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

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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.