

Title	A preliminary sketch on embodied transcendental subjectivity in Husserl
Sub Title	
Author	植村, 玄輝(Uemura, Genki)
Publisher	Centre for Advanced Research on Logic and Sensibility The Global Centers of Excellence Program, Keio University
Publication year	2010
Jtitle	CARLS series of advanced study of logic and sensibility Vol.3, (2009.) ,p.339- 344
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	Part 5 : Logic and Informatics
Genre	Research Paper
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=KO12002001-20100331-0339

慶應義塾大学学術情報リポジトリ(KOARA)に掲載されているコンテンツの著作権は、それぞれの著作者、学会または出版社/発行者に帰属し、その権利は著作権法によって保護されています。引用にあたっては、著作権法を遵守してご利用ください。

The copyrights of content available on the Keio Associated Repository of Academic resources (KOARA) belong to the respective authors, academic societies, or publishers/issuers, and these rights are protected by the Japanese Copyright Act. When quoting the content, please follow the Japanese copyright act.

41

A Preliminary Sketch on Embodied Transcendental Subjectivity in Husserl

Genki Uemura^{1,2}

¹ Department of Philosophy and Ethics, Graduate School of Letters, Keio University

² Centre for Advanced Research on Logic and Sensibility (CARLS), Keio University

Introduction

In §53 of *Crisis* (1936), Husserl formulates the so-called “paradox of subjectivity”:

Universal intersubjectivity, into which all objectivity, everything that exists at all, is resolved, *can obviously be nothing other than mankind*; and the latter is undeniably a component part of the world. How can a component part of the world, its human subjectivity, constitute the whole world [...]? (VI, 183, my emphasis)¹

While the consequence drawn here—“human beings are subjects for the world [...] and at the same time are objects in this world” (VI, 184)—sounds paradoxical, one of its premises, which Husserl considers to be obvious, is in fact not that obvious: transcendental (inter-)subjectivity² is identical to humans, i.e. rational and finite individuals with their body in the world. In other words, the premise is that *transcendental subjectivity is embodied in humans without losing its constituting function*. In the first quotation above Husserl does not give any reason about that, but he *should* do it. For even Husserl himself does not always hold the claim in question. In a manuscript of 1908 he writes:

¹. I refer to volumes of Husserl [1950ff. and 2001ff.] by indicating their number in roman numerals.

². In this paper I ignore the problem of transcendental *intersubjectivity*.

What is, however, the being of constituting consciousness? It is no real being. It is no ego, no person, no soul. *It is connected to no body, since the body is something constituted in consciousness.* (Ms. B I 4, 18a, quoted in Lavigne [2005: 779], my emphasis; cf. XVI, 40–1)

Obviously, here body is considered to be something constituted rather than constituting. According to the early version of Husserl's transcendental idealism (henceforth TI), which is found in his writings in the period 1908–9, and some elements of which remain in *Ideas I* (1913), there is no worry about the paradox.

Thus it is reasonable to say that Husserl changes his mind about the role of body in his TI. Then the question is: when and for what reason does he change his mind? The aim of this paper is to sketch one reason about that in a preliminary way. First, I give a further characterization of Husserl's early TI. Second, I argue that it is the problem of the actuality that leads Husserl to the acceptance of embodied transcendental subjectivity. Finally, I give a remark on the later development of Husserl's thought, by pointing out a problem arising from his first explication of embodied transcendental subjectivity.

I. Husserl's Early Transcendental Idealism

One of the striking features of Husserl's early TI is the claim that transcendental subjectivity ("pure" or "absolute consciousness") is *nobody's*; it is neither an ego nor borne by it; an ego is something constituted in pure consciousness just as physical things are (cf. XVI, 280).

Pure consciousness, in which any other entity is constituted, is regarded as *the system of all the actual and possible intentional acts* (cf. XXXVI, 6–7, 35; XXVIII, 320). Since humans are finite and imperfect beings, none of their individual consciousnesses can be identical to pure consciousness. Furthermore, claims Husserl, any consideration on actual human consciousness is and must be excluded when it comes to the explication of pure consciousness (cf. XXXVI, 16–7). Under this exclusion, "all is possible, so to say" (XXXVI, 17). Every act contained in pure consciousness is of the same status in so far as it is possible.

Furthermore, pure consciousness is extended to the absolute totality that encompasses *everything* in the strictest sense of the word. Such an extension is based on the three claims of Husserl: [1] every intentional act of consciousness has its intentional objects, which is a genuine object of phenomenological analysis (cf. XXIV, xxxi–v); [2] an intentional object is not numerically distinct from the relevant transcendent object (cf. e.g. III/1, 89–91, 206–9, 297–8n; XIX/1, 436–40; XXXVI, 13, 39, 66–7, 106–7); [3] every transcendent object is in principle

knowable, i.e. capable of being an intentional object of certain acts of cognition (cf. XXXVI, 16). From these claims it follows that, for *everything* in Husserlian universe, there is a set of corresponding possible acts, which are equally contained in pure consciousness. It is such an absolute totality with correlational structure from which Husserl's early TI starts.³

Then, how can we—worldly human subjects—have an access to the absolute totality? In the early TI period, Husserl considers phenomenology to be an analysis of the lowest essences of individual consciousness. According to the lecture in 1909, being in flux, absolute givenness of Cartesian evidence (i.e. givenness of individual *cogitationes*) cannot be an object of phenomenology as a science (cf. Mat. VII, 83). “Therefore, the possibility for the establishment of a phenomenological science depends on whether still another absolute givenness than that of Cartesian evidence is shown [...]” (*ibid.*). Every individual act of consciousness, claims Husserl, has a lowest essence as its complete essence, which can be gained by abstracting “thisness” or “individuality” of the individual act. “It is such lowest generalities that ideally [*ideell*] make up the extension of general essence with which phenomenology have to do” (Mat. VII, 88; cf. II, 50–2, 56–9; XVI, 13).

Note that the German word “*ideell*” has a technical meaning, which Husserl introduces in the logic lecture of 1896. According to this lecture, the ideal extension of a concept is an aggregate [*Inbegriff*] that exhausts all the possible entities falling under the concept (cf. Mat. I, 73–4). Therefore what Husserl regards as the object of phenomenology in 1909 is all the possible acts and their intentional correlates—the absolute totality of everything, to which we have an access via ideation based on individual acts or *cogitationes*.

The absolute totality encompasses *everything* in the strongest sense of the word. It can be regarded as storage of all the possible worlds, like the divine intellect. Since everything in the absolute totality is considered to be equal, there must be no categorical differences among these possible worlds: actuality of a world does not imply that it belongs to another category than the other “merely possible” worlds.⁴

³. See Husserl's “proof” of TI in 1908 (XXXVI, 60–1), in which he appeals to absolute consciousness in the very beginning. A similar idea can be found in §47 of *Ideas I*: “The old ontological doctrine that the cognition of ‘possibilities’ must precede the cognition of actualities is [...] a great truth” (III/1, 178). See also §146, where Husserl claims that the problem of the actuality comes *after* the analysis of the general structure of pure consciousness.

⁴. In §78 of *Ideas I* Husserl claims that the actual world is a specific case of the possible worlds and non-worlds [*Unwelten*].

II. Actuality, Real Possibility, Embodiment

Now, how are those possible worlds distinguished from each other? To this Husserl gives an answer which can be reformulated in a fairly contemporary terminology (cf. XXXVI, 53): a world is represented as a maximal consistent set of propositions; a world is actual if and only if each of propositions contained in such a set is in principle justifiable by or in actual consciousness. Husserl calls this “*real possibility*” of justification or *Ausweis*. An actual world is a correlate of a maximal consistent sum of *really possible* acts, which is a proper part of pure consciousness, i.e. the sum of the all the *ideally* possible acts.

The important point is that the equality of all the possible worlds is maintained even in the analysis of the actuality. “Actual world” does not necessarily mean *this* world, a world in which Husserl lived his life and we are living now. As Husserl already points out in 1907, the fact that this world is actual is *irrational*, in so far as it is not determined by *a priori* consideration on essence (cf. XVI, 289–90). So phenomenology, which Husserl thinks is an *a priori* investigation, must deal with the actuality of a world without giving any priority to this world. Therefore, “*actual world*” means an *arbitrarily chosen world among possible worlds, which is assumed to be actual for the time being*.

Then, the correlation between an actual world and a maximal consistent sum of really possible acts holds *a priori*. To put one direction of the correlation in a schematic expression, “the factum of a world *W* would [*würde*] prescribe *a priori* a rule [=a sum of real possibilities] to the consciousness *C* connected to that world” (XXXVI, 55). As the usage of subjunctive II (“*würde*”) suggests, here Husserl is talking about the correlation between consciousness and the fact of an *arbitrarily chosen* world: suppose that the actual world is such and such, then there would be a correlating sum of really possible act with such and such characteristics. “The factum of a world” mentioned here need not have something to do with this world.

Here, there arises an interesting result. As a preliminary consideration proposed in the lecture *Thing and Space* (1907) shows, the analysis of the correlation between a real possibility of consciousness and an actual world has to do with *kinaesthesia*, which in turn has to do with *body* (cf. XVI, 291–3). In §47 of *Thing and Space*, Husserl gives an analysis of how body is constituted through the double comprehension of sensations (both kinaesthetic sensations and presenting [*darstellend*] sense data): by the first comprehension of a series of sensations, physical things, including bodies as physical [*Körper*], are constituted; and then a thing of the special kind is constituted as a bearer of the series, namely as a living body [*Leib*] (cf. XVI, 163). What is important for the present purpose is the claim that, necessarily, whenever there is a coherent series of sensations, there is a body

as a bearer of the sensations.⁵

From the above claim it follows that, necessarily, whenever there is a maximal consistent sum of really possible acts and thus there is an actual world, there must be at least one living body in that world. In Husserl's words in 1914 or 1915, "[a]n existing world requires not only existing subjects of cognition, but [also] subjects of cognition that have animal existence in the world" (XXXVI, 140). Therefore, the actuality of a world necessitates the actual existence of body (or bodies) in that world.

One can say that consequence does not imply the thesis of the transcendental function of body: it merely says that body is always there, no matter how the actual world might be. It seems to be plausible, however, to say that such a peculiar character of body *suggests* its constituting function concerning the actuality. Even though there is possibly a gap to be filled here, Husserl does come to follow that suggestion in 1914 or 1915.

Now Husserl holds that embodied subjectivity, which on the one hand must somehow be constituted, has a constituting function on the other. In the lecture in 1915, Husserl points out this paradoxical (or seemingly paradoxical) situation and tries to give a solution (cf. XXXVI, 124–9). This, as far as I can see, is one of his earliest considerations on the paradox of subjectivity, on which, unfortunately, I cannot give a detailed discussion in this paper.

A Concluding Remark:

On the Later Development of Husserl's Thought

So far I have described how the transcendental problem of body, which yields or seems to yield the paradox of subjectivity, emerges within the framework of Husserl's early TI. In conclusion, I give a remark on a serious problem following from Husserl's explication of embodied transcendental subjectivity.

It is not difficult at all to find an extreme implausibility in Husserl's position around 1915. It cannot cohere with our undeniable modal intuition that there *might have been* no conscious animal in the world. For, according to Husserl in the period around 1915, body is there no matter how the world might have been.

How to avoid the absurdity? One solution proposed by Husserl seems to be the limitation of the primacy of the possible in phenomenology. In a text of 1931, Husserl writes: "the eidos [=essence] of transcendental ego is unthinkable with-

⁵. Note that, according to *Thing and Space*, a series of sensations might be so confused that there is nothing but absolute consciousness (cf. XVI, 289). Thus Husserl keeps his claim that absolute consciousness is nobody's.

out transcendental ego as factual.” (XV, 385; cf. Kern [1989, 212]) This passage suggests that the later Husserl comes to admit a certain primacy of *this-worldly* embodied subjectivity over “pure” consciousness as the totality of all the possible acts. Then, the absurdity in question would possibly be avoided.

Now the actuality is explicated by the factual existence of this-worldly embodied subjectivity, rather than the actualization of “ready-made” possible acts contained in pure consciousness. And *then*, the modal fact that the world might have been otherwise is explicated in terms of the essential possibility of this-worldly embodied transcendental subjectivity (“the eidos of transcendental ego”). Being *factual*, this-worldly embodied subjectivity is situated in the context which does not hold in every possible worlds. The actuality is that of *this* world, which cannot be substituted by an arbitrarily chosen world; it is such an arbitrary choice that leads to the absurdity. Thus this-worldly embodied subjectivity, by which the actuality is explicated, *cannot be other than* a phenomenologizing (or potentially phenomenologizing) individual subject in this world such as Husserl and *each* of us. The necessity involved here (“cannot be other than”), however, is not an essential one. It is the *necessity of facticity*, which might somehow be analogous to the necessity of the past.

That is an insight of Husserl, which becomes clear when his early TI and one of its troubles are taken into consideration. On this matter, however, Husserl himself might not come up with a systematic consideration (cf. Kern 1989, 213), but that would be another issue to be discussed elsewhere.

References

- Husserl, E. 1950ff. *Husserliana*, Nijhoff/Kluwer/Springer.
 ——. 2001ff. *Husserliana Materialien*, Kluwer/Springer. (Abbreviated as Mat.)
 Kern, I. 1989. “Erste und Zweite Philosophie (transzendente Phänomenologie und Metaphysik),” in R. Bernet, I. Kern, & E. Marbach, *Edmund Husserl. Darstellung seines Denkens*, Felix Meiner, ch. 10.
 Lavigne, J.-F. 2005. *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie (1900–1913)*, Presses Universitaires de France.