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## Deconstructing Presence: Rethinking the Intentionality of the Subject on the Basis of the Existentiality of Dasein

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DECONSTRUCTING PRESENCE: RETHINKING THE INTENTIONALITY OF  
THE SUBJECT ON THE BASIS OF THE EXISTENTIALITY OF DASEIN

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Philosophy  
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at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Having begun from the assumption that our most fundamental way to relate to the world stems from an ‘I think’ and that consciousness is at the center of this act, Edmund Husserl sets himself up for a very narrow and specialized view of human experience. In the end, such assumptions in the philosophical tradition and their terms often remain unquestioned and ingrained in a paradigm of discourse. My aim is to move beneath these assumptions—using Heidegger’s and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological work—so as to, first, explicitly undermine the scope of Husserlian intentionality at its foundation and, second, decenter the subject in contemporary phenomenological literature. An account of human experience in terms of inner intentional content, I argue, yields an incomplete and misleading picture of our human involvements and we must ultimately move beyond the subject and its logic. The way we are always already being-in-the-world and embodied in the phenomenal texture of everydayness leaves the cogito one step behind.

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## INTRODUCTION

The task of bringing to light Dasein's existential constitution leads first of all to the twofold task, intrinsically one, of interpreting more radically the phenomena of intentionality and transcendence.<sup>1</sup>

The phenomenological given that consciousness is always consciousness of something, aptly termed intentionality, has elicited unprecedented attention from philosophers and scientists alike in the past century. Indeed, we often find an underlying theory of intentionality at the backbone of contemporary phenomenologically-based notions of self, agency and (inter)subjectivity with far ranging implications for current trends in the cognitive sciences and artificial intelligence. In these discussions, Edmund Husserl—known as father of phenomenology—remains a key figure, often providing not only the common language but the very approach for us to begin addressing the topic. “*Zu den Sachen selbst*,”<sup>2</sup> as goes his famous motto, captures the spirit of the task at hand: What does this ‘stretching out’ (*In-tendere*) of consciousness entail? How are we to understand the essence (*eidōs*) of things as (re)presented in consciousness? How are we to make sense of the constituting act of this aboutness? These are difficult questions but Husserl didn't lack a starting groundwork whence to begin. With Kant's transcendental method and the cogito as a point of departure—albeit sharply rejecting Descartes' inference (i.e., ergo sum)—Husserl advanced an investigation of what has to be presupposed by this unique characteristic of consciousness as conditions for its possibility. To this purpose, it is certainly difficult to imagine a more adequate theoretical origin than our basic and seemingly

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 162.

<sup>2</sup> This well known statement, translated as “to the things themselves,” first appeared in the introduction of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (§2).

obvious understanding of ourselves as an ‘I think’ from which the momentous Cartesian paradigm stemmed.

Husserl’s unique approach, however, unlike that of Kant or Descartes, involved a direct observation of one’s own experience—the purpose of which was to give an account of the underlying structures of consciousness that make (re)presentation of an object possible. His method espoused a distinctly reductive process, called the phenomenological reduction, through which one ‘brackets out’ any natural, causal and metaphysical assumptions about the things of our experience (in the epoché) in order to get at their essence as intentional objects (via the eidetic reduction) given to consciousness. This process specifically demands that we start with the phenomena and suspend our biases and pre-suppositions that grant us the world as it appears. The resulting corpus in phenomenology is fascinating, and it is widely regarded as his greatest contribution to philosophy. As we will explore, Husserl’s attempt to detail a phenomenological account of the way we, as subjects, relate to the world (i.e., of the intentional structures that must be in place to make this ‘aboutness’ possible) is a task with much philosophical relevance and discussion. More significantly, by proposing the conditions of our being able to encounter anything in experience, Husserl may not only have been attempting an account of the intentional object-constitution in and of consciousness but also, as a consequence, of the (phenomenological) foundation of our coming to knowledge.

### **Objective, Critique Background and Key Questions**

My effort through this paper is primarily deconstructive; thematically, it is informed by ontology and phenomenology and I employ world-disclosing arguments to advance my case

against the subject-originated intentionality Husserl proposes. For the purposes of this critique, I don't attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of Husserl's work on intentionality or the significant revisions he advanced—as such an endeavor is well beyond the scope of this paper—but rather I place emphasis on the groundwork and assumptions of his concepts in order to destabilize his theory at its foundation. I will focus on Husserl's theory of intentionality, internal time consciousness and transcendental ego in order to, preliminarily, criticize the basic assumptions underlying his transcendental move and, consequently, delimit the scope of the intentional structure he proposes to a very narrow and specialized aspect of human experience. The kind of enduring presence that Husserl espouses, as I will argue, is not enough a basis on which to understand the more holistic, embodied and concrete nuances of our everyday experience. In setting up this background for the traditional view of intentionality, I rely on Husserl's foundational work exemplified in his *Cartesian Meditations*, *Ideas I* and *Logical Investigations*. Merleau-Ponty's criticism of the *hyle* and noetic schema, Derrida's undermining of the *Augenblick* and Gurwitsch's attack on the transcendental ego, serve as central support for this preliminary effort. I will then contend that Husserlian intentionality is not only significantly flawed, but that it ultimately provides for a misleading picture of human directedness.

Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger launched powerful critiques and a contrasting account of intentionality and the role of consciousness (its 'intentional object-apprehension') in experience. It is here, in the second chapter of this paper, that my reading of their phenomenological work helps me further undermine Husserl's theory—which I will refer to as traditional intentionality—and his assumptions rooted in Descartes' and Kant's work. In the first place, I will show that Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger place more adequate emphasis in the on-going and unhindered

experience of our involvements, so as to preserve the phenomena and what it reveals, without bracketing or subjecting it to a transcendental reduction. Phenomena, as we will see in this view, are not mere appearances to be purified (in an eidetic reduction) but are rather always already rich with meaning that one cannot do without lest one does away with their significance completely. In my reading of Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's work, their (existential) phenomenology rejects not only this transcendental thrust but disallows the very logic of the Cartesian dichotomy (i.e., of subjects and objects) and the 'cogito' that, as we will see, Husserl grants from the outset.

Martin Heidegger, Husserl's most renowned student, was perhaps also his strongest critic. Yet, he remains arguably amongst the most easily dismissed thinkers of our time. Such seemingly empty qualification may, indeed, implicate his inexcusable past political affiliations. I will not venture any conjecture on the matter here. However, we can suspect that this historical fact itself may have been what was most censorious to readings of his work—and understandably so. This simply can be no longer and I believe we must, in the spirit of philosophical inquiry, read his work for its own worth. In order thus to understand the scope of Heidegger's critique and its consequence to Husserl, I must then begin where Heidegger began—in ontology. All derivative claims about intentionality and subjectivity may certainly be misunderstood, at best, if we do not grasp the ontic-ontological distinctions that are presupposed by them. The first division of Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time*, is dedicated to just this topic and is a principal source in my analysis and arguments.



The ontological quest for Heidegger revolves around the concept of being, which he initiates through a *Seinsfrage* (i.e., question of being). This investigation, as I shall clarify, must also be necessarily grounded in the (concrete) phenomena of our experience. But how and why is being studied phenomenologically? In what ways does being manifest itself in our experience and what is our relation to this concept? How do Heidegger's ontological considerations undermine Husserlian intentionality, specifically? Answers to questions such as these, while exegetically based, guide my arguments and provide a background necessary for the ultimately positive task at hand. More importantly, Heidegger began from the analytic of Dasein (and its existence) which, only through careful consideration of his revolutionary ontology, can displace and de-center the cogito and its subjectivity. An understanding of what our being-in-the-world means, as I will demonstrate, invalidates the emptiness from which Husserl's transcendental subject (or ego) constitutes its objects' meaning/sense (Sinn). Lastly, Heidegger's analysis of worldhood is absolutely crucial to the deconstruction—and note that here I use the term in the original Heideggerean sense (*Abbau*)—of the modern picture (of subjects relating to objects) in the third chapter.

In the Husserlian discussion of intentionality, additionally, the body occupies quite an anomalous position. Indeed, a theory of intentionality that presupposes the very distinction of subjects and objects has trouble identifying something which is neither within the inner subjective (immanent) sphere of consciousness nor fully extended as an (transcendent) object one can apprehend outside of it. Our bodies, notwithstanding the tradition's neglect (and which still finds its way in Husserl's work), are of central importance in re-thinking intentionality. One does well to note that even Heidegger made no mention of the body. In light of this, I aim to

explain why the body cannot be relegated to a marginal or anomalous position in Heidegger's ontology. As we will see, it is absurd to claim that Heidegger 'brackets' the body or that he falls under the traditional neglect of it. Such conclusions are often characteristic of a poor reading or disregard for Division I in the existential analytic of Dasein (*Being and Time*).

Merleau-Ponty's work on the body is therefore of central relevance. Having been strongly influenced by both Husserl and Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's main concern was a phenomenologically based account of embodiment and perception. Where Heidegger was unable to expound on the role of the body in intentionality, one finds a complementary and thorough account in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty has much more in common with Heidegger than with Husserl here and this relationship will come into better view in the first and second chapters. Through their work, they were subverting what Husserl granted from the tradition and proposing not only a more basic account of intentionality but a revolutionary understanding of what it means to be the being that we are. How is the body constituted in intentionality? What place does it occupy and how does it differ from the intentional object-apprehension of consciousness? Answers to these questions provide the necessary support in rethinking intentionality beneath the scope of the subject and beyond its own limitations. Merleau-Ponty's insight into perception and his notion of body schema directly undermine Husserl's account of the intentional object-constitution (qua sense-impression). As we will see, the body schema provides an excellent alternative in considering embodied intentionality.

The overarching thesis questions I address are as follows: In so far as Husserl's theory of intentionality is still rooted in traditional assumptions, how does Merleau-Ponty's and

Heidegger's work undermine his view and, subsequently, how do they leave the prejudices of the tradition behind? What do they propose in lieu of this intentionality and how does the traditional view stand in relation to it? Finally, how can we interpret their findings so as to de-center the subject in contemporary phenomenological discourse and propose a more fundamental way of relating to the world? I want to discuss, more broadly, why an account of human experience in terms of a inner intentional content is misleading, what such mental content has to presuppose in the first place, and, consequently, why the cogito itself must be 'transcended'—not to another ghastly realm of mental inner 'stuff', but back to the locally nuanced and embodied world of our everyday involvements.

## THE TRADITIONAL VIEW: HUSSERL AND TRANSCENDENTAL PRESENCE

The philosophical paradigm articulated and granted by Husserl's time puts an inner, self-contained subject at the center of experience.<sup>3</sup> We are subjects relating to objects, a thinking thing (*res cogitans*), essentially. Transcendence, in this discussion, is that by which we are able to reach out, as it were, to the world out there from within—the conditions for its possibility. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology emerges out of these very fundamental notions. Indeed, in his magnum opus, *Logical Investigations*, he articulates this view by postulating that it is foremost by virtue of our directed content that we have access to the things out in the world. In turn, this intentional content, characteristic in and of consciousness through mental acts (or *cogitations*), is the phenomenological foundation of our coming to knowledge of anything, in so far as we are able to grasp any object (tangible or otherwise, possible or impossible). He explains thus in the 5<sup>th</sup> investigation:

Content must mean experience, a real part of consciousness . . . . To refer to the world may be an experience, but the world itself is the object intended . . . . It makes no difference what sort of being we give our object, or with what sense or justification we do so. . . . the act remains 'directed upon' its object. If one asks how something non-existent or transcendent can be the intentional object in an act in which it has no being, one can give the answer we gave above . . . . The object is an intentional object: this means there is an act having a determinate intention. This 'reference to an object' belongs peculiarly and intrinsically to an act-experience, and the experiences manifesting it are by definition intentional experiences or acts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This qualification is not meant as a sweeping historical generalization. While one often finds little agreement in any one epoch of philosophical discourse, there is often a common ground (or set of assumptions) guiding what is considered relevant to ask, important to answer, etc. This is a paradigm's framework.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Investigation V (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1970), §14, 568; §20, 587.

Likewise, Husserl qualifies the status of an act in relation to its object and experience the following way:

Each act has its own appropriate, intentional, objective reference . . . Whatever the composition of an act . . . if it is an act at all, it must have a single objective correlate, to which we say it is ‘directed,’ in the full, primary sense of the world . . . Each intentional experience is either an objectifying act or has its basis in such an act.<sup>5</sup>

That this intentional content, in and of consciousness, mediates our contact with the world could therefore be considered part of the definition for what it means to be a subject in its relating to an object.

For Husserl, the intentional nature of consciousness is expressed, specifically, in the relation of a noetic act or noesis (νοῦς for “mind”) to the noema that belongs to any intentional object thus constituted.<sup>6</sup> ‘Thinghood’ (of the object as experienced) is therefore given to us in such a way so as to present its sense/meaning (*Sinn*) through a noematic correlate and from an originating mental process (e.g., remembrance, imagination, perception, etc).<sup>7</sup> While there are different interpretations about the relation between the object-as-intended and the object-that-is-

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., §17, 579; §41, 648.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly, Husserl writes: “Corresponding in every case to the multiplicity of Data pertaining to the really inherent noetic content, there is a multiplicity of Data . . . in a correlative ‘noematic content’ or, in short, in the ‘noema’.” Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), § 88, 213 -214.

<sup>7</sup> Husserl further notes:

Perception, for example, has its noema, most basically its perceptual sense, i.e., the *perceived as perceived*. Similarly the current case of remembering has its *remembered as remembered*, just as its <remembered>, precisely as it is “meant,” “intended to” in <the remembering>; again, the judging has the *judged as judged*, liking has the *liked as liked*, and so forth. In every case the noematic correlate which is called “sense” here . . . is to be taken precisely as it inheres “immanently” in the mental process of perceiving, of judging, of liking . . . that is, just as it is offered to us when we *inquire purely into this mental process itself*’.

Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, § 88, 214.

intended, the noema simply constitutes the intentional object as experienced.<sup>8</sup> Let us take an example and briefly consider the experience of perceiving a pencil.

The pencil on the desk in front of me, from a Husserlian line of analysis, is apprehended by my act of perceiving it (in noesis) that constitutes its meaning (through the noema) as such, as something with particular and general properties and about which I may form beliefs from my perceptual orientation that are distinct from the actual (transcendent) object but shaped by it.<sup>9</sup> The originating mental structure prescribes the meaning of the object as experienced and thus constitutes the intentional object in consciousness. I can imagine a pencil and, in the act of imagination, likewise, the object is thereby constituted as imagined.

The intentional object, furthermore, gets its material content in a noetic substructure where Husserl introduces the *hyle*. Coming from the Greek ὕλη for ‘matter,’ it is what he claims must come into the intentional structure to account for the formation of the noema and on the basis of which the object gets its meaning as part of the subjective experience. As Husserl explains:

We find such concrete really immanent Data [data of color, data of tone, data of smell, etc] as components in more inclusive concrete mental processes which are intensive as wholes; and, more particularly, we find those sensuous moments overlaid by a stratum which, as it were, “animates,” which bestows sense . . . a stratum by which precisely the concrete intensive mental process arises from the sensuous.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Whether the noema is a representational/propositional entity or a perspectival aspect of experience that is self-transcending, it is enough to see, for our purposes, that intentional content is by definition *self-sufficient*.

<sup>9</sup> This has to do with Husserl’s distinction of the object of experience as ‘real’ and the object as experienced (or intentional object) as ‘ireal.’

<sup>10</sup> Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 203.

Hyletic content, however, “has in itself nothing pertaining to intentionality.”<sup>11</sup> As such, the *hyle* are the meaningless, non-intentional, raw bits that get animated/interpreted in noetic apprehension and pulled into consciousness to give thinghood presence. They are the analogous building blocks, so to speak, that along with the animating process of the noetic schema provide the operative and necessary conditions for the meaning-constitution (noema) and (re)presentation of an intentional object in consciousness.

Returning to the earlier example, the pencil becomes an intentional object because of perceived qualities, as having an elongated and rigid shape with a pointed end distinct from its surroundings and other objects, that, more specifically, are determined by basic constitutive experiences of form, shape and color underlying it, but that are also completely unrelated to its intentional character as said object. These basic subjective qualities that enter my consciousness as raw data “present themselves as material for intentional formings or sense-bestowings at different levels” to my perception of the intentional object.<sup>12</sup> But they also exist independently of and indifferently to it. This is simply to say that neither the experience of the color yellow nor the experience of the shape of an elongated object in itself qualifies the pencil as an intentional object, but it is a necessary part in constituting my experience of it.

We can then ask: How is the object constituted in time and what is the status of the *hyle* in the temporal stretching of experience? Husserl was so thorough that he also proposed a breakthrough theory of internal time-consciousness to address these very questions. The instant of apprehension, where the noema is constituted in hyletic interpretation, is at the dead center of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Shaun Gallagher, *The Inordinance of Time* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 44.

the intentional structure: the ‘now’. Indeed, here is how Husserl explains it analogously to perception of a tone in music.

The “source-point” with which the production of the enduring object begins is a primal impression. This consciousness is in a state of constant change: the tone-now present “in person” continuously changes . . . into something that has been. But when consciousness of the tone-now, the primal impression, passes over into retention, this retention itself is a now in turn, something actually existing. Every actually present now of consciousness . . . it changes into retention of retention and does so continuously . . . Every process that constitutes its object originally is animated by protentions that emptily constitute what is coming as coming, that catch it and bring it towards fulfillment.<sup>13</sup>

The animation of the *hyle* by the noetic schema, or primal impression, thus stretches out into the flow of experience temporally via a retentional continuum that keeps hold of the intentional object and a protentional function anticipating an immediate but indeterminate ‘just to-come.’ Presentation (perception) of an object in consciousness is constituted only within the limits between retention and protention by the phasing of primal impressions while representation (non-perception) lies behind it as recollection of that which is no longer present but already past. An immediate future is pre-constituted in primal expectation after the protentional function but has in itself no content or status.

The now, or the source point, is the point of constitution for an intentional object and locus of temporal experience. Because of its role in the object-constitution, additionally, Husserl seems to designate the *hyle* as what is ultimately real in this transcendent structure of consciousness. It is, after all, that by virtue of which an intentional object comes to presence and gains cadence along the temporal continuum. The source point, too, appears to be the temporal

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<sup>13</sup> Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), §11, 24.



center in which the only moment of real presence occurs. As Gallagher explains, “since retention functions in an intentional way, what remains present in consciousness. . . is not just the past-note itself, or the memory-image, or the sensation of the just-past note. Rather the only thing that is really (*reell*) present is delivered by the current primal impression.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, even in retention we have a certain non-presence that, while still within the bounds of perception, is itself not real and already past the blink of an eye (*Augenblick*). Protention and retention are thus characteristic of the non-presence that is still part of perception to the integration of primal nows in experience. Here, Merleau-Ponty offers perhaps the clearest explanation of this phenomenon of temporality:

Husserl uses the terms protentions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. They do not run from a central I, but from my perceptual field itself, so to speak, which draws along in its wake its own horizon of retentions, and bites into the future with its protentions. I do not pass through a series of instances of now, the images of which I preserve and which, placed end to end, make a line. With the arrival of every moment, its predecessor undergoes a change: I still have it in hand and it is still there, but already it is sinking away below the level of presents; in order to retain it, I need to reach through a thin layer of time. It is still the preceding moment, and I have the power to rejoin it as it was just now; I am not cut off from it, but still it would not belong to the past unless something had altered, unless it were beginning to outline itself against, or project itself upon, my present, whereas a moment ago it was my present. When a third moment arrives, the second undergoes a new modification; from being a retention it becomes the retention of a retention, and the layer of time between it and me thickens.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly, temporal constitution of an object in consciousness is characterized by this ‘width of presence’ that provides us a unified immediate experience, always stretching out beyond and beneath itself. As Dan Zahavi puts it, “we can perceive temporal objects because

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<sup>14</sup> Gallagher, *The Inordinance of Time*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002), 483-484.

consciousness is not caught in the now. We do not merely perceive the now-phase . . . but also its past and future phases.”<sup>16</sup> But what gives the subject its characteristic unity of apprehensions to an object? To answer this question, the father of phenomenology proposes yet another transcendently purified entity: the (transcendental) ego. Since consciousness is always consciousness-of-something, it must also be consciousness-of-itself. Evidently, as Husserl claims, “the ego is existent for himself in continuous evidence; thus, in himself, he is continuously constituting himself as existing.”<sup>17</sup> With this reflective move, Husserl unveils the ego as the origin of all intentional acts. It is what endures in consciousness as their source and reaches through them, as it were, towards the intentional object. A double polarization can then also be seen in these acts of consciousness: one towards the intentional object and the other towards the transcendental ego. “We encounter [this] second polarization. . . which embraces all the particular multiplicities of cogitationes collectively and in its own manner, namely as belonging to the Ego, who, as the active and affected subject of consciousness, lives in all processes of consciousness and is related, through them, to all object poles.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, in Husserl’s view, we conceive of the ego as the overseer to which every mental act always points and in which it is always a reflection of itself.

### **Critiques of the Husserlian Picture**

Out of his own phenomenological work, Merleau-Ponty offers a powerful criticism of Husserl’s concept of *hyle* and noetic schema. He argues that one just cannot find any such detachable bits to experience which aren’t already correlated with and inter-defined by being in a

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<sup>16</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 82.

<sup>17</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1999), §31, 66.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*

whole of other sensations and shared significations and, as a result, there is no such (noetic) apprehension of a raw thing the “office of which is to give significance to a matter that has none.”<sup>19</sup> Rather, perceptual experience seems a unity from the start. Parts of our experience can certainly be derived from it but, when we look at our experiences, these qualities are not self-sufficient—much less meaningless—and they can’t make up the whole. The wooly redness of a carpet, to take a phenomenological example, is different than the shiny redness of a fire engine even though these colors could match the same color strip of red because properties are not independent of one another, but they are holistically related in perception.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, coming back to the example of encountering a pencil, the intentional object appears constituted as a pencil not because a barrage of unrelated and independent characteristics in a phenomenal background get somehow selectively interpreted (i.e., apprehended in the noetic schema) but, rather, because I can already perceive the pencil as a meaningful whole of itself, distinct to everything else around it (unified objects and spaces) and because of the relational meaning it already has as a pencil.<sup>21</sup> When I examine this experience without subjecting to a reduction, there are not any meaningless *hyle* to be found nor is there some ghostly inner entity which is then charged with the bestowing of meaning. Rather we begin with a meaningful but not fully determined whole in the perceptual field. Simply put, the simplest ‘sense-given’ commonly available to us is itself already pregnant with meaning. Hyletic experiences thus seem, by this reasoning, unparsimonious and a contradiction of terms—abstractions with no

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<sup>19</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 471.

<sup>20</sup> Hubert Dreyfus often provides this useful example in his Merleau-Ponty courses at U.C. Berkeley.

<sup>21</sup> This point leads to our ontological discussion of Heidegger’s notion of ‘ready-to-hand’ in the following chapter.

meaning or content only found when you objectify and reduce perceptual experience and that invite significantly more questions than answers.

Derrida also offers a similar critique of Husserl's internal time structure. As we have seen, Husserlian temporality depends upon the source point, the now, from which the now-apprehension is, as it were, "the nucleus of a comet's tail of retentions."<sup>22</sup> It is in there, in the *Augenblick* (i.e., in the moment of primal impression), that real presence is encountered while everything that is retentively apprehended is merely a perceiving of that which is already just past—an unreal present, as it were, still within the bounds of temporal perception. The introductory challenge Derrida raises is with regards to how the givenness of temporal objects merely passes over between perception and non-perception.

One sees quickly that the presence of the perceived present can appear as such only inasmuch as it is continuously compounded with a nonpresence and nonperception, with primary memory and expectation (retention and protention) . . . Husserl resolutely maintains that there is "no mention here of a continuous accommodation of perception to its opposite."<sup>23</sup>

Would not such temporal re-constitution be phenomenologically important?<sup>24</sup> Moreover, how can there be such a relationship without undermining the *Augenblick*, that is, without admitting a continuity or phasing between the now and not-now? Wouldn't such compromise, more importantly, by its undermining of the central role of primal impression, make presentation and re-presentation unintelligible, at best? At worst, impossible?

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<sup>22</sup> Cited in Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 62.

<sup>23</sup> Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, 64-65.

<sup>24</sup> Isn't this how we go 'to things themselves'?

As soon as we admit this continuity of the now and the not-now . . . we admit the other into the self-identity of the *Augenblick*; nonpresence and nonevidence are admitted into the blink of the instant . . . This alterity is in fact the condition for presence . . . it radically destroys any possibility of a simple self-identity . . . The fact that nonpresence and otherness are internal to presence strikes at the very root of the argument for the uselessness of signs in the self-relation.<sup>25</sup>

Derrida astutely contends that perhaps this “abyss [between] retention and representation,” their relation, is “none other than the history of life and of life becoming conscious”—that the common root in them is not a possibility which inhabits the *Augenblick* but already “constitutes it from the very movement of difference it introduces.”<sup>26</sup> Presence lies in differentiation, succinctly put, and the now-apprehension can gain self-presence only through the retentional folding-back of consciousness. *A fortiori*, this trace is more primordial both conceptually and phenomenologically. We can turn to the phenomenon encountered here. Is not *this now*, in which you (the reader) read these words on paper or a digital screen, already pre-constituted not just retentively, as you grasp each iteration of letters and words henceforth and retain their immediate significance, but even representatively, as you make sense of whole sentences and ideas in relation to this word and, more broadly, in a temporally guided activity of reading? Indeed, the realization of the importance of this temporal function undermines the centrality of the concept of primal impression. We must always check our experience in the practice of phenomenology. Moreover, isn’t a mere succession of *nows* rather derivative from a more pervasive temporal horizon? Notably, in *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Zahavi points out that “we always anticipate that which is about to happen . . . [because] we always have a horizon of anticipation.”<sup>27</sup> It is well known that Husserl’s later work even turns towards a ‘genetic

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>27</sup> Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, 83.

phenomenology’ in which he considers how past experiences and acquired knowledge inform immediate experiences but, still, “it is true that Husserl [assigns] a privileged status to intuition.”<sup>28</sup> This is made evident by the central role he gives to the concept of the *hyle* and the *Augenblick* in his quest to the intentional object. To no surprise, what we find at the heart of presence in Husserl’s temporality is an abyssal emptiness—an absence that the meaning bestowing process (or noetic schema) must fill endlessly.

What can then be said about the overseer of all intentional acts? Aron Gurwitsch, another renowned phenomenologist, raises some important charges against Husserl’s concept of transcendental ego. He argues that the ego is the byproduct of reflection, the theoretical result of reflecting on your intentional content, and further that “the unity of consciousness in no way depends upon the ego; [rather] the latter is rendered possible by the former.”<sup>29</sup> This turn of terms is significant because it lets us see the ego not as the *prima facie* cause of conscious acts but rather as the consequence of their reflection.

Reflection gives rise to a new object—the ego—which appears only if this attitude is adopted. Since the grasping act is not itself grasped, the act continues having no egological structure. It deals with the ego as an object only; and it finds this object connected with its proper object, viz., the grasped act upon which it bears. Hence the ego in question is that of the grasped, not of the grasping act.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, in any mode of pre-reflective act that belongs to our concrete experiences we just do not find such an abstract construct. Take the clear case of emotions and any practical dealings wherein we perceive some guiding feature deposited into a situation—truly, constitutive of it—

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<sup>28</sup> This is because, as Zahavi points out, “the more immediate the object shows itself for the subject, the more it *is* present. And the more present it is, the more real it is.” Consequently, this seems also to align Husserl with a metaphysics of presence as we describe in the following chapter. Zahavi rejects this connection. See Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, 94-95.

<sup>29</sup> Aaron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 324.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

that does not require any such ego directing or mirroring. There is no cognizing or checking upon myself to be done, no self-reflection shooting to and from my conscious acts as I follow through with my actions, manipulating objects and immersed in situations. There is simply a friend-in-need or my-lover-lain-before-me pulling me thus.<sup>31</sup> This meaning is deposited in objects and situations so that one does not need some ultimate overseer of intention to coordinate what is already salient in the concrete experience. The transcendental ego is useless.

## **The Body**

Evidently, Husserlian intentionality assumes certain philosophical distinctions that situate our understanding of ourselves in the modern discourse of subjects relating to objects. There is a rigid categorical distinction at its foundation, as we have seen, between what is inner and belonging to the realm of consciousness and mental acts and what is outer as transcendent objects that we apprehend via our intentional content. This framework leaves a rather awkward place for the body, since it belongs to neither category. Considered phenomenologically, it blurs (and verily erases) the lines that qualify these as distinct realms of experience. Taylor Carman summarizes the struggle to conceptualize the body under this logic thus:

Husserl . . . resorts to describing [the body] as “a thing ‘inserted’ between the rest of the material world and the ‘subjective’ sphere”. . . Yet the body is precisely what orients us in a world in which we are able to individuate subjects and objects to begin with. Nor does having a body consist in having either abstract thoughts about a body or concrete sensations localizable in a body, since embodiment is what makes possible the very ascription of thoughts and sensations to subjects.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*, 321 for more examples.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor Carman, “The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty,” *Philosophical Topics* 27 (Fall 1999), 206.

Such neglect of the body is not at all surprising. If the foundation of our theory of intentionality is the Cartesian ‘I think’ (i.e., the cogito) and the dualism inherent in assuming a primordial disconnect between (inner) mental and (outer) material, nothing could be more theoretically anomalous than a non-mental but intentional ‘thing.’ “It is precisely this conceptual dualism,” Carman points out, “that prevents Husserl from acknowledging the body as the original locus of intentional phenomena in perceptual experience.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, considering Husserl’s treatment of ‘inter-subjectivity’, Ted Toadvine also recognizes that “Merleau-Ponty finds Husserl unable to account for the experience of others due to the Cartesian conception of the cogito to which he remains committed . . . of the indubitable cogito.”<sup>34</sup> The body remains a strange object with no defined place in Husserl’s ontology of mind (mental acts) and its things (intentional objects) and his theory of intentionality, granting this dualist space at the outset, appears to rearticulate the prejudices of modern philosophy.

Returning to Merleau-Ponty, we find in his account of motor intentionality one of the clearest alternatives to Husserl’s mental model. Indeed, by more directly turning to the body in his work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, he demonstrated that an intentionality of mere mental acts fails to account for our bodily grasp in habitual worldly experience.<sup>35</sup> Instead, “it is the body which understands;” “The body is our general medium for having a world.”<sup>36</sup> In the everyday setting itself ahead, towards things and through them for some purpose—which need not be mental nor conscious—our body is in constant grasp of its world; we’re always already given

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>34</sup> Ted Toadvine, “Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Husserl: A Chronological Overview,” in *Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Husserl* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 250.

<sup>35</sup> We will see just what this means in the following chapter through a discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s notion of body schema.

<sup>36</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 169, 167.



within it (*etre au monde*) in an embodied activity. This bodily intentionality permeates our involvements more fundamentally, in the ongoing grasp of a motor significance, than the object apprehension by noetic acts Husserl postulated—truly, it does not necessitate any such (re)presentation. Here it is important to acknowledge, however, that current phenomenological literature aligns Merleau-Ponty close to Husserl, in light of Husserl’s later work and his posthumously published manuscripts, and the work by Zahavi and Toadvine has been exemplary to this task.<sup>37</sup>

### **Against the Subject: Initial Claims**

While these few but central critiques are but some of those launched in response to Husserl’s theory, his contemporary influence is undisputed. Revisions and re-considerations of his ideas might be just as numerous and, perhaps, of even more consequence (e.g., to current projects in developing a phenomenologically informed cognitive science).<sup>38</sup> Based on these objections and how I interpret them, we can now articulate a series of claims, however, so as to show how they undermine traditional intentionality, specifically, and the logic of the cogito, generally.

From my earlier reading of Merleau-Ponty and his argument of perceptual holism, I claim, firstly, that the *hyle* and noetic schema are neither self-sufficient nor necessary to the intentional object apprehension. Certainly, this kind of (transcendental) atomism of the input is

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<sup>37</sup> See Toadvine, “Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Husserl: A Chronological Overview,” 227-286. Also, see Zahavi, “Merleau-Ponty on Husserl: A Reappraisal” in *Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Husserl*, 3-29. Notably, in *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Zahavi presents excellent support for this connection.

<sup>38</sup> Exemplary to this is also Shaun Gallagher’s work in radical embodiment, particularly in *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, that is informed by Merleau-Ponty’s and Husserl’s work.

undermined by the very realization of the holistic character of our experiences phenomenologically. An object constituted in our phenomenal field, for example, is always first a whole and pregnant with meaning such that even when we try to break it into its most basic parts (or bits) they always bear on each other and are each defined by the very interrelation which constrains them in and of that object.<sup>39</sup> This perceptual unity is more basic to our experience. Moreover, by acknowledging a meaningfulness of the bits, which may be derived in relation to the whole, we avoid the conceptual necessity of conjuring a meaning-bestowing process.

As concerns temporality, secondly, I argue that the now (as primal impression) appears a dubious source of presence in the temporal constitution of meaning. Because presence itself consists in differentiation, as we have already considered, the meaning of each now cannot itself be wholly and primarily constituted in the *Augenblick*. It is, indeed, in the retentional trace (and protention function) that we find a more significant precursor. This is not at all to say that the now has no place in this continuum; it is simply to state that Husserl's *Augenblick* is grossly over-determined in what it can constitute temporally. It is not unreasonable to suppose, for example, that a meaning-giving activity actually prescribes how each now is interpreted into a temporal continuum.

Thirdly, I contest that the transcendental ego is a deficient explanation for the unity of our concrete experiences. In our daily dealing with objects and situations, the transcendental ego not only seems missing, as Gurwitsch demonstrates, but is also crippled by the very fact that it

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<sup>39</sup> If we look, for example, at an image of a duck that also looks like a rabbit we realize how difficult it is to isolate parts of the drawing so as to construct one image without the perspective of the other also impinging on our perception. For an additional and relevant discussion of the Müller-Lyer illusion see Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 6.

necessitates a (re)presentation of the intentional object as given to consciousness (i.e., through serial mental acts.) Further, in so far as it is the polar source of intentional acts, the transcendental ego seems to censor the very possibility of any behavior that it cannot oversee. By contrast, our already-being-given-in-the-world, wherein we do not have to cognize or represent an object of intention to carry out an action, is an integral part of our everyday directedness (i.e., the day to day) and is a capacity that Husserl's transcendental ego simply cannot capture. It cannot so much as get us out of the door without (re)presentation of the doorknob. The ego is the source of all acts, in Husserl's picture, but it seems to be incapable of action.

Finally, I believe Husserl's theory of intentionality is still subject to the charge of disembodiment. His later work notwithstanding, the body remains a mere object in the intentional constituting act of consciousness. Since the mental acts of an 'I think' (i.e., specifically, of the transcendental ego/cogito) guide and unify human directedness, the body remains an awkward thing—neither an object fully extended nor part of the interpreting activity of the subject.

As we can see, Husserl's phenomenological edifice is built, at its foundation, with key structural problems and riddled by phenomena it cannot adequately capture. While it can account for a (re)presentational intentionality, it fails to elucidate on the deeper, holistic and more concrete nuances of our ongoing experiences. These are, indeed, more pervasive and far outweigh the instances where an enduring-presence subtends subject-to-object directedness—as the product of mental acts of consciousness. Moreover, Husserl's transcendental attempt to get at the conditions of our experience of objects seems to have been prescribed by the very construct

that he granted from the start, the cogito, and the dualism it in which it famously inheres. It is not difficult to see how the limitations in his theory stem from having begun from this Cartesian ‘I think’—ultimately Husserl seems only to re-paint the picture of a disembodied and over-determined subject around mere meaningless things.

Now let us turn to Heidegger’s work, particularly, the existential analytic of Dasein (or *Being and Time*), to understand how an alternative conception of what it means to be the being that we are can be framed and, consequently, how we can displace and decenter this seemingly obvious understanding of ourselves as inner self/contained subjects from these previous claims. Additionally, we will look into Merleau-Ponty’s work to this end and in a way that is complementary to Heidegger’s project. By undermining the logical space of the subject, exemplified in Husserl’s work here, and considering this alternative view, we can then redirect discourse to a more fundamental way in which we are related to the world—a primordial intentionality.

## AN ALTERNATIVE: HEIDEGGER AND THE EXISTENTIALITY OF DASEIN

Heidegger's project begins with a return to ontology. Since he did not begin from a well established theoretical ground or a concept, an overview of his *Seinsfrage* will hereby provide us with a contrast in approach, vis-à-vis Husserl's transcendental turn to the subject, and inform us as to the basic assumptions he makes to its formulation.<sup>40</sup> What is being?<sup>41</sup> Heidegger's contention in his existential analytic is that the tradition has long mistreated this question as merely a question of 'beings,' of 'entities,' that is, of 'things that are.' This approach dates back to the pre-Socratics—in its highest consequence to Parmenides and the Eleatics—but becomes most thoroughly articulated—indeed, later by tradition re-appropriated and re-framed—in Aristotle who maintained that 'to be' is (ultimately) to be a substance (*οὐσία*).<sup>42</sup> The father of logic appealed to language in elucidating 'being' as that which 'stands under' predicates and properties, is self-sufficient but also (categorically) manifold in its presence.<sup>43</sup> This dominant

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger famously raised this "question of being" in the introduction of *Being and Time* (2).

<sup>41</sup> Note that I don't capitalize 'being' because 'being' is nothing like some ultimate "substance" (e.g., Plato's the Good or the Christian God). This term is often found in uppercase in translations of *Being and Time* due to either a misunderstanding from the interpreter and translator or oversight of the fact that in German all such nouns are capitalized.

<sup>42</sup> We can perhaps find the best expositions in his *Metaphysics* (Books IV and V) and *Categories*. Being, Aristotle maintains, "is spoken . . . in its own right" but "in many ways [and] always with reference to one thing [or principle]" (1017a7, 1003a34). That which is 'being,' we can then gather, has a kind of independence, in that it is an 'in-itself,' but it also is always signifying a one thing. This to which being refers is what Aristotle calls substance (*οὐσία*). Accordingly, 'beings' are so called because they are substances, or said of substances, or lead to substances, or deny substances, etc. (1003b5-10). Thus, 'being' is in many ways but to be is, invariably, to be a substance. In *Categories*, Aristotle further narrows down the manifold meanings of being to ten. Substance, most importantly, designates an 'enduring, present thing' and is itself divided into a primary mode—the instance of a this "neither said of nor in any subject"—and secondary mode—a sort of a this in which primary substance belongs; primary substance, nonetheless, is substance "most fully" (2a12-16). All other ways of being are either properties inhering in substance or existing only in relation to substance, i.e., they have quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, possession, action, affection (1b25-2a5). Of course, this is further to say that nothing could exist without (primary) substance (2b5). Aristotle, *Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle also had linguistics in mind making for these claims for, if, indeed, there were nothing standing under (sub-stantia) predicates and properties, nothing to underlie the signifier, ever constant and present, what could logically 'be'? The answer is obvious. Thus, for Aristotle, these self-sufficient entities (along with their properties) are what is ultimately real and comprise 'being'.

ontology has become known in the Heideggerean literature as “substance ontology.”<sup>44</sup> As

Charles Guignon states:

This outlook is what Dorothea Frede calls the “substance ontology”: the view that what’s ultimately real is that which underlies properties – what “stands under” (sub-stantia) and remains continuously present throughout change. Because of its emphasis on enduring presence, this traditional ontology is also called the “metaphysics of presence.” It is found . . . in Plato’s notion of the Forms, Aristotle’s primary substances, the Creator of Christian belief, Descartes *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Kant’s noumena, and the physical stuff presupposed by scientific naturalism.<sup>45</sup>

Being, for Heidegger, is rather “that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood.”<sup>46</sup> An investigation into the meaning of being requires an ontological questioning of that which designates beings as mere entities (or occurents), since (a way of) being is always already manifested in them such that they ‘are’. Being is therefore not to be confused with ‘a’ being.<sup>47</sup> The forgetfulness of this question, Heidegger suggests, is a testament to the historical emptiness of the concept of being.<sup>48</sup> A ‘fundamental ontology’ is necessary if one is then to make sense of what it means to ‘be’ at all.

This undertaking is possible only through more careful consideration for phenomena as a whole. “Phenomena are never appearances,” Heidegger argues, but “on the other hand every appearance is dependent on the phenomena.”<sup>49</sup> After more careful analysis of the Greek, he explains that a phenomenon (*φαινόμενον*) is “that which shows itself in itself” and an appearance

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<sup>44</sup> This is Dorothea Frege’s coinage.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Guignon, “Introduction,” *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 25, 26.

<sup>47</sup> This is commonly known as Heidegger’s ontological difference.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

is a hiding of itself in that it covers up its origin (in another) and is not.<sup>50</sup> So an appearance is dependent on the phenomena and, even in its covering up, can lead to the phenomena but is not the phenomena itself. The logos (λόγος) is intimately related to the phenomenon (φαινόμενον) in that it signifies a “letting be seen” so that logos of the phenomenon (i.e., phenomenology) is a letting “that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.”<sup>51</sup>

Being, in as far as it is so defined, is about the ‘intelligibility’ or ‘access’ already given to the things (or substances) of experience and it qualifies phenomena such that we are always also its own manifestation. As Heidegger puts it: “Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are.”<sup>52</sup> Because of this, he cannot partake in any bracketing of our meaningful experiences of the world and thus departs with Husserl and his method in the phenomenological reduction.<sup>53</sup> As a consequence, an ‘understanding of being’ is always already manifested in our basic comportment towards ‘beings’ (or objects), before any conceptualization or ontology (i.e., pre-ontologically):

We are able to grasp beings as such, as beings, only if we understand something like being. If we did not understand, even though at first roughly and without conceptual comprehension, what actuality signifies, then the actual world would remain hidden from us. If we did not understand what reality means, then the real would remain inaccessible . . . We must understand being so that we may be able to be given over to a world that is.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 51-53.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 56-58.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>53</sup> Certainly, to undertake in such bracketing would be to do violence to the phenomena and what it already lets be seen.

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 10, 11.

In order to elucidate being thus, Heidegger first invites us to consider ourselves in our most average, commonplace engagement as expressed in day-to-day comportment (amidst all sorts of ‘things’ and with one another). Therein, in the texture of the everyday, we don’t usually find one another as commandeering subjects/egos standing over mere objects (to be apprehended or cognized) but rather we’re “always already dwelling with the extant.”<sup>55</sup> Being there (da-sein) we already understand. This disclosing activity is so basic that it doesn’t even require any such autonomous, inner beholding or (re)presencing characteristic of the cogito—of which inner conscious acts constitute subject to object directedness.<sup>56</sup> A reflective turn inwards to a self-sufficient intentional content (of the subject and its immanent sphere) only seems to conceal the character of the being that we are: the being-there or Dasein.

This misinterpretation lies in an erroneous subjectivizing of intentionality . . . intentionality must not be interpreted on the basis of an arbitrary concept of the subject and ego and subjective sphere and thus taken for an absurd problem of transcendence . . . Because the usual separation between a subject with its immanent sphere and an object with its transcendent sphere—because, in general, the distinction between an inner and an outer is constructive and continually gives occasion for further constructions, we shall in the future no longer speak of a subject, of a subjective sphere, but shall understand the being to whom intentional comportments belong as Dasein.<sup>57</sup>

One could say that we are already pulled from without, heteronomously, by the very things and situations whose meanings already call us to and fro, before any subjective apprehension. Merleau-Ponty best captures the subversive significance of this idea towards the end of *Phenomenology of Perception* by stating that “[nothing] determines me from outside, not because nothing acts upon me, but, on the contrary, because I am from the start outside myself

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>56</sup> This is, more radically, to say that there doesn’t necessarily have to be an object for an I-think. As we will see, being must instead underlie any such (re)presencing.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



and open to the world.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, this statement undercuts the very ‘problem’ that transcendence becomes.<sup>59</sup> While such qualification may still appear to work within the constructive dichotomy that is problematic in the first place (i.e., that there is such categorical separation between us and the world, between the subject and object), Merleau-Ponty’s conclusion has powerful de-constructive value in that it dismantles its logical space by literally turning its inside assumptions out.

Dasein’s everyday comportment, more importantly, is anything but blind; it articulates just this understanding (of being) that precedes entities as entities (or objects as objects). Let us return to the phenomena so that we may see the alternative *way of being* Heidegger proposes here—the way of being of things that we encounter daily, which Heidegger calls “*Zeug*” or “equipment” (loosely translated), not in the manifestation of ‘mental acts’ but rather in the expression of practical activity: the ready-to-hand or *zuhandenheit*.<sup>60</sup>

A pencil, as we normally would grasp it, is (for the most part) so withdrawn as a mere object that we don’t have to cognize it as such to make sense of it. Instead, we aim through it ‘in-order-to’ write *here*, because it already affords writing.<sup>61</sup> While we can observe it as a mere thing, we normally put it to use without objectifying its essence or status as a pencil (or thing). That it is an elongated object with a certain solidity, weight and color is not how it shows itself to us first and foremost in engaged experience; instead, we understand it in an activity of writing as bearing on other things (such as paper, books, sharpeners, etc.) through practices/skills (like

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<sup>58</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 530.

<sup>59</sup> Rather, the problem that it has always been in the tradition.

<sup>60</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 97-98.

<sup>61</sup> Here the term ‘affordance’ is used exactly in the Gibsonian and ecological sense. Fortunately, we have coined more language with which to better point to this phenomenon.

handwriting, calligraphy, and so on) and for a goal in my use of it. We don't grasp the pencil without already possessing this background understanding of its relation (or lack thereof) to other things and how it bears to a task at hand and our purposes. To say that we understand the pencil is in this case to engage with it in activity of using it as such.<sup>62</sup> This ubiquitous phenomenon, our ongoing comportment with 'equipment' (and, truly, of anything that we 'use'), is commonly referred to as 'transparent coping' because the object itself 'withdraws' and is not normally an entity of conscious apprehension.<sup>63</sup>

If we are to consider a hammer, to take a classic example, under the traditional substance ontology, we see that it is essentially an object made out of two conjoined pieces: a firm and elongated shaft and a heavier but also hardened blob. It has a certain weight, proportionality, density, et cetera, but it is primarily 'this' hammer and secondarily 'a hammer' with properties and corresponding predicates—further yet, with material or final causes such as being made out of 'wood' and 'iron' and for the use of craftsmanship. But, again, what such approach completely overlooks is that the hammer couldn't be the thing that it is if it wasn't already in a holism of other equipmental things (i.e., nails, wood, houses, etc.) that bear on its being and because of the work to be produced through it. Indeed, "to the being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be the equipment that it is" and "the work bears with it that that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered."<sup>64</sup> These underlying relational features cannot just be added to the object as properties, nor are they

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<sup>62</sup> Heidegger thus re-appropriates the term of 'understanding' not as a mental phenomenon (i.e., of cognition or representation of an object or state of affairs) but as practical and ongoing activity (grounded in an understanding of being).

<sup>63</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 99. Specifically, he notes that "the peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw . . . in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically." (Transparent coping is Hubert Dreyfus' perfect coinage.)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 97, 99.

somehow imposed from a subjective sphere, but they already constitute the hammer such that it 'is' from the start.

Moreover, without an underlying significance of involvements, what Heidegger calls an "in-order-to," "towards-which" and "for-the-sake-of-which," belonging to the hammer, in the ready-to-hand and that grant us its intelligibility as such—of our human practices and priorities—this entity could not be the entity that it is. In this heavily nuanced and textured way, the hammer is a hammer in so far as it already exists within a whole of things that bear on its being and relates to ways in which we make sense of who we are (as Dasein) in the hammering itself.<sup>65</sup> This primordial relationship we have with the things we use reflects a directedness that is more fundamental than what Husserl could account for in subject-to-object (or traditional) transcendence: a primordial intentionality. It is captured by the closeness we, as the being-there, have to the ready-to-hand and expressed in the everyday of our thus "being-in-the-world." Heidegger summarizes this best as follows:

The theme of our analytic is to be being-in-the-world, and accordingly the very world itself; and these are to be considered within the horizon of average everydayness—the kind of being which is closest to Dasein . . . The being of those entities which we encounter as closest to us can be exhibited phenomenologically if we take as our clue . . . our [comportment] in the world and with entities within-the-world. The kind of [comportment] which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of 'knowledge.'<sup>66</sup>

From this phenomenological consideration—not of an observer merely 'staring' at things (passively) but of everyday people engaged in an ongoing worldly activity—we can then see that

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<sup>65</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 120.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

our most basic involvement in the world is neither cognitive nor explicit according to Heidegger. In the manifestation of an ‘understanding of being’, it is first practical, withdrawn and highly nuanced. Assuming a reflective attitude towards the things of experience, as Husserl had (quite remarkably) done, brings ‘thinghood’ and ‘presence’ to center-focus into what Heidegger calls the present-at-hand (*vorhandenheit*), the way of being of objects as distinct substances in the world.<sup>67</sup>

Turning traditional assumptions inside out, Heidegger further proposes the ontological foundation of this (re)presenting, the present-at-hand, in the ready-to-hand as exemplifying the tacit and ubiquitous ‘know-how’ for our already making ourselves intelligible before any such (re)presentation.<sup>68</sup> The present-at-hand is thus a ‘break-down’ mode of our common experience; it is derivative from the more basic, holistic and pervasive ready-to-hand way of being expressed in daily comportment. Additionally, these ways of being ontologically disclose entities (i.e., they allow things to ‘show up’ for us) differently as ways of intelligibility.

The significance in which equipment shows up, revealed in a ‘totality of involvements’, is intrinsically connected to Dasein and its way of being for Heidegger such that:

[It] goes back ultimately to a “towards-which” in which there is no further involvement . . . This primary “towards-which” . . . is a “for-the-sake-of-which”. But the ‘for-the-sake-of’ always pertains to the being of Dasein, for which, in its being, that very being is essentially an issue . . . Dasein comports itself towards its being as its ownmost possibility. In each case Dasein *is* its possibility, and it ‘has’ this possibility, but not as a property . . . And because Dasein is in each case

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<sup>67</sup> See *ibid.*, 79.

<sup>68</sup> Heidegger, specifically, qualifies that “to lay bare what is just present-at-hand and no more, cognition must first penetrate beyond what is ready-to-hand in our concern.” See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 101.

essentially its own possibility, it *can*, in its very being, ‘choose’ itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore we also see that Dasein’s involvements ultimately reflect its ability to choose and express its understanding of being because it possesses this as its “ownmost possibility.”<sup>70</sup> These latter points lead into Heidegger’s more ‘existential’ ideas which, for the purposes of this paper, we will not explore.<sup>71</sup> The focus here, as it has been, is on the ontology and the conditions that make Dasein’s existence possible in uncovering its relationship to the world: its *existentiality*. Our discussion has been framed with particular relevance to Husserl’s project and the assumptions that guide it in formulating our intentionality to the world. But what is the being of Dasein? And how are we to understand its temporality? These are still relevant questions so we will look ahead with such considerations in mind.

Finally, Heidegger proposes the way of being of Dasein as ‘care’; that its essence “lies in its existence.”<sup>72</sup> Here it must be noted that care is not meant as some psychological construct or private/subjective phenomenon. Care must rather be understood ontologically, as the condition for Dasein’s projection towards entities (in concern) and with others (in solicitude) being-in-the-world.<sup>73</sup> Because of its way of being as ‘care’, Dasein puts things to use to express its ownmost potentiality to be that which it

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 116-117, 68. The “is an issue” should, of course, not be taken to mean something mental or subjective but rather, in our *being-there*, it captures what is expressed in the significance of involvements, phenomenologically (i.e., in our concrete everydayness) and, ontologically, in our way of being.

<sup>70</sup> This is the more explicit sense in which it is “an issue”: that it has a choice.

<sup>71</sup> Some of these topics include ‘being-with,’ ‘authenticity,’ ‘the one’ (or ‘das man’) and death. Of course, it is well known that Heidegger also rejected the term ‘existentialist’ about his work.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 329, 67.

<sup>73</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 237-238. Heidegger emphasizes that “care . . . lies ‘before’ every factual ‘attitude’ and ‘situation’ of Dasein, and it does so existentially *a priori*; this means that it always lies *in* them.”

is—both generally, as ‘being-there’, and specifically, as ‘this’ being-there. This potentiality that is owned by Dasein, furthermore, indicates that Dasein is always “already ahead of itself” in its projecting.<sup>74</sup> Of course, if we consider Dasein’s understanding, the primordial directedness in which we find ourselves engaged in the ready-to-hand, we see that “[understanding] means to be projecting towards a potentiality-for-being for the sake of which any Dasein exists.”<sup>75</sup> Here it is important for us to return to the phenomena once again in order to see exactly what Heidegger is pointing out ontologically.

I use this pencil and ‘understand’ it through this activity of writing here, on this piece of paper, ‘with’ other equipment (such as the eraser next to the paper and the pencil sharpener), because I would like to put down these ideas I have about certain concepts so that they will be physically recorded, ‘towards’ the completion of a work in philosophy and ‘in-order-to’ establish my case and that I may be evaluated on philosophical reasoning and aptitude, ‘for-the-sake-of’ my understanding of myself as a student of philosophy in this university and my interests in certain topics, as part of a larger society that values and prioritizes such academic activities. The pencil (and every object bearing on it) is integral to my understanding of myself as a student, in the practice of writing, and for the goals and priorities I have as part of a community to produce works with it. Consequently, I am constantly projecting myself in the manipulation of it, to the production of a work that expresses this understanding of myself, for my sake, and in so

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 385.

doing I make myself sensible such that I am: ‘this’ student, in this community, in this situation, etc.

We can see that Dasein’s temporality is thus essentially futural; it is rooted in its way of being as care and because of its existence. In contrast to Husserl successive temporalization of empty but real ‘nows’ in consciousness (that an entity must somehow interpret to bestow meaning), time for Dasein is always pregnant with meaning and guided by an activity, in our concern, projecting towards possibilities from an understanding of being.<sup>76</sup> While it can become a ‘now’ of apprehension or a present-at-hand entity to be discerned, it is only so derivatively and from the horizon against which Dasein makes itself intelligible in care.

But how else is Dasein projected in understanding if not through the body (that is, in the body-writing, body-hammering)? It is well known that Heidegger never mentions the body; but to say that he brackets the body or that he is still liable to the charge of disembodiment is to completely misunderstand the ontology of the existential analytic that we have attempted to clarify hitherto. The fact that he doesn’t explore the role of the body does not necessarily mean that his theory precludes it as a central possibility. Rather, if we consider our exposition of Heidegger up to this point we see that there really is no other way Dasein could be but with-a-body. It is here that my reading of

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<sup>76</sup> It is important here to refer to Zahavi’s arguments against the view that Husserl ascribes to a metaphysics of presence. In his perceptive reading of Husserl’s work, Zahavi argues that “Husserl always emphasizes the *transcendence* of the perceived object . . . [Husserl] is not merely arguing that every perception of an object must necessarily include more than that which is intuitively present . . . Ultimately, Husserl is also claiming that the intuitively given profile is only presenting the object because of its horizontal reference to the absent profiles of the object.” This ‘horizontal intentionality’ is indeed quite prominent in Husserl’s later work, as referenced by Zahavi. See Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, 95-98.

Merleau-Ponty is complementary to Heidegger's project (without a conflation of their theories) in elucidating this primordial intentionality. The clue I take to this exposition lies first in their likeminded appropriation of the term 'understanding' that, as we have seen, dismantles the traditional conception of a mental process.

### **The Body Again – Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Body Schema**

In the previous chapter, we introduced Merleau-Ponty's work on the body and his account of motor intentionality against Husserl's view. Particularly noteworthy is that Merleau-Ponty's notion of body-understanding, like Dasein's understanding, reflects our involvements more directly in an on-going activity. This understanding, in both cases, does not primordially belong to the realm of (re)presentation to consciousness, cognition or to any subject originated directedness (of an I-think).<sup>77</sup> In Merleau-Ponty, this embodied understanding rather constitutes our 'phenomenal field' from the start and projects us in an "abiding space of perceptual possibilities, impossibilities and necessities": the 'body schema'.<sup>78</sup> Carman explains:

The body schema is . . . precisely not an image of the body, for images are objects of awareness, whereas schemata sketch out in advance and hence structure our awareness of objects. [It] is our ability to anticipate and (literally) incorporate the world prior to applying concepts to objects. This ability, which Merleau-Ponty also calls "habit," is not objective knowledge, nor is it internal to the mind, for "it is the body that 'understands' in the acquisition of habit."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 160. Merleau-Ponty also says that "to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made independently of any representation." This is not to deny the role of cognition and (re)presentation to embodiment but rather it is to say that they are normally derivative from a more pervasive body-world relationship.

<sup>78</sup> Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 2008), 105.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.



The way in which the body is geared within its environment, in understanding, also points to the more basic intentionality Heidegger proposed by being grounded in the same phenomena, that is, in our ‘skillful coping.’<sup>80</sup> Embodiment is therefore a critical part to our being-in-the-world, in so far as it allows us to express this understanding in the everyday. Merleau-Ponty further establishes this connection to Heidegger by relating the performance of the body to existence such that:

The analysis of motor habit as an extension of existence leads... to an analysis of perceptual habit as the coming into possession of a world. Conversely, every perceptual habit is still a motor habit and here equally the process of grasping a meaning is performed by the body.<sup>81</sup>

The body schema is the feature that defines motor intentionality not only in how it allows objects to be utilized through our body but, more basically, in how it designates that they ‘show up’ as objects in a space of possibilities for action. Consequently, this space, our phenomenal field—which is not a mere bundle of sensory facts but the very ‘transcendental field’ within which we are directed—is constituted by these body schematic processes nuancing the grasp we have of our world, at every turn, through any situation and in manifold ways.

A martial artist, for example, acts in the space of possibilities designated by her body schema in the accurate execution of a spin kick to a target at a certain height, range and through a number of obstacles or she may reach precisely through her sword that, incorporated into her bodily space (the schema), slices and thrust across targets as if in

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<sup>80</sup> Hubert Dreyfus coined the term *skillful coping* in his lectures at U.C. Berkeley and throughout many publications. Prominently, see Hubert Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>81</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 176.

seamless extension of her arm. The parkour practitioner traverses across urban places that his body designates as ‘open’, in possibilities unique to his ability, by his effortlessly jumping through a fence demarcating the edge of higher ground to a lower level, landing and running seamlessly to escalate up vertical walls to the balcony of three storey building.

Of course, we do not need to consider bodily skills of expert performers here. The space of possibilities that the body schema opens up is expressed just as well in my using this pencil to write this sentence, through very finely tuned movements that (re)create these pre-designated shapes, with this hand and by the specific grasp of my hand and fingers. In an ongoing activity, the pencil (just like the sword) withdraws as it is literally incorporated in-order-to produce and work. Additionally, I can go up a stairwell, move through a crowd, open doors and grab my drink while running towards a classroom by virtue of this bodily space of possibilities that has been opened up before me, without ever having to cognize each object that was part of the experience. In all its limitations, necessities and possibilities it is this body schema that thus allows us to be in the ongoing grasp of our world understandingly. As Carman summarizes, it “constitutes our precognitive familiarity with ourselves and the world we inhabit [because] ‘I am aware of my body via the world’ . . . just as ‘I am aware of the world through the medium of my body’ .”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 106, 107.

By this exposition, Merleau-Ponty's account of motor intentionality complements Heidegger's primordial intentionality quite explicitly. His closeness to Husserl is made all the more tenuous when we consider it at just this fundamental level. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty point to the phenomenon of everydayness and argue against the tradition and Husserl's continuation of its prejudices that categorically separate us from the world. It is particularly important here, at this juncture, to then ascertain what 'world' means since, as it should now be clear, the world cannot be a collection of mere 'things' (or, indeed, any-thing itself) nor is it an intended object of consciousness as Husserl posits it.<sup>83</sup> Rather, it is in our 'familiarity' with the world that we have the closest glimpse of its phenomenon as an originary ontological structure.

### **The World and Our Primordial Relationship Being-in-the-world**

To better bring into view this which has been ignored, dismissed or mistreated in terms of subjectivity, let us then return to Heidegger's ontological investigation and the relational totality that discloses entities as equipment (or *manipulanda*), in the ready-to-hand, so that we may conceptualize what is meant by 'world.'<sup>84</sup> As we have clarified thus far, the beholding of an object presupposes a holistic grasp of it as first and foremost bearing on other things.<sup>85</sup> It is in this basic practical mode that we are always already given to our world understandingly. What else does this overarching relational totality of things as equipmental show us? To review, Heidegger explains that things given in this practical structure are made whole by their being tied

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<sup>83</sup> As we've seen in the first chapter here, Husserl quite explicitly claims that "the world itself is the object intended." See Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Investigation V, §14, 568.

<sup>84</sup> "*Manipulanda*" is Merleau-Ponty's term commonly used in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

<sup>85</sup> This is also the case for naturally occurring 'things' such as water, rocks and air as *resources*.

to significance (i.e., they have an in-order-to, a towards-which, a with-which and a for-the-sake-of-which) and that is part of Dasein's projecting (futrally) as care. This, we have also established, need not be mental or conscious; rather, through primordial/motor intentionality, the signifying is already made manifest in an activity as we enact our understanding of being. Indeed, everywhere we turn and in whatever we do we are always using things in such a way that we express our understanding of them within a given referential totality and through significance, in concern (with equipment) and solicitude (with others), without necessarily cognizing them or (re)presenting their possibilities within us. They are given in the space of actively grasping them that already makes sense from the possibilities laid ahead by our body-understanding (the schema). It is this 'background,' on the basis of which we project (care), which points us to the world, the world that we've granted from the outset in our ontological exposition and that we can bring it into better view here with the following passage from *Being and Time*:

That wherein Dasein understands itself beforehand in the mode of assigning itself is that [on the basis of which] it has let entities be encountered beforehand. The "wherein" of an activity of understanding which assigns or refers itself, is that [on the basis of which] one lets entities be encountered in the kind of being that belongs to involvements; and this "wherein" is the phenomenon of the world. And the structure of that [on the basis of which] Dasein assigns itself is what makes up the worldhood of the world.<sup>86</sup>

This phenomenon that points to the world as an ontological structure, also constitutive of Dasein, is 'familiarity' and this, in turn, always refers to the "wherein" within which Dasein exist as the world.<sup>87</sup> It is the background on the basis of which any and all understanding takes its

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<sup>86</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 119.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

meaning, in Dasein's projection (care), and from which any objects arise as objects, in any way of being ready-to-hand or present-at-hand. As such, the 'worldhood of the world' is also part of our being-in-the-world in the way Dasein exists and expresses an understanding of being.<sup>88</sup> We can categorize this existentially in that we always have a 'perspective' on the world such that "the surrounding world is different in a certain way for each of us" but, at the same time, "we move about in a common world."<sup>89</sup> The world is the pregnant source from which the 'being-there' always takes its meaning in any mode of understanding (or presencing) but also ultimately in that it 'exists'.

A closing look at the phenomenon of familiarity as it relates to the referential totality is useful here to grasp how 'world' prescribes experience more commonly, in an instance of encountering. Here Heidegger offers the best explanation by considering our experience of a room:

The manifold of things encountered here is not an arbitrary manifold of incidental things; it is first and only present in a particular correlation of references . . . a closed totality . . . My encounter with a room is not such that I first take in one thing after another and put together a manifold of things in order then to see a room. Rather, I primarily see a referential totality as closed, from which the individual piece of furniture and what is in the room stand out . . . The closed character of the referential whole is grounded precisely in familiarity, and this familiarity implies that the referential relations are well-known. Everyday concern as making use of, working with, constantly attends to these relations; everyone dwells in them.<sup>90</sup>

In familiarity we therefore finally capture the essence of this relationship we have to the world; an ontological relation that, even in its mode of breakdown, is never fundamentally one of

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<sup>88</sup> See *ibid.*, 92, 93.

<sup>89</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 164.

<sup>90</sup> Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 187.

separation or inner to outer directedness.<sup>91</sup> It is one in which we always already belong and because of which there can be any transcendence or intentionality at all. Ultimately, the world is not a 'thing.' It is the condition for our encountering any-thing that reveals (i.e., discloses) things, ontologically, within an understanding of being in Dasein's projection.

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<sup>91</sup> We did not explore the mode of breakdown here but only hinted at it here. It begins in what Heidegger calls the 'unready-to-hand' and has an ontological relationship to the present-at-hand.

## DECENTERING THE SUBJECT IN CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE

This discussion should prove more than sufficient to invite us out of the comfort of the subject and its distance to the world. As is now clear, Husserl's conceptual framework cannot clarify our most basic understanding expressed in the daily know-how of transparent/skillful coping and the body's own focal role given to this significance (*etre au monde*) in its habitual dealings. The cogito lags behind and is crippled by self-centeredness. We must be reminded that this is not to deny the place of consciousness, at the very least, in the phenomenon of (re)presentation and cognition. This ability to bring 'thinghood' to presence is integral to the being that we are and our comportment by making the so-called 'first person' point of view possible. But, while we often can and do encounter entities as mere entities, this is not at all what is ontologically primordial and phenomenologically basic to our experience. An unassuming turn to the phenomena, taking it as it shows itself from itself, reveals this much without having to retroactively conjure ghastly abstract entities in the fumbling of transcendental reduction. More strikingly, the irreducibility of this know-how attests to the absurdity of any cognitivist ambitions to construe us and our world in terms of logical syntactic processes and entities—of which one only has to ascertain the correct predicative and causal stories—without comprehending the vast inter-relatedness to which we are always already given in an embodied and situated activity, with care as our ontological determination, and from which the very possibility of us as selves or self-contained minds originates. Philosophical discourse must thus return to this ground and sprout from it anew by re-establishing our relationship to the world—our ownership and, more importantly, our responsibility within it.

To this task, generally, it is clear that we must see through pernicious dichotomies of self and world, subject and object, inner and outer that sever us from the world at this fundamental level. We must, as we have been doing through this paper, deconstruct them by undermining the logical space within which they rise as sensible possibilities and employing disclosive arguments. Indeed, our unitary relationship with the world needs to be re-stated this way so that we may form new metaphors and guide the discussion from more wholesome assumptions and towards new theories. Heidegger offers a clear alternative, as we have formulated it here, by considering the primordial togetherness in which world and ‘being-there’ (Dasein) are interdefined. These productive dichotomies of philosophy then dissolve and cease to produce their work in the heritage of an ancient ontology.<sup>92</sup>

World exists—that is, it is—only if [being-there] exists, only if there is [being-there]. Only if world is there, if [being-there] exists as being-in-the-world, is there understanding of being, and only if this understanding exists are intra-worldly beings unveiled as [present] and [useful]. World-understanding as [being-there]-understanding is self-understanding. Self and world belong together in the single entity, the [being-there]. Self and world are not two beings, like subject and object, or like I and thou, but self and world are the basic determination of the [being-there] itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world.<sup>93</sup>

As a consequence, we can see that the problem of transcendence is no longer a ‘problem’ that somehow needs ‘solving’. Our directedness to the world is not something that belongs to the immanent sphere of a subject in relation to an object, nor is it captured by such a distinction in the first place; rather, Heidegger explains, “the intentional constitution of the Dasein’s compartments is precisely the *ontological condition of the possibility of every and any*

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<sup>92</sup> Under these distinctions, after all, one can ostensibly doubt the existence of the ‘external’ world and remain sensible—a ruse no child will believe.

<sup>93</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 297.



*transcendence.*”<sup>94</sup> Indeed, there is no such ‘problematic’ for how we reach across a ‘void’ of meaning, from an overdetermined ‘within’ to an empty world ‘out there’, because we’ve destroyed the logical space within which the very question of subject-to-object transcendence works.<sup>95</sup> Its terms of an ‘either/or’ have been dis-solved. Husserl’s task to bridge this categorical divide, through his transcendental phenomenology, becomes now all the more clear to us in its limitations by the narrow and misleading experience it outlines for our way of being (i.e., transcendental presence). We can see his philosophical project as symptomatic of both a substance ontology and the cogito from which the subject and ego take their rise. This is a paradigm that Husserl could not escape and, again, it is exactly in this sense that his theory of intentionality remains traditional.

In order to redirect discourse we must then, more specifically, subvert the logic of this ontology (metaphysics of presence) and the language within which it works to produce its prejudices. Let us return to the claims we laid out in the first chapter and consider them, now in a new light, to this initiative and so as to re-frame our understanding and familiarity being-in-the-world as ordinary ontological structures to this task. At the same time, we must keep in mind that the phenomenon of presence Husserl was trying to articulate is indeed very much part of our human experience but the contention here is that it is not what is most basic. In our most common and practical engagements, once again, we don’t find ourselves as subjects standing over mere objects with a bridge of relevance and meaning to cross. We find ourselves *first* already within them by virtue of these unitary phenomena.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>95</sup> We’ve done this through dissolution of the dialectic that allows its work.

## **Against the Subject: Final Claims in Light of Heidegger's Existential Analytic**

First, I have asserted that Husserl's *hyle* and noetic schema are neither self-sufficient nor necessary to the intentional object apprehension. The logic behind these constructs assumes that the access we have to world must be made possible by some inner feature of the subject, through a mental act, that apprehends the raw data of experience to constitute its intentional object. In par with the paradigm of the cogito, here it is also granted that an 'I-think' generates and gives meaning in subject-to-object directedness. This is problematic from two different angles. First, Husserl grants that subject and object are two categorically separate entities that have a relationship only through the former's inner intentional structure. Likewise, he assumes this intentional structure takes hold of the world only through the mental acts of consciousness immanent to the subject. My stronger claim here is that this intentional relationship the noetic schema and *hyle* attempt to construe is not one that belongs to an inner mental act (of the subject) but, rather, is first already constituted by the body schema (of the 'being-there') in its possession of a familiar world and through common action as a unitary-disclosive phenomenon and from which there can be any such object apprehension. The space of possibilities within which our body works (e.g., via perception, in proprioception and through environmental affordances) pre-designates what may come to presence in an already intentional activity and is primordially determined by our skillful coping and the stance we take towards such activity.

Take, for example, that experience of a busy college day for a student as she heads to class. She rushes to her calculus test site and her ability to cross streets, move through busy hallways, open doors, climb stairs, grasping and coming into contact with many objects,

situations and other people, while beholding the fundamental theorem of calculus as object of apprehension, makes it possible for this ongoing activity to remain intentional without (re)presenting each and every particular instance of encountering (myriad of objects and people) to this end. Ultimately, she traverses this extremely nuanced space in-order-to go to class; but this is not a possibility that she needs to represent either—it guides her activity quite thematically in her projection as ‘this’ student. If she were a philosophy major, she might perhaps begin thinking about phenomenology and, in a very Husserlian fashion, stare at an object while reflecting on her ability to be directed towards it, (re)presentationally, but this is only a stance that she has decided to take towards her experience that is in no way required for embodied intentional comportment.<sup>96</sup> It is in no way representative of her normal experience. More explicitly, if she had sustained an ankle injury and lost proprioceptive ability to her foot, the flight of stairs (and her foot) might then suddenly stand out to her, every step of the way, as a distinct object(s) with clear physical properties to be discerned. She is forced to suspend the transparency of her common interaction in-the-world because of these task-specific limitations that her body has assigned her.

Second, I have contended that the now appears a dubious source of presence in the temporal constitution of meaning. Because the content of primal impression cannot depend exclusively on the apprehension of the noetic schema, since presence is given to us in ‘difference’, any such temporal constitution must already be informed by the retentive character of what ‘just’ was and has been to its own self-relation. More radically, the meaningful constitution of the now must also be made sensible in this quality of difference within a space

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<sup>96</sup> This, in other words, is to say that action can be purposive without an agent entertaining a purpose.

that there may be any difference at all and from which there is any sense for a 'now' to come into being in self-disclosure. My stronger claim to the temporality of meaningful experience is thus that the phenomenon of the now is sensible only first against a background condition of projecting (futrally) and subsequently to the folding-back of consciousness to itself (past) that temporally interprets it as within a pervasive horizon of care. The temporal cadence of our experiences impregnates each now to be both salient and relevant through these very ontological structures.

The student rushing to her classroom sees each now as filled and constituted against the activity of going to class, in that instance, and to this activity, thematically, in her understanding as a student, to the concerned involvement with 'this' busy hallway, through 'that' door and to the significance of her taking the calculus test and articulating an understanding of applied concepts of mathematical derivation. They may stand out to her as distinct temporal moments but they are never isolated and without meaningful direction; rather, they press onwards as she enacts her ownmost possibilities in the rhythm of this disclosive activity and to its relevance. She might decidedly turn her attention towards these moments (as objects in themselves) and strip them of their worldly and existential character by taking a purely transcendental or scientific stance but, again, such moments are not accessible to her if not first within the conditions of intelligibility that already grant them to her from any perspective. She is able to behold an instant from a view because she is the kind of being that can project and self-refer temporally.

Finally, I have maintained that the transcendental ego is a deficient explanation for the unity of our concrete experiences. The better alternative to the shortcomings of this model is

captured by a situated and embodied ‘being-there’ as we have unveiled it here—grounded in my complementary reading of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. At bottom, we can see that what it means to be the being that we are cannot be formulated in terms of subject to an object or any such ontological separation. I thus raise my final and more radical claim that we can understand ourselves as subjects (to objects) only derivatively and after we have suspended the relationship which already unites us in the phenomenon of worldhood in the ontological whole of being-in-the-world. It is clear that the phenomenon Husserl was pointing to is very much part of our experience but we do not constitute our world and ourselves in terms of this directedness. The fact that we are fundamentally ‘enworlded’ is that which allows us to be directed towards and constitute any object in consciousness, against a background of many other related and unrelated things, for certain purposes and because of our way of being as care.

As the student arrives to class, her attention is directed to certain physical objects and spaces such as the actual classroom, the desk she usually sits on, the board and the calculus book she carries with scribbled-on notes. She imagines many different manipulations of a given calculus problem (an abstract object) that she may be able to differentiate or integrate on her test (a physical object) because she would like to demonstrate her proficiency in the topic, pass the class and eventually be able to comprehend more complex relationships in the application to physical problems, from more nuanced objects and relationships, building her future as a mechanical engineer. That these are objects of (re)presentation to her is made possible by the fact that there is already an articulated world within which these objects make sense both particularly and generally. She is this student, in this society, with these priorities and she projects herself to becoming an engineer, at this university, as a woman of color, with these beliefs, from this

culture, etc. The world within which she ‘dwells’ is exactly that from which any-thing may come to presence, as a condition that she sees herself and that she projects forward in an activity of understanding that she ‘is’.

### **Closing Remarks and Further Considerations**

These claims, both in the introductory case of the first chapter and in the more radical sense here, articulate my critique against the subject and its shallow directedness epitomized in Husserl’s theory of intentionality. More importantly, we have ventured beneath the assumptions of the subject-to-object model and, through Heidegger’s ontology, discussed the new ground from which to reformulate our way of being as first unitary and never hopelessly problematic in a question of transcendence. This exploration was grounded in the phenomenon of our common experience, considering Merleau-Ponty’s work in embodiment as complementary to the phenomenology. Broadly, the existential character of the being that we are, or, our *existentiality*, as I call it, guided us to the destruction of the prejudices that produce these terms in a categorical separation, epitomized in the intentionality of the subject. My interpretation of phenomenological texts to this general task provides more than sufficient support for the particular claims I raised apropos this traditional intentionality and to the purposes of inviting a more radical consideration of it.

Even if we do not look into the existential implications of these claims, as that is well beyond my purposes in this paper, there are some relevant points we can lay out for further discussion. I would like to make some qualifications, particularly, in closing, to the positive way in which the destruction of these prejudices here informs our way of being in cultural self-

understanding and with poignant relevance to our times. We can ask the following questions to this end: What would it mean for us to begin seeing ourselves as inseparable from our world? What would it then be like to see truly that this ‘enworlded’ ground we walk on is entirely ours, of our making, and that, as such, we are completely responsible and accountable in its unbridled proliferation? How can such a radical change in the way we see ourselves and our world affect our individual and cultural perspectives to ecological responsibility?

I believe it to be clear that only with the fall of the subject as a cultural paradigm, with the erosion of its language and metaphors, will the comforting distance of a self-contained ‘I-think’ to an object be displaced and thereby allow the emergence of a new and radical sense of belonging. Dasein is, after all, fundamentally *de-distancing*; but this is a relationship that we must constantly uncover and reframe towards making more explicit the responsibility that this ownership brings—at the individual, societal and cultural levels. Under this lens, notions of subject and object are thus no longer mere moot terms for arguments of armchair philosophers but entail pernicious reflections that enslave us to an illusory self-image and logic, distancing us from the world that we ourselves are and as we continue to act in its unrestrained expansion—particularly so, by muddling our ecological relationship with it in an ontological and material sense. We can refer to these considerations more critically from the discussion we have framed here.

## CONCLUSION

We have here set out and finished on the general task of rethinking the intentionality of the subject through a more radical interpretation of its phenomenon and the question of transcendence it produces. A thorough but well-focused reading of Heidegger's texts and complementary exposition of Merleau-Ponty's work—along with important critiques from other key figures—informed us in this task, specifically, by allowing us to formulate a series of claims against the subject (and its narrow and specialized directedness) through world-disclosing arguments. We can now summarize and merge these central claims to three main thesis points I would like to establish. First, Husserl's concepts of the *hyle* and noetic schema are neither self-sufficient nor necessary to the intentional object apprehension because their intentional relationship is not one that belongs to an inner mental act (of the subject) but, rather, is first already constituted by the body schema (of the 'being-there') in its possession of a familiar world and through common action as a unitary-disclosive phenomenon, from which there can be any such transcendental apprehension. Second, the now (as primal impression) appears a dubious source of presence in the temporal constitution of meaning because its phenomenon is sensible only first against a background condition of temporal projecting (futurally) and subsequently to the folding-back of consciousness to itself (past) that temporally interprets it as within a pervasive horizon of care (that we are). Lastly, the transcendental ego is a deficient explanation for the unity of our concrete experiences because we can understand ourselves as subjects to objects only derivatively, after we have suspended the relationship which already unites us in the phenomenon of worldhood in the ontological whole of being-in-the-world.



As we have seen, transcendental presence in the Husserlian fashion thus exhibited is not what is most basic to our human experience and I related the overarching ontological discussion to original examples of the phenomena in an attempt to ground the abstract in the concrete. In the first chapter, I sketched the fundamental (albeit not comprehensive) picture of what the traditional view of intentionality entails and outlined its problems through some preliminary claims. The second chapter then consisted in directing the discussion to Heidegger's revolutionary ontology, interpreting it and formulating arguments to the task of dismantling the basic assumptions on which Husserl's project still works and so as to re-formulate ourselves and our primordial intentionality being-in-the-world. A discussion of the body was central to these chapters. Lastly, I presented stronger claims against the subject in the effort to capture the *existentiality* of Dasein as an alternative to Husserl's model and towards a more integral view of human experience.

An intentionality of the subject with its inner mental content, dependence upon primal impressions and a supervening ego thus fails to articulate the fundamental relationship we have with the world. It cannot deliver us to the heavily nuanced, concrete and embodied everyday in which we already project and understand ourselves. This failure, however, is not a shortcoming of its theoretical reach nor of its guiding phenomenon (i.e., transcendental presence), but reveals a fundamental limitation in its conceptual groundwork. Indeed, the subject, the indubitable cogito and its directedness, falls behind in the assumptions of an ancient ontology still binding us in a bondage of separation from the very world that defines us.

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