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

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## 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)<sup>49</sup>

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

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<sup>49</sup> Entwicklung der Welt ist Entwicklung des Bewusstseins, und alles Physische ist selbst nur eine Beziehung zwischen Bewusstsein, 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”*<sup>50</sup> (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:

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<sup>50</sup> 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)<sup>51</sup>*

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<sup>52</sup>, 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

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<sup>51</sup> 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 Selbstobjektivierung durchdringt, Monaden zum vernünftigen Selbst- und Menschheitsbewusstsein und zum Weltverständnis kommen etc.

<sup>52</sup> 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)<sup>53</sup>*

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.<sup>54</sup> (Hua 42, 158)*

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<sup>53</sup> 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.

<sup>54</sup> 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)<sup>55</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup> 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<sup>56</sup>. 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

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

<sup>56</sup> 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 n° 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)<sup>57</sup> (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 [primordially] I find transcendental birth and death as the human occurrences in the world phenomenon, but correlatively transcendental being and life as the one that*

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<sup>57</sup> Die ganze transzendente Monadologie entspringt für mich als Ego, das in 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 (...)*<sup>58</sup> (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” [transzendente 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*

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<sup>58</sup> Darin finde ich transzendente Geburt und Tod als die humanen Vorkommnisse im Weltphänomen, korrelativ aber das transzendente Sein und Leben als das die Weltgeltung mit dem Weltsinn konstituierende -das transzendente Ego in seinem strömenden Leben, in seiner urtümlichen Gegenwart alles intentional implizierend (...)

*principle inaccessible to the methods of worldly knowledge?” (Hua 42, 81)<sup>59</sup>.*

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)<sup>60</sup>*

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*

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<sup>59</sup> Sind die Weltvorkommnisse „Geburt“ und „Tod“ transzendente Indizes für eine unweltliche, übernatürliche Seinsweise der Monaden, für einen Übergang in einen Seinsstil, der in den Methoden der weltlichen Erkenntnis prinzipiell unzugänglich ist?

<sup>60</sup> 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)<sup>61</sup>.

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)<sup>62</sup>. 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.*<sup>63</sup> (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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<sup>61</sup> 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.

<sup>62</sup> 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.

<sup>63</sup> 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.*<sup>64</sup> (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

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<sup>64</sup> 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 factual 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.