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Towards the Way Out from the Closed System of Husserl's Monadology

Yoshihiko Itakura

§ 1. The Problem of the Other as a "Sense"

In a way, the unique character of the experience of other human beings was already treated by Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* while he was considering the contrast between the apprehension of a real woman and that of a mere wax doll. When we are wandering around a museum, we encounter a lady winking at us with a smile. In a moment, our belief is suspended, without—or before—thinking of any other sort of entity, and starts to fluctuate between a living woman and what looks like a woman. (But finally, of course, we will find a 'doll' before us which represents a lady...) Some readers might not resist asking: "What conditions are necessary to the perception of a living being?" "What is the condition of possibility of the experience of the 'Other'?" Or more generally: "In what structure does the perception of an individual being function here?" In this case, the "intentionality" of the perceptual "act" involved aims at an individual. For Husserl, what is intended must be capable of being designated by an "occasional expression" like 'this' or 'that', as long as it can be determined as τόδε τι with its specific tempora-spatial—"real"—determinations in space and time. Furthermore, in Husserl's position, it is claimed that this same "sensuous" or "real" object, given by a perception in the narrower sense, is at the same time an intentional object of the "proper signification" ("Eigenbedeutung") which directly intends an "individual meaning"—an "ideal" (supra-temporal) meaning—in the
intuition of an individual—for, otherwise, any objective reference would be impossible at all. It is worth noting that, originally, the Husserlian concept of intentionality was formed on the model of the assertive form of judgement in the interest of the restoration of logic. To meet this requirement, the “material” of judgement—an identical “object” (ideally, a self-identical immanent transcendence)—must stay identical whether the intentional “act” may fluctuate between its different “qualities” (as well as thetic characters). In the above case, therefore, the “object” in the process of perception is supposed to remain identical in its “material”—even if, as he admitted in a later work\(^3\), it might be apprehended in a new “sense”, insofar as new noematic moments are “founded” upon the “sense” of underlying noeses. Here one could remember the distinction of Frege between the meaning of words and their referential object. For, in Husserl, coincidence of thinking and language is universally presupposed, and “recognition” is nothing else than the “Adäquation” of signification (“symbolic” or “signitive intention”) and intuition\(^4\). In terms of *Ideen*, this state of affairs means that intentionality (“noesis”) can possess the same referential object (“noematic sense” or object itself) in different “senses”. In this way, the idea of “sense” in Husserl involves both objective and subjective sides at the same time. That is, the universal character of the “sense” secures objective reference to an identical object while multiple possibilities of the way to “think” the same object are shown as the subjective character of “signitive” intentionality or language.

Here, however, we would have to contend with the following difficulties, if we took into account the later development in Husserl’s own thinking:

(1) In Husserl, any object is a “constituted” object which is constituted in time synthesis (which is tantamount to the “self-temporalization” of “absolute subjectivity”). In this sense, the “real” object is a result of subjective constitution, not the ultimate, nascent objectivity with respect to the problem of individuation.
Besides, even on the level of "reality" in this sense, the scientific determination of a "real object" itself would be an open question.

(2) Even if the identity of an "individual meaning"—the correlate of a proper name—is secured in a sufficient manner, it would not be disputable that the ideality or the essentiality of the "individual meaning" depends on the facticity and historicity of an individual being, by its very definition. Therefore, the whole matter rests upon how the relationship of fact and essence should be interpreted. The inversion which took place as Husserl came to understand the deep meaning of temporality must be considered.

§ 2. Monadology as a System of Automorphisms

It is well known that the problem of the experience of the 'Other' was studied by Husserl through the theory of "Einfühlung" (empathy) and interpreted in the name of "monadology". Here again, the 'Other' is considered to be given as a "sense", and as one "constituted" by the transcendental ego itself. In one of the concluding sections in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, which aims at the self-justification of transcendental idealism, Husserl declares: "...our 'theory' of experiencing Others" is "...an explication of the sense, 'Others' as it arises from the constitutive productivity of that experiencing: the sense, 'truly existing Others', as it arises from the corresponding harmonious synthesis (Einstimmigkeit). What I demonstrate to myself harmoniously as someone else, and therefore have given to me, by necessity and not by choice, as an actuality to be acknowledged, is eo ipso the existing Other for me in the transcendental attitude: the alter ego demonstrated precisely within the experiencing intentionality of my ego". It is as what is "mirrored" in my transcendental ego (a monad) that other transcendental egos (other monads) exist for me. In this sense, alter ego is given as a "mirroring" and an "analogue" of myself in a peculiar way. That is to say: in Husserl, the "self-interpretation" of transcendental ego means that the 'Other' is interpreted as an
analogue of myself, and his or her own original sphere is something "appresented" beyond my own "primordial sphere". And it is when I, as transcendental ego, effect transcendental reduction that I grasp myself in my "primordial sphere" and likewise (in the form of my transcendental experience of what is alien) grasp Others as they are—i.e. as what becomes constituted in me (as an immanent transcendence), as what is "appresentatively" mirrored by the empathy that I fulfill on the basis of "external experience". Thus it turns out that Husserl's whole analysis of experience of Others has been carried out as the explication of the sense 'Other' that has already been constituted in myself and by myself—and by necessity, not by choice—as my own "transcendental experience"; and that it was carried out as the interpretation of the limit of "Others that truly exist" for me by means of the correlative harmonic synthesis of "Einstimmigkeit". Therefore, it is quite natural in this sense that the Other is given as a "sense" for him, and is always expected to appear in exact correspondence with my theoretical eye engaging in phenomenological reflection and reduction which is nothing else than the method itself of Husserl's phenomenology.

Nevertheless, the problem remains the same: what does "sense" mean in Husserlian phenomenology? How is it, or should be it, determined in his phenomenology—once the problem of "facticity" has come to the foreground? Here it is presupposed that every eidetic "sense" of the monadological universe is tautologically represented by each monad—a monotheistic world view of automorphism! And is this not similar to the case in which tautological descriptions of classical dynamics did not permit the "primacy of time and change"? After all, all monads are unable to learn anything from the outside, and are concerned only with themselves. If, however, the "sense" of the Other cannot be separated from the original situation—"hic et nunc" of the original impression or present—in which we encounter him in the most fundamental
inter-subjectivity, it will follow that the problem of the Other—the meaning of the ‘Other’ and the Other as a “sense”—must basically be in line with that of the “facticity” which the later Husserl arrived at. It was Husserl himself who showed that the problem of individuation is that of temporalization. And it was nonetheless true that he did not introduce the genetic viewpoint of phenomenology when he dealt with the “constitution” of the sense ‘Other’ in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation.

§ 3. The Problem of the Sense as an “Essence”

Apparently, the entire project of transcendental phenomenology is based on the methods of “Eidetik” which aim at the recognition of essence and of “sense” as an essence. The fundamental presupposition involved here is that our experience of the world—therefore, that of the intersubjective world—is structured in a definite a priori manner. The manner in which beings are “constituted” as a sense, and in which Others appear in their “appresentations”, is, accordingly, supposed to be in conformity with certain pre-established rules and a priori structures. If, in fact, it were not so, no science would be possible and we could even not lead life itself. It would be quite understandable, therefore, that there must be given to us numberless “essences”—stable and abiding as in Plato—which we can recognize any time, and as many times as we need. On the other hand, however, there is no denying that in our eidetic attitude every particular fact turns into a mere example which is voluntarily interchangeable with another appropriate case. It must be admitted that inevitably, the theory of essence brings with it a cleavage between fact and essence—as far as it excludes irreducible individual facticities. And it will also have to be mentioned that once the essence of an object is recognized in that theory, its singularity is reduced to a nulity.

Here, a certain related problem might be pointed out. No one has ever successfully proved that the ‘becoming’ of the world
excludes effects of any ‘contingency’. No one has proved that ever-changing fluidity of phenomena is *purely* “a priori” phenomena. For, in fact, it would be as difficult to prove as to disprove that no concept of a priori is compatible with the existence of any empirical ‘contingency’—just as there has been no guarantee ever given to natural scientists that every natural phenomenon can be mathematized in a meaningful manner. We would be able to ask here whether no experience of the world—including that of Others— involves such sense constitution as is only possible through historical and/or empirical moments. Take for example the historical—*diachronic*—formation of the sense of a word, whose structurality, if any, transcends the *synchronic* structure of a linguistic system in a certain radical manner. Even though our language and ‘thinking’ may basically be characterized as the synchronic structure of a contemporary language and systems of culture, no one would doubt the facticity of such a diachronic change taking place ‘between’ individuals beyond our synchronic consciousness. It might, therefore, be no wonder that Husserl himself stated in § 58 of *Ideen I*: “the rationality which we find in the fact is never the one that is necessitated by the essence”, while the latter, for him, is the very thing in which he finds “a wonderful teleology”. In fact, it was in this sense that he could not avoid speaking also about the “contingent a priori” in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, as regards a materially and sensorially (“*hyletisch*”) determinate “region”. However, it is clear that such an “a priori” is never ‘logically’ necessary, even though not ‘logically’ impossible. In this respect also, it would not be meaningless to examine whether such an “a priori” already involves some empirical or historical moments, and therefore, whether the “transcendental experience” of such an “a priori” can be genuinely “transcendental” or not. And if such an a priori still deserves the name, we would have to ask whether it must be regarded as an *historically relative* a priori, and whether, if the latter exists at all, it follows that essences of
things, structures, rules of appearance, and the referential character of the world and language itself are eternal, or, rigourously speaking, only temporarily stable and self-identical, and incessantly subject to change.\(^\text{10}\)

In Husserl's view, every "regional ontology", corresponding to each particular science, is subordinate to "formal ontology". The latter, the "eidetic science of objects in general", is defined as "pure logic completely extended to the mathesis universalis".\(^\text{11}\) Husserl proposes here that "a priori synthetic" recognitions and categories should be regarded as "regional axioms" that irreducibly belong to each region, while "formal ontology" should determine the totality of formal ("analytical") categories, as "formal ontology" is supposed by him to involve every form of possible "material" ontology. Accordingly, for him, "reason itself, and especially theoretical reason, is a formal concept"\(^\text{12}\) while leaving as an open question to what extent, or how, the non-"meaning"-conferring moments in subjective experience—pure passivity, functioning associations etc.—contribute to "thinking" which, for him, coincides with language itself ("the universality of coincidence between language and thinking")\(^\text{13}\). For Husserl, the passive genesis, which builds up temporality, is a matter of completely universal, essential necessity which also embraces everything new. Association itself, which is for him "a realm of the ‘innate’ Apriori" and the very principle of passive genesis, is therefore a completely closed, immanent "form-system". However, it would be necessary to note here that the perceptual world of "Gestalt", for example, is what is most difficult to mathematize in its "non-linear" characters. For the logico-mathematical structures, where \(2+2=4\) by the addition participating of the laws of the total structure of "group", are precisely not those of Gestalt.\(^\text{14}\) In a "non-linear" phenomenon, the sum total of qualities of elements does not amount to the quality of the whole because of the interaction between elements where the behavior of an element is influenced by another element. It is clear
that such phenomenality, based on interaction or synergism between elements, is lost sight of where the whole—beyond an element and its individual immanence—is reduced to an immanence, and where no interaction with exteriority is acknowledged, as in Leibniz monadology. In § 40 of *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl says: “In the developed ego, this many-leveled structure [of the all-embracing genesis] is conserved as a persistent form-system of apperception and consequently of constituted objectives—among them, the ones belonging to an Objective universe having a fixed ontological structure”. Thus, even though “the particular fact is irrational,...it is possible only in the apriori form-system pertaining to it as an egological fact”, and “‘fact’, with its ‘irrationality’, is itself a structural concept within the system of the concrete Apriori.” It is clear, here, that there is no absolute gap acknowledged between the genetic streaming of consciousness and a reflecting phenomenologist who endeavors to bridge over a chasm with himself by means of “*Eidetik*”.

It is a very important problem whether, or to what extent, this perspective is consistent with the concrete analysis of the “living present” (*Lebendige Gegenwart*) which concerns the conditions of possibility of reflection itself. For the absolute facticity of the living present with its “original streaming” (*Urströmen*) is found, by analysis, as always preceding reflection itself, and, as L. Landgrebe showed brilliantly, the “original streaming”, as a creative process, cannot be apprehended by reflection which is always carried out as a linguistic articulation. Just as the concept of “original impression”—the original present of consciousness—is beyond the distinction between ‘active’ and ‘passive’, so the “original streaming”, as “original passivity”, must be beyond the distinction between essence and fact, the subjective and the objective, form and matter, and the spiritual and the corporeal. This means that the streaming itself, as antecedent to reflective articulation, cannot be comprehended as a “regional” event, in which the regional laws would explain
regional cases of individuation. Therefore, it is not the movement of reflection that brings forth individuation in the most fundamental sense, but rather the "original streaming" itself which must carry with it the principle of individuation—individuation not of "τόδε τι" in the sense of Ideen I (§§ 14-15), but rather, of an individual in its very etymological sense!

§ 4. The Problem of the Pre-objective World as a Topos of Open Experience

(1) The above problem seems to open up a new perspective on the "sense" of an individual object. For the same difficulty applies also to the problem of the individuation of an "object", and it will amount, rather, to the concealment itself of the individuality of an individual if an τόδε τι in its independent ultimate essence is supposed to be reducible to any material essence in regional ontology. To suppose that an object itself can be given in its essence or a type means to suppose that the essence of an object can be interpreted in a single perspective that is based on the relatively closed reference corresponding to a region. To interpret an object in thematization and typification will thus be to forget the world itself. While the consistency of our world experience requires the univocity of sense and context, the openness of this experience presupposes the undetermined sense of the world and its objects. For, precisely, our life world is such a world as allows the same object to be apprehended in multiple, often ambiguous senses, even if the "noematic meaning" of a given object (ideally, the "object itself") can, under certain conditions, be supposed to stay identical throughout the change in "qualities" and "thetic characters" of judgement. There exist, in fact, numbers of hybrids which at once possess a few eidetic singularities of one and the same genus. As contradictory properties of a wave motion and a particle belong to light, so does man show contradictory characters at the same time. Take, for example, the so-called "double bind" situation of a psychological
conflict. In such a mode of human communication another person is given in totally antagonistic senses at the same time, even if those different senses may be "founded" upon the "objective" context which involves "real" determinations of an external object. In such a case, however, it does not seem that the whole situation can simply be reduced to a matter of constitution of a "time object", for the very excesses which cannot be absorbed into the unity of an "context" engender the whole phenomenon of this emotional situation.\textsuperscript{20} We would generally have to say that eidetic necessities which form and constrain a behavioral context, can be deranged in some affective manner, and the "context" itself has a tendency to be loosened or even disrupted by unexpected moments in the open horizon of the lived world. And this must be because the world experience as such has been an open experience from the beginning, and it has been the experience of the unknown and unexpected, being more than mere re-cognition of the already known. In fact, in the later Husserl, the world is no longer a mere sum of constituted objects\textsuperscript{21}. It is not a completely closed system of the already established, but is the "ground of universal passive belief of being" or "Urdoxa" on which each thematization is carried out. It is always "pre-given" as a determinable undetermined horizon though it itself can never be completely thematized. And it must be for this reason that Merleau-Ponty also said: "Il est vrai qu'on ne parlerait de rien s'il ne fallait parler que des expériences avec lesquelles on coïncide..."\textsuperscript{22} Therefore we would have to conclude that an object, which is always in relation with other objects and always in the world, is never known in itself, as well as the world remains unknown in itself. Or we could also say, the sense of an object is "without bottom"\textsuperscript{23} because of the openness of our world experience itself. Hence the semantical ambiguity—or épaisseur—of an individual before being "constituted" as an univocal "object"—: "Mais cette réponse critique pose un problème: la conversion du regard qui transforme la vie de la conscience en une pure dialectique du sujet.
et de l'objet, qui réduit la chose dans son épaisseur sensible à un réseau de significations, la réminiscence traumatique à un souvenir indifférent et soumet à l'examen la structure de classe de ma conscience,—explicite-t-elle une "condition de possibilité" éternelle, ou bien fait-elle apparaître une nouvelle structure de conscience? C'est un problème de savoir ce qui se passe par exemple lorsque la conscience se sépare du temps, de ce jaillissement ininterrompu au centre d'elle-même, pour l'appréhender comme une signification intellectuelle et maniable..."²⁴

(2) If we direct ourselves towards the later manuscripts of Husserl, it is not impossible to give the interpretation that his Cartesian endeavor to ground the experience of the Other solely on the theory of empathy was not suitable for his own original intention. It is admitted, for example, in his analysis of the sexual instinct that "the fulfillment of an instinct when it is penetrating another 'soul' is not an empathy with the Other", and that such fulfillment is not the "act" of the Ego in the course of living in the "world".²⁵ And in fact, in a certain manner, Husserl's monadology also attested to the posteriority of the "world" to other monads in that the 'objective' world constituted by my ego is posterior to other egos who are also constituting the same—'objective'—world. Therefore, aside from the theory of empathy, it might be noted that in Husserl the object apprehended as the 'Other' in its "sense" is never an 'objective' object which has already been constituted as a part of the 'objective' world. While he still holds that the plurality of other monads is achieved through the "self-interpretation" of the Ego, he assures: "the instinct or drive in its direct operation is not the act" of the Ego's will, and "kinestheses themsevles are not the modes of will"²⁶. According to these points, we would have to interprete that from the outset the Others have appeared, or been experienced as such, before fulfillment of empathy. And it has been so through my genuine sensibility and its achievements that is functioning in the "constantly persisting underlayer of the
primordial world." Moreover, here we find a further problem, namely, how Husserl can maintain his basic idea that "sense" conferring activities (i.e. "thinking" or "noesis") coincide with signitive (symbolic) intention or language, if such passive and pre-predicative functions of instinctual communication are already constitutive of the "sense." Other, and if instincts and drives are not the "act" of my Ego, and if kinestheses themselves are not the modes of the will. For kinesthesis works as the most basic constitutive layer of the world constitution in Husserl, and the perspective of the perceived world is always uniquely being given as a correlate of the mode of my own kinesthesia. And finally, we would also have to examine whether affectivity itself is not only a matter of auto-affection, but also of "hetero-affection" (Lévinas) which presupposes the "asymmetrical" relationship with exteriority or Others that engenders veritable interaction between lives.

Notes


2 An equivalent for the meaning of a proper name. For Husserl, the meaning of every expression is universal. See LU II/6, § 7, p. 30; cf. Ibid., § 5, p. 20 f.


4 See LU II/6, § 8. "Signitive" is equivalent to "significative".


7 If effects of 'contingent' empirical conditions were also formative of relatively stable structures of our world constitution, then those structures would show both 'a priori' and 'empirical' characters at the same time. And the absurdity of the purely empirical (a pure
contingency) would be excluded, as well as the concept of purely a
priori structurality. Here, the problem concerns the concept of genesis.
For this problem, see the suggestive criticism of Lévi-Strauss and
Chomsky offered by the constructional position of J. Piaget: Le
structuralisme (PUF, 1987), pp. 119–125. “Certes il est séduisant
pour un mathématicien de croire aux Idées et de penser qu’avant la
découverte des nombres négatifs et celle de l’extraction des racines
le nombre imaginaire $\sqrt{-1}$ existait de toute éternité dans le sein de
Dieu. Mais depuis le théorème de Gödel, Dieu lui-même a cessé d’être
immobile et il construit sans discontinuer des systèmes de plus en
plus “forts”, ce en quoi il est d’ailleurs plus vivant...l’innéité de la
raison chez Chomsky ou la permanence de l’intellect humain chez
Lévi-Strauss ne satisfont l’esprit qu’à la condition de négliger la
biologie.” (Ibid., pp. 121–122.) “Or, tant à cause des antinomies
connues depuis longtemps que pour la raison plus récente des limites
de la formalisation, une structure de toutes les structures ne saurait
être réalisée: d’où cette conclusion que la nature du sujet est de
constituer un centre de fonctionnement et non pas le siège a priori
d’un édifice achevé; et si l’on remplace le sujet par une unité sociale,
ou par l’espèce, ou la vie, ou même l’univers, il en sera encore ainsi./
Au total, le structuralisme est bien une méthode et non pas une
doctrine, ou, dans la mesure où il devient doctorinal, il conduit à une
multiplicité de doctrines.” (Ibid., p. 123.)

8 Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas’ philosophical development of the concept of
“diachrony” and “asymmetrical relationship” between singular
beings, found in Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence (La Haye,
1974; cited hereafter as AE). See, for example, ibid., p. 109. Cf.
Levinas, Le Temps et l’Autre, PUF, 1983, pp. 81, 88, 89. His concept
“féminité” seems to make it more intelligible why our naive consci‐
ousness will say ‘reality’ of our life is full of contingencies, and
that the easily anticipable behavior and destiny of a most familiar
person is, after all, unpredictable.

9 Formale und transzendentale Logik, Husserliana XVII (hereafter cited
as FTL), § 6. For Husserl, the concept hyle is a formal one.

10 Cf. Plato, Cratylus, 402 a, Theaetetus, 152 a–e. See Emmanuel Lévinas,
Totalité et Infini (Nijhoff, 1980), p. 31, on his interpretation of the
Heraclitus’ stream and the affinity between Protagoras and Heraclitus.


12 FTL, § 6. “Logic...is the self-interpretation of Pure Reason” which is “the closed system of pure principles.” (Ibid., pp. 33-34.)

13 FTL, §§ 3-4.


15 I. Prigogine & I. Stenger op. cit., p. 302: “...it is an essential property of all integrable systems that there exists a transformation that may be described in terms of noninteracting entities. .../ All integrable systems thus can be viewed as “monadic” systems. Conversely, Leibnizian monadology can be translated into dynamic language: the universe is an integrable system. Monadology thus becomes the most consequential formulation of an universe from which all becoming is eliminated.”

16 Since Gödel's proof, Husserl’s conception of mathesis universalis (“formal ontology”) is impossible without amendment. Here, however, Husserl’s way to understand “a biological Apriori” will also have to be taken into account. See Krisis...Husserliana VI, p. 484: “biology is concrete and true psychophysics. It has necessarily universal tasks, and only seemingly it is at a disadvantage against physics in this point. ...Rather, as truly universal biology, it comprehends the whole concrete Apriori, and then also implicitly physics, and becomes, through the correlative consideration, totally universal philosophy.”


18 Cf. LU II/6, § 58, p. 180: “only reflective contents can serve as purely categorial representing contents.” Cf. Ideen III, Hua.V, p. 44.

19 See Husserl, Ideen I, § 15; cf. ibid., 2. Halbband, p. 481, Zu S. 35 d. Neuaukg, 38 Rb.: “This law has become doubtful to me...”

20 L. Landgrebe showed this as the atemporal character of affectivity and drives. See Landgrebe, Faktizität und Individuation (Hamburg, 1982) pp. 71 (466)-87 (482), & p. 112 (285) which also gives a happy criticism of Krisis. Cf. EU, § 17, p. 80 ff.: Husserl on the “qualitative or intensive discontinuities” “in the sphere of sensibility.” Cf. AE, pp. 141, 154 f.

22 Maurice Merleau-Ponty,*Phénoménoologie de la perception*, p. 388.


(Doctorate Student)