle and be true to the *a priori* of correlation. The problem with this reading might be that it implicitly states the existence of a realm where certainty is not possible, and that takes us back to the problem that the presupposition of immortality was trying to solve.

If we go back to Fink's mapping of the phenomenological system, we find that limit problems belonged to what in Kant we find under transcendental dialectics, and indeed this reading of the immortality of the Monad can be explicitly related with a certain use that Husserl makes of Kant's insights. In *Ideas 1*, Husserl uses the notion of Kantian Ideas to express the givenness of certain objects that cannot be intuitively given, and the intellectual evidence that accompanies them (Hua 1-3, 186; 331). Among these types of objects, we find certain totalities such as the world considered as a whole and the internal flow of experience. Understanding the eternal character of the Monad as a Kantian idea is a possible alternative to the paths we have been exploring so far regarding death. However, the paradoxical way in which death is so often presented in Husserl's writings suggests that the intellectual evidence supporting immortality is not so straight-forward and thus would face us with two equally acceptable outcomes. According to Lázsló Tengelyi,

Husserl has already learned from Kant that these metaphysical attempts at justification always only provoke antinomies and thus lead to incessant disputes because they extend their claims far beyond what is given and what can be identified. Phenomenology necessarily rejects this speculative procedure.[64] (Tengelyi 2014b, 187-188).

An inquiry into the differences between Kant and Husserl's philosophical method would go well beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is useful to point out that, in the context of Kant's philosophy, Ideas have a role to play, be it intellectual (to organize experience) or practical (to guide our behaviour), and what they may be lacking in terms of epistemological validity is compensated by their practical force. Turning back to Husserl we must ask about the potential role of this understanding of Subjectivity. Is there really a benefit in endorsing the monad's immortality? Perhaps we would need, as Fink also does, to distinguish in this discussion between the role of the transcendental subject and that of the phenomenological onlooker (Fink 1995, 13), who is the one that performs the reduction and the phenomenological inquiry. When we are conducting phenomenological research, we take the world and ourselves as experiencing subjects to be our objects. This means that we separate ourselves as phenomenologizing from ourselves as constituting in order to make meaningful statements about our own transcendental activity. Now, while we are living through this activity we cannot intuit its origin or its end, so it is only when we inquire into it that this question arises. In principle, there shouldn't be anything stopping us from appreciating the coincidence between transcendental and empirical life from this perspective, and so to state that they are both equally limited. However, we have now incorporated the phenomenological onlooker into this scenario, and the fact that this is the one that makes the enquiry possible means that it possesses some methodological primacy. This establishment of this primacy takes the transcendental principle to its last consequences and it is, I believe, what leads

[64] Husserl hat bereits von Kant gelernt, dass diese metaphysischen Begründungsversuche immer wieder nur Antinomien heraufbeschwören und damit zu unaufhörlichen Streitigkeiten führen, weil sie ihre Behauptungen über das jeweils Gegebene und Ausweisbare weit hinausspannen. Die Phänomenologie weist dieses spekulative Verfahren notwendig zurück.

Husserl to privileging immortality over finitude. While deciding in favour of the immortality means that we fully acknowledge the perspective of the phenomenologizing subject who precedes every possible inquiry, and thus feel compelled to recognize the precedence of the potentiality of experience over its actuality; stating the monad's finitude would mean disregarding our own standpoint as onlookers, and failing to justify fully the legitimacy of our results. Nevertheless, it would also entail disconnecting the phenomenological onlooker from the transcendental and the empirical subjects, which would arguably erase the main benefit of monadology, namely considering subjectivity as a whole. The minimal, metaphorical interpretation of the monad's immortality can be explained as follows: it is not the transcendental subject that is immortal, but the phenomenologizing subject. This is itself a type of metaphorical being, insofar as it is a way of naming the perspective that emerges only during the phenomenological process, but it shouldn't be considered in isolation from the concrete whole made up by transcendental and empirical subject.

It thus appears that the dilemma posed by death cannot be successfully solved without important costs. Is there a possible third way?

According to Tengelyi, the potential antinomies that arise when we go beyond what is intuitable, would lead Husserl to asserting that there are certain primal or original facts (*Urtatsache*) that cannot be justified. But within these primal facts, Tengelyi counts the existence of the Ego and its involvement with the world (Tengelyi 2014b, 184-5), which is precisely what the idea of the sleeping monad puts into question. In order to follow this path, it will be necessary to modify slightly the methodological principles that Husserl works with. When it comes to the limits of egoic being, a factical point of departure must be acknowledged, which appears to menace transcendental integrity. It is to this discomfort that Husserl responds by postulating the eternal being of the subject, at the risk of falling back into the speculative domain. In the following chapters, I will continue to explore this third way to consider the limits of subjectivity.

Chapter 6: The person

Our previous chapters focused on the notion of the primal I as the most fundamental structure of consciousness, and the monad as the subject thought of as a concrete whole. While considering constituting subjectivity as primal I played into the Cartesian dualism that disconnects consciousness from embodiment; the monad accomplished a union that was nevertheless still marked by a speculative tendency, whose strongest version led to a traditional idealism, and whose weaker version led to the primacy of a phenomenologizing subject which, once again remained disconnected from the subjective whole. In this chapter I will turn to the notion of "person" as another possible way of considering subjectivity in an integral manner. Because the person is in principle confined by Husserl to the empirical side of the transcendental-empirical divide, but retains nevertheless an ambivalent character that will become more explicit in later writings, it will prove to be a useful notion to think of the subject as a unity while potentially avoiding the shortcoming of monadology. The main difference between the person and the monad, and the feature that is mostly relevant for our research, is that the person, unlike the previous figures of subjectivity, dies. According to Husserl "*In death I become nobody (Not-I) but not an absolute nothingness*" [Im Tod werde Ich zum Niemand (Nicht-Ich) aber nicht zu einem absolutes Nichts] (Hua 42, 21). This means I lose my personhood, that which makes up my individual place in the world. As we have seen, personal life ends and it is surpassed by transcendental life. In chapter 2, I presented the paradox of subjectivity and Husserl's understanding of death as the separation between the two dimensions that the paradox described. This division within subjectivity was problematic since it creates a gap that later affects the possibility of pursuing an integral account of the human subject and experience. But since we also found that transcendental life beyond birth and death is, to say the least, hard to account for, it can be useful to turn to the notion of person to explore the possibility of it being the true concrete whole of subjectivity. The key element is that the person dies, and so I will be once again using the case of death

to explore the broader issue of the relationship between the transcendental and the empirical.

6.1 Introduction

As it is presented in *Ideas II*, the person is the subject of the natural attitude, and its main traits involve being a social agent in an intersubjective world. The idea that the person, unlike transcendental subjectivity as it has been defined so far, is necessarily an embodied member of a society, makes it a very appealing notion once genetic analysis start to show the importance of habits, social norms and inherited meanings for the subject's constituting activity. While the primal I simply cannot include these features within itself, the person, thought of initially as belonging to the empirical realm, becomes a good candidate to represent the true constituting subject. Husserl himself seems to be going in this direction when in late manuscripts he speaks of a "transcendental person" (Hua 34, 451).

Since the notion of person first appears in the context of a description of the personalistic attitude in *Ideas II*, I will begin by explaining what this attitude consists in and how it relates to different attitudes that Husserl describes. The personalistic attitude is presented both as a theoretical attitude that abstracts one aspect of the world, and as the true natural attitude, which functions as the ground for every possible attitude. The first two sections of this chapter will deal with these two ways of understanding the personalistic attitude. The subject in the personalistic attitude is the person, which is considered by Husserl sometimes as a compound of nature and spirituality, and sometimes only as spirit. These ambiguities and the liberal use Husserl makes of these concepts testify to a particular vagueness of the notion of person that can be used to our advantage. At this point, we start moving a bit further away from Husserl–that is, from an orthodox, subjectivistic version of Husserlian philosophy–but hopefully we are not betraying his fundamental spirit by tying the loose ends in an innovative way. In fact, the foregoing has shown that it is only for the sake of the basic commitments of Husserlianism that we take the liberty to diverge from the letter of some of his texts. In later writings, Husserl speaks sometimes of a "transcendental person" and so following these

descriptions, I will reflect on the notion of transcendental person as a two-sided subject that is both constituted and constituting, and explore a hypothesis whose boldest formulation is put forward by Steven Crowell (2012). He considers the person to be the only constituting subject and does away with transcendental subjectivity in its primordial structure –that is, he rejects the notion of a primal Ego- by putting forward a model of constitution based on praxis.

6.2 Attitudes and the theoretical-personalistic attitude[65]

In *ideas II*, Husserl sets out to describe how the world is constituted as a whole by tackling the constitution of its various dimensions or regions from the most basic one of mere physical nature to the spiritual world of social values and norms, mediated by psychic reality. The two antagonistic regions of spirit and nature are defined as abstract realms obtained through the adoption of two corresponding attitudes, namely, the personalistic and the naturalistic one, that focus on one aspect of the world in order to thematize it in the manner of a scientific enquiry.

Attitudes can be roughly defined as contexts of meaning of intended objects. If I approach a certain object with a practical or an aesthetic attitude, I am looking at the same thing but considering it from very different perspectives, and that is what will make something be, for example, a tool or a work of art. The interest that determines the direction of my intentionality is the attitude I adopt (Luft 2002, 5)

The personalistic attitude is then presented as the attitude that corresponds to the sciences of the spirit, opposed to the naturalistic attitude that belongs to the realm of the natural sciences. In this sense, it could be considered a *theoretical* attitude along with the naturalistic one. Theoretical attitudes focus on only one aspect of the world in order to thematize it explicitly. In this sense, they differ from the *natural attitude*, which is our everyday holistic understanding of the world and others, since they abstract one of the two aspects that constitute the concrete world as it is pre-given to us. Husserl mentions other attitudes such as a practical or an aesthetic one, all of which highlight different aspects of the world and objects in it;

[65] On the distinction between the personalistic attitude as theoretical and as natural I am drawing from the article by Andrea Staiti, “Systematische Überlegungen zu Husserls Einstellungslehre", in *Husserl Studies* 2009, pp. 219-233

and most importantly, he distinguishes a phenomenological attitude, which is the result of performing the *epoché*. This is different from other attitudes insofar as it is a second-order attitude that can take all others as its object of reflection. By doing so, it highlights the constituting activity of the subject, considered as transcendental. The phenomenological attitude does not just belong to a particular context but -much like the natural attitude but in an inversed manner—it is all-encompassing. The contrast between natural and phenomenological attitude can be thought of in terms of a modification of the position (*Setzung*) of the intended objectivities: while in the natural attitude the world is presented as existing independently, in the phenomenological attitude we suspend our belief in that existence.

In the natural attitude we see the world and others as a compound of nature and spirit; and when we adopt a theoretical attitude we separate these two elements and reduce one to the other. About the naturalistic attitude, for instance, Husserl states that it not only isolates the material dimension in order to focus only on this aspect, but it in fact attempts to reduce the higher layers to this more basic one and give an explanation of the spiritual accomplishments in material-causal terms:

> *naturalistically considered, all consciousness, and, in general, all lived experience, is founded bodily, and hence, in addition, so is the total content of that which, in the persons, intentionally constitutes the world and all its properties.* (Hua 4, 184; Husserl 1989, 193).

As we have seen, this is precisely the position that phenomenology is striving to discredit. Now, in contrast with this attitude, the personalistic one focuses on the spiritual aspect of the world, that is, on values, norms, social and historical developments; and it too reduces nature to spirit through the type of transcendental argument that Husserl utilizes to express the primacy of consciousness over physical nature:

> *Subjects cannot be dissolved into nature, for in that case what gives nature its sense would be missing (…) if we could eliminate all spirits from the world, then that is the end*

of nature. But if we eliminate nature, "true", Objective-intersubjective existence, there always still remains something: the spirit as individual spirit (Hua 4, 297; Husserl 1989, 311)

Now, Husserl here alludes to "spirits" as if they were transcendental subjects, that is, he identifies spirit with the constituting subject (the one that constitutes nature). But since constituting subjectivity arises through the performance of the reduction, which entails the adoption of the phenomenological attitude, and spirits are the subjects of the theoretical-personalistic attitude; would this mean these two attitudes somehow overlap? If we consider the personalistic attitude as abstracting one aspect from the concrete whole of the world, would this mean transcendental subjectivity is in fact abstract just like spirit is? Moreover, how do persons fit into this scene?

6.3 The personalistic attitude as natural attitude

Interestingly, Husserl speaks of the personalistic attitude not only as a theoretical attitude but first and foremost as the true natural attitude, since he considers that in our everyday experience we understand ourselves and others as *persons*. If we distinguish between the personalistic attitude as the natural attitude (and thus as the basis of every other possible attitude) and the personalistic attitude as the attitude of the sciences of the spirit, which is a theoretical refinement of the former, we can understand Husserl's claims better. Most importantly, a distinction should be made between persons and spirits, keeping in mind that in our regular understanding a person is a spiritual being that is founded on a natural stratum, and thus not *just* a spirit. So, while the theoretical-personalistic attitude might focus on spirits and leave aside the natural basis on which they lie, the natural-personalistic attitude takes the person as a compound–although this needs to be further analysed. The person's spiritual stratum rests upon the natural one; that is to say, constitution of ourselves as psychophysical beings is implied in the constitution of ourselves as persons:

That which is given to us, as human subject, one with the human Body, in immediate experiential apprehension, is the human person, who has his spiritual individuality, his

intellectual and practical abilities and skills, his character, his sensibility. This Ego is certainly apprehended as dependent on its Body and thereby on the rest of physical nature, and likewise it is apprehended as dependent on its own past. (Hua 4, 140; Husserl 1989, 147)

However, even when the person includes both aspects and cannot be reduced to spirit, the spiritual side remains prevalent, and so some ambiguities remain. However dependent on her physical nature, the person is not identified with it. The passive, 'natural' side of the person remains subordinated to the higher, active abilities. The idea is better understood when we consider it in an ethical context. Being a moral agent, a person is able to act purposefully and make decisions according to her own beliefs or desires. This active aspect of personhood is born out of a passive background in which the person constitutes herself as a subject of abilities through her bodily capacities:

Prior to the will with its active thesis of the "fiat" lies the action as instinctive action, e.g., the involuntary "I move", the involuntary "I reach" for my cigar; I desire it and do it "without any further ado," something which, to be sure, is not easily distinguished from a case of voluntary willing in the narrower sense. (Hua 4, 258; Husserl 1989, 270)

The person is firstly constituted as a subject of habitualities, of desires and inclinations, and of bodily abilities. But because all these natural tendencies can be contested by the 'higher' aspect of a person, that is, by the free Ego, Husserl tends to identify a proper sense of the person with this latter aspect and thus present us with a division within it. I make choices against or in favour of my instinctive tendencies, and this means that "I" in a proper sense am not those tendencies but their conductor:

*Above all, however, it is versus the empirical subject, in its generality and its unity, that the "*person*" is to be delimited in* the specific sense*: the subject of acts which are to be judged from the standpoint of* reason*, the subject that is "*self-responsible*" the subject that is free or in 'bondage, unfree (taking "freedom" here in a particular sense, indeed the proper sense).* (Hua 4, 257; Husserl 1989, 269)

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the person, even when defined

against the empirical subject on the one hand, seems to share with it, on the other hand, the same place in the transcendental/empirical division, insofar as the person is "*something pre-given to myself, after the development of the empirical apperception of the Ego, just as well as the thing is pre-given to me after the thing-apperception has developed*." (Hua 4, 250; Husserl 1989, 262). Our previous section shows that the notion of the person has roots that tie it to the transcendental subject thought of as a spiritual being, while in the context of the natural attitude it is considered as being constituted itself. It would thus seem that the person can reunite both transcendental and empirical characterizations. The stark separation between these two realms was at the basis of the paradoxical understanding of subjectivity and of death. As we have seen, this ultimately led to a difficulty in accounting for the interaction of mind and body. Could the notion of person be a key to understanding the ambiguous character of subjectivity and moving beyond the paradox of subjectivity?

6.4 Transcendental person

When we become aware of the underlying "natural" basis of the spirit in the person, we reach a point where "*the two types of reality, nature and spirit, enter* into relation *with each other*" (Hua 4, 281; Husserl 1989, 294). This means that, unlike what we encountered previously when discussing the primordial structures of subjectivity, the subject considered in personal terms is in fact *something*, a positive being instead of a presupposed prior potentiality:

> *This Ego* [the pure Ego] *is not a reality and so does not have real properties. The personal Ego, on the contrary, is indeed a reality, and this in conformity with the concept of reality we have fixed and clarified. The original sense of the word "real" refers to things of nature, and nature can be understood here as the nature appearing sensuously in relation to the individual subject* (…) (Hua 4 325; Husserl 1989, 338)

if we bring this statement together with the previous characterization of the person as spirit we find that the person could be considered at once the constituting subject *of* nature and a reality constituted *by* nature. Admittedly, this would entail

a separation at the interior of the subject, namely the one that Husserl makes between the natural and the spiritual layer. In this way, while the spiritual layer would be the one constituting, the natural layer (consisting of the empirical subject), would be the one constituted, at which point it would be valid to ask if we are not, once again, reproducing the dualism between empirical and transcendental subject.

To do away with this fundamental distinction is not entirely possible in the context of Husserlian phenomenology. However, with the notion of person, much like what happened with the monad, there is an effort to think of these two aspects coming together in a unity. And, unlike with the monad, the material aspect of the body has a predominant role. It is the body as two-sided that in fact is in charge of bringing together the two modes of being in the person: "*Thus we have two poles: physical nature and spirit and, in between them, body and soul. As a consequence, body and soul are "nature in the second sense" properly speaking only according to the side turned toward physical nature*." (Hua 4 285; Husserl 1989, 298). I will examine closer the role of the animated body in the next chapter.

The fact that Husserl speaks in a few late manuscripts (Hua 34, nº 8, 13 and 31) of a "transcendental person" (*Transzendentaler Person*) has struck some scholars (Luft 2005, Hart 2009) as an attempt to –finally- place the transcendental subject *in* the world, much in the way Heidegger refers to *Dasein* as a *being-in-the-world*, and perhaps precisely to address the critique made by the latter (Luft 2005).

But is the reconciliation between transcendental and empirical possible at all? A person is "*a conscious and responsible agent living in a social setting with others and with rules, living in a state of affects, emotions, etc., and as essentially embodied*" (Luft 2005, 14). This is the way we experience ourselves and others in the natural attitude. It is not, however, the way we experience ourselves in the phenomenological attitude (that is, after performing the *epoché*), at least not in principle. Thinking back to the paradox of subjectivity, we found that when we think of ourselves as subjects *for* the world, this automatically ruled out our self-awareness as objects *in* the world, and we encountered a type of worldless, disembodied consciousness, that Husserl called transcendental subjectivity. As we

have seen in the previous chapter, it was in fact the primal I, as the last source of subjectivity, that necessarily remained non-worldly because of its nature. As for transcendental (inter)subjectivity, Husserl's mature theory of constitution develops in such a way that it becomes more and more difficult to think of a pure consciousness as the constituting subject. By bringing forward the role of habits and past experiences, inherited senses, as well as instincts and passive tendencies in experience, genetic phenomenology broadens the scope of the transcendental field. It becomes clear that, in order to make sense of anything at all, the subject must already be embedded in a community (the subject is always implicated with others and so transcendental subjectivity becomes intersubjectivity) and count with some sedimented senses that serve as tools to understand present experiences and anticipate future ones. In the way our experience unfolds we can see an extraordinary entanglement of the empirical and the transcendental, insofar as the categories with which we make sense of the objective world, although necessary, are not innate, fixed structures, but in fact arise *from* experience. We are faced with the idea that the conditions of experience are given *in* experience and cannot be deduced a priori *à la Kant*, which means they are something like *a posteriori necessities*. This oxymoronic formulation is, I will propose, at the heart of transcendental phenomenology as it is conceived after the genetic turn, and it will be a key to our understanding of the subject's finiteness. The person, in her duality, seems to fit perfectly in this scenario; whereas the pure spirit, as a kind of being that could somehow still *be* in the absence of a world, should be left behind. László Tengelyi's (2014)[66] analyses of categories as *experientials* in phenomenology shows how "*In opposition to Kantianism, phenomenology admits of a necessity that is separated from aprioricity*" (Tengelyi 2014, 52), by drawing from Husserl's writings on the life-world, a topic closely

[66] This type of formulation can be found in the work of several scholars. I am drawing here from the quoted article by Lázsló Tengelyi where he refers to a "factical necessity" of the categories of experience, inspired by Husserl's own use of the phrase "the necessity of a fact" when speaking of the cogito (Hua 3/1, 98). The work of Anne Montavont (1999), who speaks of "a transcendental *a posteriori* or 'an *a priori* essentially after the fact'" (281), is of the utmost importance and will be further discussed in this dissertation. In this line, see also Bernardo Ainbinder's "Questions of genesis as questions of validity: Husserl's new approach to an old Kantian problem" in Apostolescu, I. & Serban, C. (eds.), *Husserl, Kant and Transcendental Philosophy*, De Gruyter, 2020.

related to personhood. In effect, because the life-world is the horizon of experience in the natural attitude, it is an important piece of the puzzle when trying to put together Husserl's late understanding of constitution and subjectivity. I will now turn to this notion and analyse the case of death in its context.

6.5 The Life-world

One of the most important notions in phenomenology is the key concept of *horizon*. We have mentioned in our introduction that in a phenomenological description of experience, we find something that goes beyond what could be described through scientific discourse as the work of stimuli on our senses, and that has to do with our specific way of experiencing anything at all. Particular associative syntheses are performed that allow for a full object to appear before us where in actuality we are perceiving only one side of that object. The totality of aspects of the object, both intended and non-intended, forms the *internal horizon* of said object. This horizon is not something effectively given but, in a way, it is 'put there' by the subject. In a similar manner, we do not experience things in isolation but rather in meaningful relations with their surroundings. Associative bonds with other things form the *external horizon* of an object. This external horizon varies according to the interest that determines my intending activity, that is, according to my attitude, which means attitudes are correlated to horizons, or, in other words, to worlds (Luft 2002, 6). In the natural attitude, although we always inhabit a particular 'homeworld' which is built out of that which is familiar to us, there is no specific interest to determine the horizon. It is simply the pre-given world in its most general character that is working as a background for any of our personal endeavours. This general horizon of the world is what Husserl terms the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). This term is first used in a supplementary text to *Ideas 2* from 1917 (Hua 4, 375; Husserl 1989, 384) but it's only in the *Crisis* that it receives specific treatment. Here, Husserl introduces the notion of a prescientific world in opposition to the Galilean view of the world as measurable. It is also this prescientific world that encompasses in a way the scientific one, insofar as the work of scientists is a spiritual achievement that happens within the lifeworld; and all other particular

worlds for that matter. As the horizon of all meaningfulness, the lifeworld is the correlate of the natural-personalistic attitude, which means the person is embedded in it. And if the subject needs to be enworlded in order to constitute, this enworldment happens in the lifeworld and so there is no possible constitution without it.

In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl thus explains the need for a meaningful horizon in order to make sense of any object of experience:

> *For us the world is always a world in which cognition in the most diverse ways has already done its work. Thus it is not open to doubt that there is no experience, in the simple and primary sense of an experience of things, which, grasping a thing for the first time and bringing cognition to bear on it, does not already "know" more about the thing than is in this cognition alone*. (Husserl 1997, 31-32).

Husserl identifies certain general characteristics of any possible world and thus speaks of an *a priori of the lifeworld* (Hua 6, 140; Husserl 1970, 137), mainly consisting of space-temporality. Even when there are many different cultural worlds, beyond these differences a common structure can be found: any possible world is a world of humans, of embodied persons located in space and time (Hua 29, 324).

This also has some consequences for the study of limit-cases, since Husserl states that it is an "aprioristic feature" of the lived world that people are born and die in it (Hua 29, 334; Hua 15, 172). In effect, whenever Husserl discusses death, he claims that while the transcendental subject is eternal, the person surely has an ending. In death "*my ego as person living in the personal world is over (it disappears); [I am] no longer existing in the world, no longer a person lasting in time*" [mein Ichsein als Person in personalem Weltleben zu Ende ist (es verschwindet); ⟨ich bin⟩ nicht mehr in der Welt vorkommende, nicht mehr in der Zeit fortdauernde Person] (Hua 42, 79). In a very precise manner, he writes:

> *Otherwise, what occurs under the title "dying, death"? The ego can only be awake (or the monad), as long as it "has" its body, "has" its environment, "has" its projects, its*

interests in it, even if it has completely become "unconscious" when it faints, when it sleeps. But that it dies means that it does not have that anymore.[67] (Hua 34, 473)

When death occurs, everything that makes up a person is gone, but then this also means that some of the features required for the subject to perform her constituting activity are lost as well. If we bring closer transcendental subjectivity to the transcendental person, wouldn't that make way for a potential consideration of death as the end of transcendental subjectivity?

6.6 Death and the paradox revisited

First of all, we should ask why we *can* say that the person dies, or why Husserl does. We have said before that death can never occur in the first person, so we learn about it in the third person—as an event in the world—and we ascribe it to ourselves as objects in the world, that is, as humans. However, this might not be sufficient to think of death as a necessary trait of our existence, since we come to know it empirically. Indeed there is no logical impediment for thinking of an immortal person, and it could be the case that, even if everyone in history so far has died, someone could avoid that fate in the future. In order to consider death a necessary feature of our world, we have to admit the aforementioned *a posteriori* character of—at least some—transcendental necessities, and this goes hand in hand with the acknowledgement of the lifeworld as the insurmountable ground of every meaning-giving act. If constitution is always performed in the context of the lifeworld–and so, by persons—then it must feed off factical sources. Living in the lifeworld—which has a structure that includes birth and death—we as persons necessarily die.

However, because the aprioristic structure of the lifeworld is reached through eidetic variation, Husserl considers this already requires the performance of the epoché:

[67] Andererseits, was geschieht unter dem Titel „Sterben, Tod"? Geweckt kann das Ich nur so lange sein (bzw. die Monade), so lange es seinen Leib „hat", seine Umwelt „hat", in ihr seine Vorhaben, seine Interessen „hat", auch wenn es dessen völlig „unbewusst" geworden ist, wenn es ohnmächtig ist, wenn es schläft. Aber dass es gestorben ist, sagt eben, dass es das nicht mehr hat.

If we ask the question about the a priori of the world–the intuitive world, that means we effectively and freely vary it in its imaginable forms, and that demands that we already exercise the epoché and vary the world in its concretion, as the world that is possible for us that perform this variation. (Hua 29, 326)[68].

We reach again a point of circularity: we have unveiled the fundamental fact of the lifeworld as the insurmountable ground for every possible inquiry, but have done so through a specific inquiry, namely the phenomenological one. For Husserl, this entails the priority of the phenomenologizing subject, but is this not, once again, a subject in the world? I have mentioned that this circle is what leads Merleau-Ponty to the conclusion that the phenomenological reduction is not entirely possible, and transcendental phenomenology must always contends with some adversity (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxvii). In Husserl's view, it leads to postulating a necessary prior stage that is structured by an inner divide: if the person is dependent on the lifeworld it is because she is constituted, but she cannot constitute herself in this capacity; rather, a purely constituting subject or constituting aspect of her must be the one carrying out the constitution. This constituting subject is, ultimately, the primal Ego that was presented in our previous chapter; but this one lacks the features that, according to Husserl's mature theory of constitution, are necessary in order to disclose the world. Steven Crowell sums up the dilemma in the following way:

If transcendental subjectivity must constitute all transcendence, then apparently it must be a subjectivity free of all transcendence, such as the absolute temporal flow of consciousness is supposed to be. But this clears up the paradox only if such subjectivity has the resources to constitute meaning—which, being pre-personal, it does not. Thus the fissure in the concept of transcendental constitution appears to force a choice

[68] Wenn wir nach dem Apriori der Welt - der anschaulichen - fragen, so heißt es, sie wirklich in Freiheit zu variieren in ihren Erdenklichkeiten, und das fordert schon, daß wir Epoche üben und die Welt in ihrer vollen Konkretion variieren als die möglicherweise für uns, die Variierenden, seiende.

between a paradoxically self-constituting person or an absolute consciousness that seems too anemic to constitute a world. (Crowell 2012, 30)

Crowell goes on to argue that the reason why Husserl could not consider the person as a self-constituting transcendental subject is a naturalistic assumption lying behind his argumentation, namely the identification of the person with the human being. Because the person experiences herself and other persons as *embodied*, Husserl immediately considers she should be a *natural* human. Crowell suggests that this way of thinking of embodiment is naturalistic, and that in fact a purely subjective experience of the body can be isolated, in such a way that thinking of a person does not require thinking of a human being. I will go further into this in the next chapter. A similar point is made by Hanne Jacobs (2014) who argues that self-constitution as a psychophysical being—and therefore as an object in the world—is dependent on self-constitution as a person, which is done through acts, and this is a key distinction. The person would constitute herself, understand herself, through her very acts, and this would entail switching from one model of constitution to a new one. In Husserl's view, because action always requires a pre-having, a meaning already available that we take up in our action, and results in a product, it cannot serve as a model for self-constitution, which must happen "from scratch". This is what leads Husserl to the radical genetic questions that have led us to the primal fact of primal temporalization. According to Crowell "*understanding myself as a carpenter just* is *trying to be one*" (Crowell 2012, 37) and this doesn't involve objectifying myself. Which means there would be no need to postulate a pre-objective being that performs the "first" constitution. Crowell also calls attention to the fact that Husserl reaches said pre-being through argumentation and not intuition: it is to stop the infinite regress of constitution that this pre-ego (which was one of the names of the primal ego) is, as we have seen, *presupposed*. And in doing so, the first-personal approach, fundamental to phenomenology, is lost. "*But do such arguments really authorize these genetic conclusions?*" he asks.

I do not believe so, but even if they do motivate something like such conclusions–that is, even if they suggest that personalistic constitution rests upon conditions that it does not constitute—this does not mean that these are constitutive *conditions. They may*

contribute no more to the transcendental analysis of how meaning *is constituted than does digestion (…)* (Crowell 2012, 40).

What may transpire through this quote is that Crowell's interpretation relies heavily on separating the person from nature. Not just digestion but the body itself thought of as an objective part of the world does not belong in the constituting sphere. Coincidentally, he brings up a text where Husserl holds that the death of the human being entails the death of the person, that is, that organic death entails spiritual death (Hua 39, 287). Crowell is not explicit about it, but it seems he would consider that the person, like the transcendental subject originally considered, does not die, which would be coherent if we think that phenomenological analysis should be nothing but a transcendental clarification of what is pre-given. Even though Crowell rejects the notion of a primal Ego, his account of the person shares an important feature with it, namely its separation from the empirical realm, which ultimately leads to some of the same concerns that surrounded Husserl's own paradoxical view.

The analysis of the notion of person shows a concept that is susceptible of being interpreted in different ways, and these sometimes are in conflict with each other. We have defined the basic features of the person in terms of embodiment and enworldment. The discordances we may find in different accounts of personhood boil down, then, to the way we understand this involvement in the world through embodiment, and so it now becomes necessary to reflect further on this notion.

We will retain the notion of person to account for subjectivity as a point of convergence or entanglement of transcendental and empirical forms of being, and enrich it by tackling the question of the body.

Chapter 7: The body

In this chapter, I turn directly to the topic of embodiment, which is an underlying issue in every major point of contention in this research. Our understanding of what constituting subjectivity is and how it relates to human nature, which later reflects on our understanding of death, relies heavily on the way we conceive embodiment. Its central role can explain why I have in turn considered Husserl's notion of the primal I (which is disembodied) and then that of the monad, in which the body remains subordinated and secondary regarding the noetic side of the correlation, as the most fundamental figure of subjectivity. After considering these two, the notion of person has proven to be more fitting to account for the complexity of the subject as a whole, but without a proper account of the body, it can easily fall back into a one-sided description.

7.1 Introduction

As it may have transpired from the previous sections, embodiment is a key issue when thinking about limit-cases and the relationship between transcendental and empirical subjectivity. In the section on the paradox of human subjectivity, we saw that the subject is embodied insofar as she objectifies herself through self-apperception as a psychophysical being, which resulted in there being always a distance between constituting subjectivity and her body. In the transcendental-empirical divide, embodiment belonged in the realm of the empirical. However, as Husserl refines his theory of constitution, embodiment turns out to be a crucial *condition* for constitution. This takes us to the paradoxical idea that the subject would need to be a body in order to constitute herself as embodied. How would this work? I will now turn to the specifics of Husserl's reflection on embodiment.

In our previous chapter I have looked into the notion of person as the embodied subject that acts within a life-world, and considered the reading that suggests it might be the true concretion of transcendental subjectivity, possibly allowing us to bridge the gap between transcendental and empirical subjectivity. However, following Hanne Jacobs (2014) and Steven Crowell's (2012) readings, we saw it would still be possible to think of the person as constituting without committing to

the thesis that it is at the same time an object in the world. This would entail distinguishing the person from the psychophysical being, which Husserl seemingly tended to conflate, and so separating embodiment from nature. Yet, this does not seem entirely possible for Husserl. On the contrary, He characterized the body as a type of bridge between nature and spirit, or nature and culture (Hua/Mat 4, 186), or a turning point (*Umschlagspunkt*) between causal and conditional orders (Hua 4, 161). In the reading I am proposing here against Crowell's, the person is fundamentally embodied, and this characterization of the body as a middle point between these two realms and as essentially ambiguous, go hand in hand.

Starting from the ambiguity manifested in the phenomenological reflection on embodiment, whose cornerstone is the phenomenon of double sensation, I claim that neither a purely subjective nor a purely objective experience of embodiment is possible, but rather, the being of the body calls for a rethinking of this dualist understanding of subjectivity. Through an analysis of bodily normativity and of the relationship between the body and temporality, I also claim that embodiment is present in the most basic levels of constitution, both as subjective and objectively lived.

The consequences of this reading go as far as questioning the methodological validity of the first-personal and the third-personal approaches to consciousness. Regarding death, the possibility to think of it in terms of a *normal* event in the life-world is opened. So far, we knew that the person, for Husserl, died; and that there was a kind of transference from the experience or knowledge of the death of others to one's own, that resulted in my own awareness of my finitude. The notion of normality now provides a way to consider how mortality is apprehended and embodied, even before any thematic awareness of death takes place. Once the body as object is taken as transcendentally relevant, a criterion for telling apart death from sleep in a phenomenologically sound way is also provided.

7.2 Leib and Körper

The most famous contribution of Husserlian phenomenology to the question of embodiment is the distinction between two ways of considering a body that Husserl

ascribes to the two ways of referring to a body in German: *Leib*, usually translated as lived body, and *Körper*, the physical or material body. This distinction relates in a way to the distinctions we have been dealing with so far between the transcendental and the empirical subject, and between my first-person experience of myself as a subject and a third-person experience of myself as an object. My body as lived body can be thought of as the way I experience my body in the first person. While if I consider myself as an object in the world I can see my body as a thing in nature alongside every other thing. However, these distinctions between different senses of the body can prove to be a bit more complicated than the prior ones since, while *Körper* is reserved for the consideration of my body (or any body) as a mere physical thing in space, throughout *Ideas 2*, Husserl speaks of *Leib* to account for animated organisms in nature as well as my own body as it is experienced "from within", and so sometimes a third term seems to be needed to address a division within the division. Besides the body as material thing, he distinguishes:

> *1. the aesthesiological Body. As sensing, it is dependent on the material Body; but here we once more have to distinguish from the physicalistic Body the material Body as appearance and as part of the personal surrounding world.*
>
> *2. the Body for the will, the freely moving Body. It is something identical, even in relation to the various possible movements the freely active spirit performs with it. There thus results a stratum of reality that is its own*. (Hua 4, 284; Husserl 1989, 297)

Husserl uses the term *Leib* every time "body" appears in this passage, so evidently this category exceeds the body as subjectively experienced, which seems to fit better with only "the freely moving body". As the aesthesiological body is distinguished from the material body, there would be a three-fold characterization of the body, or a two-fold characterization in which a middle point of interaction is identified, which mimics the classification of the world itself. Husserl also uses the term *Leibkörper* throughout *Ideas 2,* the *Cartesian Meditations*, and other writings, possibly to stress the entanglement of the two experiences of embodiment, although by no means in a systematic and rigorous way.

Regarding the relation of the body with the whole of the world, immediately after the previously quoted passage Husserl states: "*Thus we have two poles: physical nature and spirit and, in between them, Body and soul. As a consequence, Body and soul are "nature in the second sense" properly speaking only according to the side turned toward physical nature*." (Hua 4 285; Husserl 1989, 298). Here the body seems to be a kind of third region that lies in between nature and spirit, as a combination of the two. This type of characterization is also present in the 1919 lectures on nature and spirit where he refers to the body as the point of connection between nature and spirit (Hua/Mat 4, 186)[69]. So we would have two poles in the world and the body in between them as something that resists being circumscribed to either region; we also already know that the person is a spiritual being that at the same time depends–to some extent—on a natural basis; and now we see inside the body itself the presence of these two poles along with a middle point that is neither one nor the other. The analysis of the body appears to be at the heart of this somewhat heterodox way of describing subjectivity, that is, as a middle point, a mixture, or a third kind between two poles. If we go back to the paradox of subjectivity, we find that these two poles could only be alternatively present, such that self-awareness as constituting subject excluded self-awareness as constituted object and vice-versa. These analyses of the body seem to stray away from that duality and instead bring forth a third region where human experience proper happens. As Elizabeth Behnke warns us:

> *What Husserl's research shows, in other words, is that the Body does not fit neatly into a dualistic ontology where everything must be assigned to either one or the other of two mutually exclusive categories such as 'mind' or 'matter', 'spirit' or 'nature*'. (Behnke, 151)

In a manuscript from 1921, Husserl reflects on this particularity: "

> *My body is given to me on the one hand as a physical thing (real-causal spatial thing) and on the other as a body. We have physical experience (perception) of it, but we also*

[69] For an in depth research on this idea, see Rabanaque, Luis, "The body as noematic bridge between nature and culture" in Vandevelde & Luft (eds), *Epistemology, Archaeology, Ethics. Current investigations of Husserl's corpus*, Continuum, 2010

have somatological perception of it. Regarding the latter, the main problem is: What is the meaning-structure of this perception (…) (Hua 14, 56)[70]

The question that this chapter opens up can be formulated as follows: If the body as a *freely moving body* is experienced in the first person, and the body as *material* body is experienced in the third person, what type of perspective would be fitting for this 'middle point', if it is in fact a separate category?

7.3 The ambiguity of the lived body

If it is possible to pose the previous question it is because reflection on embodiment shows it is difficult to abstract what is given subjectively in the experience of my body from its constitution as an objective reality. Rather, experience of embodiment is given in a spectrum in which these two forms are ideal poles that could never be fully reached: "*There is neither a pure existence of body-as-subject nor of body-as-object. The former would amount to a disembodied and purely feeling state of the mind, while the latter would be the corpse as the completely corporified and deanimated body.*" (Breyer 2017, 739).[71]

The phenomenological evidence of this difficulty can be located in the phenomenon of double sensation, by which a perceiving body perceives itself, both from the inside as from the outside. In *Ideas 2*, Husserl gives the famous example of one hand touching the other to illustrate this phenomenon: while the touching hand experiences certain sensations that disclose properties of the touched hand (as they would of any touched object) thus constituting the touched hand as a

[70] Mein Leib ist mir einerseits als physische Ding (real-kausales Raumding) gegeben und andererseits als Leib. Wir haben von ihm physische Erfahrung (Wahrnehmung), wir haben aber auch von ihm somatologische Wahrnehmung. Hinsichtlich der letzteren ist es das Hauptproblem: Welches ist die Sinnesstruktur dieser Wahrnehmung (…)

[71] A potential counter-example of an experience where my body is given in these separate modes is an out-of-body experience. According to Michela Summa (2014) in these types of experiences I perceive my own body as an object, while *being* my body as subject. This is because, in order to see my own body from the outside, I need to remain oriented spatially as the 'phantom body' that is floating above my objective body; and so I would still have the subjective experience of my body as zero-point of orientation. I would argue that the body I look at from above is not in fact my own body as objective, but a body that I imagine looking like me. In fact, it would be impossible to experience my own body truly as an exterior object, since that would entail the possibility of experiencing all its sides, including those that are by principle inaccessible to me.

physical thing, and the touched hand is at the receiving end of internal sensings – it feels the pressure, the localization of the touching, etc.– both can turn into the other while merely focusing on one type of sensations or the other. According to Husserl, this shows that:

> *the body is originally constituted in a double way: first, it is a physical thing,* matter*; it has its extension, in which are included its real properties, its colour, smoothness, hardness, warmth, and whatever other material qualities of that kind there are. Secondly, I find on it, and I sense "on" it and "in" it: warmth on the back of the hand, coldness in the feet, sensations of touch in the fingertips*. (Hua 4, 145; Husserl 1989, 153).

Moreover, in the case of me touching my own body, the localization of sensations that is felt from the inside is constituted in conjunction with the constitution of the place in which the body as a thing is touched from the outside (Bernet 2013, 49).

Not just in the case of a direct perception of one's own body, but in every perception, the body is co-perceived, although in an imperfect way (Hua 5, 124). My own body is at the limit of every perception, or, as Husserl says, it is the *zero-point* of orientation [Nullpunkt der Orientierung], in the sense that it is always "here" and thus works as the centre of the field of perception in relation to which everything else is organized spatially. While being an object itself, it holds a privileged place, it is a "*subjective object*" (Hua 5, 124) and this contributes to its ambiguous constitution:

> *Among all things, my body is the closest to me, the closest to perception, the closest to my feeling and will. And so I, the functioning ego, am in a special way united with him in front of all other objects in the surrounding world. It is, in its own and different ways, the centre, the centred object, functioning in the middle, and becomes, even when being itself an object (opposite to me), the centre of function for all other objects (…)* (Hua 14, 59)[72]

[72] Mein Leib ist mir unter allen Dingen das Nächste, das Nächste der Wahrnehmung, das Nächste meinem Gefühl und Willen. Und so bin ich, das fungierende Ich, vor allen andern umweltlichen Objekten mit ihm in besonderer Weise einig. Er ist, in eigener Weise und verschiedener,

The body is the centre of orientation for every perception and every action, and it holds in this sense a fundamental role regarding our practical involvement in the life-world. It is also an expressive unity, and Husserl considers this expressiveness as an indication of the unity of body and spirit (Hua 4, 241), and a way of understanding and being understood by other people (Hua 4, 196). Bodily sensations of pleasure and pain are also at the basis of value judgments, and this could all amount to a certain experience of nature through our lived body in the spiritual world (Dzwiza 2019).

7.4 The body and the first person

In the previous chapter, I presented Crowell's reading of Husserl's naturalistic assumption. According to Crowell, Husserl mistakenly identified the person with the human being and this prevented him from considering the person as the true constituting subject, that in Crowell's reading was self-constituting through *praxis* in a much more Heideggerian fashion (a subject that constitutes through her dealings with a world that she is already involved with). Crowell argues that, even when embodied, the person's body is not constituted (Crowell 2014, 41) and so the person is not to be identified with the human being. With this in mind, he distinguishes two senses of *Leib* that he claims Husserl conflates, and advocates to keep only one within the realm of the transcendental:

> *On the one hand,* Leib *is that which incorporates, as it were, the person's ability to try—its skills and habitualities; its 'I can'—which opens up the practically normative space of apperception necessary for the constitution of meaning. Let us call this 'lived body: On the other hand,* Leib *is the 'animate organism the body that belongs to constituted nature as part of the pre-given world. Let us call this 'living body'. Recognizing this ambiguity has implications for our understanding of consciousness, for while it is still possible to conceive consciousness as a distinct stratum of the* living *body-for instance, one can distinguish between the living body and the corpse by appeal to the presence or absence of consciousness as psyche-it is no longer possible to distinguish between*

Mittelpunkt, in der Mitte stehendes Objekt, fungierend habe ich es in der Mitte und Wird es, obschon selbst schon Objekt (mir gegenüber), zum Funktionszentrum für alle andern Objekte (…)

*constituting consciousness (*Vermögens-ich*) and the* lived *body. (Crowell 2012, 42)*

The reason why Crowell considers the identification of constituting subjectivity with the human being mistaken or even dangerous is that it would mean constituting subjectivity (meaning-giving consciousness) could be studied as an object of the natural sciences. Indeed, the whole point of Husserlian phenomenology was to go against the naturalization of meaning and stress the first-personal givenness of consciousness to avoid scientific reductionism; and in this sense Crowell is right to be concerned. In fact, this stance is arguably most faithful to Husserl's own thought, whose commitment to the first personal perspective and transcendental idealism run deeper than anything else. In a manuscript from 1908 he describes the body as "*a certain system of real and possible sensations*" [ein gewisses System wirklicher und möglicher Empfindungen] (Hua 13, 5) and dismisses on this ground the idea of a dependency of consciousness on the body. In a way, everything that was said about Husserl's view of death so far shows precisely this: that the body should not be thought of as a condition of possibility for consciousness. However, as I will propose, challenging the sharp division between first-personal and third-personal givenness of the body does not necessarily entail their conflation.

Crowell's argument relies heavily on the possibility of such sharp distinction between subjectively lived and objectively lived embodiment. In other articles he complements this view by arguing that everything that can be presented as 'natural' in myself is merely something that is *constituted as* natural *by* myself and thus cannot be considered proof of my own involvement with a general nature conceived as shared with other living beings (Crowell 2014). This presupposes that the "myself" that constitutes can be distinctively identified outside this natural involvement. For Husserl, this would be problematic since embodiment is entangled with nature to the point that one cannot be considered without the other:

Now one could ask what it is like if I keep my body and all the rest of nature disappears, or if I keep a nature and my body disappears. But there it would have to be shown that nature is only possible in unity with a body too, and that a body is hardly conceivable

without a more extensive nature (Hua 14, 98)[73].

At the same time, Husserl denies that causal explanations can account for bodily consciousness, and so he faces the problem of explaining "*the relations of the irreal, of an event in the subjective sphere, with something real, the Body: then mediately the relations with an external real thing which is in a real, hence causal, connection with the Body.*" (Hua 4, 65; Husserl 1989, 70). In order for the body to be considered as "*a "turning point" where the causal relations are transformed into conditional relations between the external world and the Bodily-psychic subject*" (Hua 4, 161; Husserl 1989, 169), it must be reconsidered in light of its fundamental ambiguity.

Regarding limit-cases, one of the consequences of this classic Husserlian approach to embodiment is that it is not able to provide us with a criterion for telling death and sleep apart. Indeed, from a purely first-personal perspective, all forms of unconsciousness are the same. Taking inspiration from the Merleau-Pontian account of temporality via Didier Franck's *Chair et corps* and the notion of the flesh [*la chair*] as the passive locus of time-constitution, Matthieu Mavridis (1997) claims that it is bodily activity that allows us to tell apart sleep from death, which from the Husserlian perspective get conflated. In an article on the subject, he states that it is simply the difference between the living body of the sleeping person and the cadaver that marks the distinction between the potentiality of an ego (in the case of sleep), and its absolute end. It is because a sleeping subject breathes and moves that it differs from a dead one, and this is so from the point of view of the conditions for empathy and not from a naturalistic discourse. This means that there is a passive recognition of another functioning subject that differs when we face a sleeping person or a dead body, where the former shows up as embodying a subject, and the latter as mere materiality (Mavridis 1997, 209-10). In order to be able to make this distinction in phenomenological analysis, we would need to admit as valid certain statements about the first person that stem from third-personal

[73] Nun könnte man noch fragen, wie ist es, wenn ich meinen Leib behalte, und die ganze übrige Natur verschwindet, oder, wenn ich eine Natur behalte und mein Leib verschwindet. Doch da wäre zu zeigen, dass eine Natur nur möglich ist in eins mit einem Leib, für den sie erfahrenden, und dass ein Leib für sich ohne weiterreichende Natur wohl schwerlich noch denkbar ist.

observation. This would be possible if, unlike in Husserl, the passive level of temporalization is embodied and thus presents the ambiguous character of the body: "*The architectonic ambiguity of the flesh, neither pure noema nor pure noesis*" (Mavridis 1997, 209). This would allow for the intersubjective solution to be entirely effective, since it gives validity to something like an identification of a "primal ego" "from the outside". In relation to sleep we can find one of the rare passages where Husserl seems to grant the organic body a constituting character:

> *I wake up someone sleeping. I give him a bodily shake. I call aloud to him, and so on. The body [is] the index for psycho-physical stimuli [Reize]. It is the index for a lawfulness of the binding of hyletic prominences to the organic embodiment in its natural objective being—indeed, the lawfulness that makes possible the immanent temporal order, the grouping of hyletic data [and, hence] worldly apperception*. (Hua/Mat 8, 102)[74]

This shows to what extent limit cases subvert the normal standards that Husserl holds true, and cry for a serious consideration of the role of the body that stresses its ambiguity. Notably, it is an indication of the theoretical limitations that come with maintaining a canonical Husserlian perspective on certain key topics. Does this mean that, at this point, we must definitely depart from Husserl? Perhaps the way Merleau-Ponty did? I argue that this is not necessary. Although we need to reject some of Husserl's moves, this should not amount to breaking away from the two basic Husserlian principles of intuitive givenness and first-personal evidence.

7.5 The body of norms

The double character of the body ties up with Husserl's inquiries into genetic phenomenology and habit formation through repeated experiences. The idea that every experience gets sedimented and contributes to shaping anticipations and to

[74] Den Schlafenden wecke ich, ich schüttle ihn etwa leiblich, ich rufe ihn laut etc.; der Leib, Index für psychophysische Reize, Index für eine Gesetzmäßigkeit der Bindung seiner hyletischen Abhebungen an die organische Leiblichkeit in ihrem naturalen objektiven Sein; und zwar eine solche Gesetzmäßigkeit, daß die immanent-zeitliche Ordnung, Gruppierung der hyletischen Daten mundane Apperzeption ermöglicht. *Present translation by James Mensch in "Birth, death and sleep. Limit problems and the paradox of phenomenology" (Forthcoming)*

form a certain style of experience and of the world remains abstract until we focus on the actual procedures which allow for such a thing to happen. Perceptive habits are formed on the level of the passive body; experiences that are repeated allow us to develop skills and abilities that shape the way we see the world. What Husserl calls the '*I-can*' (Hua 4, 257; Husserl 1989, 266) is the set of abilities that are experienced as available to the embodied subject at any given time and that form the background of every possible experience. These skills don't only refer to complex abilities like playing the piano or dancing *ballet* but go all the way down to how we talk, walk and see things. Husserl's studies on the notions of normality and normativity show that even in the most basic level there are underlying norms that orient experience towards a certain notion of optimality (Hua 4, 59; Husserl 1989, 64). In the case of visual perception, for example, certain lighting conditions are considered optimal for obtaining a clear view of an object. The clearest and fullest perception of the object represents the *optimum*[75]. Normality in perception is a combination of this optimality and of concordance, which is the coherence of a particular experience of an object with other experiences of the same object and with the rest of experience in general. It then works as an organizing principle that presents us with a coherent, well-adjusted experience of the world, and so it is already a normative concept. As far as optimality goes, the criterion for determining what is optimal is given by an intersubjective ruling. Husserl talks about a familiar world (*Heimwelt*) to refer to the social environment we are accustomed to, and a strange world (*Fremde Welt*) to refer to foreign communities and their own intersubjective norms (Hua 15, 214). Our familiar world provides the criteria for a normal experience, but the rules that are effective in it need to be internalized and operate "from within". As Joona Taipale (2012) points out this creates a tension between the primordial and the intersubjective levels of normality, which Husserl would settle in favour of "solitary normality".

This means that, even if intersubjectivity is the source of the type of normativity that governs our personal experience, it is necessary that we internalize those rules

[75] „Das Optimum ist das Erscheinende in der besten Akkomodation, die den Charakter eines Näherbringens hat'' Ms. D 13 I, 81ª, quoted by Taipale, 2012, 52

ourselves in order for them to be effective. The key here is, once again, the meaning of "ourselves". And so while phenomenology can provide the analyses of how cultural norms are literally incorporated all the way through to the most basic levels of experience, it remains a point of contention whether this means the individual loses its privileged position. On the basis of Husserl's general discussions about normality in later manuscripts, Maren Wehrle shows that "*Individual perceptions and actions are embedded within experiential horizons that go far beyond current perception; they are motivated and have to be in accordance with broader cultural and historical horizons."* (Wehrle 2015, 136). Our bodily habits are a reflection of our community and familiar environment not only because we form them partly by mirroring those around us, but also because we inherit a natural and cultural past that manifests itself in them. A possible way of accounting for this reading–one that is not explicit in Husserl's work—is to turn to the instinctive intersubjective bonds that Husserl finds operating both at the level of the infant Ego and of the adult passive Ego, in his generative phenomenology. These are responsible for the transmission of tradition, and provide us with sedimented senses that do not stem from habitualities formed during our lifetime (Hua 15, 609).

In the context of his reflection on normality, Husserl suggests another account of death as an abnormality or as the limit of bodily normality: "*an anomaly that destroys the biophysical individual, biophysical death, in which the body ceases to be truly a body and to appresent a psychic life at all*." [eine Anomalie, die das biophysische Individuum zerstört, den biophysischen Tod, in dem der Leib aufhört wirklich Leib zu sein und überhaupt ein Seelenleben zu appräsentieren.] (Hua 14, 69). As Andrea Staiti puts it, however, death is a "*normal anomaly*" (Staiti 2014, 278) in the sense that, even if not an everyday event, it is to be expected eventually, and there are typical ways in which we deal with it when it affects people close to us. I would argue, moreover, that it is not an anomaly at all, but in fact we become aware of death as a part of the normality of life, under some specific cultural characteristics. Let's recall that in the genetic approach to limits, Husserl considered death to be unconceivable for the transcendental subject. However, the discussion of normality allows us to see that, considered from the point of view of a transcendental person that is involved in a life-world, death acquires its rightful

place in any horizon of experience, even if it is a “horizon of potential abnormalities” (Ciocan 2017, 178).

We have seen in the chapter on death that Husserl deals with some of these issues in his generative writings, but even though he recognizes the presence of senses that are inherited through tradition, he redirects all intersubjective formations to my primordial constitution of others. That means that even when he points back to the activity of a transcendental community, this community rests on the shoulders of the primal I; and so, as Taipale pointed out, the primordial level of normality precedes the intersubjective one. What the bodily dimension of normativity can bring to this scene is a more concrete understanding of the subject in her involvement with the world and others, one that defies the possibility of separating these two levels of normality. If it is true that for Husserl “*I myself [am] the primal norm constitutionally for all human beings*” (Hua 1, 154; Husserl 1960, 126); when the description of myself as constituting subject is made to include embodiment in the sense discussed above (namely as already including social norms in it), separating the two orders can only mean performing an abstraction on the concrete unity of the embodied subject. Moreover, the ambiguity of the body shows that there is a fundamental alterity within myself, that makes it harder to speak of a sphere of ownness where the Other would be constituted: “As soon as we adopt the standpoint of the body and proceed from a bodily self which is “not master in its own house”, the Other arises as co-original with myself and to some extent as earlier than myself”. (Waldenfels 2007, 81).

7.6 Merleau-Ponty’s phantom limb

A lot of what has been said about the body so far echoes some of Merleau-Ponty’s most important contributions to post-Husserlian phenomenology, and indeed in many ways Merleau-Ponty’s reading and reinterpretation of Husserl aligns with the results of this research. In *Phénoménologie de la perception*, embodiment is considered from the point of view of the ontological ambiguity that, as I suggest here, Husserl already pointed at but did not fully explore, possibly

because it would have meant rethinking some fundamental principles of his own method. What Merleau-Ponty deals with under the title of "being-in-the-world" is the type of bodily being that cannot be defined in terms of either first- or third-personal perspectives:

> *Because it is a pre-objective perspective, being in the world can be distinguished from every third-person process, from every modality of the* res extensa*, as well as from every* cogitatio*, from every first person form of knowledge–and this is why "being in the world" will be able to establish the junction of the "psychical" and the 'physiological.'* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 82)

In order to illustrate this junction, Merleau-Ponty focuses on the phenomenon of the phantom limb, that is, on the experience of a part of my body that is neither present nor absent, and on the difficulty that this kind of phenomenon creates for both psychological and physiological explanations. The phantom limb shows, on the one hand, that having a body means being engaged with the world and certain objects in a particular sense that relates to my own practical field. The loss of a limb in my body as material object does not immediately reconfigure my practical field and so I find myself still attempting to accomplish the same tasks as before and not being able to. This shows that the experience of my body goes beyond what a naturalistic view would portray. On the other hand, there is what Merleau-Ponty calls "*regions of silence*" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 84) in the totality of my body, which is a way of expressing the impersonal character under which I experience it. The resistance that my own body opposes my active initiatives, the passive processes to which I owe my subsistence and that work incessantly in the background of my bodily experience, are for Merleau-Ponty marks of my body's belonging to a natural world, or a world that is broader than the spiritual one:

> *A margin of almost impersonal existence thus appears around our personal existence, which, so to speak, is taken for granted, and to which I entrust the care of keeping me alive. Around the human world that each of us has fashioned, there appears a general world to which we must first belong in order to be able to enclose ourselves within a particular milieu of a love or an ambition.* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 86)

The phenomenon of the phantom limb presents some similarities with the case

of death, insofar as the latter can be thought of in terms of an absence felt in our bodily presence. When Husserl speaks of the analogical constitution of our own death, he refers to phenomena that are of an eminently bodily nature like sickness, aging, and sleep. It is in the experience of the weakening of my body's strength and my own sense of agency over it that I can get an approximate feeling of what dying would be like, as an experience that I can and will go through as an embodied being in the world. Moreover, even when this type of analogical constitution is not given in my sphere of ownness, the analogical constitution through others in the life-world is already present, and as we have seen, this intersubjective implication is achieved through the–bodily—incorporation of social norms, which include death as a special case. This bodily dimension of the experience of my own death cannot be reduced to either a third-personal ascription of a possible event in my body seen as a material *Körper*, nor is it exactly a first-personal experience of death, since this would be impossible.

7.7 The body and time

If we follow Merleau-Ponty's interpretation, we also find that the impersonal existence he attributes to the body is understood in terms of an "anonymous" character and it is intimately entangled with the structure of time. In this sense it holds a strong resemblance to Husserl's notion of the primal Ego in that they both refer to the spontaneous yet passive accomplishments of temporality that serve as the basis for the constitution of objects *in* time. But if we think of the primal Ego as what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the anonymous layer of the habitual body, what we would have is a pre-personal consciousness that is nevertheless embodied. The spontaneously lived body is the bearer of the subject's history and intersubjective involvement, and it functions by passively expressing all these sedimented senses: "*The domain of our body includes all that really has to do with me without being done by me*." (Waldenfels 2007, 75). So it is pre-personal in the sense that there is no thematic awareness of the self in its spontaneity, but in an important sense it is not, since it includes the person's world. As Sara Heinämaa understands it: "*Thus understood, perception is "prepersonal," not in the sense of*

being an egoless stream or a collective accomplishment of several simultaneous subjects but in the sense of having a history and a 'prehistory,' as Merleau-Ponty states." (Heinämaa 2015, 125). Because the habitual body expresses previously acquired senses and dispositions, when we turn to it reflectively we discover our past, and so the objective dimension of embodiment becomes a key to understanding our temporality: "*Thus, to summarize, the ambiguity of being-in-the-world is expressed by the ambiguity of our body, and this latter is understood through the ambiguity of time*." (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 87)

Along the same line, Maren Wehrle argues that, at its most basic level, time-constitution is already bodily. She takes the notion of *operative intentionality* from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty understood as a "*general intentional directedness or embodied action and engagement"* (Wehrle 2020, 506), and of *implicit time* (Fuchs 2006) to describe what elsewhere in this dissertation we have discussed under the notion of absolute time-flow, namely, the most basic level of self-awareness that is a condition of possibility for our experience of temporal objects. Embodiment and time are entangled in such a way that "*temporal constitution concretely takes place in the lived body's actual performance of movements*" and "*The lived body is thereby the concrete realization of lived time*." (Wehrle 2020, 506/508

In our discussion in chapter 5, we found that Husserl's genetic inquiries on time-constitution led to an *absolute fact* that could not be further explained. The presupposition of a primal I was introduced as a theoretical device to account for this absolute fact of experience. According to Ronald Bruzina, the fact that primal temporalization requires an impressional element to which the primal I turns in order to retain it–thus originating the flow of time—, meant that Husserl's theory required a certain "naturalism" (Bruzina 2010, 118). Indeed, if primal impression is given to our bodily senses, we would have to say that the stream of time is dependent on the body.

In a similar line, Wehrle argues that this absolutely functioning intentionality must be bodily

because, firstly, every time consciousness relies on impressions, and thus affection and

sensual receptivity that presupposes a body with localized sensations. Secondly, all object perception presupposes a moving body with kinaesthethic skills, that is, the fact that perception is dependent on potential movement and action (…) (Wehrle 2020, 505).

We can now say that these two arguments can be tied together in virtue of the inseparability of the subjective and the objective aspect of the body, which can be translated in terms of our necessary belonging to an objective world while being constituting subjects of the world. The inseparability of these two orders of self-experience is what prevents us from adopting two types of solutions I will consider in the following section: one is Crowell's proposal to consider the lived body as a purely subjective experience. This position represents a strong defence of the transcendental principle that cannot, however, accommodate its ambiguous character. As a counterpoint I will analyse Merleau-Ponty's stance, which, I will argue, commits the opposite excess.

7.8 Beyond first and third person

What these reflections on time and embodiment show is that, while I can only be an object in the world if I am already a subject that constitutes herself as such, the opposite is true as well: I can only be a subject for the world if I am first a body that is susceptible of sensory affection. Furthermore, since "pure" subjectivity is only ever given retrospectively, it can only be grasped as a non-object once it becomes objectified. This is what Husserl referred to as the paradox of the living present, and what it shows is the intimate relation and the interdependency of the anonymous functioning subject and the objective person. When thinking about subjectivity as a primal Ego that is not embodied, Husserl's problem was to then try to connect this pre-personal dimension with the personal, embodied subject in the world. The link between these two, not being given from the start, remained mysterious; whereas if we consider that the pre-personal arises at once with the person we can think of the unity of this lived body, already subjective and objective in itself, to not be something else that would help bridge the subjective and the objective—that is to say not a substance or a basis where two things come together—but the unity itself, the concrete whole of subjectivity.

In Husserl's view, the first person had to be disembodied because the body, in its ambiguity, was already infested by a dimension of objectivity. The body is from the start susceptible of being considered in third-personal terms, and thus it could not belong in the primordial sphere. But because embodiment is so fundamental for constitution, it is also problematic to consider it merely as a constituted achievement of the subject. Crowell's proposal of an embodied transcendental subject, which is neither objective nor natural, aimed at reconciling the purity of the first person with the fundamentality of embodiment, but it accentuated the gap between mental and physical states.

Methodologically, questioning the purity of the first-personal standpoint does not immediately lead to a third-personal approach such as the one of the natural sciences, but it is a gateway to possibly understanding why the same kind of being can be thought of through both perspectives. As Rudolf Bernet states: "*It is because the* Leib *that feels itself touched simultaneously appears from the outside as* Leibkörper *that the latter can also be a* Körper *that is subject to physical and neurophysiological laws*." (Bernet 2013, 53). The ambiguous status of the body calls for a different or broader perspective on the subject. In the experience of double sensation lies the stepping stone for elaborating on such a mixed perspective without forfeiting intuitive givenness, since it presents us with an intimate experience of the foreign and vice versa. It can thus be said to provide us with an intuitive presentation of the entanglement of first and third-personal perspectives. This type of experience might not give us grounds to completely abandon the first personal perspective, although it does challenge its purity. At this point, and insofar as our intuitive experience is giving us reason to doubt the integrity of the first personal perspective, these two principles of Husserlian methodology that I have been trying to maintain appear to be at odds with each other. However, a balance may be achieved. While the experience of embodiment might undermine the stability of the first-personal perspective, it is necessary to remind ourselves once again that intuitive evidence is not given in a void, but in first-personal experience. Neither one of these principles should be placed above the other, but complement each other in phenomenological work.

What I have tried to show so far is that, while concrete experience cannot be analysed in third-personal terms, it also exceeds first-personal givenness, at least in the way it is thematized by Husserl–that is, as ultimately leading back to the primal Ego. The type of practical, enworlded, embodied *praxis* that the person carries out in the life-world requires a broader idea of the givenness of experience. Husserl tried to achieve this by broadening the scope of the transcendental, by including within the transcendental sphere things like norms, instincts, impulses, emotions, etc. to the point of committing to a sort of "hyper-transcendentalism" (Montavont 1999, 282). But even in the context of generative inquiries, intersubjective accomplishments always necessarily lead back to an individual stream of consciousness.

We can summarize our findings regarding embodiment as follows:

a) Experience of my own embodiment is given as neither purely subjective nor purely objective, but as preceding this polar opposition.

b) embodiment is not given in a secondary way as a part of the process of self-objectification that a previously disembodied consciousness performs on herself; but is a necessary condition for any constituting activity. The body is already present at the most basic levels of experience.

c) the ambiguity that characterizes bodily consciousness, when applied to the subject at the most basic level of constitution, challenges the first-personal perspective not only on embodiment but as a whole. Not only does experience in the first-person allow for an objectification of ourselves; but an objective, third-personal stance about oneself is also necessary in order to have a first-personal, lived experience of oneself.

Conclusions to part 2

After having examined four fundamental notions related to subjectivity, we have come to the conclusion that constituting consciousness cannot be accounted for in either/or terms. We are at once subjects and objects in the world because those two terms cannot exist separately. Even though this was always true regarding our objective self, Husserl thoroughly defended the idea of a subject that is independent of her body and the world, whether in the form of a primal I or a phenomenological onlooker. These two notions are presupposed but not intuited, and they are postulated as a way of proving the primacy of consciousness over nature. While the former can only arise together with the temporal ego, and thus its foundational character is called upon revision; the latter is a methodological construct that ultimately depends on the practical engagement of the person performing the epoché in the life-world. Neither can stand independently, and so neither can be used as a reason to postulate the immortality of consciousness.

When we inquire into the genesis of experience, what we find is an insurmountable factum, namely the existence of the ego and its involvement in the world. This factum would only endanger the integrity of the phenomenological method if we consider, as Husserl seems to do, that the supposed tension between consciousness and nature must be settled in one direction or the other. Rather than this, we have come to rediscover the fundamental character of the correlation.

Part 3

The examination of subjectivity that I have explored in the last part is a necessary step into bridging the gap between transcendental and empirical subject, and between consciousness and nature, in order to reconsider mortality of subjectivity as a whole. In this last part, I reconsider the notion of Nature in light of what has been examined so far, and present the results regarding subjectivity and death in an organized manner. After part 1, which presented the problem of death and the limitations of Husserl's approach to it, part 2 went deeper into the basis of the problematic and laid the ground for a new understanding; this part will now present my own alternative and thesis regarding death. This requires, not only that I reconsider the topic of nature and subjectivity in light of previous results, but that I take a final stand regarding the methodological constraints of the transcendental principle and the intuitive access to experience, achieving a balance that avoids both the extreme idealistic account that Husserl arguably fails to overcome, and the complete abandonment of the transcendental standpoint that characterises the French tradition. This will allow me to maintain the Husserlian rules beyond Husserl.

Chapter 8: Nature

"Autant que par le tourbillon de la conscience absolue, la pensée de Husserl est attirée par l'eccéité de la Nature"

Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, Le philosophe et son ombre*

In this chapter, I consider what Husserl's understanding of subjectivity, as it was displayed in our last section, owes to his —and the phenomenological tradition in general— understanding of Nature. Even while the approach to Nature suffers changes throughout Husserl's work, the idea of the natural world as a disenchanted realm of physical things continues to have an influence on his dealings with constituting subjectivity. A reconsideration of the notion of Nature that reconciles it with constitution would allow us to make sense of limits as "natural" in a new sense of the word, namely one that considers them a part of the primal fact of life.

8.1 Introduction

There might have been a time when there was no consciousness in the world, when mute nature was all there was, and it was there with no one to look at it. This is what science tells us. But that moment in time (if we can indeed refer to something prior to the upsurge of conscious subjectivity as being "in time") can only be named now, can only have meaning once subjectivity has made its appearance. Did it exist before? And if so, in what sense of "exist"? When phenomenology enquires about the meaning of 'being', it brings out its necessary entanglement with subjectivity; and if being is always being for consciousness, then the question about the being of nature prior to conscious thought becomes more difficult. According to Bataille (1986), a group of intellectuals including Merleau-Ponty, discussed this matter on a late night at a Parisian bar, where they famously asked "*Was there a sun before men existed?*". Merleau-Ponty answered

in the negative, as he does in *Phenomenology of Perception*, claiming that there is no world without a being in the world (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 456; Vrahimis 2013, 87)

From the perspective of transcendental phenomenology, being something amounts to being given as something to consciousness. What the world and things are, are 'sense-formations' correlative to transcendental subjectivity. Nature is not the exception; it too draws its meaning from the constituting activity of the subject, that is to say that what nature is can only be unveiled insofar as it is given to consciousness. However, even if every transcendental phenomenologist were to agree on this basic insight, nature would remain a peculiar notion. In the natural attitude we think of ourselves as persons, and the scientific-naturalistic attitude refines and accentuates that understanding. Only when we perform the *epoché* do we realize that we are natural only insofar as we constitute ourselves as such, and therefore we are not primarily, not originally, not *really* natural. As Husserl states in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, "*as a component pertaining to my world-apperception, it [the ownness of "*my psyche*"] is something transcendentally secondary"* (Hua 1, 131; Husserl 1960, 100).

The conflict between the natural and the phenomenological attitude is, of course, ubiquitous; but in this case it is even more pressing since the question of the being of nature is inevitably intertwined with the question of our own being as constituting subjects insofar as nature is often presented as the limit of constitution.

I have started this dissertation by considering the tension between the first and the third-personal approaches to consciousness, that in Husserl's work can also be translated as a tension between transcendental subjectivity and her self-objectification as a human being, the two forms of the subject involved in the paradox of subjectivity. Husserl's phenomenology considered as transcendental idealism, even when progressively constricted by the advance of an existential perspective on the subject, remains in the end faithful to the absoluteness of the constituting subject considered as pure consciousness. The path we have taken so far has led to reconsidering these types of statements on the basis of the

ambiguity of the subject as embodied and part of a life-world. We found that in order to explain how time, and accordingly how experience, can take place, we have to place the body already at bottom-most level of constitution. It is because we are at once subject and object in the world, and neither pole can exist independently, that we must understand our way of being as the intertwinement of these two types of self-awareness.

This movement, however, must be met by a different idea of nature. According to Bernhard Waldenfels, the notion of the subject that we have been contesting so far arises in correlation to a specific notion of nature:

> *Indeed the destiny of the modern era is deeply marked by the fact that the mathematization of nature and the enthronement of the ego arose together and reinforce each other. Due to this two-fold process, everything that pertains to our bodily existence is twice overshadowed–by an autonomous subject and by a calculable nature.* (Waldenfels 2007, 70).

In this chapter, I will explore the notion of nature and inquire into a possible understanding of it that is not necessarily opposed to constitution.

Husserl deals with the question of nature on various occasions throughout his work, generally in the context of considering the relationship between nature and spirit, which can be broadly defined as the realm of what is properly human (meaning, values, culture, history) and its consequences for the organization of science. Husserl's main goal throughout his dealings with the subject of nature is to contest the naturalistic notion of an absolute nature that is independent of subjectivity. However, his own depictions of nature share some features with this scientific notion that are detrimental for bridging the gap that opposes nature and constitution, namely the idea of nature as a disenchanted realm of the mere physical. Finding a better notion of nature is perceived both by the tradition in phenomenology and in philosophy of mind as a way to help bridge the explanatory gap insofar as it is the strict opposition between nature and spirit that is at the root of the conflicting perspectives on subjectivity. As John McDowell puts it:

If we conceive nature in such a way that delineating something's natural character contrasts with placing something in the space of reasons, we can no longer take in stride the idea that powers to acquire knowledge are part of our natural endowment. Knowing, as a case of occupying a normative status, can no longer be seen as a natural phenomenon. And now it is easy for knowing to seem mysterious. (…). (McDowell 2009, 258-259).

Interestingly enough, Roman Ingarden points to the conception of the fundamental difference between the spatiality of the physical thing and the intentionality of experience as one of the theoretical *decisions* that leads Husserl to his idealistic position (Ingarden 1975, 29).

In the following, I will explore the treatment of nature present in Husserl's own work. A first approach to it can be characterized as the opposition between the personalistic and the naturalistic realms, in which the former reveals itself to be foundational for the other. In later approaches to the subject, once the life-world has appeared as a key interpretative notion, this seems to change as nature and spirit are seen as abstractions and their fundamental entanglement stressed. However, while this perspective may challenge the privilege of spirit over nature, from a phenomenological perspective it does not yet place subjectivity in the midst of this entanglement, but rather, above it. After reviewing both these positions, I will turn to different attempts from the field of contemporary phenomenology and philosophy of mind to place meaning and intentionality already in nature and try to reconcile phenomenology with science by naturalizing phenomenological inquiry. I will argue that, while it is fruitful to recognize intentional patterns in other forms of life, these approaches neglect to problematize the type of access we have to these findings. The missing piece is a properly phenomenological way of reaching validation for these approaches, and in order to find that, we need to redefine the subject along the lines that we have been exploring, and place it in nature, understood as the meaningful space of our limited existence.

8.2 Naturalistic nature

Because they span the course of many years, some of Husserl's views seem to become reversed at times as he reaches more clarity about his own philosophical approach. A consistent framework however is the need to distinguish phenomenologically between the domains of different sciences, thus getting involved in a debate of his time. The first notion takes nature as the object of natural science, and considers it the product of the spirit's constitution. Although dealing with a scientific notion of nature, Husserl finds its origin in pre-scientific experience (Hua 4, 2; Husserl 1989, 4).

The first type of approach to the topic of nature in Husserl's work can be found mainly in *Ideas II* (Hua 4) and in the *Nature and Spirit* lectures of 1919 (Hua/Mat 4). In this context, nature is first presented as the correlate of a particular attitude, namely the scientific-naturalistic attitude defined in opposition to the personalistic one. As we have seen, these two attitudes focus on two different regions or *strata* of the world, the natural and the spiritual realms. The natural would be the most basic of these levels, the purely physical substratum of "*every possible external concrete individual*" (Hua/Mat 4, 120), consisting of its materiality and its spatio-temporal location and tied to the laws of causality; the realm of "mere things" as opposed to the spiritual world of values and social meanings: "*Nature in a specific sense, the subject of natural science, are the mere things, the things as mere nature, that is the res extensae*" [Natur im spezifischen Sinn, das Thema der Naturwissenschaft, sind die bloßen Dinge, die Dinge als bloße Natur, d.i. die res extensae] (Hua/Mat 4, 121). Described in this way, nature is completely disenchanted and portrays itself as devoid of meaning: "*it is characteristic of these objects [natural objects] that a valuing consciousness, as "constituting" has contributed nothing to their essential composition, that is, to the content of their sense*." (Hua 4, 26; Husserl 1989, 28). This is a characterization of nature that excludes and opposes spirit, and that can be traced back to the Cartesian rationalist ontology: "*Roughly, in Descartes's philosophy material nature is devoid of meaning because what actively organizes nature–God, God's ideas–is external to it."* (Morris 2013, 320). This Cartesian organization is at the basis of the modern scientific view of the world, as Husserl sees it (Hua 6, 74 ff.).

As Ulrich Melle (1996) points out, and as I suggested at the beginning of this thesis, Husserl's concern with scientific naturalism is of an ethical nature, since he considers the mechanistic view of the world that science endorses to be undermining human freedom. As a fragment from *First philosophy* shows:

> *Instead of opening wide for man the gates of genuine freedom and offering its empowering tools, science seemingly transforms man itself in a complex of facts bereft of freedom. Science seemingly subordinates man to a meaningless world-machinery. It explains man in terms of a merely subordinated machine in the world-machinery. Instead of providing man with scientific "directions towards a blessed life*" [. . .] *science turns nature and freedom into an incomprehensible antinomy.* (Hua 8, 230-231)[76]

In spite of being extremely critical of scientific naturalism, Husserl himself seems to share a common perspective with it about what 'nature' is. Not only does *Ideas 2* paint a picture of the subject as being founded upon a lower stratum made of mere materiality[77] that leads Husserl to say that "*the spirit can be grasped as dependent on nature*" (Hua 4, 297; Husserl 1989, 311), but there are several places in which Husserl displays this type of naturalistic perspective. In a manuscript from 1919 related to his course on *Nature and Spirit* he speaks of nature as being "*perceptually given in pure receptivity*" [wahrnemungsmäβig gegeben in reiner Rezeptivität] without the intervention of egoic acts (Hua 25, 329). In a similar vein, we have seen that Husserl talks about the body and soul as a nexus, a middle point or a turning point between the realms of spirit and nature in the 1919 course on spirit and nature, a view that speaks to a strong separation of realms–and therefore, a non-spiritual nature—that could come into contact only *a posteriori*.

It seems the strategy adopted in these texts is not to question the idea of nature as the stratum of mere materiality or sensuously given experience, but to claim that the spiritual cannot be reduced to the natural layer and that, on the contrary, spirit

[76] As translated by Staiti (2014, 253)

[77] This is considered by some Husserl scholars as the negative influence of Edith Stein in the editing of Ideas 2, who would have reversed the order of foundation between nature and spirit by presenting nature as the lower, most fundamental stratum. Although this is not the only text where one can find this kind of statement -which could mean Husserl himself was at times seduced by this idea-, the primacy of spirit over nature was overall predominant and more in line with his thought.

is foundational. According to Andrea Staiti (2014), *Ideas 2* includes descriptions from different perspectives. Once the phenomenological reduction comes into play, and a shift of attitude is performed in the text itself, the idea of a founding nature is put to rest. So even when Husserl might state that the ego has a natural side (Hua 4, 338; Husserl 1989, 349), having performed the *epoché*, consciousness is radically separated from nature because what made the Ego seem connected to it in the natural attitude is now revealed as a constituted meaning.

So while in the natural and in the naturalistic attitude, affection, sensation, and the body are thematized as our own connection to nature, in the phenomenological attitude they prove to be *constituted as* natural, that is to say as not natural in-themselves. So when Husserl speaks of the Ego as natural, he would be echoing a naïve understanding of the subject. On the contrary, the phenomenological attitude reveals that, being a constituted meaning, nature can never be foundational regarding spirit, but rather that it is us, as spiritual beings, that confer upon nature the sense of being 'meaningless' and 'in-itself':

> *For, when, at the beginning, we posited nature straightforwardly, in the way done by every natural scientist and by everyone else sharing the naturalistic attitude, and when we took human beings as realities, ones that have a plus above and beyond their physical Corporeality, then persons turned out to be subordinated natural objects, component parts of nature. On the other hand, when we inquired into the essence of the person, then nature presented itself as something constituted in an intersubjective association of persons, hence presupposing it.* (Hua 4, 210; Husserl 1989, 220)

Nature is peculiar because unlike any other object "*it is our ground, not what is in front of us, but what carries us*" (Merleau-Ponty 1995, 20) an apparent thing-in-itself that the phenomenological reduction unmasks. If nature were described as deprived of meaning, then subjectivity as meaning-constituting would be naturally placed in the realm of spirituality. In the 1925 course on Phenomenological Psychology, Husserl explicitly equates the subjective with the mental (Hua 9, 54; Husserl 1977, 40), and even when he admits inanimate things can hold some spiritual meaning, this is only in a derived manner insofar as they are experienced

as supporting certain predicates given by a subject. The official response of phenomenology to the naturalistic claim that anything can be reduced to nature as the realm of physical causality is that "*In virtue of the essential correlation between the constituting and the constituted, all nature must be relative*" (Hua 4, 179, Husserl 1989, 189). At least in the context of *Ideas 2*, while nature is relative, spirit is not. Spirit is thus equated to subjectivity in general, and held as absolute: "*That is to say, if we could eliminate all spirits from the world, then that is the end of nature. But if we eliminate nature, "true," Objective-intersubjective existence, there always still remains something: the spirit as individual spirit*." (Hua 4, 297; Husserl 1989, 311). As we will see, Husserl will later question the absoluteness of spirit, but not the absoluteness of subjectivity against nature. As late as 1934, he writes:

> *Everything in the world, the world that is ours, is ultimately nature, physical corporeality (…) Nature is, however, constituted nature, my corporal body constituted body; constitution is the permanent transcendental happening in and from my Ego and the Ego of others in it*. (Hua 42, 79-80)[78]

There is a sense in which our experience in the life-world also offers us the source for considering nature in this opposition to subjectivity. There is a practical dimension that has to do with the type of ethical response we adopt towards it. In our dealings with what we perceive as mute nature, we consider ourselves responsible for the meaning we ascribe and consequently the way in which we interact with our own nature and the nature surrounding us. When we speak of the destruction or preservation of nature, we consider the natural world to be something different than ourselves, we place it as an object in front of us, and this is arguably something needed in order to *care* for it: "*Nature is incessantly and necessarily spiritualized and humanized. If we decide to protect Antarctica from human exploitation, this too involves a particular spiritualization and humanization*

[78] Alles in der Welt, die Welt unser aller ist, ist zuunterst Natur, physische Körperlichkeit. (…) Natur ist aber konstituierte Natur, mein körperlicher Leib konstituierter Leib; die Konstitution ⟨ist⟩ das ständige transzendentale Geschehen in meinem Ego und von ihm aus und in ihm die ⟨der⟩ anderen Egos.

of Antarctica. We give it a certain meaning, we apperceive it with a certain value." (Melle 1996, 34).

In a related manner, Steven Crowell (1996) argues that it is when I recognize another as other (and so when an ethical claim takes place) that nature becomes disenchanted and perceived within ourselves as a force dragging us down (Hua 4, 276; Husserl 1989, 289). Taking from Levinas' argument in *Totality and infinity*, Crowell holds that the presence of the other before me is what distances us from the world and thus allows for something like a world to exist in the first place. Before this ethical call, there was a fusion between the subject and her surrounding, and this is where our sense of belonging to nature comes from. Once we are in a spiritual world, nature is what threatens us to go "back" to this absorbed experience, but precisely because it can present itself to us in this or that way, nature is no longer one with us, no longer meaningful or 'mythical', thus resulting in a paradox:

> *Because the personalistic community presupposes the ethical constitution of intersubjectivity, its mythical view of nature already contains the sense of following upon a battle already won; that is, it rests upon an obscure acknowledgement of the 'absolutism of reality' that it conceals and resists*. (Crowell 1996, 105).

Needless to say, in the life-world we also have experiences that could speak for the contrary belief, as we will see further on.

8.3 Spiritual nature

There are many elements in Husserl's work that would support the notion of a spiritualized nature, without it resulting in thinking of a natural intentionality. For instance, he sometimes speaks of nature not as the object of natural science but a pre-scientific, "natural" nature that presents itself to us in our everyday life: *"The nature of everyday life is plainly the normally experienced nature, but the nature of natural science is by no means this, the normal nature, but wants to be the "objectively true" nature." (Hua 9, 128; Husserl 1977, 98).* In the writings gathered

in *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl extensively refers to a notion of a pre-given nature as an "*objective environment*" that is "*always already given to us*" (Husserl 1997, 37) and that includes more than only mere physicality since it is already typified:

> *our pregiven surrounding world is already "pregiven" as multiformed, formed according to its regional categories and typified in conformity with a number of different special genera, kinds, etc.* (Husserl 1997, 38)

Contrary to the idea of the absoluteness of spirit, one can find elements in other writings where Husserl treats both spirit and nature as abstractions that are in fact interdependent. In the *Nature and Spirit* lectures of 1927 he states:

> *We have to learn to see deeper here, that even nature and spirit, though each designates a universal concept, a world-encompassing infinity, have their sense-dependency in relation to each other. Nature is not thinkable without spirit, spirit is not thinkable without nature. What shows here is that what is grasped in universal concepts has along with its constitutive sense an outer, indefinite but not arbitrary horizon of sense. Nature has also spirit-determinations, spirit has also nature-determinations. That means that indeed each scientifically closed-off conceptuality is an abstraction*. (Hua 32, 16)[79]

The need to "see deeper" [*tiefer einsehen*] here does not refer to the overcoming of the natural stance but rather of the scientific stance, so well established that it has become a commonplace for reflection. In the theoretical attitude(s), nature and spirit only show up as opposite realms:

> *In keeping with their respective habits of interpretation, the natural scientist is inclined to regard everything as nature, whereas the investigator in the human sciences is inclined to regard everything as spirit, as a historical construct, and thus both thereby misinterpret whatever cannot be so regarded*. (Husserl 2002, 253)

In the same spirit, he states:

> *The natural and the mental do not confront us clearly and separately so that mere*

[79] As translated by Bruzina (2010, 95)

pointing would suffice: here *is nature, and* here*, as something completely different, is mind [*Geist*]. Rather, what seems at first obviously separated, upon closer consideration turns out to be obscurely intertwined, permeating each other in a manner very difficult to understand (Hua 9, 54; Husserl 1977, 39)*

This interdependency of spirit and nature was also found in the genetic analysis of primal temporalization (chapter 5), where Husserl reached a last level of constitution characterized by an indifferentiation of the primal I and the primal *Hyle*, terms than can be considered as a pure form of spirit and a pure form of nature respectively. Indeed, *Urhyle* was described as the core and matter [*Stoff*] of the proto-impressional sphere (Hua/Mat 8, 110). It is matter before affection, since when the Ego turns towards it, it becomes sensation-hyle (*Empfindungshyle*). But matter before affection is precisely what the naturalistic notion of nature was about, and this material core in the origin of time was the basis for the constitution of nature. However, *Urhyle* is not something given but reconstructed, since once it presents itself to the Ego it becomes already "spiritualized":

"Nature" is the core, matter (Hyle) of the world as experienced–a core that accepts "spiritualization" and already beforehand has it in world consciousness; but the objective nature is not simply constituted on the basis of the unitary hyle, but first the primordial core is constituted, through which the meaning of nature is constituted for me in the first stage (Hua/Mat 8, 111)[80]

Hyle is experienced as transcendent, but it is always transcendent for some Ego, and it cannot stand on its own outside this relationship. Since we can only reach the available content insofar as it is given to us, that is, since content is always content for an Ego, this natural material cannot be taken as proof of something existing outside the reach of subjectivity, that is, as something in-itself. At the same time, the Ego arises by turning to the sensation that draws its attention (Hua/Mat 8, 350). This goes to show that, as it should be kept in mind, it is the

[80] Die „Natur" ist Kern, Materie (Hyle) der Welt als erfahrener – ein Kern, der „Vergeistigung" annimmt und im Weltbewusstsein vorweg schon hat; aber die objektive Natur ist nicht aufgrund der einheitlichen Hyle schlicht konstituiert, sondern erst konstituiert ist der primordiale Kern, durch den für mich der Sinn Natur in erster Stufe sich konstituiert.

correlation of the subjective-objective poles which is fundamental to experience, and not one of the poles. However, as we have seen repeatedly throughout this dissertation, Husserl does not consider this a reason to question the absoluteness of the Ego but rather to conclude that, since the Ego is the only one that can disclose–retrospectively—this fundamental entanglement, it is nevertheless foundational. In the lectures on phenomenological psychology, Husserl wonders if it is possible to perceive the world pre-theoretically (Hua 9 57; Husserl 1977, 41) or even any object at all insofar as we always seem to "put" something of the order of the mental alongside what is given: "*Is even a single thing actually to be designated as perceived, since it is always more than we actually perceive of it*?" (Hua 9 61; Husserl 1977, 45).

What we have arrived at is a notion of a meaningful nature that is nonetheless not meaningful in and of itself. In his most idealistic formulations, nature is for Husserl "*a structure of transcendental history*" [einem Gebilde der transzendentalen Geschichte] (Hua 15, 309), and the "rule of awakening of the monads":

> *Starting from the given monads with their given sensations and perceptions, we have to say: For the human monads, strong nature means certain rules of their actual appearances and those of inactual appearances, which they could have according to their 'psychophysical constitution'. And 'nature before any awakened consciousness' means that for all sleeping monads there are certain rules of connection, which are presented to us by analogous structures and phenomena, and that there is a law that develops the monads up to 'awaken' consciousness*. (Hua 42, 158)[81]

Regarding the gap between nature and constitution, we can say that this notion of a spiritualized or meaningful nature is not enough to bridge it since, as long as nature is constituted by a subject that methodologically holds a priority over it, whether it is disclosed as meaningful or disenchanted does not make a difference,

[81] Von den gegebenen Monaden mit ihrem gegebenen Empfindungs- und Wahrnehmungsbestand ausgehend, müssen wir sagen: Die feste Natur bedeutet für die Menschenmonaden gewisse Regeln ihrer aktuellen Erscheinungen und derjenigen inaktuellen Erscheinungen, die sie nach ihrer „psychophysischen Konstitution" haben könnten. Und „Natur vor allem erwachten Bewusstsein" besagt, dass für alle schlafenden Monaden gewisse Regeln des Zusammenhangs bestehen, die sich uns vorstellig machen durch analogische Gebilde und Erscheinungen, und dass eine Gesetzmäßigkeit besteht, welche die Monaden emporentwickelt ⟨zu⟩ „wachem " Bewusstsein.

because the subject will remain exterior to it in some way. On the contrary, a meaningful in-itself nature is what many attempt to find in order to bridge the gap and/or bring phenomenology and the sciences closer together.

8.4 Naturalization of phenomenology

Traditionally, the difference between nature and spirit has been considered as the difference between humanity and the natural world, where the upsurge of human consciousness breaks the causal chain of the natural order and inaugurates a new type of possible relations. This is what Wilfrid Sellars had in mind when he distinguished between the space of nature and the space of reasons, drawing attention to the particular kind of normativity that governs human action, different than empirical generalizations that make up natural laws. The potential danger with this perspective is, as John McDowell afterwards pointed out, that we risk undermining *empiria* as a valid source of knowledge[82]. So there is a danger–as Husserl pointed out—in considering the world and the subject through the perspective of natural normativity: freedom becomes incomprehensible. But there is also the opposite danger of considering experience in general under the laws of reason, namely, the danger of undermining the objective world as a source of validity.

Facing this problem, a possible response has been to try to conceive nature in a broader way, namely one that has room for meaning and reasons. John McDowell attempts to do this with the notion of a second nature, that will be suited for thinking about the way of being of humans as a nature that is acquired by habit. However, as Michael Thompson points out, McDowell's second nature has no understandable connection to first nature, and this reproduces the problem:

The break with vulgar bald naturalisms does not come or does not simply come with

[82] For a comprehensive view of this debate see Ainbinder & Satne, "Normativity with a human face. Placing intentional norms and intentional agents back in nature" in Marsch, J., McMullin, I. & Burch, M. *Normativity and Meaning: Crowell and the Promise of Phenomenology,* London: Routledge, 2019

> *an expansion of the concept of a nature that would permit recognition of second natures alongside first; it must come with an expansion of the concept of a first nature that would permit it to cover all that is really contained in such a concept as human*. (Thompson 2013, 703)

Expanding the concept of nature to fit intentionality in it is a common strategy of several projects that aim to reconcile phenomenology and natural or cognitive sciences, usually inspired by Merleau-Pontian phenomenology. In an article on this issue, David Morris (2013) proposes that we consider meaning as already existing in nature, in order to close the gap that separates nature and consciousness. He takes as an example the behaviour of receptors in the immune system, which select and respond to pathogens in ways that do not seem to respond to previously demarcated patterns. He understands this behaviour as the exhibition of negation (which he considers a fundamental feature of sense) existing already at the level of lower organisms, in the discerning and determining of these receptors. According to Morris, this shows that "it is not we who determine that life is meaningful, life itself in its very living determines itself that way, and that is an unsurpassable characteristic of life" (Morris 2013, 324).

A similar strategy is adopted in autopoietic enactivism (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991), with the aim of reconciling scientific and phenomenological accounts of life. From the side of biology, autopoietic theory serves to explain the behaviour of organisms as cognitive systems, that is, as systems that relate in a meaningful way with their environment, drawing from Varela and Maturana's autopoiesis theory; while Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology was meant to provide a first-personal account of behaviour as the nexus of consciousness and nature (Kee 2018, 4).

But these attempts might fall short of showing how an access to such a meaningful being in-itself could be accomplished, and this is, in our view, Merleau-Ponty's main problem. How is this nature exhibited if it is not to a subject? On the opposite side of this controversy, this problem is articulated by Steven Crowell (2014) in a discussion surrounding a possible description of life. As it happens with life, if we consider nature to be a common field that we share with other forms of

life (animals, organisms, etc.) we must admit that since it is only through our own experience of life and nature that we can reach any description about it, this description will fail to reach a truly objective status. It is only through a *privative approach* that we can make sense of the being of animals, namely by starting from our own experience and subtracting whatever elements we find to be specifically human. In Husserl, animals are seen in the personalistic attitude as abnormal variants in relation to the normality of the human (Ciocan 2018). Crowell contests our kinship with other animals[83] because he contests our belonging to nature, which is an essential feature of the Merleau-Pontian interpretation. In another article on the topic of nature Crowell states:

> *Merleau-Ponty, for example, tries to close the gap that opens up between the naturalistic and the personalistic attitude in Husserl on the basis of this radical break with nature by interpreting touch's reversibility as the Chiasm which represents the prototype of all subsequent reflection. But if for him the constitution of all meaning, including the meaning of the Other, will be carried out through the resources of a being whose break with nature is accomplished in circular intimacy across the arc of its own Body, how does it for itself ever come to be more than equivocal, apparitional, like the 'things' surrounding it? Does it possess the power to disambiguate the spectacle, in which its 'Others' too participate?* (Crowell 1996, 97-98)

In other words, if the subject is regarded as a thing of nature, what makes it apodictic, and so a reliable source of evidence?

Perhaps it is not, but this does not need to lead directly to the opposite conclusion, namely that nature in itself is an authority regarding the meaning of the world and of ourselves, and that it only takes observation to reveal these meanings. In fact, this view is also highly contested in contemporary science, not just by the work of sociologists and philosophers of science drawing attention to the possible biases of the scientists conducting research, but in the experimental field as well[84].

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[83] For a detailed view of Crowell's position on this matter see: Crowell, S. (2017) "We have never been animals. Heidegger's Posthumanism." in *Études phénoménologiques–Phenomenological Studies* 1, 217-240.

[84] It can only be pointed out here that a particularly interesting counterpart to these phenomenological findings are the ontological questions raised in the field of quantum physics. The uncertain nature of reality prior to observation and measurement that experiments in quantum

Crowell may be right in suggesting that Merleau-Ponty's description of animal behaviour is not first-personal at all, but as we have seen, the first-personal has proven to be less than ideal to approach the question of embodiment and nature.

Placing meaning and normativity in nature in a way that is independent of the observing subject runs the risk of concealing this subject's perspective. If this is the premise behind the attempt to naturalize phenomenology, we must reject these projects. On the other hand, considering the subject as the only source of meaning runs the risk of reducing nature to a cultural or historical product. It becomes our task to search for a perspective that does not commit either of these excesses.

8.5 Nature as facticity

If we think of Nature as a realm of spatiotemporal objectivities that is independent of the subject, we wouldn't be able to postulate it without going against the transcendental principle. Naturalistic nature would be a thing in-itself if we consider its meaning to be already within it, waiting only to be passively received by us. Nevertheless, this does not lead us to support the opposite idea of a completely spiritual world. If nature is presented to us *as* a thing in-itself in our normal understanding of it, this is an indication that its meaning is never wholly reducible to our constitution of it. Unlike any particular object, nature is a horizon for this constitution, which means our making sense of it occurs within it. When Husserl discusses the encounter with different cultures or alienworlds, he provides a social or intersubjective description of nature, that is nevertheless linked to embodiment. Nature in this sense would be an objective and all-encompassing horizon for all homeworlds, made up of the shared features of embodiment and spatio-temporal location on Earth: "*The world for us receives new, strange people, but still people, realities, animated bodies, persons who live in a special community with each other (…) namely, realities individuated by their physique and their*

mechanics show, could be considered as a type of objective display of the limits of the scientific approach. In the words of Karen Barad: "*Measurement is a meeting of the "natural" and the "social". It is a potent moment in the construction of scientific knowledge –it is an instance where matter and meaning meet in a very literal sense*" (Barad 2007, 67)

spatiotemporal positions (…) (Hua 15, 216)[85]. In *Phenomenology and embodiment*, Joona Taipale presents this notion in connection with empathy. Following Zahavi who in turn follows Merleau-Ponty[86], he claims that embodiment in its two-fold dimension allows for the self to be a part of the objective realm, and through empathy–which has an *a priori* dimension whereby the other is present before being intended as an object—the other is understood as a part of this objective realm as well. Nature, in this sense, would be the horizon of all human experience, while at the same time it is disclosed in human experience. This is what makes us both spiritual and natural beings.

But once again the question could be raised as to what makes this understanding of nature more than simply the constituted sense that we imbue it with.

If we want to consider a new notion of nature that can include the subject, we need to start by thinking of the subject as body, in the perspective we have been exploring. After having looked more closely at the notion of constituting subjectivity in our previous chapters, we must also admit that nothing can be given as purely subjective, in a purely first-personal intuition.

In "The question of the Other" Bernhard Waldenfels states: "*It is not easy to say who gets farther from the truth of the body: Descartes who takes the dualistic part, insisting on a gap between mind and body, or Hegel who takes the monistic part, integrating the body into the totality of spirit.*" (Waldenfels 2007, 71). These two tendencies are suitable to understand the different strands in Husserl's thought about nature: we have either a nature completely alien to spirit or completely dependent on it, and this division is intimately related to Husserl's conception of the subject. How should we understand nature beyond this dichotomy?

In order to bridge the gap between nature and intentionality, not only a

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[85] Die Welt für uns gewinnt neue, fremde Menschen, aber doch Menschen, Realitäten, beseelte Körper, Personen, die in besonderer Gemeinschaft miteinander leben (…) nämlich Realitäten individuiert durch ihre Physis und deren raumzeitliche Stellen (…)

[86] Zahavi 2001, 160–61. Husserl also writes: "that I . . . can become aware of someone else . . . , presupposes that not all my own modes of consciousness are modes of my self-consciousness" (Hua I, 135; see also Hua XV, 634). Or, as Merleau-Ponty puts it: '*as an embodied subject, I am exposed to the other person*' (Merleau-Ponty 1969, 28/18)"

meaningful nature is needed but so is a natural spirit. This entails accepting that while we are responsible for the meaning we ascribe to nature, for how we disclose it and thus what ethical stand we take regarding it; we ourselves are also a part of what we reveal. This not only means that we are subject to biases of our own, but that in the most intimate experience of ourselves there is also a sense in which we are subject to contingency, alien to ourselves and obscurely aware of our existential dependencies. What we can learn from limit-cases is that this obscurity is not just the way in which we constitute an experience given in our interiority, because in fact at times these experiences are not entirely constitutible. This is what happens in the case of death. As Natalie Depraz states in an article from 1991, the thing that eludes us about life is the mystery of its beginning and ending, and the impossibility of having an access to those limit-events. (Depraz 1991, 464)

Along the same line, Ronald Bruzina states:

> *One of the prime impositional features, nevertheless, in the force of sense not as thought but as found in experience, is that of a beginning and an end, in striking contrast to temporalization 'as such.' Beginning and ending, even if not able to be experienced of oneself, is completely natural to human life as we find it around us, and expect in ourselves as what we can never experience. And we see precisely this contrast, not fully resolved in the texts*. (Bruzina 2010, 119).

Along with the appearance of *Urhyle*, these are facts of our existence that cannot be explained from a first-personal point of view. Husserl's interpretative response is to presuppose the precedence of the spirit, that is, of the transcendental subject *outside* nature:

> *If* ownness-purification of the external world, the animate organism, and the psychophysical whole*, has been effected, I have lost my natural sense as Ego, since every sense-relation to a possible Us or We remains excluded, and have lost likewise all my worldliness, in the natural sense. But in my spiritual ownness, I am nevertheless the identical Ego-pole of my manifold "pure" subjective processes...* (Hua 1, 129; Husserl 1960, 98).

But this perpetuates the opposition between nature and spirit that undercuts

our chance of connecting science with ethics in a positive way.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I have proposed to call limit-cases "natural phenomena." The reason is that, in my view, they exhibit a natural resistance to be absorbed by the space of meaning. This resistance is our first-personal experience of nature. In the phenomenological tradition, the impositional character of our embodied existence has been treated under the title of facticity. Facticity, as the name suggests, encompasses all the facts of our existence, that is, everything deriving from our spatio-temporal being in the world, with embodiment at its centre. Because the structures of facticity describe empirical facts, they do not belong essentially to the constituting subject. The consequences of this approach can be positive insofar as they stress the need to develop a different approach to the human subject than the deterministic or causal approach of modern science to its objects of research. We are more than our historical place, our social environment, our bodies as *Körper*. However, we reach ourselves only through those objective aspects; and most importantly, our existence itself is a primordial *fact*. An important distinction can be drawn here between factuality *within* the world-horizon and the deploying of the world-horizon itself, that we refer to as primal facticity. When Husserl talks about facts in *Ideas 1*, he defines them in opposition to essences (*Eidos*) (Hua 3-1, 9), with the former contingent and the latter necessary. While with any object of experience fact and *eidos* are clearly differentiated, when it comes to our very being in the world, the rules that apply normally to explain the relationship between transcendental and empirical cease to apply:

> *The existence of an Eidos, the existence of eidetic possibilities and the universe of these possibilities is free from the existence or non-existence of any realization of such possibilities, it is independent of all reality, namely the corresponding one. But the Eidos transcendental self is unthinkable without a transcendental self as factual* (Hua 15, 385)[87]

As Anne Montavont points out, facticity in this fundamental sense cannot be

[87] Das Sein eines Eidos, das Sein eidetischer Möglichkeiten und des Universums dieser Möglichkeiten ist frei vom Sein oder Nichtsein irgendeiner Verwirklichung solcher Möglichkeiten, es ist seins unabhängig von aller Wirklichkeit, nämlich entsprechender. Aber das Eidos transzendentales Ich ist undenkbar ohne transzendentales Ich als faktisches.

crossed out by the reduction, because it is what makes it possible in the first place –along with any kind of activity of the constituting subject (Montavont 1999, 198). What we reach by enquiring into these fundamental facts is a "metaphysic of facticity"[88] that deals with the *brutal fact* of there being a world given to a consciousness. Ultimately, it is the fact of the Ego being affected by *Hyle*, the accidental (*Zufällig*) beginning of affection and time (Hua 39, 473) that shows that we cannot do away with nature, at least not without incurring the cost of endorsing a speculative metaphysic of the pure spirit. Ronald Bruzina insists on this point:

> *…that part of the absoluteness of these limits lies in giving human existence and human experience too exaggerated and too pure a "spiritual" character, in an acceptance of the* geistig *that is conceived as so totally "unbodily" that it has virtually no material being to mark it as inhabiting the world in actuality (i.e., phenomenally). There is, in other words, a reductionism that is a spiritualistic as much as there is a reductionism that is naturalistic. (Bruzina 2001, 375).*

In the same sense, Montavont asks: "*How do we think what we* must *think according to Husserl, namely a flowing life closed off to affection, if affection is precisely constitutive of this life*?" (Montavont 1999, 177-8)[89]. This flowing life without time or affection is the idea of the subject we have been contesting so far. Limit-cases, as the points that mark the union or separation of this life and personal life have been a leading thread in the process. In this sense, Klaus Held points out that the living present can only be 'living' insofar as it stretches between birth and death, and these facts structure it in an essential manner (Held 1981, 218). In his study on the living present he explicitly talks about the functioning present as an "absolute fact": "*The* nunc stans *as anonymous, as a 'given' whose way of being given is not known, should be called "fact" in the following.*" (Held 1966, 146)[90]

The peculiarity of the issue is that the only first-personal evidence we can have

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[88] According to Landgrebe: "*Husserl defines metaphysics as "the doctrine of the fact"* [die Lehre vom Faktum]" (Landgrebe 1982, 39)

[89] Comment penser ce qu'on doit penser selon Husserl, à savoir un vie fluante fermée à toute affection, si l'affection est précisement constitutive de cette vie même?

[90] Das *nunc stans* als solchermaßen anonymes, als eine "Gegebenheit", von der nicht einmal die Gegebenheitsweise bekannt ist soll im folgenden ,,Faktum" heißen.

of this primal facticity lies in the lack of evidence of the experience of limits. Only our insufficient experience of them can provide some form of first personal attestation of our natural character. This is not, of course, accidental, since the factical ground of experience could not be given otherwise without ceasing to be what it is. However, limits do not delineate a realm beyond consciousness where pure nature would continue, that is, they do not point to a primacy of nature over consciousness. Rather, they testify for the insurmountable truth of the correlation, and the claim that there cannot be consciousness without world or world without consciousness.

Chapter 9: Towards ambiguity

"*Depuis qu'il y a des hommes et qu'ils vivent, ils ont tous éprouvé cette tragique ambiguïté de leur condition; mais depuis qu'il y a des philosophes et qu'ils pensent, la plupart ont essayé de la masquer.*"

Simone de Beauvoir, Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté

In this chapter I review three characterizations of subjectivity from the phenomenological tradition and scholarship, in order to point out the similarities and differences with my own understanding of it as transcendental personhood, according to the preceding investigations.

9.1 Introduction

Husserl's conception of death as the separation of the transcendental ego from its self-objectification as a human being (Hua 29, 332) rested on a particular view of the subject that allowed for a radical divide between its transcendental and empirical dimensions. This view is at the basis of the paradox of human subjectivity, to which I now return.

Throughout this dissertation, we have examined Husserl's notion of subjectivity in its connection with embodiment and nature, and found that it is not so easy to separate its subjective and objective aspects. Thinking about transcendental subjectivity as a mode of being that is not in principle *in* the world is only one side of the story, and the paradox portrays this well: we are at the same time subjects and objects in the world. However, in Husserl's view this was always an asymmetric couple, and the resolution tends to separate these two aspects rather than stress their interdependency.

Because of Husserl's unique conception of intentionality, meaning-constituting consciousness or transcendental subjectivity is not described as a thing but as a property or the mode of disclosure of things. Constituting consciousness is merely the way in which the world is given, and thus its way of being is different from the

world's. It is the way in which this world becomes intelligible for us, the disclosing or illuminating of it. In a word, it is experience itself. In this sense, it must be radically different than the things it discloses. Indeed, how could experience be tied to the laws that govern entities? How could experience begin or end? And yet, for the same reason that makes consciousness different from any entity, we find that in order for it to be, it must necessarily be entangled with entities. Because a disclosing activity on its own would be nothing, meaning-giving consciousness requires an objective realm to ascribe meaning to. Now, this way of thinking about the issue gives us the feeling of the duality that we have been putting into question: consciousness would be the illuminating ray that brings light to the inert matter of objectivity. Our discussion of nature and spirit has shown that, in fact, because neither of these poles can exist independently, experience is possible as an entanglement of the two. We must not think of it as the union of two separate poles, but as a fundamental intertwinement from which we later abstract. It is a relation without pre-existing relata. But why *can* we abstract? These two poles must be there in some form already if we are able to distinguish them, even if it is after the fact. As Fink would point out, the Absolute is a unity that is articulated in opposites (Fink 1995, 142). And so the particularity of subjectivity is that it is always a concrete unity and still it can be considered in different ways. I will now present three different approaches to this problem and draw from them to present my own interpretation. The first one is James Mensch's interpretation of subjectivity as a process that goes from the living present to the human being through the unfolding and constitution of time. This, I believe, is the best depiction of Husserl's own thought insofar as it does not stray from the texts and yet attempts to show his own ideas under the best light. I will argue, however, that it does not provide a sufficiently clear account of the bond between the different steps in this process, especially considering that the initial one is the primal upsurge of experience, which is not yet personal or individual. The second one goes back to Steven Crowell's reading, presented in chapter 6, of the transcendental subject as a transcendental person. I consider this to be an original re-working of Husserlian phenomenology that, insofar as it holds fast to first-personal grounding of phenomenological enquiry, remains respectful of his methodological principles while going beyond it.

Nevertheless, it lacks a proper recognition of the natural character of the subject's facticity by rejecting any type of objective feature —such as organic embodiment— as a condition for experience, which ultimately reinforces the explanatory gap between 'mind' and 'body'. Lastly, I tackle the question of whether the notion of subjectivity that I have been led to support here can be identified with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh. As it has been shown throughout this dissertation, Merleau-Ponty is well-suited to confront the concerns I have raised. However, his own thought evolves in a direction that ultimately does away with the priority of a first-personal access, going against a fundamental tenet of Husserlian phenomenology, and thus becomes illegitimate in its eyes. While in the previous section the limitations of the first-personal standpoint as Husserl conceived it became manifest, I argue that this does not provide the grounds for a complete abandonment of it, since methodologically we are still tied to a first-personal access to experience. In this sense, I claim that my conclusion remains consistent with the two basic commitments of Husserlianism.

9.2 Subjectivity as process

In "Birth, Death, and Sleep: Limit Problems and the Paradox of Phenomenology"[91], James Mensch considers, as I have been doing so far, the problem of death in light of the paradox of human subjectivity, and wonders: "*Can the project of justifying assertions on the basis of immediate, first-person evidence, make intelligible the relation between a deathless transcendental subjectivity and its mortal, human counterpart?"*

He proposes that subjectivity be thought of as a process that proceeds "*from the preontic to the ontic*", where the initial point is the primal "*welling-up of data at our core*" and the end point is the embodied human being.

He distinguishes three steps of this process: 1) the "primal phenomenon" where the absolute ego coincides with the living-present as a static-flowing source of time, 2) the temporalization of a present in time, that is in relation to a past and

[91] Forthcoming in *The Existential Husserl—A Collection of Critical Essays*, eds. George Heffernan and Marco Cavallaro, under review.

a future that together form a stream that is as of yet 'private', and 3) the level of embodied existence where the constitution of an intersubjective time becomes possible.

This division evokes the levels of temporalization that we touched upon in chapter 5 when discussing the notion of primal I. I briefly mentioned that the idea of a living present and the primal I as the subjective pole in said structure brought about the issue of interpreting this living present as individual or plural, given its pre-personal or anonymous character. Mensch suggests the living present is not individual because if it had individualizing features it would already be a concrete temporal stream. He relies on the following quote by Husserl:

> *When, in self-meditation, I go back to my living streaming present in its full concretion, where it is the primal ground and source for all of the things now actually valid for me, it is not for me my living present as opposed to that of other humans, and it is not my present as that of an existent with a body and soul, i.e., that of a real human being*. (Hua 34, 186)[92].

However, it is mine retrospectively.

Mensch goes on to argue that, because the different levels belong to the same process, there is a difference within a unity that would render the paradox of subjectivity no longer problematic. Indeed, it would only be problematic to try to reconcile the two figures of subjectivity presented in the paradox if we take them as competing figures instead of complementary ones:

> *Viewed from the streaming welling up of data at our core, this embodiment is constituted. Viewed in terms of what this core constitutes, the body, in its affording us the data that streams up is itself constituting. In fact, it is both, since what we are focusing on are different levels of the same ongoing process*. (Mensch, forthcoming)

92 Wenn ich mich besinnend auf meine lebendig strömende Gegenwart in ihrer vollen Konkretion zurückgehe, in der sie der Urboden und Urquell aller für mich jetzt-gegenwärtig aktuellen Seinsgeltungen ist, so ist sie für mich nicht die meine gegenüber derjenigen anderer Menschen, und sie ist nicht die meine als die des körperlich-seelisch seienden, des realen Menschen

As Husserl deepens his genetic analysis and the notions of subjectivity multiply, it seems like the notion of process would be fitting to think about subjectivity as an encompassing structure that brings them all together. In a text from 1926 that is now part of the *Husserliana* volume on Eidetics[93], Husserl speaks of the different ranges of variability of the I and distinguishes between the transcendental Ego and the personal Ego on the grounds of the results of eidetic variation. If we can, through this method, conceive of a consciousness that is not dependent on the existence of a world, but cannot in return consider a world that is independent of consciousness, as Husserl suggests, this means that a consciousness that is not worldly, not embodied nor objective, is to be considered valid. All these levels would be tied together in the unity of this process that goes from the disembodied consciousness to the psychophysical human being.

The interpretation of subjectivity as a process is beneficial insofar as it allows us to consider both the anonymous pole of activity and the human being as a part of the objective world to be included in the whole of the subject. However, it appears to go in only one direction and thus to give a greater importance to the "initial" step of the process which is the primal temporalization. This would be in line with what we found regarding the primal I, namely that it is for Husserl, the ultimate level of subjectivity, and it is foundational regarding the personal or empirical subject. But can we, in fact, imagine a primal I—a consciousness that is independent of objectivity? If we take correlation seriously, we should say no. Constituting consciousness needs constituted objectivity to grasp itself as much as the living present needs its manifestation to be understood as anonymous—and so not susceptible of being manifested. And, as Merleau-Ponty seems to understand as well, it might be deceiving to think we could grasp a consciousness without a body:

> *One might respond that the organization of our body is contingent, that one could 'conceive of a man without hands, feet, or a head' and, even more so, conceive of a man without sexual organs who could reproduce through cutting or layering. But this is*

[93] Hua 41, 356 ff. I'd like to thank Prof. Andrea Staiti for drawing my attention to this text and taking the time to kindly discuss this topic with me during a post-conference dinner in Helsinki.

only true if we consider hands, feet, the head, or the sexual organs abstractly, that is, as fragments of matter and not in their living function, and only if we also form an abstract notion of man into which only the cogitatio is allowed entry. If, however, we conceive of man through his experience, that is, through his distinctive way of articulating the world, and if the organs are reintegrated into this functional whole from which they are cut out, then a man without hands or without a sexual system is as inconceivable as a man without thought. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 173)

Even if we could conceive of a consciousness without a body or a world, it would then become a problem to account for how it connects to its constituted body[94]. Since the primal I is not personal, not individualized in space and time and not corporeal, the passage from this level to the individualized personal Ego becomes enigmatic. This issue is particularly urgent when it comes to thinking about death. As Mathieu Mavridis (1997) clearly argues, when we consider death for the transcendental subject, we are faced with a difficult dilemma: either we exclude the human being from what we consider to be subjectivity–or, as he calls it, transcendental life—, or we include it but create a gap within it and with it, and therefore raising the problem of bridging it:

We have to accept either the tautology that defines life as non-mortal–and lose the problem of individuation and the multiplicity of mortal lives—, either the dualism that maintains the distinction between 'human life' and 'transcendental life'–and lose the possibility of understanding how human life is the self-objectification of this transcendental life. (Mavridis 1997, 211)

If we think, like Husserl, that the living-present, considered as the original source of temporalization, is susceptible of being reached and thematized on its own, it becomes problematic to understand how it could then become a concrete

[94] Regarding eidetic variation as a way of a supporting the idea of an immortal subject, two remarks can be made: firstly, I have tried to show throughout this dissertation that the possibility of considering subjectivity as independent of the world can and should be put into the question (see particularly chapter 4). Secondly, it is worth mentioning that eidetic methodology does not consider the existential element involved in my own death, which is ultimately what makes my encounter with death a paradoxical one —as Husserl puts it, I can believe I will live forever, knowing full well I will die (Hua Mat/8, 96).

subject. Because the living-present by principle cannot have a positive content, because it is not a being and in its anonymity it cannot hold what is required to constitute, to think of it as the initial point or the ground of the process of subjectivity is problematic. Between the primal I as a pre-personal anonymous structure and its self-objectification in a personal Ego that belongs to a world, there is a disconnect. The risk is having to appeal to a 'mythical relation' between the two, such as the one that Husserl criticized Kant for (Husserl 1954, Hua VI, p. 116). To avoid this, phenomenology must deal from the start with concrete subjectivity.

9.3 Subjectivity as person in Crowell's reading

This type of objection to the notion of primal I as ground echoes what Steven Crowell pointed out already as a reason to do away with primal subjectivity altogether. He considered the primal Ego to be simply unable to constitute, due to its anaemic nature. In chapter 6 I have explored the idea of the *person* as the true constituting subject as Crowell presents it, which meant abandoning the primal I as a meontic foundation of subjective experience. As an alternative, Crowell's account of the person's self-constitution through praxis entailed leaving aside any objective dimension associated with embodiment: the person constituted herself in a purely subjective manner, through the performance of her practical pursuits. This is an appealing view insofar as it rules out naturalism and avoids Husserl's more speculative streak, but it has some shortcomings. By rejecting the validity of Husserl's genetic findings, it would bring us back to a static stage of Husserl's phenomenology, which is, ultimately, what I think a position like Crowell's will be confined to.

Mainly, however, I think the downside of this position is that it accentuates the gap between the transcendental and the empirical subject, and this is not only impoverishing in theoretical terms but in practical terms as well. How are we to effectively develop or modify our behaviours, habits, desires, etc., if we do not understand their nature, how they arise or develop? In effect, the problem for Crowell would be to think "*that personalistic constitution rests upon conditions that it does not itself constitute*" (Crowell 2012, 40), so everything belonging to the realm

of passivity might very well play a role but it is not a constitutive role, meaning it does not allow for constitution to happen and it does not alter the direction of this constitution. So as it happened with thirst, where I would need to be aware of my feeling of being thirsty in order for it to become a motivation to drink water, every feeling or bodily occurrence would undergo the same process of becoming 'spiritualized' in order to have an effect in the personalistic realm. This would leave out, for instance, everything we refer to as 'unconscious' as an objective cause for our actions. So if I as a person go to see a psychoanalytic therapist once a week and discover I have some latent feelings of anger towards my mother, it would be the act of interpreting those feelings in said way, and in the context of a particular social practice that I engage in, which makes those feelings exist as what they are. These feelings are now disclosed as having always been there and having always had an effect on me that was unknown until that moment of realization, but this is simply how they are constituted by me; which means that in fact they did not have an effect on me prior to this unveiling –at least not as 'latent feelings of anger towards my mother' which is how I now disclose them. This is a hard theory to refute because one can add specifications *ad infinitum* to the fundamental premise that everything is constituted in one way or another; and as long as subjectivity is defined as that which is not constituted, we can never grasp it through any meaningful statement. Crowell also denies the possibility of asking the genetic questions that had led us to the recognition of ambiguity in the origin of time, and the reflection on limits. The result is thus a theory that is robust if perhaps too limited in scope. Is it possible to put aside the question of the genesis of the subject? Husserl seemed to think this is damaging for the transcendental enterprise, insofar as recognizing something that phenomenology could not deal with meant recognizing something outside the realm of constitution. Now, Crowell would not claim that these matters are outside the reach of constitution, but simply that they do not belong to the transcendental realm, that they do not represent transcendental conditions. But what are transcendental conditions and how do we discern them? I can now tie together two important issues that have come up throughout this dissertation, namely the contingent or *a posteriori* character of transcendental conditions of experience and the natural character of primal

facticity. As I mentioned in chapter 6, I think the right way to look at the issue of the transcendental realm is to consider the conditions of possibility of experience as stemming from experience and not as being prior to it, which means there would be an empirical dimension to them. At least *some* transcendental conditions of experience can be thought to require a material aspect, and thus belong to the paradoxical category of factical necessities (Tengelyi 2014), a posteriori transcendentals (Montavont 1999; Ainbinder 2016) or "*contingent a priori*" (Hua 17, 33; Ainbinder 2020). Now, Husserl restricts this type of transcendentals to hyletic essences, and distinguishes them from the principles of pure reason, that would be the true fundamental transcendental principles, since "*there is no essential requirement that a judicatively cognizing subjectivity (or a rational subjectivity of any kind) be capable of sensing colours or sounds, that it be capable of sensuous feelings having just such and such a* differentia*, or the like* (…)" (Hua 17, 26/27; Husserl 1978, 30). However, in the case of birth and death this proved to be slightly different as Husserl's generative writings began to consider them essential features of the world rather than accidental occurrences (Hua 15, 172; Hua 29, 327). Insofar as it belongs to the a priori structure of experience that we have a body and that we be spatio-temporally located through it, Husserl recognizes the limits of the functioning of this body as essential. This ties in with the issue of the recognition of primal facticity as nature, that is to say, as a condition of possibility of experience that is not constituted *by* or *in* experience but rather lies at the origin of experience (chapter 8), but also with the characterization of embodiment as essentially and at the same time subjective and objective (chapter 7). The main problem with Crowell's proposal is his understanding of the experience of embodiment. While he thought it possible to have a purely subjective experience of our bodies, and so did not regard embodiment as entailing spatio-temporalization, I have followed Merleau-Ponty on this issue to account for the body as what prevents us from setting apart subjective and objective aspects of subjectivity so starkly. Crowell's reading advances in considering subjectivity as a concrete person that is involved practically in the world, but it continues to separate it from the natural realm (Satne & Ainbinder 2019, Rouse 2019 both in Burch, McMullin & Marsh 2019). As a consequence, the opposition between

transcendental and human life, as well as between phenomenology and science, is maintained.

9.4 Subjectivity as flesh (*chair*)

A lot of the issues raised so far have led us to Merleau-Ponty's particular take on phenomenology as a place of potential answers. Merleau-Ponty's greater contribution to the phenomenological tradition stems from his analysis of embodiment, and this has proven to be of utmost importance for this research. The stress he places on the ambiguity of the lived body and the consequences he draws for thinking of subjectivity in general, and of phenomenology as a project that aims at describing such subjectivity are elements that we want to retain when it comes to considering death in the light of the subject's ambiguity.

In chapter 7, I have presented Merleau-Ponty's notion of an anonymous bodily subject in order to consider what Husserl called the anonymous primal Ego as being already embodied. This allowed me to place embodiment already at the lowest level of constitution, making it easier to reunite this grounding structure of subjectivity with the concrete objective human being. In my reading, unlike Crowell's, the primal I should not be simply cancelled. The retrospective presupposition of the anonymous upwelling of time is available to us in reflection, as that prior to which we cannot posit anything. However, it is true that it cannot serve as foundation when considered in isolation from its 'results', that is to say, when it is separated from its own objectification. As the paradox of the living-present stated, it is only through objectifying itself that the living-present can be manifested as that which is not objectifiable. What this shows is that what is truly primal is not the primal I but the whole structure of becoming through which the primal I becomes objectified in a concrete I that can go back in reflection to its anonymous source. This is not just a process that goes from an initial point onwards, but a circular movement where one pole points to the other incessantly. It is the whole of subjectivity where we should seek the concrete form of transcendental life, and this concrete whole is necessarily embodied insofar as it is anchored in the personal Ego. According to Renaud Barbaras (2004), this is

Merleau-Ponty's early position: "*Even though Merleau-Ponty discovers an experience that is no longer personal, an experience in which the category of the person finds itself contested, he grasps it still on the basis of the personal subject, as a negation that is already its affirmation*" (Barbaras 2004, 9). In this sense, the anonymous habitual body described in *Phenomenology of Perception* could be a suitable tool for us.

However, Barbaras considers this an incomplete stage of Merleau-Ponty's thought, which would later develop in such a way that this anchoring in the personal Ego would disappear. According to his thesis in *The Being of the Phenomenon*, in *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty is still holding on to the Cartesian dualism between subjective and objective dimensions of experience, and while the body is seen as a mediation between the two and already points at a third dimension, this is still not positively thematized (Barbaras 2004, 8). It is not until the later texts (published posthumously in *The visible and the Invisible*) that Merleau-Ponty would lose the anchoring in a subjective pole and present his full "ontology of the flesh". The notion of the flesh (*la chair*), while also aiming at showing the intertwinement between subject and object, being and nothingness, and now the visible and the invisible, points to something broader than subjectivity—even when it is understood, as we are attempting to do here, as including a noematic pole. The flesh would be "*an element, in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing*" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 139). Our bodies and ourselves as bodies would be participants in the flesh, modes of the flesh; but would not have an active role regarding its givenness:

> *When we speak of the flesh of the visible, we do not mean to do anthropology, to describe a world covered over with all our projections, leaving aside what it can be under the human mask. Rather, we mean that carnal being, as a being of depths, of several leaves or several faces, a being in latency, and a presentation of a certain absence, is a prototype of Being, of which our body, the sensible sentient, is a very remarkable variant, but whose constitutive paradox already lies in every visible.* (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 136)

The idea of constitution and the first-personal priority would be virtually lost in this scenario. Unlike in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the transcendental aspect of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy does not show up here. As Barbaras regretfully notes:

"Phenomenology of Perception *does not allow us to conceive this situation [the originary facts of there being phenomenon] on the exact level where it is established. It immediately translates the 'there is phenomenon' into 'there is consciousness of something.' Instead of this certainty being grasped on the basis of what it is certain of, namely, the world itself, it is immediately explicated in terms of self-certainty*." (Barbaras 2004, 13).

But how are we to consider, then, the access to this element, this being? Merleau-Ponty's path resembles the one this investigation on limits has traversed, but his results might not be in full agreement with ours. What we have investigated under the heading of the reciprocal relationship between the pre-being of anonymous constituting subjectivity and its objectification, has a parallel in Merleau-Ponty's description of the relationship of the visible and the invisible. According to Chouraqui (2014, 176), we shouldn't understand the intertwinement between the two terms as either a third term or as a middle point, but rather as the relationship itself, which is prior to the terms and in a way 'produces' them. We can agree on this point, but we must add the following: as long as this relationship is disclosed *by us* (the transcendental community that is humanity, as Husserl stated when discussing the paradox of human subjectivity), there must be some acknowledgment of our privileged standpoint. The move towards an ontological description that does not recognize this, motivated as it might be, is not entirely legitimate in the context of a phenomenological inquiry. The rigour and faithfulness to experience of the phenomenological enterprise is tightly linked with first-personal accountability, and in it lies its value in the philosophical tradition. If we lose this accountability, doing phenomenology would not be significantly different from doing speculative philosophy. The move towards ontology performed by Merleau-Ponty is a dangerous step in this direction.

In sum, even though our concern with limit-cases has made us appreciate some of his major insights—and in this sense we can testify to what motivated them in the first place—, what we aim at is developing an account of the subject and her death that works within a Husserlian framework, that is to say that we do not want to abandon Husserl's main methodological principles, which would arguably be the case if we followed Merleau-Ponty's theory to the end.

9.5 Crowell vs. Merleau-Ponty and the question of limits

Throughout this dissertation, I have repeatedly presented Steven Crowell's position on the status of the transcendental subject and its connection to the natural world in an attempt to present a counter-strategy to that of French phenomenology following Merleau-Ponty. While in the former the concern for the first-personal access and grounding of experience and knowledge is the guiding principle, in French phenomenology, the move towards ontology[95] shows, above all things, an attempt to overcome the Husserlian depiction of consciousness as absolute and transparent. This counterpoint is presented by Crowell himself in an article where he criticizes not Merleau-Ponty's but Barbaras' philosophy (Crowell 2014). The reason for this is that, according to him "*Merleau-Ponty, too, leaves the genesis of the "invisible" from the "visible"—the clarification of how the normative space of reasons is grounded in the flesh of the world—as a mere promissory note."* (Crowell 2014, 43), while Barbaras actually attempts to bring it to fruition. Crowell argues against the search for a brute nature that serves as ground for both objective reality and consciousness by appealing to the way in which we would encounter said nature: it is always our own experience of our own nature, the one through which we encounter nature in general, and this means we cannot really say what this nature beyond us would be. We can only address nature as it is revealed to us, and thus, as a constituted meaning. This position, albeit methodologically rigorous, amounts to the strong disconnection between on the

[95] Bruce Bégout refers to this common spirit in terms of a concern for the sensible or the hyletic, and a search for a new founding ground for phenomenology in terms of it. (Bégout 2004, 35)

one hand what we consider consciousness or transcendental subjectivity and the world and objective reality, on the other. There are two important reasons why we should strive to overcome this position. One is the pragmatic benefit that bridging this gap or separation between conscious states and physical reality would bring, namely advancing in the study of human consciousness by engaging in an interdisciplinary, integral field of enquiry. In fact, such a type of enquiry already exists. With or without the consent of phenomenology, researchers in cognitive science and philosophy of mind are aiming at making the connection between subjective and objective cognitive states. If, for example, it is possible to cross information between a brain scan and a live account of a certain experience, or between economic and political variables to predict certain behaviours, it is because in actual experience subjective and objective dimensions are entangled. The second and main reason why we should strive to overcome the characterization of consciousness as absolute (not constituted) being is simply that this is not what experience is showing us. But the intimate connection between the subjective and objective aspects of experience, needs to be phenomenologically grounded if it is to be accepted as valid. To be mindful of phenomenology's methodological principles means that we can go as far as intuition lets us, and the move beyond the subjective-objective division might be an illegitimate one if we consider evidence to be tied to the first person.

9.6 Conclusion

In searching for a way to describe transcendental subjectivity that can be true to its double-sidedness, we need to resist two opposing impulses: one is to reject a dividing dualism by searching beyond it for an all-encompassing being that would precede any division. This is, I believe, Merleau-Ponty's gesture towards the end of his life; and the one that sets precedent for many authors that would later come in the French phenomenological tradition. Experience shows us an intertwinement, but we mustn't forget that it is *our* experience that shows it. On the other side, this fact shouldn't be a reason to go back to the drawing board and simply dismiss what experience is showing us. Crowell's ultimate reply to these concerns is that any 'objective' condition of experience such us having a functioning organism should

be kept outside the transcendental sphere, under pretext that it is not a constituting condition. But since the decision of what counts as constituting already entails a demarcation of the constituting sphere, this seems to be begging the question.

However, we can retain some aspects of both these perspectives, along with Mensch's interpretation of subjectivity as process, in order to navigate towards a balanced account of the subject and her death.

Chapter 10: Death and the first person

In this chapter I return to the problem of death and consider it in light of what has been developed in the previous chapters. I briefly consider Heidegger's position, as it is canonical in the phenomenological tradition, and argue that, as it happens with Husserl's account, it also entails the separation of the transcendental and the empirical subject. Against this perspective, I state that death affects both dimensions of the subject, and that it is therefore necessary to put into question Husserl's thesis of the immortality of transcendental consciousness. I propose to reconsider this immortal character as a feature of the phenomenological onlooker rather than of the constituting subject, thus circumscribing it to a methodological realm; as long as this functions as a warning for phenomenological work, and not as a means of creating a new separation within the subject.

10.1 Introduction

Because phenomenology is a transcendental inquiry grounded on first-personal evidence, and insofar as the factical end of life is a limit for intuition, limit-cases are not just personal but philosophical limits. But if it was the case that death remained completely exterior to our experience, the question of how to account for it or whether or not it is an absolute limit would never have arisen. From a first-personal perspective death is impossible, and yet "*once knowledge of death has been acquired, it enters into the horizon of all experience*" (Schutz & Luckmann 1983, 127). The question is, then, how to make sense of it. Death seems to differ from any other experience in that its meaning already contains the idea of an inexperienciability.

In the most renowned phenomenological account of death, namely Heidegger's, this particularity is explored through the idea of the "possibility of the impossible". This formulation, I will argue, is compatible with Husserl's own views on the immortality of the transcendental subject, for whom death always remain impossible to realize; but it lacks a proper understanding of how and why death can be incorporated into the horizon of our lives as it is. Where does the meaning of death come from? We don't live through it in the first person, nor do we transpose

the experience of others onto our own, because no one can in fact live through it. By separating the experience of my own death completely from the event of death, Heidegger seems to avoid the problem, but arguably at the cost of a complete disconnection of Dasein and the body. In his paradoxical formulation of death, Husserl seems to recognize that the particularity of death does not only stem from the impossibility of experiencing it, but rather from the encounter between this impossibility and the certainty of our future factical death. If death can structure our horizon in the way it does, it is in virtue of this ambiguity, which is to say that the meaning of death lies in the relation between these two terms and not in one or the other. Drawing from Fink's work in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, and in accordance with our reflections on subjectivity so far, I will argue in favour of the fundamental ambiguity of the subject as a concrete whole of transcendental and empirical dimensions. Thanks to this dual character, no other experience exhibits the ambiguity of our very way of being as well as it does.

10.2 Heidegger's *Sein zum Tode*

The purpose of this section is to expose the reasons why Heidegger does not have a central role in this research, even though death is a central topic in his work and he is an exponent of the type of existential turn in phenomenology I have been exploring. There is no doubt that death holds a central role in Heidegger's work, and specifically in *Being and Time*. The relationship to death in the existential *Sein zum Tode* shows, ultimately, what it means to be *Dasein*: an unconcluded openness, a pure project, a possibility whose actualization is impossible. In this very context where death has its central role, Heidegger has been accused of ignoring or underplaying the importance of certain relevant issues like embodiment or animality (Aho 2009, Ciocan 2008, Krell 1992), topics that in the case of death seem especially important. Not unlike Husserl, Heidegger is strongly opposed to thinking of *Dasein* in third-personal terms, and he advocates subordinating any reflection on the body to the existential analysis of *Dasein* insofar as "*everything we call our bodiliness, down to the last muscle fiber and down to the most hidden molecule of hormones, belongs essentially to existing*" (Heidegger 2001, 232). This

means that the body as physical is not a condition of possibility of experience but rather it is derived from our being as experiencing subjects. He illustrates this point in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 1995, 218) with a formula about organs and abilities: it is not that we can see because we have eyes, but rather we have eyes because we can see. Trying to understand human existence starting from the body as an entity would mean, for Heidegger, considering it as a thing, and thus mistaking the way of being of *Dasein* with that of the *Vorhanden*. According to Søren Overgaard, the fact that Heidegger explicitly rejects dealing with embodiment in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996, 44; 100) does not mean he thinks of *Dasein* as disembodied but on the contrary, that he considers embodiment to be so fundamental to the being of *Dasein* that to reflect on it as a separate issue would give the impression of being able to separate *Dasein* into layers and it would defeat the purpose (Overgaard 2004, 128). It would imply thinking of *Dasein* as *having* a body instead of as *being* a body. However, because of Dasein's very nature, the kind of embodiment that would be 'built-in' its description would probably resemble a kind of purely subjective body such as the one Crowell thematized, which, as we have seen, does not depict its ambiguous character.

Hand in hand with this thematic de-emphasis of the body there is a second one related to animality and biological life. Once again it is here a matter of explaining human existence not as a sum of elements (animality plus something) but as a whole. In paragraph 10 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger deals with the difference between fundamental ontology and other sciences that study the human being such as anthropology, psychology and biology. He claims that whereas the latter analyse the entity that is the human, fundamental ontology reflects on its being. If the question of the life of *Dasein* can be posed it is because *Dasein* gives meaning to that which it designates as "life" and does so in a privative manner, that is, starting from its own way of being and subtracting something from it. There is a fundamental separation between the being of *Dasein* and that of life inasmuch as the possibility of speaking of life is derived from *Dasein's* understanding of being as something more than this life.

Both this characterization of the being of *Dasein* as different from the animal, and the exclusion of embodiment from the existential analytic, point in the same direction, namely that of preventing a naturalistic approach to existence. Heidegger's dealing with death stresses this point further, insofar as the authentic understanding of death for *Dasein* is starkly separated from the event of its factical death. The use of different terms to separate authentic dying (*sterben*) from factical dying (*ableben*), and the dying of animals (*verenden*) expresses this difference. Only authentic dying represents *Dasein's* relationship to death, which is described in terms of the existential encounter with the groundlessness of our existence. However, this way of distinguishing between the different ways of death and dying seems to go against the need to take *Dasein* as a bodily whole. Moreover, the separation between *ableben* and *verenden* appears to imply there is something like a third realm between existential dying and animal death, namely a properly human way of dying, while existential death would in fact have nothing to do with the event of death. Is it by pure homonymy that death is called death? To put it in Husserlian terms, we would say that death too is a constituted meaning, and to experience it is to relate to this meaning, which finds its origin in the subject and not in any physical state of affairs. Taken up by *Dasein*, death ceases to be merely factical death to become the possibility of the impossible, that is to say, the possibility of not being there anymore. Because this is not realizable, because it is a potency that can never become actuality, death as an end of experience cannot happen. Unlike Husserl, Heidegger advances towards a way of understanding death that allows us to say that Dasein dies, that is to say, that allows us to bring death into phenomenological reflection admitting of its central role regarding our experience. However, Heidegger and Husserl's account of death share a fundamental feature, namely the radical division between two realms: the transcendental and the empirical for Husserl, and the ontological and the ontic realms for Heidegger. So while, for Heidegger, Dasein does die, it is not clear how this dying relates to factical death; and more broadly, how Dasein relates to embodiment and the natural world. It could be the case, as Sartre points out in *Being and Nothingness,* that we were factically immortal, and this would have no effect on our being finite (Sartre 1978, 546) or, in Heidegger's words, in our dying.

As we saw in chapter 3, Husserl also tried to isolate a purely subjective experience of dying that was independent from the apprehension of factical death, but admitting the possibility of such an experience implied arguing in favour of a primordial solipsistic realm independent and prior to my involvement with others, a possibility that his later developments (and our own research direction) has put into question. What would it mean, then, to think about death as a transcendental-empirical phenomenon?

10.3 Who dies?

Ronald Bruzina explains very clearly the dilemma that we face regarding limits:

> *Either transcendental constituting "subjectivity" is structured by the beginning and end of life humans undergo or else humans as individuals cannot be identified with that "subjectivity". Yet is not that identification at the very heart of phenomenology's whole investigative track and procedure insofar as the openness to being that is intrinsic to intentionality, and correlative in the phenomenality of beings, is structurally constitutive of human experience and hence is the fact that allows proposing a reflective investigation of constitution in the first place?* (Bruzina 2001, 374/5)

In the context of Husserlian phenomenology, transcendental subjectivity simply *is* the empirical subject considered from the phenomenological perspective: "*As transcendental ego, after all, I am the same ego that in the worldly sphere is a human ego. What was concealed from me in the human sphere I reveal through transcendental inquiry.*" (Hua 6, 267; Husserl 1970, 264). And yet, as we have seen, this identification is cut loose in the moment of death, where personal life ends and transcendental life continues, albeit as a pure potentiality. Husserl understands death as the separation of transcendental life from its self-objectification as human being, and so our reflection on limit-cases has led us to examine this division within subjectivity. After having looked at different notions or figures of the subject in his work, we have come to an understanding of subjectivity as fundamentally ambiguous. It is in Husserl's own investigations that we can find the evidence to support this ambiguity, even though he himself goes in a different

direction.

The genetic question about the origin of experience had led Husserl to the unfolding of time through the retention of a primal impression (*Urhyle*). At the very "bottom" of temporalization, what he found was an anonymous layer, whose anonymous character had to do with our way of reaching it, namely retrospectively, through a reflective act. According to Husserl, this showed the need to take this anonymous primal source of time as the most fundamental figure of subjectivity, the final source of experience. However, as I understand it, the impossibility of reaching the spontaneous source of temporal experience other than after the fact, is already evidence of the interdependency between subjective and objective aspects of personal experience that I have been advocating for so far. To put it simply, while reflection presupposes the anonymous functioning Ego, this functioning Ego requires reflection—and so, objectification—to be given at all. In Husserl's reading, the objective awareness of myself that reflection provides is dependent on subjective awareness, but he never seems to give the same importance to the other direction. This becomes evident whenever he implies that a pure spirit or a pure consciousness can still *be* without there being a world, which ultimately means a pure consciousness could *be* without having an objective place in the world. Naturally, it is also what motivates the idea of the immortality of the transcendental subject. When we look closely at the dynamic of time, we see that the privilege of the primal Ego over the empirical is somewhat arbitrary once we take into account the interplay between subjective and objective dimensions that takes place as long as there is conscious experience. In death, this dynamic would cease because the objectification of the subject is lost, but rather than thinking of it as making everything stop, Husserl views it as a moment of separation between the two, where the transcendental continues. The reason behind this has proven to be of a methodological nature. In the chapter on Monadology (5), I have argued that in fact what continues or what needs to be admitted as always having been there and always remaining there should be considered as the phenomenological onlooker rather than the transcendental subject. Indeed, whatever we can meaningfully say or imagine about our life as subjects and the world as the horizon of this life, needs to be correlated to a subject, because the opposite would mean

describing something like a world in-itself. This is the sense of the methodological need that leads Husserl to positing the immortality of the subject. *In the context of his work, we can potentially retain some idea of immortality of a strictly methodological nature, meant to express the insurmountable character of the reflecting consciousness; while reconsidering the idea of the immortality of constituting consciousness*. In order to do this, the first-personal approach must be reconsidered.

10.4 Constituting subjectivity

While Husserl seems to think of the first person in terms of an Ego, scholarship after him–especially in the French tradition–tends to stress the idea that, because what we effectively reach through intuition is an anonymous consciousness that does not seem to be yet personal, the first-person is either lost as ground of experience, or must be understood in broader terms. In her reflection on the first-personal approach in phenomenology, Natalie Depraz (2014) comes to a conclusion along these lines: the true first person, she states, because it is anonymous and bodily, is not an "I". It is not either a non-I, but a field of felt intimacy that is nevertheless already in relation to others. Rather than characterizing this field, phenomenology would put forward an idea of the first-person that is already objectified, and therefore it would be a third-personal first-person, which is contradictory. Now, if it is not an "I", how can this field be first-personal at all? In his *Phenomenology and Embodiment*, Joona Taipale explains it as follows:

> *It should be noted here that the term "first-person" does not quite merit its name: even if experiences have an ipseity or mineness from the start, this ipseity remains anonymous and pre-personal. Accordingly, when discussing 'first-personal givenness,' I am not referring to thematic self-presence of subjectivity, but to the pre-reflective mineness of experiencing*. (Taipale 2014, 74).

Without this mineness of experience, that is, without the possibility of going back to lived experiences within the unity of the flow of internal time, there wouldn't be experience at all. To experience something is for something to last in time, and

time is given first-personally, in the sense that it is lived through and not perceived as an object itself. In this sense, a first-personal approach is irreducible. As Dan Zahavi clearly explains:

> *To speak phenomenologically of the temporality of consciousness is to speak of the temporal givenness of consciousness. but to speak of the temporal givenness of consciousness is to speak of its temporal self-manifestation. To suggest otherwise is to reify consciousness. Of course, it might be necessary to distinguish different types of self-manifestation, and different types of subjective temporality, but from the outset it should be realized that Husserl's investigation of inner time-consciousness is nothing apart from an investigation into the temporality of prereflective self-awareness*. (Zahavi 1999, 71).

Self-manifestation of consciousness is a necessary starting point of phenomenological analysis, but the analysis of time undeniably presents us with a foreign element that cannot be reduced to this self-manifestation and that in fact allows for this self-manifestation to occur. This is, naturally, what the a priori of correlation expresses. So even if the unity of experiences is given in "subjective" time, this is in fact already a mixture of a subjective and an objective element. That this is a *felt* element, that is to say, that it is not in-itself, is also just a necessary consequence of this correlation. Taken as a living point of view that we cannot step out of, the first person, indeed, could never die. And yet, as Husserl already acknowledged, we know that it will, because what the first-personal reflection showed is that affection –and thus, *Hyle*—is needed for there to be a living perspective. Husserl stated that death was the separation of the transcendental and the empirical subject, but as we have seen, this is a speculative remark. What we face when trying to understand limits is the impossibility of going beyond an already temporalized, worldly life. Going back to our reflection on nature in chapter 8, we had seen that the regressive question for the genesis of constitution could only take us as far as the recognition of a primal fact, and this was the existence of the Ego as the point of encounter of ideality and facticity. While normally the necessity of ideality was defined in opposition to the contingency of facts, in the case of the transcendental Ego this opposition did not hold and the eidos of

transcendental Ego coincided with its fact (Hua 15, 385). The question about the genesis and the end of our experience unveils the fact of our existence, which is both contingent and necessary. As Tengelyi states: "*It is, indeed, a contingent fact that, at the very moment, I exist and think; but as long as I actually think, my existence is necessary. That is why Husserl speaks of the 'necessity of a fact'". (*Tengelyi 2014, 51). This type of paradoxical formulations once again show up when characterizing the basis of subjectivity, and despite Husserl's efforts to 'solve' these paradoxes, there does not seem to be a possible reconciliation. But what exactly does this paradox mean? Is it, as Husserl seems to suggest in the case of death, a conflict between the way I experience myself in the first person, namely as immortal and necessary, and how I experience myself in the third person, as contingent and finite? Both perspectives seem to be irreconcilable, as James Hart points out:

> *The transcendental I cannot be said to be contingent or factual in any sense that we may find in our manifestation of the world. We cannot properly say that the transcendental I exists 'as long as' primal presencing 'lasts.' Nor can we properly say that 'at some time' the transcendental I might no longer be. Nor can we say that the transcendental I at one time was not. The senses of necessity, temporality, possibility, and contingency here tend to reflect the senses that are embedded in the manifestation of the world. To this extent they are inappropriate. Yet the transcendental person is present to us also as someone in the world who has begun and who will die, who is as ephemeral as anything else. (…) Each perspective urges scare quotes (or quotation marks) on the disclosure of what appears from the different standpoints. Not that the appearings are denied or simply transcended, but rather their sense is disturbed by the other perspective. And there is no clear standpoint that can harmoniously unify them.* (Hart 2009, 449)

And yet, what we have seen so far is that limit-cases simply cannot be restricted to only one standpoint. As Depraz & Mouillié assert in an article dedicated to the topic, the locus of death is the space in-between the two:

> *'We die': this statement considers then only the interval, which is not made of time or space, from facticity to the ontologically constituting structure, an interval that takes*

time [prend du temps]. To live (that is to say, phenomenologically, to constitute) takes time. It is that, taking time, that we call 'dying' "[96] (Depraz & Mouillié 1991).

Since limits can never be something *to* the subject, and therefore cannot be said to be constituted *by* the subject but rather coincide with it, it is not possible to understand them through the subject-object scheme. The first-personal perspective thought of as the 'mineness' of experience is itself bound to temporalization, and so it falls short when it comes to explaining temporalization itself. As Klaus Held points out, the living present is living insofar as it lies between birth and death (Held 1981, 217).

Husserl's idea of the immortality of transcendental subjectivity is intimately tied to his views on what subjectivity and the first person is, and the reflection on limits puts both these characterizations into question. Subjectivity could only be said to be immortal because it was outside of time, as the primal I of the living present. But if we accept the idea of the primal facticity shown by the reflection on limits, we must reject any identification of the subject with the pre-being of primal temporalization. *If transcendental subjectivity is itself bound to temporalization, then it would in fact be legitimate to say that it lasts as long as primal presencing does.*

However, the previous quote points to an important issue: How can transcendental consciousness last or end, if the meaning of what lasting or ending is, can only exist for her? The transcendental principle persists as long as the meaningful expression of its limits redirects us to the meaning-giving activity of a subject. Is it not the case that the unveiling of the limits of the first-personal perspective is achieved by a first person? We must now turn to the methodological aspects of immortality in order to consider one final point, namely whether it is possible to ascribe immortality, if not to the transcendental subject, to the phenomenologizing subject or transcendental onlooker.

[96] «Nous mourrons»: cet énoncé considère alors seulement l'intervalle, qui n'est ni de temps, ni d'espace, de la facticité à la structure ontologiquement constituante, intervalle qui, lui, prend du temps. Vivre (c'est-à-dire, phénoménologiquement, constituer) prend du temps. C'est cela, prendre du temps, que nous appellerons «mourir».

10.5 Phenomenological onlooker

I have stated that, even if we can put into question the immortality of constituting consciousness, we can retain some idea of a methodological immortality. This goes back to the epistemological reading of Monadology I put forward on chapter 5. When Husserl claims that the Monad was already there before consciousness arose in the world, and that it will be there forever; he seems to be presenting a hypothetical situation where the being of the world continues, and as a consequence he must posit the being of consciousness, even if as a potentiality. It does not mean, or it should not mean, that a pure consciousness can be independent of the world, as his more idealistic formulations suggest. Rather, it means that as long as we can imagine such a world without consciousness, there is in fact a consciousness correlated to it, namely our own as those who imagine it now. It would be impossible for a world to exist without there being a point of view, and this is the ultimate meaning of the first-person. In its most basic configuration, the first person coincides with the primal I, which is a "living point of view" (*lebendigen Gesichtspunktes*) (Taguchi 2006, 175) from which we understand the world and others. But to be aware of the necessity of this point of view entails having gone beyond the natural attitude and into a phenomenological reflection: the transcendental principle that is behind Husserl's defence of immortality becomes available through the performance of the epoché, which in turn modifies this scheme by objectifying the functioning subject. This ontifying of the absolute anonymous first person is the "*secondary (or non proper) enworldment of phenomenologizing*" (Fink 1995, 116) that was mentioned in our discussion of the primal I (chapter 4). According to Fink, because in order to bring to light what transcendental consciousness is, we need to turn it into an object which we can speak about and betray its proper character (of being pre-ontic); the phenomenologizing subject, which he calls transcendental onlooker, is revealed as a kind of condition for the being of the transcendental subject. It is a matter of contention whether Husserl agreed (or to what extent) with Fink's developments in

the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. But, as Ronald Bruzina points out in his introduction to the English translation, "*the differences from Husserl that emerged in Fink's thinking were* genuine problems for and within transcendental phenomenology*, genuine problems that developed intrinsically within it rather than antagonistically confronting or undercutting it from the outside*." (Fink 1995, xxxii). The main point to consider here is the transcendental onlooker's involvement in the world. Up until now, I have tried to reconsider Husserl's perspective on transcendental subjectivity as being outside of time and the world, to show that this outworldly dimension of subjectivity is only abstract and any talk of it having a priority over constituted subjectivity is deceiving. This was mainly achieved by examining constitution as a process that requires a noematic pole from the start. However, even if we can deny that constituting subjectivity could be considered independently of the world—in a strict sense, independently of the hyletic core that is the basis for the constitution of a world—, we have to now ask if the same goes for the transcendental onlooker. Indeed, Husserl does not explicitly separate these two forms of transcendental life, but according to the reading I've proposed so far, it is in fact possible to make out what I've referred to as a methodological dimension of the first-personal perspective. Could this mean that the transcendental onlooker could absorb the characteristics that Husserl attributed to constituting subjectivity; and in this sense, that it is her, the onlooker, that can be considered outside of time and "eternal"? This would entail admitting that phenomenologizing is not any kind of constitution but something radically different. As Fink himself wonders: "*But does the transcendental onlooker, who does not participate in the constitution of the world, still at all '*constitute'*? And if so —what sense does 'constitution' still have?"* (Fink 1995, 12). It is evident that phenomenology is an accomplishment of humans in the world like every other, but insofar as it tries to overcome the natural attitude, it is also, in a sense, a "*flight from finitude*" (Fink 1995, 112). Nevertheless, we must beware not to divide subjectivity once again, now between constituting and phenomenologizing subject; when we are precisely looking for her unity. When considering this issue, Fink suggests that the unity of the three I's (phenomenologizing, constituting and empirical), what he calls the Absolute, is a "*synthetic unity of antithetic moments*" (Fink 1995, 142), where being (world) and

pre-being (constituting subjectivity) are the two opposing elements. This in-itself Absolute then becomes for-itself when the (once again opposing) tendency of self-elucidation arises through the reduction. In line with what we presented in our previous chapter, we can turn to Fink's use of dialectics to account for the movement that ceaselessly goes from constituting to constituted subjectivity and back, where the two poles are given in opposition but require each other.[97] But in Fink's developments, noncommittal as they are to any straightforward form of metaphysics, there is a sense of closure that might be lacking justification. Just as we rejected the move towards an ontological description of a being prior to the subject-object division in Merleau-Ponty, I would not go as far as to endorse an idea of a science of the Absolute that goes beyond the subject-object correlation. Fink seems to suggest that these categories cannot fully apply to the Absolute because they belong to the realm of mundane science (Fink 1995, 151). This might be true, but it is only one side of the coin. The self-cognizing of the reciprocal relation of being and pre-being that completes the Absolute, should not be thought of as something else or beyond these terms, but as the relation itself between them. In the same way, a science of the Absolute should not be understood as rising above mundane science, but rather as the awareness of the reciprocal relation between mundane science and phenomenology.

[97] A similar formulation can be found in Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*, where he describes perception as a "*diacritical, relative, oppositional system.*" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 206)

Conclusions to part 3

Where does that leave us regarding death? Insofar as we find ourselves always in between birth and death, we cannot reach beyond these limits. But the reflection on limits, rather than give us a yes or no answer to a metaphysical question, illuminates the fundamental ambiguity of our experience.

Already in chapter 5, we came across the possibility of considering immortality as a purely methodological notion. While mortality could affect the subject as both empirical and constituting, it would be necessary to leave aside a form of subjectivity of a methodological nature to preserve the transcendental principle. However, this strategy ran the risk of dividing subjectivity again when what we are precisely after is the possibility of explaining its unity. Even if we took immortality as a metaphor for something else, explaining that metaphor led to the recognition, in Husserl's thought, of a persistent idealistic standpoint that goes against the phenomenological spirit of going to the things themselves. The methodological need to consider, in the context of a transcendental philosophy, a living point of view as a condition for experience and reflection, should not go against the methodological need of sticking to what can be grounded on intuition. This is why I dismissed the metaphysical question of the immortality of the monad—which cannot receive a yes or no answer through intuition—and recuperated the notion of primal facticity trough the work of Tengelyi (2014b), which in an indirect manner, provides us with the only possible answer: we are always already between birth and death, and cannot go beyond that. Considering subjectivity as a unity, we have to admit there is no form of the subject that can go beyond its facticity, not even the phenomenological onlooker considered as a purely methodological notion.

What we have found is that Husserl's account of constitution was perhaps lacking a sufficiently robust foothold in the embodied aspect of the subject. For a subject, to be a body means to have an ambiguous nature that is both constituting and constituted. Husserl may have undermined the importance of the objective aspect of embodiment by considering it the result of the subject's own self-constitution. This meant either that subjectivity was not embodied at all, or that it was embodied only in a subjective manner; yet, as we have seen, it does not seem

possible to isolate a purely subjective body. Even though in many of the texts we have explored throughout this dissertation, he seems to identify this lack and try to compensate it by enlarging the transcendental sphere, this enlargement appears to be half-hearted insofar as he will always retain a notion of transcendental life that remains outside of time and of the world.

The notion of transcendental person, considered as a transcendental subject that is a reality in the spatio-temporal world —and importantly, in a historical and social world— has become our candidate to address the whole of subjectivity. In Husserl's account, and in ours, the person dies. But we cannot consider, as Husserl did, that transcendental life continues. The singularity of our personal lives ends with death, and so does the primordial upsurge of time that Husserl identifies with the primal ego. It ends not because it has never been, but because it can only be in correlation with the world.

And yet, we understand that the transcendental standpoint prevents us from endorsing a position on the matter that pretends to be final. The methodological need to consider, in the context of a transcendental philosophy, a living point of view as a condition for experience and reflection, should not serve to create a split within subjectivity, but as a warning that the results of mundane science should always be put in the context of our subjective constitution; and that the results of subjective constitution should be put in the context of a primal facticity (nature) and the life-world.

Therefore, we have found that when it comes to limits, our very own first-personal experience leads us beyond herself, and in this movement beyond herself we must defend it still. The ambiguity of our own being makes it so that we cannot opt for one perspective or the other completely, since both are already contaminated with the other.

In our view–which has followed Husserl even when opposing him–neither the intuitive evidence nor the first-personal perspective can be forfeited without forfeiting the integrity of the phenomenological enterprise as a whole. Death as a natural phenomenon pushed us to find a balance between these two principles. This balance is only found in a reformulation of the subject as transcendental person.

General conclusions

This thesis argued that a Husserlian (i.e., a philosopher who holds on to the two Husserlian principles) can only make sense of the phenomenon of death by considering the constituting subject as a transcendental person, that is to say, as being both constituting and constituted, without any primacy of one over the otherI started by pointing out the tension between transcendental phenomenology and naturalism, and the seemingly unresolvable chicken-and-egg scenario between consciousness and nature. The result is closer to a recognition of the virtuosity of the circle that goes from one to the other and back, than to a strong defence of either term as privileged. This amounts to nothing more than a confirmation of the fundamental correlation that is at the centre of Husserlian phenomenology. This correlation cannot be dissected into smaller components, because the poles that are involved in it are abstract moments that do not stand alone. When Husserl stresses the independent and absolute character of consciousness, spirit, or constituting subjectivity facing the world and its own self-objectification, he seems to be attempting to separate them himself. In his dealings with death this becomes more apparent, and the story of how he deals with the being and nature of the transcendental facing the world can be told following the thread of death. This is what I have tried to do throughout this research.

Regarding the secondary aim of this dissertation, namely providing an immanent critique of the traditional, idealistic strand of Husserlian phenomenology, I have tried to show the limitations of such an approach by showing the limitations of the first-person perspective upon which it rests.

I began the first chapter by looking at the difficulties that death brought to the transcendental method in the eyes of Husserl. The primacy of spirit over nature was to him a necessary result of the adoption of a transcendental standpoint. As the resolution of the paradox of human subjectivity showed, constituting consciousness was considered by Husserl to have a non-worldly type of being, which meant it was also not subjected to birth or death. In fact, death provided the separation between consciousness and the human being. In the context of phenomenology, stating that the being of consciousness is different than the being

of an entity is a platitude. And yet, as the treatment of death shows, the consequences of such a view are far-reaching and not at all obvious.

In chapter three, I described Husserl's first approach to death as a temporal impossibility, and then his own attempt at overcoming this difficulty by appealing to an intersubjective, Generative solution. This kind of approach put the weight of the constitution on the shoulders of the community, and in this sense, it seemed to allow for a consideration of limits as true phenomena. However, it fell through when it came to explaining the constitution of the community itself, which still depended on the Ego, proving that in order for generativity to work, one must reassess the foundations of Husserl's theory of constitution. After going through Husserl's treatment of death and the complications that it gives rise to, I turned to a more detailed analysis of subjectivity in part 2.

The genetic analysis of constitution showed that in its most basic form, consciousness can be identified with time. But since temporalization can only occur when there exists both an Ego pole and a non-Ego pole, it is impossible to isolate any form of subjectivity that is completely independent of the givenness of a material core (*Hyle*). Husserl's solution was to presuppose the presence of the primal Ego, which is strictly speaking supra-temporal. In chapter four, I considered the primal Ego as the most fundamental form of the subject. This proved to be problematic since it is not intuitively reached but constructed. And yet, the mere fact that there is a constituted pole points in the direction of a constituting subject, and so it is not easy to get rid of the primal I altogether. In searching for a type of concept that can encompass both poles of the constituting process, I turned in chapter five to the notion of Monad. The discussion around Monadology is of great importance for the topic of death since, when Husserl speaks of the immortality of Monads, he goes beyond the simple negative statement of the supra-temporality of the primal I, and into a metaphysical theory of some sort. How close or far this metaphysics is to intuition and the principles of the phenomenological method remains to be examined. After discussing the possibility of considering immortality as a mere methodological necessity, in the line of Kantian regulative ideas, I concluded that this is not entirely compatible with Husserlian phenomenology given the need to ultimately anchor knowledge to intuitive evidence. Rather, following

Tengelyi, I claim that the impossibility of intuitively deciding in favour of either mortality or immortality should lead to the recognition of the primal fact of the existence of the Ego and its intertwinement with the world. While the first type of solution would privilege the integrity of the transcendental principle to the detriment of intuition, the second one would do the opposite. To make such a decision between the two entails committing to a general appreciation of what makes phenomenology what it is.

The notion of Monad, with its metaphysical background, was not entirely suited to consider the whole of subjectivity. This led me to the transcendental person and the ambiguity of her embodied experience as the notion that was most useful to account for the subject. Chapters six starts by considering the person as is commonly understood in Husserl's account, that is, as the subject of the natural attitude. As a moral and social agent, the person distances herself from the empirical human being, while remaining at the same time different from the transcendental subject. This special status of the person regarding both dimensions of subjectivity is what makes it valuable for my argument. By recuperating the idea of a "transcendental person", I can point to what would be a correct understanding of the subject, namely one that brings forth her fundamental ambiguity. It is first necessary, however, to examine the intuitive foundation of this ambiguity. Chapter seven deals with the importance of embodiment as the corner stone of the interpretation of subjectivity as a concrete whole of constituting and constituted subject. To put it simply, we can say that if the subject is a transcendental person, then it is necessarily embodied; and if it is embodied, it is both 'subjective' in the sense of being for-itself, and 'objective' in the sense of being in-itself, an object in the physical world. Except that this kind of description is bound to miss the mark when in fact subjectivity is not a combination of two things but a concrete unity. The type of understanding of the subject as a combination of these two dimensions is intimately related with a certain conception of the world as being made up of nature and spirit, and so these considerations must be accompanied by a reflection on the idea of nature in general (chapter eight). Nature is not to be seen as the disenchanted realm of physical entities that Descartes opposed to *res cogitans*. Phenomenology shows that nothing like a nature in-itself can be

encountered, and so nature is always ‘spiritualized’. But in this movement, it has also rejected every type of limit imposed to that constituting subject considered ultimately as a primal Ego. There is, however, a certain limit that consists not of the particularities of facticity, but of facticity itself: the limit of life. Drawing on the previous idea of primal facticity presented by Tengelyi and other somewhat heterodox readings of Husserl, we can recuperate an idea of Nature as the primal fact of existence.

Chapter nine presents the final reworking of the notion of Subjectivity through a negative strategy, by pointing out the shortcomings in three possible understanding of the subject with respect to my own conclusions. In this chapter and the final one, I present the results of the investigation and my own conclusions regarding subjectivity and death. I propose that subjectivity be considered as a concrete unity of subjective and objective poles, that is to say, as the process of constitution as a whole without any privilege or primacy granted to either one of the poles. On the other hand, this should not lead to consider the whole as a third or fourth kind of being, above or beyond the movement and the poles that constitute it. A sense of incompleteness may remain, insofar as there is no superior synthesis that can provide an end point to the movement. However, this should not be regarded as a flaw of the philosophical system, but rather as the way of remaining true to the way things, and limits, are given.

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Samenvatting

Kan transcendentale subjectiviteit sterven? - Dit proefschrift gebruikt het limietgeval van de dood om een fenomenologisch onderzoek te starten naar het begrip subjectiviteit en zijn relatie tot de natuur. Het proefschrift begint met een uiteenzetting van Husserls controversiële bewering dat de vormende subjectiviteit onsterfelijk is. Daarnaast biedt dit proefschrift ook een tweede-orde discussie aan over de methode en het wezen van de fenomenologie in het aangezicht van naturalisme. De conclusie van dit onderzoek zal zijn dat we slechts een fenomenologisch begrip kunnen krijgen van de dood als we ons begrip van subjectiviteit heroverwegen.

Twee hoofdprincipes – of metaprincipes – van Husserliaanse fenomenologie worden bedreigd door het bestaan van limietgevallen zoals de dood en het wezen van de vormende subjectiviteit. Deze twee principes bestaan allereerst uit de noodzaak om dingen te overwegen zoals ze gegeven worden door intuïties en ten tweede uit de noodzaak om de ervaring te overwegen vanuit een eerste persoons-perspectief. De spanning tussen deze twee principes wordt duidelijk wanneer we de analyse van de dood in acht nemen. Dit onderzoek zal een balans proberen te vinden tussen de verschillende eisen van deze twee principes. Het proefschrift zal concluderen dat deze balans slechts te bereiken is als we het vormende subject begrijpen als een transcendentaal persoon. Het verdedigt een lezing van onsterfelijkheid als een slechts methodologische sleutel. Deze methodologische sleutel is bedoeld om het karakter van het levende perspectief over te brengen. Dit levende perspectief functioneert niet als een absoluut fundament, zoals Husserl het begrepen heeft. Daarnaast heeft deze methodologische interpretatie niet de onsterfelijkheid van het subject tot gevolg.

Het proefschrift bestaat uit drie delen. Allereerst bestaat het uit een algemene presentatie van Husserls fenomenologie en het probleem van grenzen. Ten tweede zal er een diepte-analyse van subjectiviteit in zijn verschillende dimensies worden gegeven. Tot slot bestaat het proefschrift uit een reflectie op ‘de natuur’ en ‘de dood’. Deze reflectie zal een heroverweging van deze sleutelbegrippen voorstellen in het licht van de voorgaande resultaten.

Het eerste deel bouwt een raamwerk op om het probleem van grenzen te begrijpen. Ook wordt Husserls behandeling van het probleem van de grenzen gepresenteerd. In het eerste hoofdstuk geef ik een inleidende bespreking van de fenomenologie als een transcendentale filosofie. Daarnaast bespreek ik de relatie van de fenomenologie tot het wetenschappelijk naturalisme. In het tweede hoofdstuk presenteer ik de "paradox van menselijke subjectiviteit". Deze paradox drukt de problematische relatie uit tussen het transcendentale subject (bewustzijn) en het empirisch subject (de mens). Het paradoxale begrip van onszelf als een wezen dat tegelijkertijd zowel subject als object in de wereld is, vertaalt zich in een paradoxaal begrip van onze dood als zowel onvermijdelijk en onmogelijk. De dood is onvermijdelijk als mens, en onmogelijk als bewustzijn. Het derde hoofdstuk van het eerste deel presenteert Husserls eigen behandeling van de limietgevallen. Deze presentatie zal worden uitgevoerd door een analyse van zijn teksten en manuscripten te geven. Het hoofdstuk zal concluderen dat er een distinctie bestaat tussen een genetische benadering en een generatieve benadering. Daarnaast worden de respectievelijke tekortkomingen van deze twee benaderingen behandeld.

Ik wijd het tweede deel van dit proefschrift aan een verkenning van vier verschillende begrippen geassocieerd met Husserls begrip van subjectiviteit: de oer ik, de monade, de persoon en het lichaam. In hoofdstuk 4 behandel ik het probleem van het retrospectieve karakter van reflectie en het anonieme karakter van het functionerende subject. Ik zal beargumenteren dat de poging om het functionerende subject te identificeren met vormende subjectiviteit vervalt in bepaalde inconsistenties. Het oer-ik is immers van alle objectivering beroofd en is niet een zijnde. Het oer-ik kan zich dus niet manifesteren en kan op zichzelf zodoende niets vormen. Hoofdstuk 5 zal zich focussen op Husserls monadologie. Het begrip monade heeft het voordeel dat het inclusief is en staat in zichzelf de noëmatische correlaten van de ervaring toe. Niettemin zal het duidelijk worden dat Husserls monadologische theorie uiteindelijk gefundeerd is op een speculatieve grond dat ook aan de basis staat van zijn idee over de onsterfelijkheid. In hoofdstuk 6 wend ik mij tot het begrip van de persoon, en zal ik focussen op 'de

transcendentale persoon' als een mogelijke kandidaat om te denken over het concrete subject dat is ingebed in de leefwereld. In hoofdstuk 7 zal ik hier verder op in gaan door te reflecteren op de ambiguïteit van onze belichaming. Met het idee van de ambiguïteit van het lichaam is het mogelijk om subjectiviteit te begrijpen als de concrete eenheid van de subjectieve en objectieve dimensies van de ervaring. Daarnaast overtreft het idee van de ambiguïteit van het lichaam de speculatieve elementen van het monadologische perspectief. Hoofdstuk 8 behandelt de vraag naar het wezen van de natuur en geeft een mogelijk nieuw begrip van de natuur als het rijk van oer-feitelijkheid. Genetische vragen leiden uiteindelijk naar dit rijk van deze oer-feitelijkheid. Dit begrip stelt ons in staat om de natuur te begrijpen als een onderdeel van het subject. Terwijl de natuur te begrijpen is als onderdeel van het subject, zal ik laten zien dat we nog steeds de onherleidbaarheid van de natuur kunnen behouden. In hoofdstuk 9 presenteer ik het begrip van subjectiviteit als een concreet belichaamd geheel. Ik vergelijk dit begrip van subjectiviteit met drie andere mogelijke interpretaties geërfd uit de fenomenologische traditie.

Tot slot, hoofdstuk 10 keert terug naar de vraag van de dood. Ik heroverweeg het begrip van de dood in het licht van de voorgaande analyses. Dit houdt allereerst een heroverweging in van de toegang tot de reflectie van het eerste-persoonsperspectief. Ten tweede houdt het een heroverweging van het transcendentale principe in. Door een analyse te geven van Finks positie in *de zesde Cartesiaanse meditatie*, overweeg ik of onsterfelijkheid kan worden toegeschreven aan de transcendentale toeschouwer in plaats van het vormende subject. Ik zal echter concluderen dat dit een problematische splitsing tot gevolg zou hebben van de Ego. Ondanks deze splitsing is het handig om dit idee als een methodologische waarschuwing te onthouden tegen een naïef naturalisme.

De algemene conclusie van het proefschrift behelst de erkenning van het leven als een onovertroffen *Faktum* dat een onderbouwing geeft van de onderlinge afhankelijkheid van de subjectieve en objectieve polen van vorming, dat wil zeggen, van de *a priori* correlatie. Ik concludeer dat een volger van Husserl slechts het fenomeen dood kan begrijpen wanneer zij het subject begrijpt in termen van een transcendentaal persoon.

Summary

Does transcendental subjectivity die? Starting from Husserl's somewhat controversial claim about the immortality of the constituting subjectivity, this thesis uses the limit-case of death in order to present a phenomenological exploration of the notion of subjectivity and its relationship to nature. It also offers a second-order discussion about the method and nature of phenomenology in the face of naturalism. The main conclusion of the research is that, in order to make sense of death while abiding by Husserlian methodological rules, it is necessary to reconsider the notion of subjectivity

There are two main principles or meta-principles of Husserlian phenomenology that appear to be threatened when we consider limit-cases such as death and the nature of constituting subjectivity: one is the need to consider things as they are given to intuition, and the other is the need to consider experience from a first-personal perspective, in order to preserve the transcendental standpoint. The tension between these two demands come into view in the analysis of the case of death. This research attempts to achieve a balance between the demands made by these principles.

The thesis concludes that this point of balance can only be achieved via an understanding of the constituting subject as a transcendental *person*. It defends a reading of immortality as a mere methodological key, meant to convey the ineliminable character of the lived perspective. This lived perspective does not function as an absolute foundation, as Husserl conceived it, and it does not entail the immortality of the subject.

There are three parts to this thesis: a general presentation of Husserl's phenomenology and the problem of limits, an in-depth analysis of subjectivity in its different dimensions, and a reflection on nature and death that proposes a reconsideration of these key topics in light of previous results.

The first part builds up the framework to understand the problem of limits and presents Husserl's treatment of them. In the first chapter, I provide an introductory view of phenomenology as transcendental philosophy and its relationship to scientific naturalism. In the second chapter I present the so called "paradox of

human subjectivity", which deals with the problematic relationship between the transcendental subject (consciousness) and the empirical subject (the human being). The paradoxical understanding of ourselves as being at the same time subjects and objects for the world translates into a paradoxical understanding of our death as both unavoidable and impossible: unavoidable for humans, impossible for consciousness.

The third chapter of the first part presents Husserl's treatment of limit-cases through the analysis of his texts and manuscripts, it concludes to the distinction between a genetic approach and a generative one and points out their respective insufficiencies.

I dedicate the second part of this dissertation to exploring four different notions associated with Husserl's notion of subjectivity: the primal I, the Monad, the person and the body. In chapter 4, I take a look at the problem of the retrospective character of reflection and the anonymous character of the functioning subject. I argue that the attempt to identify this purely functioning subject with constituting subjectivity falls into some inconsistencies insofar as, deprived of all objectification, the primal I is a non-being that cannot be manifested and cannot constitute on its own Chapter 5 focuses on Husserl's monadology. The notion of Monad has the advantage of being inclusive and admitting within itself the noematic correlates of experience. However, as it becomes apparent upon closer analysis, Husserl's monadological theory ultimately rests on a speculative ground that is also at the basis of the idea of immortality. I then turn to the notion of person in chapter 6, and focus on the "transcendental person" as a possible candidate to think of the concrete subject that is embedded in a life-world. I complement this by reflecting on the ambiguous nature of embodiment in chapter 7. Through the idea of the ambiguity of the body, it is possible to understand subjectivity as the concrete unity of the subjective and the objective dimensions of experience while overcoming the speculative element of the monadological view. Chapter 8 deals with the question of nature and a possible redefinition of it as the realm of primal facticity that genetic questions ultimately lead to. This allows us to consider nature a part of the subject while retaining its irreducible character. In chapter 9, I present the notion of

subjectivity as a concrete embodied whole in comparison with three other possible interpretations inherited from the tradition.

Finally, chapter 10 returns to the question of death and reconsiders it in light of the foregoing analysis. This involves a reconsideration of the first-personal access to reflection and of the transcendental principle. Through an analysis of Fink's position in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, I consider whether immortality can be attributed to the transcendental onlooker (the phenomenologizing subject) instead of the constituting subject, but conclude this perpetuates a problematic splitting of the Ego. In spite of this, it is useful to keep this idea as a methodological warning against naïve naturalism.

The overall conclusion of the thesis amounts to the recognition of life as an unsurpassable *Faktum* that underpins the inter-dependency of the subjective and objective poles of constitution, that is to say, of the *a priori* of correlation. I conclude that a Husserlian can only make sense of the phenomenon of death by considering the subject as transcendental person.

Curriculum Vitae

María Celeste Vecino was born on 1 May 1987 in the city of Buenos Aires. She completed her license degree in Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires, where she started her research in the field of phenomenology and contemporary philosophy. After obtaining a doctoral scholarship from ANid in 2016, she began her joint PhD at Diego Portales University in Santiago de Chile and Leiden University in the Netherlands. During her time in Chile, she worked as a teacher and coordinator for Diego Portales University (UDP) and the Pontificial Catholic University (PUC), and took part in the formation of a network of young researchers dedicated to the study of Phenomenology, with whom she organized several conferences and other academic activities.

She spent the second half of her time as a PhD student researching and teaching at Leiden University. As part of her graduate studies, she carried out two research stays at the University of Köln and the Husserl archives in 2019 and 2020.

Her current research is on Post-Husserlian phenomenology, focused on the notion of Nature.