

## Closing Essay

### Phenomenological Reduction and the Condition for Belief Formation

#### In 5 Sections

#### 1. Contemporary Thought and Phenomenology

It is perfectly usual for a certain philosophical theory to invite different interpretations. This is merely indicative of how an abundance of theories and discourses can be cultivated within free thinking. Regarding Husserl's notions of phenomenology and their acceptance/rejection, however, it does not seem to me that the response is merely the case of a natural and productive diversity of opinions and interpretations. More than this is going on. I hope I have established in this study what the case is: one of a systemic and fundamental misunderstanding.

Let me first present my general understanding of the subject in question. Husserl's brand of phenomenology has been faced with a number of virulent criticisms from different contemporary thinkers. With such a wide spectrum of harsh responses, belief in phenomenology as a valid philosophical theory has significantly declined since the mid-20th century. The key critics are the French post-modern thinkers, who introduced themselves as tough critics of French phenomenology, as well as some other scholars of contemporary analytical philosophy. The thinkers involved in positivistic social and cultural studies are also aggressive in their opposition to phenomenology, probably because the latter is seemingly critical of the positivistic humanities.

In short, phenomenology has been subjected to a strong criticism from contemporary thinkers who basically adopt the standpoint of relativism and from the school of positivism-oriented, allegedly 'scientific' human and cultural studies. This is a natural outcome, in a sense. As I have argued, Husserl dismisses the positivistic approach as one based absolutely on the old 'subject-object schema', as he does also the relativistic approach as it too relies on a non-correspondence between subject and object. Accordingly, criticism from both schools is, so to speak, counter-argumentation against the criticism of conventional epistemology that is offered by phenomenology.

What would you say, however, if all of these arguments derive from a serious misconception of the core theory of phenomenology? How would you respond if the approach to phenomenology that is advocated by Husserl involves a truly epoch-making philosophical advance, which these positivistic, post-modern and analytical philosophers were unable to attain?

I should like, firstly, to reexamine the general take on phenomenology that most of those criticisms operate from, and, secondly, to offer a new 'hypothesis' concerning the key idea of Husserl's version of phenomenology. I will then leave it to the fully informed reader to decide whether or not the contemporary criticism of phenomenology is justified.

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The core idea of Husserl's phenomenology is that the so-called 'phenomenological reduction' is a valid method of analyzing the condition and structure of *belief formation*. My point is that only in this way of understanding phenomenology – Husserl's intended way – can one solve the puzzle of cognition, the most important problem for philosophy (as I thoroughly discuss in my commentaries on the Lectures).

As it appears to me, in the general understanding/criticism of phenomenology there is no acceptance that it (phenomenology) is an art of analyzing the condition for belief formation: that it is a universal theory about world belief. There is certainly a widely accepted interpretation that phenomenology is a theory about the *constitution* of the world. This term (world constitution) gives rise to a number of different interpretations. Crudely put, phenomenology has been understood to be a 20th-century version of the Kantian *theory of cognitive constitution*.

It is also generally accepted that the most central motif of Husserl's phenomenology is an ontological quest for the world and the self knowing it. Phenomenology seems to be interpreted as an attempt to address the enigma of

'being' in philosophy.

Yet this last misunderstanding is, on my view, destined to encounter a dual difficulty. Firstly, it locates phenomenology in the stream of traditional German-style 'metaphysics'. This has prompted the criticism from post-modern and positivistic thinkers that phenomenology has ambitions for a revival of obsolete metaphysics. Secondly, it (the misunderstanding) is absolutely incompatible with the method of phenomenology that aims at resolving the puzzle of cognition. This is because Husserl's approach in addressing the enigma of knowledge will eventually resolve the conventional enigma of being, namely metaphysics.

Accepting my argument to be true, why and how could the fundamental method of phenomenology have undergone such an extensive misunderstanding and misconception? I should like in this addendum to clarify this question while at the same time avoiding scholastic discussion as much as possible.

Husserl's phenomenology has been absorbed by such maestros of contemporary philosophy as Martin Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and JP Sartre, and it has achieved mainstream recognition in current thought. However, there were considerable deviations between philosophers in terms of their understanding and acceptance of Husserl's phenomenological method. This has made it quite difficult for a general audience to acquire a more or less consensual understanding regarding the import of phenomenology. (I myself was originally quite perplexed by the discrepancies we find between the different advocates/opponents of phenomenology and, as a consequence, was initially unable coherently to contemplate phenomenology in general.) We are, however, at last beginning to notice that there is a good reason for the difficulty in understanding Husserl's phenomenology.

There are several people said to be prominent disciples of Husserl: Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Eugen Fink and Ludwig Landgrebe, for example; yet even these few named have disagreed with each other regarding the import, meaning, and proper criticism of Husserl's phenomenological method. This general ambivalence is manifest even among those who learned directly from Husserl since his time in Freiburg, that is, among individuals such as Eugen Fink, Ludwig Landgrebe, Klaus Held, and Gerd Brand, not to speak of Scheler and Heidegger. Fink raises the following question regarding Husserl's notion of constitution.

'Husserl opened the dimension of absolute subjectivity by means of the fundamental method of reduction. All the objects in the world are 'constituted' in the course of the life of absolute subjectivity with intentionality. The constitution of the entities existing in the world is ascribed to this absolute subjectivity. (.....) What does constitution mean? (...) When Husserl receives the notion of constitution from the naïve use of the world and allocates to it new kinds of transcendental significances, all these significances for him are entangled together and vacillating' (Fink: *The Operational Concept in Husserl's Phenomenology* – translated into English from a Japanese translation).

Phenomenology is generally taken to be a theory about the constitution of the world or of an ego. Fink here points out that this notion of constitution vacillates in Husserl, with no exact definition of the word ever been given. He also argues that other key terms in Husserl's phenomenology – terms such as phenomenology, epochè, constitution, and transcendental logic – are not strictly defined, but should properly be called mere 'operational concepts'.

Landgrebe also raises an objection. I quote his argument (though it is a bit verbose) as it typically indicates the view of Husserl taken by the so-called 'orthodox' school of phenomenology.

'It is impossible to trace the in-depth analysis of 'living present' by Held and the unfolding of the puzzle of this living present. I may just say as follows. Husserl had always postponed the analysis of this deeper dimension in his earlier works, including *the First Philosophy*. However, only this analysis justifies the way he specifies transcendental subjectivity as absolute subjectivity. (...) The ultimately functioning ego is a standing-still-flowing ego-present or an absolute ego that is present for itself while flowing. (...) Simply see the fact that the ultimately functioning ego is characterized as such an absolute entity, and we understand the following. How is the question: 'in what sense is constitution spoken about here, it is to be a signifier or a creation?' legitimately linked with the characterization of the ultimately functioning ego mentioned above? Does the origin mean the ground for all the constituting functions that bring the given into being, or the ground for the given themselves?' (Landgrebe: *Reflection on Husserl's Constitution Theory* – translated from a Japanese translation)

The point of Landgrebe's argument is this. Husserl's later philosophy went beyond the theory of 'world constitution' (epistemology) and strayed into the realm of 'ego constitution' (ontology) as a ground for epistemology. In this

realm of pursuing an ultimate ego, however, Husserl's method of reducing everything to pure consciousness posed a fundamental problem. That is to say, a question whether ego is something to be constituted or a ground to constitute itself. Husserl's theory begins with the presupposition that *everything* is to be constituted. It would then entail that the ego is an object to be constituted and at the same time be a subject to constitute it. Accordingly, the phenomenology as a pursuit of ultimate ground would end up as paradox.

This 'limitation' of the phenomenological method in terms of ego-constitution is a questioning of Husserl's phenomenology that is common among the 'orthodox' phenomenologists, including Fink, Landgrebe and Held. Incidentally, Michel Foucault points out the same problem in his study, *The Order of Things*, saying that phenomenology is locked in the paradoxical circle of being simultaneously a subject to know and a subject to be known. Notwithstanding, I honestly suspect the correctness of this particular criticism of Husserl's phenomenology. Let me explain why.

An unfortunate thing about Husserl is that all of his brilliant students, despite their phenomenological background, were after World War II more or less sympathetic towards Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger, who has been regarded as his most distinguished disciple, quickly distanced himself from Husserl's phenomenology on publishing '*Being and Time*'. He advocated his own ontology and eventually broke away from phenomenology. (Their well-known dispute and parting are reviewed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article.)

Heidegger's ontology is, so to speak, a metaphysics of the 20th century in pursuit of a meaning or truth of being that could form a basis for human being. It sets about a quest for the grounds (being) that enable the self or consciousness. From the viewpoint of Heidegger's philosophy as such, Husserl's approach of reducing everything to pure consciousness, claiming that consciousness is a source of all insight, may not seem 'unfathomable' enough in terms of a philosophical quest for profoundness. The discontent with Husserl's phenomenology among his disciples probably resides in this context.

Are we able to capture a genuinely primordial source that substantiates our ego merely by reducing everything to pure consciousness and directly 'seeing' it? Could we not better say that the constitution of the world by my ego takes place in some deeper dimension (such as passivity, sub-consciousness, body, and being)? Could such deeper dimensions ever be grasped by the phenomenological ego? Such questions led those disciples of Husserl more or less to disapprove of and criticize his theory.

The claim that Husserl, in his later life, got deeply involved in the quest for the ground of being of 'ego', where he faced a critical limit, is the theory prevalent among the above-mentioned 'orthodox' scholars of phenomenology. Besides, this theory is widely accepted today in Japan as a legitimate understanding of phenomenology. As far as I can see, however, this general theory is derived from a fundamental misunderstanding (or lack of understanding) of the conception of Husserl's phenomenological reduction. Such a misunderstanding seems to me to be the main source of the harsh criticism found in contemporary thought.

There are two sides to the problem. First, this 'orthodox' interpretation of phenomenology does not appreciate that phenomenology is primarily a theory about the constitution of world certainty or 'belief'. This obscures Husserl's notion of phenomenological constitution as a *constitution of belief*, and leads to a belief that it 'vacillates' this way and that. Second, this misinterpretation by the orthodox school by and large takes the stance of Heidegger's ontology, with no adequate comprehension between the radical discrepancies between Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's ontology. As a result, they could not but interpret Husserl's teachings in a more or less distorted way.

Let us consider the first point in more detail.

On my view, the basic scheme of Husserl's phenomenology is quite succinct. Its three major theses are itemized as follows.

(1) In order to decipher the puzzle of cognition (present since the beginning of modern philosophy), there is no other way except adopting the stance of methodical solipsism and rejecting the subject-object schema. We call this the fundamental method of phenomenological reduction.

(2) This method reduces all of cognitions to beliefs in (held by) a subject. This reduction enables an analysis of the condition on which various cognitions (transcendence) can be constituted within immanence.

As this analysis is conducted by directly 'seeing' the immanence, it can be confirmed and updated by anyone as a creditable theory of cognition constitution, unlike such fictitious and unverifiable epistemologies as proposed by Kant and others.

The method of reducing all cognitions to world belief is also referred to as the method of reducing them to the *noematic* meaning (constituted immanence in *The Idea of Phenomenology*). This entails that phenomenology will be an essence theory about all kinds of formation or establishment of 'meaning'. Consequently, phenomenology will offer a basis for the general theory of 'sciences of essence', instead of sciences of facts.

Why did Husserl in his later years dedicate himself to the study of ego-constitution theory? It is because the presupposition of phenomenology (that any cognition is a constituted belief) necessarily leads to the two poles of 'world' and 'ego' as the objects of cognition. In this instance, it would be impossible in view of this methodological premise that his pursuit of 'ego' is to head in the direction of pursuing what substantiates the ego (ground of ego). Such a pursuit could allow a deviation of phenomenology to go into the unverifiable realm of metaphysics, which is a totally prohibited area for the phenomenology method, as will be discussed later.

Many 'legitimate' scholars of phenomenology point out the limit of Husserl's method, mainly because they see it from the viewpoint of ontology. Yet Husserl, if he had had the opportunity, would have said that those students failed to grasp the fundamental method of phenomenology and fatally deviated from its important principles.

Most obviously, their interpretation of phenomenology never helps one to understand why and how the method of phenomenological reduction is able to contribute to the unraveling of the enigma of cognition. In fact, there is no reference at all to this question among their arguments. Without understanding this, we shall never see why phenomenology carries great significance in modern epistemology, and, above all, why it would play a decisive role in our understanding of people and society.

From the standpoint of this misconception, phenomenology may be considered merely as metaphysics in quest of the ground of being, generally in vain. If phenomenology was a philosophy as understood by the so-called legitimate phenomenologists, there would be no reason for us contemporary people to particularly select it again and make it our key theme.

I should now like to show how Husserl's phenomenology as a theory of constitution of world belief succeeds in resolving the puzzle of cognition and discuss what kind of criticism has been derived from this failure to grasp the basic idea of Husserl.

## **2. The Condition for Belief Formation and the Resolution of the Puzzle of Cognition**

The core of the phenomenological-reduction method is that it takes the position of methodical solipsism in order to solve the question of cognition. The aim is almost the same as Descartes' methodical skepticism that he came up with solely to refute all other skepticisms.

The methodical skepticism of Descartes was, however, not quite thoroughgoing in that it was not itself entirely free from the subject-object schema.

Solipsism in general contends that everything is what is perceived in the mind, and necessarily goes to dogmatism in contending with George Berkeley that, with no world existing, only the mind exists. In contrast, methodical solipsism does not give up belief in the world, but merely 'suspends' it methodologically. This leads to the idea that the entire existence of the world should be a belief or certainty within oneself.

Let us think about this idea from the aspect of the question of cognition.

Husserl repeatedly says in *The Idea of Phenomenology* that while the impossibility of correspondence between subject and object certainly teaches us the impossibility of absolutely objective cognition, how should we understand the objective knowledge accepted as the achievements of sciences and mathematics, or how should we think about valid or legitimate knowledge?

This question, according to Husserl, is answerable only by assuming the attitude of methodical solipsism. This is to say, that something considered as objective cognition is a *world belief* constituted under given conditions.

All of our knowledge is a belief constituted within our subject. We are able directly to ‘see’ the structure of constituting the belief, that is, the way it is constituted, its intensity and its mode by means of phenomenological reflection. By so doing, it can be a general theory of world belief that can be confirmed and verified by anybody.

Seeing the method of phenomenological reduction as being a general doctrine of world belief is not currently generally accepted. There are reasons for this, other than the orthodox acceptance of phenomenology mentioned above. Let us examine Husserl’s own words.

‘Already in Descartes’ *Meditations* (and this is precisely the reason why he was the epoch-making awakener of transcendental problematic) the insight was already prepared, namely, that, as far as the knowing ego is concerned, everything we declare to really be and to be-thus-and-so -- and finally this means the whole universe -- is only as something believed-in within subjective beliefs, and is-thus-and-so only as something represented, thought, and so on, as having this or that sense.’ (*Encyclopedia Britannica* article, translated by Thomas Sheehan *et al*)

Descartes’ *Meditations*, says Husserl, already includes the idea that what we consider as material substance and its objective nature – and therefore the whole universe as an object – is in fact our *belief* and is constructed intra-subjectively.

‘To be sure, that objects in the broadest sense (real physical things, subjective processes, numbers, states of affairs, laws, theories, and the rest) exist for me is a statement that says nothing immediately about evidence; it says only that objects are accepted by me – are, in other words, there for me as cogitate intended in the positional mode: certain believing.’ (*Cartesian Meditations*, translated by Dorion Cairns)

Here, Husserl says that not only material substance but also number, laws and ideas are all what is *valid for me*, namely the state of my belief. The terms ‘certainty in the positional mode’ may be interpreted as the particular intensities of various beliefs of objects. The same holds true for the following quotations.

‘Each is in the broadest sense an act of believing (*ein Vermeinen*) and thus there belongs to each some mode of certainty---straightforward certainty, surmise, holding-to-be-probable, doubting, etc.’ (§20 *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, translated by David Car, referred to below as *The Crisis*)

‘The life-world, for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for use, the “ground” of all praxis whether theoretical or extra-theoretical. The world is pre-given to us, the waking, always somehow practically interested subjects, not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon. To live is always to live-in-certainty-of-the-world’ (§37 *ibid*)

How then is the question of subject-object or the puzzle of cognition to be solved when everything is considered as ‘world belief’ (*Weltgewissheit*)?

Insofar as we take the natural attitude (worldview) that here is a subject and there is an object beyond it, the puzzle of correspondence reaches an impasse. If, on the contrary, we consider an object (transcendence) as a belief-of-an-object (world certainty or world belief) formed in *immanent consciousness*, the question of correspondence can be answered, as this certainty or belief can be called an objective cognition, provided that this is proved to be an absolute certainty (evidence) for anybody.

Some people may raise here the objection that it is merely a common certainty shared by us humans. Exactly so: a universal certainty established between humans is exactly the essence of what we call an objective cognition.

Such a question may come from the approach of viewing the world as a ‘thing in itself’, or in the way of ‘noumenalism’ depending on the subject-object schema. This question will never disappear unless we abandon and replace the noumenalistic way of thinking.

We can say from the epistemological point of view that, insofar as we adhere to the subject-object schema and presume some absolute truth or object, we shall never be able to solve the question why there are so many different thoughts and opinions in the world.

According to Husserl, correspondence can be found between something considered as transcendence and immanence, but not between subject and object. Differently put, we do not know how perception reaches or corresponds to a transcendent object, but we can see 'how perception reaches the immanence' (Lecture III-3 of *The Idea of Phenomenology*), by means of purely immanent reflective perception, namely phenomenologically reduced perception.

Perception here represents cognition of an object. Cognition of an object does not coincide with the transcendent (the object itself). It coincides with the immanent, namely the immanence (*noema*) constituted in consciousness. On the contrary, something transcendent is established as our belief of an object.

Let me give a concrete example. We cannot prove that our genuine or *reell* perception (cognition) of roundness, redness and gloss objectively corresponds to an apple. This is a basic schema of epistemology indicating the principle of non-correspondence between subject and object. On the other hand, an intentional object ('this is an apple') or belief of an object is built on the basis of *reell* perception of redness and roundness. This is what Husserl intended in saying the object of perception corresponds to the immanent.

This correspondence holds only as a belief or certainty and therefore always remains dubitable, because the apple might be fake or a dream-image. If this belief becomes unquestionable for me first, and then equally so for anyone else (more exactly speaking, if it is such a belief or certainty for me and everyone else is absolutely certain about it too with thus inter-subjective certainty), my belief may be called objective or valid knowledge.

Newtonian dynamics had been accepted by all as genuine/valid, and the associated knowledge had been applied to numerous human facts and practices, but only so until a certain point of time. It is now replaced with the findings of relativity theory and quantum physics. It is not that Newtonian dynamics was an erroneous theory. It was, and remains, a theory *valid only for the terrestrial space*. When human activities have begun to extend to outer space, a new way of viewing the world has been required to establish a new system of communal knowledge.

We can thus say that what we have so far taken as objective knowledge is nothing like an absolute 'truth' that is given by ascertaining the correspondence between subject and object, but is some knowledge or cognition that provides conditions in which someone's belief about some matter or being can turn into everyone's belief. This is what Husserl clarified in terms of the matter of correspondence.

The example of Newtonian dynamics is the simplest one, but the structure is always the same for all kinds of human knowledge. Basically, this approach can and does solve the question of cognition.

As has been repeatedly discussed, however, Husserl does not give a complete explanation about his approach in *The Idea of Phenomenology*. The problem is as follows.

In order to ensure a correctly phenomenological analysis of the question of cognition, it is first of all necessary to persist in the practice of reducing all cognition to the belief-constitution of a subject and examining the conditions for such a constitution. This alone, however, can merely analyze the condition for intra-subjective belief or certainty about the cognition of an object.

A second step is required: that of clarifying the conditions in which the intra-subjective belief turns into an inter-subjective belief. This second step is *not* described in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, and therefore, it is not clear why Husserl's method of reduction based on the methodical solipsism is able completely to elucidate the question of cognition. Husserl thus becomes deeply involved in the problem of constitution of the other ego in and beyond *Cartesian Meditations* translated by Dorion Cairns)

Let us reserve this problem for later discussion. Here, I should like to refer to another important point of the phenomenological reduction method that has scarcely been brought into focus by other thinkers.

We are all able to know the condition for belief constitution by means of phenomenological reflection, and therefore to attain an inner structure common to us all by confirming the belief with each other. Although this is the

primarily basic premise of phenomenological reduction, most critics of Husserl seem to be quite ignorant about this fundamental aspect.

In *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenology Philosophy* (referred to below as *Ideas Pertaining*) Husserl names two major condition for validity (certainty or belief) of perceptual things, one being that the object is given as a perceptual representation (*vorstellung*), or, more exactly, that the object is perceived with the structure of actuality, adumbrations and horizons. The other condition is that the belief of the object thus constituted remains with a continuous harmony.

‘To their (perceptions’) essence belongs the ideal possibility of their changing into determinately ordered continuous multiplicities of perception which can always be continued, thus which are never completed. It is then inherent in the essential structure of those multiplicities that they bring about the unity of a harmoniously presentive consciousness and, more particularly, of the one perceptual physical thing appearing ever more perfectly, from ever new sides, with an ever greater wealth of determinations.’ (§42 *Ideas Pertaining*, translated by F. Kersten)

It is essential that we are all able check to see if Husserl is really right here, or not, by means of our own inner reflection. So let us try it for ourselves.

Suppose I am looking at an apple. When I assume the attitude of phenomenological reduction, I can just say I see something red, round and glossy. If the image of this something is given to me with vividness or actuality, adumbration and horizon, I shall consider it as an image of the actually perceived object. I cannot but believe this is an apple that really exists (i.e., have a belief in it).

I then touch the apple and find it to be a very accurately made replica. Now my belief that this is an apple will lose its ‘continuous harmony’ and I will now profess: ‘This is not a real apple.’ That is to say, insofar as a certain perceptual image of an object is given to provide an overall belief (*noema*) about what the object is, and insofar as this image remains in continuous harmony, I can persist in my belief that this is certainly an apple. This is the essential structure of constituting a belief or certainty about a perceivable object.

Whoever conducts such inner reflection can get the same structure and condition for reaching such belief, though the way of stating the matter may well vary from person to person. This is what we call the essential structure. If the structure were different between individuals, what could happen? The answer is simple. If someone’s structure of belief is different from that of someone else, they do not mutually share the same reality and order of the world. In this event, they live two different worlds.

Is it so bizarre? Not particularly. We all know by intuition that the structure for belief of objects may be considerably different between normal people and young children or those who suffer mental disturbances. This fact tells us that most of us share the same structure and condition for belief about physical things with one another. This mutual participation of the belief structure is exactly the ground for the widely accepted objectivity of natural-scientific knowledge.

This also gives us a clear account of the important question of why studies in the humanities hardly ensure objectivity of knowledge, as commonly occurs in the natural sciences. The reason is obvious from the viewpoint of phenomenology.

The disciplines of the humanities do not investigate the objects of natural sciences as a physics of the natural world and the order of scientific relations. Instead, they focus on the *relations* in humans and their societies, the meanings and values created in them, the order of languages and art, historical interpretations, etc. The structure for belief of objects in these fields varies immensely, depending on the views on human beings and values of the observers themselves and the culture they belong to. This makes it extremely difficult for them to establish any commonly shared cognition among themselves.

If human cognition was limited to dealing with physical things, there would be no room for the skeptical question of cognition. Knowledge about physical things has been empirical long before the emergence of the modern natural sciences. Incorrect or erroneous knowledge (which could not by its nature develop into any mutual agreement)

has been filtered out by the numerous processes of practical verification.

This does not hold for the knowledge about various meanings or essences of things or matters. Ever since philosophical ideas emerged in human consciousness, there has been no mutually agreed knowledge about 'being' and the world. Despite this, the pursuit of mutual agreement (common knowledge) has been incessantly carried out in the form of questioning if any truth (genuine knowledge) exists and in the studies on cognitive methods to attain truth, namely epistemology.

The method of phenomenology is the first approach capable of completely solving this puzzling question of cognition in a manner that conventional philosophy, whether Western or Oriental, has not thought of. However, one cannot grasp the significance of this solution of the question of cognition unless the phenomenological method is first accepted as an analysis of the condition for the formation of world belief.

There is a common and general criticism of phenomenology that it is essentially solipsism, as it reduces everything in the world to the dimension of consciousness. This kind of misconception is rooted in a fatal lack of understanding that the scheme of phenomenology is a process of moving on from the constitution of transcendental subject to inter-subjective constitution.

'The following insight was already included in *Cartesian Meditations* in its preliminary state. Whatever we insist as something <that exists in reality> or <that exists as such>, and therefore eventually the whole universe is for a cognizing ego something that exists insofar as it is believed in subjective belief.' (*Britannica Article* translated by Thomas Sheehan et al.)

Analysis of transcendental subjectivity (or clarification of the condition for formation of transcendental inter-subjectivity) is, Husserl says, a key task for acquiring genuine knowledge of the transcendent in the world (substantial things, matters and ideas), namely knowledge of being of all the things and the meaning of the being itself.

As has been discussed, if world belief merely ends up with the reduction of a transcendental subject, it would be only the analysis of the condition for 'my' world belief. My natural world belief is sustained only by its being parallel to that of others in the world. This is because the theory of world certainty or belief has to go forward from the condition for a belief or certainty in myself to the condition a belief in others. This must be obvious to anyone.

We should remember here that the process of this belief of others itself must be accomplished as a process of belief of my subject.

Perhaps reduction to the transcendental ego only *seems* to entail a *permanently* solipsistic science; whereas the consequential elaboration of this science, in accordance with its own sense, leads over to a phenomenology of transcendental inter-subjectivity and, by means of this, to a universal transcendental philosophy (§13 *Cartesian Meditations*)

Here we see the very marrow of Husserl's phenomenology as methodical solipsism.

What Husserl asserts here is not that phenomenology parts from solipsism at a certain point of time. Methodical solipsism must be thoroughly unfolded in line with its intrinsic significance. This alone enables phenomenology to analyze the condition for reaching communal and universal belief and to elucidate the essence of the question of cognition, so as to allow phenomenology to evolve into a universal theory of essence.

We could not find any coherence in Husserl's theory of inter-subjectivity, unless we take it as the methodical solipsism that assumes everything in the world as world belief so as to examine the possibility of universal cognition. Whoever fails to grasp this methodological principle could only discover in phenomenology an apparition lingering in pursuit of the ultimate source of being of metaphysical ego or other egos.

Part of the *Crisis* indicates how Husserl elaborated the problem of the analysis of cognition as a theory about the belief of other subjects 'within' the belief of a subject or ego. I offer below my own interpretation or deciphering of this, so that you can check with reference to Husserl's original text.

<Hyper-paraphrase: Let us see the question discussed above in more radical way. Looking back, we have in our tran-



scendental pursuit depicted the transcendental ego certainly as an ego pole constituting itself against the world as an object. This was too simple a way of description in a sense.

We were yet unable fully to deal with the problem of the constitution of communal certainty, in which the meaning of ego alters in such a manner that a solitary ego turns into the other ego, that is, myself being among 'us'.

[In connection with this, what was lacking was the phenomenon of the change of signification of [the form] 'I' ---just as I am saying 'I right now --- into 'other I's,' into 'all of us', we who are many 'I's', and among whom I am but one 'I'. What was lacking, then, was the problem of the constitution of inter-subjectivity---this 'all of us' --- from my point of view, indeed 'in' me' (§54 *The Crisis*)

<Hyper-paraphrase: Now I cannot but direct attention to this problem, as the following question arises: Who are 'we' as a set of subjects to form communal world certainty? How can our belief be constituted? This is the next question coming forth. I should say that, as far as we properly comprehend the fundamental principle of phenomenological method, it will take the following course.

First there must be a constitution of belief that the other person is a substantial human existence, one based on the perceptual recognition of the existence of this person. This belief then extends to a further belief that he or she exists not only as a physical entity but as a personal existence. This belief of personal existence includes a process of identifying him or her, for instance as the person I have been acquainted with, and there should take place in that person, as well as in me, a constitution of a shared belief.>

[Original English Version:] 'Here it is a case of inquiries proceeding from real human being back to their 'manners of givenness,' their manners of 'appearing,' first of all in perceptual appearance, i.e., in the mode of original self-givenness, of manners of harmonious verification and correction, of identification through recognition as the same human person: as the person previously known 'personally' to us, the same one of whom other speak, with whom they also have become acquainted etc' (ibid)

Let me particularize these gradations of belief:

(1) Subjective belief:

This is my inner belief in the being of an object ('it exists'), or in its mode of being ('it exists in this or that way'), which is applicable only to me.

In such case as you have experienced some supernatural phenomena in which nobody else seems to believe, witnessed a ghost, doppelganger, UFO or some such impossible event, or have a firm belief that is shared by nobody else, such belief could not be called inter-subjective belief.

(2) Communal belief:

This is a firm belief or conviction established necessarily between me and someone else: a secret shared by two alone; e.g., an illusion of eternal, absolute mutual love. Otherwise, it is a belief shared by multiple people such as community folklore, sailors' legends, justice in community; more typically, a strong faith in ethnic gods. The faiths found in world religions are, of course, also communal belief. World views and values often provide a widely accepted communal belief.

(3) Universal belief:

This is a belief or certainty about things or matters that people having normal reasoning ability naturally attain when given sufficient evidence or reason. Among such everyday 'self-evident' matters is the knowledge that 'people die', 'the sun rises', 'touching the fire can cause a burn', 'iron is harder than wood', and so on.

A communal belief (such as a world religion) is shared by a great many people and may potentially expand further. Yet it is never equipped with the inner condition for turning into a universal belief. The limitation lies in the nature of religious doctrine itself (as religions are originated in narratives).

In counter distinction, the cognition found in the natural sciences and in mathematics offers inner ground for building a universal belief. Although, of course, there is always a gray area along their marginal zones, the scientific achievements have established in their center zones a vast area of universal belief that any rational person must admit as justifiable. This cannot therefore be a communal cognition governed by custom, as suggested by David Hume. No matter how many people share a communal belief, it has no inner condition for turning itself into a universal belief.

The point is that, while cognition in one area always remains communal, cognition in another area can be a universal belief. The condition and grounds for attaining universal belief can be brought to light only by way of insight into the structure of evidence in the sphere of immanence through phenomenological reflection.

As Husserl emphasizes, this latter cannot be attained in the naturalistic sciences, because the subject-object schema is there *presupposed*. Contemporary thought, such as is found in post-modern and analytical linguistic philosophies, equally fails in this respect, as it adopts skepticism and logical relativism as its basic method.

### 3. Criticisms of Phenomenology and 'Prior Constitution'

I believe the foregoing description makes it clear that phenomenological epistemology, which is to ground valid or genuine cognition, has nothing to do with grounding so-called objective cognition or pure 'truth'.

Husserl, however, often mentions 'grounding exact knowledge', 'grounding universal sciences' and 'ultimate grounding of sciences': this kind of expression leaves room for the interpretation of phenomenology as a quest for the ultimate source of being.

There have to date been few theories that accept (as I do) phenomenology as a general analysis of the structure of certainty in terms of world belief. In many cases, it has rather been interpreted as a doctrine about the ultimate origin of consciousness, ego and being.

This is clear from reading texts written by Europe's leading scholars of phenomenology, including Fink, Landgrebe, Klaus Held, Antonio Aguirre, Gerd Brand, Michael Theunissen, Heinrich Rombach, and Paul Ricoeur. Most of these thinkers more or less share the argument that, while the intent of phenomenology is certainly grand in its pursuit of the source of world and ego, this pursuit has its limitation in that everything is reduced to the sphere of absolute consciousness.

That is, the common criticism of phenomenology is that its method faces serious limitation in its pursuit of absolute origin or ultimate source in the sphere of absolute consciousness or pure consciousness.

'At any rate, we still have the following question regarding Husserl's phenomenology. (...) There should be no such philosophy that, as a human philosophy, could completely free all of its concepts from the shadow and possess them on their own, and that is illuminated by the crystal-clear, universally penetrating light of truth.' (Fink: *The operational concept in Husserl's phenomenology* [translated from the Japanese translation]).

'Consequently, phenomenological reflection may be understood as an attempt to infinitely approximate to such limit situation. That is, the attempt of phenomenological reflection is promoted and sustained by the fixed idea that it is able to reach the limit situation. Such an attempt aims at obtaining an endless series of results by experiencing the primordial nearness and primordial brightness as a start of remoteness and as a start of concealment.' (Held: *The Puzzle of <Living Present>* [translated from the Japanese translation]).

'That the place of ultimate grounding is subjectivity and that all transcendence is dubitable only with immanence being indubitable will in turn be dubitable immediately when *cogito* itself is found to be exposed to exhaustive criticism which phenomenology applies to all kinds of phenomena from separate perspectives.' (Ricoeur, *Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* [translated from the Japanese translation]).

A greater problem arises from this situation. Criticism of Husserl such as the above has led commentators to the general assertion that phenomenology roots itself somewhere in the sphere of pure consciousness (in a quest for some absolute source and origin). This interpretation eventually led to the view of contemporary thinkers, who see phenomenology as a current or updated version of metaphysics.

'The most general form of our question is formulated as follows. I wonder if the requirements which are met by phenomenological necessity, the strictness and precision of Husserl's analysis and his analysis itself, that we have to meet first of all, may, nonetheless, hide some sort of metaphysical premises. They may secretly embrace some dogmatic or speculative coalescence.' (Derrida: *Voice and Phenomena* [translated from the Japanese translation]).

'Under necessity of discovering something of which apodictic truth can be spoken, Russell uncovered his logical form and Husserl his 'essence', that is, a purely formal aspect which remains even after the non-formal aspects of the world are bracketed. The efforts for austerity, pureness and strictness started again with this discovery of privileged representations. The efforts have lasted for almost 40 years since then.' (Rorty: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [translated from the Japanese translation]).

'Accordingly, phenomenology is much more than the restoration of old Western rational goal, but is nothing other than an extremely clear and consistent formal proof of a deep gap developed in modern <episteme> around the turn between the 17th and 17th centuries. (...) This is why phenomenology was always induced to various questions, or the very question of ontology, though it had been initiated by reduction to *cogito*. To our eyes, the phenomenological projection seems to be under disassembly into two, one the description of experiences which are empirical against its intention and the other, ontology of unthought things which keep the superiority of *cogito* outside the circuit.' (Foucault: *The order of things* [translated from the Japanese translation]).

Most critics imply that Husserl sought some absolute source and origin of being human and attempted to locate this in the area of pure consciousness, totally in vain. Our consciousness is already 'constituted' by a great many things. The essence of consciousness or ego is certainly a key theme in the pursuit of comprehending human nature, but we are unable to uncover it in the area of pure consciousness. Instead, should we not strive to find what sustains and enables such consciousness or ego? Or, is such pursuit of ultimate origin perhaps impossible?

In any event, we cannot have access to a deep dimension of human beings by directly 'seeing' the consciousness, that is, by means of a solipsistic approach. I call this central issue of their arguments a criticism based on prior-constitution theory, or a prior-constitution criticism. The philosopher who first introduced this prior-constitution criticism of Husserl's phenomenology is Martin Heidegger.

'By showing how all sight is grounded primarily in understanding (the circumspection of concern is understanding as common sense (*Verständigkeit*), we have deprived pure intuition [*Anschauung*] of its priority, which corresponds noetically to the priority of the present-at-hand in traditional ontology. 'Intuition' and 'thinking' are both derivatives of understanding, and already rather remote ones. Even the phenomenology 'intuition' of essences [*Wesensschau*] is grounded in existential understanding' (§31 *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson)

Here Heidegger reviews and analyzes the world surrounding people (the environmental world) not from a general objective viewpoint, but from his original standpoint of existentialism.

It is here to be noted that Heidegger's approach is an existentialistic application of the phenomenological reduction method of reducing the natural attitude to a consciousness-related view. While Husserl reduces a substantial object to a phenomenon of consciousness, the substantial objects surrounding us (people) are taken by Heidegger as a correlate with our 'concern' (interest, desire and concern in our daily life), something central to human existence.

According to Heidegger, all those things around us reveal their being and meaning in dependence on our concern. A desk in front of my eyes, for example, from the objective point of view is a presence-at-hand (*Vorhandensein*) of such and such a size, of this or that material and in this or that design. On the other hand, from the ontological view, it is a readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandensein*) that can be 'a bit too low, unstable, or just fit as a stepstool' when I

want to change the light bulb on the ceiling. When a robber breaks into this room, it could be something too heavy for a weapon, but usable for blocking the door. Ontologically speaking, a thing becomes a presence-at-hand that reveals its own meaning of existence depending on my care and concern. Grasping the meaning of the object from the viewpoint of concern is called *existential understanding*.

Heidegger contends that the phenomenological intuition of essence gained by directly ‘seeing’ consciousness is in fact not primordial, as it is based on the world understanding developed in connection with the existential concern of humans. The phenomenological intuition or insight is thus deprived of its predominance over the existential approach. Existential concern is exactly that which enables objectifying the world by means of consciousness.

This argument may ring quite convincingly. Interestingly enough, philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty came up with the idea that all objects reveal their being and meaning(s) in correlation with will-to-power, concern and body. I myself call this idea ‘desire-correlativity’. In view of this, Husserl’s approach could be said to remain only in the stage of consciousness-correlativity. As far as this point is concerned, Nietzsche and Heidegger might well have advanced Husserl’s principle a step forward.

This, however, is only half true. The view of desire-correlativity certainly goes one step beyond Husserl’s consciousness-correlativity as a philosophical principle. Despite that, the principle of desire-correlativity can never be predominant over consciousness-correlativity. The point is that Heidegger’s argument here takes the form of typical prior-constitution criticism. And it is invalid for criticism of phenomenology.

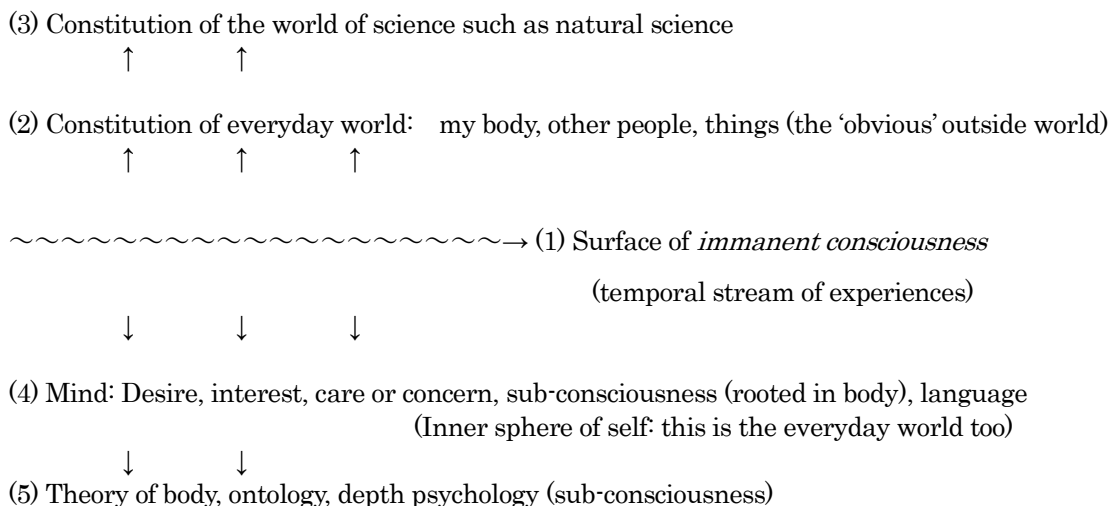
Why is this so? There are two reasons. First, Husserl’s method of phenomenological reduction makes it a core theme to resolve the traditional question of cognition. As far as this aim is concerned, Husserl’s approach of reducing everything to belief of objects is the most fundamental one. The scheme of desire-correlativity suggested by Nietzsche and Heidegger is unable to solve the problem of cognition.

Another more important reason is that, while the method of essential insight can be derived from the principle of phenomenological reduction, the insight of desire-correlativity is made possible only by using essential insight as a fundamental method.

The elaborate existential analysis by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty has been enabled only by relying upon Husserl’s method of essential insight, as seen in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, which analyzes the essence of World-hood of world, In-being (existence) and death, as well as Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of the essence of body, human or world, which is not just a material entity but an existential being for individual persons.

I offer below a diagrammatic view of the general constitution of world cognition from the phenomenological point of view, so as to demonstrate the invalidity of this prior-constitution criticism (which claims that Husserl’s approach is merely a consciousness-centered solipsism and is unable to analyze some deeper dimension that enables the consciousness).

Diagram showing the general constitution of world cognition



(1) Sphere of *immanent consciousness*: Surface of *immanent consciousness* with temporal stream of mental process. Any single person keeps his/her own current self in this stream of mental process. Husserl's terms are 'transcendental subject', 'pure consciousness', 'pure ego' etc. with subtle difference in nuance.

(2) Our everyday world constituted with the consciousness experience in (1). Obvious world with firm beliefs about various things, human relations and the relationship of meaning between those things and people. No one doubts the being-ness of apples, desks, houses, buildings and nature in front of one's eyes.

(3) The scientific world verbally describing the overall order of causal relations in the natural world, established by scientific observations of daily phenomena. Typical of this are the natural sciences. Communal knowledge (universal belief) is developed over a vast area by incessantly making hypotheses, evidencing and verifying. Yet they are 'transcendence' in principle. They never reach any ultimately genuine cognition in principle. They are always general cor-relatives with human desires and interests, or collective, inter-subjective images of people's belief about the world.

(4) Mental world with desire, interest, concern, and the sub-consciousness (body-ness). Just as a belief in a house, a natural entity, a town, people or the like, is created from a bundle of various perceptions, we constitute a being of our mind as a substantial image from our various living experiences. We cannot see our mind, but still posit it as an indubitable substance and are certain about this positing. The contents in it are desire, interest, concern, characters, sub-consciousness, language ability, etc.

(5) The sciences that focus on the body as an obvious physical existence are physiology and medical science. Objective sciences that focus on the mind as an obvious existence are depth psychology, a theory about body, ontology and logics, if it refers to language ability.

This diagram will, in my belief, make clearer the reason why Husserl insisted on locating the foundation of all sciences within the domain of phenomenological essence studies in *immanent consciousness*.

First, the entire world obvious to us – namely, the realities of our daily world – are constantly being constituted on the surface of (1) *immanent consciousness* (a stream of mental process). The structure of indubitability is dominant here, so that no one does and can doubt the being and reality of this world. Second, we are also scientifically constituting, again constantly, the overall image of the world from innumerable data accumulated in this daily world. This scientific world is in nature transcendent too, and is always subject to some dubitability (potential alteration).

As I have repeatedly said, a broad-range universal belief can be established in the area of the natural sciences (3), but in the humanities (such as depth psychology and ontology), it is impossible to build a widely accepted universal belief as it is in the natural sciences. This is because studies within the humanities deal with the ambiguously-varying order of meanings and relations, instead of the order of unequivocally describable sensory materials, as we find in the natural sciences.

In any case, I should like to particularly note what those criticisms based on prior-constitution attempt to suggest by contending that phenomenology has thrown away the deeper dimension (prior-constituted part) enabling consciousness by reducing everything to consciousness.

Husserl adopts the method of reducing everything to the level of *immanent consciousness* because we must be aware that our everyday life of natural sort constituted in this sphere and the scientific world as its methodical modes both essentially belong to transcendence (belief constituted), that is, to the world of '*doxa*' (knowledge by conjecture).

Modern humanities (the domain of (5)) launched themselves with a conviction that the use of a natural-scientific approach could enable them to create 'universal cognition', in view of the successfully spreading universal cognition we find in the domain of the natural sciences. This was a grave misconception. They have failed to understand that there are critical differences in the essence or nature of the objects of cognition between the domain of nature (3) and the domain of mind (5). The result is an eruption of numerous contending theories. This is what Husserl emphatically pointed out in *The Crisis*.

The objects cognized by the natural sciences are physical things, that is, things essentially related with human physicality. Instead, the humanities study mind, society, cultural affairs and etc., abstractions that are all involved with individual views on people and the world. Whereas the former field has a potential for the development of an intensive communal cognition, there can be little unequivocal communal cognition in the latter.

According to the major arguments of many kinds of 'prior-constitution' criticisms, there is something constituting 'pure consciousnesses' prior to itself. The pursuit of this prior-constituted 'something' should be materially important, but phenomenology which clings to consciousness-centrism could not achieve this task.

Those criticisms, however, fail to understand Husserl's stated principle to *exclude* the subject-object schema, wherein he insists, insofar as any social or cultural science starts from transcendence, there must arise contending theories based on doxastic deduction, with no potential for universal cognition.

As noted, there are two major streams of criticism of phenomenology: one from contemporary thought saying that the consciousness-centrism of phenomenology is a sort of metaphysics in quest of an absolute source or origin of *Being*. The other is the phenomenologists' own criticism that phenomenology is unable to reach a deeper dimension of *Being* as mentioned above. Both of those criticisms are wrong, but not just wrong. The method of phenomenology itself should be a radical criticism against such contemporary skepticism/relativism and metaphysical dogmatism.

Many Japanese scholars of phenomenology adopt the views of the allegedly orthodox school of phenomenology, which accepts and criticizes Husserl in accordance with Heidegger's interpretation. Heidegger argues against Husserl from the viewpoint of *Being* as a primordial ground to enable the *Being* of overall entities. Let me give an example.

'Against the relative existence of transcendent objects, the consciousness is considered to define itself as such an absolute existence with which 'thinking about it as impossible is a paradox' (...) This is a source of misunderstanding after all.

In connection with this, the description about absoluteness of consciousness prior to reduction is in itself contradictory to the authentic nature of reduction. Naturally, to discuss the essence of consciousness prior to reduction is (...) based on the self-reflectivity of the phenomenological method. The problem is not in the preliminary investigation into the nature of consciousness to attain the possibility of reduction but in Husserl's attempt to preemptively define the absoluteness of consciousness so as to thematize consciousness in terms of its absoluteness.' (Nitta, Yoshihiro: *What is phenomenology?* Written and published in Japanese in 1992. The quoted passage was translated into English by K. Isobe)

Briefly speaking about Nitta's acceptance of phenomenology, in his later years Husserl tried exhaustively to explore the ultimate source of consciousness, ego and Being, to face the methodological limit after all. Here too we see a heritage of the basic view of 'orthodox' phenomenologists who mostly rely on Heidegger's understanding and criticism of phenomenology.

Nitta sees the problem in that Husserl defined consciousness as an absolute existence where 'thinking about it as impossible is a paradox' and that 'he also attempted to preemptively define the absoluteness of consciousness' so as to thematize consciousness in terms of its absoluteness. In short, Nitta claims that the problem with the phenomenological method is that it groundlessly presupposes the absoluteness of consciousness.

It can readily be seen that this objection by Nitta tacitly uses as a support the argument made by Landgrebe and Held that the absoluteness or primordial nature of consciousness must be examined, but consciousness itself is unable to do so, because consciousness can never be an absolute origin, but is always constituted by something else prior to its existence.

What Husserl means by saying that in consciousness, 'thinking about it as impossible is a paradox' is rather simple: it refers to the fundamental principle that what is reflected upon in the sphere of consciousness is intrinsically indubitable as an object of immanence. When I feel that this cup of coffee tastes good, there is no point of doubting that this experience may not exist. The absolute indubitability of immanence is no such a hypothetic assumption as preemptive definition, but can be confirmed by anybody by means of the reflective method. The phenomenological method started with this primal cognition that anyone is able to verify. If you say this is questionable, you may return to skepticism, which doubts everything and denies the standpoint of phenomenology altogether.

In summary, they presuppose that there must be something more primordial 'prior' to consciousness, against

the idea that consciousness is an absolute origin. They therefore blame Husserl for his alleged premise of absoluteness of consciousness. I cannot help but say they are mistaken about both the basic method of phenomenology and the notion of absoluteness of consciousness itself.

Another counter-argument given below also contains a typical misconception about the method of phenomenology.

I must admit that ego (I) exists. There is no necessary reason for this, though. It is so just as a fact. (...) This 'fact' is the most primordial fact sustaining all the constitutions, which Husserl called proto-fact. That I exist is above all a proto-fact. However, that there pre-exists the time/world that makes me exist is also the most primordial proto-fact (Tani, Toru: *This is Phenomenology*, written and published in Japanese. The quoted passage was translated into English by K. Isobe)

The 'pre-existence' referred to by Tani means some existence that prior-constitutes the ego as a proto-fact. Let me paraphrase what he contends. That we all have our own ego (consciousness) is an absolutely unquestionable fact. Despite this, the fact that we have our ego should also indicate another absolutely unquestionable fact: that this ego and the time and the world sustaining (or enabling) it all exist with absolute certainty.

Tani may imply that, though objects can certainly be reduced to a subject (ego), the subject is made possible only by the objects (time/world), as these are the most primordial proto-fact. That is to say, the subject is prior-constituted by the time and the world. In fact, what Tani means by 'proto-fact' is totally different from what Husserl intends. Here is found a typical 'mata-basis' (a confusion due to the failure to make a clear distinction between the objective and the phenomenological attitude), one that Husserl repeatedly warned against.

What Husserl actually means by proto-fact is the proto-fact of the phenomena of consciousness. In phenomenology, we have to methodically stay in this field of consciousness and should not go beyond it. This is the principle of epoché. Another reason why Husserl refers to proto-fact is that, regarding what we 'see' in the phenomena of consciousness, we can never know its source or ultimate cause. This sphere should therefore be the primal or 'proto' sphere for all cognitions where only inference could serve to inquire as to its cause.

The 'proto-fact' referred to by Tani that enables ego/consciousness as a pre-existence is nothing but transcendence (from the phenomenological standpoint). If you set consciousness against world to purport that the world is a pre-existence prior-constituting consciousness, you would revert to the subject-object schema. This would be by no means acceptable as an explication of phenomenology.

The immediately succeeding description about Heidegger and Levinas made by Tani is quite curious too. Heidegger, for instance, considered *Being* as *es gibt* = it gives (as a gift). *Being* is not what a subject constitutes, but 'gives' the subject itself. It is therefore said that the authentic or genuine attitude to be assumed by humans is gratitude and thinking about this fact.

On the contrary, Levinas counters that human existence is nothing like a gift from *Being*, but is rather the subject's escape from the uncomfortable state named *il y a*. For him, *Being* is neither gift nor deprivation, but exists just by chance. Fink, on the other hand, regarded *Being* both as gift and deprivation. Here is no necessity either. 'Proto-fact is interpreted in such diverse ways' (Tani, *ibid*).

The thinkers named here all contemplate on the question: what is *Being*. Husserl would say their contemplations are all their personal efforts, and have little to do with something universal. I do not think it nonsense to ponder such things as *Being* and existence (metaphysics). The diversity of the way people grasp the meaning of human life and existence is a significant part of the contemporary humanities or studies on the human condition in general.

It is obvious that such criticism of the phenomenological method in the angle of metaphysical speculation is totally pointless. Even if such a Metaphysics of Being is not necessarily entirely meaningless, it should lead to varying interpretations of *Being*, which will result in infinite unproductively pedantic disputes, and a situation in which people are not aware of the reason that such diversity arises.

#### 4. Limit Line of Indubitability

Now let me handle another 'prior-constitution' criticism that I reserved for this addendum.

In Lecture V, Husserl discusses the structure of 'constitution' of temporal objects such as sound/melody, where the elements of 'past' (= memory), besides those of 'now' are incorporated to constitute an experience of listening to a melody. To put it strictly, this temporal structure of perception is found not only in the simple case of melody, but in any kind of cognitive experience. The experience of looking at a house, for instance, is associated with temporal factors too. This finding may however encompass a difficult problem in view of Husserl's theory of constitution.

We have so far understood that an intentional object of 'a house of this and that character' is constituted as an integration or synthesis of genuine or *reell cogitationes* (perceptions) of white wall, red roof and glass windows. Here, the white wall and red roof are *reell* elements and the house is an object constituted. Examining this more carefully, however, the white wall considered to be a *reell* element is found to have the structure of temporal constitution. Logically, then, we must say that any *reell* element is something 'already constituted'. The problem of prior-constitution arises here again. This temporal analysis reveals to us that even Husserl's fundamental conception of 'unquestionably indubitable *reell* element', which is an absolute givenness, has a factor of prior constitution.

Derrida used this argument in his *Voice and Phenomenon* to criticize Husserl's attempt to ground exact cognition. This acute criticism catapulted him into the status of one of the leading post-modern philosophers. The following passage is indicative of the point of his argument:

'Thus, against Husserl's explicit intention, *Vorstellung* (representation) itself is made dependent on the possibility of repetition, and *Gegenwartigung* which is the simplest *Vorstellung* is made dependent on *Vergegenwartigung*. The <presence-of-the-present> is made derived from repetition, not vice versa' (Derrida: *Voice and Phenomenon*)

Here (typically) we see the method of 'deconstruction' that points out a logical contradiction of the argument by making use of the very logic of the opponent.

'Deconstruction' seems almost equal to the traditional sophistry called the theory of reduction to absurdity.

Derrida's argument can be specified as follows. When proceeding with the analysis according to Husserl's idea, the most primordial element for Husserl, namely the present simplest images of perception (vivid presence) is admittedly dependent on incessant taking-in the memory of past (*Vergegenwartigung*), i.e., possibility of repetition. The most primordial 'present' depends on the motion of '*differance*' which is here a repetitive inclusion of the past.

The 'primordial' element thus disappears when rigorously examining perception. There is no way of establishing the absolutely indubitable primal cognition. The primordial depends on '*differance*'. Or, 'difference' prior-constitutes the primordial. This is Derrida's prior-constitution criticism of phenomenological primordial in terms of its temporal factor.

This seems to be a logically consistent, materially convincing criticism. Notwithstanding, I must say this is a totally invalid criticism just as the prior-constitution theories regarding 'ego' or 'Being'. We should particularly note this criticism by Derrida because it is an objection to 'indubitability' in phenomenology from the viewpoint of skepticism and relativism.

We are never able to reach the ultimately fundamental unit (ground) for certainty of cognition when examined carefully, this is the governing argument made by all kinds of skepticism and relativism across the world. It has always proved effective when critically applied to realism. (See for instance, Hume's criticism of Spinoza and Leibnitz, criticism of Hinayanist's realism philosophy made by the philosophy of 'void' based on Mahayana Buddhism.) It is because realism always presupposes the subject-object schema insisting that the subject corresponds to the object.



It is not that skepticism denies the subject-object schema itself. Skepticism rather stands on the subject-object schema in its nature, and contends that logically there is no proof of correspondence between subject and object. Skepticism does not call for abolishing the schema, but just denies any correspondence between the two items.

Philosophically, such impossibility of correspondence is inarguable in principle. Any realism that dogmatically takes this correspondence for granted is thus unable to refute skepticism. If, however, skepticism claims that, so, there exists no world, it would be another dogmatism (as has been elaborated by Kant in his teaching of antinomy. A proposition that the world exists and another that the world does not exist form a philosophical 'antinomy' so that one can never shoot the other down decisively.)

Husserl's grounding of the universal cognition is not based on realism. It dismisses the subject-object schema shared by both skepticism and realism, and examines in its place the intensity of belief of object in our immanent experience. The contemporary criticism of phenomenology led by Derrida merely picks up seeming contradictions associated with particular terms such as 'primordial element' without seeing the crux of Husserl's method.

Let me say again that what phenomenology attempted to locate and determine is a limit line of indubitability, instead of any absolute primordial element, though Husserl's wording is more or less responsible for such misunderstanding.

Note that G.W.F. Hegel already offered an essential insight that any radically fundamental element can never be uncovered within consciousness (see *Phenomenology of Spirit*).

Human consciousness is at any point of time found as a result of constitution already accomplished in the dialectic evolution. Since it is nothing like a computer program, it cannot be reduced to elemental units of 0 and 1. This may be instinctively accepted by anybody. Any absolutely elemental unit such as 0 and 1 cannot be found in consciousness. What Wittgenstein attempted to do in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was exactly to discover this elemental unit, but not surprisingly he failed to do so.

The limit line of indubitability in consciousness is contrary to such an absolutely fundamental element. Anyone is able to make sure of its existence by means of phenomenological reflection. Let me take the following example.

There is a psychological experiment regarding perception as follows. Mark a black dot on a white board and make it smaller and smaller. Check to see how far you can reduce its size until you no longer recognize the dot. At some point, then, you will be uncertain if you are actually looking at the black dot, or if it is a mere flickering trouble with your eyes. This is generally considered as indicating uncertainty of perception.

This understanding is however a sort of reduction to absurdity.

That we can see there is some domain of vagueness could never provide the ground for skepticism claiming *everything* is dubitable: quite the opposite. If you reflect on this perceptual experience in the phenomenological way, the essential structure to be observed is as follows.

- (1) The domain where a belief is given that the black dot is so far certainly recognizable.
- (2) The domain of vagueness where you are not certain if it is a black dot or a mere eye trouble.
- (3) The domain where a belief is given that you can see no dot at all.

This is an essential boundary demarcation (structure) in terms of clarity of all kinds of perception. (Wittgenstein 'discovered' this domain of vagueness in his later work *Philosophical Investigations*.)

Divide a wall surface into two parts and paint one part white and the other black. The boundary between the two parts is apparent to actual vision. Yet it is known that no one is able to accurately define the boundary when trying to do so. The fact that the domain (2) always exists in perception is the ground for analog nature of perceptual experience.

Additionally mark that not only the division into domains (1), (2) and (3), but also the impossibility of absolutely defining the boundary lines belong to the essential structure of human perception. This fact makes fatally invalid the theory (elementary proposition) proposed by Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* where he suggested the absolute correspondence between facts and language. This also signifies that the discipline of mathematics

is to completely exclude the domain of vagueness. This is why it is an important task of the natural sciences to exclude the domain of vagueness as much as possible by means of a mathematical description.

The structure of the domain of vagueness efficiently teaches us the ground for analog nature of perception. Besides, this structure of perception with three distinct domains is in itself the fundamental ground for 'indubitability' of perception. Otherwise put, the fact that, in human perceptual experience, the three domains arise not arbitrarily but always with the same structure is the evidence that a certain belief always stays in different perceptual experiences. Furthermore, this essential structure of perception is a ground for the possibility that we try to make sure of the existence and modes of different objects through constantly doubting and confirming them.

This is made clear on actually reflecting upon our experience.

You try to read some small print in dim light, but are unable to make it out. You are not sure if the letters spell 'credit' or 'crest' and are unable to understand the text until you learn the answer. You could close your eyes for a while, and then try to make the letters out again. Adjust to dimness, you find the letters to spell 'credit'. It means you have made a transition from domain (2) to (3). Only then, an unquestionable belief comes (is given) to you that the letters spell 'credit' and that the text means such and such.

When you cannot make out the letters despite all your efforts, you suspend your 'belief'. It is, however, not that you have no way of judging the reality. You have a distinct judgment that the letters are not eligible. We thus learn that while perception has a domain of uncertainty, this does not provide any solid ground for the skeptic argument that everything is uncertain.

It is an obvious philosophical finding that there is no absolute elemental unit of evidence in the sphere of immanence. Philosophy, whether Oriental or Occidental, has provided numerous proofs of this, since Derrida allegedly argued for it. Hegel's argument is notably adequate, as mentioned above. However, this of course never justifies the idea that we do not have a ground for belief to make a distinction in our everyday life between what is real and what is not.

The counter-argument based on skepticism/relativism is effective only for dogmatic realism. Such counter opinion is, however, utterly incapable of solving the question of cognition. This is because the problem here is essentially not any absolute elemental unit but the ground for indubitability, or, in other words, not the ground for 'being' but the ground for 'belief'.

Let me think in the reverse angle. We are creating 'beliefs' with different intensities about all kinds of objects in the world. The world is, so to speak, a 'bundle' of beliefs of objects. What would happen if such beliefs of objects were just arbitrary in essence, with no definite condition and structures, as is purported by skeptics?

The result is patent: we could then make no clear distinction between reality and illusion (phantom or hallucination), between the realistic and the non-realistic, between the existent and the non-existent, between present, past and future, and between the conceptual, the sensory, the empirical, and the abstract.

In such a scenario, people would live in their individual and private world orders, and be unable to share the 'one' world with one other (as may be seen in a group of insane people). There could be no such thing as a communal world belief, with neither natural laws nor logical rules being possible.

If there is no such a thing as the limit of indubitability in *immanent consciousness* and commonness of its order and structure, any belief in an objective world could not be established. This means that even skepticism could not survive because it claims the impossibility of correspondence between the subject and the object while standing on the premise of this schema. On this view, there would necessarily be as many distinct world beliefs as there are heads among all the people and creatures that live in the world.

It is utterly unquestionable that the world exists, that the world is given as a whole universe in continuous experiences which incessantly flow into overall union. It should be however a totally different thing to understand this indubitability sustaining life and positivistic sciences and the ground for legitimacy of such indubitability ' (See Postscript written by Husserl in 1931 for the first English translation of *Ideas Pertaining*)

Husserl contends that no cognition logically corresponds to transcendence (=object) . Notwithstanding, none of us doubt the reality of the world. What kind of reason and ground is there? If we want to explore them, we need directly to inquire into consciousness. Consciousness is the very place where various beliefs of objects, and their dubitability and indubitability come and go. The problem is not how to verify the correspondence between subject and object, but to see how people's world beliefs could become communal and then universal, how to grasp this necessary structure of this world belief.

The core of phenomenology is in the analysis of the ground for indubitability of the world. I am convinced that the phenomenological method has fully accomplished this analysis. When we understand phenomenology to be the analysis of the condition and structure of belief formation, it is readily seen that all the various criticisms of phenomenology are derived from a misconception of its methodical essence. In fact, such misconceptions are more properly revealing of the intrinsic limitations of such contemporary criticism as philosophical thought.

## 5. The scope of the science of essence

The criticism of the subject-object schema in modern epistemology has been a central theme of modern philosophy. The major reason for this is that the dogmatic world of Marxism occasioned grave ideological conflicts in the 20th century. Not only that, it fueled the violent disputes of political fundamentalism, resulting in the dire situation of totalitarianism and Stalinism.

Analytic philosophy beginning with Wittgenstein and post-modern thought inspired by post-structuralism both came into existence as a criticism of those dogmatically-alleged legitimate world views. The theoretical principle of contemporary thought is logical relativism. It is necessarily natural that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein were the origins of such twentieth-century relativistic thinking.

Rorty declared that the 'linguistic turn' in contemporary linguistics would be a decisive paradigm change overcoming the epistemological deadlock of modern philosophy. This was a fatal miscalculation, because the disputes between dogmatism and skepticism/relativism in linguistic cognition have continued to return exactly in the same pattern as in modern philosophy.

Wittgenstein's two texts, his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, are the very theatre of war between sheer dogmatism and sheer relativism, in a war as fought by a single philosopher. Whereas the problems (the question of cognition) were all raised here, contemporary linguistic philosophy has had no way to address these problems. In my view, only the phenomenological approach to the linguistic problems could cope with the task, as suggested in my work *Toward the Linguistic Thoughts*.

Phenomenology is another essential criticism of the modern subject-object schema. We have already shown above how it can and did settle the problem of cognition. This phenomenological analysis tells us why the criticism of objectivism based on contemporary relativistic thoughts is unable to provide any fundamental solution of the problem. Not only that, it also teaches us that contemporary philosophic thinking is generally of a skeptic/relativistic nature and how such skepticism/relativism should be one of the prevalent trends to be overcome for the sake of a meaningful progress of philosophy and thoughts.

We appreciate how the method of reduction to absurdity or proof by contradiction was adopted by many ancient philosophers and thinkers, including Sophists in Greece, Buddhist thinkers of the Middle Way school in India, and Gongsunlongzi from the School of Names, one of many schools of great thinkers around the fifth century BC in China.

The most well-known example of logical relativism with reduction to absurdity is Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise. Achilles who started after the tortoise cannot overtake the tortoise despite his fast running. This is 'proved' by the logic that, to overtake the tortoise, Achilles must pass the infinite number of points in a finite period of time, but this is impossible. While this is of course an unreasonable logic in terms of reality, it is not so easy to refute it and logically to 'prove' that Achilles can and will outpass the tortoise.

Some skeptics skilled in contestation organized such rhetoric into a system of criticism. A Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus classified the paradoxical logic of criticism into five types and discussed these in detail. In the twelfth century, Moksakara Gupta listed 16 types of negative reasoning in his work *Tarkabhāṣa* (<http://openlibrary.org/works/OL10728237W/>). Despite these examples, skepticism and relativism are not just a philosophical theory rooted in ancient philosophy.

History distinctly shows us that the method of reduction to absurdity (logical relativism) largely developed to become a dominant weapon in the refutation of dissident opinion, for instance in the course of Indian Buddhism changing from Theravada to Mahayana thought, or in the course of European Christian theology unifying the orthodox doctrines.

In Western philosophy, Greek sophists emerged as the philosophers who deliberately methodized logical relativism as an instrument of criticism. Zeno's argument is typical (though he himself is not a sophist), and a number of sophistic dialogues are depicted in Plato's works.

Any philosophical thought starts from presenting an overall world view. It can always be divided into more than one type, because it intrinsically provides a synthetic inference about the entire world.

Skepticism itself may be exhibited as a worldview ('the world is nothing at all'). Normally, however, skepticism/relativism grows powerful when some different world views clash with each other, whether in the West or in the East. There have been disputes about beliefs or views with respect to the world and people since ancient times. The deep chasms between different world views have hardly been narrowed at any time of history. Thus we have Taoism versus Confucianism, Theravada versus Mahayana, The Middle Way versus Maatrataa, Stoic versus the Epicureans, Athanasian versus Arian: which is right or just?

These philosophical disputes are in many cases associated with the typological opposition between world perspectives, for instance, realism versus idealism, monism versus pluralism, absolutism versus relativism, the existentialistic attitude versus the society-oriented attitude. These clashes are derived from a difference in world views based on general inferences about the world. They therefore form a philosophical antinomy resulting in reconcilable metaphysical disputes, as has been pointed out by Kant. The thinkers then tend to make use of either dogmatism or relativism (reduction to absurdity) as a firm ground for supporting their claims.

Logical relativism (reduction to absurdity) develops in this situation because this logic of reduction to absurdity is most effective in logically arguing for the validity of their opinions.

The problem of such clashes of beliefs was radically analyzed for the first time in European modern philosophy by Immanuel Kant. Kant was successful in his attempt simply because modern philosophy instinctually discovered the method of universalization in mathematics and in the natural sciences. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was able to prove the impossibility of traditional metaphysics by elaborating the cognitive method of modern science into a comprehensive philosophical thought.

Modern natural sciences were established as a way appropriately to measure nature after the exemplary model of mathematics. There is no other work than Husserl's *Crisis* to offer such a point-blank understanding of the essence of the natural sciences. The natural sciences have pursued a way of describing the overall order of nature that is free from any vagueness in cognition and therefore is acceptable to everybody, and established it as a systematic (scientific) method. What is most important here, according to Husserl, is the method of quantifying the sensory characteristics of nature.

The method built by the modern natural sciences is to coordinate and describe nature in the most efficient order in terms of usability and manageability for humans in general. It is not that the method is capable of cognizing nature as it is in itself. The natural scientists, however, idealized it to be exactly this. The method defined by natural scientists as such has been applied to modern humanities with little adjustment. Positivist epistemology made a great mistake in doing so. This is roughly what Husserl claims.

Despite all this, the human race has an important and decisive tool in acquiring 'universal knowledge' by means of the modern scientific approach. While it acts *as if* the subject infinitely approximates to the object, what science has actually accomplished is constantly to update its findings by means of numerous repetitions of hypothesizing

and verification, to the point where people, however different the cultures to which they belong, reach an agreement and their intra-subjective cognitions are universalized. Modern science has interpreted its own method as a process to make the subject/cognition correspond to the object (something it in fact presupposes), but, what is actually present here is a sure method of translating intra-subjective beliefs into inter-subjective ones.

The above notwithstanding, it is important that philosophical epistemology somehow finds a way to break out of the dead end of infinitely lasting clashes between dogmatism and relativism in view of the systematic universalization of cognition as realized in the natural sciences. The first step was made by Kant, followed by the new epistemological principle of Nietzsche and Husserl.

That the enigma of subject-object relationship remains unsolved does not greatly affect natural sciences, but it gravely affects all social and cultural sciences. Here there is no mutual agreement in terms of exact cognition to be attained. Numerous rival schools will arise with constant and sterile disputes. Besides, the science as a whole will be deprived of the trust for universality, spurring the tendency toward relativism.

The concern and foresight of Husserl came true as post-modern thought almost conquered the human and social sciences in the late twentieth century.

What will happen when logical relativism becomes influential in the scientific field? Relativism will likely damage the assumption that universality of cognition should be pursued by discussion and investigation. Scientific findings will be made dependent on the influence of particular schools, that is, on how many 'professors' were produced by these schools. The method of scientific positivism by no means offers a ground for the attainment of scientific universality in the field of the humanities, and instead, tends to serve as a logical reinforcement of their partisan (prejudiced) beliefs. The scholars have their own belief about their theories, but do no longer 'believe' that these must be verified by universal investigations.

Here is the circumstance of 'irony' mentioned by Hegel. In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel named this attitude of logical relativists (who know that there exists no omniscience) as 'irony' after Socrates' attitude towards knowledge ('I alone know that no one knows the truth'). Although 'ironists' have a belief that some righteousness itself exists, they don't believe that there is a way to temper it to universality (common understanding). This is the path taken by skeptics according to Hegel.

Ironists subjectively suppose that they are able freely to assume *any* attitude to the world. Yet in practice they are unable to find a way that can lead to a universal thought. Accordingly, they have no other method of contention than the reduction to. For this reason, the reduction to absurdity prevails when different world views conflict with each other.

Marxism has claimed that it can offer the sole legitimate world view, but, from the philosophical standpoint, this is nothing but dogmatism

Post-modern thought and analytical philosophy, which emerged as a counter to Marxism, have obviously taken the position of ironists with no belief in genuine knowledge. Contemporary thought has consequently exercised a strong power of criticism in our times, but it is difficult to conceive of a new scheme for people and society as they have in a way tabooed the very idea of universal knowledge and thought.

Opposed to the above, phenomenology thinking is as follows. No omniscience exists. Neither objective knowledge nor truth exists in principle. Yet there nevertheless exists valid cognition or universal knowledge that is acceptable by everybody. The thinking method to attain this exists too.

Traditional epistemology (according to the subject-object schema) holds truth or objective knowledge to be something that is hidden behind the world. Phenomenological epistemology (according to the immanence-transcendence schema) regards *any* cognition as an intra-subjective world belief. Universal knowledge is to be defined as a communal (inter-subjective) belief *derived from different individual beliefs*. Do you not feel here that the concept of truth (or objective knowledge) has been essentially renewed?

Phenomenology analyzes the question of cognition as a general theory on world beliefs. When an understanding of this perspective is made possible, it will also be possible for *The Idea of Phenomenology* to open up a new horizon for the science of essence as a potential for universal thought.

The science of essence is a theory on relations between meanings and values in people and their society. The phenomenological sphere of immanence is exactly where meanings and values for humans are constantly being created. In practice, the efforts for unfolding the science of essence as a new domain of philosophy have been begun by Husserl. This task must and will be reinitiated by a new generation, engaged in re-capturing the core of his phenomenological method.

(The end)