

There are two main themes that I want to discuss today in the context of the "Second Meditation," whose title reads as follows: "The Field of Transcendental Experience Laid Open in Respect of its Universal Structures." The first theme, briefly stated, concerns the ego (*das Ich*) in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. Husserl's analysis of the ego is complex. First, pre-phenomenologically we could say, one can identify the I that is straightforwardly or naïvely interested in the world, i.e., the I that is this natural human I. Second, there is the theme of phenomenological research itself,<sup>1</sup> the I as constituting subjectivity to which the world-as-an accepted-phenomenon (which includes, of course, myself *as human I*) stands correlate. This is, of course, the transcendental I who remains hidden or anonymous in the straightforward life of the mundane ego. Third Husserl methodologically discloses in his investigations the "disinterested" onlooker of transcendental reflection, i.e., the phenomenologizing I, "to whom it remains solely the interest to see and to describe adequately (what he sees, purely as seen, as what is seen and seen in such and such a manner)."<sup>2</sup> This discussion is taken up in the Second Meditation quite explicitly by Husserl, and most directly in §15 "Natural and Transcendental Reflection." Honestly, though, this egological reduction is at play throughout *Meditations* to this point.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in §15 Husserl writes (on page 35):

If the Ego (*Ich*), as naturally immersed in the world, experientially and otherwise, is called "*interested*" in the world, then the phenomenologically altered ... attitude consists in a *splitting of the Ego*: in that the phenomenological Ego establishes himself as "*disinterested onlooker*", above the naïvely interested Ego.<sup>4</sup>

I want to emphasize that here, in this passage specifically, Husserl only speaks of the I as split into two insofar as this splitting arises in consequence of a transcendental reflection. That is to say, there is to be found in transcendental reflection the naïve I living straightforwardly directed to and in the world. To say that this ego is "interested in the world" means merely that I as a natural subject do not reflect on my own consciousness of things. When I am hammering, let's say, I don't reflect on my hammering. I am simply at work. Indeed, I can even lose myself in my work as I become more and more immersed in a project. Of course, I can reflect on my natural subjective feelings and thoughts and interest myself on my own self in my work. But insofar as I do this, I merely – Husserl says – make an object out of what was previously a subjective process but not objective. The proper task of reflection," Husserl insists, "is not to repeat the original process but to consider it and explicate what can be found in it."<sup>5</sup> In the phenomenologically altered attitude, "I direct my regard exclusively to this life itself, as consciousness of "the" world – I thereby acquire myself as the pure ego, with the pure stream of my cogitations."<sup>6</sup> My preeminent aim now as transcendental onlooker i.e., phenomenologizing I, reflecting on the position takings going on anonymously by in this stream of

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<sup>1</sup> "Apparently my (the philosopher's) transcendental ego is, and must be, not only its initial but is sole theme." (Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 30)

<sup>2</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, modified 35.

<sup>3</sup> "Perhaps reduction to the transcendental ego only *seems* to entail a *permanently* solipsistic transcendental science; whereas the consequential elaboration of this science, in accordance with its own sense, leads over to a phenomenology of transcendental intersubjectivity and, by means of this, to a universal transcendental philosophy. As a matter of fact, we shall see that, in a certain manner a transcendental solipsism is only a subordinate stage philosophically; though, as such. It must first be delimited for purposes of method, in order that the problems of transcendental intersubjectivity, as problems belonging to a higher level, may be correctly stated and attacked." (Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 30f)

<sup>4</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 21.

consciousness I thus to explicate how within this pure inwardness and objective outwardness comes to have this abiding sense.<sup>7</sup> I think it is worthwhile to pause at this stage over Husserl's insertion found on page 52 of the text.

Yet I (*the phenomenologizing I*) had to begin with myself (qua as an accepted or constituted sense by transcendental subjectivity), the Ego given in experience of myself as a man. After all, I could exercise reduction only by starting out from myself (qua constituted phenomenon); and therefore I arrived only at the ego who has, as his worldly counterpart, his own psyche. My own human psyche, therefore, I can make evident (in my seeing and descriptive performance as phenomenologizing I) as a manifestation of the absolute: what are others, what is the world, for me? – Constituted phenomena, merely something produced within me.<sup>8</sup>

Today I want today to get a highlight the two manners of interestedness, so speak: the naïve interest of the natural I and the purely descriptive interest of the reflecting phenomenologizing onlooker. I think it is important not to misunderstand the nature of this disinterestness as Husserl means it here. As a phenomenologist, I have a sincere, abiding, and even at time passionate interest in my task – which I now see is the disclosure of the transcendental ego in whom the world is posited or accepted as having the sense as world universally for all.

However, before continuing on, I would like to make two points. One, this Ego-splitting is a theme taken up explicitly by Eugen Fink in his *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. And Fink is right to pause over this, since the nature of this "split" needs elucidation. It is not as if, in other words, I "am" three different people or that I have some sort of schizoid experiencing here. So we need to pause over this analysis in order to understand it correctly. Yet if we do not exhaust our discussion here, as in fact we won't, we'll have the opportunity later to revisit later to revisit this issue. Second point, Husserl only implicitly speaks of three I's in quoted passage above. On page 35, in other words, he only explicitly mentions the I as naturally immersed in the world and the transcendental onlooker a.k.a. phenomenologizing Ego. Yet later on page 37 he states more clearly "it can be said that, as an Ego in the natural attitude, I am likewise and at all times a transcendental Ego, but that I know about this only by executing (the) phenomenological reduction."<sup>9</sup> Hence there are obviously three I's to account for descriptively. Obviously, though, the transcendental and the natural Ego, though at all time "one," are at best only analogically the same, for the transcendental Ego is precisely "not a piece of this world"<sup>10</sup> while I qua human subject am precisely a being of the world.

I want to make clear in the context of this first theme that there is an aspect of Husserl's analyses which we will have to elide over. We can't do everything in the brief time we have together, so some things must remain left open for further. Again and again in the *Meditations* Husserl claims of a precise parallel between transcendental phenomenology and (a purely intentional) psychology. As just one example of this, Husserl says in §14, page 32:

To be sure, pure psychology of consciousness is a *precise parallel* to transcendental phenomenology of consciousness. Nevertheless the two must at first be kept strictly separate...  
(later in the paragraph) In the one case we have data belonging to the world, which is

<sup>7</sup> Cf. p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 52 n1.

<sup>9</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 37

<sup>10</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 26.

presupposed as existing – that is to say, data taken as psychic components of a man. In the other case the parallel data, with their like contents, are not taken in this manner, because the whole world, when one is in the phenomenological attitude, is not accepted as actuality, but only as actuality-phenomenon.<sup>11</sup>

Just how that which is transcendental and that which is not are parallel remains strikingly obscure – at least to me. For instance, can the switch between the natural or psychological attitude and the phenomenological attitude really so easily be performed such that we could at times change from the one to the other and back again – presuming of course the strict distinction remains in force throughout these changes in nuance? Husserl suggests this is so. I wonder. However, let me say that the problem rests in the distinctions that are drawn here between the mundane ego, the transcendental ego, and the phenomenological onlooker.

Our second theme today is intentionality, explicitly introduced in §14 and thereafter. Given that this is *the* predominant theme of Husserl's philosophy, we can be guaranteed not to exhaust our subject matter today. However, we should make clear to ourselves, at least, the fundamental structure of intentional consciousness that Husserl is describing in these meditations in order to follow his depth-probing analyses.

Intentional analysis is guided (Husserl tells us in §20, page 46) by the fundamental cognition that, as consciousness, every cogito is indeed (in the broadest sense) a meaning of its meant [*Meinung seines Gemeinten*], but that, at any moment, this something meant [*dieses Vermeint*] is more – something meant with something more – than what is meant at that moment explicitly.<sup>12</sup>

(Stop here, go over §§17-21 with class together)

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<sup>11</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 46.