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

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## 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"<sup>91</sup>, 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

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<sup>91</sup> 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)<sup>92</sup>.*

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)*

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<sup>92</sup> 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<sup>93</sup>, 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*

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<sup>93</sup> 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<sup>94</sup>. 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

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<sup>94</sup> Regarding eidetic variation as a way of 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 factual 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 regrettably notes:

*"Phenomenology of Perception does not allow us to conceive this situation [the ordinary 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 intertwining 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<sup>95</sup> 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

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<sup>95</sup> 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 as 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.