

Who Was Gadamer's Husserl?

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Volumes have been written about Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical relation to Martin Heidegger, but there is little to help us understand his philosophical relationship to Edmund Husserl. Gadamer has many scattered remarks about Husserl, and has dedicated four short essays to themes in Husserlian phenomenology, but there's virtually no secondary discussion about how to understand Gadamer's relation to Husserl: in particular, the extent of his indebtedness to Husserl or the character of his criticisms of Husserl.¹

Among the major European phenomenologists, it has been standard practice to orient oneself with respect to Husserl. Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, Max Scheler—not to mention Roman Ingarden, Eugen Fink, Ludwig Landgrebe, Alfred Schutz, and Aron Gurwitsch—all wrote extensively on Husserl and made a point of formulating their philosophical project in dialogue with and in contrast to Husserl. So why not Gadamer? There is no major phenomenologist who has less to say about Husserl than Gadamer, which invites the question: to what extent does Gadamer see himself working in the phenomenological tradition as originated by Husserl? To answer that requires some sleuthing since he didn't write anything along the lines of *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, or even "The Philosopher and His Shadow." He did write four essays explicitly on Husserl—one unpublished essay for the Royau-mont phenomenology congress in 1957 was on Husserl and Wilhelm Dilthey on experience ("Der Begriff des Erlebnisses bei Husserl und Dilthey"²); one was a

1. The one exception is Walter's Lammi's "Gadamer's Debt to Husserl" in A. T. Tymieniecka, ed., *Analecta Husserliana* LXXI (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 167–179.

2. It was excluded from the volume on the proceedings because it was not focused enough on Husserl, though it's likely the material was integrated into *Truth and Method*, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989); especially pages 60–64 and 242–252.

1963 review and discussion of recent work done in phenomenology for his journal *Philosophische Rundschau* (“Phänomenologische Bewegung”³); one written for an April 1969 phenomenology conference in Waterloo, Canada was on Husserl’s theory of the lifeworld (“The Science of the Life-World”⁴); and one was a summary and concluding commentary of the papers presented at the September 1969 phenomenology congress in Baden-Württemberg (“Zusammenfassender Bericht,” later re-titled “Zur Aktualität der Husserlschen Phänomenologie”⁵). In addition to these four essays, there is a brief “Erinnerung” of Husserl in *Edmund Husserl und die Phänomenologische Bewegung*,⁶ and scattered comments and reflections throughout his essays and interviews. The index to the *Gesammelte Werke* also includes in the list of Gadamer’s works on Husserl a late essay “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person,”⁷ which devotes less than a half-dozen pages to Husserl.

With only one extended book review, one conference summary, and two conference papers, one that was never published, it’s fair to say Gadamer never took up the project of a full critical interpretation of Husserl. The tendency has been to see Gadamer as either dismissive of Husserl, or as working entirely in the wake of Heidegger’s interpretation of Husserl. That is, Gadamer doesn’t himself have to independently establish a relation to Husserl as Heidegger has done that work for him. He can move forward with his own work from there. I think this overlooks the extent to which Gadamer has a developed interpretation of Husserl’s project and has clear views about what philosophical directions taken by Husserl are admirable and what directions are dead ends. Overall I think there are sufficient resources to create a coherent picture of how Gadamer saw himself with respect to Husserl, that is, how he interprets Husserl and how his own project is connected to that interpretation.

First, I want to make clear what I won’t be doing. I won’t be laying out all the similarities and differences between Husserl’s phenomenology and Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics; that would require addressing many views that Gadamer himself does not present as indebted to, or as rising in response to, Husserl views. Instead I will focus on what Gadamer says about

3. *Philosophische Rundschau*, 11(1/2) 1963, 1–45. A shorter version is included in *Gesammelte Werke* 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 105–46, and has been translated by David Linge as “The Phenomenological Movement” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 130–81. All references are to the Linge translation.

4. Originally given in English and published in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 2, *The Later Husserl and the Idea of Phenomenology*, edited by A. T. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), 173–185; a German version is included in *Gesammelte Werke* 3, 147–59, and a new English translation from the German is included in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 182–97.

5. *Gesammelte Werke* 3, 160–71.

6. Edited by Hans Sepp (Munich: Alber, 1988), 13–16. Henceforth “Erinnerung.”

7. *Continental Philosophy Review* 33(3) 2000: 275–87.

Husserl, about how Gadamer interprets Husserl, and, in the process, about how Gadamer sees himself with respect to Husserl. The main topic is discovering who was *Gadamer's* Husserl. Second, I am not going to concern myself with whether Gadamer is right in his interpretations of Husserl. He is adamant he is right and, at his most polemical, he goes so far as to refer to Schutz, Fink, and Merleau-Ponty as merely “so-called phenomenologists” he disagrees with them so strongly. That kind of disagreement with major interpreters of Husserl suggests his interpretation is controversial, and there is work to be done to evaluate Gadamer's interpretation of Husserl. But that that would be an essay about Husserl and the philosopher I want to understand better here is Gadamer through his reading of Husserl.

To that end I've divided this essay into five parts. First, I'll present the historical connection between the two and the stories Gadamer regularly tells about his experiences with Husserl. That will provide an accessible introduction to Gadamer's picture of Husserl the man. Second, I will present what Gadamer sees as the basic trajectory of Husserl's thought, which will set the stage for Part 3, a more detailed examination of those views of Husserl's Gadamer agrees with. Part 4 will turn to the four views of Husserl's Gadamer explicitly disagrees with. Finally I will briefly mention what I think are the morals of the story—what we can learn about Gadamer from the way he reads Husserl. To give a sense of where the essay is heading, the four morals are, first, that Gadamer sees himself as belonging to the phenomenological movement initiated with Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, expressed in the writings of Scheler and in Husserl's late writings on the lifeworld, and perfected with the account of phenomenology given by Heidegger. Second, the main target of Gadamer's criticism is Husserl's account of the transcendental ego. The strongest evidence for the need to reject this account of subjectivity is Husserl's failure to provide an adequate account of intersubjectivity. Third, the discussion in *Truth and Method* of Wilhelm Dilthey and Ludwig Graf Yorck von Wartenburg conceptually mediating Husserl and Heidegger is an outlier; in all four of Gadamer's criticisms it is Scheler who first recognizes Husserl's limitations and facilitates the conceptual transition to Heidegger. Heidegger is presented as the philosopher who gets it right on three of the four criticisms (it is not the case with Gadamer's most extensive criticism, his criticism of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity). Finally, the fourth moral is that Gadamer has great respect for what others see as Husserl's extremism—Husserl's missionary conviction that only a *Letztbegründung* based on the reduction to the transcendental ego can provide a rigorous foundation for the sciences and save the world from relativism (or unreflective rationalism). Gadamer consistently praises this project as a noble endeavor of someone trying to live life in an intellectually honest way.

I. Historical and Anecdotal Connections

Gadamer's knew Husserl, but only for a short time and only as a student. In 1923, after finishing a dissertation at Marburg on Plato under Paul Natorp, Gadamer traveled to Freiburg to study with Heidegger. Gadamer was only there for a summer as Heidegger left that fall to take up a position in Marburg, but while there Gadamer sat in on four classes given by Heidegger, one on Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, and one given by Husserl on "Transcendental Logic."⁸ He was welcomed by Husserl as a representative of the Marburg Neo-Kantians—Husserl's discussions with Natorp had been significantly affecting the trajectory of his phenomenology for twenty years—though Gadamer confesses he was too young at the time to appreciate the complexities of Husserl's phenomenology. He *is* fond, however, of telling four stories from his seminar with Husserl, all which help guide our understanding of Gadamer's relation to Husserl.

First, Gadamer admired Husserl's detailed, focused, anti-speculative mind. In an interview he was asked what drew him to phenomenology; he replied, "The answer is simple. I went to Husserl's seminar, and when people spoke in a high-sounding manner he said 'not always the big notes! Small change gentlemen!' I am the son of a natural scientist; I too dislike empty talk."⁹ Gadamer claims to share that desire for the concrete, in fact Jean Grondin reported that after hearing the talks given in honor of his hundredth birthday he remarked that he found the talks too abstract and neither phenomenological nor *lebensweltlich* enough.¹⁰

Second Gadamer appreciated Husserl's descriptive power for capturing the essence of an experience. In class Husserl had

a truly un-self-conscious devotion to the business of phenomenological description. . . . An example: In order to illustrate the eidetic structure of perceptual illusions, Husserl, with bewitching naïveté, told us about what he experienced one day in Berlin. It was probably just at the time when the Berlin Ministry had offered him his first chair in Göttingen. There he

8. Not published, however is it a repeat of his 1921 class on "transcendental logic" which has been published in part in *Analysen zur Passiven Synthesis: Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918-1926)*, edited by Margot Fleischer, Husserliana XI (The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1966), in part in *Formale und Transzendente Logik, Versuch einer Kritik der Logischen Vernunft, Mit Ergänzenden Texten*, edited by Paul Janssen, Husserliana XVII (The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1974), and in part in *Aktive Synthesen: Aus der Vorlesung 'Transzendente Logik' 1920/21, Ergänzungsband zu 'Analysen zur Passiven Synthesis'*, edited by Roland Breuer, Husserliana XXXI (The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

9. *Gadamer in Conversation*, edited and translated by Richard Palmer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 105. This story is repeated in "Gadamer on Gadamer" (in Hugh Silverman, ed., *Gadamer and Hermeneutics* [New York: Routledge, 1991, 13–19]), 15, and *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 133.

10. *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 333.

was, going down the road full of satisfaction when eventually he arrived at the well-known Panopticon, which was conveniently located behind the Friedrichstrasse Train Station. And now he told us: When he climbed the stairs a beautiful woman gave him an inviting wink. He hesitated, and, flustered, stared at her—only to suddenly recognize: “it was a doll.” The word “doll,” spoken softly and almost affectionately in his eastern-Austrian accent is still today unforgettable. He sounded half charmed and half disappointed, tenderness and relinquishment all in one.¹¹

We can see how misleading Grondin is when he lifts the words “bewitching naïveté” as if they referred to Husserl’s phenomenology; they refer to the way Husserl told the story about himself; the context is one of praising Husserl’s ability to describe an event with intuitive power.¹²

Yet, third, Gadamer was concerned about the absence of conversation and dialogue from Husserl’s thinking and pedagogy. Perhaps his most repeated story is this one.

I remember my time as a student in a seminar exercise with Husserl. As is well known, such exercises should foster when possible research discussions or at the very least pedagogical discussions. Husserl, who in the early twenties as the Freiburg master of phenomenology was inspired by a deep missionary drive and indeed practiced an important philosophical teaching, was no master of conversation. In those seminar classes he started by setting forth a question, got a short answer then dwelled on

11. “Erinnerung,” 14, translation mine. The story is repeated in *Gadamer in Conversation* as an example of Husserl’s ability to be “very concrete intuitive” and “to present such a story almost like an actor” (108) and in *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, translated by Robert Sullivan (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), as a case of his “authentic intensity . . . when he really lost himself in a description” (35).

12. *Biography*, 98. Grondin takes another word out of context to misinterpret Gadamer’s interpretation of Husserl. Grondin says that Gadamer called Husserl a “clockmaker gone mad” and said this refers to the fact that “Husserl continued to develop his own logic without allowing himself to be distracted in the slightest by the outside world or the demands of the time.” In fact here is Gadamer’s full quote. “Once my friend Fjodor Stepun and I were together in Husserl’s lecture. Stepun, a highly gifted actor, had been a philosophy student of Windelband’s in Heidelberg. It was 1923; in less than two years he would lead the Moscow Actor’s Theater. One hears how he characterized Husserl at the lectern: He is like a clockmaker gone mad. In that way Stepun had described very well how Husserl made the strangest movement when concentrating— during his lecture with the outstretched fingers of his right hand he traced a circle back and forth in the palm of his left hand. That was splendidly observed by Stepun. It of course also showed that Stepun’s own concentration was not so much directed toward philosophy, since Husserl’s gesture spoke of a truly un-self-conscious devotion to the business of phenomenological description.” (“Erinnerung,” 14, translation mine; the story is repeated in *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, 35). Not only is it Stepun who presents Husserl like a clockmaker gone mad, it refers to a winding gesture he made with his hands and has nothing to do with Husserl’s ideas. In fact Gadamer criticizes Stepun for focusing on a gesture and not appreciating the ideas.

this answer for two hours in an uninterrupted lecture. As he got to the end of the class with his assistant Heidegger, he said to him outside the hall: “Today was an energizing discussion, for once.”¹³

As interesting as this is an insight into Husserl’s lack of dialogical or pedagogical skill, it is also noteworthy that Gadamer comments on the teaching style of all his teachers during the early twenties. Clearly he sees one teaching style as not just anecdotally significant, but also philosophically significant.

Husserl’s “deep missionary drive” is the focus of the fourth story Gadamer tells from his summer 1923 class with Husserl. In his summarizing comments on a 1969 phenomenology conference with Ingarden in the audience he said

whoever knows Husserl—Mr. Ingarden of course knew Husserl ten years before I knew him, but I believe he will confirm this—knows that he had an almost missionary mindset and that he wanted to heal human culture in its entirety. In the *Crisis [of the European Sciences]* that comes out clearly. I once had a conversation with Husserl that illustrates this. Naturally I was interested in many musical things, and wanted to know what Husserl privately thought about modern art—about expressionism, which is what I regarded at that time as modern art. Husserl answered me: “Ah, Herr Doktor, you know I have great fondness for music and really love poetry, I would gladly go to theatres or museums, but the transcendental establishment of phenomenology leaves me with no time to occupy myself with such things I love.” That was said in a true missionary state of mind.

At that point Ingarden apparently called out from the audience, “Husserl said to me he was a polar explorer and had no time for other things.”¹⁴ We will see more what motivated this missionary mind-set, but it is clear from the various places Gadamer mentions it that it is something he appreciated, even if he was not sympathetic with it himself. According to Gadamer, Husserl saw his phenomenology as both philosophically important and culturally important. In the discussion of his paper “The Science of the Lifeworld” Gadamer comments that “Husserl was a profound human being who not only felt deeply the historical and political situation in which he lived but tried by his own effort of philosophical reflection to answer its challenge. His thought was not limited to theoretical problems, but, like a missionary, he tried to throw it into the life struggle of hu-

13. “The German University and German Politics” in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, translated by Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 3–13, here 7. Also *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, 36, “Erinnerung,”¹⁵ *Gadamer in Conversation*, 106, and “Die Unfähigkeit zum Gespräch” (*Gesammelte Werke* 2 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993], 207–15), 212.

14. “Zur Aktualität der Husserlschen Phänomenologie,”¹⁶⁵ translation mine.

manity.”¹⁵ Altogether these four stories Gadamer liked to tell give us an initial picture of what he found appealing in Husserl’s style—his passion, his detailed descriptive work, and his disparagement of grand philosophical proclamations, even if they occluded an appreciation of dialogical pedagogy. According to Gadamer, Husserl was above all concerned about being an “intellectually honest” philosopher.¹⁶

II. Gadamer’s Interpretation of Husserl’s Intellectual Development

Gadamer has a clear line on the development Husserl’s phenomenology. Husserl was by temperament and training a mathematician and logician, and questions of the possibility of certain knowledge of abstract objects persisted throughout his writings. His breakthrough came with the *Logical Investigations* where he arrived at an insight about intentionality that allowed him to make sense of the universal claims of mathematics and logic—something that can’t be achieved if mathematics and logic are understood as branches of psychology—without becoming a Neo-Kantian idealist. Through his theory of perception Husserl was able to show that the universal features of objects, and general relations among objects, are not a product of our minds or of abstracting from particulars, but are intuited in perception itself. So essences and relations are real, a priori, and phenomenologically discoverable, though we need not only the intuition, but to confirm the adequacy of the intuition through the presentation of evidence through careful descriptions. This project was expressed by the slogan “to the things themselves.” A contrasting slogan to the Neo-Kantian “back to Kant,” it is meant to show that phenomenologists can answer the question that plagues Kantians: the question of the relation between the appearance and the object. Our perception of an object goes beyond the mere givenness of the object to the senses, and, by focusing our phenomenological attention on those co-intended features of the object, we can provide the necessary evidence for showing that the universal features of the object are the essential features of the object. By the 1913 *Ideas* this will be thematized as an account of horizontal intentionality—the way that every object appears with a horizontal background.

15. “Discussion of ‘The Science of the Lifeworld’” from *The Later Husserl and the Idea of Phenomenology*, 218–41, here 230–31.

16. “Husserl is a very special case. I used to take part in his seminar, and I very often heard him speaking about such things [as the philosophical life]. As you know he was originally a mathematician and logician. But he was driven by a desire to be correct and precise not only in mathematical work but in lifeworld as well. So he always described his own life in the following formula: ‘I would like to be an honest philosopher, *ein ehrlicher Philosoph sein*’” (“Interview: Without Poets There is No Philosophy” [*Radical Philosophy*, 69, 1995], 27–35, here 28).

In the same period Husserl formulated his project of phenomenology as a rigorous science. Since there is always more than is immediately given to consciousness, Husserl's phenomenology would seem to lead to a kind of skepticism, or at least fallibilism that the essential features of an object are never apodictically given until all the horizons themselves had been subjected to phenomenological scrutiny. The Neo-Kantian Natorp raised this concern, which led Husserl to revise his realist account of universals and instead ground all universals in the constituting activity of the transcendental ego, itself available to phenomenological analysis, in order to avoid any threat of skepticism or relativism. The move to transcendental idealism required an account of a transcendental reduction to show how it would be possible to have the self-certain, pure perception of the constituting accomplishments of consciousness. Along with this, though, came the problems of explaining the possibility of the awareness of others, the objectivity of objects (which presumes other subjects for whom the object appears), and the way our pre-theoretical awareness of the world functions as the origin of and motivation for our scientific awareness of the world. At the end of his career, Husserl finally hit on the idea of the lifeworld—the pretheoretic awareness of the world—and appealed to it to try to solve some of the problems that had arisen with the turn to phenomenological idealism and the development of the reduction. According to Gadamer, then, the lifeworld is a natural extension of Husserl's original phenomenology; it becomes a problem for Husserl only because of his concern for making phenomenology a rigorous science.

For Gadamer, the difficulty Husserl had with issues of intersubjectivity, the body, and practical life were signs that Husserl erred when he turned away from the realism of the *Logical Investigations* toward the idealism of the *Ideas*, but his incessant analyses of these problems were a testament to Husserl's conviction that an absolutely certain foundation for the essential intuitions had to be found and his willingness to recognize the difficulties inherent in this project. Gadamer writes,

the idea of the transcendental phenomenology was unquestionably and unwaveringly held onto from the first conception in [the 1907 lecture course] "Idea of the Phenomenology" to Husserl's final efforts of thinking. The appearance of a change in the position of the transcendental self-foundation of phenomenological philosophy comes, as we all know, from the theme of the "lifeworld." But I believe that the matter is wrongly seen, if one means that the "lifeworld" was a new topic in the later development of the Husserl phenomenology. That stands in contrast to the oldest Husserl deployment of the term, that he retreats to the lifeworld over against Neo-Kantianism, oriented at 'the fact of the sciences,' or the positivistic theory of knowledge.¹⁷

17. "Zur Aktualität der Husserlschen Phänomenologie," 160, translation mine.

The emergence of the concept of the lifeworld was not a new position so much as an underlying theme finally becoming explicit.

Gadamer's criticism of Husserl's turn towards transcendental idealism in 1913 was widely shared by the first generation of Husserl's students; both the members of the Göttingen School and the members of the Munich School saw this as giving up too much to Neo-Kantianism as did Gadamer's early teacher Nicolai Hartmann, who left the Neo-Kantians for phenomenology precisely to get away from idealism. Gadamer's insistence that Husserl maintained his commitment to phenomenology as a rigorous science all the way to the end of his life is controversial, but still widely accepted. Some have tried to defend Husserl by arguing that he gave up in this project when he recognized its difficulties and that his account of the lifeworld was a sign that "the dream was over";¹⁸ Gadamer reserves some of his harshest criticism for these apologists, who include such phenomenological luminaries as Fink, Landgrebe, Merleau-Ponty, Schutz, and Gurwitsch.

The last and most elaborate form of transcendental philosophy, the phenomenology of Husserl, with its special intention of founding and justifying every step in philosophy from the point of view of transcendental self-consciousness, was an attempt (and I think a hopeless one) to establish the relationship between theoretical construction and its application to practical living. The authentic Husserl would have rejected the contention (begun by Merleau-Ponty and carried on by many other so-called phenomenologists who isolate that single dimension in the framework of phenomenology connected with the very popular expression 'life-world') that the life-world is a new foundation of phenomenology that can be helpful for the social sciences. Husserl was much more radical in his claim. Indeed, his own orientation toward transcendental phenomenology with its foundation in the transcendental Ego provides the counterpart to the modern criticism of the data of self-consciousness as the *fundamentum inconcussum* of idealistic philosophy.¹⁹

Gadamer admired and defended Husserl's detailed work and his quest for certainty, even while holding it was bound to fail. The detailed descriptive work must eventually return to the cultural, social, and historical forces that shape the constituting acts of consciousness, yet in precisely these places we recognize our own cultural and historical limitedness and the ultimate impossibility of apodictic certainty.

18. This is a reference to a line in a Husserl manuscript published as part of the *Crisis* volume, "philosophy as a science, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous science—the dream is over" (*The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970], 389).

19. "Hermeneutics as a Social Science" (*Cultural Hermeneutics*, 2[4], 1975), 307–316, here 309. See too his condemnation of Fink's and Schutz's readings of Husserl as 'utterly indefensible' ("The Phenomenological Movement," 163).

III. Expressed Agreements

What then are the elements of Husserl's phenomenology that Gadamer explicitly embraces, keeping in mind we are not looking at all the ways in which Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Husserl's phenomenology overlap, but the ways in which Gadamer sees what he is doing as overlapping with Husserl. Two themes show up repeatedly in Gadamer's essays, first that Husserl's account of horizontal intentionality in his theory of perception helps avoid idealism and psychologism, and second that the account of the lifeworld helps avoid the prioritization of a scientific understanding of the world over an everyday awareness of the world. Both are themes central to the idea of hermeneutics as legitimating of the human sciences, the main project of *Truth and Method*. Given Gadamer's understanding of the trajectory of Husserl's thinking it is understandable that the two views he has the most sympathy for include one from the *Logical Investigations*, predating Husserl's turn to transcendental idealism, and one that arises out of recognized challenges to his account of transcendental idealism. Gadamer taught courses in phenomenology only four times in his career, half of those were on Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (in Marburg, SS 1930 and SS 1933), one was on the *Crisis* (Heidelberg, WS 1960–61) and one on phenomenology from Husserl to Heidegger (Heidelberg, SS 1961).²⁰ It is the early and the late Husserl that provide Gadamer with the greatest resources for his views.

Gadamer credits Husserl for finding an impasse out of the debate between realistic empiricism and idealism, that is, between psychologism and Neo-Kantianism as its only alternative. Psychologism was on shaky grounds: not only couldn't it explain the universality in a priori judgments, psychological studies were suggesting that our awareness of objects was quite different from the givenness of objects to our senses. Neo-Kantianism could solve both these problems, but it inherited the long-standing skeptical problems associated with idealism. Husserl embraces ideality, the view that we have direct access to universals thus creating sympathies with the Neo-Kantians, but then, according to Gadamer, avoids idealism though embracing a modification of Franz Brentano's theory of intentionality—the view that all mental states take an object.

It was the devastating critique of the distortions that sensualistic psychology had produced especially in regard to logical structures that led to

20. It's not clear why on these occasions thirty years apart these were the courses he offered nor is it clear what lectures he is referring to when, in "Writing and the Living Voice" (in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History*, 63–71) he claims that "lectures on Husserl and Heidegger became material for part 2 [of *Truth and Method*]" (64). The *Crisis* does appear to be the main text for Gadamer at this time; virtually every Husserl quotation in *Truth and Method* is taken from the *Crisis*.

a new, more profound grounding of apriority in philosophy: the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. The victorious reproof of psychologism in the first volume of the *Logical Investigations* was still only the first step toward a new philosophical foundation. . . . In the concept of intentionality, the dogmatically posited split between the immanence of self-consciousness and the transcendence of one's knowledge of the world, which lay at the root of the notion of epistemology and its theoretic constructions, was fundamentally overcome.²¹

Intentionality bridged the split between self-consciousness and the transcendent object and made possible an account of perception based on the givenness of the object itself—and made sense of the slogan “back to the things themselves”—rather than relying on a representational account of perception. Husserl's turn to a Cartesian view of the transcendental ego moved away from what Gadamer thought he had accomplished in the *Logical Investigations*, but Scheler and Heidegger continued to develop their ideas in the path established in Husserl's early writings.

[W]ith almost demagogic passionateness, Scheler described that ecstatic character of consciousness by showing that consciousness is not a closed box We do not know representations, we know things We are always with the beings we intend. Heidegger radicalized this hypostatized consciousness by transforming it into an ontological critique of the understanding of being presupposed by ‘consciousness.’ His ontological critique of consciousness found his watchword in the assertion that Dasein is ‘being-in-the-world.’²²

Crucially important for Gadamer is that Husserl's account of intentionality made possible seeing the subject as *engaged* in the world it knows rather than standing apart from the world, but just as important is Husserl's account of horizontal intentionalities.

Husserl pointed out that although our senses only give us incomplete information about an object, we perceive the object as a whole. So although when

21. “Philosophy or Theory of Science?” in *Reason in the Age of Science*, translated by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1982), 151–169, here 154. In *Truth and Method* he writes, “with intentionality we get a more and more radical critique of the ‘objectivism’ of previous philosophy, Dilthey included” (243).

22. “The Philosophical Foundations of The Twentieth Century” (in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 107–128), 118. Compare to this quote from “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion” (*Man and World*, 17[3/4], 1984, 313–323): “Husserl overcame the dogmatism of an immanent consciousness, which must ask: how can we transcend ourselves and make contact with the external world? This is obviously an epistemological theme. Husserl overcame this by demonstrating that consciousness is exactly intentionality, which means that we are *in* the matter and not simply enclosed in ourselves. Self-consciousness occurs only insofar as there is a consciousness of objects” (316). Here Gadamer is presenting Heideggerian and Hegelian consequences from Husserl's account of intentionality.

looking at a chair we are only presented with one side of the chair, we perceive a chair, not a chair-side. We are not surprised when we move to see the chair has other sides to it, that it's three dimensional and so on. In fact we would be quite shocked to find out what we thought was a chair was only a chair-façade. Likewise when perceiving a person we can often tell who a person is based on very little sensory information. We can recognize someone from the back of his or her head; were he or she to turn around to reveal that we were mistaken, this itself is a sign that our perception of the back of the head included more than simply the back of a head. Were it otherwise we wouldn't have been surprised to find he or she was someone we didn't expect. So perception always goes beyond what we actually see. According to Husserl, it is not that our mind is at work drawing inferences from the perceptual information we receive such that, for example, we first see a field of color and our then our mind organizes the color and concludes it is some object or person. We actually see it *as* some object or person. The additional content that fills out the object—the horizontal intentionalities—are contained in the perception of the object.

Now “intentionality” does not mean “an act of meaning” in the sense of a subjective operation. There are also what Husserl calls “horizontal intentionalities.” If I direct my attention to a definite object . . . everything present is simultaneously there for me, like a corona of intentionalities. . . . The horizon of intentionalities, the constantly co-intended, is not itself an object of a subjective act of meaning. Consequently Husserl calls such intentionalities “anonymous.”²³

About Husserl's concept of horizon Gadamer says, “we too shall have occasion to use [it].”²⁴ Since they are “anonymous” and the product of a particular constituting consciousness, the essences presented in the relations are objective and intersubjectively available, two crucial facts for Gadamer's account of dialogue which aims the well-known “fusion of horizons.”

The second view Gadamer explicitly appreciates from Husserl is Husserl's account of the lifeworld as our prescientific, practical awareness of our environment explicitly distinguished from a scientific understanding of the world. The one concept Gadamer most identifies with Husserl is the concept of the lifeworld—“the world in which we are immersed in the natural attitude that never becomes an object as such for us, but that represents the pre-given basis for all

23. “The Philosophical Foundations of The Twentieth Century,” 118.

24. *Truth and Method*, 245. As is well known, Gadamer moves in new directions treating horizons not only as connected to perception but to the meanings of propositions. In “What is Truth?” (in *Hermeneutics and Truth* [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1994], 33–46) he writes, “every proposition has its horizon of meaning in that it originates in a question situation” (42). This essay from 1957 contains his first published use of the phrase the “fusion of horizons”.

experience.”²⁵ Rarely does Gadamer talk about Husserl and not mention the life-world, and almost always when he mentions Husserl in passing it is to credit him with coming up with the concept and word *Lebenswelt*. That a philosopher came up with a word which caught on and became part of non-philosophical discourse is a sign, for Gadamer, both that words carry rhetorical as well as philosophical force, and that the times were ripe for Husserl’s word.

In Husserl’s later work the magic word *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) appears—one of those rare and wonderful artificial words (it does not appear before Husserl) that have found their way into the general linguistic consciousness, thus attesting to the fact that they bring an unrecognized or forgotten truth to language. So the word “Lebenswelt” has reminded us of all the presuppositions that underlie all scientific knowledge.²⁶

Like the account of intentionality, Gadamer sees Husserl here as avoiding Neo-Kantianism’s excessive focus on scientific rationality as the model of knowledge. By “burst[ing] open the narrow limits of a notion of experience restricted to the sciences, and [making] the lifeworld—the truly lived experience of the world—the universal theme of philosophical contemplation”²⁷ Husserl cleared the way for the central project to *Truth and Method*, the legitimating of the humanities over and against the epistemic dominance of the natural sciences. Gadamer acknowledges that there is something heroic in the abstractions and self-imposed limitations on evidence in scientific inquiry, nevertheless “something of higher significance occurs when philosophy turns to the lifeworld.”²⁸

IV: Expressed Disagreements

Gadamer disagrees with Husserl on four points: the possibility of pure perception, the nature of subjectivity, the possibility a phenomenology of essences can capture what is actual, and the solution to the question of intersubjectivity. None of these are original to Gadamer, but together we get a picture of what features of phenomenology are important to Gadamer and how he sees himself with respect to the tradition. What is interesting is that as he develops his criticism of each of these views, the pattern is the same. According to Gadamer,

25. *Truth and Method*, 246–47. Burt Hopkins has informed me that in an exchange of faxes with Gadamer over the views of Jakob Klein, Gadamer wrote, “[Klein] shared the greatest respect me and my whole generation had for Husserl’s discovery of the philosophical theme of the ‘life-world’” (Hopkins’ translation).

26. “The Ideal of Practical Philosophy” in *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, translated by Chris Dawson (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 50–61, here 55.

27. “Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Metaphysics” in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (25[2], 1994), 104–110, here 105.

28. “The Diversity of Europe” in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History*, 221–36, here 230.

Max Scheler was the philosopher who first recognized the limitations of Husserl's views and powerfully expressed those limitations, but it was only Heidegger, informed by his reading of the ancients, who was able to provide an adequate solution to the problems. The pattern of Scheler mediating Husserl and Heidegger is consistent in each criticism except his criticism of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity; there Scheler and Heidegger are given credit as two of many philosophers who recognized what is missing from Husserl's account.²⁹

Even a passing familiarity with hermeneutics would lead one to expect the first criticism, that there is no pure perception of an object. It is hermeneutic dogma that all perceptions are interpretations. In contrast, in order for Husserl's phenomenology to become a rigorous science at some point the phenomenological reduction must make possible a direct intuition of pure givenness; Gadamer is skeptical such pure perception ever occurs.

[D]oes Husserl follow the rigor of his own principle "*Zu den Sachen selbst*" in beginning his analysis of the evidence of our cognition by the standard model of sense perception? Is sense-perception something given or is it an abstraction that thematizes an abstract constant of the given? Scheler, in his very living contacts with psychologists and physiologists of this epoch as with American pragmatism and Heidegger demonstrated with vigor that sense perception is never given. It is rather an aspect of the pragmatic approach to the world. We are always hearing, listening *to* something and extracting *from* other things. We are *interpreting* in seeing hearing, receiving. . . . So it is obvious that there is a real primacy of interpretation. Husserl refused to accept this analysis . . . and held that all interpretation is a secondary act.³⁰

29. Perhaps as interesting is that Gadamer does not discuss language when criticizing Husserl. Many would present their different views on language as their main difference, and although I don't expect Gadamer would have disagreed, the topic of language simply doesn't arise in the context of his discussions of Husserl.

30. "Hermeneutics of Suspicion," 318–19. Also see "Philosophy and Literature" (*Man and World* 18[2], 1985, 241–259): "For Husserl, perceiving- or judging- something as something, with regard to meaning or value, was a higher form of mental activity which based itself on the fundamental stratum of the phenomena of sense perception. Insofar as this is the case, the hermeneutical dimension for Husserl comes only later. For him, the concrete presence of objects of perception in 'pure' perception was first. To be sure, in his careful, descriptive work Husserl himself acted thoroughly hermeneutically and his efforts were constantly directed towards 'interpreting' the phenomena in ever-broadening horizons with ever increasing precision. Yet he did not reflect on the extent to which the very concept of the 'phenomenon itself' is interwoven with the issue of 'interpretation.' That we do since Heidegger. He showed us Husserl's phenomenological principle contained a hidden dogmatic prejudice. Already Scheler, whose vivacious mind has used the insights of both of American pragmatism and of Nietzsche as well as the results of modern research of sense perception, showed that there is no pure perception. A 'pure' perception, i.e., one fully adequate to the sense-stimulus is an abstraction" (241–2).

There are three different criticisms here. One is that perception is not a two-step process where, first, an object or an idea is given to consciousness, and then, second, we interpret that object or idea in such a way as to make it meaningful. That something appears to consciousness at all is the result of interpretation, is the result of an interpretive interaction with one's environment and, as such, is always already an interpretation. "All seeing is already 'perceiving-something-as-something'"³¹ According to Husserl an interpretation is always an interpretation of something given; he can only hold this view, Gadamer believes, only if he fails to see the inescapable way that perception is bound up with practical and essentially pre-conscious factors.

A correlated, but separate criticism is that the belief in the possibility of pure perception leads Husserl to model all knowledge on sense perception "The fundamental teaching of Husserl's phenomenology was that knowledge was first and foremost viewing or intuition; that is, it is achieved when a thing is seen comprehensively with one beholding. Sense perception, which places the object before the eye in its incarnate givenness, is the model according to which all conceptual knowledge is to be thought."³² Once the ubiquity of interpretation is established, we can no longer prioritize what is immediately given over what is mediately given as everything is mediated. Sense-awareness loses its pride of place and opens the possibility of legitimate, non-perceptual sources of insight into phenomena.

The third related criticism is that the involvement with the world that establishes the interpretive character of perception is a more fundamental disclosure of the world than provided by sense perception. Gadamer ascribes variations of this view to Scheler and Heidegger. "Scheler showed that pure perception is the extreme limiting case of a phantasy drive turned sober, which in the end learned to accept the given in an adequate manner. . . . Heidegger saw in so-called perception the deficient mode of a more primitive concern with things."³³ In both cases, perception is derivative and therefore not "pure." Husserl's reply was always the same: that his critics underappreciated the radicality of the phenomenological reduction. But even if such a perception is possible, argues Gadamer, it is "a final reduction of the excess of fantasy that guides all our seeing, . . . an abstraction,"³⁴ "the 'degree-zero' of all lived world-orienta-

31. "Philosophy and Literature," 242.

32. "Martin Heidegger: 75 Years" in *Heidegger's Ways*, translated by Translated by John Stanley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 15–28, here 17–18.

33. "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Metaphysics," 106.

34. "The Philosophical Foundations of The Twentieth Century," 120. Gadamer raises the same criticism pure perception against German Idealism (with the same references to Scheler and Heidegger). See also *Truth and Method*, 92.

35. "Philosophy and Literature," 242.

tion.”³⁵ As such it loses its connection to practical reality and its usefulness for a phenomenology of the lifeworld.

If indeed our fundamental relation to the world is not sensory but a pragmatic, drive-informed interaction with our surroundings then key features of the phenomena of experience may not be accessible via an eidetic phenomenology. Among other things, such a search for essences might miss the pragmatic motivation for phenomenological analysis itself. Actual, historically contingent facts about us and our times may have phenomenological significance, in which case there would be necessary limits on the success of a phenomenology aimed at essences. This is the second expressed disagreement between Gadamer and Husserl, namely that there is a gap in Husserl’s phenomenology between what it seeks to grasp, essences, and the actual states of affairs it attempts to explain.

In truth, this idea of the knowing of essences that was to renew the moralizing of philosophizing, this descriptive analysis of the boundless field of ‘consciousness’ that was to precede all scientific knowledge and contain its a priori presuppositions, might have a limit beyond which phenomenology itself could not reach. Even a perfected phenomenological knowledge of essences . . . might not be able to reach the actuality of what is actual, the actuality of thinking consciousness as well as the experience of actuality. Even if the distinction between fact and essence might be rightly delimited over against the particular sciences as phenomenology’s great field of investigation and the ground cleared for methodically self-conscious work, the factuality of the factual—facticity, existence—is not only a final, last and contingent factor, that is determined materially and grasped exhaustively in its determinateness. It is also a primary and basic factor, one not to be ignored, which on its side supports every insight into essences. The dilemma was that factual human Dasein could be illuminated by phenomenological research only as an *eidos*, an essence. In its uniqueness, finitude, and historicity, however, human Dasein would preferably be recognized not as an instance of an *eidos* but rather as itself the most real factor of all. In this aporia Husserl and phenomenological investigation in general was to encounter its own limit, finitude, and historicity. Within the circle of phenomenologists Max Scheler knew it to be the case.³⁶

Scheler is once again given credit for being “able to work out the connection between essence and actuality with thematic explicitness,”³⁷ however he left a bifurcated intellectual project where phenomenology handled all investigations

36. “The Phenomenological Movement,” 134–35.

37. “The Phenomenological Movement,” 136. See also the “Discussion of ‘The Science of the Lifeworld’”: “[I]t was Scheler who criticized Husserl . . . that the Husserlian approach cannot grasp anything but *eidoses* and essences. Husserl’s suspending of all positing consciousness and thematizing of essences alone precludes the possibility of describing real things. Therefore Scheler points out that we should inquire into the origins, the genetic prehistory of the very possibility of the suspension and of the eidetic insight” (111).

into essences and the empirical social sciences handled all investigations into actualities. According to Gadamer, only Heidegger's "more radical approach to philosophizing" solved the Husserl's problems without resorting to a "dualism of truth and actuality."³⁸

Gadamer's argument against Husserl in *Truth and Method* is a version of this second criticism. There Gadamer compares the way Dilthey and Husserl use the concept of life—*Erlebnis* in Dilthey's case; the *Lebenswelt* in Husserl's case—to check the one-sidedness of abstract reflection. Gadamer says they both share in the mistake, however, of taking life in too epistemological of terms. As a result "we might ask whether the genuine content of the concept of life does not become alienated."³⁹ In *Truth and Method* it is not Scheler but Count Yorck von Wartenburg who mediates between Husserl and Heidegger by seeing the essential (Hegelian) dialectical connection *within life* between concrete actuality and self-conscious reflection. Husserl's focus on essences misses this dialectic. Naturally for Gadamer, Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity—which bases phenomenology not on the essential features of a transcendental ego, but on the temporal ekstases of *Dasein*—provides the full critique of Husserl's eidetic phenomenology.

The third area of expressed disagreement between Gadamer and Husserl is the nature of subjectivity. Gadamer sees Husserl as equating subjectivity and self-consciousness thus belonging to the Cartesian tradition with its emphasis on certainty. In "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person" he traces the transformation of the concept "subject" from the Greek *hypokeimenon*—which means "that which remains unchanged as it underlies the process of all change"—through Descartes', Locke's and Kant's account of the *cogito* as "the unshakable foundation which endures in the face of all doubts," to the inclusion of reflexivity and self-consciousness as the model of certainty.⁴⁰ Gadamer gives credit to Brentano for returning to Aristotle and "challeng[ing] the primacy of self-consciousness" but then points out that it wasn't Husserl, but Scheler who following this path, "insisted that this primacy must be given to the givenness of the thing rather than to self-consciousness."⁴¹ Heidegger took the same lesson from Aristotle, and instead of focusing on the constituting acts of consciousness, Heidegger focused on the disclosive character of the object, a view, Gadamer believes is more consistent with the Husserlian maxim, "to the things themselves." In fact, Gadamer likes to quote Heidegger as saying that he is holding Husserl to his maxim by critiquing his transcendental idealism.

38. "The Phenomenological Movement," 136. Gadamer also credits Karl Jasper's account of the disclosive power of boundary situations.

39. *Truth and Method*, 250.

40. "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person," 276–77.

41. "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person," 278.

Husserl's turn to transcendental idealism between the *Logical Investigations* and the *Ideas* drew on the hope that the reduction to apodictic self-consciousness could provide the certain foundation phenomenology would lack otherwise. Gadamer takes this to be a mistake, and appeals to the trinity of hermeneutics of suspicion, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud, to argue that not only do we not have *certain* self-consciousness, we cannot even guarantee privileged access to our own minds. "What Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud have in common is certainly this, that one cannot just take the givenness of self-consciousness as a given. Here arises a new role for the concept of interpretation."⁴² So on the one hand Gadamer's criticism of Husserl's account of subjectivity is similar to his criticism of the possibility of pure perception—all awareness, including self-awareness, is interpreted and thus cannot serve as a *Letztbegründung*.

On the other hand he has a deeper criticism of Husserl's account of the temporality of the transcendental ego. For Husserl time consciousness is the most fundamental level of consciousness as anything that appears to consciousness appears in a temporal horizon. What one finds is that as Husserl's account of constitution becomes less and less egocentric, his account of time consciousness becomes more and more radical and his account of the reduction more and more powerful in order to preserve the possibility of a rigorous science based on first person descriptions. So even though the theory of time consciousness produces clear paradoxes—such as that the ego is both the origin of time consciousness and presented in time-consciousness, and that time must temporalize itself—Husserl can escape these paradoxes with an account of a self-conscious, transcendental subject that is the ultimate source of all meaning and that can be apodictically accessed.

Heidegger knew, as did Levinas and others, that therefore the most radical critique possible of Husserl's views would be a critique of time-consciousness. "With the concept of 'self-presence,' that is, the appearing of the stream of consciousness to itself, Husserl meant to grasp the essence of the consciousness of time. Heidegger's critique shows the narrowness of such a conception of being."⁴³ Heidegger shows that time is fundamentally not a structure of consciousness, but the horizon for the disclosure of beings. With that comes a very different account of the subject, one not based on the idea of self-presence. Gadamer connects this criticism to the other two.

From this critique of the concept of consciousness, which Heidegger would later radicalize, we can take to be of special significance that Heidegger already before *Being and Time* introduced the expression "hermeneutic of facticity," setting it against his own questioning of the

42. "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person," 279.

43. "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person," 280.

idealism of consciousness. Facticity is obviously that which cannot be clarified, that which resists any attempt to attain transparency of understanding. Thus it becomes clear that in every understanding there remains something unexplained, and that one therefore must ask about what motivates every understanding. This changes the entire concept of interpretation, and we approach the radicality we saw above in the citation from Nietzsche. My own works have proceeded in this direction, asking what interpretation in fact is when one goes so far as to fundamentally question the ideal of the self-transparency of subjectivity.⁴⁴

By undermining the idea of subjectivity as transparent self-consciousness Gadamer can show the impossibility of pure perception and the failure of a philosophy of essences to grasp our facticity. The first three criticisms are interrelated, and since one's theory of intersubjectivity is wholly dependent on one's theory of subjectivity—"Now, of course, behind the concept of intersubjectivity stands the concept of subjectivity . . . [o]ne might even say that the concept of intersubjectivity is only comprehensible once we have expressed the concept of subjectivity and of the subject, and its role in phenomenological philosophy"⁴⁵—Gadamer's fourth criticism is also related.

All other three criticisms converge with Gadamer's critique of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity. The problem of intersubjectivity is the most common example given by Gadamer as evidence of a systematic failing in Husserl's phenomenological project. It is telling that at some point or other Gadamer applies all the objections I've mentioned so far—the objection against pure perception, the objection against the search for essences missing the concrete, and especially the objection against the Cartesian account of subjectivity—to Husserl's account of intersubjectivity, and the one story Gadamer told that was critical of Husserl was the one about his non-dialogical teaching style. It should be clear that if self-consciousness is the key feature of subjectivity, how we are aware of others as self-conscious subjects will be difficult to explain since we never perceive another's self-consciousness. Husserl's account of the phenomenological reduction to the transcendental, solipsistic ego made the problem more difficult; the realization that an awareness of other subjects is a precondition for our awareness of objects as objective made a solution more pressing. Gadamer calls Husserl's attempts at an account of intersubjectivity his "experimentum crucis." The definitive statement of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity comes in his 1931 *Cartesian Meditations*—the Fifth Meditation, the final and longest of the meditations is dedicated to gaining "insight into the explicit and implicit intentionality wherein the alter ego becomes evinced and verified in the realm of our transcendental ego"⁴⁶—though his main views are established as early as 1910

44. "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person," 280–81.

45. "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person," 276.

46. *Cartesian Meditations*, translated by Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1977), 90.

when he was working out his aims of phenomenology as a rigorous science, his account of the reduction, and his account of time-consciousness. Most but not all of archival writings on the topic are collected in three very large volumes running almost 2000 pages. Intersubjectivity is both a central concern throughout his writings and, according to Gadamer, “a guiding word that points us back to Husserl’s own conceptual shortcomings and a whole range of problems.”⁴⁷

We have seen already that Gadamer criticizes the goal of phenomenology as a rigorous science on the basis of rejecting the possibility of any self-consciously certain givenness of an object. Since the reduction is developed in order to guarantee the possibility of certain givenness, Gadamer sees the reduction as consistent with the project, but unnecessary once the project is abandoned. Even more, if we abandon the goal of phenomenology as a rigorous science we lose the motivation for the turn to transcendental idealism altogether. Since the problem of intersubjectivity gets much of its force from the turn to transcendental idealism and to the egoic character of the reduction we should expect that Gadamer sees much of Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity as flawed from the start.

With Husserl we can understand how he arrives at a concept like “intersubjectivity” because he is determined to remain in the Cartesian sphere of subjectivity. That leads to Husserl’s tireless phenomenological investigations which now fill three thick volumes. It also leads to the utterly absurd consequence that we first intend the “other” as an object of perception constituted by aspects, etc., and then in a higher-level act, confer on this “other” the character of a “subject” through transcendental empathy. We can admire the consistency with which Husserl holds fast to the primacy of his approach. However, we notice that the narrowness and one-sidedness of the ontology of presence cannot be avoided by such an approach.⁴⁸

Because Husserl prioritizes what is made present in sense perception, he must begin with what we sense—the other’s body—and then argue that we are perceptually aware of the other’s consciousness in a similar way in which we are aware of, for example, the back side of a chair (recall the earlier discussion of horizontal intentionality). We draw on our own awareness of ourselves as consciously embodied beings to “analogously appresent” the other also as a subject. Husserl’s emphasis on perception necessarily insures there could never be direct awareness of another subject as a subject.

But Gadamer thinks this misses important ways in which we are immediately aware of other subjects as subjects, particularly as a Thou in conversation.

47. “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person,” 281.

48. “Text Matters: Interview with H. G. Gadamer” in *States of Mind: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers*, edited by Richard Kearney (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 262–289, here 277.

He writes,

Is the experience of the other really a secondary achievement of animating apprehension based upon the pure perception of an extended thing? Is there first something extended and perceptible which then “becomes” a person? Is this what “the things themselves” look like? Scheler’s “sympathy feelings,” Heidegger’s “being-with,” Sartre’s classic description of the looks encountering each other, and Merleau-Ponty’s analyses of perspectivity amount to one single critique of that starting point.⁴⁹

Scheler, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have very different theories of intersubjectivity—some are even developed in opposition to others—but what they share in common is that not only are we not first aware of others as inanimate objects that are then perceived as animate, but also that self-consciousness is not the defining feature of subjectivity. Though they also disagree widely about how we should understand subjectivity, and their theories of intersubjectivity reflect that. For Gadamer once again the important figure is Scheler.

Repeatedly, in fact almost universally, when Gadamer is discussing Husserl’s failed attempts to arrive at a phenomenology of intersubjectivity, Scheler is credited with providing the decisive arguments against Husserl. This might seem anachronistic as Scheler’s main discussion of intersubjectivity comes in the second edition of *The Nature of Sympathy*—in an added chapter “The Perception of Other Minds”—written in 1923, six years before Husserl presents the Paris Lectures, the public presentation of the ideas that became the *Cartesian Meditations*. In fact by time of the appearance, in French, of Husserl’s main account of intersubjectivity Scheler had been dead for four years. But in his criticism of analogical approaches to intersubjectivity—a view Husserl criticizes as well—Scheler aims at a more general target, namely any theory of empathy that provides a “two-fold starting point . . . (1) that it is always our own self, merely, that is primarily given to us; [and] (2) that what is primarily given to us in the case of others is merely the appearance of the body, its changes, movements, etc., and that only on the strength of this do we some-

49. “Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Metaphysics,” 106. He says something similar in “Hermeneutics of Suspicion”: “Another theme that arises is the way in which the other person is given for the ego. Husserl’s answer is very complicated. He discussed the whole problem with great care, and I would not say that he did not succeed in careful description. But how is the difference between selves and other objects of perception articulated following Husserl? There is no doubt that he described it somewhat as follows: there is another. What is given there? There is something extended with a human shape, I lend to this object an ego in transferring my own ego into it. Husserl calls this ‘transcendental sympathy,’ which means that I constitute what I see there as another person through a new act, based upon the primary givenness of the visual object. That is hard to accept, especially after the superb analysis that thinkers like Sartre or Merleau-Ponty have given of the role of the look and the other” (319).

how come to accept it as animate and presume the existence of another self.”⁵⁰ Scheler’s argument hits on what Gadamer emphasizes is mistaken in Husserl’s theory of intersubjectivity and both agree that the perception of “a living being is prior to [the perception of] the dead object.”⁵¹

At the heart of Gadamer’s disagreement with Husserl is Husserl’s reliance on an account of subjectivity as self-consciousness. With, instead, an account of subjectivity that “orient[s] itself toward the functional circle of life, which goes far beyond consciousness”⁵² emerges the possibility of an immediate awareness of another subject as subject. Language for Gadamer will play a key role for, as he says, “who thinks of ‘language’ already moves beyond subjectivity,”⁵³ and who moves beyond subjectivity moves beyond intersubjectivity as well. Perhaps that is why he refers to intersubjectivity as a “nonconcept.”⁵⁴

V: Morals of the story.

What conclusions about Gadamer should we draw from this extended review of his interpretations of Husserl? As I mentioned in the introduction I think there are four morals to the story. First and above all Gadamer takes Husserl’s project seriously and takes Husserl himself seriously. Gadamer sees the main shifts in Husserl’s thinking as driven by a commitment to phenomenology as a rigorous science and as based in a missionary conviction that only such a philosophical pursuit can save culture from relativism. He repeatedly praises Husserl for his descriptive care as well as his philosophical consistency. “We need not materially accept the systematic consistency that leads Husserl to the transcendental ego, but we must recognize it nonetheless in its immanent necessity.”⁵⁵ Yet, second, Gadamer saw Husserl’s transcendental turn as a clear mistake, and one that lead to an insupportable account of the subject. While Husserl’s account of the transcendental ego could be seen behind all four disagreements between Husserl and Gadamer, Gadamer sees the failure of Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity (Husserl’s failed “experimentum crucis”) as the strongest evidence that transcendental idealism is a dead end. Third, much of Gadamer’s interpretation of Husserl is inspired by Heidegger, but the philosopher he gives the most credit to for first confronting the limitations of

50. *The Nature of Sympathy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1954), 244.

51. “Discussion of ‘The Science of the Lifeworld,’” 110.

52. *Truth and Method*, 250. He says in a footnote he is referring to Viktor von Weizsäcker’s concept of the Gestalt circle, which connects body movement and perception.

53. “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity; Subject and Person,” 286.

54. “Friendship and Self-Knowledge” in *Hermeneutics, Religion and Ethics*, edited and translated by Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 128–141, here 129.

55. “The Phenomenological Movement,” 146.

Husserl's phenomenology is Scheler. Given the impact of Scheler's extraordinary genius on the young Gadamer—he attended lectures by Scheler years before he had even heard of Husserl or Heidegger—this might not be a surprise, but the tendency is to see Dilthey as the crucial figure mediating Husserl and Heidegger for Gadamer, not Scheler. When Gadamer is talking about hermeneutics, Dilthey is the main figure leading to Heidegger; but when he's talking about phenomenology, in particular his relation to Husserl, Scheler becomes the key transitional figure. Gadamer credits Heidegger with fully understanding the flaws of pure perception, how to close the gap between the study of essences and the study of actuality, and the deep flaws in Husserl's account of subjectivity, but Gadamer looks elsewhere when it comes to the proper solution to the limitations of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity. It should not come as a surprise that Gadamer is critical of Heidegger on this topic. Finally, Gadamer understands himself as working in the phenomenological tradition, especially when it is understood as properly embracing the motto "to the things themselves." He is sympathetic to Husserl's account of intentionality in the *Logical Investigations* and the development of horizontal intentionalities in the later writings. He also sees the concept of the lifeworld as the natural fulfillment of Husserl's starting point. When he says at the beginning of *Truth and Method* and *Plato's Dialectical Ethics* that he is going to work phenomenologically, he means as it was initially presented in the early and late writings of Husserl, and as it was developed in the writings of Scheler and Heidegger.
