

On Husserl and Cavellian Skepticism,
With Reference to the Thomistic
Theory of Creation

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On Husserl and Cavellian Skepticism, With Reference to the Thomistic Theory of Creation

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There is clearly some relationship between Husserl's transcendental idealist phenomenology and skepticism about the objects of the external world. Husserl himself says that skepticism "draws its power in secret" from the phenomenological "dimension," or that phenomenology overcomes skepticism by "making it true in a higher sense" (*Erste Philosophie*, Husserliana 7:57, 61). My dissertation attempts to explain precisely what that relation is. I focus on Husserl's views at the time he wrote book I of the *Ideen*, and I make use of the analysis of skepticism found in the early parts of Stanley Cavell's *Claim of Reason*. As a means to this end, I establish a parallel between the Thomistic metaphysics of causation and the epistemologies of Husserl and Cavell. It emerges that Husserl is, in a sense, able to refute the Cavellian skeptic, but that this comes at an extremely high price: in effect, the deification of the ego, which in turn renders absurd the basis of (Kantian) morality. I close by asking how we ought to respond to such a metaphysically "dangerous" doctrine, and in particular by pointing out that the danger may lie less in the doctrine than in the response.

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Abbreviations

Full details on these and other works cited are found in the Bibliography.

Abbreviations used in citing Husserl's works

EP *Erste Philosophie*

Hua *Husserliana*

Id 1 *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*

Id 2 *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, zweites Buch*

LU *Logische Untersuchungen* (1st edition, unless otherwise stated)

Abbreviations used in citing the works of St. Thomas Aquinas

De ent. *De ente et essentia*

De malo *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*

De pot. *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*

De subst. sep. *De substantiis separatis, seu de angelorum natura, ad fr. Reginaldum*

De ver. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*

In De div. nom. *Exposito in Dionysium De divinis nominibus*

In Metaph. *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum exposito*

In Ph. *Sententia super Physicam*

<i>In Sent.</i>	<i>Scripta super libros Sententiarum</i>
<i>Q. de an.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>

Abbreviations used in citing the works of Aristotle

<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Categoriae</i>
<i>De An.</i>	<i>De Anima</i>
<i>De Int.</i>	<i>De Interpretatione</i>
<i>EN</i>	<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>
<i>GC</i>	<i>De Generatione et Corruptione</i>
<i>Metaph.</i>	<i>Metaphysica</i>
<i>Ph.</i>	<i>Physica</i>
<i>Top.</i>	<i>Topica</i>

Abbreviations used in citing the works of other authors

<i>CAG</i>	<i>Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca</i>
<i>CCH</i>	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Husserl</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>The Claim of Reason</i> (Cavell)
<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Enneades</i> (Plotinus)
<i>KrV</i>	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i> (Kant)
<i>NE</i>	<i>Nouveaux essais</i> (Leibniz)
<i>PSG</i>	<i>Philosophische Schriften</i> , ed. Gerhardt (Leibniz)

Introduction

Several years ago Stanley Cavell asked me a question about the relationship between Husserl and skepticism, which at the time I was unable to answer. This dissertation began as an attempt to rectify that. It has since grown into something more, in particular given the lengthy essays on Husserl's ontology which now take up the central sections of chapter 3. That material represents an attempt to interpret Husserl's entire system in such a way as to correlate it point by point with traditional (Aristotelian/Neoplatonic) metaphysics—albeit an incomplete attempt, given that many important aspects of Husserl's thought (especially those revolving around the status of the noema and of “psychological reflection”) are only superficially treated. But even those sections, in any case, are still driven, in structure and terminology, by the overarching task of matching Husserl and Cavell, and thereby providing an answer to Cavell's original question.

To make this task manageable, I have been forced to adopt two limitations.

First, “Husserl,” for the purposes of this dissertation, refers almost entirely to the “transcendental phenomenological idealist” Husserl of *Ideen I* (though I will also have to resort, for some points on which book I is uninformative, to the so-called *Ideen II*—a text which Husserl himself did not write or approve for publication in its current form). There are significant and relevant differences between the theory of *Ideen I* and both later and earlier stages of Husserl's thought. Indeed, Husserl seems hardly to have composed two consecutive works without major changes in both doctrine and

terminology. The system of the *Ideen* deserves particular scrutiny, however, both because it marked a major watershed in Husserl's own development, and because it was extremely influential on later thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Rudolf Carnap.¹

Second, my discussion will be limited, for the most part, to the question of theoretical skepticism about the external world. I will make a few remarks near the end about practical skepticism (or the practical equivalent of skepticism) and about the problem of other minds.

My ultimate answer to Cavell's question will not take the form of a determination as to whether or not Husserl is, in Cavell's terms, a skeptic. I will explain shortly why it might look obvious that he is not, and why, on the other hand, it might look obvious that Cavell would say he is. But the main task of the dissertation will be to show that neither of these obvious answers is satisfactory. It will turn out, therefore, that there is no clear answer to the simple yes or no question. What Cavell was asking, in any case, was, I think, something more complicated: a question of what,

¹In some ways it would have been more natural to use as a reference the 1923/24 lectures on *Erste Philosophie* (published in *Husserliana* volumes 7 and 8). In this period Husserl himself seems far more conscious of the important and ambiguous relationship between his own view and skepticism. He also explicitly acknowledges, without giving any details, his debt to traditional metaphysics and ontology (see especially Hua 7:186–7). Both Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and Carnap's *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, moreover, seem to reflect some doctrines, terminology, and emphases which are found in these lectures and not in the published *Ideen* I. (The phrase *Aufbau der Welt* itself appears, in something like Carnap's sense, at Hua 7:175,33–4—but see also the phrase *Aufbau der räumlichen Welt* at *Id* 2, §18a, Hua 4:57,9–10.) These lectures, however, do not present anything like a complete and finished version of Husserl's system, and the fact that Husserl never published them shows in itself that he was not satisfied with their contents.

if anything, is peculiar about Husserl's response to skepticism, as Cavell defines that term. It is that more complicated question that I intend to answer.

A satisfactory answer will have to be in terms that both Husserl and Cavell could accept. It is to that end that I turn to traditional metaphysics, and in particular to St. Thomas. Not that I will be taking Thomas as a *historical* middle term between Husserl and Cavell: he seems to have exercised little if any direct influence on either. But it will turn out that traditional metaphysics, of which the Thomistic system is certainly one of the most developed and influential forms, contains the conceptual framework on the basis of which a precise comparison is possible. Whatever additional benefits are to be expected from the individual comparisons, then (of Thomas with Cavell and of Thomas with Husserl), the immediate reason for making them here is to provide that middle term which will allow the main comparison of Husserl and Cavell to go through.

To some readers (perhaps to almost all), this procedure will seem surprising and idiosyncratic, and, worse, it may seem unclear what significance there could be to its results. Why, one might ask, should we expect to find some kind of correspondence or analogy between Cavellian epistemology, Husserlian phenomenology, and Thomistic metaphysics, and, even granted that we might find some such thing, why should we bother looking for it? To some extent these questions cannot and should not be answered in advance: the test is to read on and see how far the comparison can be carried out, and, more importantly, whether it is fruitful—whether it sheds new light on some or all of the terms being compared. But, at the risk of justifying a surprising method by means of an even more surprising methodological principle, let me say here that I regard this type of comparison as almost the *only* intelligible thing that can be said about a philosophical system from the outside. To use a

type of economic metaphor which, for obvious reasons, has become quite popular: philosophical theories cannot be “cashed out”; they can only be converted one into another. When I say below, therefore, that one aspect or another of Husserl’s system or Cavell’s epistemological analysis corresponds to some metaphysical structure in Thomas, I am saying, in almost the only possible way, what those things really mean—what they really amount to. One knows the meaning of a word, as Cavell would say, only when one is able to project it correctly.

Chapter 1

Cavell

I do not intend to provide a complete summary of Cavell's views on skepticism. That would involve, first of all, a summary of virtually all of his writings—writings which are peculiarly resistant to summary. It also would involve coming seriously to grips with the later Wittgenstein: a very difficult task, and one which I do not presently feel competent to undertake. I will merely try to explain why, from Cavell's point of view, there is a question to be raised here at all, and to highlight certain features of Cavell's argument which point in the direction of an answer. This will be possible, and easier than it might at first sound, because Husserl diverges from the paradigmatic Cavellian skeptic at a very early stage. The point on which we need to focus lies, therefore, not in the complex and fascinating (and bewildering) efflorescence of *The Claim of Reason*, but near its root.

Now, the short answer to the question about Husserl's relationship to skepticism is that he thinks that phenomenology, and only phenomenology, can refute it. It is true that the existence of external things is in a certain sense dubitable. It is even true, in a certain sense, that they do *not* exist, that they are "nothing." But in the way in which the skeptical or dogmatic *empirical* idealist intends such statements, they are false, and transcendental idealist phenomenology can demonstrate that they are not only false but absurd (*widersinnig*). This is one of the points on which Husserl agrees

with, or intentionally echoes, Kant. Only by transcendental idealism can empirical idealism be refuted.

I will not yet get into the details of this refutation. But it should already be clear, to anyone familiar with Cavell's writings, that the mere existence of such a refutation in Husserl's thought does nothing to dispell the impression that he is, from Cavell's point of view, a skeptic. On the contrary, Cavell takes such refutations as *evidence* of skepticism:

I do not . . . confine the the term ["skeptical"] to philosophers who wind up denying that we can ever know; I apply it to any view which takes the existence of the world to be a problem of knowledge. A crucial step for me, in calling an argument skeptical, is that it contain a passage running roughly, "So we don't know (on the basis of the senses . . . alone); then (how) do we know?". It is at this stage that philosophies break into Phenomenalism, Critical Realism, etc.¹

Up to a point, of course, both Kant and Husserl *agree* with this sentiment. Cavell, in describing his own perspective as one "from which skepticism and (what Kant calls) dogmatic realism are made in one another's image, leaving nothing for choice,"² must be aware that, even from Kant's own point of view, there is little or nothing to choose between here. And the same goes for Husserl. Like Kant, he considers that dogmatism and skepticism are, as usually understood, absurd, and that the two absurdities, if not exactly identical, at least spring from the same root error. What neither Kant nor Husserl would accept, however, is the characterization of their *own* views as just another form of dogmatism or of skepticism. And yet Cavell has suggested precisely that, both by his choice of examples ("Phenomenalism," "Critical Realism") and by

¹CR, 46.

²Ibid.

his sweeping definition of skepticism. For it certainly seems, on the face of it, as if both Kant and Husserl regard the existence of the world as “a problem of knowledge.”

In fact I think that Kant does not claim or intend to refute skepticism, in the way that Cavell understands that project—not, at least, in his theoretical philosophy. He explicitly admits that, from a theoretical point of view, there is no way of knowing whether the grounds of internal and external perception are different—i.e., whether there is any “thing” outside of “me” in a metaphysical sense.³ In the *practical* philosophy there is indeed a kind of proof of the externality of “things,” but then, in practical philosophy, it is by definition no longer just knowledge that is at issue.⁴ Whether this shows that Kant is not a skeptic, or, on the contrary, that, having failed to refute the skeptic, he *ipso facto* is one, I will not try to decide.⁵ My primary purpose here is not to discuss Kant. And I do not think that the above remarks apply to Husserl. Husserl *does* intend to refute skepticism, in the very sense in which Cavell understands it, and he *does* regard this as a theoretical project.

Having started with the short answer that Husserl is not a skeptic, I have now

³See *KrV*, A378–80.

⁴I am agreeing, in other words—and claiming that *Kant* agrees—with Cavell’s suggestion (*CR*, 54) that the basis for belief in (external) things-in-themselves is similar to the basis for belief in God. But as for the further conclusion that in that case “‘noumenal’ would so far add nothing to the concept of ‘world,’” I can only say that for Kant, as much as for Husserl or Plotinus, there is indeed a sense in which the world of νοῦς is τὸ ἀλήθινον πᾶν, the All of true being (For Husserl, see *Id* 1, §51, 96 [and *EP*, Hua 7:283,32–3—“die allein wahre Welt”]; for Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.4.2.1–2). Sensible objects are not really things, and the sensible self is not the real (*eigentlich*) one (*KrV*, A492/B520). At one point Cavell describes Kant’s view as one according to which I am “sealed within my circle of experiences, never (under my own power) to know whether those experiences match an independent reality” (*CR*, 382). But that can’t be exactly right, because part of what is supposed to be “sealed off” from me is *myself*. See also below, p. 55, n. 37.

⁵But see below, p. 60, n. 47.

come, by a slightly longer route, to the answer that he most definitely is. But that answer is, if not exactly false, then incomplete. Exactly how it is incomplete is the task of this entire dissertation to explain. But in a rough, preliminary way, I can say that the problem lies in the assertion that all the various philosophical alternatives split off from each other *after* the skeptical question is raised. What I intend to show is that Husserl's approach is rather to make this question unaskable, to cut off its possibility before it appears. One may say that, in Husserl's system, it is true that we "know" of the existence of material objects, but that there is nevertheless no question as to "how" we know them.

I will leave it as an open question whether Cavell ought to call such a position "skeptical," or whether he should instead regard it as a rival to the kind of non-skeptical "refutation" of skepticism that Cavell looks for (and, up to a certain point, finds) in ordinary language. And in any case, even if we do not regard Husserl himself as a proponent of skepticism, it will not follow that we should look upon him as a desirable ally in the fight against it. It is very possible, on the contrary, that the means which Husserl uses to eliminate the skeptical question are so disturbing that skepticism itself would be preferable. Near the end of the dissertation I will try to show exactly why one might think that in Husserl's case. And I will then, finally, have a word to say about the implications of that—i.e., about how we ought to react to such a metaphysically "dangerous" doctrine.

To demonstrate all of these things I will need, as I mentioned before, to find a common basis, a common field upon which the philosophies of Husserl and of Cavell can be compared. My clue to finding this common basis is a distinction which Cavell introduces in the third chapter of *The Claim of Reason*: the distinction between "specific" and "generic" objects.

Cavell introduces the distinction in response to a certain line of argument in J.L. Austin's "Other Minds" —a line of argument which, at least as Cavell presents it, is directed against skepticism. But it is *not* one of those traditional "refutations" of skepticism that, in Cavell's view, are themselves skeptical. Austin proceeds, not by taking the skeptical question as a question of knowledge and then answering it, but by analyzing, from an ordinary language perspective, the question of knowledge itself—the question "How do you know?" Austin's claim is that, once it is properly understood how we really ask and answer such questions, we will see that the skeptic is using them illegitimately.

Austin takes as his examples such claims as "There's a bittern at the bottom of the garden," or "That is a goldfinch." We are to imagine that someone has made such a claim, and that we have challenged it with the question "But how do you know?" And we are to discover what kind of question this is—what it is that we have really asked for—from the ordinary answers we might expect to receive. Take the case of the bittern. Someone has informed us that "there is a bittern at the bottom of the garden." We ask: "How do you know?" Austin lists the following examples of possible responses:

- (a) I was brought up in the fens
- (b) I heard it
- (c) The keeper reported it
- (d) By its booming
- (e) From the booming noise
- (f) Because it is booming⁶

These responses are all statements about my *credentials* for recognizing bitterns, or about my *opportunities* for doing so in this particular case. And it is always estab-

⁶"Other Minds," 79.

lished (more or less roughly), in advance, what sort of credentials and opportunities will be required. Once these established requirements have been met, it would be ridiculous to go on asking “But how do you know?”

Enough is enough: it doesn’t mean everything. Enough means enough to show that (within reason, and for present intents and purposes) it “can’t” be anything else, there is no room for an alternative, competing description of it. It does *not* mean, for example, enough to show it isn’t a *stuffed* goldfinch.⁷

It would be ridiculous to go on in this way, that is, *unless* certain abnormal circumstances obtained: unless there were some particular reason to think, in this case, that the bittern or goldfinch in question was not a “real” one. But even if such a doubt about “reality” were to arise, it would, nevertheless, be some *particular* doubt, and there would be some particular established procedures for allaying it:

There are recognized ways of distinguishing between dreaming and waking . . . and of deciding whether a thing is stuffed or live, and so forth. The doubt or question “But is it a *real* one?” has always (*must* have) a special basis, there must be some “reason for suggesting” that it isn’t real.⁸

This is what is wrong with the argument of the skeptic (in Cavell’s sense, in which the metaphysical dogmatist is also a skeptic).

The wile of the metaphysician consists in asking “Is it a real table?” (a kind of object which has no obvious way of being phoney) and not specifying or limiting what may be wrong with it, so that I feel at a loss “how to prove” it *is* a real one.⁹

Cavell notes, however, that the examples used by wily metaphysicians (a table, a ball of wax, an envelope, a tomato) are unlike Austin’s examples of the goldfinch and

⁷Ibid., 84 (cited in *CR*, 49).

⁸Ibid., 87.

⁹Ibid. (cited in *CR*, 50–51).

the bittern. That is in itself no surprise to Austin: he is aware of this difference, and proud of it. It is, in fact, as Cavell admits, one of Austin's main complaints against traditional philosophy that it "works with paltry, arbitrary examples which stultify investigations from the outset."¹⁰ But Cavell sees something more significant than mere paltriness or arbitrariness here—or rather, he suggests that the "paltriness" of these examples is in itself significant: it is a symptom of the obsession which *forces* the metaphysicians to choose just these examples and no others (i.e., which makes them the very opposite of "arbitrary"). The metaphysicians choose examples "about which there just is no problem of recognition or identification or description."¹¹ It is here that Cavell first makes the distinction we need. "For heuristic purposes," he says, he will call these objects (tables, tomatoes, etc.) "generic," and the other, Austinian kind (goldfinches, bitterns, etc.) "specific."¹²

Cavell thinks that Austin's choice of "specific objects" as examples has helped to obscure something important about questions of knowledge. Austin's description is accurate in the normal cases: cases in which the question "How do you know?" is a request for my credentials, or for a description of my opportunities and procedures in this particular instance, or, in other words, in which the problem is one of "recognition or identification or description." But Cavell takes issue with the idea that the abnormal cases, in which there is a problem about the "reality" of, for example, the goldfinch, are parallel to these normal cases. He objects, in particular, to Austin's

¹⁰ *CR*, 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

claim that in such abnormal cases “I make sure it’s a real goldfinch in ways essentially similar to those in which I made sure it was a goldfinch.”¹³

In the normal cases, the responses to the question “How do you know?” involve the application of what Cavell calls “Austinian criteria”: “marks or features . . . which I might in principle be more expert at applying than others are.”¹⁴

In what *ways* do I make sure it’s a goldfinch? The answer seems to be that I make sure that I have identified it correctly, i.e., that I have in unobjectionable circumstances applied the correct (Austinian) criteria and that the bird truly manifests them (50).

But, Cavell argues, there are no such criteria in the abnormal cases.

There are (can be) no criteria for something’s being a real *X* over and above the criteria for its being an *X* . . . The criteria (marks, features) are the same for something’s being a goldfinch whether it is real, imagined, hallucinatory, stuffed, painted, or in any way phoney (51).¹⁵

It is still true, in the case of specific objects, that one must have a good reason, once the question of identification has been answered, to go on and ask a further question (of existence or reality). Cavell does not deny this. But in the case of

¹³“Other Minds,” 88, cited in *CR*, 50.

¹⁴*CR*, 51. The qualification “Austinian” is meant to distinguish these from “Wittgenstinian” criteria. I will save what little I have to say about these Wittgenstinian criteria for a later section.

¹⁵We can imagine cases where this would not be so. For example, we might be passing an alleged goldfinch or tomato through an airport scanner to determine whether it is real or fake and stuffed with explosives. In that case we might indeed appeal to experts to tell which was which, and we might indeed want to ask after their credentials, find out what “criteria” they have applied, and so forth. A goldfinch and a stuffed goldfinch would then no longer count as real and phoney examples of the “same” thing, however, but as two different specific objects. The new speciation can be traced to the new mode of intuition, so to speak, which an airport scanner mediates.

generic objects, there is no problem of identification at all. And so, given that we have somehow or other become suspicious about our knowledge of such an object, the problem *must* be one, not of identification, but of existence.

In the sense in which it is obviously unreasonable to ask of a specific (i.e. Austinian) object, without a special reason for asking, whether my basis for claiming to know . . . is enough to show that it is real—in that sense it is *not* unreasonable to ask of a generic object, granted that it has presented itself as a problem of knowledge, whether our basis for claiming to know (typically, “I see it”; “I know it by means of the senses”) is enough to show that it is real (55).

We are left, therefore, neither with any (Austinian) way of dismissing the question out of hand, nor with any (Austinian) way of answering it. And the result is skepticism. For the knowledge of a generic object is (in appropriate conditions) a “best case” of knowledge. If I know *anything*, I know that there is a table (or a tomato, or a piece of wax) here in front of me (see 133–4).¹⁶

Now, this terminology of specific and generic “objects” is a bit misleading, as Cavell himself points out. He warns against taking the distinction as a classificatory one.

I will not by such titles be meaning to suggest that there are two kinds of object in the world, but rather to summarize the spirit in which an object is under discussion, the kind of problem that has arisen about it, the problem in which it presents itself as the focus of investigation (52–3).

¹⁶I will not pay much attention here to the requirement of “optimal conditions.” It is not these optimal conditions in themselves that make the metaphysicians’ examples different, but rather their genericness. See the goldfinch as closely and as long as you like, there can still be a problem of proper identification; and then, on the other hand, given the proper context, even the vaguest and most circumstantial of evidence (the slight over-loudness of the passenger’s laugh as she ridicules the very suggestion that she has a goldfinch hidden in her luggage; the absence of the disorder that the ostrich would have left, if it had been the ostrich rather than the goldfinch which came through the room) might be “enough” to settle the question.

An object is generic or specific depending on how we consider it—i.e., depending on what we think or find to be in question about it. And *any* object could, in principle, be considered in either way.

By this I do not mean that any generic object could *as such* be taken as specific (i.e., that there is no “highest genus”). True, we can imagine being among space aliens, or members of some “primitive tribe,” and having to produce credentials and (Austinian) criteria for identifying tables, tomatoes, and so forth. But can we imagine producing such criteria for identifying bodies (as opposed to spirits)? Similarly, I do not mean to say that any specific object could, *as such*, take on a generic function (that there is no “lowest species”). We can imagine a context in which there is as little question about the identification of a goldfinch as there is about the identification of a table, but perhaps there are objects somehow so “specific” that no such context is conceivable for them. What I intend, rather, when I say that any object could be considered as either generic or specific, is just the much more ordinary observation that every object can be thought of under both specific and generic concepts (that every object falls under both a species and a genus). A goldfinch or a bittern is also a bird, a living thing, and so forth, and a tomato, on the other hand, is of some particular variety, a table of some particular style and make, a piece of paper of some particular weight and quality and brand (perhaps you can tell “by the watermark”).

Is it legitimate, as I have just done above, to switch back and forth between Cavell’s terminology of generic and specific objects and the more traditional one of objects’ “falling under genera and species”? It is not. Cavell does not appeal to any set metaphysical or logical system in which such “species” and “genera” would have their place. In this he is as different as could be from either Husserl or Thomas. And yet, as I will argue, there is an important sense in which to consider something as a

Cavellian generic object is to consider it with respect to its Aristotelian or Thomistic or Husserlian genus. This is so particularly with respect to the characteristic of the generic object which makes it so central to a consideration of skepticism—namely that, *because* a generic object presents itself as not (yet) differentiated, or not (yet) a particular kind of object, the only relevant question about it is the question of its being.

Before going on to show this, however, I will say a few words about “individual objects.” Cavell does not use this phrase. But besides genera and species, there are also individuals, and so the series “generic object,” “specific object,” seems to require “individual object” as its conclusion. And there is indeed a question of knowledge which can arise about an object—a way in which an object can come into question—in which it is treated as an individual. Or rather, there are two distinct such questions.

On one way of asking, we demand an answer which is, so to speak, more specific than specific. If I am asked how I know that that was Bucephalus who just trotted past, my answers in terms of criteria or opportunities will be similar to my answers in a specific case: “By the white spot”; “I saw him quite clearly.” But my answers in terms of credentials will be different. In the specific case, those answers were *universal*: they had to do with my prior exposure to or training in the identification of, not this object here, but objects of its *kind* (of its species). In the case of the individual object, such universal answers are not available (there is no science of individuals). I can only answer in terms of my prior experience of, or instruction about, this individual object itself (“I was there when Phillip bought him for thirteentalents”; “He looked exactly

as Arrian describes him”).¹⁷ Let us call an object like Bucephalus—an object so considered—a “subspecific individual.”

I can also imagine—and metaphysicians, wily or otherwise, would imagine exactly this—making a different kind of claim to knowledge of an individual. I can imagine claiming to know that *this* (pointing) is there—a claim which could then be challenged. That there must be “pointing” is an important fact, to which I will return below. For the moment, we need only notice that, on this way of looking at things (which so exercises Hegel and, in a different way, Wittgenstein), the question “How do you know?”, asked about an individual object, is just like that question asked about a generic one. One cannot be an expert in recognizing “this,” nor is it a matter of suspecting, for some good reason, a phoney or stuffed or decoy “this,” or a wax replica of “this.” Once the metaphysician refuses to accept one’s reason (“I see it”), there is nothing further to say. The skeptical conclusion then follows just as surely as it does from the question about generic objects. For, at least from the point of view of the metaphysician, knowledge about the existence of “this” also looks like a “best case.” If I cannot tell (in optimal conditions) that “this” exists, then it is no comfort

¹⁷My point here is not, incidentally, that correct (i.e., correct “enough”) identification of an individual object requires direct acquaintance with it, whereas the identification of a specific object does not. I could (in the proper context) defend my identification of Bucephalus by authority of Arrian’s description, and, on the other hand, I could defend my identification of the goldfinch by saying that I’ve worked with goldfinches for years. The difference is that in the case of the specific object, one justifies one’s identification of *it* (of *this* specific object here) by referring to some kind of direct or indirect “acquaintance” with, or, more broadly, training in the recognition of, objects of its *kind*, whereas in the case of the individual object the object of acquaintance or training is (or so you claim) the very same thing we have here before us.

Cf. Leibniz’s remark that it is impossible to know an individual except by “keeping hold of that same thing” (*garder elle même*) (*NE* 2.3.6, 289).

that I can correctly identify “it” as Bucephalus, a goldfinch, or anything else.¹⁸ I will refer to this second kind of individual object as a “generic individual.”

¹⁸Cf. *KrV*, A26/B42: “For neither absolute nor relative determinations can be intuited before the existence [*Dasein*] of the things to which they belong.”

Chapter 2

Thomas

Moving from Cavell to Thomas, we move from epistemology to metaphysics. The question we will be asking is not “How do you know?” but “Why (is it)?” To answer such a question is to give a *cause*. And so we will be discussing the different kinds of causes that objects have.

Our ultimate objective is to understand the way in which God causes the being of an object in creating it, and the differences between that kind of causation and every other. But I will begin by drawing a somewhat broader distinction, between “causes of being” and “causes of becoming.”

“An effect must depend on its cause. For this is of the definition [*ratio*] of cause and effect.”¹ But that can happen in different ways. The matter and form of a composite substance—its material and formal causes—are examples of “causes of being.” The being (existence) of the composite depends on these causes, because, for anything that is composed of matter and form, that composition—the presence of such and such a form in such and such kind of matter—is *essential*. “If the material or formal cause is subtracted, then the thing instantly ceases to be, since such principles enter

¹*De pot.* 5.1 c. It is notoriously difficult to translate *ratio* accurately (let alone consistently) into English—which is unfortunate, because a particular technical use of *ratio* will be somewhat important for us. I use various translations, all of which should be taken with a grain of salt, and give the original in brackets.

into the essence of the thing.”² In this sense, Thomas also says that the essence of such composite things is itself composite: that matter and form are “parts” of the essence.³

But besides the formal and material causes, there is also the efficient or “agent” cause.⁴ And an efficient cause is *not* a part of the essence of its effect—in fact, as we will see, it could not possibly be. The dependence of the effect may therefore be weaker. “Some agents are causes of their effects according to becoming merely, and not directly according to their being.”⁵ This, for example, is the way the offspring depends upon the animal which is its father. The offspring “becomes” (comes to be) only if and when the father animal acts in a certain way. But once it is in existence, it will continue to exist (i.e., will continue in “being”) without any further action on the father’s part.⁶ Still, not every efficient cause is a mere cause of becoming. Some are like material and formal causes: they are causes of being. To see why, we need to explain what an efficient cause is, and how efficient causation works.

The efficient cause, in its most general sense, is that which brings about the actuality of something possible. That is why the efficient cause is also called the “moving” cause.⁷ The possibility of an individual, generally speaking, precedes its

²Ibid.

³See *De ent.* 2, ll. 38–40; *In Metaph.* 7.99 (nn. 1467–9); *ST* 1.29.2 ad 3, 1.50.2 ad 3; *In Metaph.* 5.7 (n. 862) and 5.10 (n. 902), etc.

⁴The fourth of the four Aristotelian causes (the “final” cause) will not, for the most part, be important for us. But see below, p. 219, n. 310.

⁵*ST* 1.104.1 c.

⁶There are certain complications here, especially in the case of a human father and child, which I will ignore (see *ST* 1.118.1–2, and see below, p. 239).

⁷This is Aristotle’s name for it: τὸ κινεῖν or τὸ κινῆσαν. See *Ph.* 2.7.198^a24; *Metaph.* A.4.1070^b23; *GC* 2.9.335^b29–35.

actuality in time, and so the cause of actuality must be a cause of change, or, in the broadest sense of the word, of motion.

Now, in the case of a composite substance—a substance composed of form and matter—the matter in itself is the mere potentiality of that thing; it is the form that “makes [the matter] exist [*esse*] in actu.”⁸ Thus efficient causes, as causes of actuality, are (with just one exception, which I will come to presently) all causes of form. If some are causes of becoming merely, and others causes of being, then the difference must lie in the way in which they cause the *form* of the effect. “The being of the thing which is made depends on the efficient cause according as the form of the thing which is made depends on it.”⁹

In the normal cases of natural generation—an animal causing its offspring, or one fire causing another—the efficient cause and its effect belong to a common species. The effect, that is, is *essentially* the same as the cause: composed of the same form in the same (kind of) matter. And this places a restriction on the way such causes can operate, because nothing can cause itself per se:

It is manifest that, if some [things] are two of the same species, one cannot be the cause per se of the form of the other, insofar as it is such a form, because it would thus be the cause of its own form.¹⁰

If the animal *could* cause the form of its offspring per se then it would be a cause of being. This follows from the fact, which we have already noted, that the form, as a part of the essence, is always a cause of being of the informed thing. If the father animal were a cause of form per se, then, if and when it ceased to act, the form would

⁸*In Metaph.* 5.10 (n. 904).

⁹*De pot.* 5.1 c.

¹⁰*ST* 1.104.1 c.

be removed (“subtracted”) from its offspring, and the offspring would instantly pass out of existence. But since that is impossible—since it is impossible for something to cause its own specific form per se—what is left to the father animal is only a weaker mode of causation.

It can be the cause of such a form insofar as it is in matter—that is, that this matter acquires this form. And this is to be a cause according to becoming, as when a human generates a human, or fire fire.¹¹

These normal cases are cases of “univocal” generation—cases in which, as Aristotle says, “each substance comes to be out of [something] univocal [*συνώνυμον, univocum*].”¹² This requires a bit of explanation. Aristotle’s own official definition of “univocal,” in the first chapter of the *Categories*, does not require that the things signified by a univocal term be essentially the same. It requires only that they share a common “account which signifies the essence”—i.e., a common definition.¹³ But Thomas explains that this minimal univocity is just the kind demanded by the “logician” (this being part of what marks the *Categories* as a *logical* work). The “philosopher” and “physicist” ask for more: they demand that the word signify things which have not just a common account (*ratio*), but also a common being (*esse*).¹⁴ Being described by a term which is “univocal” in *this* sense is the same as having a common essence. We can therefore put the above restriction by saying that no univocal cause (in the “physical” or “philosophical” sense of univocity) is ever a cause of being.

¹¹Ibid. (For these examples, see *GC* 1.5.320^b20.) Thomas also speaks of a cause of being as “inducing” the form, whereas a cause of becoming merely “disposes” the matter to receive it. See *De pot.* 5.1 c. and *ST* 1.115.3 ad 2.

¹²*Metaph.* A.3.1070^a4–5.

¹³See *Cat.* 1.1^a6–12, and cf. *Top.* 1.5.101^b38 and *Metaph.* Z.5.1031^a11–12.

¹⁴*In Sent.* 1.19.5.2 ad 1. For the distinction between the logician and the philosopher in general, see *In Metaph.* 4.4 (nn. 573–7).

But not every cause of generation is of this kind. A mouse, for example, may come to be out of a pile of rags, without any father mouse being involved. In such a case, there is still *some* efficient cause of becoming—for example, maybe some human piled up the rags. But this is causation per accidens: it is not characteristic of humans as such to cause mice. To have only a cause per accidens is to happen by *chance*, or *spontaneously*, and so, from the point of view of sublunar causes, this kind of generation is “spontaneous.” The causes of generation per se, in such cases, are ultimately the angels (separate intelligences), which, however, always cause such effects indirectly, by means of the celestial bodies. Hence the life of “animals which are generated out of putrefaction . . . is consequent on the virtue of the sun and the stars.”¹⁵ But angels and celestial bodies both differ very greatly from sublunar things. Thomas says that they do not belong to a common “physical genus.”¹⁶ I will have more to say about this below. What it means, first of all, however, is that their forms and matters have no element in common—that there is no “community of essence” between them. A term which applies to members of different physical genera (even if it refers to them under a single definition or “account”) is thus philosophically, or “physically,” equivocal. And such an equivocal efficient cause is in principle free of the restriction which limits a univocal one.

Such an agent can be the cause of the form insofar as it is considered as such a form [*secundum rationem talis formae*], and not only according as it is acquired in this matter. And thus it is a cause, not only of becoming,

¹⁵*ST* 1.70.3, obj. 3.

¹⁶See, on “physical” and “logical” genus, *In Metaph.* 10.12 (n. 2142); *ST* 1.66.2 ad 2, 1.88.2 ad 4; and see further below, p. 195. The term “physical,” which is somewhat inappropriate here, derives ultimately from *Metaph.* I.8.1058^a23–5, with its distinction between the “genus” of the Heraclids and genus ἐν τῆ φύσει. Cf. *Metaph.* Δ.28.1024^b4–8, 31–5, and Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.1.3.1–5.

but of being.¹⁷

If we now turn back to the normal cases—the cases of univocal generation—we will see that, in addition to the univocal efficient cause (e.g., the father), there is always, according to Thomas, *also* an equivocal one. The basis for this doctrine in Aristotle is his discussion, in *Metaphysics* *Λ*, of the four “causes and principles” of things. The first three are “the form, the privation, and the matter,” which are “in-being [*ἐνυπάρχοντα*] causes.” These obviously differ from each other (even if the matter and the privation differ only “accidentally”). The fourth “principle,” however, is an “external” cause, which is “the mover”¹⁸—i.e., it is an efficient cause. And here it seems at first as if nothing new had been added to the original three. For in the case of univocal generation, the efficient cause is just another individual of the same species as the effect, which means that its form is the same as form of the effect, and its matter is a different parcel, so to speak, of the same kind of matter. In such cases “it is manifest,” as Thomas explains, “that the causes are in a certain way three, insofar as the mover and the form are the same in species.”¹⁹ In *Physics* I, indeed, where Aristotle’s discussion of “principles” focuses on sublunar processes, he mentions only three. It is only in *Metaphysics* *Λ*, where he examines the role of celestial bodies and immaterial substances—i.e., of equivocal causes—that the fourth principle appears. For the sublunar, univocal efficient cause, it turns out, is not enough to explain generation.

¹⁷*ST* 1.104.1 c. Note that causation per se should not be confused with causation of the *form* per se. A father mouse, unlike a human who piles up rags, causes a *mouse* per se; but it does not cause the *form* of mouse per se—only the celestial bodies can do that.

¹⁸*Metaph.* *Λ*.4.1070^b18–19, 22–3.

¹⁹*In Metaph.* 12.4 (n. 2473).

The cause of a human is the elements, fire and earth, as matter, and its proper form, and furthermore something else external, such as the father, and besides these the sun and the oblique circle [of the zodiac], which are neither matter nor form nor privation nor similar in species [or “similar in form”: *ὁμοειδές*], but movers.²⁰

Everything generated here below therefore has, in addition to its sublunar cause of becoming, also an equivocal celestial cause, which is a cause of being.

For it is manifest that not only living [things] that are generated without seeds are generated by the rays of the sun, but that even in those that are generated by seeds, the virtue of the sun operates.²¹

Like every cause of being, this celestial cause acts not only to bring its effect into being in the first place, but also to conserve it. “To superior causes . . . among corporeal things, is attributed the conservation and the permanence of things.”²² “For we see that [things] that are generated when the sun approaches us, are corrupted when it recedes. Such as herbs, which are born in the spring and wither in the autumn.”²³

What does it mean, however, to cause a form “per se”? One might imagine that, just as something causes the composite, so too something must cause the form, regarded as a separate entity, to come into being. But that is not a possible understanding of Thomas. He makes it quite clear, on the contrary, that the forms of

²⁰*Metaph.* A.5.1071^a13–17. Cf. *GC* 2.10.336^a31–2 and *Ph.* 2.2.194^b13 (“A human and the sun generate a human”).

²¹*In De div. nom.* 4.3 (n. 312). Cf. *ST* 1.118.1 c. For the ultimate origin of this doctrine, see Plato, *Republic* 6.509^b2–4. Plato, however, refers to the sun as a cause of becoming (*γένεσις*) of visible things, whereas the Good is the cause of being and substance (*εἶναι καὶ οὐσία*) of intelligibles. The idea that generable and corruptible sensible things are nevertheless “substances,” which have a cause of *being*, is Aristotelian.

²²*ST* 1.104.2 c.

²³*In Metaph.* 12.6 (n. 2511). As for what would happen if all the celestial bodies were to cease acting entirely, see below, p. 219, n. 310.

composite substances cannot be thought of in that way. “Forms do not have being, but composites have being by means of them [*per eas*],”²⁴ and hence “it is not forms that are generated, but composites.”²⁵ “Causes of form *per se*” cannot literally be causes which bring the form itself into being; they must be a type of cause of the composite.

We can understand *what* type of cause of the composite they are if we remember the argument which showed that such causes of being are never univocal. All members of a single species have, it was argued, the same form. If an animal caused the form of its offspring *per se*, it would therefore cause the form of every member of its species—including itself. An efficient cause of being, in other words, is one that causes its effect, not as this or that individual thing (not insofar as “*this* matter acquires this form”), but simply as a member of its species:

For a non-univocal agent is the universal cause of a whole species, as the sun is the cause of generation of all humans. A univocal agent, however, is not a universal agent cause of the whole species (otherwise it would be its own cause, since it is contained under the species), but is a particular cause with respect to this individual, which it constitutes in [its] participation in the species.²⁶

The effect of a non-univocal cause, in other words, is a *specific* object.

Now, everything which I have just been explaining—the distinction between efficient causes of being and becoming, and the fact that the former are equivocal and universal, while the latter are univocal and particular—followed from the rule that every efficient cause is, in one way or another, a cause of *form*. But I also mentioned, above, that there is one exception to that rule. To see how this can be, recall that the

²⁴*ST* 1.65.4 c.

²⁵*In Metaph.* 7.8 (n. 1458).

²⁶*ST* 1.13.5 ad 1.

efficient cause is responsible for a transition from possibility to actuality. Suppose, in other words, that *A* is an efficient cause, and *B* its effect, and suppose that *A* acts at some time *t*. Prior to *t*, only *A* is actual. *B* itself is possible before *t*, but becomes actual only afterwards. In the cases we have been discussing, however, in which *B* comes about by generation, there is always a second *actual* thing, besides *A*, that must precede *B* in time. Call this thing *C*. There is not in *C* (as there is in *A*) any “active potency” to produce *B*—*C* does not make *B* come into being. But there is in it a “passive potency.” *C* is something that, given the proper efficient cause and the absence of any impediments, can *become* (be made into) *B*. Hence although *B* does not exist in actu before *t*, it does have a kind of existence “in” the passive potency of *C*—i.e., it exists “in potentia.” That is why, in such cases, the act which *A* performs at *t* can consist only in causing the *form* of *B*: the potentiality of *B*, i.e. its matter, is already in existence.²⁷

There is, however, also a kind of possibility which is *not* potentiality: a way in which things can be “possible not according to a potency.”²⁸ In other words, there is a kind of possibility which is not relative to any pre-existing condition—a kind which is absolute. For even if something—some object under some description—corresponds to no passive potency in actual things, still, if that description isn’t self-contradictory, then there is a sense in which the object is possible: it is *logically* possible. What is *impossible* in this sense is so “not because of the privation of some potency, but because of the repugnance of the terms in a proposition.”²⁹ The difference between

²⁷See *In Metaph.* 7.6 (nn. 1384–8) and 5.14 (nn. 955–6, 961–3).

²⁸*Metaph.* Δ.12.1019^b34–5: *δυνατὰ οὐ κατὰ δύναμιν, possibles non secundum potentiam.*

²⁹*In Metaph.* 5.14 (n. 971).

possible and impossible is

because of the relationship [*habitudinem*] of the predicate to the subject, because sometimes it is repugnant to the subject, as in impossible [things], but sometimes not, as in possible [things].³⁰

What can be possible or impossible in this way is not, therefore, in the first instance, an *object* like a horse or a fire, but rather, so to speak, a concept. The *concept* of a ϕ which is ψ is possible if ϕ and ψ are not “repugnant”—i.e., not contradictory opposites. It is not as if there were some kind of thing (an *impossibilium*) that is described by contradictory predicates, and therefore cannot exist. Two contradictory predicates cannot be used to describe the same *thing* at all. What is at issue is therefore not whether a certain thing can come into being or not, but whether a certain predicate can be attached to a certain subject. That is why Aristotle describes the absolutely impossible as that “of which the contrary is of necessity true”:³¹ true and false, in the usual meaning of those words, pertain not to things, but to propositions. “To the true belongs affirmation in what is composed, and negation in what is disjunct, but the false the contradiction of this partition.”³² And since affirmation and negation are acts of the mind, rather than properties of its objects, “the true and the false are not in things [*ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, in rebus*] ... but in the mind [*ἐν διανοίᾳ, in mente*].”³³ Absolute possibility is “logical” possibility: it belongs to the field of study, not of the philosopher, who studies “physical being” (*ens naturae*), but of the logician, who studies “being in account” (*ens rationis*).³⁴

³⁰*In Metaph.* 9.1 (n. 1775).

³¹*Metaph.* Δ .12.1019^b23–4.

³²*Metaph.* E.4.1027^b20–23.

³³*Ibid.*, ll. 25–7.

³⁴*In Metaph.* 4.4 (n. 574).

It is important to remember, however, that Aristotle’s own version of the principle of non-contradiction is not the modern “not (p and not p),” but rather: “It is impossible for the same [property] simultaneously to be [$\acute{\upsilon}\pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$, *inesse*] and not to be in the same [thing] according to the same [manner].”³⁵ Even though logical possibility is the possibility of a concept, therefore, it is the possibility of that concept insofar as it might be *applied* to an object (its possibly being “adequate” to some object): a concept containing impossible predicates is impossible *because* contradictories cannot “be in” the same thing at the same time.³⁶ There is therefore, after all, a way of thinking of the object itself as absolutely possible. It is possible “by being or not being somehow”:³⁷ being *or* not being, but not both. The object is absolutely possible, in this sense, in that it is something to which a concept might possibly apply. But this kind of absolute possibility is secondary. It is, after all, our concepts that must be adequate to objects, rather than vice versa. The objects are what they are; the question is whether certain predicates could (possibly) be used, in combination, to refer to them.

Things look rather different, however, when we compare the object, not to human concepts which may or may not apply to it, but to its idea or archetype in the divine intellect. In that case it is the mind that is the measure of the thing, and not vice versa: things themselves are said to be true to the extent that what God affirms is composed in them—i.e., to the extent that predicates attach to subjects in the way

³⁵ *Metaph.* Γ.3.1005^b19–20. Kant will ask what the “simultaneously” ($\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha$, *simul*) is doing here, and draw great conclusions from the answer—see *KrV*, A152–3/B191–3.

³⁶ This is related to the Fregean doctrine (in itself foreign to traditional logic) that self-contradictory concepts are indeed possible as such—that they simply have empty extensions.

³⁷ $\tau\tilde{\omega}\tilde{\nu}$ εἶναι πῶς ἢ μὴ εἶναι, *eo quod aliquo modo sunt aut non sunt* (*Metaph.* Θ.1.1046^a8–9).

that God conceives them to. And so things themselves can also be called possible, in a sense which is both absolute and primary, if God is able to affirm their existence—i.e., if they are possibly adequate to their archetypes.

But “true,” in the sense of “adequate to the divine archetype,” is a *transcendental*: it is “convertible” with being. For God is omnipotent. What God affirms, is. Hence it emerges that the limits of affirmability, of possible truth, are also the limits of possible being. God’s omnipotence consists in his being able to bring about any state of affairs which is logically possible—that is, not self-contradictory. What is logically possible, is also metaphysically so.

Whatever can [*potest*] have the nature [*ratio*] of being is contained under absolute possibility, with respect to which God is said to be omnipotent. But nothing is opposed to the nature [*ratio*] of being, except non-being. That, therefore, is repugnant to the nature [*ratio*] of absolute possibility . . . which in itself implies being and not being simultaneously.³⁸

God is a kind of efficient cause. He causes possible things to be actual. And he is, of course, no mere cause of becoming: he is an efficient cause of being. But he differs from every other efficient cause in that the possibilia which he can make actual are not potential things—not things that exist already in *potentia*. Omnipotence is rather the power to make actual what is possible in a mere logical sense, without

³⁸*ST* 1.25.3 c. There is actually a subtle equivocation here. Talk of God “affirming” and “negating” is (as Thomas would acknowledge) a mere anthropomorphic metaphor. There are not any successive “acts” or really distinct “ideas” in God’s “mind” (i.e., he does not “think”). Once the metaphor is stripped away, however, it turns out that saying God “affirms” something is *no different* from saying that he causes it to be. There is no new information to be gained about the limits of divine power from such a metaphorical reformulation. In particular, it in no way follows that the limits of divine power coincide with the limits of conceivability, literally understood. This, again, is a point that Kant will seize upon. It does not yet bother Thomas, however, and, for reasons which will become obvious, it no longer bothers Husserl.

regard to any preconditions whatsoever. Here there is no passive potency, and no being in potentia, which precedes the actuality in time. Hence God causes the being of things, not by causing their form merely, but by causing “everything that pertains to their being in any way”³⁹—i.e., he is the cause both of their form and of their matter.⁴⁰

To cause the matter of something, however, is to cause it, not according to its species, but according to its genus—according to its “physical” genus, that is. For the composition of genus and differentia in the definition of a composite thing reflects the composition of matter and form in its essence. “The account [*ratio*] of the genus is taken from that which is material in the thing, and the account [*ratio*] of the differentiae from that which is formal.”⁴¹ So long, therefore, as the definition itself is “physically,” and not just “logically,” univocal—so long, that is, as it truly singles out a single common *essence*—the generic part of it must single out a common matter. Things which belong to the same species have all the same form, but things which belong to the same (physical) genus have only their matter in common.

Most genera can also be seen, with respect to still higher genera, as species. Thus

³⁹*ST* 1.44.2 c.

⁴⁰Note carefully that what is “absolutely” possible is *less* possible than what is relatively so: to exist in potentia is already to be possible in a far stronger sense. That is why, according to Thomas, it requires a greater power—an infinite power—to actualize an absolutely possible thing. It is also the grounds for Kant’s objection to this account of “absolute possibility,” which at first looks merely verbal: that the term “absolute” ought to be reserved for what is *most* possible, rather than what is least so (*KrV*, A324–5/B381). The verbal disagreement is really a symptom of something deeper: a question of the way in which different objects can be consistent or inconsistent with each other, i.e., the way in which they can be thought of as belonging or not belonging to a single possible “world.” This is the problem that Hume brought to Kant’s attention. It is as important for Cavell and Husserl as it is for Kant. I cannot, however, go farther into it here.

⁴¹*In Metaph.* 5.7 (n. 862).

the matter which all their members have in common is “proximate” matter only: it is matter which, from another point of view, is seen to involve form. Horse, ox, and orangutan are species of a common physical genus (the genus of viviparous sanguineous mobile animals), and this means that the *forms* of horse, ox, and orangutan all exist in the same (kind of) matter.⁴² But in comparison with a radish, for example, a horse, an ox and an orangutan all have a single form in common (in this case, the form of *animal*), while they share with the radish only the matter which is common to all sublunar living things. As causes of form, therefore, the created causes of being and becoming of, for example, an ox (its causes as a specific object and as a subspecific individual) are also the causes of its (proximate) matter and of its (intermediate) genus. What causes something to be an ox also causes it to be flesh and bones, and to be an animal.

Recall, however, that between members of different *highest* physical genera there is no community of essence: nothing is common to their respective essences that could serve to define a genus including them both, with respect to which they would be specifically different. The forms (actualities) of such things must differ, so to speak, not in kind but in degree. And the pure potentiality to receive such forms—the “prime matter”—is therefore different. Sublunar bodies, for example, are generable and corruptible: their forms succeed one another in the same matter. Celestial substantial form is “more actual” than that: so actual that, once it is found in a certain parcel

⁴²It is not clear whether one should say that this common proximate matter is flesh and bones (which all such animals are “made of”) or that it is the menstrual blood (from which they are all generated). Thomas, for the most part, takes the former view. See *De pot.* 5.1, obj. 5 and *SCG* 4.30, ll. 31–8, and cf. Averroes, *Tafsīr* (Long Commentary) to *Metaph.* Δ, comm. 10, 534,10–14; Simplicius *In Ph.* 1.7, CAG 9:225,25–7; Boethus apud Themistium *In Ph.* 1.7, CAG 5:26,9–28. Fortunately this issue is irrelevant for our purposes.

of matter, there is no room for any other form to succeed it.

Inferior bodies have less actuality than celestial bodies, since in inferior bodies the total potentiality is not completed by the act, in that the substrate matter of one form remains in potentia to another form, which is not so in celestial bodies, since the matter of a celestial body is not in potentia to another form, and thus its total potentiality is exhausted [*terminata*] by the form that it has.⁴³

Hence sublunar prime matter, which is the pure potentiality to receive one form *after* another, is incapable of receiving celestial form. There is not a single prime matter of celestial and sublunar things.⁴⁴

Things which differ from each other in highest physical genus do not differ in form only, but in form and matter both: in “everything that pertains to their being in any way.” A specific form determines what kind of object something is—it designates, as Aristotle puts it, as a *quale quid*, a “certain how.”⁴⁵ Things that differ in form differ in *kind*—that is, in species. But a difference in highest physical genus is a difference in prime matter: a difference in the pure *possibility* of being something (being some kind of thing) at all. Hence Thomas also refers to these highest genera as different modes or “grades” of being.⁴⁶ Created efficient causes, however, are causes of form. Although they may, in a certain sense, be thought of as causes of proximate matter, they are not, in any sense, the causes of *prime* matter. They do not cause generic objects, if “generic” is taken as referring to the highest physical genus. The created

⁴³*De pot.* 5.8 c.

⁴⁴*ST* 1.66.2 c. On the three different types of prime matter (and the way in which the “immaterial” angels can nevertheless be said to have “matter”), see especially *De subst. sep.* 8, ll. 23–33.

⁴⁵*Cat.* 5.3^b15–16.

⁴⁶See *De pot.* 7.7 ad s.c. 1; *In Sent.* 1.19.5.2 ad 1. Cajetan (*De nominum analogia*, n. 5, pp. 6–8) fails to understand this connection.

causes of an ox—the father ox, the celestial bodies—cause it to become and to be an ox, an animal, etc., but they do *not* cause it to become a (sublunar) body. The form of an ox or of an animal may come and go with the action of such causes, but (sublunar) prime matter is never without (sublunar) corporeity.⁴⁷

The relationship between God and a generic object—an object regarded with respect to its highest physical genus, or, in other words, with respect being as such—is thus analogous to that between some created efficient cause of being and a specific object as its effect.

The celestial bodies, for example, are equivocal causes of sublunar things. There is no potentiality, in sublunar things, to be actual in the way that celestial bodies are, and celestial bodies therefore do not belong to any sublunar physical genus. Sublunar prime matter is incapable of receiving their forms (incapable of being informed by them univocally), because they are too actual for it: they “lack” a kind of potentiality (corruptibility) which all sublunar forms have in common. But this “lack” is not in any way a defect in the power of celestial form. On the contrary, it is because of this difference in grade of actuality or of being that celestial bodies can be *universal* causes of sublunar things, causes of sublunar forms per se—causes, in other words, of sublunar specific objects.

⁴⁷See *GC* 1.5.321^a9–15. My discussion implies that Thomas should follow Simplicius rather than Avicenna on the issue of corporeity: he should hold that what all sublunar bodies have in common is not a common generic “form of corporeity,” but simply sublunar materiality—that is, a common defect in their mode of being. (See my paper, “Simplicius and Avicenna.”) I think that that really is Thomas’s mature and considered view (see especially *ST* 1.66.2 ad 3), although in the very early *De ente et essentia* he reproduces Avicenna’s discussion of corporeal form almost word for word (see *De ent.* 2, ll. 105–50, and cf. *al-Šifā’*: *al-Mantiq*, pt. 5 [*al-Burhān*] 1.10, 99,16–100,13), and even later he sometimes speaks as if all bodies, or even all substances, have something formal in common. (See, e.g., *Q. de an.* 9 c.; *ST* 1.76.7 ad 1, 2.)

God, similarly, is an equivocal cause of beings. There is no (logical) possibility of something else being actual in the way that he is, because he is not, strictly speaking, logically “possible” at all (is not a thing that can be described by applying a predicate to a subject). He is outside every *logical* genus of beings. “God is not in a genus.”⁴⁸ And because of this, he is the *universal* cause of being, compared to which all created efficient causes of being are merely particular.

That . . . which is the cause of things insofar as they are beings must be the cause of things, not only according as they are *such* by accidental forms, nor according as they are *these* by substantial forms, but even according to everything which pertains to their being in any way. And thus one must posit that even prime matter is created by the universal cause of beings.⁴⁹

God is therefore the cause of generic objects—of things regarded, not with respect to what *kind* of things they are, but with respect to their mode or grade of being per se.

In any natural thing [i.e., in any sublunar substance] we find that it is a being, and that it is a natural thing, and that it is of such and such a nature. Of which the first is common to every being; the second, to every natural thing [i.e., to every member of the genus, “sublunar body”]; the third in one [single] species; and fourth, if we add accidents, is proper to this individual. This individual, therefore, cannot, in acting, constitute another in the same species, except as it is the instrument of those causes which are with respect to the whole species and [which are] beyond the whole being of inferior [i.e., sublunar] nature. And because of this nothing acts to [cause] the species [*agit ad speciem*] in this inferior [world] except by virtue of the celestial bodies, nor does anything act to [cause] being [*agit ad esse*] except by virtue of God.⁵⁰

The analogy between God and created causes takes us only so far, however. Like all such analogies, it is infinitely misleading. An angel or a celestial body does not

⁴⁸*De ent.* 5, l. 8; *ST* 1.3.5 c., 1.88.2 ad 4.

⁴⁹*ST* 1.44.2 c.

⁵⁰*De pot.* 3.7 c.

cause the form of this or that member of a species as such, but the form of the species as a whole. Something else—a cause of becoming—must determine which matter the form comes into at a given time. This, again, is why the possibility which such causes actualize is *matter*: a real existent in potentia. There are real preconditions, in the absence of which they cannot act. “The virtue of a celestial body is not infinite. Thus it requires a determinate disposition in the matter in order to induce its effects, both so far as distance of place and so far as other conditions.”⁵¹ God’s action, however, is not like this. True, it is even more universal than the action of created causes, causing not only a species, but an entire physical genus, as a whole. By this very fact, however, it is clear that there can be no preconditions for the application of such power. It is the power of creation *ex nihilo*.

Before the world existed [*esset*], it was possible for the world to exist [*esse*], not according to a passive potency, which is matter, but according to the active potency of God, and furthermore according as something is said to be possible absolutely, not according to some potency, but from the relationship [*habitudine*] of the terms only, because they are not repugnant to each other.⁵²

But if no real preconditions determine what receives being from God and what does not, then the determination must be made by God himself. God must be not only the most universal of causes, but also the most particular. He must cause the being of objects, not only as generic, but also as individual.

This may seem surprising. We have already seen Thomas say, what seems reasonable enough, that individuals of the same species differ from each other because of accidents. If nothing else, such things must differ from each other in place and time.

⁵¹*ST* 1.115.6 ad 2.

⁵²*ST* 1.46.1 ad 1. Cf. Plotinus’ statement that the power of the One is the power to “rule” over “nothing” (*Enn.* 6.8.20.29–31).

It is hardly necessary to invoke God as the *direct* cause of these accidents, however, since it is precisely accidents that even sublunar causes have the power to determine. Bucephalus is this horse rather than another because his father, a sublunar individual, acted here and now, rather than at some other time and place.

But this picture is incomplete. It is true that two individuals of the same species must differ because of some difference in form (must be *actually* different), and, given that they are essentially the same, the form by which they differ must be an accidental one. But accidents cannot be what makes them different individuals in the first place—cannot be the “principle of individuation.” For accidents are subsequent to substance. The substance may not always be prior to them in time (both it and the accident may have come into being simultaneously), but it is always logically prior (prior in “account,” as Aristotle says⁵³). An accident is this *kind* of accident because it exists in *this* way in substance as its subject; and it is *this* accident because it exists in *this* substance. Accidents themselves, in other words, are individuated only by their subjects.⁵⁴ One “where” or “when” is different from another “where” or “when” *because* they inhere in different substances. It would be circular to turn around and use the difference in “where” and “when” to explain the individuation of the substances themselves.⁵⁵

If the substantial form is common to all members of a species, however, and the individuation of accidents is posterior to that of substances, what *is* the “principle of individuation”? The only thing which is prior to a substantial form is the prime matter which is its subject. Different individuals—things which differ “numerically”—

⁵³*Metaph.* Z.1.1028^a32.

⁵⁴Cf. Simplicius, *In Ph.* 1.7, CAG 9:226,23–5.

⁵⁵Kant, of course, rejects this—see below, p. 56.

must therefore have different matter; or, in other words, what is one “in number” is that “of which the matter is one.”⁵⁶ Prime matter, as something universal (as a certain “kind” of matter) corresponds to the highest genus: to the universal, as opposed to the particular, in a definition. But as something *particular*, prime matter belongs to a single individual only.

The definition, in natural things, does not signify form merely, but form and matter . . . not, however, the designated matter [*materia signata*], which is the principle of individuation; but the common matter.⁵⁷

What, however, “designates” the matter—i.e., what ultimately causes the unity of a single thing, and its difference from all others? It must be that which causes, not merely the form of the thing, but its whole being, matter included. “One” and “something [else],”⁵⁸ like “true,” are transcendentals, convertible with being. And God, therefore, as the universal cause of being, is also the cause of individuals as such. “The causality of God . . . extends itself to all beings, not only so far as the principles of species, but even so far as the individual principles.”⁵⁹ God does not merely cause a thing of a certain (specific or subspecific) kind, a *quale quid*; he causes a thing as “this,” as *hoc aliquid*—that is, as a generic individual.

What is true of beginnings is also true of endings. A created cause of being acts to conserve something insofar as it has one form (belongs to one species) rather than

⁵⁶*Metaph.* Δ.6.1016^b31–33.

⁵⁷*ST* 1.75.4 c. For universal vs. particular matter, see *Metaph.* Z.10.1035^b27–33 and Θ.7.1049^a22–4. The doctrine, however, that a material substance is “this” qua (prime) matter is ultimately Platonic, rather than Aristotelian—see *Timaeus* 49^e–50^a, and cf. *De An.* 2.1.412^a7–8; *Metaph.* H.1.1042^a27–8, Λ.3.1070^a9–13 (see, however, *Ph.* 1.7.190^b24–7).

⁵⁸Thomas understands *aliquid* (“something”), as a transcendental, to mean *aliud quid* (“something else”). See *De ver.* 1.1 c.

⁵⁹*ST* 1.22.2 c.

another. As long as it continues to act, it will continue to cause this species as such. But even though the celestial causes, as a matter of fact, all act continuously,⁶⁰ sublunar substances can nevertheless be corrupted. Conditions change, either with regard to the distance between them and their celestial cause, or to other “material dispositions.” Under the influence of some sublunar causes of corruption, an actually existing substance comes into a state of potential non-being—i.e., of being, potentially, something else (something of a different species). This potentiality is then actualized by the cooperation of the celestial causes, so that the old form passes out of the designated matter and is replaced by a new one.⁶¹

God, on the other hand, as the conserving cause of being of a created thing, needs no change in circumstances to cease conserving it, nor need the thing have in itself any real potential for corruption, any potential for becoming no longer itself, if that is to happen. When God ceases to conserve something, after all, it will *not* become something else (a different form in the same matter), but will be nothing—i.e., will no longer “be” at all. Just as, before the world existed, there was no passive potency for its existence, so too incorruptible things—angels and celestial bodies, but also the sublunar world regarded as a whole—contain no passive potency for non-being. There is no way for them to lose their current form and take on a new one.⁶² They exist

⁶⁰I say “as a matter of fact” because, in a created world, an incorruptible substance whose nature it is to “run down”—to operate less and less and eventually stop acting altogether—is a *logical* possibility. See *De pot.* 5.5 ad 9, and see below, p. 219, n. 310.

⁶¹In fact, corruption typically involves, not the replacement of a single individual of one species by a single individual of another, but the dissolution of one individual into many, or coalescence of several into a larger mass. The task of explaining this fact, which falls to the doctrine of corporeal form (see below, p. 210, n. 301), is surprisingly difficult—difficult enough that Leibniz, in a sense, gave up on it as impossible.

⁶²On the “form” of the world as a whole, see *ST* 1.46.1, obj. 1.

actually (have form) without potentially not being. And yet, just as the existence of the world, before creation, was nonetheless possible absolutely, and hence possible with respect to the active potency of God, so too the non-existence of even such incorruptible things is now possible, and would follow instantly if God should cease to conserve them.

Being per se follows from the form of a creature—supposing, however, the influence of God . . . Thus the potential for non-being in spiritual creatures and in celestial bodies is rather in God, who can subtract his influence, than in the form or in the matter of such creatures.⁶³

So, in summary, this is the difference, metaphysically speaking, between a specific and a generic object. The being of a specific sublunar substance—its being this *kind* of sublunar substance, rather than some other—is explained, given the continued action of its universal cause, by the presence of certain conditions. In the normal case of univocal generation, these conditions will involve a proper (per se) cause of becoming, which must be of a certain species (the same species as the effect). If we ask why there is, say, an ox here, then the answer will be: the sun and an ox generate an ox, in the menstrual blood of a cow. This corresponds to the fact that, in a normal case of questions about specific object (for example, a goldfinch), we are questioning someone’s expertise in identifying a certain *kind* of thing, and hence demanding that they have some universal criteria which enable them to do so. But even in abnormal cases of equivocal generation, in which there is no cause of becoming per se of what comes to be, there are still *some* circumstances—circumstances which cannot, perhaps, be specified in advance—which allow the universal causes of being to achieve their effect. This corresponds to the fact that, in the abnormal case of questions

⁶³*ST* 1.104.1 ad 1.

about the *reality* of a specific object, even though there are no pre-established criteria for answering the question, still it must be based on some particular problem about the situation—something that makes us suspect, for example, that the goldfinch is stuffed.

There can be, on the other hand, no material preconditions for the coming into existence of a generic object. The cause of such an object must be the cause of prime matter itself. There is therefore no explanation, normal or otherwise, for its becoming. It can be explained only in terms of a cause of being. And this must be the universal (that is: transcendental) cause of being, the infinitely powerful cause which is capable of acting without any preconditions. It follows, however, that there are also no preconditions—normal or abnormal—for its ceasing to exist. The reason for its existence is such that it can turn out, at any time, and without any further explanation, to exist no longer. Just as the lack of any particular reason for questioning the reality of a Cavellian generic object is what makes it impossible to *answer* the question, hence throwing our knowledge as a whole into doubt, so too the dependence of objects on their generic cause of being implies the contingency of the world as a whole.

As for individual objects, they are in a way more specific than specific ones: there is never any explanation for their existence, as such, in terms of universal laws. (It is not true that horses generate Bucephalus, only that *Bucephalus*' father generated him at a particular time and place.) This corresponds to the fact that, in the case of questions about a subspecific individual, we demand a kind of "expertise," not in recognizing some *kind* of object, but in recognizing *this very object* we have here before us. But individuals are also, in a way, like generic objects. For the cause of

being of an individual object as “this” must, like the cause of a generic object, be the cause of the form and the matter both.

Chapter 3

Husserl

3.1 Introduction: Thomistic epistemology and the modern skeptical dilemma

I hope that I have made it clear, by now, that there is a striking parallel between traditional metaphysics (at least in its Thomistic version) and what Cavell calls “traditional epistemology.” But I would certainly not claim this as a great and surprising discovery on my part. For it is old news that there is *some* analogy between metaphysics and epistemology—some analogy between the object’s relationship to the knowing intellect, on the one hand, and to its various efficient causes, on the other. The germ of this idea is, in fact, already present in traditional metaphysics itself. The reason that truth is a transcendental (the reason that every being, as such, can be called “true”) is that every being, as such, must conform to God’s knowledge of it. “The knowledge [*scientia*] of God is the cause of things”¹—i.e., the cause of their being. As far as God’s knowledge goes, then, the relationship between traditional knowing and causation is not so much analogy as identity.

There is not, however, in the Thomistic system, a strict analogy between *human* epistemology and the metaphysical theory of efficient causes, and it is instructive to

¹*ST* 1.14.8 c.

see why. There are, namely, three ways in which “knowledge” is possible:

In all knowledge [*scientia*] there is an assimilation of the knower to the [thing] known. Thus, it must be that either [1] the knowledge is the cause of the [thing] known, or [2] the [thing] known is the cause of the knowledge, or [3] both are caused by one cause.²

Case (1), as we know already, is the case of divine knowledge—the knowledge of an *intellectus archetypus*.³ In this case the knowledge itself causes the truth, i.e. the being, of its objects as such: it is their transcendental cause. As the cause of the whole being of things, “the ideal concepts [*rationes*] which exist in God are effective of things not only insofar as [pertains] to form, but also insofar as [pertains] to matter.”⁴

Case (3) is the case of angelic knowledge. Angels know by means of innate ideas which God put in them at their creation.⁵ Such knowledge does not cause the whole being of its objects, but it does *derive* from the cause of the objects’ whole being. Hence an angelic intellect, too, even though it is itself no *intellectus archetypus*, can know things according to both their form and their matter.

Just as natural things flow from the divine intellect according to both form and matter, in order that they might exist [as composed] out of both, so do the forms of an angelic intellect flow [from God] in order that [it] might know both.⁶

And so, although there is no *identity* between angelic knowledge and the cause of its

²*De ver.* 2.14 c.

³This Kantian phrase do not occur verbatim in Thomas. But see *In Sent.* 1.3.1.4 ad 1, where he says that the divine intellect “conceives in itself, in a certain way, the idea of the world, which is the archetypal world [*mundus archetypus*].”

⁴*De ver.* 8.11 c.

⁵*ST* 1.55.2 c.; *De ver.* 8.9 c.

⁶*De ver.* 8.11 c.

objects, there is an *analogy* (or “similarity”) between the two.⁷ The “innate forms” in an angelic intellect “are similar to the productive forms [*formis factivis*], that is, to ideas existing in the divine mind, although they are not themselves productive of things.”⁸

In case (2), however—the case of human knowledge—the analogy breaks down.

For [the similitude] which is in our intellect is received from a thing according as the thing acts upon our intellect . . . But matter, because of the debility of its being, because it is being merely in potentia, cannot be a principle of action. Hence, a thing which acts upon our soul acts only through its form. Thus, the similitude of a thing which is imprinted upon sense and purified by several stages until it reaches the intellect is a similitude of form merely.⁹

This creates a serious problem. For it is evident that the human intellect, if it knows only the forms of things, can know them only as specific objects.¹⁰ Now, as far as individual objects are concerned, it is still possible to explain how we “know” (or at least, are aware) of them, by the senses. Our souls, insofar as they are sensitive, are forms in matter; our sense organs are material things.¹¹ And one material thing, as an individual, can act on another, as an individual. The form received by our senses “is also a similitude of material dispositions, insofar as it is received in a material organ, which receives materially; and so it retains some conditions of matter. Because of

⁷“Similarity” is a name for the type of analogy which would later be called (somewhat inappropriately) the “analogy of proportion” (see below, p. 168). See *ST* 1.66.2 c. (near the end), and cf. Thomas’ use of *similitudo proportionis*, e.g. *In Metaph.* 7.4 (n. 1334).

⁸*De ver.* 8.11 c.; cf. *In De div. nom.* 7.2 (n. 712).

⁹*De ver.* 2.5 c.

¹⁰There is also a problem with the knowledge of specific objects, in that we do not, in general, know their true differentiae. We will discuss this further below.

¹¹That is Thomas’s position, at any rate: see below, p. 162.

which it happens that sense and imagination know singulars.”¹² These “material dispositions,” of course, are just the accidents which one material thing can cause in another, and which are (at least in principle) enough to pick out a single individual. The individuals which we know by the senses are the kind of individuals that are picked out by accidents—which is to say, “subspecific” ones.¹³

It seems, however, that we *cannot* know sensible things as generic. And if that is so, then we are led inevitably to a skeptical conclusion. Knowing an object with respect to its form is knowing it as a *quale quid*, knowing what *kind* of thing it is (it is a matter of “recognition or identification or description”); and it is knowing it as actual (as a *real* thing of that kind). But knowing an object with respect to its highest physical genus—as a sublunar body, for example—is just knowing that *something* is there, which is to say: just knowing the pure possibility that I am presented with some kind of object or other. If I cannot know that there is some (external) body or other there, some material thing, then I cannot know that there is anything there at all; no amount of knowledge as to what *kind* of thing I am looking at will help, or even make sense. A “knowledge” of things which extended only to form—a “knowledge” which encompassed only the (empirical) actuality of things, but not their (a priori) possibility—would be empty. It would not be a knowledge *of* anything whatsoever. Hence the knowledge demanded by the Cavellian skeptic is exactly the kind that, according to St. Thomas, the human intellect does not have, and that fact tends to undermine all our knowledge in exactly the way the Cavellian skeptic’s question tends to undermine it.

¹²*De ver.* 8.11 c.

¹³Thomas says that the sensitive faculty “cannot know [*cognoscere*] singulars except according to the proper species of those singulars [*per species proprias singulorum*]” (*De subst. sep.* 15, ll. 49–51).

It is important to notice that this skeptical dilemma emerges straight out of Aristotelian metaphysics and epistemology, in their Thomistic versions. I point this out because of Herman Philipse's claim that the skeptical problem driving Husserl's idealism is specific to modern "corpuscular ontology."¹⁴ Philipse does not define "corpuscular ontology" very precisely—it turns out, for example, that it does not necessarily involve any belief in corpuscles. But the epistemologically relevant feature of this ontology, and the one that is supposed to differentiate it from traditional "hylomorphism," is a fundamental incompatibility between reality and perception:

According to Aristotle, the perceiving mind absorbs the "forms" of the perceived objects, so that perception is a formal or essential identity of the perceiver and object perceived. . . . The corpuscular ontology, however, implies a deep cleft between perceptual appearance and physical reality. . . . Physical reality . . . is very different from its perceptual appearance, because it lacks secondary qualities.¹⁵

This "incompatibility thesis" leads in turn to the "principle of immanence," according to which "the primary data of perception are really immanent in consciousness," and are merely "projected" onto external objects.¹⁶ Philipse claims that Husserl's idealism is just another version of such a projection theory, and that it is therefore dependent on the "naturalistic attitude"—an attitude which, according to Philipse, Husserl officially considers to be absurd.¹⁷ He further claims that Heidegger's criticism of Husserl can be understood in this light:

¹⁴See "Transcendental Idealism," in *CCH*, 248–9 and 295 ff.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 295–6.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁷This use of "naturalistic attitude" (as opposed to "natural attitude") to stand for a *philosophically* "naturalist" attitude towards the world, is apparently due to Heidegger (see *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 155). Husserl himself, in *Ideen II*, uses the phrase mostly as a synonym for "the attitude of natural science," which simply consists of abstracting from all values and practical judgments, though also some-

According to Heidegger, the entire problematic of the external world is a symptom of *Verfall*, that is, of an interpretation of ourselves and our being-in-the-world due to scientific objectivism and the ontology of presence.¹⁸

As an interpretation of Heidegger, this is not very promising. Heidegger, at least in this early period, never connects our existential situation of *Verfall* with the rise of “corpuscularist” modern science (or modern scientific philosophy) per se. On the contrary, he characterizes the “naturalistic attitude,” fundamentally, as one in which the human being is experienced as ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, as *animal rationale*—i.e., according to the traditional Aristotelian (“hylomorphic”) definition.¹⁹ And he is most explicit that this older tradition, ultimately, is responsible for the defectiveness of Husserlian phenomenology. The tradition of classical Greek philosophy, he asserts, is still “secretly at work” (*verdeckt wirksam*) in the Cartesian tradition as inherited by Husserl.²⁰

With respect to Philipse’s substantive thesis, about “corpuscular ontology” and its alleged baneful effects, we should note the following. This thesis, first of all, depends on identifying some entity recognized by both early modern and Aristotelian psychology—presumably, the rational faculties of the soul—with “consciousness” in the Kantian and Husserlian sense. If not for this identification, the principles of

times, as it seems, as a synonym for “natural attitude” (our normal way of taking the world): see §12, Hua 4:27,27.

¹⁸Ibid., 300.

¹⁹See, e.g., *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 150, 155 and 172; cf. *Sein und Zeit* 25, 48. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger makes a distinction between the “later interpretation of this definition in the sense of *animal rationale*” and its true or original meaning (165). But clearly even the “later interpretation” is supposed to be medieval at the latest, and is not, therefore, particularly associated with modern science.

²⁰*Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 180.

immanence and of incompatibility, as he states them, could be neither affirmed by the early moderns nor denied by Aristotelians. If we allow this identification, however (and it is at least in certain respects correct), then it will emerge that the alleged principles really hold within Aristotelian psychology as well. This is so in three distinct senses. (1) Even according to Aristotle, we know an object not because the form of that object is *in the object*, but because the form of that object is *in our intellect*. If the Aristotelian intellect, in other words, is to be identified with consciousness, or with some part thereof, then knowledge requires that the form be “really immanent in consciousness.” Whatever the difference is between Aristotelian and modern, it does not have to do with “immanence.” I will say more about the alleged principle of immanence, and in particular about whether there is any such principle which is worth stating, below. (2) Whatever Aristotle himself may genuinely have thought, by the time the Aristotelian tradition reached modern thinkers, it had become clear that the forms present in the human intellect were not, in general, literally identical to the substantial forms present in matter. There are two reasons for this. First, there cannot literally be a formal or essential identity—i.e., a unity of species—between an intellect and a material object. There is at best a unity of analogy: the intellect, at best, takes on a “similitude” of the external form.²¹ Second, the human intellect receives forms by way of the senses, and substantial forms are not sensible. This is why, as mentioned above, we do not, in general, know the true differentiae of sensible substances.²² Hence, at least in any normal case, a very severe “incompatibility thesis” is already in place within the Thomistic version of

²¹For the origin of this terminology, see *De Int.* 1.16^a7. See also my remarks on the use of “similitude” in Thomas, p. 169.

²²See *De ent.* 5, ll. 76–81.

“hylomorphic” epistemology. (3) As we have explained at length, even knowing the true (substantial) form of a thing is not sufficient to know it generically, or as a generic individual. For that it would be necessary also to know the matter—which, for the human intellect, is impossible. Because, in other words, Aristotelian epistemology is not really *hylomorphic*, but just plain *morphic*, it unavoidably, even under ideal conditions, leaves an unbridgeable gap or incompatibility between human knowledge and its object.

Attempts to solve the problem raised in point (2) above involve a search for true differentiae of substance which we might actually know. One probable case is rationality, the true differentia of *human*.²³ At the basis of Cartesian ontology, which is a corpuscular ontology, strictly speaking—an ontology, that is, upon which the only true characteristics of physical things are corporeity and its concomitants—lies the contention that we also know extension or divisibility, the true differentia of body.²⁴ It is for this reason—not, as Philipse suggests, simply because of the (empirical) success of mechanism—that other, “secondary” characteristics of bodies are taken to be essentially sensible (i.e., to be characteristics whose *essence* consists in producing a certain impression on the faculty of sense): taken together with the alleged intelligibility of body as such, this insures that physical things are entirely intelligible (do not possess “occult properties”). The same connection holds in Leibniz, even though his doctrine of corporeity and of physical or sensible substance is quite different from Descartes’s—even though, in particular, he holds the Plotinian view that sensible “substances” per se are phenomenal, or in other words are not substances,

²³See Leibniz, *NE* 3.6.17, 311; Kant, *KrV*, A265–6/B321–2.

²⁴See *Principia philosophiae* 1.48, AT 22–3; 1.53–4, AT 25–6; 1.63–4, AT 30–31; 1.70, AT 34–5. See also *KrV*, A28–9 and B44.

strictly speaking.²⁵ This must be true precisely because extension or partibility is essential to such substances. The division of a true substance into parts is, according to Leibniz, inconceivable, so that partibility is the essentially sensible characteristic *par excellence*. Still, Leibniz continues to agree that the only intelligible differentia of what can be (analogously) called sensible substance are the essential characteristics of body, and that non-mechanistic explanations are therefore “occult.”²⁶ In that respect he remains a corpuscularist.

It will be recalled, however, that, on Thomas’s view, body does not really have a formal differentia at all: sublunar corporeal substance is distinguished from celestial and incorporeal substance by its possession of sublunar prime matter, which is to say by the defective character of its substantial form. In Leibniz this shows up in the form of an argument that simple extension as such cannot be the differentia of anything, because extension as such is merely a relative property: extension must be extension

²⁵See especially “De ipsa natura,” §8 (*PSG*, 4:509): “Indeed, if corporeal things contained nothing but [that which is] material [i.e., if true, intelligible substances were not virtually present in them], they could most truly be said to consist in flux, nor would they have in them anything substantial, just as the Platonists, too, once correctly recognized”; see also *NE* 2.19.4, 161, and cf. *Enn.* 6.3.2.1–4: “First we must examine [*θεωρητέον*] that which is called substance, agreeing that the corporeal nature [*τὴν περὶ τὰ σώματα φύσιν*] is equivocally or not at all [called] substance, due to its conforming [*ἐφαρμόττειν*] to the theory [*ἔννοια*] of [things] in flux [i.e., the theory of Heraclitus], but that it is properly called becoming [*γένεσις*].” (On the Heraclitean origin of Plato’s theory that sensible things, as opposed to the ideas, are “always in flux” [*ἀεὶ ῥέοντες*], so that there is no “knowledge” [*ἐπιστήμη*] of them, see Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.6.987^a29–^b1.)

See also Leibniz to Arnauld, 28 November/8 December, 1686 (*PSG*, 2:77): “bodies would be, without doubt, something imaginary and apparent only, if there were nothing but matter and its modifications.”

²⁶See *NE* 3.6.4, 305; “Antibarbarus Physicus,” (*PSG*, 7:337–44); and see especially Leibniz to Queen Sophie Charlotte, 1702 (*PSG*, 6:499–500): “*sensible qualities* are in fact *occult qualities*, and there must be others *more manifest* that can render them explicable.”

of something. Bodies are not, as Descartes supposed, nothing but extension; they are the extension of (active and passive) force (*vis*).²⁷ Force, however, properly speaking, belongs not to bodies but to the substances (monads) which constitute them, and these substances of course differ in species in different bodies (in fact, on Leibniz's theory, every monad is specifically different from every other). There is not really a form of corporeity which is common to all bodies; what they have in common is rather the defective, diffused (and hence confused), subsistence of form. That is to say: what they have in common is prime matter, in the Thomistic (though not in the Leibnizian) sense. The attempt by Descartes and Leibniz to explain how we can know the substantial form of material things—the claim, that is that we know the differentia of body per se—therefore really reduces to the claim that we know bodies as generic objects.²⁸ And this lands us straight back with the main problem we found in Thomas. How can we know material substance (whether true or phenomenal) if we know it only, one or way or another, by its effect on our intellect, and therefore have no knowledge of its matter?

Leibniz's solution to this problem is to reject the premise. He holds that every created intellect knows, like an angelic intellect, by means of innate ideas. But this solution is problematic, because the very mode of operation of our intellect seems to show that our knowledge is not angelic. We know objects only by *synthesis*: by

²⁷See *PSG*, 4:393–4 (from an untitled anti-Cartesian fragment dated May, 1702), and cf. *NE* 2.4.5, 127–8.

²⁸Whether rationality is also such a generic pseudo-differentia depends on how we understand the ontological status of the human soul—i.e., on whether it should be regarded as in some way *sui generis*. (The confusion which attended that question from beginning to end of the Aristotelian tradition seems, incidentally, to belie Heidegger's claim that that tradition has bequeathed to us some stable doctrine of the soul's *Vorhandenheit*. See also below, pp. 162 and 239.)

affirming predicates of subjects—or, what comes to the same thing, by affirming different predicates, one after another, of the same subject. But angelic intellection is not like that. The innate ideas of an angelic intellect are supposed to be similar to the divine productive archetypes: that is what makes it possible for them to extend to form and matter, rather than merely to form. They must all, therefore, like the divine archetypes themselves, be completely adequate to their objects, or in other words serve completely to determine those objects. There is therefore never any need for an angelic intellect to further determine an object by applying a predicate to a subject, i.e., no need for synthesis.

This difference between human and angelic intellects can be expressed by saying that the former are *discursive*, whereas the latter are *intuitive*. I say “can be expressed” because, at least in Thomistic terminology, the two points—that angelic knowledge is not “discursive,” and that it does not proceed by synthesis (and analysis), are distinct. Discourse, according to Thomas, means “to arrive [*devenire*] at one cognition from another”;²⁹ when he says that angelic knowledge is intuitive rather than discursive, therefore, he means that angels do not know by such a process of reasoning. Rather:

just as we know [*cognoscimus*] principles without discourse [i.e., without proof], by simple intuition, so too do the angels [know] all they know; thus they are called “intellectual,” and the habit of principles in us is called “the intellect.”³⁰

But Thomas, following Avicenna, already makes an analogy between first *principles*, which are known without proof, and first or highest *concepts*—for example, the

²⁹*De ver.* 8.15 c.

³⁰*Ibid.*

transcendentals—which are known or employed without definition.³¹ And he explicitly connects the non-discursivity of the angelic intellect—the fact that it does not know by reasoning—with the fact that it does not know “by adding a predicate to the subject according to the mode of composition and division”.³²

It is clear that it comes from the same [source] that our intellect intellegizes by discoursing, and [that it intellegizes] by composing and dividing: out of this, that it cannot immediately [*statim*], in the first apprehension of something first apprehended, perceive [*inspicere*] whatever is virtually contained in it. Which happens because of the debility of the intellectual light in us. . . . Thus, since the intellectual light is perfect in an angel . . . an angel, just as it does not intellegize by reasoning [*ratiocinando*], also does not intellegize by composing and dividing.³³

Just as an angel knows whatever propositions it knows in the way in which we know first principles, in other words, so too it employs all concepts in the way in which we employ first concepts: completely and instantly, without “composition or division,” i.e. synthesis or analysis. And that, roughly speaking, is Kant’s objection to Leibnizian epistemology.³⁴

³¹See *De ver.* 1.1 c., following *al-Šifā’*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5, 29,5–8.

³²*De malo* 16.6 ad s.c. 6.

³³*ST* 1.58.4 c.

³⁴It is somewhat tricky to draw the equivalence, however, because Kant works with a different classification of possible intellects: see Kant to Marcus Herz, 21 February, 1772, pp. 100-102. See also Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* 4.17.14, 683.

Leibniz, in his reply to the above passage in Locke (*NE*, 490) and elsewhere, actually contends that only divine knowledge is *entirely* intuitive, based on the argument that, if angels knew *only* by direct intuition, they would never experience the “pleasure of discovery.” (That is: based on the principle that each individual created thing must represent the infinite divine perfection by means of an infinite potential for self-improvement.) Leibniz, in other words, does not agree that angelic knowledge is, in the *Thomistic* sense, non-discursive. But he does appear to agree that angelic knowledge (and therefore, on his theory, human knowledge as well) is non-synthetic:

Having, however, rejected the theory that we know by ideas directly derived from God (either by pre-established harmony or by *influxum hyperphysicum*), and nevertheless still agreeing that knowledge of objects as generic could never be due to the action of those objects on us, Kant is left, in the generic case, with only one of the three explanations for “assimilation of the knower to the thing known.” He is left to conclude that, even though the objects of our knowledge are caused, according to species, by something else (i.e., even though *sense* is “passive”), still there must be a way in which the human intellect, like the divine one, itself causes the being and truth of its *generic* objects. He is left, that is, with the option of “transcendental” idealism.

3.2 Transcendental idealism in Kant and in Husserl

As I understand it, Husserl’s system of the *Ideen* is, in this respect, truly (post)-Kantian: transcendental phenomenological idealism is (a kind of) transcendental idealism.³⁵ In saying this I am, of course, already staking out a position in the fierce and

the process of coming to know an object more determinately is not genuinely one of combining one concept with another, but rather one of coming to see more clearly and distinctly what is already present in the concept in confused form. That is the conclusion Kant attacks.

It is an open question, to my mind, what are really the fundamental differences between Kant, Leibniz and Thomas here. A really complete answer would go a long way towards explaining why the analytic/synthetic distinction suddenly becomes so important in Kant.

³⁵This is not to say that Husserl himself was necessarily aware of the traditional meaning of “transcendental.” He seems to have known the term only from Kant—in *Erste Philosophie* he refers to it as a *Kant eigentümlicher Begriff* (*EP*, Hua 7:282)—and thus may well have formed a distorted impression of its meaning, as many of Kant’s readers have done. Heidegger, who of course is very familiar with the traditional usage, himself uses the term in explaining “phenomenology” (see *Sein und Zeit*, 38–9), but this may not be, and may not even be intended as, an accurate guide

continuing debates about the proper interpretation of Husserl's writings. Many interpreters argue either that Husserl was never an idealist at all, or that the idealism of *Ideen I* is an unfortunate appendage or superstructure which can easily be removed, revealing a core doctrine which is either realist or at least metaphysically neutral. Others claim that he was indeed an idealist, but more in the spirit of Berkeley than of Kant.

I will do my best to respond to these claims below, in §3.4. For the moment, let me proceed with the exposition of my own reading. I have said that Husserl is a transcendental idealist in the true Kantian sense. But what is most important for our purposes is not the way in which Husserl follows Kant, but the way in which he breaks with him. Both agree that our (synthetic) a priori knowledge, i.e. our generic or in other words transcendental knowledge, our knowledge of beings simply as such, cannot be the *effect* of its objects (cannot be of empirical origin), and must therefore be their *cause*: it must be the case, somehow or other, that “the representation . . . alone makes the object possible.”³⁶ But they disagree, as Husserl would say, about the sense of this fact.

Kant takes it as obvious that the knowing subject in us cannot per se be literally a cause of being (that we do not possess an *intellectus archetypus*).³⁷ Thus if only the

to what Husserl meant by it. In any case, whatever Husserl himself meant by the term, I intend to show how it applies to his system in the traditional (and, properly understood, also the Kantian) sense.

³⁶*KrV*, A92/B124–5.

³⁷It cannot be *theoretically* ruled out (though it can be ruled out for *practical* purposes) that “we”—that is, our true selves, our selves regarded as *Dinge an sich*—are indeed transcendental causes of being. But this true self is not the knowing subject per se, subject of the “I think” that attaches to every representation—i.e., the transcendental ego. It is a self not accessible to apperception, hence not knowable by us, and that, in fact, is what makes possible the theoretical/practical distinction

knowing subject in us is in a position to cause an object's being in a certain respect, that object cannot have being in that respect at all. Since, however, the respect in question—the respect in which the human subject would have to be the cause of being—turns out to be generic or transcendental; since, that is, the human subject would have to cause the being of its objects simply qua being, Kant concludes that the objects of our knowledge have no causes of being per se whatsoever, or in other words that they are not beings per se (*Dinge an sich*) at all.³⁸ What they have, instead of such a transcendental cause of being, is merely a transcendental cause of knowability. If “the representation is determinative *a priori* in respect to the object,” even though “representations in themselves . . . do not produce their object *according to existence* [dem Dasein nach],” then it must be because “only through it [the representation] is it possible *to know* something *as an object* [etwas als einen Gegenstand zu erkennen].”³⁹ Human epistemology (“critique”) replaces metaphysics. Sensible objects are not the beings per se that the metaphysician would study. They are appearances. They have “being” only relative to our knowledge.

It follows from this view that although we do know “generic objects,” we do *not* know “generic individuals.” For the conditions of knowability which derive from the form of the understanding are all universal conditions. If something is to be an individual object of our knowledge, then it is enough (a) that it satisfy certain universal conditions (that it fall under the categories) and (b) that we be able to distinguish it from other objects by means of its accidents—in particular, by the

to which I have just alluded.

³⁸On the interchangeability of “being” and *Ding* here (i.e., the status of *Ding* as a transcendental) see below, p. 157.

³⁹*KrV*, A92/B124–5.

accidents of space and time. Different objects of knowledge do not have to be, and in fact *cannot* be, already different *before* they receive these accidental differences, by means of which we know them distinctly. These accidental forms, rather—the forms of inner and of outer intuition—must precede all “matter” of sense (must be a priori). This is why the “designated matter” of a thing must for us be always more or less *literally* designated. The metaphysician, in asking how we know the existence of “this,” is forced, in one way or another, to *point*.⁴⁰

It is acceptable for accidents to precede substantial form in this way only because sensible substances are phenomenal, i.e. not true substances at all. For, as Plotinus already points out, such phenomenal “substances” do not have true essences, or are, in other words, themselves nothing more than bundles of accidents. Hence in response to Aristotle’s argument, “but how could a substance be [made] out of non-substances, or how could non-substance be prior to substance?”⁴¹ Plotinus responds:

And one ought not to object if we make the sensible substance out of non-substances: for neither is the whole a true substance, but that which imitates true [substance] . . . a shadow upon that which is itself a shadow, a picture and an appearing [*φαίνεσθαι*].⁴²

So far both Kant and Leibniz would agree. Leibniz, however, wants to account, not only for the individuation of sensible (phenomenal) substances, but for the individuation of intelligible substances (monads), as well; time and space, as accidents, are

⁴⁰Strictly speaking, “designation” is not pointing at something but putting one’s seal upon it, which is done with a different finger (using a signet ring). I am not sure if this is important. The term *designatio* in this context is in fact a translation of Avicenna’s term *išāra*, which does literally mean “pointing.” For details on the origin and use of this latter term, including in the phrase *māda mušār ilaihi* (= *materia signata*), see my paper, “Simplicius and Avicenna.”

⁴¹*Ph.* 1.6.189^a33–4

⁴²*Enn.* 6.3.8.30–37.

unavailable for that purpose:

The understanding . . . demands that something first be given (at least in concept) in order to be able to determine it in a certain [specific] way [*auf eine gewisse Art*]. . . and Leibniz, for that reason, first assumed things (monads) and, internal [to them], their power of representation, in order afterwards to ground their external relationship and the community of their states (namely of the representations) upon that.⁴³

And, Kant goes on to explain:

so, too, would it in fact have to have been, if the pure understanding could be directed immediately to objects [*Gegenstände*], and if space and time were determinations of things in themselves [*Dinge an sich selbst*]. But if they are only sensible intuitions, in which we determine all objects [*Gegenstände*] merely as appearances, then the form of intuition (as a subjective property [*Beschaffenheit*] of sensibility) comes before all matter (the sensations [*Empfindungen*]).⁴⁴

Because, in other words, the only objects falling under the determinations of space and time are phenomena—things whose transcendental predicates derive from their relation to our knowing subject—a form which is essential to that knowing subject, even though accidental to its objects per se, can be prior to what passes for substantial forms of those objects, and hence can serve to individuate them.

To say that sensible objects are phenomena, however, is to say that they are not mere illusions: although they are, in their individuation and transcendental predicates—i.e., as *generic* objects—dependent on us as knowing subjects, their *specific* content derives from elsewhere.⁴⁵ Sense, in other words, is passive. But whatever

⁴³*KrV*, A267/B322–3.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, A267/B323.

⁴⁵Kant refers to this specific content as the “matter” of sense. Its relationship to space and time is that of matter to form insofar as substantial form is the matter of accidents (the determinable something that is determined by them): see again *KrV*,

does cause the being of appearances (objects of sense) according to species cannot itself, obviously, have the mode of being of an appearance—i.e., it must, like a Thomistic efficient cause of being, differ in highest physical genus from its effects. Such a thing might still be thought of in terms of the same categories as are sensible objects (because the categories as such are *logical*), but the categories would have to apply to it by way of different “schemata.”⁴⁶ And *we* can have no knowledge of things which fall under such hypothetical supersensible schemata, because, as we have already argued above, the only reason we, as possessing human (as opposed to divine or angelic) intellects, can know objects at all is that the objects which we know are phenomena, whose essence is to appear to us through our senses. Hence it emerges that appearances must have, in this respect, at least one cause which is *not* an appearance (which is a being per se, a *Ding an sich*), but that this cause is for us unknowable. Even

A266–7/B322–3. This in, in other words, an example of what I will later call the “metaphysical” form/matter relation. The Kantian categories of substance and accident, on the other hand, turn out, by way of their sensible schemata, to stand for the “physical” matter/form relationship (of permanent substrate to changing property), and in *that* sense of matter and form the roles are reversed: the schema of substance is simple duration in time, so that whatever actually appears within time is accidental (see *KrV*, A144/B183). This is another way of seeing that what is essential to sensible objects—their substantial form, so to speak—consists of properties with the ontological status of accidents, whereas their substantiality itself, insofar as they have that, is something which depends on our subjectivity.

⁴⁶For a possible origin of the term “schema” in this connection, see *Metaph.* Δ.6.1016^b31–5, where Aristotle contrasts that of which there is a single *σχῆμα τῆς κατηγορίας* with that which is one only *κατ’ ἀναλογίαν* or *ὡς ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλο*. Since the unity of the Thomistic (and Plotinian) categories is, at least “physically” speaking, a mere unity of analogy (see below, p. 111), one could well imagine taking the phrase “schema of the category” in this passage to refer to the genus which results from the restriction of a category to a single sphere of being. A “schema” in this sense would be, at least physically speaking, the highest generic unity; all higher unities would be merely *κατ’ ἀναλογίαν*. I am, however, not aware of any text (Kantian or otherwise) where this interpretation of the passage in Aristotle is explicitly put forward.

the expression “at least one cause,” in fact, is already illegitimate. We can know something neither as one or many nor as cause or effect, unless the *sensible* schemata of those categories apply to it.

Husserl, like most if not all post-Kantians, finds this doctrine of the unknowable *Ding an sich*, which is neither one nor many, both a cause and not a cause, unintelligible.⁴⁷ He is bothered, moreover, by the old question of “critique of critique”: what is it that we know about, when we know something about our “faculties” or “representations,” and how can we know about it?⁴⁸ Husserl, as I understand him, solves these problems by means of a simple but fundamental change in the Kantian picture: he concedes, namely, that our intellect is an *intellectus archetypus*. Our knowing subject, in other words, is per se a cause of things according to their being. It “posits” them, or, as he and Thomas also say, it “constitutes” them.⁴⁹ Causes of knowability

⁴⁷Cavell appears to agree: “To say that we do not (cannot) know things-in-themselves is as much a Transcendental Illusion as to say that we do” (*CR*, 239). But it is not entirely clear to me that that is what he should have said. The disagreement between him and Kant, if there is one, turns on the difference between “falling under our logical categories, but outside the schemata by which we apply them” and “referred to by the meaning of our words, but outside of the language games in which we use them.” These are both negative characterizations: they are not about “something” of which (absurdly, paradoxically) we can have no knowledge. And it is far from easy to say exactly what is at stake in choosing one over the other. (One answer might be that Kant’s formulation *appears* to leave a move like Husserl’s open.)

⁴⁸This problem about Kant, and Husserl’s solution to it, is already implicitly alluded to at *Id* 1, §62, 118–19, where Husserl says that Kant failed to understand the phenomenological field as the subject matter of its own rigorous science. More explicit versions can be found at *EP*, Hua 7:95 and 198–9 and in “Kant und die Idee der transzendente Philosophie,” Hua 7:237.

⁴⁹“Constitute,” when used (as here) causatively, means literally to cause something to be by putting it together out of its parts. In Thomas the parts in question are clearly the matter and the form. In Husserl it refers to a seemingly disparate class of processes in which consciousness posits (causes the being of) some object by means

are causes of being; human epistemology (“phenomenology”) is metaphysics, and truth, in the sense of adequacy to *our* intellect, is a transcendental, convertible with being:

There corresponds in principle ... to every “truly existing” [seienden] object the idea of a possible consciousness, in which the object itself is graspable *originally* and therewith also *perfectly adequately*. And vice versa: if this possibility is guaranteed [gewährleistet], then the object is *eo ipso* truly existent [seiend].⁵⁰

This position becomes possible for Husserl because of an ingenious maneuver which he makes in drawing the parallel between epistemology and metaphysics. Whereas Kant compares our representations to the archetypes of the divine intellect (in which comparison they are of course seen to be defective), Husserl in effect compares our representations (*Erlebnisse*),⁵¹ to the *created* universal causes of sublunar things—i.e.,

of other things. I will suggest below, however, a sense in which all these kinds of “constitution” are really analogous, and furthermore amount to more or less the same thing as does constitution out of matter and form in Thomas. (See below, pp. 185 and 215.) For the time being, we can use the terms “constitute” and “posit” almost interchangeably.

⁵⁰*Id* 1, §142, 296.

⁵¹I leave untranslated Husserl’s technical *Erlebnis*. In ordinary German this word means “experience” in the sense of “going through an experience,” but that is not what Husserl means by it, and in any case “experience” must be reserved for *Erfahrung*. The common translation “mental process” is highly misleading.

Husserl uses this term in several ways. I will try consistently to follow the one which is most common and official (at least as far as *Ideen* I is concerned). In this sense, an *Erlebnis* is a concrete existent or “individuum” within the realm of pure consciousness (in a precise sense of those latter terms which we will discuss below). Husserl also at times uses *Erlebnis* to refer to any existent at all, or at least any “this-here,” within that realm (so that the parts or moments of *Erlebnisse*, at least, would also be called *Erlebnisse*). For the first (normal) usage, see *Id* 1, §12, 25 and §73, 136; for the second, see §36, 65. Other usages also crop up from time to time (e.g., when Husserl speaks of “psychological” *Erlebnisse*).

Husserl prefers not to use the term “representation” (in this context, *Vorstellung*)

to angels and celestial bodies.

This one move shows all the facts about our knowledge in a new light. It explains, above all, why our knowledge of sensible things involves synthesis. To introduce briefly some concepts that we will eventually have to follow out in great detail: sensible things, and in general all transcendent (i.e. consciousness-external) things, depend for their *being* upon *Erlebnisse* in which, as Husserl says, they are “posited”—or, more precisely, in which they are rationally posited, and, assuming they are actual, rationally posited with *certainty*.⁵² An *Erlebnis*, however causes being by “sense-giving”—i.e., by taking the object, the *something* that is given in sense, to be, for example, a tree. But this sense-giving is never complete; the “something” itself always remains capable of being taken otherwise, of being taken as something else. An *Erlebnis* as a cause of being is, in other words, like an angel or celestial body: it can cause something purely determinate to take on a certain specific form, but its power is not infinite. If the object is to be conserved, then other *Erlebnisse* which rationally posit the same object, but with further determinations, must eventually follow. The synthetic (or, loosely speaking, “discursive”) character of our knowledge is thus due, not to our failure fully to grasp some completely intrinsically determinate objects, but to the failure of those objects to *be* fully determinate, due to the deficient

as synonymous with *Erlebnis*, but the *Erlebnisse* in Husserl’s system are that which corresponds most closely to representations in Kant.

⁵²The qualification “rational” (*vernünftig*) is extremely important; we will return to it below. The translation of *Vernunft* and its derivatives is a tricky problem. In Kant, *Vernunft* corresponds more closely to *νοῦς*=*intellectus* than to *λόγος*=*ratio*, and should be translated accordingly. In Husserl, however, “reason” seems the more appropriate translation. Unfortunately this solution is less than satisfactory, because Husserl himself believes that his use of *Vernunft* derives from Kant. The reader should keep in mind that I have translated *Vernunft* in both of these ways (and that I have not translated any other German word as either “intellect” or “reason”).

nature of their immediate causes qua specific objects.

In the same way, moreover, Husserl is able to explain why our knowledge of transcendent things is *fallible*, as one would not expect the knowledge of an *intellectus archetypus* to be. There may, namely, come a time when the contrary actions of other *Erlebnisse* bestow a different form (a different “sense”) on this same matter. What is given, even with perceptual certainty, as a such and such a tree, might always, at some later time, turn out to be something else. This means that the properties and existence of objects which owe their being to rational positing in *Erlebnisse* are always merely provisional. The “fallibility” of our knowledge of transcendent objects is due to the fact that the being of those objects is itself, so to speak, fallible: to the fact that all transcendent objects are necessarily changeable and corruptible.

The rest of this chapter will be devoted, directly or indirectly, to filling in the details of the above sketch. When that task is complete, we will be in a position to identify the source, in Husserl’s system, of our knowledge of generic objects, and therefore, at last, to make a direct comparison between Husserl and Cavell.

3.3 Rational positing and the actuality and corruptibility of transcendent objects

Let us begin by noting the following. I said above that what is “now” given as, say, actually a tree, might always, “at a later time,” turn out to be actually something else. The “time,” however, in which the tree at first actually exists and is then no longer present is not a objective (or “cosmic”) time. If I at first take something, with certainty, to be a tree, and later take it, again with certainty, to be something else, then, objectively speaking, I would say, not that the tree is no longer there, but that there never has been a tree at all, or anyway not such a tree as I had

thought. But this objective or cosmic time is something secondary, something that is itself “constituted” in or by means of *Erlebnisse*. That the tree exists or existed at some particular point in cosmic time—say, last year, or just before sunrise this morning, or at the time when my watch read “12:04”—is determined in the same way as it is determined how tall the tree is, or what color, or in what vicinity: by the characteristics of the *Erlebnisse* in which it is posited. In primary, subjective, “immanent” (or “phenomenological”) time, the tree’s actuality, or its actually being *so*, is followed by a no-longer-being-actual: it turns out that there is not “now” such and such a tree at the (cosmic) spatio-temporal point where once there was one.⁵³ A transcendence like the tree is corruptible as a complete cosmic spatio-temporal entity. Its entire history may, at some point in immanent time, cease to exist.

A transcendent thing like the tree can therefore be called actual, or can be said to exist in reality, in two distinct senses. In one sense, the tree’s existence depends only on the existence of its cause of being—i.e., of an *Erlebnis* which rationally and certainly posits it—at the present immanent time. It is in this sense that Husserl speaks of “actual” as the correlate of “perceptual certainty,” and of a perceived object as being “there,” “in simple obviousness [*Selbstverständlichkeit*], in certainty.”⁵⁴ It is in this sense that “through vision, touch, hearing, etc., in the different manners of sense perception, corporeal things in some spatial distribution *are simply there for me, ‘present [vorhanden]’* in a literal or metaphorical sense.”⁵⁵ And it is in this sense that transcendent things can be said to exist, or to be actual, contingently. They

⁵³For the distinction between cosmic and immanent time, see *Id* 1, §81, 161. See also Thomas, *ST* 1.53.3 c.; *De malo* 16.4 c.; and cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.5.11.22–31.

⁵⁴*Id* 1, §103, 214.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, §27, 48. See also *Id* 2, §44, Hua 4:162,23–32.

exist and are actual, insofar as they are now rationally posited; their existence or actuality is contingent, insofar as that positing (or its rationality) may at any time cease.

Dingliche existence is . . . in a certain way always *contingent*. That is: it can always be, that the further course of experience requires one to relinquish [*preiszugeben nötigt*] what has been already posited *with experiential legitimacy*.⁵⁶

Husserl refers to this kind of actuality as “presumptive actuality”;⁵⁷ in *Erste Philosophie* he calls it “being in flux” (*fließende Sein*).⁵⁸

There are a two subtleties here which should not be neglected.

(1) The dependence of presumptive actuality on positing in a single present *Erlebnis* does not mean that there is no relationship between what is now presumptively actual and the content of past and future *Erlebnisse*—i.e. that anything can be presumptively actual before or after anything else. The explanation for this lies in the crucial qualification that actuality corresponds, not to positing simply, but to *rational* positing: actuality is a correlate of certainty which possesses rational “legitimacy” (*Recht*), and so the problems of actuality are correlated with problems of “rational consciousness.”⁵⁹

I am looking, for example, at a book on the table in front of me. Suppose I

⁵⁶*Id* 1, §46, 86. I in general leave Husserl’s technical term *Ding* and its derivatives untranslated. In the present context *Ding* is to all intents and purposes synonymous with “transcendent object,” although that is not Husserl’s most official or most common use of the term. For a discussion of his various uses of it, of the relationship between Husserl’s *Ding* and the Latin *res*, and of my reasons for considering the English “thing” unsuitable as a translation, see below, §3.6.1.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*EP*, Hua 7:32,34–5. On sensible substance as “in flux,” see above, p. 50, n. 25.

⁵⁹*Id* 1, §135, 281.

were suddenly to become certain, without any direct or indirect perceptual grounds, that there is a goldfinch hiding behind that book. That would be a positing of the goldfinch, but not a rational positing; there would not be an actual goldfinch corresponding to it, even in the presumptive sense of actuality. The rationality of positing depends, then, as is clear from this example, on context. If I had seen a goldfinch fly in through the window earlier today, and had heard cheeping and scratching from behind the book a few seconds ago, and had not seen anything emerge from behind it since then, then that same feeling of certainty might carry complete “experiential legitimacy,” so that the positing would be rational and the goldfinch (presumptively) actual.⁶⁰ Hence Husserl says that “actual object” is a title for “rational concatenations” of consciousness.⁶¹ It is still true, however, in a certain way, that every rational positing carries its legitimacy within itself, in that the legitimating, context-providing experience is always, like all parts of pure consciousness, itself absolutely actual, and hence immediately present to the current positing. We will discuss the ontological status and character of the *Erlebnisse* themselves at greater length below.

(2) Not everything that is rationally posited is posited with perceptual certainty: some things are rationally posited, but not by perception, and some things are ra-

⁶⁰Husserl rejects the idea that there is a “feeling of evidence” (*Evidenzgefühl*) which could either attach or not attach to the “same” positing (*Id* 1, §21, 39–40). But this does not mean that there is not a characteristic of *certainty*—whether or not the best word for that characteristic is “feeling”—which can be varied in that way. On the contrary, it is just because a positing can in principle be certain whether or not it posits with evidence that it can be either rational or irrational. See *Id* 1, §145, 299–300, and see especially (as Husserl suggests) *LU* VI, §39, 2:599.

⁶¹*Id* 1, §145, 302. I follow Kersten in translating *Zusammenhang* here as “concatenation.” The German term is of course much less technical sounding than this, but no obvious English equivalent suggests itself. (The English word “connection” is not quiet appropriate in this case, still less “context” or “coherence.”)

tionally posited, but not with certainty. Let us examine these two possibilities in turn.

In the narrowest (and most usual) sense in which Husserl uses the term “perception,” it refers specifically to the way in which a single sensible object—a single *Ding*, in the strictest sense of that term—can be given to the senses. If I posit something which is not in this way sensible (i.e., either is not sensible, as a number or a soul is not sensible, or is not a single *Ding*, but rather some abstraction from and/or synthesis of *Dinge*), then I do not posit it by perception in this narrow sense. Every object which can be rationally posited at all, however, has its way of being “originarily” given, i.e. given with “immediate evidence,” in a way analogous to the way in which a *Ding* is given in sense perception. Husserl’s strict term for this originary positing in general is “intuition” (see §1, 7 and elsewhere—especially §3, 11 and §125, 260), but he also sometimes calls it “perception,” or even “seeing,” in a broader sense of those terms (see e.g. §37, 65–6; §19, 36).

This distinction, between literal sense perception and intuition or “perception” broadly speaking, is of minor importance for our present purposes:⁶² obviously whatever I rationally and originarily posit as actual, I will posit with “perceptual” certainty in the proper kind of “perception,” i.e., intuition. “Every peculiar [*eigentümlicher*] type of . . . actuality brings with it . . . a new concrete theory of reason” (§152, 319).⁶³ More important is the distinction between what is originarily given and what is not. Rather than being perceived, i.e. given with immediate evidence, the tree might be given immediately but unevidently (e.g. remembered) or evidently but not immedi-

⁶²This is not to say that it is of minor importance in general. See below, p. 175ff.

⁶³Note that essences, even though they are in a way mere “possibilities,” can also be “actual” in this very broad sense: see §135, 281.

ately (e.g. its presence deduced). The positing in such cases may still be rational and certain, and the tree therefore actual. That is why Husserl speaks of the presumptive actuality of transcendent things as deriving its legitimacy from *experience*, rather than simply from sense perception: “experience” (*Erfahrung*) is a broader term which includes the whole structure of cognitions in which perception (sensible intuition) plays the fundamental role (see, again, §1, 7, and see also §39, 70). The rationality of such positings will, however, depend on their possessing an immediate and evident—i.e., intuitive—“motivating” basis. The recollection of the tree is supported, ultimately, by the connection of past perception with what is perceived here and now; the deduction of the tree’s presence must be based on some unequivocal signs which are actually perceived (see §141, 293–5).

In presenting the rationality of unevident or mediated positing in this way—in saying that what is so posited can be posited with rational certainty and hence be (presumptively) actual—I am trying to make sense of Husserl’s doctrine as a whole. It must be admitted that he at times suggests a far narrower definition of presumptive actuality: that only what is now perceived is presumptively actual. He speaks of the four legs of his desk, for example, which are at present hidden from view, as a mere “motivated possibility” (as opposed to a hypothetical ten legs, whose possibility is not motivated but “empty”) (§140, 292). The most obvious way of understanding the example is that Husserl is simply perceiving his desk, which he knows full well to have only four legs, but that those four legs are not at this moment visible to him. On that way of understanding it, however, the talk of possibility (even motivated possibility) seems incorrect. The possible *absence* of the four legs, rather, is what is “empty” or “unmotivated” here. Indeed, it is not clear that in such a case Husserl ought even to speak of a mediated or unevident positing at all: it does not seem that,

at least in normal circumstances, the presence of the legs (or even, in my example, of the goldfinch behind the book) is somehow deduced. What is originally present, and hence presumptively actual, is not the visible surface of a desk, but a *desk*, and this desk has some number of legs—presumptively, four.⁶⁴ It may be that the example should be taken differently (e.g., that we should imagine Husserl as somehow having explicitly started to wonder how many legs the desk has, and then concluding based on previous experience that it possibly—in fact, very probably—has four). In any case, nothing which is important for our present purposes hinges upon this latter point.

An entirely different kind of deviation from the case of perceptual certainty occurs when it is not (or not only) perception that is absent, but rather (or also) certainty. I may not be certain of the existence of the tree, but I may suspect that it exists, wonder if it does, assume that it does for the sake of argument. I may be certain that the tree does *not* exist, even if it is immediately given (in case, for example, I recognize it as an illusion or hallucination). All of these possibilities and more are classified by Husserl as “doxic characters” or “belief-characters” of positing. In cases where the belief-character is other than certainty, the tree will not exist with (presumptive) actuality, but with some other, more defective kind of being: for example, “the *being-modalities* of ‘possible,’ of ‘likely,’ of ‘questionable,’ of ‘doubtful.’”⁶⁵ Still, all of these kinds of positing are subject to their own rules of rationality, albeit of a secondary or derivative nature: “the reason-characters which belong to these modalities ... all ..., so to speak, point back [*zurückweisen*] to a primary reason-character [*Urvernunftcharakter*],

⁶⁴See Husserl’s description, at *Id* 1, §41, 74, of walking around a table: the transcendent table remains (is posited as actually) the same, even though the perception of it, including which parts are visible, constantly varies.

⁶⁵*Id* 1, §103, 214.

which belongs to the domain of primary belief [*Urglauben*]” (§139, 289).⁶⁶ These secondary types of position, moreover, can be transformed, by a certain shift of attention, into examples of the first: from the rational doubt, say, that there is a tree (in which a tree is posited with the being-character of doubtfulness), into the rational certainty that there is a doubtful tree (§105, 217–18). If, in other words, we take “actual” (*wirklich*) as a name for the unmodified or primary being-character in general (the being-character corresponding to the positing-character of certainty), then we could say that, whereas the tree is doubtful (exists only doubtfully), the *doubtful* tree, considered as the object of a primary positing, is itself actual. This is why the being-characters are *being*-characters: the object to which they attach, from another point of view, actually exists (§114, 234). The question which some interpreters have raised, as to whether Husserl believes that there “are” possibilities, can therefore be answered with a qualified “yes.” From one point of view, there may actually exist such a thing as a possible tree (i.e., a possible tree may be posited with rational certainty), but a possible tree is not in that sense an object of the same kind as an actual tree. From another point of view, there can “be” such a thing as a tree (a living thing falling under the species tree) which is merely possible; but in that case the “being” in question is of a secondary and derived character.

For the sake of completeness, I should point out two additional things. First of all, there are some “objects” which can never be rationally posited at all, even in the mode of mere assumption. Some “objects” are self-contradictory, and hence logically impossible—for example, a square which is not a square.⁶⁷ Husserl seems to think

⁶⁶Something similar applies to further, non-doxic types of positing—e.g., wishing that the tree were here, or judging that it ought to be (290–91). On non-doxic (non-theoretical) modes of positing, and the primacy of theory, see further below, p. 190ff.

⁶⁷See *Id* 1, §48, 90.

that, in a sense, such “objects” are not objects at all: the laws of formal logic all have their counterparts in the theory of formal ontology, or in other words of the formal possibility of objects in general.⁶⁸ Even if there is no formal contradiction in the description of an object, moreover, it may still be *widersinnig*, i.e. essentially impossible, because it is supposed to have some characteristics which are inconsistent by virtue of the essence of a species or genus to which it is supposed to belong. A circular square, for example, is impossible because it belongs to the essence “spatial object” that something cannot both be a circle and have straight sides. Husserl connects such essential truths with the Kantian synthetic a priori, and considers them to belong to so-called “regional ontology”—a topic we will examine in some detail below. Finally, there are objects which cannot be rationally posited for entirely extrinsic (neither logical nor essential) reasons. An example of something which is impossible in this way would be an (actual) object which is not part of our own (actual) world—which is to say, roughly speaking, an actual object which is not possibly given originally.⁶⁹

Husserl does not, as far as I know, ever clearly draw this latter distinction, between what is intrinsically impossible (i.e., what cannot exist because of the specific or generic essence under which it is supposed to fall) and what is impossible only because it is described as having an impossible (contradictory) relationship to positing consciousness. But clearly the being-characters are not genera of things: an actual tree and a possible tree, or, to use the traditional example, an actual hundred dollars and a possible hundred dollars, are essentially the same. As suggested, moreover, by the original context of that example (*KrV*, A599/B627), the general principle behind

⁶⁸Ibid., §148, 307; see also *EP*, Hua 7:27,10–28,15.

⁶⁹See again *Id* 1, §48, 90.

this distinction—that the mode of being of a certain kind of object, namely, is a matter of the way that kind of object is posited—just *is* the doctrine of transcendental idealism. We will return to these issues in more detail below.

What all of these impossibilities have in common, in any case, is that they are absolute: not relative, that is, to what actually exists. It might seem, then, that we can argue as follows: nothing could exist which would make such things possible; hence no experience could motivate their position; hence no position of them could ever be rational. But this argument is flawed, because objects can be posited by means of a symbolic representation. There is no such thing as the sensible impression that would be produced by a ten-sided regular polyhedron, but there *is* an experience corresponding to the symbolically expressed conclusion that such a thing exists. Husserl must apparently argue, if he is to avoid the absurd conclusion that what is absolutely impossible may also be possible or even actual, that merely symbolic positing as such is never rational.⁷⁰ Among other things, this would mean that assumption of the impossible for purposes of indirect proof is not as such rational (although the entire

⁷⁰See *EP*, Hua 7:25,21–35, where Husserl says that the expression “2 is greater than 3” has an “analytic sense,” but no “material [*sachliche*] sense,” and that its evidence or clarification involves a “merely symbolic, merely verbal judging,” which therefore “has no implication for possibility and truth, or for that matter for necessity or probability of holding and for their opposites” (*das . . . gar nichts für Möglichkeit und Wahrheit, ebenso nichts für Notwendigkeit, Wahrscheinlichkeit der Geltung ergibt und für deren Gegenteil*). See also Levinas (*Théorie de l'intuition*, 103): “A significative intention does not possess its object in any way; it only thinks it.”

It would require some care to state this principle precisely. There are possible and actual objects which can only be posited symbolically, the most obvious examples being large numbers. Presumably all such objects must resemble large numbers in that their (possible or actual) existence follows from essential laws, and the relevant essences, together with the essential representative properties of the symbolic system, can be non-symbolically known. Under these conditions the symbol itself can function as the basis for a mediated (deductive) rational positing.

symbolic procedure of indirect proof might nevertheless be a rational procedure, in the sense that the conclusion might, by virtue of the proof, be posited with rational certainty).

Secondly, there is one particular doxic modality—the mode of positing which Husserl calls “neutral”—which posits its object “neither as existing [*seiend*] nor as not existing.”⁷¹ For this mode of positing, therefore, “the question about [*nach*] reason or unreason has no sense” (§110, 223). Actually, to speak of this mode of neutrality as one doxic modality among others is a misnomer; in reality “it occupies a completely isolated position [*Stellung*],” and thus “should not be put in a series” with the other modalities (§109, 222). Husserl explains this as follows. Recall that the doxic modalities properly speaking (the modalities which can be put in a “series”) are all convertible, by a shift of attention, into the primary doxic modality of certain positing. The difference between neutral and non-neutral (or “positional”) consciousness however, is one in which this primary positing is abrogated: neutrality or positionality is “a fundamental-essential [*grundwesentlich*] property of all consciousness *überhaupt* . . . which expresses itself in relation to actual [*aktuelle*] doxically primary [*urdoxisch*] positability or nonpositability” (§114, 232). Hence the change from positional to neutral affects all doxic modalities equally. The certain positing of the actually existing tree becomes the neutralized certain positing of a tree which neither exists nor does not exist actually; the doubtful positing of the doubtfully existing tree becomes the neutralized doubtful positing of a tree which neither exists nor does not exist doubtfully, and so forth. To every positional *Erlebnis* corresponds a “shadow” *Erlebnis* whose position is neutralized, and which therefore does not posit anything at all,

⁷¹*Id* 1, §111, 226.

either as existing or as non-existing: “the one actually [*wirklich*] produces, the other is a mere reflection [*Spiegelung*] of a production” (§114, 233).

There are two things about this mode of neutrality which might lead one to think it of fundamental significance for Husserl’s system. First, Husserl treats it at great length. Second, compared to the doxic modalities properly speaking, and to the various other characteristics of positing, it seems less obviously familiar: it is not immediately clear that we ever “merely think” of, say, a tree, in this way, as opposed to imagining that a tree exists, or assuming the existence of a tree for the sake of argument. Husserl admits that there is no traditional term for what he calls “neutrality,” and that it has typically been mixed up with one of those alternatives (assumption or imagination) (§109, 222). It is hard to avoid the impression that Husserl *needs* neutrality to fulfill some important theoretical role or roles, and has therefore sought it out and either discovered or invented it.

One role which it certainly is supposed to fulfill, in the system of *Ideen* I, is to explain imagination (*Phantasie*). As we have just mentioned, the two cannot be identified, any more than can neutrality and assumption. But it is nevertheless true that “imagination itself is in fact a neutrality modification” (§111, 224). The imagining of a tree is not the same as the neutralized positing of the tree, in other words, but it *is* a neutralized positing of *something*. It is, namely, a neutralized version of the absolute positing of a tree-positing *Erlebnis*.⁷² Since imagination is both a difficult and an important topic for Husserl, the role of neutrality in explaining imagination might in itself be enough to justify its lengthy and somewhat forced treatment.

⁷²See below, p. 203.

Should we consider neutrality as an explanation of something even more fundamental? Phenomenology itself is supposed to be based on the so-called *ἐποχή* or “phenomenological reduction”: an abandonment of our “natural attitude” towards transcendent objects in favor of a different, “phenomenological” attitude, in which we cease to posit such objects at all, and thus no longer take them either to exist or, in a positive sense, to be absent. This sounds sufficiently like the result of neutralization that one might be tempted to explain one in terms of the other. There are serious obstacles in the face of such an explanation, however. Neutralized positing (at least, the neutralized positing of a transcendent object) is supposed to involve a different *Erlebnis* than the corresponding actual positing (a “shadow” *Erlebnis*), whereas the reduction is supposed to leave the *Erlebnisstrom* essentially unchanged.⁷³ Neutral-positing, moreover, is supposed to be a part of everyday experience:

The *neutrality modification of normal perception* which posits in unmodified certainty is *the neutral picture-object consciousness* that we find as a component in the normal consideration of a perceptively [*perzeptiv*] presented pictured world (§111, 226).

The reduction, on the other hand, is not part of normal experience at all, but a special, *sui generis* operation which only the phenomenologist is able to carry out: it does *not* consist merely in taking all perceptions in the way we would normally take the perception of a picture. We will have to postpone any attempt to explain what actually *does* go on in the reduction until much later.

While it is impossible, however, to explain the reduction in terms of neutrality in *Ideen I* as it now stands, it seems likely that at some earlier stage of his work Husserl in fact did mean to do exactly that. An explicit remnant of this view in the published

⁷³See *Id 1*, §31, 54, and see below, p. 224.

text is the statement that, in neutralized positing,

Everything has the modifying “bracket,” closely related to that about which we earlier spoke so much, and which is so important in preparing the way to phenomenology (§109, 223).

Here the identification of reduction with neutralization is already abandoned, but Husserl clings to some kind of vague idea of a “close relationship” between the two. A later stage is represented by the comment Husserl wrote in one of his copies of *Ideen I*, next to the words “closely related”: “no.”⁷⁴

All of the above considerations are related to the presumptive actuality of a transcendent thing. This, however, as I indicated above, is not the only sense of actuality that Husserl recognizes. There is also what he calls “absolute” actuality—i.e., an actuality which is not confined to some point or interval of immanent time, and which is therefore not subject to later cancellation. Although this is a sense of “actuality,” however, it is, as we have already seen, not one which finds any positive application to transcendencies. *No* transcendent object is absolutely actual. Still, it makes sense to talk about the absolute actuality of such objects, if only in a negative way. It *must* make sense, because presumptive actuality can only be understood by contrast with absolute actuality. A transcendent object is posited as not exhausted by the way it currently appears, or in other words as not exhaustively justified by the evidence with which it is given, even when the givenness in question is immediate and rational (i.e., originary):

Position on the ground of the in-person [*leibhaftig*] appearance of a *Ding* is indeed rational, but the appearance is nevertheless a one-sided, “imperfect” appearance; what stands there as consciously known [*bewußt*] in-

⁷⁴Hua 3.2:501 (marginal note to Hua 3.1:248,35).

person is not only what “properly [*eigentlich*]” appears, but rather simply this *Ding* itself.⁷⁵

This failure of appearances to exhaustively justify the positing of the transcendent objects which appear in them is what Husserl calls their *inadequacy*. And it is this inadequacy that underlies the corruptibility of transcendent objects, i.e. the possibility of the *same* transcendent object’s being actual at some point in immanent time and not actual at others:

No rational position which rests upon such an inadequately given appearance [can] be conclusive [endgültig]. . . . none is, in isolation, equivalent to the simple [statement that] “The thing is actual,” but is only equivalent to: “It is actual,” assuming that the progress of experience does not bring “stronger rational motives,” which would present the original position as one which was “to be canceled” [durchzustreichende] in the wider context (§138, 287).

But that possibility in turn presupposes the thought of the object, of “this *Ding* itself,” as “the same” in all its possible appearances, that is, as having an actuality which is *not* dependent on immanent time, or which is absolute. “Truly existing [*seiender*] object” is in this way not merely the correlate of “object to be rationally posited,” but also of “object to be posited in an originally [*ursprünglich*] perfect rational position”—i.e., in a rational position to which the object “would not be incompletely, not merely ‘one-sidedly,’ given” or in other words whose object would be *adequately* given, and hence absolutely actual (§142, 296; see also §39, 71).

The way this works, according to Husserl, is as follows. The *Erlebnis* which posits a transcendent object with rational certainty, i.e. as presumptively actual, at the same time implicitly compares that object to a standard of absolute actuality. Since, however, no transcendent object can be absolutely actual, this standard is an “idea”

⁷⁵*Id* 1, §138, 286.

“in the Kantian sense” (§143, 297)—that is, as Kant himself explains, “a necessary concept of the intellect, to which no congruent object can be given in the senses,” to which “no object can ever occur [in experience] which would be adequate.”⁷⁶ The inadequacy in transcendent rational position is not an inadequacy of the object to the very positing which is the cause of its being: that would be an absurdity, given that truth (i.e., adequacy of object to representation) is a transcendental. It is rather that the positing of the object at the same time makes reference to an idea, and this idea establishes a standard of absolute actuality. It is to this implicit absolute standard that the object is inadequate—a standard that, for reasons we will describe with full precision in §3.6 below, could never, in principle, be satisfied in any positing by means of *Erlebnisse*.

Husserl describes the “idea in the Kantian sense” as an object in its own right, which has its own kind of explicit, originary givenness (“ideation”).⁷⁷ Its precise ontological status is not clear—an important topic which, unfortunately, I will not be able to pursue further here. What *is* clear is that, when the idea of a transcendent object is implicitly or explicitly given to us, we are given a rule to which the appearances of that object would conform if it were (a) absolutely actual and (b) continuously and originarily given (see §144, 298). The inadequacy, hence lack of absolute actuality, of transcendent objects is due to the fact that the appearances cannot fully conform to the rule in question.

One must be careful in describing both the nature of such rules and the reason

⁷⁶*KrV*, A327/B383–4. The history of the term “idea,” leading both to this usage in Kant and to Husserl’s own earlier use of “idea” as equivalent to “essence,” is too complicated to trace here. See to begin with Leibniz, *Discours de Métaphysique*, §27 (*PSG*, 4:452); Locke, *Essay* 2.31; Thomas, *De ver.* 3.1 c.; *ST* 1.15.3 c.

⁷⁷See *Id* 1, §83, 166; §143, 298; §149, 312.

that experience is always inadequate to them. The way Husserl himself puts things is in fact somewhat misleading. He lays great stress on the infinite number of appearances which are required to fulfill the rule prescribed by the idea. What keeps a transcendent object from being absolutely actual is that such an object can appear only inadequately “in a *closed* appearance” (§138, 286; my emphasis).⁷⁸ This could lead one to believe that a transcendent object is like a Leibnizian monad: that it has or can have absolute being, not, indeed, by virtue of its state (i.e., appearance) at any point in (immanent) time, but by virtue of the infinite series of its appearances, which taken together are adequate to its idea. The parallel is misleading, however, in several ways. Although the entire being of a Leibnizian monad does not appear, or is not “expressed,” in any one of its passing states (or in any finite interval composed of such states), still the entire being of the monad is *implicit* in every such state. The monad is therefore ungenerated and incorruptible (though it might be miraculously created or annihilated), and it is fully determined by its “complete idea.” One might say that, while its presumptive and absolute actualities are conceptually distinct, still, in the absence of a miracle, the former implies the latter: every presumptively actual thing is naturally identical to something absolutely actual. Nothing could be less true of a Husserlian transcendent object.

It cannot, of course, be unambiguously gathered, on the grounds of the experiences which are carried out at a given time [*auf Grund der jeweilig vollzogenen Erfahrungen*] and of this rule . . . how the further course of experience must play out. On the contrary, infinitely many possibilities remain open (§144, 299).⁷⁹

⁷⁸“Closed” (*abgeschlossen*) here is equivalent to “finite,” as can be seen from §144, 298.

⁷⁹It is true that Husserl goes on to say that “the goal of unambiguous determination” can be reached by natural science “according to the *idea* of the natural object,

It does not follow, from the fact that what is now presumptively actual is consistent with a given idea, that the (immanent) future will continue to be so consistent; nor does the idea itself prescribe a *single* future course of experiences which would fulfill it.

This means that what is presumptively actual cannot, in principle, be identified with something absolutely actual. It is true that rational certain positing refers to an idea of its object as absolutely actual, and therefore as not exhausted by its current appearance. But it does this not by provisionally or presumptively identifying that object with something absolutely actual, but *merely* by reference to an idea—to a rule, that is, to which future appearances would have to conform, if they were to count as ordinary appearances of this same object. Only the rule itself embodies, is identical to, the idea of something absolutely actual: something which would *necessarily* appear in such way that appearances would continue to conform to the rule. Actual appearances, even indefinitely continued, would never establish such a necessity, because each of them leaves infinitely open the question of *which* absolutely actual object inadequately appears in it. Even, therefore, if some transcendent object were posited “harmoniously” and with rational certainty throughout immanent time, still its actuality would be merely presumptive. Absolute actuality is simply not a characteristic that transcendent objects can possess:

[The transcendent world] is not in itself [*in sich*] something absolute . . . it has no “absolute essence” whatsoever; it has the essentiality of something

the natural event, etc.” What this means, however, is not that in natural science we achieve absolutely determinate knowledge of transcendent things by means of some superior type of idea; it is rather that the “physical *Ding*,” the absolutely determinate object of natural science, is itself given only in ideation. The *Ding* qua object of physics is more transcendent, and hence *less* actual (i.e. less adequately given), than the *Ding* qua object of perception. See §40, 72; §52, 100; and especially §47, 87–8.

that is in principle *only* intentional, *only* consciously known [*Bewußtes*], represented for consciousness [*bewußtseinsmäßig Vorstelliges*], apparent (§50, 94).

Transcendencies can, in other words, have only presumptive actuality—actuality which depends on present positing in some *Erlebnis*. Their being is intrinsically such that it might always be canceled at some future point in immanent time. They are corruptible.

3.4 Is Husserl a realist or an idealist?

It is only in the context of the above points and distinctions that we can hope to understand Husserl’s answer to the problems which various interpreters have raised about the relation, in Husserl’s philosophy, between consciousness (or “the mind”) and external objects. All of these problems boil down to roughly the following. On the one hand, external objects transcend consciousness, i.e. are not parts of it. This can be seen from the fact that they are “mind-independent”: any such object may or may not actually exist, independently of the state of my consciousness. On the other hand, there is some part of consciousness, i.e. something “immanent” to consciousness, which we characterize as an intending or being conscious of the object. The question is: what could possibly make that immanent intentional state into an intending of or consciousness “of” some particular object, if the object in question might not even exist?

It should be noted, first of all, that what is here assumed a priori to be immanent is not some kind of *object* of consciousness, but consciousness itself. It is important to keep this in mind when we consider the nature and origin of Philippe’s so-called “principle of immanence”—which, recall, is that “the primary data of perception are

really immanent in consciousness.”⁸⁰ In *Erste Philosophie*, Husserl describes a certain picture of the relationship between the ego or “spirit” and its sensations—a picture which, in his opinion, has the British Empiricists in its grip:

Locke speaks of [the ego] . . . almost as if in front of the tablet of consciousness there stood a human being who busied himself with the signs [i.e., with the signs “inscribed” on the *tabula rasa*]—which, however, is palpably nonsensical.⁸¹

The picture is “nonsensical,” of course, because it involves an infinite regress: the complete human being who allegedly stands behind the “tablet” must, like every human being, already contain such a “tablet.” A similar nonsensical picture seems to be at work in Philipse, and to be behind his Husserl’s need for a “principle of immanence.”

This comes out most clearly when Philipse discusses Husserl’s use of the possible “annihilation” or “destruction” of the world (at *Id* 1, §§47 and 49). According to Philipse, Husserl argues as follows: we can imagine that the series of our sensations (or “adumbrations”) might become chaotic (no longer possess the kind of coherence which is necessary for them to be sensations of stable objects); if that were to happen, then no external world would be given to us, but consciousness would still exist; consciousness, therefore, might exist on its own without any external world. This interpretation is not, I think, quite correct; we will return to these topics later. What is important for our present purposes is that Philipse, in analyzing Husserl’s argument as he understands it, claims to detect a hidden premise:

This inference shows that Husserl presupposes the principle of immanence. . . . Obviously, he assumes that adumbrations exist *in* conscious-

⁸⁰“Transcendental Idealism,” in *CCH*, 296.

⁸¹*EP*, Hua 7:103,19–22.

ness. . . . Otherwise he should have inferred from the thought experiment . . . that in this case consciousness would exist *together with a chaotic stream of adumbrations*.⁸²

It seems as if we are supposed to imagine “consciousness” standing in front of a stream of sense data and busying itself with them—among other things, trying (and, in this case, failing) to interpret them as appearances of an external world. But how is this “consciousness” supposed to be conscious *of* the “stream”? Clearly the change from one sense datum to the next must be accompanied by some kind of changes in “consciousness” itself. But then it is these changing states of “consciousness,” or some parts of them, that are the true sense data. The real “principle of immanence” is a principle so obvious that it hardly seems worth stating: that my perceiving or, in general, being conscious of something is a state of my consciousness. If this “principle” is to be traced to some origin, and is then to be attacked, the origin will have to lie somewhat deeper than seventeenth century mechanism.

Let us ignore the possibility of such a deep (Austinian or Wittgenstinian) critique, and proceed on the assumption that consciousness or “the mind” includes states of perception, or in general of “intending,” by virtue of which it senses or intends external objects. The problem is that, as we have said, if such states are to be sensations or intendings at all, then their presence must apparently depend in some way on the presence of the object of which they are supposed to be sensations or intendings. And yet the transcendence, i.e. mind-independence, of the external objects rules out exactly that.

Two solutions immediately suggest themselves, both of which have been attributed to Husserl—both, I think, erroneously.

⁸²“Transcendental Idealism,” in *CCH*, 258.

On the one hand, one might deny that there really is anything transcendent to consciousness. This is the approach taken by interpreters like Philipse and Theodore De Boer—interpreters, in other words, who take Husserl to be an “idealist.” According to them, Husserl believes that what *seem* to be transcendent objects are really just complexes of immanent elements (for Philipse, sense data; for De Boer, noemata). The apparent transcendence of such objects stems from our interpretation—our *mis*interpretation—of these immanent elements. Philipse is quite explicit about this: what transcendent positing confers on its object is “the illusory appearance of independent existence.”⁸³ De Boer seemingly disagrees: “Husserl’s idealism,” he says, “is not an idealism in which what is constituted turns out to be a fiction.”⁸⁴ Husserl’s

⁸³Ibid., 266. It is true that Philipse is speaking at this point, not about the *Ideen*, but about the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. But he holds that Husserl maintained this same theory “until the end of his life” (280).

⁸⁴*Development*, 465. This, at least, is De Boer’s position with respect to *Dinge* and the *Ding*-world (i.e., objects belonging to the realm of nature narrowly defined). The psychic (or psychophysical) realm, according to him, *is* supposed to be rejected as fictional: “We can speak of a falsifying interpretation in both cases [i.e., in the transcendent positing of both psychic and ‘material,’ i.e. sensible, nature] The difference, however, is that the ‘soul’—*as soul*—owes its very existence entirely to this interpretation. This is not the case with matter, for when the absurd interpretation is set aside, matter continues to exist in purified form [i.e., as noemata]. Yet, for the ‘soul,’ purification means the elimination of the ‘soul’ *as* ‘soul.’ It is unmasked as a fiction” (464–5). (I have written “soul” where Plantinga’s translation has “mind”; in the corresponding passage of the Dutch edition, p. 526, De Boer uses the German term *Seele*.) Unfortunately I will not be able to do justice to the difficult topic of psychological consciousness in this dissertation. It is clearly implausible on the face of it, however, that a realm of being to which Husserl devoted so much study (including one out of the three parts of *Ideen* II), and which he repeatedly mentions as the field of study of an important natural science, should turn out to be completely fictitious in this way. (The passage De Boer cites from the *Cartesian Meditations*, incidentally—the only direct textual support he offers for his surprising claim—is not about transcendent, i.e. psychological, consciousness at all, but rather about the transcendental ego in the attitude of transcendent positing. It is therefore not to the point.)

idealism, according to him, does not reject “reality,” but only “the absolutization of it”⁸⁵—i.e., the “absurd absolutizing of the world” of which Husserl speaks in *Id* 1, §55. On a closer examination, however, one sees that the absurdity of absolutization amounts, for De Boer, to the absurdity of transcendence itself. For De Boer identifies the realization that this absolutizing is absurd, and the consequent “cancellation” of it, with the *ἐποχή*, or in other words with the phenomenological reduction.⁸⁶ This view, that the reduction cancels something *absurd*, is in line with De Boer’s claim that the reduction is supposed to be *permanent*: the phenomenologist “lives in the transcendental attitude and does not give it up” (373–4). But what the reduction cancels is just the natural attitude, or in other words the positing of transcendent things as transcendent—about that, Husserl is entirely clear. If, then, the reduction represents the permanent rejection of an absurdity, then it must be that, according to De Boer, the natural attitude itself—i.e., all transcendent positing in general—is already absurd, if only implicitly so. And that is indeed De Boer’s position. He admits that *explicit* absolutizing occurs only in the so-called “naturalistic attitude” of the metaphysical realist.⁸⁷ But he holds that the ordinary, pre-philosophical “natural attitude” already contains a “hidden absolutization” (386–7). Transcendent objects as such (as *transcendent*) are therefore indeed illusory. What are not illusory are the complexes of immanent elements (noemata) that, in reality, make them up: “the noema is what remains when the existence of the transcendent object is excluded from our consideration” (317). Such complexes of noemata do not have true transcendence,

⁸⁵*Development*, 465.

⁸⁶*Development*, 322, 367, 398.

⁸⁷See above, p. 46, n. 17, for the origin of the phrase “naturalistic attitude” in this sense.

but only a kind of “transcendence in immanence”; “over against this stands the ‘natural’ concept of transcendence, by which something outside consciousness is indicated” (398). And that “natural” concept is what is permanently given up, as absurd, by the phenomenologist. “Transcendental phenomenology shows that the very supposition of a world ‘outside’ us is incorrect” (483).

The difference between De Boer and Philipse here, aside from their technical disagreement about just what the elements are from which objects are constituted, is ultimately rhetorical. Philipse’s main purpose is to show that Husserl, far from being “ahead of his time” and anticipating the results of analytic—especially, as it seems, Popperian—philosophy of science, was really a bad old Cartesian or Aristotelian “foundationalist.”⁸⁸ He is only too happy to show that Husserl’s idealism is similar to, in fact almost indistinguishable from, Berkeley’s.⁸⁹ The fact that Husserl himself expressly denies this is simply more evidence of the incoherent nature of Husserl’s system in particular and of traditional philosophy in general. De Boer, on the other hand, is motivated by no such animus; he is therefore anxious to give some sense to Husserl’s distinction between himself and Berkeley. Whether De Boer succeeds in doing this—whether, that is, there is really an important distinction between De Boer’s Husserl, on the one hand, and (Husserl’s) Berkeley, on the other—is not important for our purposes. The main point is that De Boer and Philipse are in agreement about what the distinction is *not*. According to both of them, Husserl, like Berkeley, considers that our natural attitude towards the world is a *mistaken* attitude, and hence that the transcendence of the world as we naturally conceive of it—the world’s existence “outside” of us—is illusory.

⁸⁸See “Transcendental Idealism,” in *CCH*, 239–40, 288ff.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 286–7.

On the other side stand a large group of interpreters who want to defend Husserl against what Sokolowski calls “the accusation of idealism”⁹⁰—that is, to show that Husserl is actually a “realist.” Why idealism should have come, at a particular time and place, to be seen as an accusation, is an interesting historical question; Husserl himself, evidently, did not think of the term as derogatory, since he went out of his way to apply it to his own system. Be that as it may: our present problem is not to determine what Husserl can be accused of or defended against, but to determine what he says, and in particular how he can reconcile mind-independence with presence to consciousness. If the above idealist solution, that transcendence is illusory, is rejected, then we are seemingly left with the alternative that consciousness really does intend objects independent of it. If the realist interpreters are to explain how this is possible, however, then they must argue that something guarantees the intentionality of conscious states—their being “of” a certain object—even though nothing about those states guarantees that the object in question exists.

Sokolowski himself has a great deal to say, which we will have to consider later on, about the way in which transcendent objects are “constituted.” But there is not much to say about his explanation on this one fundamental point—on the question of how consciousness can so much as *intend* an object transcendent to itself—because, as I read him, he does not offer any such explanation. Instead he simply leaves Husserl saddled with an admittedly unsolvable problem. “Husserl,” he says,

does not claim to solve or dissolve the enigma of transcendence. . . . It still remains a paradox that . . . what reality is in itself can be reached by consciousness even though it must remain, in principle, radically distinct

⁹⁰*Formation*, 159; cf. the nearly identical phrase “accusations of idealism” (*accusations d’idéalisme*) in Levinas, *Théorie de l’intuition*, 81.

from and transcendent to consciousness.⁹¹

If this were really the case, then it would be somewhat problematic. To declare that intentionality is a major theme of one's thought; to claim, moreover, that one's system is the culmination and "secret yearning" (*geheime Sehnsucht*) of all modern epistemology, and in particular of Kant's;⁹² and then to admit modestly that one has nothing coherent to say about the question of how consciousness can intend a transcendent object, but that this must be left an unsolved and unsolvable "paradox"—it would seem like false advertising, to say the least. Husserl, in any case, does not himself anywhere make the modest disclaimer which Sokolowski makes on his behalf. He appears, in fact, to claim that he *has* solved the mystery of intentionality—i.e., that he can answer the skeptic who objects as follows:

But . . . *is the object itself "actual"?* Couldn't it be unactual, while the manifold harmonious . . . *posita*—*posita* of whatever essential content you like [*von welchem Wesensgehalt auch immer*—nevertheless ran their conscious course [*bewußtseinsmäßig abliefern*]?⁹³

A more positive approach to this problem would be to say that while a given intentional state of consciousness is not sufficient to determine its transcendent object, we can nevertheless tell what object it intends if we take into account the transcendent objects themselves. The clearest proponents of this approach (among interpreters of Husserl) are D.W. Smith and Ronald McIntyre. They hold that perception is "occasional" in the sense that "the [transcendent] physical circumstance of a perception has a role in determining the directedness of the perception."⁹⁴ They stop short

⁹¹*Formation*, 134–5.

⁹²*Id* 1, §62, 118.

⁹³*Ibid.*, §135, 280.

⁹⁴*Husserl and Intentionality*, 221. Sokolowski also suggests that "the real world has

of claiming that Husserl actually held such a view—in fact they acknowledge that Husserl “seems to take it to be a general truth about intention that an act’s conceptual content not only prescribes properties its object is intended as having but also, in some sense, determines which object it is,”⁹⁵ and even that “the ‘transcendental’ foundation of Husserl’s phenomenology . . . is incompatible with letting the object of perception, or any other part of the external world, play a role in perceptual intention.”⁹⁶ But they do not seem to understand the very deep nature of this incompatibility. According to Husserl, a perception-*Erlebnis* does not and cannot have a “physical circumstance” at all: consciousness “has no spatio-temporal outside and cannot be inside any spatio-temporal context.”⁹⁷ Hence there is literally no such thing as the “occasion” on which a given perception occurs.

We see . . . that nothing is less true of consciousness (*Erlebnis*) and real being than that they are coordinate kinds of being [*daß Bewußtsein (Erlebnis) und reales Sein nichts weniger als gleichgeordnete Seinsarten sind*], which dwell peacefully next to one another and occasionally [*gelegentlich*] “relate” to one another or “connect” one to another.⁹⁸

a fundamental place in phenomenology and constitution” (*Formation*, 220), or that “constitution . . . is the development of reality and subjectivity in their fundamental relationship to one another” (218–19), and criticizes Husserl for not taking the role of “reality” (i.e., the transcendent world) into account. He does not do this for the same purposes as do Smith and McIntyre, however, but rather to account for the element of “facticity” in experience. We will discuss his argument in the appropriate place below.

⁹⁵*Husserl and Intentionality*, 20

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, n. 33, 225–6.

⁹⁷*Id* 1, §49, 93.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 92. D.W. Smith himself would presumably want to interpret this passage in line with the theory of “many-aspect monism” which he develops in his article, “Mind and Body,” in *CCH*. I will explain later why many-aspect monism cannot be correctly attributed to Husserl.

For Husserl to come around to Smith and McIntyre’s view would involve not merely his “developing” a systematic theory of “the occasional nature of perception”: it would require that he assert things which seem to him intrinsically absurd. Even if their approach can somehow be made satisfactory on its own terms, it is therefore wrong to rely on it in an interpretation of Husserl.⁹⁹ If realism is to be reconciled with Husserl’s actual theory, then it must be explained how conscious states can have intentionality without any help from transcendent objects themselves.

Some realist interpreters—the main examples being Jaakko Hintikka and Dallas Willard—have attempted to do this using Husserl’s theory of “fulfillment” (*Erfüllung*). Since we have not yet examined the internal structure of *Erlebnisse* in detail, we are not yet in a position to give a precise account of this theory. The rough idea is simple enough, however. It is related to the distinction between intuitive or originary givenness, on the one hand, and givenness which is somehow mediate or unevident, on the other. There can be two *Erlebnisse*, both of which intend the same object, but only one of which is (or contains) an intuition of the object in some respect—i.e., in only one of which the object is given, in that respect, originally. They might both be positings of a tree with a brown trunk, for example, but only one might be or include an actual perception of the trunk in which it actually appears brown. The difference

⁹⁹There is definitely reason to think that Smith and McIntyre’s approach is inherently unsatisfactory, if one continues (as they do) to accept anything like a traditional epistemological framework. If the “directedness” of consciousness is determined by some features of reality that have no correlates in consciousness, then there will be, in those crucial respects, no analogue in the intellect of the form of the object—or, to put it differently, *abstraction* will be, in those crucial respects, impossible. But this will mean that our concepts are inherently inadequate to describe reality, or in other words that the transcendent objects we intend in perception and in acts founded upon it are inherently unthinkable. Their view thus leads to the unpalatable conclusion that “appearances” are themselves unknowable *Dinge an sich*.

between these two *Erlebnisse* is a difference between “emptiness” and “fulfillment”: Husserl says that the intuitive *Erlebnis* (or some component of it) is “fulfilled” in the respect in question; also that it (or some component of it) “fulfills” the non-intuitive *Erlebnis*.¹⁰⁰

Hintikka and Willard want to use this concept of fulfillment as follows. For a given object, imagine a *completely fulfilled* state of consciousness in which that object is given. This, they argue, would be a state which indeed guarantees the actual existence of its object—in fact, both of them speak of the object itself, or part of it, as “fulfilling” an *Erlebnis*, or as being what it is filled “with.”¹⁰¹ In this one case, therefore, the object is not mind-independent; its existence follows necessarily from the completely fulfilled positing of it, and so there is no problem with saying that that completely fulfilled positing intends or is “of” that object. We can then understand the intentionality of other, relatively empty, positings, mediately, by means of their reference to an intuitive positing which would be of the same object but which would be completely fulfilled. The object of the empty positing may not in fact exist, but if it *does* exist, then it is the same object which would be originally given in the corresponding fulfilled positing. Hintikka makes this argument directly:

We can see how it is that a noema can do its duty of helping us to intend an object. . . . If the noema is like a set of expectations, it specifies its object

¹⁰⁰For an (incomplete) list of several different uses of *Erfüllung* in this context, see *Id* 1, §136, 284.

¹⁰¹See Hintikka, “The Phenomenological Dimension,” *CCH*, 81 (the answer to the question raised here—“What fills the noema?”—is given implicitly at 88–90); Willard, “Knowledge,” *CCH*, 152. In Hintikka’s paper, in particular, one gets the feeling that intentionality is supposed to be explained by the fact that consciousness can *literally* “reach” the object, in the sense of touching it at a common boundary. Even if that were supposed to be possible (rather than, as Husserl actually says, absurd), it is not clear how it would help with our problem or with epistemological problems in general.

by claiming that those expectations will be fulfilled. . . . The constitution of a noema determines how it is connected with what is given to me in intuition, in Husserl's terminology, how it could be filled.¹⁰²

Willard, because his paper focuses on knowledge rather than on intentionality in general, does not make the point quite so explicitly. But it is the upshot of his statement that "the property of being *known* . . . in no way distorts or conceals the identity of the object before, during or after the time when it has it, any more than being hit by the bat does so to the ball."¹⁰³ An empty positing can intend the very same object which would be the object of the corresponding fulfilled positing, i.e. the object of "knowledge," because it makes no difference to the object itself whether it is known or unknown, so that very *same* objects which we could in principle know may exist even when our knowledge of them does not.

Now, it is undeniably the case that fulfillment plays an important role in Husserl's solution to the problem of transcendence. The question is whether it can play such a role in a "realist" solution. The problem is that such a solution must rely crucially on the possibility of *complete* fulfillment: whenever we intend any object, we intend it as the possible object of a completely fulfilled positing. This has undesirable consequences. It means, first of all, that when we are certain that an object is present, what we are certain of is that that object could be given with complete fulfillment. As Willard explains:

In most cases where we "confirm" a thought, we do not actually carry through to the Ideal limit of Evidence, but simply assure ourselves that we could do so if we wished. And sometimes we mistakenly so assure ourselves.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²"The Phenomenological Dimension," in *CCH*, 92.

¹⁰³"Knowledge," in *CCH*, 155–6.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 153.

As he also admits, however, complete fulfillment “is not possible for the physical world or physical objects”¹⁰⁵—this being just what it means to say that positing in sense perception is always inadequate. The “assurance” in question—the assurance that we could “carry through to the Ideal limit of Evidence”—is therefore *always* mistaken in the case of such physical objects (and of transcendent objects in general). Willard’s “realist” Husserl must ultimately agree with De Boer and Philipse’s “idealist” one that the natural attitude, in which a transcendent world is posited with certainty, is an erroneous attitude. Transcendental realism, in other words, leads to empirical idealism.

But this is not the worst of it. Recall that the positing of a transcendent object is inadequate not just in the sense that it is partially empty (i.e., that not every property of its object actually appears in it), but also in the sense that it is underdetermining. There are always more than one—in fact, infinitely many—different series of perceptual positings which would serve to “confirm” it, and many of these different series are inconsistent with each other, in the sense that they do not represent appearances of the same object. There is just no saying, then, *which* ideal state or process of complete fulfillment corresponds to such a positing. If the directedness of an inadequate positing is supposed to be explained by reference to “the” corresponding adequate (completely fulfilled) one, therefore, it will not in fact be directed at any one transcendent object. Even on its own terms, in other words, the realist solution does not work as promised. It fails to explain how an object could ever be intended in an inadequate positing.

That both the “realist” and “idealist” interpreters end up in the same fix is no

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

coincidence. They both make the same mistake, and it is a mistake which Husserl expressly warns against: namely, the absurd absolutizing of the transcendent world. For “absolutizing” does not mean, as De Boer supposes, the ordinary positing of a transcendent thing as outside consciousness. To absolutize a transcendent object is rather to take its actuality, or in general its being, to be *absolute*, rather than presumptive, being. In the naivete of the natural attitude (including the naivete of natural science), we do not make this error. We do, it is true, posit transcendent objects with certainty, i.e. as actually existing; but this certainty always carries with it the possibility of “cancellation” in future immanent time—which is to say, this actuality is always presumptive. The certain positing of the natural attitude is therefore, insofar as it is rational, *not* mistaken. The object actually *does* exist; it exists only presumptively, but presumptive being is all we attribute to it, and is the only kind of being which it could possibly have.

The absolutizing of the transcendent object is a mistake, rather, which is made, not in any kind of naive consciousness, but only in *philosophy*. And it is not, moreover, a way of rationally positing any object at all—i.e., there is not, according to Husserl, really any such thing as what Heidegger, Philipse and De Boer call the “naturalistic attitude.” It is rather the (blind or symbolic) supposition of an absurdity, a contradiction in terms. Phenomenology, for its part, therefore does not claim to correct an error in any of the ways we rationally posit objects—there is, by definition, no such error to be corrected. What it does, rather, among other things, is merely to call attention to the philosophical *absurdity* of naturalism—to the fact, that is, that there is no such position as naturalism which can be rationally maintained:

[Phenomenology] as little takes anything from the fully valid being of the world . . . as one takes something away from the fully valid geometrical being of a square in that one . . . denies that it is round. Real actuality

is not “reinterpreted,” still less denied; rather, an absurd interpretation of it . . . is put aside. It [i.e., that absurd interpretation] stems from a *philosophical* absolutizing of the world, which is thoroughly alien to the natural way of considering it [*die der natürlichen Weltbetrachtung durchaus fremd ist*].¹⁰⁶

If the “idealist” and “realist” solutions are both untenable, then, what is Husserl’s real solution to the problem we have been considering? The real solution relies on the fact that the being of transcendent objects is *inherently* imperfect, merely presumptive. Their “mind-independence” is entirely consistent with their complete *dependence* on the *Erlebnisse* in which they are posited, because what “mind-independence” amounts to is nothing more or less than that presumptiveness. I am certain, as I write this, that there is a carton of orange juice next to my right elbow. And yet I am conscious that my certainty about such a thing does not rule out my being mistaken. This does not mean, absurdly, that I am both certain and not certain—it does not mean that I have some reason for *doubting* the presence of the carton. It does not mean, in other words, that I posit the carton with certainty and at the same (immanent) time, absurdly, posit its possible (cosmically) simultaneous non-existence. What it means is that my present certainty is subject to cancellation in the (immanent) future. That “the carton of orange juice might nevertheless not exist, even though I am certain of it” just means that while my current positing is sufficient (as Austin says: “enough”) to cause the carton’s presumptive existence, i.e. existence in the immanent present, it is *not* sufficient to give it absolute existence, i.e. existence which is, in terms of immanent time, eternal. It means, as we said before, that the carton is a corruptible substance.

One might object that the above “solution” is not really a solution at all, or

¹⁰⁶*Id* 1, §55, 107.

rather is no better than De Boer and Philipse's solution, in that the kind of mind-independence or externality which it attributes to transcendent objects is not true mind-independence or externality. As far as mind-independence goes, this is of course correct, in the sense that Husserl does not think that transcendent objects are literally independent of the mind: they owe their being, such as it is, to our positing of them. There are two things to keep in mind about this, however. First of all, since the being-character of a thing is not a genus under which it falls, this dependence is in a way not essential to transcendent things: "a world outside our own," as I pointed out above, is not just logically possible, but in a way intrinsically or essentially possible as well. This means that the dependence of transcendent objects on consciousness is not like the intrinsic dependence of an accident upon its subject or a part upon its whole. It means that transcendent substances are *relatively* independent—which is the only kind of independence that finite substances were ever supposed to have. We will return to this point in much greater detail below. Secondly, a transcendent object cannot be *identified* with any conscious state or set of states. What I have in mind is not what De Boer or Philipse would acknowledge: that the transcendent object cannot be identified with some kind of immanent *objects* of consciousness (sense data or noemata), because its transcendence requires in addition a certain (erroneous) "interpretation" of those immanent objects. There is no human being standing in front of the tablet: the interpretation itself is also part of consciousness. And yet all of this, the interpretation along with that within consciousness which is interpreted, must be distinguished from the transcendent object, for the simple reason that, when the transcendent object is canceled, the *Erlebnisse* in which it was posited continue to exist. While the transcendent object has only presumptive actuality or being, in other words, the being of the *Erlebnisse* themselves is "absolute."

3.5 Husserl's ontology: a general overview

This distinction, between absolute and relative being, is the most fundamental distinction of Husserlian ontology: “the *most radical* of all *distinctions of being*,” as Heidegger puts it, “which can and must be made within the theory of categories.”¹⁰⁷ Besides this one fundamental distinction, however, there is also a more general ontological structure of spheres or regions of being and of (formal and regional) categories. Then, furthermore, there is a distinction which runs through all the others, between fact and essence. I would like to pause here to consider these secondary ontological distinctions at some length. Doing so will serve two purposes. First, it will enable us to assign the “most radical distinction” its proper place within Husserl's system, and in particular to exclude certain mistaken interpretations. Second, it will enable us to draw the parallel between Husserl and Thomas, and hence the parallel between Husserl and Cavell, with the greatest possible accuracy. These two purposes are different, but they are not unrelated: no explanation will completely serve one if it does not also address the other.

3.5.1 *Region and individuum*

With respect to the division into “regions,” it is important to understand, first of all, what the division is, and upon what it is based. It is closely related to the concept of a “highest material genus.” At one point, in fact, Husserl seems simply to identify the two: “every concrete empirical objectivity is ordered, with its material essence,

¹⁰⁷*Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 141: *Der radikalste Seinsunterschied ... der überhaupt innerhalb der Kategorienlehre gemacht werden könne und müsse.*

under a *highest* material [*materialen*] genus, a ‘*region*’ of empirical objects.”¹⁰⁸ As can be seen from the more careful, “rigorously analytic” definition which Husserl gives a few pages later, however, a region is not, strictly speaking, a highest genus, but a *complex* of such highest genera:

Region is nothing other than the *total highest generic unity belonging to a concretum*, thus the essentially unified complex of the highest genera which belong to the lowest differentiae within the concretum (§16, 30–31).

To understand what a region is, therefore, we need to understand Husserl’s distinctions (1) between genus, species, and “eidetic singularity” (*eidetische Singularität*); (2) between concretum and abstractum; and (3) between (material) essence and (logical) form.

The first of these three distinctions is one between different types of essence. We will discuss the precise nature and ontological role of Husserl’s fact/essence distinction in section 3.5.3 below. For the time being we need only explain that Husserl distinguishes between singular essences and the singular objects to which such essences belong; for these latter he officially reserves the term “this-here” (*Dies-da*), which he takes as equivalent to the Aristotelian expression $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$ (§14, 28).¹⁰⁹ A singular essence forms part of a hierarchy of specific or generic essences, and is simply the lowest rung of such a hierarchy, or in other words a lowest species: “lowest specific

¹⁰⁸*Id* 1, §9, 19. It is important not to confuse *material* with *materiell*, which Husserl uses for something completely different—see below, §3.6.1.

¹⁰⁹Despite the official rejection of “individual” as a synonym for “this-here,” it often turns up in the *Ideen* with that meaning (whereas “this-here” is rarely used outside of the section in which it is introduced). Indeed, Husserl sometimes goes even farther and uses “individual” as a synonym for factual, as opposed to essential, being in general: see, e.g., §3, 12.

differentia" and "eidetic singularity" are interchangeable (§12, 25);¹¹⁰ it is merely a matter of terminological convention that the term "species" is not normally used for these singular essences.¹¹¹ Each this-here has, that is, in the eidetic singularity under which it falls, its own singular essence or "proper species" (*Eigenart*), defined by the sum total of its essential predicates.¹¹² It is clear, however, from Husserl's examples, if not from what he says explicitly, that the relationship between this-heres and singular essences is not one-to-one: in at least some cases, there can be more than one this-here with the same singular essence.¹¹³

¹¹⁰Husserl's explicit statement here and elsewhere (e.g. *Id* 1, §149, 310–11) that there are essences of every level of specificity, down to and including the singular, certainly rules out De Boer's interpretation, according to which only the most general of all concepts correspond to Husserlian essences, so that "Husserl's essences can be better compared with the transcendentia of Scholasticism or the categories of Kant" than with "general concepts in the sense of traditional conceptual realism" (*Development* 260). In fact, as we will soon see, the transcendentals properly speaking—predicates which belong to objects merely insofar as they are objects—are for Husserl not a matter of (material) essence at all, but of (logical) form.

The passages De Boer cites from *Erfahrung und Urteil* are, incidentally, not to the point: that text indeed distinguishes between the a priori concepts yielded by essential intuition and "empirical concepts," which are "contingent" and may therefore involve or refer to "extraessential types." But there is no suggestion there that this is a distinction between more and less *general* concepts: instead it is explicitly said that "essential types" have themselves "different levels [*Stufen*] of universality" (*Erfahrung und Urteil*, §83b, 402). *Erfahrung und Urteil* should in any case perhaps be regarded more as the work of Ludwig Landgrebe than of Husserl himself: see Landgrebe's own half-admission of that fact (xxvi).

¹¹¹*Id* 1, §15, 30.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, §14, 28; §2, 9.

¹¹³For a list of examples, see *Id* 1, §12, 25. Husserl also seems to imply the same thing at §15, 29, where he talks about different "individual singulars" (*individuelle Einzelheiten*) falling under the same essence; the sentence is confusing, however, terminologically and otherwise. Further statements in §2, 8–9 which appear to address this issue are ambiguous and/or problematic, as we will see shortly.

The second distinction, between concretum and abstractum, is both more important and more difficult to understand. As Husserl describes this distinction, it is also, technically, a distinction between two different kinds of essence: “a non-independent [*unselbständiges*] essence is called an *abstractum*; an absolutely independent one [is called] a *concretum*.”¹¹⁴ Husserl refers the reader to the *Logische Untersuchungen* for a complete treatment of independent and non-independent objects as such; in the context of *Ideen I*, he explains only what it means for an *essence* to be non-independent: “that such an essence grounds, together with another one, the unity of *one* essence” (ibid.). Specific and generic essences, except for the lowest specific essences, i.e. eidetic singularities, can always be combined with further differentiae (further specifying essential attributes) to create an essence of greater specificity. Hence they are “non-independent in principle” (§15, 30).¹¹⁵ Even among the eidetic singularities themselves, however, there is still a distinction between independent and non-independent. This distinction is best understood by turning from the singular essences to the objects, i.e. this-heres, whose essences they are. And, indeed, Husserl's only real explanation of it is along these lines: if *A* and *B* are essences which together ground the unity of a single essence *C*, then this-heres falling under *A* can only exist as “determined” (*bestimmt*) by this-heres which at least belong to a genus under which *B* is ordered (§15, 29).

The relationship between *A* and *B* in this case is one of symmetrical non-independence: if anything (any this-here) falls under *A*, then it must be determined by

¹¹⁴*Id* 1, §15, 29.

¹¹⁵The same applies to the essences of syntactically complex (categorical) objects (see the beginning of §15), which we will discuss in a moment, though it is not entirely clear whether such essences are therefore to be called “abstract,” or whether a different term should be used for this distinct kind of non-independence.

something generically like *B*, and vice versa. The examples Husserl gives are of this kind. A (single instance of) a sensible quality, for example, can exist only as “covering” a certain extension, and an extension can exist only as “covered” by some sensible quality (ibid.). There is also a relation of *asymmetrical non-independence*, however, between *A* and *B*, on the one hand, and *C*, on the other. If *A* is the singular essence of a certain color, for example, and *B* the singular essence of a certain extended surface, then *A* and *B* are dependent on *C*, the essence of a surface of that color, while *C* itself is relatively *independent*. If this-heres falling under *C* can themselves only exist as further determined (as colored surfaces, in our example, can exist only as the colored surfaces of three-dimensional objects), then the independence of *C* is *merely* relative, however, and *C*, like *A* and *B*, is an abstractum. Only when we arrive at this-heres which can exist without any further “determinations,” have we arrived at an *absolutely* independent essence, and hence, by the above definition, at a concretum. Husserl’s name for such a fully-determined this-here is “individuum”: “a this-here whose material [*sachhaltiges*] essence is a concretum is called an *individuum*” (ibid.).¹¹⁶

It is clear from Husserl’s examples, as I said above, that there can be more than one this-here falling under the same singular essence: the color of two bodies, for example, can be essentially identical. What is far less clear, however, is whether the same thing holds for this-heres which are individua. True, Husserl says that “everything which belongs to the essence of the individuum, another individuum can also have” (§2, 9). But this is obviously ambiguous: does it mean that one individuum could have *all*

¹¹⁶Husserl takes *sachhaltig* as equivalent to *material*, and there seems to be no real alternative to translating it as “material,” even though there is of course nothing about the word itself to suggest a connection with “matter.”

the same essential attributes as another, or only that each of these attributes, taken separately, could as easily be found in some other individuum as in this one? The examples given earlier in the same section only complicate the problem. Husserl says, first of all, that whatever exists at a certain place and time could always be essentially identical to something existing at another place and time (§2, 8). This could be taken to mean that place and time are not essential to any (spatio-temporal) object, therefore not part of any essence, even a singular and fully determinate one—i.e., even a concretum. Given that some spatio-temporal objects are individua (which, as we will see, is Husserl's view), there could therefore be individua which agreed in essence but which nevertheless differed due to their different spatio-temporal positions.¹¹⁷ There are two problems with this, however. First, Husserl does not stop here with spatio-temporal determinations, but goes on to talk about other attributes of a real object. Not only could “the same” object have existed at a different time or in a different place, but it could have had a different shape than it in fact does, or it could have changed, whereas it is in fact unchanged, or changed in a different way that it has in fact changed.¹¹⁸ But although Aristotelians—most Aristotelians, at any rate—would acknowledge that the same (substantial) concrete individual might have had a different (accidental) shape, or might have changed differently than it has, in the sense in which “change” means *accidental* change, it does not look as if Husserl can admit that “accidental” qualities like shape or color are truly accidental to the individuum in which they inhere.¹¹⁹ This table might not have had the shape or color

¹¹⁷This, apparently, is how D.W. Smith reads the passage: see “Mind and Body,” in *CCH*, 329.

¹¹⁸*Id* 1, §2, 8–9.

¹¹⁹See below, p. 129 and p. 210, for discussion of what should properly be called “accidents” in Husserl's system.

which it actually has, but it certainly could not exist in reality without *some* shape or color—i.e., without being determined by something at least identical in genus to its actual shape and color; it follows that “this table,” in the sense in which “this table” might have some other shape or color, is not an individuum, and that its essence is not concrete, but abstract. The true concretum must be an absolutely independent essence, and hence it must already include every kind of determination without which something falling under such an essence could not exist. But then, secondly, if we turn back to spatio-temporal determinations themselves, it looks as if the same argument ought to apply to them as well: surely a table that does not exist at any particular time or place is essentially a mere abstraction.

I think that Husserl does not give a clear answer to this question in *Ideen* I. There are some vague indications that he really does think there can be only one individuum falling under a given singular essence.¹²⁰ In the later parts of *Ideen* II, on the other hand (which were written not that much later than the published text of *Ideen* I), he unequivocally takes the opposite position:

The *Ding* has its individual essence as that which [*das, was*] is here and now. But this what [*dieses Was*] itself is a “universal.” That is: every *Ding* is an exemplar of a universality. . . . Every [*Ding*] is to be thought of as repeated arbitrarily often.¹²¹

¹²⁰The statement that most lends itself to this interpretation is his justification of the way he uses the term “individuum”: he says that he has reserved the word for a this-here with a concrete essence because it implies “indivisibility” (*Id* 1, §14, 28). He does not, unfortunately, go on to explain what *kind* of indivisibility the individuum possesses. Certainly Husserlian individua, unlike, say, Leibnizian monads, need not be indivisible in any *literal* sense. It seems possible, therefore, that he has in mind exactly the idea that the extension of a concrete essence is not “divisible” into numerically distinct this-heres; i.e. that only one this-here can belong to it.

¹²¹*Id* 2, §64, Hua 4:298,15–20.

And this is the correct position with respect to sensible individua (*Ding*), and transcendent individua in general. For, as Husserl in effect goes on to explain there, all transcendent individua possess characteristics which are extra-essential in every sense of the word: their relation, namely, to the *Erlebnisse* in which they are posited, and in particular to a certain range of *immanent* time. This is a point I have already touched on above, in the context of distinguishing different kinds of impossibility. The time has not yet come to discuss it in detail, however; we will have to return to it below.

For the moment, we should notice that it is not obvious on the face of it, simply from these definitions, that there need be any concreta at all, or in other words that some this-heres must be individua. That there are non-independent essences implies, to be sure, that there is also a *relatively* independent one—namely, that single essence in which they are “united”; it does not, or does not obviously, imply that there are *absolutely* independent essences. Husserl, nevertheless, does hold that all abstracta relate back, in one way or another, to concreta, because he takes it to be the case (to be, in fact, a matter of logical necessity) that all objects are “modifications” (*Abwandlungen*) of ultimate independent substrates: “the individuum is the primary object [*Urgegenstand*] demanded by pure logic, the logical absolute, back to which all logical modifications refer.”¹²²

That the existence of individua, and hence of concreta, is a matter of *logical* necessity, brings us to the third distinction I mentioned above: between essence and form. This will lead us into a discussion of Husserl's logic, because the concept of form is fundamental to the theory of pure logic as Husserl develops it in *Ideen* I: the

¹²²*Id* 1, §15, 29. See also *Id* 2, §15, Hua 4:34,5–10.

purely logical is that which is purely “formal.”

Behind this usage of “form” (*Form*) and its distinction from “material” (*sachhaltig*) essence, lies a complicated metaphysical and terminological story. For *Form* is of course a translation equivalent of $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$. Although Husserl uses *Eidos* as equivalent to “essence” (*Wesen*), however, he nevertheless makes a radical distinction between the essence (or “material essence”) of an object and its (“empty” or “logical”) form.¹²³

The immediate source of this distinction, and indeed of the term “form” in this context, is Kant. In Kant, however, the distinction arises, not because form and (material) essence are different, but because the form with which general, i.e. formal, logic deals is the form of thought, rather than the form of the *objects* of thought:

General logic abstracts . . . from all content of knowledge [*Erkenntnis*], i.e. from every relationship [*Beziehung*] of [knowledge] to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation [*Verhältnis*] of knowings [*Erkenntnisse*] to each other, i.e. the form of thought *überhaupt*.¹²⁴

It is still true in Husserl that the truths of formal logic derive ultimately from the essential truths about thought, or more generally about *Erlebnisse*—i.e., from truths about their form in the traditional sense.¹²⁵ But there is also, in his system, a “form” *of the object*, distinct from its material essence, and it is this kind of form of which pure logic itself, as opposed to the phenomenological theory of pure logic, treats.

¹²³In Husserl’s usage, the term *Form* by itself normally refers to logical form, whereas the term *Wesen* normally refers to material essence. There are times, however, when he refers to logical form as a kind of “essence” (e.g., *Id* 1, §8, 18) or to (material) essence as “material form” (e.g., *Id* 1, §9, 19).

¹²⁴*KrV*, A55/B79.

¹²⁵See especially *Id* 1, §153, 321–2.

Or rather: every object falls under several such forms. For every object, first of all, falls under the form of “object *überhaupt*” or “the empty something.”¹²⁶ Some objects, in addition to this, have a “syntactic form,” examples of such syntactic objects being states of affairs, relations, multiplicities composed of unities, members or orderings, and so forth—in short, the objects which in the *Logische Untersuchungen* are called “categorical” (§11, 24). Also included here are universals, in the sense of generic or specific essences, insofar as generalization falls under “the now extended concept of logical ‘modification’” (§15, 29). Other objects lack such a syntactic form (are “syntactically formless”), but then by that very fact must have one of two other forms: either the form of “material [*sachhaltiges*] ultimate essence” (i.e., eidetic singularity) or the form of “this-here” (§14, 28). Finally, the difference between concreta and abstracta, and hence also the difference between individua and other types of this-here, is also a formal difference—which is why, as we have seen, Husserl can speak of the individuum as being “the logical absolute,” or as “demanded by pure logic.”

That there are *truths* of pure logic at all (axioms and theorems) means that there are relationships which must hold between objects, or (kinds of) objects whose existence is implied by the existence of other (kinds of) objects, merely by virtue of their form. It means, that is, that there are necessary truths about objects which do not depend on their material essences, or in other words are not restricted to any genus, not even a highest genus. One such logical law, as Husserl first puts it, is that there is in every region a primary kind of object (an *Urgegenständlichkeit*), such that all other kinds of objects in that region “point back” (*zurückweisen*) to

¹²⁶*Id* 1, §13, 26.

that primary kind (§10, 21). As we have already seen, however, this primary kind of object is just the individuum, so that the above law can be restated as follows: every region contains individua, upon which every other kind of object in the region is (perhaps mediately) dependent, in the sense that the every other such object is either a (singular, specific, or generic) essence, or, if factual, is syntactically complex, or, if syntactically formless, possesses an essence which is an abstractum, and in such a way that there is an asymmetrical, perhaps mediate, relationship of non-independence between that abstractum and the concrete essences of individua. If, however, we use the most careful and “rigorously ‘analytic’” (that is, purely logical) definition of region, as the “totality of highest generic unities belonging to a concretum,” then to say that there are individua (that is, objects whose essences are concreta) in every region turns out to be more or less tautologous—or rather, what it really means is just that there *are* such things as regions, and that every object belongs to one. It is as a consequence of this last formulation that pure logic, which is the theory of the empty form of “object,” is also the theory of “the formal region,” which is not really a region, but rather “the empty form of region *überhaupt*” (§10, 22).

From all of this it follows, first of all, that D.W. Smith's theory of many-aspect monism, whatever its intrinsic merits, is not correct as an interpretation of Husserl. The theory, as Smith explains it, is that “each concrete experience falls under two high-level essences or species, called Consciousness and Nature respectively, so that the mental and physical sides of the experience are two aspects of a single event.”¹²⁷

¹²⁷“Mind and Body,” in *CCH*, 323. Note, incidentally, that in the *Logische Untersuchungen* Husserl uses very similar language to describe a theory which he vehemently rejects: “Not seldomly, one mixes together both, the color-sensation [*Farbenempfindung*] and the objective coloredness of the object. Precisely in our day, an account [*Darstellung*] is very popular which speaks as if the one and the other were

Now there is a way, of course, in which something “concrete,” i.e. an individuum, whose essence is a concretum, “falls under” more than one species. Abstracta are abstracta because they “unite” to form, ultimately, concreta; the individuum, in falling under its own concrete essence, also falls under the various abstract essences which find their ultimate unity within it. The example which Smith discusses,¹²⁸ of an instance of brown as a “moment” of a table, is of exactly this kind. This-brown-table-here qua individuum falls under the abstract essences of table and brownness, insofar as those essences are united within the concretum which is its own proper species, and insofar as it itself, qua individuum, includes this-brownness-here and this-tableness-here as dependent parts or “moments.” But brownness and tableness are not essences which belong to different regions, nor could they be, if they are to be united in the same concretum:

If consciousness-*Erlebnisse* were unthinkable without involvement with nature in *that* way in which colors are unthinkable without extension, then we could not, as we must, regard consciousness as its own absolute region [*als eine eigene absolut Region für sich*].¹²⁹

the same, only considered under different ‘viewpoints and interests’: psychologically or subjectively considered, it counts as [*heiße*] sensation [*Empfindung*]; physically or objectively considered, as property [*Beschaffenheit*] of the external *Ding*” (V, §2, 2:327).

¹²⁸“Mind and Body,” in *CCH*, 329.

¹²⁹*Id* 1, §51, 95. In fact, as I will argue below in §3.6.4, pure consciousness is a distinct region in a special, strong, “metaphysical” sense, so that the “involvement” (*Verflechtung*) with nature that is ruled out here includes even the kind of “involvement” that different transcendent regions can have with one another (see *Id* 1, §17, 32, and see below, p. 171). That only makes things worse for many-aspect monism, of course.

Note that this kind of statement also seems to contradict Levinas’s interpretation, according to which “consciousness” is the “primary and original phenomenon,” from which “the object and the subject of traditional philosophy” are mere abstractions (*Théorie de l’intuition*, 80). As Husserl says in the continuation of the above passage:

For it is, as we have seen, the *definition* of “region” that the various essences—ultimately, the highest genera—of which the region is composed can all be united in a single concretum. When Husserl says that “every concrete empirical objectivity is ordered, with its material essence, under a *highest* material genus, a ‘region’ of empirical objects,”¹³⁰ he is being loose: only slightly loose, but loose enough to have led Smith astray. The highest (material) genera whose members are individua (i.e. “concrete objectivities”) are not *identical* with the regions, but they stand, rather, in perfect one-to-one correspondence with them: the domain of a single science, which is to say a region, is not itself a highest genus, but it is “determined by a higher genus”—by the “highest concrete genus,” which is “built” out of “highest genera that are in part disjunct, in part founded upon one another.”¹³¹ This follows from the fact that the same individuum cannot in any sense belong to more than one region: region and concretum, hence also region and individuum, are coordinate concepts.

“through such ‘abstractions’ from nature only [something] natural is attained.” And Levinas there indeed maintains, for this reason, that the apparent idealism of *Id* 1 §49 (which is obviously also at work in §51) should be either rejected as an aberration from Husserl’s true central idea of intentionality or reinterpreted in light of it. I will suggest below, however (p. 213, n. 304), that there is a sense in which Levinas’s point about intentionality is correct, and moreover is entirely consistent with the radical (and, in my view, consistent) idealism of the *Ideen*. (As for the proper interpretation of §49, I am in partial agreement with Levinas on that, as well: see below, p. 223, n. 313.)

We will discuss the various meanings of the term “nature,” including its use here to mean the realm of transcendency in general, in §3.6.1 below.

¹³⁰*Id* 1, §9, 19.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, §72, 133–4. For the correspondence between regions and sciences, see §17, 32.

3.5.2 *Region and category*

The sorting of objects into regions, and within regions into highest material genera—the laying out, in other words, of the most general kinds of being—corresponds in large part to the subject matter of traditional Aristotelian/Neoplatonic ontologies. The key concept of such ontologies is that of *category*. It is therefore necessary to consider the place of category within Husserl's ontological system. The task is made difficult, however, by the fact that Husserl's own use of the term *Kategorie* does not derive directly from Aristotle or from any Aristotelian, but rather from Kant, and under an interpretation of Kant, moreover, which obscures the continuity between the traditional Aristotelian use and the Kantian one. To get the entire picture straight, we will have to sort out and keep distinct the Thomistic/Aristotelian, Kantian, and Husserlian uses of “category.” And in order properly to appreciate the relationship between these three, it will also be necessary to say a few brief things about a fourth famous system of “categories”: that of Plotinus.

What Aristotle actually meant by *κατηγορία* has been the subject of intense debates, not only throughout modern times but in antiquity and in the Middle Ages as well. It would certainly be out of place for us to attempt a resolution of those debates here. On Thomas's interpretation—which is also the oldest surviving interpretation, insofar as it corresponds to that of Plotinus and of Alexander—the term has a very straightforward meaning. The categories (*praedicamenta*) are simply the highest genera of things.

There is a difficulty with this understanding, however, which has dogged the theory of categories at least since Plotinus. The problem is that there are, according to Aristotle, both sensible (i.e., material) and intelligible (i.e., immaterial) substances, but that it seems impossible, for one reason or another, to assign both of these kinds of

substances to a single genus. Later on, when we have fully explained the significance of the different modes of being which Husserl distinguishes, and in particular the precise way in which the being of *Erlebnisse* differs from that of transcendencies in general, we will be able to explain how this argument plays out in his system: how this difference in mode of being, hence in highest genus, is a necessary concomitant of the way in which *Erlebnisse* are metaphysically prior to transcendent objects. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to recall where the problem lies according to Thomas: intelligible substances are the causes of being (according to species) of sensible ones, from which it follows that there is nothing in common between the essences of the one and of the other. If being members of a single genus is a matter of having something essentially in common, then the metaphysical priority of intelligible to sensible substance seems to rule out the existence of a common genus to which both would belong.¹³²

The solution to this problem which Thomas adopts is in some ways as ancient as the problem itself. Already in Plotinus, it is suggested that, while the highest genera, in the strict or primary sense of “genus,” are indeed confined to either the sensible

¹³²The doctrine that there cannot be prior and posterior things in the same genus has its origin in certain Aristotelian texts: see *Metaph.* B.3.999^a6–13 and *EN* 1.6.1096^a17–23. Plotinus uses these passages, together with the (alleged) fact that intelligible substance is “prior” to sensible substance, in his version of the above criticism (*Enn.* 6.1.25.16–21). The subsequent history is complex: Thomas interprets the above Aristotelian passages (probably correctly) as ad hominem arguments against Plato, and thus in general *denies* the principle that there cannot be prior and posterior in the same genus; in fact, he argues that, according to the correct Aristotelian view, *every* genus has prior and posterior species (see *In Metaph.* 8.3 [nn. 1723–4]; *ST* 1.50.2 ad 1; *In Metaph.* 3.8 [n. 438]). He nevertheless, because of his own reliance on such Neoplatonic sources as the *Liber de causis*, ends up with his own version of Plotinus’ criticism, not realizing (or perhaps just not caring) that it is ultimately based on a reading of Aristotle with which he disagrees.

or the intelligible realm, there is a weaker sense of “genus” in which sensible and intelligible things—in particular, sensible and intelligible substances—can be said to have a single genus in common. In Plotinus, however, the weak and strict senses of “genus” are only distantly related. The unity of the “genus” of substance, in the sense in which it applies both to sensible and to intelligible substances, is not really the unity of genus at all, but rather the entirely distinct kind of unity which Aristotle calls a unity $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma \epsilon\nu$, and which Thomas, for complex historical reasons, calls a unity of analogy.¹³³ Sensible and intelligible substances can both be called “substances” in the same way that a healthy animal and a healthy diet can both be called “healthy”—which, according to Aristotle, is the same way in which a substance and an accident can both be called “beings.”¹³⁴ Whatever that unity involves (and it is by no means clear), it does *not* imply the existence of a single genus in the crucial sense of a rung within some genus-species hierarchy. This weak kind of “genus,” in other words, is in no way suited to be called a “highest” (or lowest, or intermediate) genus. Hence when it comes time to assign the proper use of the term “category,” it is clear that it must be reserved for the highest genera in the strict sense. There must therefore be (at least) two distinct systems of categories: one for the intelligible realm—or, as Plotinus says, for the intelligible “sphere” ($\sigma\phi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\alpha$)—and one for the sensible.¹³⁵

In Thomas, on the other hand, a “logical” genus represents a kind of unity which, though weaker than that of the stricter, “physical” genus, is still in some way a unity

¹³³See below, p. 168, for a more detailed discussion of the different kinds of Thomistic analogy.

¹³⁴See *Metaph. I.2.1003^a33–^b16*.

¹³⁵Although, incidentally, it seems that Husserl never studied Plotinus very carefully, he may well have known about both this criticism and its Plotinian solution from Brentano. See *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*, 143–4.

of *genus*—not, in other words, a mere unity of analogy. What is, logically speaking, generically unified may, to be sure, be analogically unified from the “physical” point of view—this holds, for example, of the logical genera *body* and *substance*. In a passage in the *Sentences* commentary to which I have already alluded several times, Thomas speaks of such cases as ones in which there is an analogy “according to being and not according to intention.”¹³⁶ But in such cases it is the common definition or *ratio*, and *not* the physical unity of analogy, which gives rise to a *logical* unity of genus. Celestial and sublunar bodies, to take Thomas’s example, belong to a single logical genus because they share a common definition (“substance having length, width and breadth”), rather than because celestial bodies have in a primary way what sublunar ones have secondarily. Hence if the common *ratio* is absent, there can be a physical unity of analogy where there is no unity of genus whatsoever. This is the case, according to Thomas, of the unity of being, insofar as it includes both substances and accidents: “being” not only is no physical genus, but is not a logical genus, either.¹³⁷ The close relationship between definition and essence, moreover, is enough to ensure that logical and physical genera fit into a single hierarchy of genera and species. The logical genus of substance, for example, has under it as a species the lower logical genus of body, under which fall the two highest physical genera of celestial and sublunar bodies. The way is therefore open, once again, to regard the categories, even as they apply to objects in different spheres of being, as the highest

¹³⁶*In Sent.* 1.19.5.2 ad 1. Note that the terminology in this early work differs somewhat from that which Thomas preferred later on: *intentio* (translating the Arabic *ma‘nā*) is used where he would later have used *ratio*=λόγος.

¹³⁷*Ibid.* An even more extreme case (which Thomas also mentions) is that of the predicate “being” applied both to God and to creatures. Here again there is a unity of analogy, even though God is undefinable and thus outside *every* logical genus.

genera: the highest *logical* genera, under which all logical and physical genera fall. And that, indeed, appears to be Thomas's theory.¹³⁸

Ingenious a trick as this is, however, it is important to realize that it leaves the overall structure of Aristotelian/Plotinian ontology almost unchanged—that, indeed, is part of what is so ingenious about it. Because a Thomistic category is purely logical, and does not correspond to any one thing in the essence of its members, the metaphysically fundamental units are still the categories in the *Plotinian* sense of the term: the highest physical genera. Hence, even the transcendentals, as we have already seen, apply to a thing only insofar as it belongs to such a highest physical genus. The genera of intelligible, celestial, and sublunar substance are different grades or modes of being (and of unity, truth, goodness, reality, etc.); they are different ways in which form can subsist, different degrees to which something can be *actual*. The fundamental structure of the ontology is therefore still defined by the two supra-categorical $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ relations recognized by Plotinus: within each sphere of being, a relation of the highest accidental genera back to the fundamental genus of substance; between different spheres of being, the relation of different kinds of substance back to the fundamental, intelligible kind. The *logical* relationships between the parts of each Thomistic (logical) category, and between the various categories as such—e.g. between sublunar and celestial quantity, or between the logical genera of substance and quantity as a whole—do not reflect any real features of things, and are therefore unimportant as far as metaphysics is concerned.

Still, the overarching logical structure of categories does have one important consequence: it makes clear the sense in which “the same” categories can exist in different

¹³⁸See *In Metaph.* 10.12 (n. 2142).

spheres, and hence the sense in which a single comprehensive list of categories can prescribe the form of all possible spheres. Because the definition is the “account that signifies the essence,” things which share a common essence (i.e., which agree in physical genus) must also share a common definition (i.e., must agree in logical genus). The only way in which things which share a common definition can differ from one another, on the other hand, is in prime matter, or in other words in grade or sphere of being. Hence those members of a given sphere of being which agree in logical genus (i.e., which share a most general common definition) must also agree in physical genus (i.e., must share a most general common essence). Every Plotinian category (highest physical genus) is, in other words, just the restriction to a single sphere of some Thomistic category (highest logical genus). If a term like “substance” or “quality” can be used in a logically univocal way of the members of two different spheres, then it names a highest physical genus in one of them if and only if it does so in the other.¹³⁹

In Kant there is no longer any clear connection between the categories and the highest genera of things. It is not so much that Kant argues against such an interpretation of Aristotle as that he seems completely oblivious to it. This is an indication of nominalism with respect to accidents: the view, that is, that at least some of the terms (including mental terms, i.e. concepts) which refer to accidents do not refer to beings distinct from the substances in which they inhere, but merely to substances themselves (and their parts) under different aspects. On such a (non-Thomistic)

¹³⁹It remains possible that some of the categories do not apply to some spheres at all, and, indeed, it does seem to be Thomas's view that some or all of the accidental categories do not apply to intelligible things. To the extent that the names of the accidental categories (e.g., “quantity”) are applied to angels, it would follow that those names are not, even logically speaking, univocal, though their various meanings might still be analogous in one way or another.

nominalist view, some or all of the accidental categories are not genera of beings or objects at all; they are simply the highest concepts in certain series.¹⁴⁰ The above Thomistic picture nevertheless persists in Kant to a great extent, because the Kantian categories are “merely logical forms”¹⁴¹—which, as we have already seen, means that they are forms of thought rather than of the objects of thought, or in other words that they are mere *rationes* which do not in themselves determine anything about the essence of the objects to which they are supposed to apply. In principle, then, it is possible for a Kantian category to apply, just as the Thomistic categories do, to things between which there is no community of essence, and in particular it is possible for them to apply both to sensible and to intelligible things. This is why it so much as *seems* that the categories might have a purely transcendental use, i.e. might serve to determine something about objects in general (B305; cf. A253).

That the categories do *not* have such a use, so that the appearance that they do is a transcendental *illusion*, is a consequence of the doctrine of transcendental idealism: that the objects of knowledge are caused generically, i.e. according to their prime matter, by the knowing intellect. It is true that, if we think of supersensible objects (as we do, in the practical philosophy), we must think of them under the categories. But if we try to draw theoretical conclusions from this, then we are

¹⁴⁰William of Ockham's view is that this holds for all accidents *except* for certain qualities: those belonging to the so-called third species, which Aristotle calls “passions” (πάθη), and which include all sensible qualities such as sweetness, whiteness and heat (see *Quodlibeta septum* 7.2, and cf. *Cat.* 8.9^a28–31). There may well be some historical connection between this medieval nominalist view and Kant's; Kant's usage of *Ding* is suggestive, as we will see below. No simple equivalence can be drawn, however, because Kant also has a Plotinian doctrine of sensible substances as actually *made up of* sensible qualities, which Ockham does not share. This is a topic to which we will return.

¹⁴¹*KrV*, A136/B175.

implicitly referring to a different prime matter from the matter of sensible things, and therefore, given the doctrine of transcendental idealism, to a different mode of intuition by which things would appear to us (or to some knowing subject) (see B307, A252, and especially A249). Hence the categories in themselves are not merely (as the Thomistic categories are) metaphysically empty or useless, but, paradoxically, also of limited application: they do not at all apply to things *not* considered as appearing, i.e. to *Dinge an sich*. It follows that ontology, defined as “a system of all concepts and axioms [*Grundsätze*] which relate to objects *überhaupt* [*Gegenstände überhaupt*], without assuming objects [*Objekte*] which *would be given*” (A845/B873), is impossible. The study of the categories as such (i.e., without taking into account the pure form of intuition) reveals nothing about objects, merely something about the form of thought:

The proud name of an ontology, which presumes to give synthetic knowledge [*Erkenntnisse*] a priori about things *überhaupt* in a systematic doctrine . . . must make way for the modest [name] of a mere analytic of the pure understanding (A247/B303).

It is still true, however, that the Kantian categories, as fundamental concepts of logic, prescribe in advance the form of any region of phenomena—i.e., any region of things which appear to a being with discursive knowledge, regardless of the particular form of that being's intuition.

What is confusing in Husserl is, at least in part, that he follows Kant in terminology while simultaneously rejecting the doctrines which made Kant's terminological choices appropriate. This is true with respect to the term *Ding*, as we will discuss in §3.6.1 below. It is true with respect to the term *Substanz*, as we will soon see. And it is true with respect to the term *Kategorie*. Since Husserl does believe in abstract and categorial *objects*, i.e. distinct beings other than concrete substances, he ought by all rights have returned to the use of “category” to refer to the highest genera

under which such object fall. Instead, however, he follows Kant in taking the (formal or regional) categories to be “fundamental concepts” (*Grundbegriffe*)—that is to say, concepts which appear in the (formal or regional) axioms.¹⁴²

This definition requires some comment.

First, as to the formal categories: in Husserl the logical axioms are or include the fundamental formal truths (the fundamental matters of logical necessity) about objects in general. They are the axioms of *formal ontology*. This follows clearly from Husserl's fundamental disagreement with Kant, over the intelligibility of the *Ding an sich*. If objects in general are (metaphysically) possible only as posited by me—i.e., if the *Ding an sich* is a (metaphysical) absurdity—then the logic must indeed include a “system of concepts and axioms which relate to objects *überhaupt*,” a system which certainly deserves “the proud name of an ontology.”¹⁴³ This is what makes possible the Husserlian idea of “logical form” as something belonging to the *object*, rather

¹⁴²*Id* 1, §10, 22, §15, 29. For Kant's description of the categories as *Grundbegriffe*, see *KrV*, A81/B107.

At *Id* 1, §76, 141, Husserl uses *Urkategorie* as a synonym for *Urregion*—i.e., uses “category” to mean “region.” But as the phrasing there shows, “region” is his own preferred choice of terminology (the *Urkategorie* is *in unserer Rede die Urregion*). This use of “category” is a concession to other people's terminology, rather than an extension of his own.

¹⁴³Cf. Levinas (*Théorie de l'intuition*, 119): “since forms have been distinguished from genera, logic is separated, in a decisive fashion, from ontology,” and see also p. 21, where he refers to the regional categories as “ontological in the proper sense of the term.” He is correct, on my view, to emphasize the importance of this distinction between material essence and form, but his conclusion about “ontology” is incorrect: insofar as *being* is itself a formal, i.e. logical, category, ontology strictly speaking—as opposed to *metaphysica specialis*, rational physics, rational psychology, etc.—should really be identified with what Husserl calls “formal ontology.” That is: Husserl's move really *makes* ontology into (a part of) logic. See also, on this issue, Syrianus, *In Metaph. B.1*, CAG 6.1:5,9–18; Henry More, *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*, ch. 2, pp. 5–18. (The similarity between these Neoplatonist views and Husserl's is striking enough that one is tempted to search for some historical connection.)

than as the form of thought merely.

It is true that Husserl continues to use the term “analytic” to describe logical truths (and therefore also speaks of his formal categories as “analytic categories”). In other words, he both reinstates “the proud name of an ontology” and at the same time retains “the modest name of a mere analytic.” At least in *Ideen I*, however, he makes no attempt to explain this use of “analytic” in terms of *analysis*.¹⁴⁴ In Kant, the logical truths are supposed to be “analytic” because Kant, like Thomas, takes it that the only axiom of logic is the principle of contradiction. Thomas, applying that axiom to the divine intellect as transcendental cause of beings, arrives at the ontological conclusion that whatever is not self-contradictory is metaphysically possible. In Kant, where the form of our knowledge as a generic cause of knowability, and hence as a limit on what is possibly knowable by us, is distinguished from the unknown causes of being, the alleged “axiom” turns out just to mean that we cannot use self-contradictory *concepts*. Whatever is logically necessary of some object is so not because something about the object requires it, but because to negate it would be to negate some feature of the concept under which we have *thought* that object. What is logically necessary of the object, in other words, can be determined by *analyzing* the concept. But Husserl, perhaps following Frege, asserts that there is more than one axiom of pure logic.¹⁴⁵ He therefore ends up *defining* analyticity in terms of formality, i.e. of applicability to objects which do not share a common essence. The logical axioms, and hence the logical categories are “analytic” merely by definition:

¹⁴⁴Later Husserl tried to make more of a connection. See, e.g., *EP*, Hua 7:24–6.

¹⁴⁵See, most explicitly, *LU*, Prolegomena, §40, 1:140, n. 1; but this is also implied, or rather taken for granted, at *Id* 1, §10, 22, where Husserl speaks of a “small stock” of logical axioms.

Because the purely logical, in our absolutely exactly delimited sense, determines the only philosophically important . . . concept of the “*analytic*” over against the “*synthetic*,” we may also refer to these categories as *analytic*.¹⁴⁶

Second, as to the regional categories—that is, the concepts which figure in the regional axioms: an “axiom” in general, according to Husserl, is a “fundamental truth” (*Grundwahrheit*). Whereas a logical axiom is a fundamental formal truth (a fundamental matter of logical necessity), a regional axiom is a fundamental material-essential truth (a fundamental matter of essential necessity pertaining to the members of a certain region). But what is meant by “fundamental” in the latter case is, unfortunately, not completely clear. Husserl thinks that all purely formal truths, including all the truths of pure mathematics, can be *deduced* from the formal axioms. In fact, he holds that the entire system of pure mathematics is, in Hilbert’s sense, complete—i.e., it is a field in which “*the concepts ‘true’ and ‘formal-logical consequence of the axioms’ are equivalent, and so too the concepts ‘false’ and ‘formal-logical counter-consequence of the axioms’*” (§72, 136).¹⁴⁷ This gives at least some sense to the claim that the formal axioms are “fundamental.” Among material-eidetic disciplines, however, only a restricted class—those that are “exact” or “ideal”—share this property; “descriptive” eidetic disciplines are not deductive systems at all. One such discipline is phenomenology itself, which is why “deductive theoretizations are . . .

¹⁴⁶*Id* 1, §10, 22.

¹⁴⁷At this point, Husserl is talking about the material-eidetic discipline of geometry, but he says at the end of the section that the same thing applies to formal logic itself (including pure mathematics). His own term for this property is “definite,” but, as he says in a footnote there, “the close relationship between the concept of definiteness and the ‘completeness-axiom’ introduced by D. Hilbert for the foundation of arithmetic will be clear to every mathematician without further ado.” *Ideen* I was, of course, written before Gödel had proved his Incompleteness Theorem.

excluded from phenomenology" (§75, 140). But such a descriptive material-eidetic discipline also forms a part of, for example, the eidetic science of nature, in the strict sense in which "nature" refers to the sensible region (the region corresponding to the *Ding* as individuum) (§74, 138). And this, so it seems, is true of every material region in general: even if there is an exact eidetic science of that region, there must also be a purely descriptive one, and the latter science is in fact primary (*ursprünglich*) (§74, 139). The overall regional material-eidetic system can therefore never consist purely of truths which can be deduced from some set of axioms. The sense in which the regional axioms are "fundamental" must be different. Husserl never explains, however, what "fundamental" *does* mean in this context, nor does he give any examples of non-geometrical axioms within the regions of nature, or of any axioms at all within the region of pure consciousness. This makes it difficult to say exactly what the regional categories are supposed to be, and therefore renders many questions about them difficult to answer.

Third, as to the relationship between the formal and regional categories: Husserl attempts to connect his usage and Kant's:

If one wants to preserve the allusion to Kant's critique of reason . . . one would have to understand, under *synthetic knowledge* [Erkenntnisse] *a priori*, the *regional axioms*. . . . The "*synthetic fundamental concepts*" or *categories* would be the regional fundamental concepts . . . and we would have as many *distinct groups of categories*, as there are *regions* to be distinguished.

Formal ontology, in addition, comes *externally* in a series with the regional . . . ontologies. Its regional concept "object" determines . . . the formal axiom-system and thereby the class [*Inbegriff*] of formal ("analytic") categories (§16, 31–2).

But Kant, like Thomas, has *only* formal, i.e. logical, categories; it is these *logical* categories that figure, by way of their sensible schemata, as *Grundbegriffe* in the

synthetic axioms—the *only* axioms that relate to objects, rather than concepts; it is those schemata that, in effect, take the place of the Plotinian categories, i.e. of the highest physical genera (or in this case: highest concepts with sensible content). This suggests that Husserl would have been better off reserving the term “category” for the fundamental concepts of formal ontology, and calling his regional categories “schemata.” The problem is, however, that there is not the kind of perfect correspondence between Husserlian formal and regional categories as there is between Kantian categories and schemata or between Thomistic categories and highest physical genera. The existence of separate sets of formal and regional axioms means that there is no reason for formal and regional *Grundbegriffe* to match up in that way. And while it is still true that every regional category is a kind of schema in the sense that it instantiates some logical form or other, that is true of *all* concepts as such. The regional categories

do not, like all concepts *überhaupt*, merely express specifications [*Besonderungen*] of pure-logical categories, but are rather distinguished [*ausgezeichnet*] in that they express, by virtue of the regional axioms, that which belongs *properly* [*eigentümlich*] to the regional essence (§16, 31).

If, in an attempt to preserve the allusion to Kant, one wants to use the term “category” for a *Grundbegriff* which appears in the (“analytic” or “synthetic,” i.e. formal or regional) axioms, then one must admit that there are two kinds of category, analytic and synthetic, and that there need not, in general, be any correspondence between the two.

Not only can the Husserlian regional categories not be identified with schemata of the formal ones; it seems that they are not to be identified or correlated with the highest material genera, either. That the two cannot be *identified* perhaps follows from the very definition of categories as (a kind of) concepts—this is not the place to

go into the difficult problems about what Husserl means by “concept.”¹⁴⁸ A concept is like an essence, however, in that it has an extension—or rather several types of extension (eidetic, individual, empirical).¹⁴⁹ It would be possible, therefore, for the regional categories and the highest material genera (i.e., the highest generic essences) to correspond in such a way that each regional category would be coextensive with a single highest genus. Yet Husserl does not say this, and it seems on the face of it implausible, given the way the categories are defined. It seems likely that the regional axioms do not involve all and only the highest generic concepts: it seems likely, for example, that the axioms of the eidetic science of nature involve the concept of local motion, and it also seems likely that local motion is not a highest genus (that it is merely one species of physical change or process).

Husserl's regional categories are therefore, in general, neither the same as nor, probably, in any simple correspondence with, the Plotinian categories. And it is even more obvious that Husserl's formal categories do not correspond to the Thomistic ones: because of Husserl's clear and complete distinction between formalization and generalization, his logical categories do not really resemble genera at all. There is, for example, a logical category of “essence,” under which every generic, specific, or singular material essence falls—but not in the same way in which they fall under higher generic essences. Similarly, the category of object *überhaupt* (the “empty

¹⁴⁸A concept is strictly speaking a type of *Bedeutung*, i.e. falls under one of the (formal) *Bedeutungskategorien*; but the ontological status of *Bedeutungen* (which in the *Logische Untersuchungen* are essences of *Erlebnisse*) is unclear (to me, at any rate) in the *Ideen*. See *Id* 1, §10, 22–3 and §124, 256–9.

¹⁴⁹*Id* 1, §13, 27. The term “individual” in this case is misleading, because even abstract essences or concepts have an “individual extension,” whereas the abstract this-heres falling under such abstract essences and concepts are not properly called “individua.” See above, p. 98, n. 109.

something”) applies to any object whatsoever, but *not* as a single super-genus under which all genera are ordered.¹⁵⁰ One can see the difference by paying attention to the way in which the name of a true genus is predicated: if *A* is a specific essence, and *B* a generic essence under which it falls, then every *A* (i.e., every this-here belonging to *A*'s individual extension) is a *B*, but *A* itself (the essence) is not a *B*. Every triangle, for example, is a shape, but the essence *triangle* is not itself a shape. Hence if “essence” were the name of a higher generic essence under which the specific essence *triangle* fell, then every triangle would be an essence, whereas the essence *triangle* would not be. If, similarly, “object *überhaupt*” were a genus—the highest of all genera—to which triangles belonged, then the essence *triangle* would not be an object. But none of these things is the case: a triangle is not an essence, but an (abstract) this-here; the essence *triangle* is, obviously, an essence; and *everything*—the essence *triangle* included—is an object.

In general, then, Husserl's ontology contains things corresponding to Plotinian categories (highest physical genera), but which are not called “categories,” and it contains nothing answering to the Thomistic categories (highest logical genera) at all. There is, however, one key exception to these rules—one key case in which Husserl's ontology contains something like a Thomistic logical category, and in which Husserl's use of “category” tracks that of Thomas and Plotinus. This case involves the formal category of *individuum*. For it follows from the purely logical definition of *region* (as “the totality of highest generic unities belonging to a *concretum*”) that

¹⁵⁰For these two examples, see *Id* 1, §13, 26. With the “empty something,” Husserl terminologically and conceptually reproduces the ancient Stoic category of *τί*—whether deliberately or not, I am not sure. By emphasizing that a formal category is not a genus, he answers the ancient objection that such an all-encompassing category would, absurdly, have to include both prior and posterior things (see *Enn.* 6.1.25.12–23).

every region contains one and only one highest genus whose members are individua.¹⁵¹ The “mathematical extension” of the formal essence *individuum*—the set of (possible) objects which have *individuum* as their logical form—is simply the union of the “individual extensions” of these highest material genera, so that the formal category of *individuum* is in a certain way like a super-genus under which all these highest material genera fall. Since, moreover, the axioms of a given region “express, in eidetic generality, what must belong to an individual object of [that] region,”¹⁵² it is evident that they will have to make reference to the concept of an *individuum* belonging to that region, or in other words that the highest material genus of *individua* will, in every region, correspond to (be coextensive with) a regional *Grundbegriff*—that is, a regional category.

We must be careful about the exact sense in which the category of *individuum* is a logical “genus” (a term which, so far as I can tell, Husserl himself does not use in this connection, although his talk of “material genera” certainly implies the possibility). Its relation to the material genera falling under it resembles a true genus-species relationship in its, so to speak, set-theoretical characteristics—i.e., in the relationship between *extensions* which we have just discussed. Its relation to the *this-heres* which are its members also resembles the relationship between a true (material) genus and its members, in that its name is predicated of them, and *only* of them. Every *Ding* (concrete sensible object), for example, is an *individuum*, but the

¹⁵¹It follows, that is, given that the same genus cannot have under it both concrete and abstract eidetic singularities—i.e., that “genera are divided, in a characteristic and fundamental way, into those that have *concreta* under them and those that [have] *abstracta* under them” (*Id* 1, §15, 30). This is itself, apparently, supposed to be a law of formal ontology.

¹⁵²*Id* 1, §16, 31.

generic essence *Ding* is not itself an individuum. Still, this resemblance is deceptive. A triangle is a shape by virtue of being a triangle (i.e., because the specific essence triangle lies under the generic essence shape), but individua are not individua because their species and (ultimately) their highest material genera fall under the category of individuum. It is rather that, just as these species and genera can be called “concrete” because the eidetic singularities that fall under them are concreta, so too they can be called species and genera of individua because the this-heres belonging to them have that logical form. Logical “form” and material “essence” are distinct kinds of form which an object has; it does not have one because of the other. Still, the one case of individuum, in which these things fall together, is instructive. For the logical category of individuum not only resembles the Thomistic categories in general; it resembles one particular Thomistic category, and the most important of all: the category of substance. Husserl’s individua, like Aristotle’s substances, are primary objects or beings (the *Urgegenständlichkeiten*), which are essentially independent, and in which every other kind of being in some way or other inheres.

It is true, and important to keep in mind, that Husserl does not, in general, use the term *Substanz* for the logical category of individuum, or for the individua of which it is the logical form, or for the material genera under which those individua fall.¹⁵³ He

¹⁵³An apparent exception is *Id* 2, §15, Hua 4:34,5–13. This paragraph seems out of place in context, however; it may have been mistakenly inserted there by Edith Stein (see the description of her methods at Hua 4:xvii). Cf. Husserl’s explicit explanations of the meaning of *Substanz* and *Substantialität* in the following text, §15d, Hua 4:44, n. 1 and §15e, Hua 4:45,15–17. On the other hand Husserl hints at (but does not sufficiently explain) a more general sense of *Substanz* slightly later on (§17, Hua 4:54). These sections also introduce a new use, or rather two new uses, of *Realität* (not found in *Ideen* I), as Husserl notes, §17, Hua 4:54,12–15. As he remarks a few lines before that: “All of these philosophical terms [*Termini*] are, unfortunately, tainted with equivocations and lacking all deeper clarification” (ll. 8–10).

uses that term, rather, to refer to the kind of causal unity which belongs to a *Ding*, properly speaking—the unity which a sensible individuum maintains through (cosmic) time, by virtue of the way in which its earlier states produce or causally influence its later ones.¹⁵⁴ This shift is, once again, a result of Husserl's attempt to follow Kant terminologically while breaking with him in doctrine. In Kant, it is precisely because the category of substance itself, i.e. the concept of a subject which is not a predicate, is, like every category, merely formal, that substance as a *Grundbegriff* enters the synthetic axioms only by way of its schema, that of a subject which persists through change.¹⁵⁵ In Husserl, the formal or logical category of primary subject (individuum) once again takes its traditional place in the axioms of ontology, but the word *Substanz* is now reserved for the fundamental physical concept (*Grundbegriff* in the region of nature) which corresponds to Kant's sensible schema.

We should not let this terminological shift confuse us, especially when we find Husserl asking whether there is such a “substance” as the soul. D.W. Smith has apparently fallen into such a confusion when he says of Husserl that “against Descartes, he resisted the notion of the mind or soul as a distinct, purely mental substance.”¹⁵⁶ I say “apparently” because Smith does not give any source in Husserl for his assertion. One imagines, however, that he has in mind such a passage as this:

Mathematical *Ding-an-sich*-causality is an index for the manifold of sensible causalities. If we compare to this [*Halten wir dem gegenüber*] the *soul*, and (as Kant did) draw the idea of *substance* from the mathematical *Ding*, then we must undoubtedly say: there is no such thing as a psychological substance [*es gibt keine Seelensubstanz*].¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴See *Id* 1, §149, 313.

¹⁵⁵See *KrV*, A147/B187–8.

¹⁵⁶“Mind and Body,” in *CCH*, 325.

¹⁵⁷*Id* 2, §32, Hua 4:132,6–10.

But it is explicitly and abundantly clear that Husserl is talking here about the Kantian schema of substance as a causally-united temporally persisting subject of changing predicates. The soul is not a substance *because*,

if we call *causality* that functional or lawful relation of dependence which is a correlate of the constitution of persisting properties of a persisting real [thing] of the type: nature, then *in the case of the soul*, one ought not to speak *of causality at all*. Not every lawfully regulated functionality in the sphere of facts is causality.¹⁵⁸

There is therefore no contradiction here with the *Cartesian* idea of a psychic “substance”—i.e., in Husserl’s terms, an individuum in the psychological region.¹⁵⁹ Husserl’s real objection to Cartesian ontology is not that it is dualistic, but, on the contrary, that it does not draw *enough* of a distinction between the mental (in one sense or another) and the physical: it asserts that there is a reciprocal causal connection between the two.¹⁶⁰

Because of the possibility of such confusions, it is probably better for the most part to avoid the term “substance” in a discussion of Husserl’s ontology, while at the

¹⁵⁸Ibid., ll. 14–20.

¹⁵⁹For the psychological as a sphere or region of being, see *Id* 1, §72, 134 and (less clearly) §1, 8. We will discuss the ontological status of the psychological in general below: see p. 140 and 165. Unfortunately, as I indicated in the introduction, there will not be space here for a discussion of the special problems associated with “psychological reflection,” i.e. with the realm of the “autopsychological.”

¹⁶⁰*EP*, Hua 7:65,34–8. At this point in *Erste Philosophie*, Husserl is taking Cartesian mental substance to be simply identical to pure, rather than psychological consciousness (i.e., not to be, strictly speaking, a “soul”)—which is correct in the sense that Descartes does not recognize a soul which is in any way a part of material nature. But, as can be seen from our passage in *Ideen* II, Husserl would equally have objected to the idea of a reciprocal “causality” between the physical and the psychic strictly speaking (so that a movement of the pineal gland would literally “move” the soul, or vice versa). Descartes’s psychology is, in other words, at the same time too naturalistic and not naturalistic enough.

same time always keeping in mind that what Husserl calls an *individuum* is, to all intents and purposes, a traditional substance by another name. There is, however, one qualification which must be made to this identification. For the Aristotelian category of substance contains things which are subject to accidents, and there is a problem with saying that from Husserl's point of view. To understand why, we will have to carefully keep separate two distinct, though not unrelated, meanings of the term "accident" (and its derivatives) in the Aristotelian tradition. On the one hand, "accident" refers to the members of the nine non-substantial categories, however those members are conceived. In that sense, Husserl's abstract essences and *this-here's* are certainly, no matter how you look at things, to be identified with accidents: they are not the essences of, and do not have the logical form of, *individua*. "Accidental," on the other hand, is supposed to be the opposite of "essential," and it is not obvious on the face of it that all and only "accidents," in the first sense, are "accidental," in the second. So it is reasonable, in particular, to ask whether Husserlian "accidents" (*abstracta*) are *accidental* to the "substances" (*individua*) in which they inhere.

In the Thomistic system, at least, the answer to the corresponding question is extremely clear. A substance is supposed to be an independent existent—*ens completum in se subsistens in suo esse*¹⁶¹—to which accidents are then added, so to speak, from the outside. The most particular essences (lowest specific essences) under which substances fall correspond to lowest *substantial* *differentiae* (e.g., rational, in the case of humans), and these are entirely different from such accidental properties as heat and bipedality. There is a merely *causal* relation between the two: the rationality of the human soul, for example, in some way to us unknown, causes the bipedality of the

¹⁶¹*De ent.* 6, ll. 34–5.

human body. It follows that accidents, in the sense of members of the non-substantial categories, are always accidental, in the sense of not essential, to the substances in which they inhere. As for the unity of substance and accident in a subspecific individual (for example, in a white, tall, neighing horse here and now), such a thing has no essence whatsoever: Thomas holds that “there is not produced [*efficitur*], out of a substance and an accident, a unity per se, but rather a unity per accidens,” and thus that “no essence results from their conjunction, as it does from the conjunction of [substantial] form and matter.”¹⁶²

In Husserl, on the other hand, it is, as we have already noted, quite unclear whether individua—for example, *Dinge*—have *any* accidental properties, precisely because Husserl conceives of abstract (non-independent) essences in general as those that can and must “unite” to form the essences of concrete singulars. This means that what would be most naturally thought of as the *subject* of, say, whiteness, or heat, or bipedality, is by no means an *ens completum*. Since there cannot, for example, be a horse which is not some particular color or other, horseness is just as much an abstraction as whiteness or neighing—even though the generic essence, *horse*, is a concrete generic essence, in the secondary sense that the eidetic singularities falling under it are concreta. The truly complete and independent being, in this case, is the individuum: a thing which is essentially both a horse *and* white (and tall, neighing, etc.). It follows that what might be called Husserlian “accident”—a this-here which is not an individuum, or in other words whose highest material genus is abstract, or in other words which belongs to a non-substantial (Plotinian) category—is *not* “accidental,” in the sense of non-essential, to the individuum, i.e. *ens completum*,

¹⁶²Ibid., ll. 44-6; see also *Metaph.* Z.4.1029^b22–1030^a6.

i.e. “substance,” in which it inheres. There is therefore a way in which Husserlian “substances” (individua) are composed of accidents: a way in which accidents are their parts (or “moments”). We will have to keep this view in mind—and to distinguish between Husserl’s version of it and those of Kant and Plotinus—in what follows.

3.5.3 *Fact and essence*

The distinction between fact and essence, between *Tatsache* (which Husserl glosses with the English expression “matter of fact”)¹⁶³ and *Wesen*, is undoubtedly of very great importance in the system of *Ideen I*. That Husserl himself regarded it as fundamental can be seen from the fact that he brings it up already in his introduction, and makes it the major theme in the first part of the book.¹⁶⁴ It is, nevertheless, possible to overestimate the importance of this distinction—not only is it possible, but it has actually happened, and has given rise to very deep confusion among some interpreters. We must therefore get quite clear, before proceeding any further, about what the distinction is, and, especially, about the role which it plays in Husserl’s overall ontology.

The cardinal thing to keep in mind about the fact/essence distinction is that it cuts across all differences of region, or all differences of “sphere,” in the strict sense of the latter term in which it is synonymous with the former. We have already said this more or less explicitly above, when we noted that “essence” is, as far as

¹⁶³*Id* 1, Introduction, 3: *eine Wissenschaft von Tatsachen, von matters of fact im Sinne D. Humes*.

¹⁶⁴Part I is entitled “Essence and the Knowledge of Essence” (*Wesen und Wesenserkenntnis*), and consists of two chapters: “Fact and Essence” and “Naturalistic Misinterpretations.” The titles are slightly misleading, however, as Husserl also discusses many other ontological issues within these two chapters.

Husserl is concerned, a *logical* category or “form.” This means that the distinction between fact and essence belongs as such to formal ontology, or in other words that such a distinction can be drawn within every region insofar as every region is an instance, a *Besonderung*, of the empty form of a region in general. In particular, the distinction between fact and essence can be drawn on either side of the fundamental divide between immanence and transcendence—i.e., between the absolute being of pure consciousness, on the one hand, and the merely presumptive being of everything external to it (of everything “real”) on the other. Husserl therefore emphasizes that phenomenology differs from a science of transcendent facts, such as psychology, in two distinct ways: (1) it is not a science of fact, but an eidetic science, a science of essence; and (2) it is a science not of the real but of the “irreal,” which is to say, a science whose domain is the region of pure consciousness.¹⁶⁵ This double distinction between phenomenology and (factual) psychology, or indeed between phenomenology and any science of transcendent fact, is reflected in the double “reduction” by which the field of phenomenology is, as Husserl puts it, “dissected out” from that of other disciplines. The “phenomenological” or “transcendental” reduction serves to exclude everything real (i.e., transcendent), whereas the “eidetic” reduction serves to exclude matters of fact, thus establishing phenomenology as a science of essence.

The two reductions, however, are quite different in nature and significance. The phenomenological reduction, for one thing, is, as is clear even from its name, far more fundamental to *phenomenology*—i.e., to the distinctive nature of phenomenology as a science—than is the eidetic one. For phenomenology is not the only science of essence: there are also sciences of real, i.e. transcendent, essence. There must be at

¹⁶⁵*Id* 1, Introduction, 4.

least one such science—or, when sciences are individuated in the most strictly correct way, *exactly* one such science—corresponding to each region. The “eidetic reduction,” however it is to be understood, is therefore nothing particularly new or dramatic; it must be carried out as much by, say, geometers, as it is by phenomenologists.¹⁶⁶ The immanence, i.e. absolute being, of phenomenology’s field is, in contrast, unique to it; all other sciences are sciences of the transcendent. The phenomenological reduction is therefore something unique to phenomenology, or, as De Boer puts it, something *sui generis*.¹⁶⁷ Nor does the phenomenological reduction as such somehow presuppose the eidetic one: “the specifically phenomenological exclusions which we have taught here,” Husserl expressly says, “are independent of the eidetic exclusion of individual existence.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶It is important not to forget, as some interpreters have, that there are supposed to be “dogmatic”—that is, *non*-phenomenological—sciences of essence, which are not only possible but are *already in existence*, and which therefore cannot be dependent on phenomenology. Husserl discusses in particular the example of “rational physics” (*Id* 1, §9, 20). It is true that natural scientists tend to claim that they are strict empiricists, but “it is not always natural science that speaks, when natural scientists [*Naturforscher*] speak” (§20, 38): “natural scientists [*Naturforscher*] . . . *speak* of mathematics and all eidetic [science] *skeptically*, but they *proceed* [*verfahren*], in their eidetic methodology, *dogmatically*” (§26, 46); “de facto, the positivist rejects knowledge of essence [*Wesenserkenntnisse*] only when he reflects ‘philosophically’ and lets himself be deceived by the sophisms of empiricist philosophers, but not when he, as a natural scientist [*Naturforscher*] thinks and argues [*begründet*] in the normal attitude of natural science” (§25, 44). And in general in the *Ideen* one must keep track of the difference between the criticism of *positivist* philosophy for denying that there is *any* eidetic knowledge, and the criticism of dogmatic philosophy in general for denying, or at least being ignorant of, the existence *phenomenological* knowledge. This corresponds to the double characterization of phenomenology as an eidetic science and as a science of “irreal,” i.e. immanent, being.

¹⁶⁷*Development*, 329, 366.

¹⁶⁸*Id* 1, §62, 119. One might therefore expect that, just as there are sciences of transcendent essence, there would also be a science of immanent fact—a science of fact within the region of pure consciousness. In that case phenomenology would

There is, however, a far more radical distinction between the two reductions. To see this, we need first to say a bit more about the relationship between essence and fact, as it appears in the *Ideen*, in general, and in particular about the relationship between the knowledge or perception (intuition) of essence and the knowledge or perception of fact. It seems, at first sight, as if the relationship between the two were symmetrical. For the fundamental relationship between essence and fact is one that works both ways. Every matter of fact, on the one hand, is an *example* of some essential truth (or rather, of very many such truths), which means that every positing of a matter of fact is accompanied by the potential positing of an essence (or rather, of very many essences).¹⁶⁹ And every eidetic intuition rests, on the other hand, on an intuition of fact—“an appearing, a being-visible of the individual”—and this intuition of fact can be made the explicit object of attention: i.e., every positing of essence is accompanied by the potential positing of a factual example.¹⁷⁰ The apparent symmetry conceals an important difference, however. For the process of “ideation,” by which we can pass from the intuition of something factual to the intuition of some essence which it instantiates, always issues in an *actual* positing of essence: whatever is (actually) actual is (actually) essentially possible. The converse process, how-

actually share the immanence or absoluteness of its subject matter with one (and only one) other science: or rather, it would form a *complete* science (the science of the region of pure consciousness) only in conjunction with another discipline. In the continuation of the passage just cited, Husserl addresses this issue, and raises certain doubts as to whether such a science is possible—the question being not, of course, whether there *are* immanent matters of fact, nor even, apparently, whether they are susceptible to scientific study, but just whether there is anything interesting to be said about them. Later on he seems to have decided in favor of such a science, and even to have proposed calling it “metaphysics” (see, e.g., *EP*, Hua 7:188n.).

¹⁶⁹*Id* 1, §3, 12.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.* On the use of “individual” to mean “factual” here, see above, p. 98, n. 109

ever, may yield only an *imaginary* factual positing—which is to say, the “appearing or being-visible” upon which essential intuition is based may be “non-experiencing, non-existence-grasping [*nicht-daseinerfassenden*], but rather ‘merely imagining [*einbildenden*]’ intuition.”¹⁷¹ Essences can be intuited, and essential truths can be known, without there being any possibility of passing to the *actual* intuition or, in general, the actual positing, of an example. That is why we can know things about, say, the essence *centaur*—an essence which, so far as we know, has no actual instances.¹⁷²

This asymmetry between factual and eidetic intuition means that essential truths are in a way prior to all factual ones. Philipse is wrong, in other words, to argue that Husserl is “an empiricist of sorts.”¹⁷³ Indeed, Philipse’s argument—that for Husserl, “the *a priori* principles of the sciences are concerned with essences of factual domains of the empirical world, which are eidetically abstracted from these domains,” and that, therefore, “the empirical world is the basis of all scientific knowledge”¹⁷⁴—overlooks precisely the crucial possibility of “eidetic abstraction” based on *imagination* which we have just discussed.¹⁷⁵ Essential truth, rather, is a priori truth, and in a very strong sense: “the old ontological theory, *that the knowledge of [essential] ‘possibilities’ must precede that of [factual] actualities*, is . . . insofar as it is correctly understood . . . a

¹⁷¹*Id* 1, §4, 12. A deeper explanation of this asymmetry would proceed from the fact that there is, in a sense, no “mere imagining” of essence: “the mere imagination of an essential connection [*Wesenszusammenhanges*] and the [actual] insight into it are ‘equivalent’” (*Id* 1, §140, 293). It is not so obvious, incidentally, how this can be explained in terms of the official theory of imagination as developed in *Ideen* I.

¹⁷²*Id* 1, §149, 311.

¹⁷³“Transcendental Idealism,” in *CCH*, 299.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵See the very clear explanation of this point in *Erfahrung und Urteil*, §87d, 417.

great truth.”¹⁷⁶ No essential truth depends on any matter of fact: “positing . . . of essence implies not the least [thing] about the positing of any individual existence [*Dasein*]; pure essential truths do not include the least claim about facts” (§4, 13). As a consequence, “the *sense* of eidetic science *in principle rules out any inclusion of the cognitive results* [*Erkenntnisergebnissen*] *of empirical science*” (§8, 18).

Nevertheless—and this will be the key point for our purposes—the independence of essential science should not be exaggerated. For however much it may be true, in every single case, that essence is prior to fact, still essences in general are not logically primary: the logical form of essence is a “modification” of the primary, “absolute” logical form, the form of individuum (§15, 29). This is why, as we have already seen, the idea of a region without matters of fact, and in particular without individua, is a contradiction in terms: “region” and “individuum” are logically correlated. Hence although an eidetic science can, for the reasons stated, afford to ignore the question of *which* individuals, states of affairs, etc. falling under its regional essence factually exist, the ignored question nevertheless retains its full force: it remains logically necessary, given that the regional essence is posited, that this factual question have a determinate answer.¹⁷⁷ Every eidetic science, in other words, regarded as a whole, is only an incomplete and dependent part of the *total* science of its region.

Although, therefore, it is not true, according to Husserl, that our knowledge of essences is always based on an abstraction, in Philipse’s sense, from matters of fact—and although it is even less true that essences themselves are mere abstractions in the

¹⁷⁶*Id* 1, §79, 159.

¹⁷⁷It is possible, in a certain sense, that the answer might be “none” (i.e., that the kind of individua prescribed by the regional essence might, in a certain sense, not exist at all). But this would itself still be a contingent (and changeable) matter of fact. See below, p. 218 for a fuller discussion of this possible situation.

old empiricist sense of being factual representations with some pieces ignored¹⁷⁸—it is still the case that an entire eidetic *reduction*, whether in the region of pure consciousness or in any other, is an act of *abstraction*. It is a matter of directing one's *attention* to some objects (essences) rather than to others; the ignored objects are still posited, but only implicitly or in the background. The *phenomenological* reduction, on the other hand, is a far more radical operation, as we will see in some detail below: it involves a suspension of positing of all transcendent objects, and hence a suspension of their actuality and even, in a way, of their a priori possibility. So in summary: phenomenology is based primarily on a radical reduction of *being* to the region of pure consciousness—a region which, like any other, contains both matters of fact and matters of essence—and only secondarily on a far less radical reduction of *attention* to questions of pure essential truth alone.

It is necessary to emphasize these points for two reasons: (1) they represent a change in Husserl's views compared to earlier periods, and (2), in part because of this, they have not been clearly understood by all of Husserl's interpreters.

As far as (1) goes, a full consideration would have to involve a complete exposition of Husserl's earlier doctrines, especially those of the *Logische Untersuchungen* and even of the earlier *Philosophie der Arithmetik*. Such an exposition is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but we can gain a rough idea of what is new in *Ideen* I by noting how the statement, maintained in both *LU* and the *Ideen*, that not all being is “real” being, or that not every object is a “real” object, changes its meaning between the two, and hence how the primary mistake allegedly made by Husserl's predecessors—

¹⁷⁸For Husserl's rejection of the empiricist “abstraction theory” of essence, see, in the *Ideen*, §22, 41; the main treatment of this topic is in the second investigation of *LU*. (Note, however, that Husserl refers to various different views, of which this is only one, as “abstraction theories.”)

namely, their mistaken identification of “reality” with being—also changes its meaning. In *LU*, “real” is opposed to “ideal” or “universal”—a “thing” (*res*), in other words, is opposed to an essence.¹⁷⁹ The mistake of Husserl’s predecessors is therefore taken to be their ignorance or misunderstanding of the fact/essence distinction: in one way or another, they either “hypostasize” essences, which is to say, take them to be a kind of fact, or they deny that there are such things as essences at all. The first alternative leads either to Platonic realism (in which, according to Husserl, essences are taken to be physical objects) or to psychologism, which (in precisely the “abstraction theory” of essence we mentioned above) takes essences to be real (i.e. factual) psychological objects; the second alternative leads to “extreme nominalism.”¹⁸⁰ In the *Ideen*, on the other hand, “real” normally means not “factual” but “transcendent,” and unreal being is not the being of essence but the immanent being of pure consciousness—a *res*, in other words, is opposed to an *Erlebnis*. The absurdity of which Husserl’s predecessors stand accused is therefore the restriction of being to, and hence the absolutization of, the realm of nature, in the broad sense of that term in which it includes all transcendent regions:

If one draws the concept of reality from *natural* realities, the unities of possible experience, then “world-all,” “all-of-nature,” is, of course, just the same as the all of realities; to identify it, however, with the all of *being*, and thereby to absolutize it, is absurd.¹⁸¹

The change in terminology reflects, albeit in a confusing and potentially misleading

¹⁷⁹See especially *LU* I, §3, 2:101; II, §8, 2:123.

¹⁸⁰See *ibid.*, II, §7, 2:121–2.

¹⁸¹*Id* 1, §55, 106. Note that, as usual, Husserl has not completely eliminated the old usage after adopting a new one—see e.g. *Id* 1, §22, 41, where “real” is evidently contrasted with “essential”; see also §19, 35. On the use of “nature” here, see below, §3.6.1, p. 167.

way, the fact that the new distinction between transcendence and immanence has supplanted the old distinction between fact and essence: the old distinction is neither identified with the new one nor abandoned altogether, but it is reduced to secondary status.

As for (2), perhaps the clearest example is Jacques Taminiaux's well-known paper, "Immanence, Transcendence, and Being in Husserl's *Idea of Phenomenology*." Taminiaux bases himself, not, as I do, on *Ideen I*, but on Husserl's 1907 lectures entitled *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*. But Taminiaux does not limit himself to making claims about this work alone; he says that the purpose of his paper is "to clarify the concepts of immanence and transcendence which play a decisive part in Husserl's foundation of Phenomenology."¹⁸² It is therefore worth noting, first of all, that if "phenomenology" is taken to mean the doctrine of *Ideen I*, then Taminiaux's interpretation can be definitively ruled out. For it is based on a confusion between two ontological distinctions which, as we have just been arguing, are (at least from the point of view of the *Ideen*) entirely different: based, that is, on the assertion that the distinction between transcendence and immanence—the distinction which forms the basis of the *phenomenological* reduction—is "a repetition of the traditional distinction between existence and essence."¹⁸³

It is not clear exactly how far Taminiaux wants this statement to go. On the most literal reading, it would imply that all and only transcendent things are factual, whereas every essential truth belongs to the realm of immanence. On this reading Taminiaux must argue that phenomenology is the only science of essence, whereas every transcendent science is a science of fact. And he does, in some places,

¹⁸²"Immanence, Transcendence and Being," 47.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, 72.

imply exactly that—for example when he says that for the “pre-given” (i.e., non-phenomenological) disciplines “the real is limited to what is the case.”¹⁸⁴ But this is very obviously incorrect, since Husserl recognizes many eidetic sciences of transcendent things, including such familiar and long-established disciplines as geometry.¹⁸⁵

A more charitable interpretation, therefore, would be that Taminiaux identifies the transcendent/immanent distinction with the essence/fact distinction only within the psychological realm. This still means, however, that he must run together the two distinctions between phenomenology and psychology which Husserl lists in the Introduction to *Ideen* I into a single distinction: if phenomenology were a science of facts, Taminiaux asserts, then it would be psychology.¹⁸⁶ And if this were true then not only would there be no question of “metaphysics,” as a science of immanent fact distinct from (transcendent) descriptive psychology, but also eidetic psychology—the science of essence in the psychological sphere—would have simply to be identified with phenomenology. This latter conclusion could not be reconciled with Husserl's

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 57. The phrase “pre-given disciplines” presumably translates Heidegger's *vorgezeichneten Disziplinen* (*Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 130). Heidegger, however, certainly does not think that all such disciplines are supposed to be factual, as can be seen from his general treatment of ideation in the preceding paragraph.

¹⁸⁵See above, p. 133, n. 166.

¹⁸⁶“Transcendence, Immanence, and Being,” 57. Another author who seems to be involved in a similar confusion, but who states it less clearly, is Sokolowski. See especially *Formation*, 159, where “facticity” is identified with “something that consciousness is faced with”—i.e., where it is taken for granted that whatever is factual does not itself belong to the realm of consciousness, and see also 20, 138, 149–50, 217–18. For the effect of this on Sokolowski's difficulty with hyletic data, see below, p. 181. A similar tendency is reflected in Levinas's claim that the eidetic reduction is the “first step” towards the phenomenological attitude (*Théorie de l'intuition*, 170); for an explicit statement to the contrary, see the passage from *Id* 1, §62, 119 cited above, p. 133. (In all three of these cases, the influence of Heidegger may be decisive. I will discuss Heidegger's position on this issue below.)

views as expressed in the *Ideen*, since he says quite explicitly there that those two sciences are distinct—that

consciousness, as the given of psychological experience, . . . is the object of psychology: in empirical-scientific research, of empirical psychology; in eidetic-scientific research, of eidetic psychology [*in erfahrungswissenschaftlicher Forschung der empirischen, in wesenswissenschaftlicher der eidetischen Psychologie*]. In the modification of bracketing, on the other hand, the entire world with its psychic individuals and their psychic *Erlebnisse*, all as correlate of absolute consciousness, belongs in phenomenology.¹⁸⁷

This leaves unclear what, if any, is the *particular* relationship between eidetic psychology and phenomenology, over and above that which exists between phenomenology and any science of transcendent essence whatsoever. That there is indeed such a particular relationship, and that it is a close and peculiar one, is something that Husserl asserts, but does not do enough to clarify, in *Ideen I*: he speaks of eidetic psychology as “here, for the time being, not yet distinguished from [phenomenology], and in any case intrinsically bound up with it.”¹⁸⁸ This suggests some of the reasons for the confusion of interpreters like Taminiaux, but at the same time shows clearly that it *is*, as far as the Husserl of *Ideen I* is concerned, a confusion. The relationship between phenomenology and eidetic psychology, whatever it may be, is certainly *not* identity.

How far is it possible to explain Taminiaux's interpretation, which is so clearly at odds with Husserl's doctrine in *Ideen I*, on the basis of differences between that doctrine and the one contained in *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*? The most that can be said, I think, is that Husserl, in those lectures, makes a few confusing or misleading statements, while failing anywhere to draw the distinctions in question with com-

¹⁸⁷*Id* 1, §76, 143.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, §79, 159.

plete clarity. In particular, he does, confusingly, describe the fundamental distinction between psychology and phenomenology as a distinction between “the explanation [Erklärung] of knowledge as a natural fact” and “the elucidation [Aufklärung] of knowledge according to the essential possibility of its achievement,”¹⁸⁹ and furthermore as a distinction between a psychological epistemology of *reale Immanenz*, on the one hand, whose object is “I, this human being,” and phenomenological epistemology of *reelle Immanenz*, as the study of “pure knowledge-phenomena [Erkenntnisphänomen],” on the other.¹⁹⁰ This type of formulation certainly could suggest that it is the *eidetic* reduction that forms the basis of phenomenology. But there are misleading statements along these lines in the *Ideen*, as well,¹⁹¹ and a careful reading of the *Idee der Phänomenologie* shows that the distinction between the *eidetic* and phenomenological reductions, and the relatively fundamental nature of the latter, is just as entrenched there as it is in the later work. Not only does Husserl distinguish there clearly between fact and essence *within* the realm of pure consciousness—between “absolute phenomena in their singularity” and those same phenomena as the objects of “ideating abstraction”¹⁹²—but he goes to great length to show something which he clearly does not consider to self-evident: namely, that the *latter* (i.e., the field of *essence* in the region of pure consciousness) is every bit as “immanent” as the former (i.e., the factual *Erlebnisse* themselves).¹⁹³ In this work, in other words, Husserl *takes it for granted* that factual “absolute phenomena”—what he in this context

¹⁸⁹*Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Hua 2:6,21–3.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 7,20–27.

¹⁹¹See, e.g., *Id* 1, §64, 122.

¹⁹²*Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Hua 2:7,35–8,36.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, 8,21–8, 51,12–18.

calls *cogitationes*—are immanent in the sense relevant to the phenomenologist; what he thinks needs to be argued for is that the “logical modifications” of such things, including their generic, specific, and singular essences, are, in the relevant sense, *also* immanent (though not, as he puts it, *reell immanent*).¹⁹⁴

The *Idee der Phänomenologie* therefore does not support Taminiaux's interpretation any more than does *Ideen* I. And one can go even further. For although the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* does not contain a doctrine of absolute or phenomenological consciousness, still one can trace the origin of what would later become the distinction between immanence and transcendence back into that early stage of Husserl's thought, and in doing so one will *not* find that it corresponds to the distinction between essence and fact. The relevant distinction in *LU* is rather the one between the empirical ego and its so-called “phenomenological core.” The

¹⁹⁴See *ibid.*, 9,3–6. In the *Ideen* the main example of something which is *ideell*, rather than *reell*, immanent is the noema, whereas in *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* the main example is immanent essence. This probably reflects a difference of emphasis rather than of doctrine. Unfortunately I will not be able, in this dissertation, to discuss the significance of this distinction in any depth. One thing that should be noted, however, is that *reell* immanent things (i.e., factual *Erlebnisse*) are, so to speak, more immanent than *ideell* immanent ones. Hence in *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* (though not in the *Ideen*), Husserl sometimes uses “transcendent” in a broad sense, in which even *ideell* immanent things, and in particular the essences of *Erlebnisse*, are “transcendent” (see *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Hua 2:35,4–30). This is very problematic for Taminiaux, given that he wants simply to identify those *ideell* immanent essences with immanent being in general. Hence in his discussion of the issue he is compelled to conclude (56) that only the narrower sense of “transcendence”—the sense in which neither the *reell* nor the *ideell immanent* is “transcendent”—is properly phenomenological, whereas the broader sense belongs specifically to “natural” (i.e., naturalistic) epistemologies. Husserl himself, in contrast, never hints that either of these two usages represents a phenomenologically illegitimate point of view. Given, in any case, that it is only the narrower sense of “transcendent” that is in use in the *Ideen*, it follows that the broad sense of *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* is completely irrelevant as far as my disagreement with Taminiaux is concerned.

empirical ego

is an empirical object [*Gegenstand*]; one's own ego [*das eigene Ich*] is such just as much as someone else's [*das fremde*], and any ego whatsoever just as much as any given physical *Ding* [*ein beliebiges physisches Ding*], such as a house or a tree, etc.¹⁹⁵

In one's own case, however (and *only* in that case), this empirical ego can be limited to its "phenomenological content [*Gehalt*]," and thereby "reduced" to

the unity of consciousness, thus to the real complex of *Erlebnisse* [*reale Erlebnisscomplexion*] which we (i.e., each for his [own] ego) in part find present in us with evidence, and, for the remaining part, assume [its presence] on good grounds¹⁹⁶

The result of that "reduction" is the "phenomenological core," that which is "the actually [*aktuell*] given."¹⁹⁷ It has a special phenomenological significance because

it is self-evident . . . that adequate perception can *only* be inner perception: that it can have to do only with *Erlebnisse* which are given simultaneously with it and which belong with it to a single consciousness.¹⁹⁸

In the *Ideen*, the requirement of simultaneity is dropped, and the phenomenological realm of pure consciousness is thus simply identified with the realm of the adequately

¹⁹⁵ *LU V*, §4, 2:331. Note that Husserl often uses houses, tables, etc. as examples of *Dinge*, even though, strictly speaking, such things are, per se, really higher-order objects with practical and/or axiological properties. There may also be a similar problem with trees insofar as they are living things, although Husserl normally calls the psychophysical unity an "animal," implying that plants do not have souls (because, presumably, they have no "psychological consciousness"). Carnap, in contrast, explicitly includes plants in the sphere of "biological objects" (*Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, §137, 183).

¹⁹⁶ *LU V*, §4, 2:331.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, §8, 2:342.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, §5, 2:333.

given; at the same time, the relationship between pure and empirical consciousness is reinterpreted, so that the former is no longer a subset of the latter, but rather belongs to an entirely different grade of being. It is perfectly clear, nevertheless, that the “phenomenological core” of *LU*, and *not* the realm of essence which plays such a large role in that work, is the direct ancestor of the region of pure consciousness as it appears in the *Ideen*. In no period of his thought, in other words, was Husserl himself guilty of the conflation which is found in Taminiaux.

Given that this is the case, how can Taminiaux's confusion be accounted for? I have already mentioned some misleading passages in Husserl's own works; it seems likely, however, that the problem is mostly due to Taminiaux's reliance on Heidegger's exposition in the *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*. Taminiaux discusses this work extensively, and devotes a great deal of space to interpreting the criticism of Husserl which it contains—a criticism which Taminiaux, for his part, apparently considers conclusive.¹⁹⁹ And there are indeed grounds for serious confusion in Heidegger's text. For Heidegger not only lists “being as essence” (*Wesenssein*), as opposed to factual being, as one of the being-determinations of Husserl's “pure consciousness,” but even glosses the word “pure” as “essential,” speaking for example of “the so-called *pure*, i.e. no longer concrete, individual, but rather *pure field of consciousness*.”²⁰⁰ This is certainly, in Husserl's terms, a mistake. For Husserl, at least in the *Ideen*, “pure consciousness” is always the name of an entire region of being—in fact, the primary region (*Urregion*)—and, as I have emphasized above for just this reason, the distinction between fact and essence is one that applies *within* each region. An attempt to read Heidegger's interpretation of “pure consciousness” back into Husserl's

¹⁹⁹ “Transcendence, Immanence, and Being,” 67–74; see especially 72–3.

²⁰⁰ *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 137; see also 141–2 and 145–6.

texts will therefore yield exactly the confusion we have seen in Taminiaux: the distinction between transcendent and immanent being will be confused with the distinction between fact and essence, and the eidetic reduction with the phenomenological one.

Now, it is one thing to disagree with Jacques Taminiaux about the proper understanding of Husserl, and quite a different one to disagree with Heidegger. Heidegger reports, in fact, that he had, by 1925, already discussed the criticisms contained in the *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* with Husserl personally;²⁰¹ one would like to think that any fundamental confusions would already have been cleared up. It would therefore be nice if I could say with confidence that, although Heidegger's terminological mistake causes a material confusion in Taminiaux, the problem for Heidegger himself remains solely at the terminological level. Unfortunately the evidence on this score is ambiguous.

At some points Heidegger distinguishes carefully between what he calls the "transcendental" reduction, "the not-going-along-with [*Nicht-Mitmachen*] every transcendent positing [*Thesis*]," which leaves my concrete factual *Erlebnisstrom* as residue, and the eidetic reduction, in which "this unity of the *Erlebnisstrom* is ideatively considered."²⁰² Add to this that *psychological* persons (streams of psychological consciousness) are "empirical unities," and that "all empirical unities are in the same sense transcendent, merely relative, contingent,"²⁰³ and the unavoidable implication is that psychological consciousness, including my consciousness as the consciousness

²⁰¹Ibid., 167.

²⁰²Ibid., 137; see also 150–51. Heidegger always calls the phenomenological reduction properly speaking "transcendental"; he reserves the phrase "phenomenological reduction" for the combined effect of both the "transcendental" and eidetic reductions. As far as I know there is no support in Husserl for this choice of terminology.

²⁰³Ibid., 154, citing *Id* 1, §54, 105 and 106.

of this concrete human being, is already excluded by the first, phenomenological reduction, whereupon the eidetic reduction still remains to be carried out. In other words: Heidegger's own explanation seems to imply, just as we have maintained, that there is a distinction of fact and essence *within* Husserl's region of absolute or immanent phenomenological consciousness (as also a parallel distinction within the transcendent realm of the psychological). In accordance with this, Heidegger is also clear, at times, that "reality," in the *Ideen*, means transcendent being—i.e., that which is excluded by the *transcendental* reduction—so that *real* is not (as in *LU*) the opposite of *ideal*. Thus he explains that that the total "phenomenological" reduction (transcendental and eidetic) "abstracts [*sieht . . . ab*] not only from reality, but also from the particular singular *Erlebnisse* [which exist as a matter of fact] [*von der jeweiligen Vereinzelung der Erlebnisse*]." ²⁰⁴

In other places, however, Heidegger seems closer to Taminiaux. As mentioned, he includes "pure being," understood as being which is free of all "singularization" (*Vereinzelung*)—understood, that is, as being which is free of all facticity—as one of the "being-determinations" of "pure consciousness as the phenomenological region," ²⁰⁵ part of "the determination of the being of the region 'consciousness.'" ²⁰⁶ This, as we

²⁰⁴ *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 151. (*Jeweilig* means "current" or "particular" and the phrase *Vereinzelung der Erlebnisse* means literally "singularization of the *Erlebnisse*"; I have done my best to come up with a comprehensible English equivalent. The intent, in any case, is obviously to refer to the factual *Erlebnisse*, in contrast to their essences.) See also 142, a passage I have already mentioned, in which (in explanation of Husserl's use of *res*), Heidegger equates "reality" with "transcendent-being" (*Transzendent-Sein*). With this one should compare, however, 146, where *real*, *Realität*, and *Realisierung* are all contrasted with *ideal*, that is, essential—where those terms, in other words, are used in the old *LU* sense.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 148–9.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

emphasized above, must at the very least count as a very incorrect way of speaking: there certainly cannot be any region of being which is characterized by ideality—that is, essentiality, as opposed to facticity—as such. To repeat briefly: an individuum is paradigmatically not an essence, but a “this-here,” which is to say, a (syntactically formless) *facticity*; the concept of “region,” however, is *defined* by Husserl in terms of the concept of individuum, and in such a way that, as a matter of logical necessity, *every* region contains one and only one genus of individua, and *every* individuum belongs to one and only one region. Phenomenology as an eidetic science can only be, like every eidetic science, the study of some region *in abstraction from* the facticity which that region necessarily contains.

Of course, if Heidegger can be off in his use of the term “pure,” then the same certainly might go for his use of “region”—especially given that Husserl himself sometimes talks about the “sphere of essence,” even though “sphere” is supposed to be a synonym for “region.” Heidegger might simply be calling the field of immanent essence a “region” insofar as it forms the field of study of a “science” (see 129); that it is *not* a region according to the strict definition of “region” would simply correspond to the fact that an eidetic discipline is not a (complete) science according to the strictest way of classifying sciences. The continuation of Heidegger’s argument, however, makes this interpretation difficult. Heidegger’s main criticism of Husserl in general in this text is that Husserl’s phenomenology fails to address what is, from Heidegger’s point of view, the most important question about consciousness or intentionality—the question, namely, of its “character” or “mode” of being. The fact that Husserl’s phenomenology is *eidetic* forms a key part of this argument, insofar as “essence” or *Eidos* (like εἶδος, i.e. “form,” in the traditional sense) is a matter of what *kind* of being something is—Heidegger calls this the “what” or “what-content”

(*Wasgehalt*), although “how” (i.e., *quale quid*) would probably be more appropriate—whereas the “mode of being” concerns what Heidegger calls the “that,” in the sense of “*that* (something) exists” (*Daß*):

From the what I never experience anything about the sense and mode of the that—only, in any case, that a being [*Seiendes*] of this what-content (e.g. *extensio*) can have a [certain] determinate mode of being [*eine bestimmte Weise zu sein haben kann*]. What this mode itself is, is not thereby clarified (152).

The argument, in other words, is that Husserl's eidetic phenomenology can at best investigate the *Erlebnisse* as *specific* objects, but not as *generic*—which criticism takes on a special significance if it turns out, as Heidegger believes, that human consciousness (*Dasein*) is a kind of being whose specific character is, so to speak, already generic (“whose what it is precisely, to be, and not to be as”) (ibid.).

So far, this criticism could well be directed against Husserl's views as we have developed them: the eidetic science of a region is indeed incapable of revealing the *mode of being* of objects in that region. The being-character of a thing is, as I have emphasized, *not* a part of its essence.²⁰⁷ This is exactly why the eidetic sciences of the transcendent world are “dogmatic,” or in other words need to be supplemented by *phenomenology*. The proper Husserlian response, however, would be to say that, while the being-character of an object is not essential to it, it does depend, according to any doctrine of transcendental idealism, on the way in which that object is posited. This is *why* phenomenology is capable of going beyond the dogmatic attitude of the natural sciences: the being-character of a particular transcendency corresponds to the positing-character of the particular *Erlebnisse* by which it is posited, and the being-character of transcendencies in general is revealed by the nature of the primary

²⁰⁷See above, p. 71.

positing characteristic of positing-with-certainty—is revealed, that is, by the kind of evidence is required to make such positing rational. But, this Husserlian response would continue, the positing of *Erlebnisse* is *absolute*, in a way we will explain below, so that there is in a sense nothing (or nothing *positive*) to be said about the character of their being, and certainly not at the “level” of phenomenology at which the *Ideen* remains. This response would not constitute a refutation of Heidegger’s criticism, but it would show more clearly that that criticism makes sense only in the context of Heidegger’s *total* disagreement with Husserl, and in particular of Heidegger’s view that there *is* no “realm” or “region” of (pure *or* “psychological”) consciousness to be investigated.

Heidegger, however, imagines quite a different response:

Of course one must be careful here, insofar as Husserl here would answer: The sense of the reduction is precisely, *at first* [*zunächst*] to abstract [*abzusehen*] from reality, in order then to be able to consider it precisely as reality, just as it is manifest in the pure consciousness which I attain [*gewinne*] through the reduction (150).

Heidegger, in other words, imagines Husserl responding that his phenomenology reveals the being-character of consciousness or of the intentional because those things are realities, i.e. transcendencies, like any other, and can be studied as such once the reduction is complete:

It thereby becomes quite clear: the being [*Sein*] of the psychic, the intentional, is at first excluded, in order to allow the pure region of consciousness to be attained, and precisely [beginning] from that [*von dieser her*] is it now first possible to determine [the nature of] the excluded being [*Sein*], reality. *The question of being is thus posed; it is even answered* (155).

But this response would not touch at all on what would, from Husserl’s point of view, be the more important sense of Heidegger’s question—the sense, namely, in which

it would ask after the being-character of that factual consciousness, that kind of individual *Seiendes*, from which the subject matter of *phenomenology*, as opposed to rational psychology, is eidetically abstracted. It would not touch on the question in that most important sense, that is, *unless* one were to take it that the phenomenologist studies the essence of *psychological* consciousness: unless, that is, one were to take it that there is no distinction to be made between phenomenology and rational psychology, and that the immanent/transcendent distinction is, if not identical with, at least a special case of, the essential/factual one.

The criticism, with its imagined response, might still make sense if one were to put things as follows: we first (*zunächst*) encounter intentionality in the “natural attitude” as psychological consciousness; pure or phenomenological consciousness can then be attained by means of the phenomenological (or “transcendental”) reduction; finally, in a second step, the field of (eidetic) phenomenological study is abstracted from this pure consciousness. Heidegger would then be saying that we cannot hope to understand the being-character of pure consciousness unless we can understand the being-character of the *Ausgangsfeld*, the original field of *psychological* consciousness from which we began. Husserl's imagined response would be that this alleged *Ausgangsfeld*, unlike the absolute field of factual *pure* consciousness, is just another transcendent region, so that the determination of its being-character poses no particular problem—to which Heidegger in turn would respond, as he does, that this is not what the true phenomena, the “things themselves,” show. But although there are indeed hints of just this argument in Heidegger's text (see especially 131), the two-step nature is never explicitly brought out, and in fact Heidegger speaks of the new domain or region which “arises” (*entspringt*) out of the psychological field as “the region of pure consciousness” (*ibid.*)—i.e., on Heidegger's understanding of “pure,”

as a domain or “region” of essence. In the passage in question he seems rather to lean towards the view that the individual *Erlebnisse* on the basis of which the eidetic reduction takes place are *the same objects* as the psychological *Erlebnisse*, only no longer considered “within the bounds of the pre-delimited disciplines of psychology and logic and their questions” (130). If anything coherent could be made of this at all, it would have to be something like D.W. Smith’s many-aspect monism (i.e., that these same individua have different essences when differently considered)—a theory which, as we have already explained, is ruled out by the logically necessary correspondence between regions and individua. I am forced to conclude that the *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* is, in this respect, either deeply confused or, at best, deeply inconsistent.²⁰⁸

If, however, the most fundamental ontological distinction—the distinction between the being of realities and of *Erlebnisse*, i.e. between presumptive and absolute, or transcendent and immanent, being—cannot be identified with the distinction between fact and essence, it remains to be explained exactly what that distinction is. We must, in other words, now address the very question which, from Heidegger’s point of view, Husserl fails satisfactorily to answer: what is the being-character of (pure) consciousness? I will address this question in the two following sections: first, by explaining the sense in which the transcendent world (the world of beings distinct from consciousness) is a single kind of being (has a single being-character), and then by explaining how the being of pure consciousness is different.

²⁰⁸The latter possibility cannot be ruled out, given that the text in question is only a reconstruction of Heidegger’s lectures, put together from different sources after his death. See the afterword of the editor, Petra Jaeger (*Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 443–7) for some unfortunately very skimpy information about how this was done. In the absence of detailed information about the manuscripts, it is impossible to say anything more conclusive on this topic.

3.6 The essential unity of the transcendent world

Let us begin with a point I have already made several times: pure consciousness is a *region* (or “sphere”) of being. Like every sphere of being, it corresponds to a single highest (material) genus of individua: in this case, the genus of *Erlebnisse*.²⁰⁹ One ontological fact follows immediately from this—namely, that there is no community of essence between the *Erlebnisse* and the individua of any other region, i.e. that they are completely (materially) *heterogeneous* from such individua; they have only formal categories (starting with the category *individuum* itself) in common with them.

This, however, applies equally to the individua of every region, or in other words to the subject matter of every science, if sciences are individuated in the most correct way. The same could be said about, say, psychology, or physics. Husserl, however, claims a *special* uniqueness for the science of phenomenology, for the phenomenological reduction which makes it possible, and for the realm of pure consciousness which that reduction reveals. He says, for example, comparing that domain of pure consciousness to the realm of “real” (i.e., transcendent) world being *as a whole*, that there is no “community of essence” between the two, but rather “heterogeneity in principle” (*prinzipielle Heterogenität*).²¹⁰ He says that “between consciousness and reality there yawns a true abyss of sense,” because

immanent or absolute being [*Sein*] and transcendent being are indeed both called “being” [*seiend*], “object,” and both have, indeed, their determination-content as objects [*seinen gegenständlichen Bestimmungsgehalt*]: but it is evident that what is there on either side called object and determination as object is given the same name [*gleich genannt*] only according to the empty logical categories (§49, 93).

²⁰⁹For *Erlebnisse* as individua, and the genus of *Erlebnisse* as (therefore) a concrete genus, see *Id* 1, §73, 136 and §15, 30.

²¹⁰*Id* 1, §39, 70; §51, 96.

To repeat: all these statements would in a way be true of any objects whatsoever which belong to different regions (e.g. physical and psychological objects), but they must be meant in a stronger way here, if there is supposed to be a special contrast between pure consciousness and the realm of reality or transcendence as a whole. And there must be such a special contrast if the phenomenological reduction is to have the peculiar character which Husserl attributes to it.

If, however, the heterogeneity of immanent and transcendent being is peculiarly deep, it can only be because the different regions of transcendent being are *not*, in the strongest possible sense, heterogeneous. There must, in other words, be a special *commonality* between all the transcendent regions, such that there is after all some “community of essence” between them, and such that the objects they contain are all called “objects” in a sense not purely homonymous. Husserl, in fact, does explain the uniqueness of phenomenology by referring to just such a commonality. All sciences, as he explains, including “all special sciences of actuality [*besonderen Wirklichkeitswissenschaften*],” involve a restriction of attention to a certain field of subject matter. But in all cases other than phenomenology, this restriction of attention is nothing more than that—it is, in other words, an act of *abstraction*:

the theoretical interest restricts itself to a special realm of the All of actuality [*der Allwirklichkeit*]; the rest remains outside of consideration, insofar as real relations [*Beziehungen*], which run in from and out to beyond [the selected field], do not compel mediating research. In this sense mechanics “abstracts” from optical events, and physics *überhaupt* and in the widest sense, from psychological ones. The realm of no science, therefore, is isolated, as every natural scientist [*Naturforscher*] knows: the entire world is, in the end, a single “nature,” and all natural sciences members of one natural science (§51, 95–6).²¹¹

²¹¹On the meaning of “nature” here, see below, p. 167. See also §1, 78, and, again, §39, 70, where the psychological and the physical are said to be bound up together in

But this does not apply to the science of phenomenology: “[the situation] is fundamentally and essentially different [*Grundwesentlich anders verhält es sich*] with the domain of the *Erlebnisse* as absolute essentialities” (§51, 96); the phenomenological reduction is “not a mere restriction of judgment to a connected piece of total actual being” (§51, 95). If we can come to an understanding of the unity of the transcendent world, then, we will be in a position to understand what the “absolute being” of pure consciousness really means; why that mode of absolute being necessarily attaches to the *Erlebnisse*, insofar as they are the causes of being of transcendent objects; and what, finally, is the nature of the phenomenological reduction: why it is a “transcendental” reduction, and how it differs from every act of mere abstraction. We will be in a position, in other words, to understand the possibility, necessity, and ontological significance of the science of phenomenology.

3.6.1 Ding, “reality,” “nature,” “material”

Recall, to begin with, that, in the Thomistic system, a highest physical genus corresponded to a single mode or grade of being. This seems a promising place to start, because both the fundamental being-character which I have called “corruptibility”—in epistemological language, the possibility of something’s being taken for something else—and the correlated *positing*-character of inadequacy are common to all transcendent beings in general:

“the real unity of the entire world.” It should be clear, incidentally, from the latter two passages, that “actuality” in §51 is synonymous not with “facticity” but with “reality,” i.e. transcendency. This must be the case, given that an eidetic science such as geometry or, in general, rational physics, is as much an abstraction from the total science of nature as is mechanics or optics. On the character of eidetic reductions in general as *abstracting*, see above, p. 136.

Transcendent being *überhaupt*, of whatever genus it may be . . . can come to givenness only in a way [or “mode”: *Weise*] analogous to [the way in which] a *Ding* [can come to givenness], thus only through appearances (§44, 81).

The word “analogous,” however, is a signal that we should be cautious here. It is true that every transcendence is given in inadequate positing, therefore—like a *Ding*—given in some sense “one-sidedly”: near the beginning of the *Ideen* Husserl promises to show, in the further course of his analysis, that “this holds . . . for *all realities überhaupt*” (§3, 10). He adds, however, that, in the process, “the vague expressions ‘one-sidedness’ and ‘many-sidedness’ will assume determinate meanings and different species of inadequacy will be distinguished” (*ibid.*).²¹² So it is unclear whether we should think of all transcendent objects, and in particular of all transcendent individuals, as existing in the *same* way (transcendently, presumptively, “one-sidedly,” given in inadequate positing), and thus, perhaps, in some sense or other, as belonging to a single genus, or whether we should rather think of the unity of the transcendent realm as a mere unity of analogy.

The key to answering this question, insofar as it is possible to answer it, is to understand the precise nature of the “analogy” in question. And the key to understanding *that* is to understand the role which the *Ding* plays here. Husserl says that the mode of givenness of transcendences in general is analogous to the mode of givenness of the *Ding*. One might imagine, based only on the above quote, that the *Ding*

²¹²This must refer principally to material of the projected volume II: *Ideen* I as it was actually published contains very little discussion of the different ways in which the members of different transcendent regions are posited. In what follows, I will therefore be forced to rely to a certain extent on the published text of *Ideen* II, despite the dangers inherent in that, given that that text is a mosaic of material from different periods, and one, furthermore, that Husserl himself did not consider ready for publication.

is a more or less arbitrary example: that Husserl could just as well have picked some other transcendent object, and said, for example, that every transcendence, *Dinge* included, is given in a way analogous to the way souls are given, or exists in a way analogous to the way in which souls exist. But although one might, as I say, imagine this, nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth.

For one easily convinces oneself that the material [*materielle*] world is not just any piece [*nicht ein beliebiges Stück*], but rather the fundamental stratum [*Fundamentalschicht*] of the natural world, to which all other real being is *essentially* related (§39, 70).²¹³

“Material world,” as the context makes clear, refers here to the world of “*Dinglichkeit*,” the “*Ding*-world,” in the narrowest sense of the term *Ding*—that is, to the world of objects that fall within the region of “nature,” in the narrowest sense of *that* term, whereas “real being” refers to the whole realm of transcendence. Since, however, these various terms—“nature,” material, *Ding*, and “real”—all play an important role in what follows, it is worth pausing here to discuss the relationship between them, not only in these senses, but in all the various senses in which Husserl uses them.

A complete discussion of the term *Ding* in Husserl, and in German philosophy in general, would have to begin with a complete discussion of its translation equivalents, and of the different roles that these words play in their respective languages. For our purposes, however, what is important is only the relationship between *Ding* and its Latin equivalent, *res*. *Res*, like the English “thing” but *unlike* the German *Ding*, has an important, quasi-pronominal function in the substantivization of adjectives. In

²¹³It is impossible to reproduce in English the distinction which Husserl makes between *materiell* and *material*. In this section, unless otherwise noted, I use “material” to translate the former, whereas above I have used it to translate the latter, as well as *sachhaltig* (both of which are opposed to *formal*). (For a different possible sense of *material*, see below, p. 164, n. 229.)

English this is in most cases obligatory: “a white thing,” for example, can never be called simply “a white.” Latin is not quite so extreme, but the analogous construction is nevertheless very common. And this grammatical fact has a direct consequence for philosophical terminology, if not for metaphysical theory itself. Since *res* can and, at least in the normal course of writing, *must* be used together with all predicates in general, it could, when it became a technical term of Latin metaphysics, only be used to stand for a *transcendental*. Whatever has being at all—sensible or intelligible, universal or particular, substance or accident—is a *res*.²¹⁴ The debate about the proper extent of “realism” (about what is to be considered a *res*) is thus a debate over what beings there are. And the Cartesian definition of “substance”—that a substance *nulla re indiget ad existendum*—thus means exactly what we would mean by saying, in English, “does not depend on anything to exist”: a substance does not

²¹⁴As Thomas explains: “we do not find anything said affirmatively and absolutely which can apply to [*possit accipi in*] every being, except its essence, according to which it is said to be, and thus this name ‘thing’ is applied [*imponitur*], which differs in this from ‘being,’ according to Avicenna in the first [book] of [his] *Metaphysics*: that ‘being’ is taken from the act of being [*ab actu essendi*], whereas the name ‘thing’ expresses the quiddity or essence of [a] being [*entis*]” (*De ver.*, 1.1 c.). A *res*, according to this explanation, is a *Wesenheit*, in the sense of a being considered insofar as it possesses (an) essence.

The reference to Avicenna is to presumably to *al-Šifā’*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5, 31,5–9. What I have said about the Latin *res* is even more true of the Arabic *šay’* (so that, for example, “anything” actually translates into Arabic as *kull šay’*). Hence Avicenna says, in an attempt to show the absurdity of trying to define “thing”: “If you were to say that a thing is that of which a predicate is true [or “to which a predicate can be correctly applied”]: *mā yaših al-kabar ‘anhu = id de quo vere potest aliquid enuntiarī*], it would be as if you said that a thing is a thing of which a predicate can be true, because the meaning [*ma‘nā*] of ‘what’ [*mā*] and of ‘which’ [*alladī*] and of ‘thing’ is one meaning, and [it is as if you] had included ‘thing’ in the definition of ‘thing’” (30,17–19). This statement makes sense in Arabic, Latin and English, but *not* in Greek or German. It seems that Avicenna may be in some way be aware of this problem, since he goes out of his way to say, incorrectly, that his own explanation of *šay’* applies “in all languages.”

depend on *anything*, i.e. is absolutely independent. That is why Descartes must go on to admit that his definition applies, *strictly* speaking, only to God.²¹⁵

German *Ding*, in contrast, is never used in this way as a mere dummy noun. More than that: it refers most naturally to a particular *class* of object (or “things,” in our sense): those that are sensible, concrete and inanimate.²¹⁶ Kant, nevertheless, as we mentioned above, continues to use *Ding* transcendentially, as equivalent to *res*. A “transcendental affirmation,” as he explains,

²¹⁵Descartes’s actual definition reads as follows: “we can understand by *substance* nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way that it needs no other thing to exist” (*per substantiam nihil aliud intelligere possumus, quam rem quae ita existit, ut nulla alia re indigeat ad existendum*) (*Principia philosophiae* 1.51, AT24). It is clear, in other words, that he is *not* distinguishing between substances, on the one hand, and a realm of “things” of which they are independent, on the other.

Note that the ancient Neoplatonic sources of this formula do *not* involve the Greek word *πρᾶγμα* (whose ordinary meaning in Greek is quite similar to that of *Ding*, although it also overlaps to some extent with *Sache*). See, e.g., Simplicius (*In Cat.* 76,2–3): *εἰ οὖν αὐτὴ μὲν καθ’ αὐτὴν ὑφ’ ἑστέωσα ἢ οὐσία οὐδενὸς δεῖται τῶν ἄλλων, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα δεῖται τῆς οὐσίας* (*si igitur ipsa quidem substantia per se subsistens nullo indiget aliorum, alia autem indigent substantia*). Note also, incidentally, that Plotinus says only of the Good, not of substance in general, that it exists *ἔρημον αὐτὸ ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν δεόμενον* (*solum purumque in se ipso consistit, nullo eorum, quae ab ipso sunt, indigens*) (*Enn.* 6.7.40.28–9). Plotinus, in other words, applies the statement in the strict sense in which, as Descartes agrees, it applies only to God. (See also *Enn.* 6.8.7.44–6. It seems that there must be a Platonic or Aristotelian source of this formula, but I have been unable to locate one. Henry and Schwyzer mention *Philebus* 63^b8 in their note to 6.7.40.28, but only the word *ἔρημον* occurs there, and the passage as a whole seems of dubious relevance.)

²¹⁶My English-German dictionary (*The Concise Oxford Duden German Dictionary* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]) lists fourteen meanings of “thing”: (1) “inanimate object”; (2) “action”; (3) “fact”; (4) “idea”; (5) “task”; (6) “affair”; (7) “circumstance”; (8) “individual, creature”; (9) (in plural) “personal belongings, outer clothing”; (10) (in plural) “matters”; (11) “product of work”; (12) “special interest”; (13) (colloquial) “something remarkable”; (14) “what is proper or needed or important.” Besides case (1), *Ding* is suggested as a translation only in cases (8) (as in “the poor thing” = *das arme Ding*) and (13) (as in “now, there’s a thing!” = *das ist ja ein Ding!*).

is a something [*ein Etwas*] the very concept of which [*dessen Begriff an sich selbst*] already expresses a being [*ein Sein*], and which is therefore called reality (thinghood) [*Realität (Sachheit)*], since only through it, and so far as it reaches, are objects something (things) [*Gegenstände Etwas (Dinge) sind*].²¹⁷

His denial that the objects of our knowledge are *Dinge an sich* is a denial that they are true beings—an assertion that they are transcendently ideal, rather than *real*. Similarly, his use of *Ding* as equivalent to *substance* (A221/B268–9; A227/B279; A283/B339; A635/B663) is a sign of his nominalist doctrine with respect to accidents.

The Kantian category (transcendental concept) of reality is, however, like all the Kantian categories, limited in its theoretical application to the domain of the sensible. If Leibniz were correct, Kant explains, and we had knowledge of true intelligible substances, then “all *Dinge* would really [*eigentlich*] be monads” (A283/B339–40); as it is, what we have knowledge of is “a *nature [composed] of Dinge* (in appearances)” (A228/B281). Kant’s term *Ding*, in other words, loses the broad applicability of the Latin *res*, not because of the way he defines it, but because of his positive doctrine, on which it turns out that the only “things” which can be thought for theoretical purposes, are the sensible ones: that is to say, more or less precisely those covered by the ordinary, non-technical meaning of the German word *Ding*, with the possible addition of the “psychological” objects of inner sense. Whether this is entirely a coincidence, or whether, on the contrary, one can here detect a certain influence which Kant’s language exerted on his thought, is difficult to say. What is certain, however, is that in *post*-Kantian German thought this restricted sense of *Ding*, corresponding, coincidentally or not, to the ordinary use of the word, was adopted as the technical

²¹⁷*KrV*, A574/B602. Note that Kant seems to waver on whether *Ding* or *Sache* is the correct translation of *res*.

philosophical one.²¹⁸ In this respect, Husserl is no exception: the most official, and by far the most common, meaning of *Ding*, at least in *Ideen I*, is the one I have mostly assumed up to now: it refers to the type of being which plays the role of individuum in the region of sensible things—i.e., the region for which sense perception strictly understood plays the role of originary positing (intuition).

There is a complication, however, when it comes to Husserl's use of the term *Realität*. This is, of course, nothing more or less than the Latinate equivalent of *Dinglichkeit* (or *Sachheit*), and, as we saw above, Kant very self-consciously uses it in exactly that sense. In Husserl, however, *Realität* has, in general, a far wider extension—it refers, namely, to transcendent being in general.²¹⁹ Hence when Husserl famously (mis)interprets the Cartesian formula *nulla re indiget*, he uses it to express the independence of pure consciousness from *all* of its transcendent objects:

Immanent being is thus doubtless absolute being, in the sense that it in principle *nulla "re" indiget ad existendum*.

The world of the transcendent "*res*," on the other hand, is referred to [*angewiesen auf*] consciousness, and not merely [consciousness which is] logically thought, but actual [*aktuelles*] [consciousness], throughout.²²⁰

Whatever the origin of this terminological disparity (and it seems likely that, at least at some stage, Husserl was confused about the history of the terms in question), there

²¹⁸See especially Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, section AII ("Perception, or the *Ding* and Deception"), 89ff. In the 1830 *Encyclopedia*, the connection with perception is not so evident, but the definition of the *Ding* as a unity of properties (§125) matches exactly with the one from the *Phenomenology*. For a reflection of this usage in English, see Russell's use of "thing" in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, 96. A complete account of this matter would also have to consider the ancient technical use of *πρᾶγμα* to mean "extra-mental existent": see especially Aristotle, *De Int.* 1.16^a7.

²¹⁹See again *Id 1*, Introduction, 4; §39, 70; §55, 106.

²²⁰*Id 1*, §49, 92.

is good justification for it in the *Ideen*, as we will see in the next section.²²¹ First, however, there are a few remarks to be made about “nature.”

Even less than it was possible to enter here into a complete discussion of the history of *Ding* and its equivalents is it possible to do so in the case of *Natur*, i.e., *φύσις*. What needs to be said about it for our present purposes is as follows. First of all, of the many uses of *φύσις* and its equivalents, the only ones that are relevant here are those in which it serves to single out a particular sphere or region of being: the realm of physical substances, which are studied by the *φυσικός*—in German, the *Naturforscher*. The ambiguities in Husserl’s use of *Natur* can be explained directly in terms of traditional controversies about the scope of “nature,” and hence of “natural science,” in this sense, and in terms of the problems involved in matching these traditional views with Husserl’s own ontological structure.

The main traditional problem that is relevant here has to do with the status of the soul (*ψυχή*). It is generally agreed that the natural or physical substances are those that are sensible, material, and corporeal (i.e., extended, i.e., divisible)—whatever exactly may be the relationship between those different attributes, and whatever, moreover, may be the relationship between those attributes, on the one hand, and changeability and corruptibility, on the other. What has generated enormous controversy throughout the centuries is the question of the relationship of the *soul* to those sensible, material, corporeal things. To summarize very briefly: Aristotle appears to say that souls in general (with the possible exception of the human soul, or part of it) are simply *forms* of certain bodies (namely, the living ones),²²² which would imply

²²¹Note that the disparity *cannot* be explained as a survival of the old, transcendental meaning of *res*: in that sense *Erlebnisse* would also have to be called “realities”—as, indeed, Husserl calls them *Wesenheiten* at *Id* 1, §51, 96.

²²²See *De An.* 2.1.412^a19–21; see also 2.4.415^b8–11, and cf. *Ph.* 2.7.198^a21–26.

that the soul is something natural *par excellence*, since, in Aristotle's system, it is the form of a natural substance that is primarily called a *φύσις*.²²³ But although, as I say, that is what Aristotle *seems* to say, many Aristotelians in fact interpret him differently (mostly because of a desire to reconcile his doctrines with those of Plato and, because of Plato, of Plotinus).²²⁴ What often emerges instead is a theory according to which the soul is a third type of substance, in addition to natural substances (i.e., material bodies) and pure intellects, and according to which there is therefore also a third science of psychology, in addition to physics and metaphysics or first philosophy.²²⁵ And while it is true that others, including Thomas,²²⁶ tended to interpret Aristotle in a more straightforward way, the controversy continued (thanks at least in part, no doubt, to the reappropriation of ancient Neoplatonic sources) in the early modern period. One stage of this—perhaps the most important, both in general and with respect to Husserl in particular—can be seen in Descartes, who eliminates the alleged third realm by the very un-Aristotelian expedient of denying that non-human living things have souls (are essentially different from inanimate bodies) at all, whereas in effect identifying the *human* soul with the (entirely immaterial) intellect. Another stage can be seen in Kant, who goes to great lengths to explain why, on the one hand, “nature” properly speaking includes both material, extended things (the objects of

²²³*Ph.* 2.1.193^b3–8; *Metaph.* Δ.4.1015^a13–17.

²²⁴See e.g. *Laws* 10, 888^e–896^c, and cf. *Enn.* 4.4.13. See also *Soph.* 246^c and cf. *Republic* 6.509^d and *Parm.* 135^e.

²²⁵See Simplicius, *In Cat.* 5, CAG 8:77,4–7; *In Ph.*, Proem., CAG 9:1,21–2 and 2.1, CAG 9:262,13–263,14; Avicenna, *al-Šifā'*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt* 2.1, 60,10–13 and (on the ambiguity of “nature”) *al-Šifā'*: *al-Tab'iyyāt*, pt. 1 (*al-Simā' al-ṭabī'iy*) 1.5, 30,7–16. (The last passage is really about “nature” in the sense in which one can speak of “the nature of a body.” But the ambiguity of that kind of “nature” implies a corresponding ambiguity of “nature” as an ontological region.)

²²⁶See, e.g., *In Ph.* 8.7 (n. 1023); *ST* 1.75.3 c. and ad 3 and 1.75.5 c.; *Q. de an.* 6 s.c.

external sense) *and* psychological ones (the objects of inner sense) and why, on the other hand, the term “physics,” or “natural science,” applies only to the study of the former, which can therefore be identified with what is “natural” or “physical” according to a more restricted understanding of those terms.²²⁷

It is not clear to me which of the above sources are important influences on Husserl, direct or indirect (for example, by way of Brentano). His various uses of *Natur*, however, certainly reflect this general background. For Husserl uses the term in three main ways.

First, most narrowly, “nature” is a particular region of being: the region of sensible individua, i.e. *Dinge*, in the narrow sense of the term.²²⁸ In order to distinguish “nature” in this sense from “nature” in one of the broader senses of the term, Husserl sometimes qualifies it as “physical” or “material.”²²⁹ Husserl agrees with Descartes about the character of the individua, i.e. substances, in this region:

Not without reason [*Grund*] did Descartes designate *extensio* as the *essential attribute* [*Wesensattribut*] of the *material Ding*, which is therefore

²²⁷See *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, 467, 471.

²²⁸See, most clearly, *Id* 1, §10, 20–21. See also §89, 184 and §90, 186, where the transcendent object of “perception” is called a *Ding der Natur* and *Naturobjekt*.

²²⁹For “physical,” see e.g. *Id* 1, §10, 21; §72, 134. For “material” see e.g. *Id* 1, §1, 8; §152, 319; *Id* 2, §12, Hua 4:27,25. In addition to using it to distinguish the region of nature strictly speaking from broader unities which can be called “nature,” it seems that Husserl, at least in *Ideen* II, sometimes uses *materiell* to refer specifically to the “substantial” (i.e., causal) unity of a concrete *Ding*, as opposed to a mere sensible “phantom” (e.g. *Id* 2, §21, Hua 4:95,1–5). He should probably have used *material* for his, given that he calls the *Ding* under this aspect the *res materialis* (*Id* 1, §149, 313) and equates (natural, i.e. *materiell*) substantiality with *Materialität* (e.g. *Id* 2, §12, Hua 4:29,6–8).

Note that the use of “physical” in this context is also nonstandard, in the sense that *physicalisches Ding* normally means the *Ding* as determined by the modern science of mathematical physics (see *Id* 1, §52).

also called corporeal [*Ding*] simpliciter.²³⁰

A *Ding* is fundamentally a *res extensa*: although every concrete *Ding* is more than this (has “secondary qualities” and “substantial,” i.e. causal, unity),²³¹ still, “spatial extension [*Extension*] or corporeity” has “a completely peculiar [*eigenartige*] place among the constitutive properties of a material *Ding*”; and this is due to the fact that corporeity is essentially the possibility of *partition* (*Zerstückung*), and partition, at least according to Husserl, entails the partition of all sensible qualities.²³²

Unlike Descartes, however, Husserl considers that there is another aspect of “nature,” which is “psychological,” “psychophysical,” or “animal.”²³³ This refers to a region of being different from that of material nature.²³⁴ The individua belonging to this region can also be called *Dinge* in a broader sense,²³⁵ even though they are not, strictly speaking, *Dinge*: i.e., not extended, not partible, and not given originally in perception, if that term is taken strictly to mean *sense* perception only.²³⁶ Nor is this

²³⁰*Id* 2, §12, Hua 4:28,30–29,1.

²³¹*Id* 1, §40, 72; §149, 312–13; §150, 315.

²³²*Id* 2, §13, Hua 4:30,12–16 (and cf. *LU* III, §22, 2:270). Husserl concludes that corporeal extension is, for that reason, “not in the same way a real property (‘not properly [a real property at all] [*eigentlich keine*]’), but rather an essential form [*Wesensform*] of all real properties [of the *Ding*]” (§13, Hua 4:31,30–33). In this respect his theory of corporeity is superficially similar to Simplicius’; see above, p. 33, n. 47. The type of “partibility” in question here may not be the one that it is metaphysically relevant, however (see below, p. 210, n. 301). (The principle upon which all this is based—that a partition of extension also partitions all sensible qualities—seems, incidentally, somewhat questionable: it works well for visible and tactile qualities, but perhaps not so well for sounds, tastes, or odors.)

²³³See *Id* 1, §1, 8; *Id* 2, §12, Hua 4:27,27.

²³⁴See *ibid.*, §17, 32; §72, 134.

²³⁵See, e.g., *Id* 2, §12, Hua 4:28,29–30.

²³⁶There is considerable ambiguity in *Ideen* I as to exactly what the individua of this region are. At times Husserl seems to imply that they are souls (at *Id* 1, §17,

broader use of the terms “nature” and *Ding* simply arbitrary. For despite the distinction between the two regions, there is an important sense in which they both belong to a higher unity. Even “nature” in the broader sense, considered apart from the rest of transcendent reality, is, in other words, an ontologically significant unit of some kind. In *Ideen II*, Husserl defines it as the realm of *bloße Sachen*: “a sphere of objectivities [*Gegenständlichkeiten*]” defined by the fact that it forms the subject matter of “natural science”—science, that is, which “knows no value-predicates or practical predicates,” and so does not recognize such concepts as “valuable, beautiful, delightful [*lieblich*], charming [*reizend*], perfect, good, useful, act, product [*Werk*],” or “state, church, right, religion.”²³⁷ Husserl uses the Hegelian term *Geist* to refer to these “higher-order” objects.²³⁸ And Husserl promises to show, “from phenomenological

32, for example, the region “material *Ding*” is opposed to the region “soul”; at §72, 134, the “physical” region is opposed to the “psychic” one); at other times he implies that they are psychophysical unities, or “animals” (e.g. at §1, 8). In *Ideen II* this ambiguity is resolved by means of a complex theory of the soul, the “animated body” (*beseelte Leib*), and the “material body” (*materielle Leib*). What is important for our purposes is that even the *beseelte Leib* is *not* a material *Ding*, i.e. not a member of the region of (material) nature: “Human and animals *have* material bodies . . . But according to the specifically human and animal, that is, according to the psychic [*nach dem Seelischen*], they *are not* material, and thus, taken *even as concrete wholes*, they are, in the proper sense, *non-material* realities. Material *Dinge* are partible, in parallel to the extension which belongs to their essence. Humans and animals are not partible” (*Id 2*, §14, Hua 4:33,14–21). According to this analysis, in other words, the correct division into regions should be between nature in the narrow sense (the *Ding*-world), which includes material *Leiber*, and the world of animals, which is composed of (unextended and impartible) animated *Leiber*. The only connection between the two is that the latter is “founded” upon, constituted upon the basis of, the former—a kind of connection we will soon examine in detail.

²³⁷*Id 2*, §11, Hua 4:25,3–12. Cf. the list of “objectivities of higher order” at *Id 1*, §152, 318 (“value-objects,” “practical objects,” and “concrete cultural constructions [*Kulturgebilde*]” such as “state,” “right,” “ethos [*Sitte*]” and “church”).

²³⁸See, once again, *Id 1*, §1, 8. In the later stages of *Ideen II*, however, *Geist* seems to take on a different and perhaps more ontologically portentous meaning.

sources,” that the “abstraction” from axiological and practical predicates which the natural scientist makes is not “just any arbitrary abstraction” (*beliebige willkürliche Abstraktion*), which would as such be unsuitable for the definition of a science.²³⁹ We will be in a position to see this for ourselves (and to see why only *phenomenology* could demonstrate it) below.

The fact, however, that there are “higher order,” *geistliche* transcendent objects not included in even this second kind of “nature” means that Husserl needs an even broader term to include all transcendent objects in general. The most common one, besides “reality,” is “world.”²⁴⁰ There are, however, also some places where Husserl appears to use “nature” in this very wide sense.²⁴¹ And there is good reason for this, as we will see, corresponding precisely to the reason for calling every transcendent object a “reality,” i.e. for connecting them all to *Dinge*, properly speaking.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to analyze that text in detail here.

²³⁹*Id* 2, §11, Hua 4:25,15–21.

²⁴⁰Strictly speaking, one might expect “world” to refer to the total transcendent *facticity*, whereas “reality” would include transcendent essence. But see, for example, *Id* 1, §1, 8, where *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* (including, presumably, their eidetic components) are grouped together as *Wissenschaften der Welt*.

²⁴¹The clearest example seems to be *Id* 1, §55, 106; see also §51, 96. Another probable example is *Id* 2, §12, Hua 4:27,18–22. Note also that the “sciences of the world” are also called “sciences of the natural attitude” (*Id* 1, §1, 8)—though it is not clear whether Husserl intends any connection between *natürlich* in this sense and *Natur* as the name of a type of region of being. The ambiguity of all relevant terms, including “reality” and “world,” makes it difficult to be completely confident in such cases; but where a sharp contrast is drawn between the region of pure consciousness (the realm of immanence) and *everything else*, then that “everything else” must include not only the material and the psychophysical, but higher order, *geistlich* transcendences, as well.

3.6.2 *The analogous unity ad unum of all transcendent regions to the region of material nature*

Husserl says, recall, that the mode of givenness of any transcendency is “analogous” to the mode of givenness of a material *Ding*—which is to say, the givenness of a sensible substance, an individuum in the region of nature. The question before us is how to understand the structure of that “analogy.”

The easiest way would be to follow Aristotle’s definition: “an analogy,” Aristotle explains, “is an equality of ratios [λόγων], and is [found] in four [terms], at the least.”²⁴² An analogy in this sense, in other words, is a relationship between four terms a, b, c, d such that $a : b :: c : d$. In this case we would have, for example, that sense perception is to *Dinge* as psychological-“perception” (“empathy”) is to souls (or animals). But such a relationship is obviously symmetrical: we could just as well say that empathy is to souls as sense perception is to *Dinge*. And that, as we saw above, would be incorrect. The relevant relationship between *Dinge* and other realities is *not* symmetrical: the *Ding*-world, or in other words the region of nature, is the “fundamental stratum” of real being; the unity of the real world is somehow due to its being all related, in one way or another, to this one fundamental level. We are forced to say, therefore, that the “analogy” that unites the various kinds of real, i.e. transcendent, objects, is of an entirely different type.

I have already alluded to this issue above several times, but perhaps the time has come to explain it in some detail. Aristotle defines “analogy” (*ἀναλογία*) in the way we have seen, as the “equality of ratios,” and never—or never clearly—uses the term in any other way. When, therefore, he lists unity “by analogy” as a more inclusive

²⁴² *EN* 5.6.1131^a31–2.

(and less proper) kind of unity than the unity “according to genus,”²⁴³ there is every reason to suppose that he means an analogy of this kind: two things x and y that are generically different can nevertheless be “one” (i.e., “the same”) in that there are two other things, x' and y' , such that $x : x' :: y : y'$. St. Thomas, however, in his commentary, asserts that there are *two* distinct kinds of analogous (or “proportional”) unity. One is the kind of we have just described, based on Aristotle’s definition of “analogy”:

that in which there is the same proportion of two [things] to diverse [other things], as tranquility to the sea and serenity to the air. For tranquility is stillness [*quies*] of the sea, and serenity, of the air.²⁴⁴

The other kind of “analogy,” however, is

that in which two [things] have diverse relationships [*habitudines*] towards one [thing] [*ad unum*], as healthiness, said of urine, signifies the relationship of a sign of health [to health], but, [said] of medicine, signifies the relationship of cause with respect to this same [thing, i.e., health].²⁴⁵

The example is from *Metaphysics* Γ ; but there, although he is indeed speaking of a unity more inclusive than the unity of genus—but which, nevertheless, allows the things so unified to form the subject matter of a single *science*—Aristotle does not use the term *ἀναλογία*; his term for this type of unity seems to be simply *πρὸς ἓν*, “towards one”—i.e., *ad unum*.²⁴⁶ Thomas, however, not only claims that the unity *ad unum* is

²⁴³*Metaph.* Δ .6.1016^b31–1017^a3.

²⁴⁴*In Metaph.* 5.8 (n. 879).

²⁴⁵*Ibid.* Note that *proportio* is simply the translation equivalent of *ἀναλογία* (used alongside the transliterated form *analogia*): if there are two different kinds of “analogy,” then there are two different kinds of “proportion,” and vice versa. (This is why Cajetan’s terminology of *analogia proportionis* is inappropriate.)

²⁴⁶See also *EN* 1.6.1096^b25–8, where *κατ’ ἀναλογίαν* and *πρὸς ἓν* are explicitly distinguished.

one of the two possible kinds of *analogia* or *proportio*: he in fact uses the terms that way more often than not. For the “equality of ratios,” on the other hand—that is, for what Aristotle actually calls *ἀναλογία*—Thomas normally uses neither *analogia* nor *proportio*, but *similitudo*.²⁴⁷

The reasons for this terminological situation in Thomas are far from clear, nor is it clear how much, if anything, Husserl actually knew about it.²⁴⁸ The use of the term “analogous” here may therefore be a coincidence. There is no denying, however, that the unity of the transcendent world as Husserl describes it is precisely the Thomistic unity of “analogy” *ad unum*. And this is the explanation for the confusing relationship between *Dinglichkeit* and *Realität* which I pointed out above. Just as urine belongs to the unity of “the healthy” (τὸ ὑγιεινόν) by virtue of its relation to the “one nature” of “health” (ὑγίεια), and an accident belongs to the unity of “being” (τὸ ὄν) by virtue of its relation to substance (οὐσία), every transcendent object belongs to the unity of “the real” by virtue of its relationship to *Dinglichkeit*, i.e. to *realitas* in the narrowest Husserlian sense of the term.

To say this much about the unity of the transcendent world is already useful,

²⁴⁷This usage is also, apparently, based on Aristotle: compare *Metaph.* Θ.1.1046^a6–9 with the passage just cited from *EN* 1.6.

²⁴⁸He *could* have known about it from his teacher, Franz Brentano. In the 1862 *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*, 95, Brentano argues that there are indeed two distinct meanings of *ἀναλογία* in Aristotle, just as Thomas says. He seems to have changed his mind about this by the spring of 1870, when he delivered the lectures which were later published as *Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie*: see p. 249 of the printed edition, corresponding to “Geschichte der Philosophie (Altes Kolleg),” MS H45, Papers of Franz Brentano, Houghton Library, Harvard University, n. 25618. Husserl’s own use of *Analogie*, *Analogon*, *analog*, etc., usually seems more in line with “equality of ratios” interpretation, however: see, e.g., *Id* 1, §45, 84, and (in a context relevant to our present discussion) §136, 282. The situation at §148, 308–9 is less clear.

but more because it points us in the direction of the right question than because it is in itself the answer we need. For simply identifying this unity as a unity *ad unum*, first of all, doesn't determine the nature of the relationships, in this particular case, between the one region of *Dinglichkeit* strictly speaking and the many regions of transcendent *Realität*. That there are relationships, and even, as he puts it "essential" relationships, between different regions is something that Husserl explicitly maintains:

The radical division [of sciences] in no way . . . rules out [mutual] involvement [*Verflechtung*] and partial overlap. Thus, for example, "material *Ding*" and "soul" are different regions of being, and yet the latter is founded in the former, and from that arises [*erwächst*] the founding of the theory of the soul in the theory of the body.²⁴⁹

And, as the example suggests, the unity *ad unum* which we are trying to understand is made up precisely of such relationships of essential "involvement": it is precisely when one considers the problem of "the involvement [*Verflochtenheit*] of the different regions" that one finds all other types of object—both "psychic subjects" and "objects of a higher order"—to be "founded" upon material *Dinge*: finds, in other words, that "material reality, ultimately, lies at the base of [*liegt . . . zugrunde*] all other realities."²⁵⁰

It is easy enough to understand, on a common-sense level, what kind of "essential" relationship of "involvement" Husserl has in mind: that a soul, for example, is essentially the soul *of* some physical body, so that a science which studies the soul must concern itself also with the soul-body relation, and so that, moreover, such a science is ultimately a piece singled out by abstraction from a single natural science, or even a single science "of the world," which considers both the physical region and

²⁴⁹*Id* 1, §17, 32.

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*, §152, 318–19.

all the other regions, including the psychological one, which depend on it. From the point of view of Husserl's ontology, however, the essential involvement of the different transcendent regions is difficult to understand. (1) If there really are physical and psychological (or psychophysical) *regions*, in the technical sense of that term, in which *Dinge* and souls (or animals), respectively, play the role of individua, then the singular essences of *Dinge* and souls (or animals) must be *concreta*, not *abstracta*. But this means that they should be "absolutely independent," i.e., precisely *not* essentially related to some other thing in the way we have just described. (2) Presumably the essential laws connecting the soul to the body are synthetic a priori—which according to Husserl must mean that they are a consequence of regional axioms. But axioms of which region? This problem is closely connected to (1), in that the regional axioms are supposed to "express, in eidetic generality, what must belong to an individual object of [that] region,"²⁵¹ purely in terms of the regional *Grundbegriffe*, i.e. categories (this being, recall, how "regional category" is *defined*). But only the essential independence of the individuum makes this possible. If, for example, it is a priori necessary that a soul be the soul of some *dingliche* body, then the "regional axioms" of the psychological realm would have to involve, not only the psychological *Grundbegriffe*, but also, at a minimum, the concept *Ding*—a concept belonging to a different region.²⁵² (3) It is not obvious that such relationships, whatever their

²⁵¹Ibid., §16, 31.

²⁵²There is a more general problem here, of course, in that Husserl's ontology as explained in *Ideen* I seems not to allow for *any* relations at all, "essential" or otherwise, between objects that differ in region: every categorial object (such as a relation or a counted collection) is supposed to be an *Abwandlung* of the logical absolute, and the system of all such *Abwandlungen* is supposed to define the empty "form" of a *region* in general, leaving no obvious room for a categorial object whose syntactically primitive components belong to different regions. But however Husserl chose to deal with this more general problem—and the solution, whatever it was, would have to

precise ontological character, are in any relevant way asymmetrical. Why is the psychologist “abstracting” any more than is the physicist? And in fact Husserl does say, in a passage I cited above, that physics, just as much as psychology, is just an abstraction from the total natural science.²⁵³ (4) Even if it is accepted that there are asymmetrical “essential” relationships between every sphere of transcendent being and the fundamental sphere of *dingliche* nature, there seems to be no obvious connection between this fact and the common mode of being of all transcendencies as such. Could there not be regions of being which are “analogous” to the region of nature in the “equality of ratios” sense—which “appear” to consciousness only in a series of necessarily inadequate positings—but which do not participate in the Thomistic “analogy,” i.e. relationship *ad unum*, of which the region of nature forms the fundamental level?

The key to answering all of these objections lies in recalling, first of all, what I have argued about the being-character of an object or kind of object in general: namely, that while the being-character certainly represents an a priori restriction of possibility with respect to that object or kind of object, that restriction flows from the relationship between the object and positing consciousness, rather than from the (regional, generic, specific, or singular) essence of the object or kind of object in question. As an example of this, I argued that the possibility of “a world outside our own”—a world with actual being, but not actually positable by us—is not only a logical, but even an essential, possibility. What is essential to a transcendent object such as, for example, a tree, that is, is that it has extension, occupies a place, has

allow for relations between transcendent and immanent objects, as well as between different kinds of transcendent ones—he would still face the special difficulties I am raising here.

²⁵³ *Id* 1, §51, 95–6, cited above, p. 154.

a trunk and roots, grows, etc., but *not* that it can exist only as potentially given in ordinary perception. It does not contradict the essence of the region *nature*—one might say that it is *physically* possible—for such a *Ding* to exist “outside our world.” Existence “outside our world” is ruled out, rather, by the nature of being itself. It is *metaphysically* impossible.

Now I also pointed out, in introducing this principle, that Husserl, at least in *Ideen* I, does not make it very clear—unlike Heidegger, who, as we saw, uses it explicitly in his critique of the eidetic reduction. But I argued that transcendental idealism as such requires such a principle. We can now see how that works out in detail within Husserl’s system: to allow that there are transcendent regions of being at all, Husserl must allow there to be transcendent *substances*, i.e. individua, i.e. objects whose singular essences are absolutely independent, and he cannot do this unless he excludes the objects’ relation to the positing consciousness from those singular essences, and hence from all generic and specific essences of the transcendent regions, as well. Otherwise he would be left with a doctrine which he strenuously denies (even though, as we saw above, some interpreters have imputed it to him in one version or another): that what we *take* to be a transcendent object is merely a certain “aspect” or “interpretation” of some immanent object or objects, and thus, among other things, is a mere abstraction.

There are places where Husserl seems, on the face of it, to deny what I have just been arguing. He says, for example, that

What we, as phenomenologically naive, take for mere facts [*Fakta*]: that “for us humans” a spatial *Ding* always appears in a certain “orientation” . . . that we can see a *Ding* only at a certain “depth,” “distance” . . . [etc.], prove to be . . . essential necessities. . . . Something such as a spatial-*dingliches* [object], not just for us humans, but also for God—as the ideal representative of absolute knowledge—. . . is given and must be given in

changing “orientations” (§150, 315).

Isn't Husserl maintaining here precisely that a certain mode of givenness—e.g., to be seen from only one side—is *essential* to *Dinge*, i.e. forms a part of the regional essence of nature? The answer is that he is not, and for a reason very relevant to our current problem. The topic under discussion in §150 is not rational physics, the eidetic science of the region of nature, but the “phenomenology of reason” with respect to that region. The “essence” to which Husserl refers here is, in other words, the generic essence, not of *Dinge* as such, but of *Erlebnisse* in which *Dinge* are posited. That is why the “essential necessity” in question is invisible, or appears to be a mere contingent fact about the faculties of a certain species of animal, as long as we are “phenomenologically naive.” This kind of phenomenological naivete is not limited to the layperson: it includes the naivete of the natural scientist, and even that of the *eidetic* natural scientist.

The relevance of all this to our current set of problems is as follows. The unity of the transcendent world is not a regional unity, in the normal sense of the term, which is to say: there is no generic material essence *transcendent individuum*, and there are therefore no synthetic a priori truths about transcendent individua as such. But there *is* a generic essence *transcendent positing*: the division of “perceptions” (i.e., intuitions) and intentional acts in general into transcendent and immanent is a fundamental one (see especially §38, 68), and forms the basis of the fundamental division of *being* into transcendent and immanent, or presumptive and absolute (§144, 298). This is why, although every natural scientist “knows” that the transcendent world is in a certain sense a single unified whole (just as every natural scientist, and indeed every naive human being, “knows” that the world is really there, that it actually exists), still the precise nature of the mutual “involvement” of different regions can only

be understood as a part of the phenomenology of reason (just as only phenomenology is actually able to refute skepticism) (see, again, §152, 318–19). The “essential” connections between different regions have to do with the essences, not of those regions themselves or of objects in them, but of the types of *Erlebnis* by which those regions and objects are posited. And it is from this point of view that the region of nature can be seen to be prior to all the others. For “the ultimate source from which the general position [*Generalthesis*] of the world which I carry out in the natural attitude derives its sustenance [*Nahrung*]” is *sensible* experience, and therefore, ultimately, the *founding* act of sensible experience, which is sensible intuition, or “perception” (§39, 70). Thus although it is, so to speak, psychologically possible that there be a soul without a *Dingliche* body, it is metaphysically (phenomenologically) impossible: the rational positing of every psychic or *geistlich* object is “founded” upon acts of sense perception, i.e. upon the acts which, at least potentially, posit and constitute *Dinge*.²⁵⁴

This explanation clearly answers the first three of the four objections we raised above. Husserl can call an individuum of whatever transcendent region “absolutely independent,” first of all, in exactly the sense that Simplicius can call a sensible substance *αὐτὴν ὑφ’εστῶσα οὐδενὸς δεομένη τῶν ἄλλων*, or that Thomas can call it *ens completum in se subsistens in suo esse*, or Descartes can say that it *nulla*

²⁵⁴The qualification implied by my phrase “at least potentially” is exploited by Husserl in *Ideen* II (§21, Hua 4:94–6) to explain the possibility of “ghosts” (*Gespenster*)—actual souls, that is, whose “bodies” are mere phantoms. The positing of a soul requires *some* sensible body as its basis, but that body need not have the complete causal unity which is characteristic of the *res materialis*. Although Husserl doesn’t bring up the possibility, it seems that this would also explain how an *actual* disembodied spirit might appear in a dream or vision (might have only a *Leib* which “explodes,” i.e. is “canceled,” in the course of experience).

re indiget ad existendum. Such transcendent individua are *essentially* complete and independent, though they depend, like all finite objects, on their causes of being. The aprioricity of those relations of dependence is, secondly, not prescribed by the eidetic axioms of any transcendent region at all, but rather by the eidetic axioms of pure consciousness—i.e., the axioms of phenomenology. And given that such dependence is (and must be, on pain of circularity) asymmetrical, we can see, thirdly, how one region can have a special, fundamental role in relation to the others. What, however, about the fourth objection? How are we to understand the unity of the transcendent world as a necessary consequence of its *transcendency*, and hence as marking off a necessary difference between the sphere of immanence and everything else?

It is important to be clear about the nature of this problem. Given that phenomenology is supposed to be a *descriptive* eidetic science, Husserl would be, so to speak, within his rights to say that there is no a priori explanation for the unity *ad unum* which we have been describing. He could admit that it is *logically* possible for there to be two or more entirely independent transcendent “worlds,” each based on an essentially different kind of “perception,” but simply claim that, the essential truths about pure consciousness being what they in fact are, this logically possible state of affairs can be ruled out a priori. It is precisely the peculiarity of a descriptive eidetic science that it reveals a priori “facts” of that kind.²⁵⁵ If that were the case,

²⁵⁵Husserl would presumably *not* want to say that the essential unity of the world is, *technically* speaking, a “matter of fact”—i.e., that it is empirical. It is one of the oddities of Carnap’s system in the *Aufbau* that he asserts just that, not only about the unity of the world, but even about more fundamental things, such as that sight and smell are not the same sense, or that time runs only in one direction. (This makes it clear, incidentally, that the concept of “empirical” at play in the *Aufbau* has nothing to do with testability according to any scientific method. It is a metaphysico-epistemological concept having to do with the transcendental “sources of knowledge.”)

however, then transcendent objects *as such* would have nothing in common except for an analogous mode of being, in the very weak Aristotelian sense of “analogy.” And it would not be obvious, I think, that “abstracting” from some part of transcendence would be *per se* different from “abstracting” from all of it—i.e., that there was anything unique about the transcendental reduction.

That all of this is not the case—that there is a deep *a priori explanation* for the unity *ad unum* of all transcendent regions—is a consequence of the special nature of sense perception as a form of intuition. To understand that, we will have to look into the peculiar role of what Husserl calls “hyletic data,” and in particular of that subclass of hyletic data which are “sense” data, in the constitution of transcendent objects.

3.6.3 *The fundamental role of sense data*

The concept of “sense data” is in itself, and despite the various attacks against it since Husserl’s time, relatively easy to understand. An act of perception—for example, the visual perception of a tree—may not be *identical* with something like having certain color-sensations in a certain part of my visual field, but (at least once the question is raised) it seems obvious that it does *involve* something like that. As for what *else* the act of perception involves, one is tempted to say that, in addition, I must *interpret* those color-sensations as originating from or standing for or in some way signifying the presence of a tree. Husserl’s theory of sense data is at bottom a thoroughly straightforward theory of that kind.

Some of Husserl’s interpreters—foremost among them Sokolowski—have nevertheless found something about the sense data, in particular, extremely problematic—and not on grounds of an external critique (such as one finds, for example, in Austin),

but in terms of (what they take to be) Husserl's own system.²⁵⁶ The problem, as Sokolowski presents it, has to do with the (absolute) constitution of the *Erlebnisse* themselves, in which, as we will see, there is no distinction to be made between "data" and "interpretation." Given that this is the case, Sokolowski asks—given that "both sensations and intentions are now said to arise from the same source"—"what basis do we have for making any distinction at all between intentions and sensations, between noeses and hyletic data?"²⁵⁷ He answers that we have none, and that Husserl therefore should have jettisoned this distinction after his work on time consciousness in around 1907–8. If he instead retains the distinction, and develops it at length, in the *Ideen*, it is only because "he has no other way of expressing the objectivity which is constituted by intentionality."²⁵⁸ If he *continues* to use it even in the very

²⁵⁶See, in addition to Sokolowski, Mohanty, "Development," in *CCH*, 59–60.

²⁵⁷*Formation*, 98.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 142. Sokolowski thus seems to say that, although Husserl had, by the time he wrote the *Ideen*, adopted doctrines which implicitly meant the end of the sense data/interpretation distinction, he had yet to understand that implication. Mohanty, on the other hand, goes farther, and argues that Husserl had already *explicitly* rejected the distinction, in unpublished notes, as early as 1909. He bases himself on a note published in *Phantasie, Bildbewußtsein, Erinnerung*, Hua 23:265. The passage in question is part of Husserl's continuing attempt to explain the difference between imagination and perception without invoking a qualitative difference between different kinds of data (without, e.g., thinking of an imaginary perception as a kind of faint copy of a real one)—cf. *LU* V, §14, 2:364n. and *Id* 1, §112, 227. In the 1909 text, he does indeed try to eliminate the whole problem by claiming that there are no such things as "data" at all: the role of Brentano's *Nichtakte* will now be taken over entirely by the newly-discovered noemata. The difference between imagination and perception of "the same" object is to be explained as a difference between different noeses which have (specifically) "the same" noema (see Hua 23:267,17–22). By the time he wrote the *Ideen*, however, Husserl had, more characteristically, arrived at the conclusion that he needed *both* the old distinction between data and interpretation *and* the new one between noesis and noema—a duplication which led, among other things, to the confusing double use of the term "noesis" in the *Ideen*. As for the difference between imagination and perception, Husserl had in the meantime come

late *Formale und transzendente Logik*, this is only because “it can be useful . . . as a pedagogical aid,”²⁵⁹ and in any case it seems that even that pedagogical use is in the end “contradictory” (206).

On the face of it this line of criticism is odd. Given that *Erlebnisse* themselves are not constituted *by* a process that involves interpretation of data—and though Husserl mostly avoids, in the *Ideen*, the “deep” topic of the absolute constitution of pure consciousness, he is at least clear about that much—why should that imply that the constitution carried out *in* them is similar? In fact, as we will see, it is precisely this difference—the difference between absolute positing and positing by means of “adumbration” (*Abschattung*) in data—which lies at the basis of the distinction between transcendent and immanent being. It is true that Sokolowski has a general difficulty with understanding the difference in principle between an object and its (efficient) cause of being. Hence his claim that the “heterogeneity in principle” of transcendent being and pure consciousness rules out an ontological dependence of the one on the other:

Otherwise, the meanings and sense in the world would share in the ontic status of subjectivity, because they would be its products; they would be fundamentally the same type of existent as consciousness is (198).

His argument about sense data can be understood in similar terms, although the

up with an entirely different explanation, and one, moreover, which made it possible for him to explain the (alleged) “iterability” of imagination (the fact, or alleged fact, that one can imagine imagining an object: see *Id* 1, §112, 226–7)—something which the 1909 explanation would seem to rule out. In short, while this passage is in itself very interesting and revealing about Husserl’s development, what it shows is that he briefly (and with unsatisfactory results) toyed with the idea of merging his old hyle-noesis distinction with the new distinction between noesis and noema—not that he had already, correctly, “overcome” it in 1909, only to return to it, inexplicably, in the *Ideen*.

²⁵⁹ *Formation*, 178.

proof now runs in the other direction, since in this case he assumes (incorrectly) that pure consciousness and its cause of being *do* have the same “ontic status”:

Both of these elements [hyletic data and noeses] are now seen to flow from the same source, to be made out of the same “stuff.” . . . If this is so how can they differ from one another? (205).

But this way of arguing is mistaken, as we have seen. The consciousness in which something is posited is not the “stuff” out of which it is made—i.e., its formal or material cause—but its *efficient* cause of being. And it is, on the contrary, impossible for *A*, as an efficient cause, to cause the being of *B* *unless* *A* and *B* are of differing “ontic status,” i.e. are in principle heterogeneous, i.e. have no community of essence.

So much for the argument as Sokolowski states it. One may suspect, however, that there is another force at work behind his desire to have Husserl “overcome” the distinction between data and interpretation. This has to do with the feeling that phenomenology ought ultimately to eliminate all facticity from the realm of consciousness—that all content ought to be “explained” a priori. Sokolowski takes it as a “lacuna” in Husserl’s theory, for example, that “it does not show why or how one sensation is ‘green,’ another ‘red,’ still another ‘loud,’ and so on” (97). In reality, of course, the noetic side of consciousness is just as factual as the hyletic: there is no more explanation as to “why” one *Erlebnis* is a guess while another is a doubt than there is as to why one sensation is red and another green. But it seems that Sokolowski (a) thinks of sense data, not as a part of consciousness, but as its “content”—something with which it “is faced” and (b) thinks (like Taminiaux and perhaps also Levinas and Heidegger) that the difference between pure consciousness and its objects is a difference between essence and fact.²⁶⁰ It therefore seems to

²⁶⁰See above, p. 140, n. 186. The confusion represented by the two points taken

him that getting rid of them would be a step in the right direction—the direction of eliminating all facticity in favor of eidetic (a priori) explanation. But, leaving aside the incorrectness of both (a) and (b), this demand that the Concept should subdue all content is appropriate to Hegel, not to Husserl. Husserl never claims that phenomenology will be able to “explain” such things as the fact that some sense data are red and others are green. *Phenomenology is descriptive*. There are sense data; they fulfill a certain role; their existence in this role makes possible the positing of transcendent objects; they are not all the same as one another. These are essential (i.e., a priori) truths about pure consciousness that phenomenology *describes*, but they cannot, in Husserl’s view, be *deduced* from anything more primitive. And as for the “facticity” of consciousness in the strict sense of the word—the fact that my actual *Erlebnisstrom* contains some *Erlebnisse*, with some hyletic and noetic moments, rather than others—that does not even lie within phenomenology’s proper domain: it belongs, rather, to the immanent *Tatsachenwissenschaft* of “metaphysics.”

Given that sense data are not as such problematic (at least, not from Husserl’s point of view), what can we say about the role which they play in perception and in other kinds of positing? Husserl describes their function in constitution as *darstellend*,

together is of no minor importance in Sokolowski’s attempted proof that Husserl is a realist. It is not just that he takes Husserl’s need for sense data (or, after sense data have supposedly been “overcome”) for *some* kind of facticity or other, as showing that the “accusation of idealism” against Husserl is unfounded. He also explains the relationship of consciousness to transcendent objects as one in which consciousness “gives sense” to them, rather than causing their being (*Formation*, 137–8). But Husserl never says that consciousness “gives sense” to *objects* (and *does* say that it gives them “being”): what are “given sense” or “animated” in consciousness are the *hyletic data*. And these, far from being something with which consciousness “is faced,” are *reell* immanent moments of it.

“presenting.”²⁶¹ Restricting ourselves, for the moment, to positing in ordinary sense perception, we can understand this as follows. The object of perception is posited as possessing certain sensible qualities—for example, it is brown. Such qualities, like the object itself, are *transcendent*; they are not in any sense a part of consciousness. The phrase “posited as,” however, points to something else—to the so-called perceptual *noema*. I will have a few things to say about the structure and ontological status of the noema below. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that the positing consciousness contains, in a certain way (in the way Husserl calls *ideell*) an “as brown”: a “noematic quality” of brownness which, so to speak, demands the *transcendent* brownness of the transcendent object. If, however, this demand is to be satisfied—if the positing is to be, in this respect “fulfilled”—then the positing *Erlebnis* must contain a datum of brownness corresponding to this noematic quality: the object must, in this respect, be *given* in the way of its “being posited as.” The relationship between the (*reell*) immanent brownness-datum and the transcendent brownness-quality of the object is what Husserl calls “adumbration” (*Abschattung*).

To be originally given this way, by adumbration, is, however, precisely to be something transcendent, i.e. something that, even when posited with certainty, has only *presumptive* actuality. For the sense datum, as something *reell* immanent, is a property of the current *Erlebnis* only, while the corresponding noematic property represents a transcendent property which, if it were absolutely actual, would have to continue being manifest (perhaps while undergoing changes) throughout immanent time. This is the disparity which makes it both possible and necessary for a transcendent property, and hence for the transcendent object of which it is a property, to

²⁶¹*Id* 1, §41, 75.

be posited inadequately.²⁶² The fact that the *Ding* is transcendent (i.e., inadequately posited) and the fact that the *Ding* is given through adumbrations are one and the same:

A certain *inadequacy* belongs ... to *Ding*-perception, and this is ... a [matter of] essential necessity [*eine Wesensnotwendigkeit*]. A *Ding* can in principle be given only “one-sidedly,” and this means not just incompletely, imperfectly in any arbitrary sense, but rather that [kind of inadequacy] which presentation [*Darstellung*] by adumbration prescribes.²⁶³

Now, of course, not all givenness is originary. Still restricting ourselves to an object of perception (*Ding*), we can rephrase this by saying: not every actual positing of such an object includes, as a *reell* part, some sense data that fulfill the demand expressed by the noema (the “posited-as” of the object).²⁶⁴ But the non-originary modes of

²⁶²Hence Hintikka is basically correct, if somewhat terminologically inaccurate, to say that sense data “fill” the noema (see above, p. 91, n. 101). But he is wrong to think that this implies some kind of overlap between pure consciousness and transcendent objects: the *reell* immanent sense data are in no way to be identified with the transcendent properties of the object; they differ from those properties not just in species but in mode of being. And this point is directly related to Hintikka’s (and Willard’s) error in considering the supposed case of a positing that is “completely fulfilled”: the fact that fulfillment must be by means of *data* is precisely what makes transcendent positing inadequate, or in other words makes the *complete* fulfillment of a transcendent-positing into an absurdity—except, that is, as an “idea in the Kantian sense.”

²⁶³*Id* 1, §44, 80.

²⁶⁴By the qualification “actual” I mean to exclude both neutralized positing and imagination (which is itself supposed to be a neutralized version of the absolute positing of *Erlebnisse*). No actual sense data is required for either of these (although neutralized or imagined sense data is), and for that very reason there is no question of their being rational, and hence no question of their object’s having being.

The true doxic modalities (i.e., excluding neutrality, which is not really a modality on the same level as the others), when originary, *do* require sense data in exactly the same way that certain positing requires it: to perceive a tree doubtfully, I must have some of the same sensations that I would have if perceiving it with certainty. As for the doubtful tree considered as an object in its own right, it is an object of

positing are either mediate (like explicit deductions), or “reproductive modifications,” like memory, or “blind” and “empty.” In the first two cases, there must, if the positing is to be rational, be perceptible “motivating” evidence (as discussed above, p. 67); sense data are therefore still required for rationality. In the third case, the positing is not itself rational at all, and it can lead to rational positing only if it is ultimately “fulfilled” in intuition, i.e. with sense data.²⁶⁵ Hence all of these kinds of non-ordinary positing are connected to the being of their transcendent objects only, if at all, by means of sense data.

Every rational positing of a sensible *Ding* therefore is based on sense data in one way or another. What about other kinds of transcendent objects? How are they “adumbrated,” or given in “appearances”? What, in particular, plays the role of sense data in such cases? Husserl says, recall, that other transcendent objects are “founded” on perceptible ones, “constituted on the basis” of them, and that this is what makes the realm of nature into the “fundamental stratum” of transcendent reality. But what does this relationship of “being constituted on the basis of” really entail? This, of course, is the key question for our purposes, since what we are trying

higher order (constituted on the basis of something sensible). We will discuss other examples of such higher-order objects in a moment.

²⁶⁵It is also the case that “blind” positing normally involves sense data in another way: such positing is normally “symbolic,” which means that it normally posits its object by way of some perceptible *symbol*, which is itself perceived (or remembered, imagined, etc.). But this may or may not be absolutely necessary. When Husserl raises, and leaves open, the question of whether the “intentional” components of (transcendently-directed) *Erlebnisse* might occur without *any* accompanying hyletic data (*Id* 1, §85, 172–3), I take it that he is asking whether there might not be a kind of transcendent-positing so “blind” as to involve not even a symbol. It should go almost without saying that such a hypothetical super-blind positing would *not* succeed in rationally positing any object—i.e., that Husserl is *not* imagining a magical way of becoming aware of sensible objects without sensing them.

to understand is precisely how the other transcendent regions are related to the region of nature, and precisely in terms of the way in which the originary positing of such objects is related to sense perception.

There is no good explanation of this in *Ideen* I, but there is quite a detailed explanation near the beginning of *Ideen* II (in a section, therefore, that mostly dates to around the time of book I's composition). The explanation is based on the fact that

*it is a specific property [es zur Eigenart ... gehört] of the theoretical attitude and its theoretical acts ... that objects [Gegenstände] in a certain sense lie before them in advance [voranliegen], which only then become theoretical.*²⁶⁶

As an example Husserl mentions the “constitution” of categorial objects—for example, subjects (of predication), attributes, collections, and relations. To begin with, a certain object, “a given [*gegebenes*] object [*Objekt*] which is defined [*umgrenztes*] with a constitutive sense (e.g., a nature-object)” is taken up in certain acts—“subjecting, attributing, collecting, [and] relativizing acts,” for example. These acts, in themselves, “immediately [*alsbald*] also carry out a certain constituting production [*Leistung*].” But the “‘categorial’ objects [*Gegenstände*]” thereby constituted “only become, for their part, *theoretical objects* [*Objekten*], if the theoretical subject intendingly turns its attitude towards [*sich meinend einstellt auf*] these new objectivities [*Gegenständlichkeiten*].”²⁶⁷ It is this process—the process of first taking some pre-given object

²⁶⁶*Id* 2, §4, Hua 4:6,10–15.

²⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 5,12–22. This “turning towards” the pre-given object is called by Husserl “reflection,” though he emphasizes that this is *not* the same as the “reflection” which turns from the object to the (pure or psychological) *Erlebnisse* in which it is given (see *Id* 2, §6, Hua 4:14–15). The use of “reflection” here goes back to Husserl’s theory, in the *Philosophie der Arithmetik*, that categorial concepts are “concepts of reflection”

in a certain way, and then turning theoretically to the object so taken, and thereby positing a *new* object, of a new *type*—that Husserl calls “founded” positing, “constitution” of one object “on the basis of” another.

Now consider the example of a categorial object within the region of nature—for example, a collection of *Dinge*. An act in which such an object is posited does not have any *Dinge* as its transcendent objects, but rather an object essentially different from all *Dinge*—an object whose logical form is an *Abwandlung* of the form of individuum. The positing of this object nevertheless presupposes a prior positing of *Dinge*, and moreover of *Dinge* taken in a particular way (collected); this positing of collected *Dinge* is still present in it, but is no longer the object of attention.²⁶⁸ If we ask, therefore, whether this collection-positing involves sense data, then the answer is that it does, but *not* in the sense that it includes some of kind of special, “categorial” data—in this case, say, some kind of irreducible hyletic datum of collectedness. The situation is much simpler and less mysterious than that. It is just that the positing of a collection of *Dinge* requires, if it is to be originary and rational, exactly the same sense data as would be required for the rational and originary positing of those *Dinge*

in the literal sense that they arise from reflection on the mental acts in which simple (non-categorial) objects are given. Characteristically, even though this theory was rejected very early on, Husserl retained the terminology that it generated.

²⁶⁸This is a concrete example of the kind of transition from polythetic to monothetic positing which Husserl discusses in very abstract terms at *Id* 1, §119, 247–9. (It is not obvious, however, that there must always be such a transition in the process of “categorial synthesis.”)

Note that, for simplicity’s sake, I am talking as if the priority of the basis to what is constituted upon it is or must be *temporal* priority (in immanent time); that is how Husserl makes it sound in *Ideen* II, as well. It is likely, however, that this is not strictly correct. “Priority” here is supposed to refer rather to a peculiar essential relation by which the constituted thing “points back” (*weist zurück*) to its constitutive basis. Of course, it is open to doubt whether there really is such a relation, and, if so, whether it really points the way Husserl claims: see below, p. 194, n. 277.

themselves. Nothing could be more straightforward. In particular: nothing about this fact, that there is no need for categorial data to explain categorial perception, casts any doubt on the need for hyletic data to explain perception in general. On the contrary, as Husserl says:

Obviously, we are *led back, by all these forms of constitution of objects* [*Gegenstände*], to objects which *do not point back to any further pre-given objects in this way* [*auf Gegenstände welche nicht mehr auf vorgegebene Gegenstände der Art zurückweisen*].²⁶⁹

The fact that the positing of categorial objects involves no special categorial data of its own thus shows precisely that it is a “founded” kind of positing, or in other words that categorial objects are, phenomenologically speaking, dependent on individual ones. They can be rationally posited—that is, their *being* can be caused—only by way of a prior, founding positing in which an object of a different kind is given. If that were not the case—if the difference between collecting perceived *Dinge* and “perceiving” the collection as such, for example, were a matter of having some special collectedness-datum in addition to the usual sense data by which the *Dinge* themselves are posited—then categorial objects would just be another kind of sensible individua; a collection of *Dinge*, for example, would be a further *Ding*, in the same way that a bunch of leaves and branches attached to a trunk is a different *Ding* from those same leaves and branches lying on the ground. The fact that no new kind of sense data are involved in categorial “perception” is not just accidental; it is, so to speak, a matter of definition.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹*Id* 2, §8, Hua 4:17,9–13.

²⁷⁰I emphasize this point because Sokolowski, as part of his attempt to show that sense data as such are problematic, argues that, if categorial “perception” can be explained without any special data, then surely perception proper, sense perception,

But now recall that, according to Husserl, it is not only categorial objects that are “founded” in this way. Animated bodies (*beseelte Leiber*), for example, are “founded realities, which in themselves presuppose, as a lower level, material realities, so-called material bodies [*materielle Leiber*].”²⁷¹ We can now understand what this means. First, a material *Ding* is posited—positing which, if rational and originary, must involve sense data. Then, this *Ding* is taken in a certain way—as the material *Leib* of an animal. Finally, the theoretical subject turns in “reflection” to the *Ding* so taken, and thereby posits a new kind of object, an animated *Leib*, on the basis of it. Just as, in the case of the collection of *Dinge* which we considered before, there was no new, mysterious collectedness-datum involved, so too, here, in the case of the animal, there are no mysterious empathy-data—just the original sense data on the basis of which

could be explained that way as well (see *Formation*, 70–71). He also, incidentally, cites a passage from the *Logische Untersuchungen* to show that Husserl once *did* believe in a kind of categorial data (*LU* VI, §56, 2:645). It is by no means clear, however, that the passage in question really indicates that. Husserl is certainly saying there that something in the categorially positing act—something which he calls a *psychische Band*—“represents” the categorial object per se, in the way in which something in the founding intuitions “represents” their individual objects. But since the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* does not clearly distinguish between “representation” by hyletic data and “representation” by what will later be called the noema, the section can just as well be taken as meaning—something Husserl would agree with later as well—that the positing of a categorial object involves a categorial *noema*. Indeed, his statement that the *psychische Band* “*is intention [Meinung]*, and is as such *more or less fulfilled*” would tend to support this interpretation, since it makes no sense to talk about sense data being “fulfilled.” It is true that in the second edition of *LU* Husserl gives “the theory of categorial representation [*Repräsentation*]” as an example of something which he would no longer maintain (Foreword to vol. 2 pt. 2, p. v). But the context there has to do, not with sense data, but with the (according to Husserl, “grotesque”) accusation that the second volume of *LU* is psychologistic. It seems, therefore, that it is the psychologistic nature, or psychologistic sound, of the theory (as reflected by the term *psychische Band*) that is bothering him, rather than anything having to do with sense data.

²⁷¹*Id* 2, §14, Hua 4:32,32–4.

the material *Leib* is posited. And just as the collection is, *for precisely that reason*, an object which differs in *kind* from all *Dinge* in general, so too this new object, the animated *Leib*, is different from all *Dinge*: unlike its material *Leib*, for example, an animal as such is unextended and impartible.

There is one important difference, however, between the two cases. The animal is essentially independent from the material *Leib* on the basis of which it was constituted. It is an individuum: its logical form is syntactically primitive, and its essence is concrete. The difference between the animal and its material body is a regional difference, whereas the difference between a collection of *Dinge* and the *Dinge* themselves is not. The psychophysical correlation (in the sense in which it is a correlation between souls or animals and their *material* bodies) therefore cannot be explained from within the dogmatic attitude. It is physically and even logically evident that there can be no collections of *Dinge* without *dingliche* individua, but there is no logical or physical or psychological reason that there cannot be an animal with no sensible body. It is only the phenomenologist who can understand why that is impossible. For an animal to have being—that is, to be rationally posited—it must be at least potentially given originarily; originarily positing requires adumbration; adumbration is (by definition) adumbration in sense data; any actual animal, therefore, must be at least potentially sensible—i.e., must have a sensible *Leib*, must be incarnate. This is the deep explanation of what we said before about a non-sensible transcendent individuum: that, while, considered from the point of view of its own essence, it is absolutely independent, an *ens completum*, it is nevertheless *metaphysically* dependent—dependent in its mode of being—upon sensible nature.²⁷²

²⁷²Even from the phenomenological point of view, the essential independence of psychic/psychophysical objects does make a difference: it is, namely, what allows

The case of “higher order,” *geistlich* objects is somewhat more complicated. As opposed to the *bloße Sachen* which are the objects of natural science (i.e., which belong to the realm of physical and psychophysical “nature”) these higher order objects have axiological and/or practical predicates. But Husserl claims that, in addition to sense data—the type of hyletic data which form the basis of theoretical positing—there are also *different* kinds of hyletic data belonging to the practical and axiological attitudes: “sensible [*sinnliche*] feelings [*Gefühle*] and drives,” which, together, “compelled the old transfer of the originally narrow talk of sensibility [*Sinnlichkeit*] to the spheres of emotion and the will.”²⁷³ In contrast to the *Erlebnisse* which posit *Dinge*

for the possibility of ghosts and spirits, to which we alluded earlier. A collection of phantom or dreamed or hallucinatory *Dinge* is a phantom or dreamed or hallucinatory collection, but a phantom or dreamed or hallucinatory sensible body might, phenomenologically speaking, form the basis for the constitution of an *actual* soul or animal. This does not, however, represent a metaphysical independence of psychic from material reality as a whole. A dream or hallucination or phantom, because it is sensible, is a physical fact, in the sense that it requires a physical explanation. If no such explanation is ultimately forthcoming, then the world of nature does not exist (has been reduced to chaos)—which is in itself a kind of physical fact, as well. See below, p. 218.

Note, incidentally, that the difference between categorial and other kinds of higher-level objects is exactly what Carnap tries to eliminate in the *Aufbau*—or, to use its full title, *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. That is for him the meaning of Russell’s slogan, that “wherever possible, logical constructions are to be substituted for inferred entities.” The result is the elimination of regional differences in the proper, Husserlian sense: “If a constitution-system of the concepts or the objects . . . is possible in the indicated way, then it follows from that that the objects do not separate [*zerfallen nicht*] into different, unconnected [*unzusammenhängende*] realms, but rather that *there is only one realm of objects and therefore only one science*” (*Aufbau*, §4, 4). Of course Carnap (under the influence of Nietzsche and the early Wittgenstein) also disagrees with Husserl about the nature of *logic*, hence about the nature of “categorial synthesis”: for him, it becomes a process of free definition of terms. That the world can be *logically* constructed therefore means, for Carnap, that all a priori metaphysical “knowledge” is really practical, rather than theoretical, in nature.

²⁷³*Id* 1, §85, 173.

as collected or as animated, therefore, those that posit them as (in a broad sense) valuable, and/or as objects of the will, *do*, according to Husserl, involve a special kind of non-sensible data. In such axiological or practical positings, something generically different from sense data fulfills the functional role of “presenting” (*Darstellung*)—which is to say that axiological or practical positings must contain non-sensible data as a *reell* immanent moment if they are to be ordinary and rational. That is, as a matter of fact, the phenomenological explanation for the unity of “nature” broadly speaking: the realm of *bloße Sachen* is defined, and distinguished from other parts of transcendent being, by the fact that the objects belonging to it can be rationally posited without any such feeling- or will-data, on the basis of sense data alone.

Now it is true that, in the theoretical positing of a *geistliche* object such as a house or a religion, there are *bloße Sachen*, and ultimately sensible objects, that function as a lower level of constitution. For the higher order objects to be theoretically posited, in other words, certain *bloße Sachen* must first be posited on the basis of sense data; then they must be taken (in the axiological or practical attitudes) as valuable or as objects of the will; then, finally, by way of “reflection,” the objects so taken must become a new kind of object for theoretical positing. From the point of view of the theoretical attitude, therefore, the sense data, and the sensible things that are posited directly on the basis of them, are still fundamental. But why look at it from the point of view of the theoretical attitude? Isn’t the situation symmetrical, so that from the point of view of, for example, the axiological attitude, it is feeling-data and value-objects that are the “fundamental stratum”? If objects of the will, say, are a different *kind* of object (belong to a different region) from objects of theory, then how can the primitive way of givenness for them be theoretical? How, indeed, can there ever be theoretical positing of *them*, those very objects, at all? If being-character is correlated

with positing-character, then wouldn't that, as Levinas claims, leave Husserl with the "difficulty" of "comprehending how to reconcile these two significations of the existence of one and the same object [*d'un même object*]?"²⁷⁴

This question is based on a mistake regarding the nature of the so-called axiological and practical attitudes, and their relationship to the theoretical one. For, according to Husserl, there *are* no "objects of the will" (or value-objects) in the way in which the question imagines them. These non-theoretical attitudes do not, per se, posit objects, i.e. beings, at all. It is rather the case that any act which consists per se of the positing of an object is by definition a doxic act, an act of the theoretical attitude:

Theoretical acts are the properly [*eigentlich*] or explicitly *objectivating* [*objektivierenden*] [acts]; proper [*eigentlich*] *Objekt*-having, *Gegenstand*-having, demands the properly [*eigentümlich*] grasping, *positing attitude* of the theoretical subject.²⁷⁵

What this means is that practical and axiological positing as such, even when rational, does not confer *being* on its object—it being indeed obvious enough that one can rationally will or value an object that does not exist. Whenever I am “‘*objectifying* [*objektivierend*],’ grasping and positing an objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*] of a particular sense as being [*seiend*] (in the validity-mode of being-intending [*im Geltungsmodus der Seinsmeinung*]),” I am in the theoretical, not the axiological or practical, attitude.²⁷⁶ And it follows as a corollary that there can be no *purely* axiological or practical objects. Not that an axiological or practical predicate—the habitability of a house, say, or the orthodoxy of a religious practice—can never be objectified as such. But in that case (1) the objectification still takes place in the theoretical attitude

²⁷⁴ *Théorie de l'intuition*, 99.

²⁷⁵ *Id* 2, §7, Hua 4:16,7–10.

²⁷⁶ *Id* 2, §4, Hua 4:4,10–13.

and (2) the value thus objectified is an *abstract* this-here, not an individuum. The concrete object that is valued or willed must always itself be something theoretically posited, and thus at bottom sensible. In *this* sense, all objects in general—practical and value-objects included—are theoretical objects.²⁷⁷

The transcendent world as a whole, in all its levels and ramifications, is just the subject matter of the *science* of the world. It is, in other words, the realm of possible transcendent *theoretical* positing. And every such positing ultimately derives its rationality, its quality of bestowing actual being, from adumbration by *theoretical* hyletic data—which is to say, by definition, “sense data.” The individua that are posited directly on the basis of those data are, by definition, the sensible individua, or *Dinge*; the region to which they belong is, by definition, the sensible region, or the region of nature in the strict sense; and the unified actual world, if any, to which they belong, is the material world. The unity *ad unum* of all transcendent being follows logically from the very nature of transcendent (inadequate) positing—which is to say, positing by adumbration in sense data.

3.6.4 *Transcendent being as a metaphysical region*

Let us now return to our original question: whether, namely, the unity of transcendent reality is the unity of genus (more precisely, the unity of a *region*—a complex of highest genera based on a single highest genus of individua), or whether it is merely an analogous unity—which, as we now know, would mean an “analogy” in the Thomistic

²⁷⁷One may, however, doubt the validity of this entire analysis—in particular if one takes it, as Heidegger does in *Sein und Zeit*, that what is present to us *zunächst und zumeist* really is fundamental (i.e., roughly speaking, that what is prior in time is prior in constitution). The *bloße Sachen* (things whose mode of being is *Vorhandenheit*) then appear as *Abwandlungen* of the so-called *Zug*.

sense, a unity *ad unum*.

It is worth noting, first of all, that there is an inherent ambiguity in the traditional concept of a sphere or region of being. This concept, as we have explained above, involves the division of the category (logical genus) of substance into highest physical genera—that is, into the highest genera whose members all share a common prime matter. There is an ambiguity in this, however, because the concept of prime matter is itself ambiguous. Prime matter has a double role to play in any Aristotelian/Neoplatonic system: it serves, on the one hand, as the absolutely changeless substrate of all change, and, on the other, as the absolutely indeterminate subject of all determinations. I have elsewhere used the terms “physical” and “metaphysical” to designate these two roles, respectively.²⁷⁸ Thomas, in making the same distinction, refers rather to physics and *logic*—while recognizing, however, that the “logical” approach to matter is the one appropriate for the metaphysician:

The Philosopher does not [here in *Metaph. Z*] prove the diversity of matter from all forms by the way of motion, because that is a proof by the way of natural philosophy, but [he proves it] by the way of predication, which is proper to logic—which, he says in the fourth [book] of this [work, i.e. *Metaph. Γ*], has an affinity to this science [of metaphysics]. He says, therefore, that there must be something of which all predicates are predicated.²⁷⁹

On the *physical* understanding of prime matter, the different highest genera of substances should be identified with the largest classes of substances which can be transformed by physical change (generation and corruption) into one another. On the *metaphysical* understanding, on the other hand, the key distinction is between different ways in which actual essential determinations can be predicated of a purely

²⁷⁸“Simplicius and Avicenna.”

²⁷⁹*In Metaph.* 7.2 (n. 1287).

potential indeterminate subject—in other words, between different modes of being, different ways in which form can subsist.

Which of these two criteria does St. Thomas use to distinguish his highest “physical” genera of substance? As I presented his system above, one has to say that it is the latter, i.e. “metaphysical,” way.²⁸⁰ Thus the celestial bodies, for example, though they cannot be transformed into one another, are nevertheless members of a single physical genus, because their matter is in the same kind of potency to form: “for the matter of celestial bodies is in potency to perfect act, that is, to form which completes the total potentiality of the matter, so that there does not remain any potency for other forms.”²⁸¹ In at least one place, however, he seems to rely on the other criterion, in a brief proof that celestial and sublunar bodies have different prime matters: “whatever [things] agree in matter are transmutable into each other . . . but celestial and inferior bodies are not so related [*non sic se habent*] to each other. Therefore . . .”²⁸² This, of course, would imply that there is no single physical genus of celestial substance, let alone of angelic substance.

Cajetan²⁸³ tries to resolve the problem by claiming that Thomas’s talk of all celestial bodies’ belonging to a single physical genus is loose: in reality, every celestial body (and a fortiori every angel) is “physically” *sui generis*. Thomas’s main response at *ST* 1.66.2 seems, however, more in accord with the argument we have cited from *De subst. sep.* (and see especially his response to objection 4). It is probably better to take the *sed contra* as imprecisely put. What is really the case according to Thomas is that,

²⁸⁰For some hints as to why he nevertheless uses the term “physical,” see above, p. 22, n. 16.

²⁸¹*De subst. sep.* 8, ll. 23–7. See also *De pot.* 5.3 c.

²⁸²*ST* 1.66.2 s.c.

²⁸³Ad loc. cit., VII.

if *A* and *B* are substances which have the same (metaphysical) prime matter, and *A* is *corruptible*, then *B* must also be corruptible and must, furthermore, be transmutable into *A*: i.e., that as far as *corruptible* substances go, metaphysical and physical prime matter are the same. If we were to abandon the two-way distinction between logical and physical genus, and instead introduce a terminologically more appropriate three-way distinction between logical, metaphysical, and physical genus, then we could say: the highest physical genus of sublunar bodies is also a highest metaphysical genus, whereas every incorruptible substance—every member of the highest *metaphysical* genera of celestial bodies and of angels—differs in highest *physical* genus from all the others.

Leibniz, in fact, proposes just such a threefold classification of logical, physical, and metaphysical genus, and, as it seems, approximately along the lines I have suggested.²⁸⁴ He explains his classification as follows. First, there is a distinction between logical and “physical (or rather real)” genus—where the use of “physical” reflects, as we have seen, the terminological tradition he has inherited, whereas the substitution of “real” reflects his consciousness that that terminological tradition is problematic. The species falling under a single real genus, he explains, are characterized by *differentiae* which “consist in mere accidental modifications of a single subject or of a single metaphysical or physical matter.” He then goes on to distinguish, within “real” genus, between “metaphysical” genus and genus which is “physical,” properly speaking. About this latter distinction he says only that it is a distinction between “the matter of bodies” and “matter which is merely metaphysical or general.” But it seems clear that, as much on Leibniz’s own metaphysical doctrine as on Thomas’s,

²⁸⁴See *NE*, Introduction, 63–4.

there is only one kind of (for Leibniz, phenomenal) “substance” which can ever be transformed into another, namely a sensible body. “The matter of bodies,” therefore, in its most universal sense, is precisely what I have called “physical” prime matter, and the genus of bodies is the only highest “physical” genus of substances worth talking about: the intelligible substances (monads), like Thomistic celestial bodies or angels, are generically united only in a metaphysical sense.

I know of no evidence that Husserl was aware of this passage in Leibniz; it is certainly possible, though Husserl himself, so far as I can tell, never explicitly uses such a three-way classification of categories or genera. It is tempting, in any case, from our point of view, to apply Leibniz’s scheme directly to Husserl’s system, and say that, while transcendent individua fall into different *physical* genera, they are all members of a single metaphysical one. And it seems to be true that a transcendent individuum can be transformed, in the relevant sense, into all and only individua of its own region. For the analogue of “corruption” here, recall, is the process in which what is at first posited as one kind of object is then, later in immanent time, posited as another—i.e., in which what “seemed” to be one thing “turns out” to be something else. And a material body, for example, cannot in this way “turn out” to be a soul, or even an animal, insofar as an “animal” is not itself a material *Ding*, but rather something impartible and inextended that “has” such a *Ding* as its *materielle Leib*; whereas, on the other hand, it appears to be true that, under conditions of severe enough perceptual error, what seems to be one *Ding* might always “turn out” to be any other one whatsoever. It appears to be true, in other words, that the “highest material genera” of individua—the genera which have as members all and only the individua of a single region—are “highest physical genera” in the sense we have just outlined. The problem comes with the other side of the classification: it

is *not* the case, namely, that all transcendent individua belong to a single genus in the “metaphysical” sense. For although they all have “the same” mode of being, this “same” expresses a unity *ad unum*, not the unity of genus. Every real individuum (and in fact, every real object in general) exists (is rationally posited) in a way *analogous* to the way in which a *Ding* exists, which is to say: the mode of positing of every real individuum is essentially (phenomenologically) *derivative* from the mode of positing of the *Ding*. And this, far from showing that all real individua belong to a single metaphysical genus, serves rather to rule out such a unity. The *Dinge* from this point of view turn out to be intermediate or instrumental efficient causes of being, and an efficient cause of being cannot belong to a single metaphysical genus with its effect; a metaphysical genus cannot, in *that* sense of “prior and posterior,” contain prior and posterior species.

The different highest physical genera of transcendent individua are not, therefore, all species of a single metaphysical genus. But it should be recalled that there are other ways that two objects can belong to the same region besides having a single highest genus in common. Categorical objects, and other objects whose logical forms are *Abwandlungen* of the logical absolute, never belong to the same genus as any individuum, but, being essentially dependent on individua of some kind—ultimately, of some highest material genus—they belong to the *region* to which individua of that kind belong. That, recall, is what is meant by Husserl’s definition of “region”: “the total highest generic unity belonging to a concretum.”²⁸⁵ And it is in *this* way that Husserl’s different transcendent regions combine into a single region of transcendent reality. From within the dogmatic attitude—the attitude proper to the sciences of the

²⁸⁵*Id* 1, §16, 30; see above, p. 98.

world, or in other words to the natural (physical) sciences in the broadest sense—the individua of different regions look absolutely independent; the relationship between them cannot be explained a priori (on the basis of essence): it looks like a matter of contingent fact. From the phenomenological (that is, metaphysical) point of view, however, the individua at higher levels are constituted on the basis of *Dinge*, or at least of sensible apparitions of *Dinge*, exactly in the way that categorial objects are constituted on the basis of individua. Hence for the phenomenologist the interconnections of the various regions are a priori (essentially) necessary, and the individua of the various regions, which according to their own essence are concrete, are, from the phenomenological point of view, mere abstractions—including even the *Dinge* themselves, if they are positively regarded as *not* possessing psychophysical, axiological, or practical properties. To put it in Thomistic/Leibnizian terminology: it is not that, metaphysically speaking, all transcendent individua belong to a single genus of substances, and therefore have a single prime matter in common; it is rather that, from a metaphysical point of view, the transcendent individua of each region are mere abstractions (so that their “matter” is not prime matter at all), whereas the true transcendent individua, the truly concrete transcendent objects are multi-level realities—*Dinge* taken together with whatever psychological and higher-order objects are constituted on the basis of them.

The “restriction” of the theoretical interest to a single region of reality is, in that sense, a mere abstraction: the presence of the excluded regions is still necessarily implied, not according to the essence of the objects themselves, but according to the essence of the theoretical acts in which those objects are posited. And it is in that sense that we can say that there is a single, metaphysical regional unity of all transcendent reality, and that the transcendent world—if there is any concrete

transcendent world at all, rather than a mere transcendent chaos—is, metaphysically speaking, a single factual concrete unity.

The pure *Erlebnisse*, however, as the causes of being of transcendent things, are not, and could not be, members of that unity. A transcendency, an object whose mode of being is to be posited inadequately, must be adumbrated in sense data, but the sense data themselves, and the concrete individua of which they are moments, cannot, obviously, themselves be adumbrated in sense data. “An *Erlebnis* is not adumbrated [*schattet sich nicht ab*].”²⁸⁶ For the sense data are *by definition* the single, fundamental genus of hyle on the basis of which every transcendency—everything adumbrated—is constituted. If, in other words, we were to suppose that some sense datum *A* is adumbrated by the pre-sense data *a*, *b*, and *c*, then in fact it is *a*, *b*, and *c* that are the sense data, while *A* is a transcendent object. The existence of transcendencies, of objects with merely presumptive being, implies the existence of objects whose mode of being is not presumptive, but absolute—i.e., of objects which are not posited by adumbration, but in an “absolute positing.”

In a certain way and with quite a bit of caution in one’s use of words, one can . . . say: “All real unities are ‘unities of sense.’” Unities of sense presuppose . . . *sense-giving consciousness*, which for its part exists [*ist*] absolutely, and not once again through sense-giving.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶*Id* 1, §42, 77.

²⁸⁷*Id* 1, §55, 106. As the phrase “sense-giving consciousness” indicates, *Sinn* here does not mean “sense” as in “sense perception.” There is nevertheless a close connection between what is posited in sense-giving and what is posited on the basis of sense perception: the hyletic data (the data of sense perception) are that to which sense is given.

Incidentally, although Husserl says (in the part of the above quote that I have elided) that this “presupposing” does not have to be deduced “from some metaphysical postulates or other,” but “can be demonstrated in an intuitive, completely indubitable method [*Verfahren*],” we have now seen that it is nevertheless *possi-*

It is to the nature of this absolute positing, and the consequent nature of absolute being as the *Erlebnisse* possess it, that we must now turn.

3.7 The ontological status of pure consciousness and the transcendental ego as generic cause of being

In attempting to understand this absolute positing, and the consequent absoluteness of being, it is tempting to identify it with the way in which one *Erlebnis* can be rationally posited in another: i.e., with so-called “pure reflection.” But this would be a mistake. The only way in which an *Erlebnis* can cause the being of something external to itself (something transcendent) is *adumbration*. That is why “transcendent” and “inadequate” (or “presumptive”) are interchangeable, and it is why pure reflection, insofar as it posits something absolute, must posit something immanent. To posit something immanent, however, is to posit something essentially included in the positing act.²⁸⁸ Immanent positing therefore *cannot* be efficient causation of being, since the positing *Erlebnis* would in that case be its own efficient cause—an argument we recognize from Thomas. Rational positing in pure reflection indeed implies the existence of the object, but only because the object itself is already *included in* (“immanent to”) the positing. What pure reflection *can* cause in its object is, at most, only a certain operation or motion (a change from potentially to actually perceived); it cannot cause the object to be (cannot cause a change from potential to

ble to deduce the required conclusion from metaphysical postulates of Husserl’s system. This comes especially in handy if one does not find oneself in possession of the indubitable intuitions in question.

²⁸⁸See *Id* 1, §144, 298 and §38, 68–9, and cf. *Enn.* 6.2.8.4–5, 6.2.7.2, 6.7.3.26, 6.7.19.17–20.

actual simpliciter).²⁸⁹ Pure reflection, in other words,

has the peculiar property that that which is perceptually [*wahrnehmungsmäßig*] grasped in it in principle characterizes itself as something which does not only exist [*ist*] and continue in the perceiving gaze, but which *already was, before* this gaze directed itself at it.²⁹⁰

To say that the cause of *Erlebnisse* is not a positing in pure reflection is not, however, to say that it is not any positing at all. Husserl speaks several times in *Ideen I* of the existence of a “deeper level” of constitution, the level of “time-consciousness,” in which the *Erlebnisse* themselves are posited. And, though he refrains from taking up the subject in detail, he does say enough to confirm some conclusions which we have reached on our own metaphysical grounds. (1) The cause of being at this level cannot be an *Erlebnis* or *Erlebnisse*: the continuous positing of the *Erlebnisstrom* in time-consciousness

is self-evidently *not a continuous immanent perception* in the *pregnant* sense, that is, in the [sense] of an *actually [aktuell] positing* perception, which is itself an *Erlebnis* in our sense: [something] lying within immanent time, possessing duration of presence [*gegenwärtig Dauerndes*], constituted in time-consciousness. In other words, it is self-evidently not a continuous inner reflection.²⁹¹

And (2) it does *not* proceed by adumbration, or in other words by a process of sense-giving in which data are taken in a certain way: the distinction between hyle and noesis is relevant only so long as we stay outside “the dark deeps of the ultimate consciousness which constitutes all *Erlebnis*-temporality.”²⁹² So we are looking for

²⁸⁹Cf. Thomas, *ST* 1.70.3 c., 1.10.5 c. and ad 3; *De malo* 16.4 ad 19; Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.4.11.21–5.

²⁹⁰*Id* 1, §45, 83. Cf. *Enn.* 6.2.8.9–10.

²⁹¹*Id* 1, §113, 229.

²⁹²*Ibid.*, §85, 171.

a cause of being which does not operate by sense-giving, and which is ontologically distinct from—and prior to, more strictly “absolute” than—the *Erlebnisse*.

We can expect to find this cause, however, in the same place as something else, something which it is essentially the overall purpose of this dissertation to find. For we should recall the following points. First, the *Erlebnisse*, as we have now shown in great detail, play a role in Husserl’s system similar to the role of angels and celestial bodies in Thomistic ontology. They differ in mode of being from all corruptible (i.e., inadequately given, presumptively existing) things. They are efficient causes of being of those things. The manner of their causation is sense-giving, which is to say: causation according to *species*; and it is for just that reason that the effects of that causation are corruptible.²⁹³ Second, within Thomistic ontology there is also a *generic* cause of being of any corruptible thing, which causes that thing (a) with regard to its highest physical genus, i.e. mode of being and (b) as a generic individual, or “this.” This generic cause of being, God, is infinitely powerful; things which are caused

²⁹³If the *Erlebnisse* are the specific causes of being of sensible individua, then, one might ask, what are their causes of becoming (causes as “subspecific individuals”)? Based on Thomas’s view, we would expect these causes to be other sensible things—either members of the same species (in univocal generation), or certain chance circumstances (where generation is equivocal). There *is* an equivalent to that in Husserl’s system, in that certain preconditions are necessary if an *Erlebnis* is to act rationally—in the simplest case, a thing of a certain kind must already have been perceived, if new data is to become the basis for the rational positing of so-and-so (see above, p. 65). Potential sensible things become actual (rationally posited), in general, only as the result of a long chain of such predisposing (“motivating”) positions. It may be, however, that Husserlian sensibles have, in this regard, less “active power” than do Thomistic ones, insofar as the predisposing—the causation of “becoming”—is done through the mediation of other positing *Erlebnisse*. Issues revolving around the active power of sublunar things are of notorious difficulty in Thomas’s own system, however (in particular, it is notoriously difficult to put one’s finger on the exact nature of his disagreement with Avicenna), so perhaps one should be cautious in making any such claims.

directly by it, or insofar as they are caused directly by it, are therefore incorruptible. Prime matter does not pass away in any physical change, nor, therefore, does sublunar corporeity (or, equivalently, the whole sublunar world) as such. Third, this infinitely powerful cause is the *only* efficient cause of being which angels and celestial bodies possess, and that is why, though they can be created and annihilated, they cannot be generated or corrupted. We should therefore expect to find the absolute positing, or in other words efficient cause of being, of the *Erlebnisse* in the same place as the *generic* cause of being of transcendent objects. But that, of course, is also what we need to find if we are to connect Husserl, by way of Thomas, back to Cavell.

Since the generic cause of being is the cause of an object with respect to its prime matter, we would do best to begin by asking what corresponds to prime matter in a Husserlian transcendent object. And to do that we will need to look more closely into the structure of the *Erlebnisse* in which such objects are posited. We should, first of all, look a bit more closely at a distinction which I have already mentioned above, namely that between “noesis” and “noema.”²⁹⁴ The noesis, very roughly, is

²⁹⁴Here and in what follows I use “noesis” in the broad sense, in which it includes both the hyletic data and the sense-giving interpretation; the term “noesis” is also used, in *Ideen* I, to refer to that interpretation alone, as distinct from the data.

A brief note on the origin of “noesis” and “noema”: these terms occur in Aristotle, but Husserl’s use of them may, if it is not entirely his own coinage, owe more to Plotinus than to Aristotle directly. See *Enn.* 5.8.11 and 6.7.39, and cf. Husserl’s notes on Plotinus, Hua 7:328,24–5 and 329,30–32 (where, however, only the term *νοητόν*, not *νόημα*, is mentioned). The editor, Rudolf Boehm, dates these notes to “around 1913.”

Metaphysically speaking, we can probably best think of the relation between noesis and noema as similar to that between an angelic intellect and the celestial sphere which it “animates.” The “soul,” in this kind of “animation,” is not the *form* of its body, and thus not a cause of its being. It merely causes its body to move or operate—i.e., is connected to its as its “motor.” Cf. *ST* 1.70.3 (which derives ultimately from Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 207, given the elimination of the old distinction between separate intellects and celestial souls), and

a cognitive act: a “thinking” in the broadest sense, in which that word includes perceiving, judging, remembering, guessing, doubting, desiring, taking pleasure in, etc. The “noema,” on the other hand, is a kind of *object* of cognition. It is not, however, the actual (transcendent) thing itself that is perceived or remembered and so forth, but merely, so to speak, the “what” and “how” of that thing’s givenness. If the noesis, for example, is the perception of a tree, then its actual object (the tree) is something transcendent, and hence corruptible. It may, in the course of further experience, turn out not to be (not to have been) a tree. But even if and when that happens, it will still be the case that this noesis, this perception, was the perception *of* something (the “what”): of something *as* (the “how”) such and such tree (to take our earlier example: “as brown”), and of such a tree as given in some particular way (seen from a certain angle, more or less clearly, as brown on the side facing me, as of such and such a shape, etc.). These facts (about the “what” and “how” of the tree’s givenness) must be facts about something incorruptible. And that incorruptible thing is the “noema.”

But why, one might well ask, can’t such facts simply be seen as facts about the noesis itself? If the noemata are simply “whats” and “hows” of givenness to noeses, then the correspondence between the former and the latter must be one-to-one: there

cf. *Id* 1, §90, 185–6.

In holding that every noesis has a noema, Husserl thus holds that every created intelligible substance is *necessarily* associated with some incorruptible “body,” in disagreement with Thomas but in agreement with Alfarabi and Leibniz, among others. See, again, *ST* 1.50.3, and cf. Alfarabi, *Mabādi’ arā’ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* 3, 100, 14–15, and Leibniz, *NE* 2.1.1, 109; 2.22.73, 212; 2.23.20, 221. This doctrine, too, has a Neoplatonic origin (the Neoplatonists being among the “ancients” to whom Leibniz refers in the introduction to *NE*, p. 58). See E.R. Dodds, “The Astral Body in Neoplatonism” (Appendix II to his edition of the *Elements of Theology*), and see, in addition to the sources cited there, *Enn.* 4.8.3.22–30.

must be, corresponding to each noesis, one and only one noema.²⁹⁵ What is there to distinguish, then, between facts about the one and facts about the other?

The answer is that, while there is indeed such a one-to-one correspondence between noeses and noemata taken as wholes, there is no such correspondence between their components. If noema A belongs to noesis a , and noema B to noesis b , and if some component A_1 of A is represented in a by a_1 , and some component B_1 of B represented in b by b_1 , then A_1 and B_1 may be formally (specifically) identical, while a_1 and b_1 are not. A theory of the forms of noeses and a theory of the forms of noemata (i.e., complete classifications of the possible components of each into genera and species)

would . . . *in no way* relate to each other as, so to speak, *mirror images*, or pass over into one another as if by a mere change of sign, so that we could, for example, substitute, [as the noesis] to each noema N , “consciousness of N .”²⁹⁶

The reason for this, as we have already discussed, is the noema’s function as standing for or claiming transcendence: the noematic qualities stand for transcendent qualities which are in principle capable of remaining the same while positing consciousness changes. Take, for example, any sensible quality of the tree—say, the brownness of its trunk. Assuming that the tree is actually posited as possessing that quality—assuming, roughly speaking, that I am “aware” that its trunk is brown at the (immanent) time of the positing—there will be something corresponding to that brown

²⁹⁵This is a point on which I disagree with most, if not all, previous interpreters of Husserl: it is generally agreed that *many* noeses have the same noema as immanent object. Unfortunately, as I mentioned in the introduction, I have not been able to include a complete discussion of the noema in this dissertation. But it is worth pointing out that Husserl warns against exactly that error (of taking the noesis-noema relationship to be many-one) at *Id* 1, §98, 207–8. See also §15, 29, where Husserl makes it clear that an *Erlebnis* considered without its noema (for example, an appearance without an “appearing [thing] as such”) is an abstract this-here.

²⁹⁶*Id* 1, §98, 206.

quality in the noema. Even if the tree itself turns out to be hallucinatory, it will still have been a hallucination of *a tree with a brown trunk*. Now if I see the same tree again, somewhat later, perhaps from a slightly different angle, perhaps under slightly different light, then (assuming that the color of the tree is unchanged, and that the change in lighting does not “fool” me into deciding that the tree is, say, blue), the *same* brown color of the trunk will be posited in both perceptions. The two noemata, therefore, will have components which belong to the same lowest species. And yet the actual sense data, if any, by which the brown color is perceived—the “brownness” insofar as it is found in the noesis—may be specifically different in the two cases. The situation in this case is exemplary of a general rule: there is a manifold of possible noetic sense data by which any single noematic sensible quality can be adumbrated.

Now, if noeses and noemata as a whole are nevertheless to stand in one to one correspondence with each other, it must be the case, on the one hand, that the noesis contains other components besides these sense data, and, on the other hand, that the noema contains components which do not correspond to what we would normally think of as objective qualities of the object. And that is so. It is precisely because a given complex of sense data could in principle represent any number of different objects that the noesis must contain not only sense data but also a sense-giving interpretation of those data (the component which Husserl calls “noetic” in a narrower sense of the term). And the noema, on the other hand, contains every part of the “how” of the thing’s givenness: even if the tree is hallucinated, still it is hallucinated not just as brown, but as lying at a certain distance, being seen from a certain angle, etc. In fact, the noesis and the noema both contain many other components—many other *kinds* of component—in addition to these relatively straightforward ones. These components correspond, among other things, to the doxic

and reproductive modifications we discussed above: a tree can be perceived unclearly or clearly, distinctly or indistinctly, directly or symbolically, doubtfully or certainly, and it can furthermore be remembered or expected or imagined or desired, and so forth, instead of perceived. The fourth chapter of part III of the *Ideen* is given over in large part to a careful (but still very incomplete) classification of the noetic and/or noematic differences to which such differences in the mode of givenness correspond.

Beyond, moreover, any characteristics which have to do with the givenness of its object per se, an *Erlebnis*, considered in its completeness, contains components which express its connection to a particular context of other *Erlebnisse* (to its *Erlebnisumgebung*), and ultimately to all other actual *Erlebnisse* (to the entire *Erlebnisstrom*). Husserl refers to these components, which have no direct bearing on *what* object is given (posited) or on *how* it is given, as “extra-essential.”²⁹⁷ But it should be clear that, whatever this means, it is *not* that such components are “accidental” in the sense that they might, at some later immanent time, “turn out” to be otherwise. And such components, taken together with the “proper” essence of the *Erlebnis*, are always sufficient to individualize it completely (to make it “fully determined”). *Erlebnisse*, in other words, like Thomistic or Leibnizian incorruptible substances, can be distinguished from each other by their substantial forms: they all differ from one another not just in number but in species.

That two perceptions essentially identical in this properness [*Eigenheit*] are also identical in view of the contextual determination [*Umgebungsbestimmtheit*], is in principle impossible; they would be individually [i.e., numerically] one perception.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷*Id* 1, §83, 167.

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*

In this respect the *Erlebnisse* (noeses and noemata) differ from transcendent (corruptible) substances: transcendent things really are individualized by “accidents,” and for reasons directly connected to their transcendent character. For recall that the whole concept of “accident” caused problems for us when we tried to fit it into Husserl’s ontology: it was clear that there are accidents, in the sense of beings that are not concrete (not individua), but it was not so clear that there are any accidents in the sense of characteristics which are truly extra-essential.²⁹⁹ In the meantime, however, we have come to understand exactly what kind of characteristic *every* actual transcendent thing must have that is completely extra-essential: a relationship, namely, to positing consciousness. And transcendent objects are indeed individuated, ultimately, by that relationship—a relationship which, because it is accidental, can change in the course of immanent time. As Husserl explains in *Ideen II*:

Objective *Dinglichkeit* is physically determined [*bestimmt sich physikalisch*], but as a “this” [*als Dies*] it is determined only in relation to consciousness and the conscious subject. . . .

The only primarily [*ursprünglich*] individual [thing] is consciousness, concrete with its ego. Every other individual [thing] is [something] appearing, and has the principle of its individuation in actual and possible appearance, which for its part refers back to an individual consciousness.³⁰⁰

That is why the very individuality of a transcendent object is, so to speak, corruptible. Two different things, for example, can sometimes “turn out” to be (to “have been”) the same, or vice versa.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹See above, p. 129.

³⁰⁰*Id* 2, §64, Hua 4:301,10–19. The phrase “concrete with its ego” was added by Husserl to Landgrebe’s 1924/25 typescript.

³⁰¹A more conventional name for the “corruptibility” of individuation itself—for the fact that what was one can “turn out” to be many—is *partibility*. This is therefore

Erlebnisse, on the other hand, are not individuated by this kind of “accident.” But that is not to say that they have no such accidental characteristics. For although *Erlebnisse* always retain their same being throughout (immanent) time—i.e., although they never “turn out” to *be* other than they were—they do “act” differently as immanent time goes on.³⁰² We have already seen one important instance of this. One *Erlebnis* can be the object of another one (the object of “reflection”). Such a reflection does not cause its object to be, but it does, of course, cause it to be *otherwise*—i.e., to be now reflected upon, rather than not.

One must first of all . . . be clear, that *every kind of “reflection”* has the character of a *modification of consciousness*, and one such that *every consciousness*, in principle, can experience it.³⁰³

This accident of reflectedness is of fundamental importance for the Husserlian science of phenomenology—i.e., for the possibility of a synthetic knowledge of *Erlebnisse*. Each *Erlebnis* has its essential form (including the “extra-essential” fully determining component) once and for all, but there is still an accidental form which it can receive only temporarily, incompletely, and by means of another *Erlebnis*. That is what makes synthetic knowledge about *Erlebnisse*, and hence the science of phenomenology,

the true sense in which all transcendent objects—*Dinge* or otherwise—are *partible*, and the true sense in which partibility is a consequence of “materiality,” and in which it is not really a *property* of transcendent objects. The partibility of transcendencies in this sense is not a property, namely, which they are posited as having, but rather a property of the way in which they are posited: a consequence of the fact that they are posited by sense-giving.

³⁰²Most likely we should speak here, not of “accidents,” but—following an old Plotinian distinction which is also found in Thomas—of “operations,” the difference being that the latter are merely a kind of activation of a thing’s essential characteristics, rather than something external to its essence. It is not entirely clear how this distinction should be applied in Husserl, however.

³⁰³*Id* 1, §78, 148.

possible: it is what makes it possible for us successively to apply to *Erlebnisse* one “concept” after another.

Reflectedness, however, is not the only such accident, or even the most fundamental one. Immanent time, for one thing, itself involves some “accident” of this kind: the same *Erlebnis* is now future, now present, now past. Then, too, there is the characteristic of “attention.” The tree, for example, may have been sitting there unchanged, within my field of vision, for some time; but I may not have noticed it until now. The same *Erlebnis* (the tree perception) has changed from unattended to attended.

Now if we ask what it is that changes about an *Erlebnis* when it undergoes one of these three “modifications” (attention, reflection, movement through time) the answer, in every case, is: its relation to the “pure” ego—an ego which can also be called “transcendental,” insofar as it, like the Kantian transcendental ego, is the subject of the implicit “I think” or *cogito* which attaches to the positing of every object (i.e., to the being of every object as such). (1) *Attention* is directed through an *Erlebnis* (i.e., at its object) when this implicit “I think” becomes explicit, and the *Erlebnis* becomes *aktuell* (which should perhaps here be translated as “activated”). Husserl speaks of its being illuminated, hit by a “ray” from the ego.

The attentive [*aufmerkende*] ray is given [*gibt sich*] as radiating out from the pure ego and terminating in the objective thing [*im Gegenständlichen*], directed to it or diverted from it. The ray does not separate itself from the ego, but is and remains itself an ego-ray. The “object” [*Objekt*] is struck [*betroffen*], a target, posited only in relation to (and by) the ego itself, but not itself “subjective.”³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴*Id* 1, §92, 192. The terminology of “rays” is ultimately Plotinian (based on *Phaedrus* 250^c4). See *Enn.* 6.8.16.13, and cf. 6.7.21.13-17 and 6.7.22.7–12. Plotinus, however, more often speaks of the “rays” as emanating from *νοῦς*, rather than from

As for (2) *reflection*, it is in the first instance merely a relationship between two *Erlebnisse*, the reflecting immanent perception and its object. But that relationship is in itself fixed (it cannot “turn out” later that this act of reflection was really directed at something else). The change that comes over the object of reflection—its new “operation” or “act”—comes about because the reflecting *Erlebnis* itself is activated, because the position which it contains is actually “carried out” by the ego. Reflection in this sense is a “self *direction* of the ego to its *Erlebnisse*, and, together with that, the carrying-out [*Vollziehen*] of the acts of the *cogito* . . . ‘in’ which the ego directs itself at its *Erlebnisse*.”³⁰⁵ And (3) immanent *time*, above all, is characterized by the ego’s remaining the same while one “now” after another becomes the object of its “gaze.” The ego

belongs to each *Erlebnis* which comes and streams along; its “gaze” [*Blick*] goes “through” each actual *cogito* to the objective thing [*das Gegenständ-*

the One (e.g., *Enn.* 4.3.17.15, 6.7.36.24, 6.7.41.6), and in fact states explicitly that the One itself does not “gaze” (*βλέπει*) at other things (*Enn.* 6.8.16.11). The same terminology is found in Thomas, following pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine (see, e.g., *De malo* 4.3 ad 3; *ST* 1.50.3 obj. 4), with God himself as the origin of the ray. (For the “wandering” of the ray of attention, as described in *Ideen* §92, see *Enn.* 6.7.13.28–33.)

That the “ego-ray” not only goes straight *from* the ego to the object, but in some sense is itself the ego (so that the ego is everywhere immediately present), means that, in a way, the two “ends” of the ray—the “ego-pole” and “object-pole”—are mere abstractions. If that is what Levinas means when he says that ego and object are mere abstractions from the concrete relation of intentionality (see above, p. 108, n. 129), then he is correct. The “object-pole” in that sense cannot be simply identified with the transcendent object, however, as is clear from the fact that objects exist even when I am not paying attention to them. Nor is the “ego-pole” to be straightforwardly identified with the ego, given that the ego itself is always the same, whereas the ego-ray is continually changing. Nor does any of this support Levinas’s argument to the effect that the ego must *always* posit something transcendent.

³⁰⁵*Id* 1, §78, 150. Cf. the Thomistic discussion of how angels “illuminate” each other through intellectual intuition, *ST* 1.106.1, and *De ver.*, 9.1 (in which the source of “light,” ultimately, is God).

liche]. This ray of gaze [*Blickstrahl*] is something that changes with each *cogito*, which shoots forth anew with each new one and which disappears along with it. But the ego is identical (§57, 109).

Now where, in all of this, is the cause of matter of a transcendent thing—its cause as a generic object, or as an individual object insofar as it is a mere “this”?

The sense data are clearly a cause of something like “matter,” in that the same data can be taken in different ways: different “forms” can attach to them. This is the simplest process, certainly, in which an object can be generated or corrupted: that brown-sensation, which I took to be an appearance of (to adumbrate) the brown color of a stick, turns out instead to adumbrate the color of this snake. All the objects which could be rationally posited on the basis of a given complex of data can thus be thought of as forming a physical genus: they are things that could be transformed into one another by a change of “form.”

If Plato (as Thomas understands him) were correct, and the intelligible efficient causes of being were the *separated essences* of those things, then this “form” would be the essence (*Eidos*) of the object, and this “genus” really would be a genus of transcendent objects. The composition of “matter” and “form” in the noesis would correspond to the composition of genus and species in its object. But Husserl is not that kind of Platonist. Eidetic truths about transcendent objects are indeed, according to Husserl, ultimately dependent on eidetic truths about the *Erlebnisse* in which they are posited—so that, for example, the theorems of geometry find their *metaphysical* justification in the fact that any *Ding* given in perception must appear at a certain distance from, and in a certain orientation to, the positing subject. This is “the intrinsic relationship [*innige Beziehung*] of constitutive phenomenology to the a priori ontologies, and ultimately to all eidetic disciplines” (with the exception of phenomenology itself) (§153, 322). But this dependence is not by way of a one to one

correspondence between phenomenological and dogmatic-eidetic laws. The “form” imposed on the data by sense-giving does not, in other words, correspond exactly to the *Eidos* of the object; there is no genus, for example, of *things which cause such and such a brown-sensation*, of which *stick* and *snake* might be species. And in fact objects belonging to different regions—objects between which there is no community of essence—can be simultaneously posited on the basis of the same data: i.e., the same “form,” in this sense, can contain characteristics which are never united in a single essence.

Still, it is true in a way that the hyletic data show the presence of something merely potential, which is *actual* only insofar as it is “modified” by a form. One might speak in this connection of physical and metaphysical form, just as we distinguished above between physical and metaphysical genus, and between physical and metaphysical concreteness or abstractness. The complex sense-giving which normally occurs when external objects are posited in the natural attitude, in which some *Dinge* (or at least the phantoms thereof) are posited on the basis of (constituted from or by means of) their appearances, and then some further categorial, psychological, axiological, etc., object is posited on the basis of (constituted from or by means of) those *Dinge*, is, from a metaphysical (i.e., phenomenological) point of view, the bestowing of form upon a single concrete transcendent object. All the intrinsically diverse conscious processes which Husserl calls “constitution” are in one way another contributions to this same result: the *Erlebnisse*, that is, ultimately “constitute” their objects in exactly the way that Thomistic angels and celestial bodies “constitute” sublunar substances—namely, by causing their “form.” And since this whole complex sense giving is made rational only by the hyletic data which it “animates,” there is an important sense in which the other objects which *could* have been posited here are those which would be

adumbrated, under a different interpretation, by the same sense data as are actually present. What the hyletic data cause in the object—what is posited in the object by means of them—is in that way a kind of matter which can receive (and lose) a full range of different forms.

Even in that way, however, it is clear that the sense data are not the cause of the *prime* matter of any thing, and that the metaphysical “genus” to which they give rise is no highest genus. A given complex of hyletic data can be construed in many ways, but not in *any* way. Not just anything, not just any color in just any object, could be adumbrated by, i.e. rationally posited on the basis of, this brown sense-datum. And for that very reason it may “turn out” in the end that the sense-datum in question did not adumbrate anything objective: that there was neither a stick nor a snake there, but that I was dreaming or hallucinating or under hypnotic suggestion. The data themselves, of course, like every noetic or noematic component of an *Erlebnis*, will always be what they were. But that potentiality which, in their animation by the remainder of the noesis, they presented *in the object*, may ultimately pass away. And this shows that, in the causation of specific objects by sense-giving, both the data *and* the data-interpreting moments are really causes of form. The “hyletic” nature of the data consists in their being the cause of, at best, a kind of proximate matter.

Let us turn from the noesis to the noema. Recall that, excluding all components which correspond to differences in mode of attention, certainty, clarity, etc., there is in the noema a central part which corresponds to the “what” and “how” of givenness of the thing itself. This central part could already be thought of as a “material” component, since it represents a kind of common subject to which other things may attach as modifications. But, although Husserl uses the term *Materie* to refer to this central part of the noema (or rather, to a certain precursor of it) in the *Logische*

Untersuchungen, he officially abandons that term in the *Ideen*, in favor of “*Sinn*” (see §129, 268).³⁰⁶ And it is obvious that the *Sinn*—even if it is a sort of material component within the noema—is very much a cause of *form* in the transcendent object itself. It is therefore not, as such, a candidate for the object’s generic cause.

The *Sinn*, however, contains both the “what” and the “how” of the given object. And it contains these two things quite differently. The “how” is represented by a set of “predicates”—either determinate aspects of the object (determinate properties it is posited “as” having), or mere indications of the ways in which it fails to be determinate:

It would, in the case of an appearing *Ding*-object fall in the bounds of the description in question to say: its “front side” is so-and-so *determined* according to color, shape, etc.; its “back side” has “a” color, but one which is “*not more precisely [näher] determined*”; it is, in this and that respect, entirely “*undetermined*,” whether it is so or not (§130, 270).³⁰⁷

Every predicate by which the thing presents itself is included in this “how”—whether an essential or merely an accidental predicate; whether a predicate which we would normally call “objective” or one which is merely “subjective,” in the sense that it indicates some relationship between the object and the viewing subject. But a thing cannot consist of predicates only. “The predicates are predicates of ‘something’” (§131, 270). *What* the object is, ultimately, is “something.” And so, in addition to all its various parts which correspond to the various predicates of the object, the manifold richness of the noematic “how,” the *Sinn* also contains a single simple component which refers to this “something,” a “central noematic moment” which corresponds

³⁰⁶The term *Materie*, meaning *Sinn*, does still occasionally crop up in the *Ideen*, however—e.g. §142, 296.

³⁰⁷On the “back” as a “part” of the object, see below, p. 235.

to “the ‘*Gegenstand*,’ the ‘*Objekt*,’ the ‘*identical*,’ the ‘determinable subject of its possible predicates’—*the pure X in abstraction from all predicates*” (§131, 271). “We see,” says Husserl,

how, in a noematic respect, there are two kinds of object-concept to distinguish: this pure point of unity, this *noematic “object simpliciter [Gegenstand schlechthin]”* and the “*object in the how of its determinateness*” (§131, 272).³⁰⁸

It could “turn out” that the object does not have any of the predicates with which it is now posited—but could it “turn out” that it is not “something”? In a way, the answer is “yes”: it does not always happen that the identical “something”—the *same* “pure *X*”—is more and more precisely determined in succeeding *Erlebnisse* (i.e., in the process of empirical synthesis), nor even that this same *X* is determined to have *different* predicates than it at first had, so that the initially posited predicates suffer “cancellation.” At times, rather, there is an “‘exploding’ of harmony, by which the posited thing comes totally and completely to cancellation” (§151, 317). And it may even turn out that, not only was there no stick or snake there, but no “world” at all (no consistent manifold of spatio-temporal things):

It is very much conceivable [*denkbar*], that experience not dissolve itself, through conflict, into illusion, only in particular cases [*im einzelnen*], and that it not be the case, as it is *de facto*, that every illusion manifests a deeper truth, and every conflict in its place is exactly what is demanded for

³⁰⁸The term *X* derives from the A version of the transcendental deduction, where Kant uses it to stand for the “transcendental object.” Husserl says of the A deduction that it was actually carried out “already upon phenomenological ground,” but that “Kant misunderstood [this ground] as psychological, and therefore himself again gave it up” (*Id* 1, §62, 119). I would guess, however, that Kant “gave up” the A deduction precisely *because* it was “phenomenological,” in the sense that this transcendental object *X*—an effect and correlate of the transcendental ego—had begun to look suspiciously like the *Ding an sich*.

the maintenance of the entire harmony by means of more widely inclusive contexts; it is conceivable . . . that there no longer be a world (§49, 91).

But even in this extreme situation, it would not be the case that nothing spatio-temporal was posited—only that these positings did not combine to make a *world*, so that there would be no way, in the end, to say which ones had “turned out” to be of actual objects.

It might be that, still, to some extent, raw formations of unity might become constituted, passing points of attachment for the intuitions, which would be mere analogues of thing-intuitions, since they would be totally incapable of constituting conservative “realities,” durational unities that “exist per se, whether they are perceived or not.”³⁰⁹

This absence of a world, in other words, would not be an abstract nothingness. It would be the absence of a particular kind of world: a (material, substantial) *spatio-temporal* world. It would be a spatio-temporal chaos, where a spatio-temporal world could in principle be. And the “could in principle” here reflects the *pure potentiality* that is posited by means of the pure determinable *X*. This pure potentiality remains after every change or corruption, even after such an “annihilation” (*Vernichtung*) of the world as Husserl here imagines—for which reason, of course, the term “annihilation” is not strictly speaking applicable. One might perhaps better describe what happens to the world in such a case as “conflagration.”³¹⁰

³⁰⁹Ibid.

³¹⁰Such a conflagration corresponds most closely, in Thomistic terms, to a process in which the celestial bodies, so to speak, run down, and naturally cease all their actions. In that case there would still be prime matter (since prime matter is conserved directly by God), and it would still have “substantial” form (because prime matter without form is a contradiction in terms, hence not possible even by a miracle [*ST* 1.66.1 c.]). Thomas appears to go farther than this, and to hold that, in such a case, there would still be *substances*, in the sense of stable composites of matter and substantial form

which could serve as substrates for changing accidents. (See *De pot.* 5.7–9.) Thomas’s view seems to be that all *mixed* bodies, with the exception of human bodies, would be corrupted, whereas the elements would retain their substance, but would no longer be sensible, nor have their active or passive qualities—e.g., the heat of fire, the dampness of water, etc. It is difficult to be sure, however, since he is mostly concerned with a less extreme case: the post-apocalyptic world, in which the celestial bodies cease their local motions, but not their other actions (e.g. illumination). But one can imagine taking the view—and this would correspond more closely with Husserl’s—that, without the action of the celestial bodies, there would be nothing “fixed and permanent.” Forms analogous to the substantial forms of our world would come and go, but there would be no numerically identical subjects capable of receiving different accidents—i.e., no sensible substances in the strict sense (see *Cat.* 5.4^a10–11).

This post-conflagration state also corresponds, less ambiguously, to the one which Kant imagines at the beginning of the transcendental deduction (*KrV*, A89–91/B122–3), in which “objects” of a kind are given to us in intuition, but in such a way that they do not fall under the schemata of the categories (e.g., the schema of substance, which is effectively the kind of “fixity and permanence” or “durational unity” which allows for different predicates to attach to the same subject), so that they are not, strictly speaking, “objects” at all—not objects of *experience*. The transcendental deduction shows how any alternative to this “confusion” is possible (i.e., how we can have so much as the concept of cause, substance, etc.). But that such confusion does not exist *de facto*—that there are in fact substances, causes, etc. knowable by us—can be demonstrated only on the basis of an a priori “teleological” principle (a transcendental principle of judgment). See *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, xxxvi–vii.

That the Thomistic celestial bodies cannot “run down,” and the world be reduced to chaos, is also ultimately something of which we can be assured only by a consideration of divine goodness (see *De pot.* 5.5 c.). The Leibnizian principle that intelligent monads will always in the end be able to reconstruct for themselves a personal (apparent) identity in addition to their true substantial identity (and hence will be able to reconstruct for themselves a coherent world of experience) similarly rests on teleological grounds. And it is likely that Husserl himself might wish to invoke teleological principles as lying behind our certainty that, *de facto*, there is a world. He explicitly says, however, that he will leave such matters out of consideration in *Ideen* I (note to §51, 96–7).

Cavell imagines something like this post-conflagration state when he discusses the “world” of cartoons or dreams, in which “the (our) concept of evidence has no application” because “anything can be followed by anything.” That “world” is not a world (does not contain objects), but it is analogous to a world, or contains object-analoga. “Cartoons make us laugh because they are enough *like* our world to be terribly sad

Does this noematic X , then, cause the prime matter of the object? If it did, then the *Erlebnisse* would not be causes of being according to the species only: they themselves would *create* their objects. And this would make *synthesis*—the normal case, in which nothing “explodes,” and successive *Erlebnisse* continuously determine the same X by means of different predicates—impossible. For each *Erlebnis* would then cause its object, not only as having such and such a form (specific or individual) but according to its whole being—in other words, as a “this.” And between such singular “thises” there could be no relation. It is possible for two different forms to be received, successively, in the same matter, but it is not possible for “this” to be some other “this.” To put it differently: the disparity between the data and the noematic qualities, in which the former are confined to a single immanent time whereas the latter make claims that extend beyond it—the very property of positing by adumbration, in other words, which gives rise to inadequacy, and hence to transcendence—would then make no sense: each “transcendent” object would be associated once and for all with a single *Erlebnis*, hence with a single point or interval of immanent time.

If synthesis, and hence transcendence, is possible, then, it must be that, when two *Erlebnisse* posit the same transcendent object, the cause of that object’s being *per se*—its transcendental cause—is not a component of one *Erlebnis* or the other, but something different from each, and yet related to both: some common thing which “points” at or “designates” the object, so to speak, *through* the pure determinable X of the successive noemata. And if it is to be possible, even in principle, for the synthesis to be complete—i.e., for there to be *one* actual world that all predicates, in

and frightening” (*CR*, 236). The thought that such a condition might actually come about in *our* world (in what seems to be the world) would not be skepticism. It would be, rather, or would be a version of, “an anxiety that there might be nothing whatever to say” (351).

the end, consistently determine—then there must be some *one* thing which is different from every *Erlebnis* and related to all of them. This one thing is the transcendental ego. The ego-ray goes out to the transcendent object “through” the pure noematic *X*; the transcendental ego causes its object as “this” (as a generic individual) by “directing” its ray at it through the noematic *X*—i.e. by “designating” it, but in a kind of designation which requires no “pointing,” no reference to the accidents of space and time.

If we remember . . . the “gaze upon” [*Blick auf*], that under certain circumstances goes through the noesis (through the actual [*aktuell*] *cogito*), that changes the specific thetic [i.e., positing] moments into rays of the position-actuality of the ego, and if we pay exact attention to the way in which this ego . . . “directs” itself at the objective, the way in which its gaze goes out through the noematic core—then we will be attentive to the fact that we are referred, in our talk of the relationship (and especially the “direction”) of consciousness to its objectivity, to an *innermost* moment of the noema . . . something that, so to speak, forms the necessary central point of the core and functions as the “bearer” of the noematic properties which belong especially to it.³¹¹

This ego is not itself an *Erlebnis*, but is related to all of them: “as something absolutely identical through all actual and possible change of the *Erlebnisse*, it can *in no sense* count as a real part or moment of the *Erlebnisse* themselves” (§56, 109). The process of synthesis is a result of its moving “gaze”:

Intuiting an individual *Ding*, following after its movements, its approaches and recessions, its rotations and turnings, its alterations of form and quality . . . we *carry out* continua of intuition, coinciding so and so with each other, which are united together [*sich zusammenschließend*] into a consciousness of unity: the gaze is then directed at the identical, the *X* of the *Sinn* . . . at the one-and-the-same, which is *what* changes [*daß sich verändert*], rotates, etc. (§150, 313).

³¹¹*Id* 1, §129, 268–9.

This is not to say, of course, that what actually exists in the world as it is now given—whatever has presumptive actuality—must always be the particular object of present attention: that it must always be the target of an actual “ray” from the transcendental ego. The sensible world and all its contents are continuously conserved, rather, by a “general position” (*Generalthesis*) that accompanies every “natural” act of consciousness. In the “natural attitude,”

“the” world is, as actuality, always there, it is at most here or there “otherwise” than I thought [*vermeinte*]; this or that is to be, so to speak, stricken out *from* it under the titles “illusion,” “hallucination,” and the like: out of what is always—in the sense of the *Generalthesis*—the existent [*daseiende*] world (§30, 53).

But the source of this *Generalthesis*, the cause of the being of every individual sensible object as such, and hence of the entire physical genus of sensible things, is the transcendental ego. And there is therefore a fourth “accidental” change, a change which can come over the *Erlebnisstrom* as a whole, in which the transcendental ego, in its “perfect freedom,” “suspends” the general position. This change in “attitude” is the famous phenomenological *ἐποχή*: the change that makes possible the phenomenological reduction.³¹²

Such a suspension of the positing of the world would be quite different from the “conflagration” which we discussed earlier—would, in fact, deserve the name “annihilation” in the strict sense.³¹³ In the case of the world conflagration, the world’s

³¹²For change in “attitude” (conversion), see *Enn.* 6.5.7. The ultimate source of this talk is, of course, Plato’s parable of the cave. On the priority (in time) of the “natural attitude” (which is neither philosophically correct nor “absurd”—i.e., which does not yet take a position on philosophical issues), see *De malo* 16.4 c. (near end).

³¹³Thus although Levinas is correct, on my reading, to suggest, in interpreting §49 of *Id* 1, that “the destruction of the world is a phenomenon with a positive sense, and necessarily implies a consciousness which, consequently, would continue to have

return to chaos, there was still the *potentiality* of a world “there”—which is to say, the *Generalthesis*, accompanying every posited sensible “something,” was still in effect. The *Erlebnisse* themselves, on the other hand, had to be imagined as quite different that they *de facto* are—not just as “accidentally” different (bearing a different relation to the ego), but as essentially different *Erlebnisse*, in which different objects (or, in this case, no “objects” at all) are given. “Certain ordered concatenations of experience and therefore also certain concatenations of theoretical reason oriented according to them would be ruled out.”³¹⁴

In the true annihilation that accompanies the reduction, however, the *Erlebnisstrom* remains essentially unchanged.

We do not give up the thesis that we carried out; we alter nothing as to our conviction, which remains in itself as it is, so long as we introduce no new motives for judgment . . . And yet it experiences a modification—while it remains, in itself, what it is, we, as it were, put it “out of action”; we “exclude it”; we “bracket it” (§31, 54).

The causes of being according to species, and even the causes of individual form, insofar as this consists in the *accidents* that single out an individual thing, are still in place. “Metaphorically speaking: what is bracketed is not erased from the phenomenological blackboard, but is only just this, bracketed [*eben nur eingeklammert*]” (§76, 142). “We have actually lost nothing, but have gained the totality of absolute being [*das gesamte absolute Sein*], which, rightly understood, contains in itself

a transcendent signification once the world was destroyed” (*Théorie de l’intuition*, 49), he is not right to conclude that consciousness can *never* be without transcendent intentionality. The equivalence he draws between “a consciousness without world,” in the sense of the destroyed-world scenario, and “a consciousness reduced to pure immanence” (*Théorie de l’intuition*, 48) is incorrect.

³¹⁴*Id* 1, §49, 92.

all worldly transcendencies, which ‘constitutes’ them” (§50, 94).³¹⁵ “Everything remains, so to speak, the same [*beim alten*].”³¹⁶ And yet everything is different. “This,” the tree, is now absent, no longer posited—and not as if something *else*, some other sensible thing (or even the chaotic absence of any such thing) were now posited instead. There is still perception, true, and, in the noema, a kind of object of perception. Husserl sometimes speaks of the noema as the “intentional object,” and sometimes calls it (or, to be more precise, calls the *Sinn*) the “perceived as perceived,” the “seen as seen.” But it is important to understand that this is not literally correct. A noema can be “perceived” only in reflection: to claim that I could *see* one would be as *widersinnig* as to claim that I could see a soul or a number or an odor. Or rather, it would be more *widersinnig*, in proportion to the depth of the difference between immanence and transcendence. What was *seen* in the perception (and seen “directly”), was a tree. And where the tree was corruptible, partible, capable of changing and of being seen, both literally and metaphorically, from different “sides”—in short, was a sensible object, a part of the world of nature, a member of the material genus *Ding*—the noema is none of these. Perception no longer has any “object” at all, in the sense in which the tree was such an object. Where there was “something,” there is now nothing. The tree has ceased to exist *generically*.

As for the *Erlebnisstrom* itself, the upper world, it is clear that it could not suffer the kind of *natural* annihilation (or “conflagration”) that might (at least, if we ignore teleological principles) befall the sensible one. The absolute positing of *Erlebnisse* does not involve adumbration and sense-giving, and therefore does not involve any “something” which might “turn out” to be something else. This, as we know, is the

³¹⁵Cf. *Enn.* 6.7.11.3–4: πάντα οὖν ἔχει ὅσα ἐνταῦθα τὰ κεῖ.

³¹⁶*Id* 1, §88, 183.

sense in which *Erlebnisse* can be called “absolute” and “necessary” beings. But this is not to say that *Erlebnisse* are not posited at all, that an *Erlebnis* is *causa sui*:

Obviously the necessity of existence [*Seinsnotwendigkeit*] of a given actual *Erlebnis* is not thereby a pure essential necessity . . . it is the necessity of a fact [*eines Faktums*], which is so called, because an essential law involves the fact [*am Faktum . . . beteiligt ist*], and indeed here its existence [*Dasein*] as such.³¹⁷

This is the kind of “necessary” existence possessed by any incorruptible thing, anything which has no potential to *become* something else: the necessity that, as long as it exists at all, it exist *as this*, rather than as something different—or in other words, its independence from any specific cause of being. As Thomas explains:

What is in something per se, is necessarily in it . . . so that [for example] it is necessary that what is double is even . . . But being per se is a consequence of form, because anything is an actual being insofar as it has form. But there are some creatures that are certain subsistent forms, as has been said of the angels . . . [and some] whose matter is not in potentia except to one form, as has been said above of the celestial bodies. Such creatures, therefore, according to their nature exist [*sunt*] of necessity, and cannot not be.³¹⁸

But such “necessarily existent” things are not necessary, of course, in the strictest sense. They have a *generic* cause of being, and are in that sense dependent and (therefore) contingent: “Being per se is a consequence of the the form of a creature, only presupposing the influence of God, as light follows from the transparency of air, presupposing the influence of the sun.”³¹⁹ So, too, as we have emphasized, there is a level on which *Erlebnisse* themselves are posited:

³¹⁷Ibid., §46, 86.

³¹⁸*ST* 1.104.1 obj. 1. Thomas at times refers to incorruptible things as “necessary beings”—see, e.g., *ST* 1.115.6 obj. 1 (although this is an objection, Thomas does not reject the terminology in his reply). Cf. *EN* 6.3.1139^b22–4.

³¹⁹*ST* 1.104.1 ad 1.

The transcendental ‘absolute’ that we dissected out by means of the reductions, is in truth not the ultimate [absolute]; it is something, which is itself in a certain deep and completely peculiar sense constituted [*sich . . . konstituiert*], and which has its source in an ultimate and true absolute.³²⁰

Hence although *Erlebnisse* are not subject to doubt, cannot “turn out” to be otherwise, they are nevertheless subject to annihilation in the true sense. Such “exclusion” “belongs to the realm of our *perfect freedom*”; its possible object includes “everything and anything, be we ever so firmly convinced of it, indeed even made sure of it in adequate evidence.”³²¹

If *Erlebnisse* and their objects are, in an ultimate metaphysical sense, equally contingent, then what is the function of Husserl’s constant emphasis on the difference between the necessary, absolute existence of *Erlebnisse* and the relative, defeasible existence of transcendent things? It is part of his argument that the former are the (specific) causes of being of the latter. He needs this, first of all, as an answer to Kant: to show what really fulfills the function of Kant’s “absurd” *Ding an sich*. But secondly, and more importantly, he needs it to demonstrate the nature and possibility of the phenomenological reduction. Not that the corruptibility of transcendent things is somehow evidence for the possibility of “excluding” them: corruption and annihilation are entirely different, and the possibility of the former in no way conditions the possibility of the latter. But by establishing the relationship of causation of being that holds between immanent and transcendent things, Husserl establishes the existence of the deep ontological gap between the two realms, and the direction of

³²⁰*Id* 1, §81, 163. Note that *sich konstituieren* does not mean “constitutes itself”—nor, incidentally, does *sich bekunden* mean “manifests itself,” as Sokolowski claims it does (*Formation*, 218). German reflexive constructions like this often correspond to the English passive.

³²¹*Id* 1, §31, 54.

one-way dependence across that gap. It is because *Erlebnisse* cause the being of their objects, and not vice versa, that we can exclude the latter and retain the former:

The existence of a nature *cannot* condition the existence of consciousness, since it [nature] itself proves to be a correlate of consciousness: it *exists* [*ist*] only as constituted in regular concatenations of consciousness (§51, 96).

And it is because the *Erlebnisse*, for their part, are utterly independent, metaphysically (phenomenologically) speaking, from anything transcendent, that this “exclusion” is no mere abstraction, but a true annihilation of transcendent being. To demonstrate these things it is enough to show that the *Erlebnisse* possess the relative necessity which belongs to anything incorruptible.

There is, however, one thing which exists with truly absolute necessity, which could not in any sense have been “otherwise,” and which requires no “constitution” (no cause of being), but possesses “a *peculiar*, non-constituted transcendence” (§57, 109–10). And that is the transcendental ego. As the source of all positing—including the absolute positing of *Erlebnisse* in time-consciousness—it is the generic cause of all other existents. It is itself, therefore, outside of every genus (not a member of a material genus, outside every region of being, without logical form). As such it is without essential or accidental attributes, not a possible object of discursive knowledge.

The *erlebende* ego is nothing that could be taken *for itself* and made into its *own* subject of investigation. Aside from its “modes of relationship” or “modes of relation” [*Beziehungsweisen*’ oder *Verhaltensweisen*’], it is completely empty of essential components; it has no explicable content; it is in and for itself indescribable: pure ego and nothing more (§80, 160).³²²

³²²The talk of relationships here is connected to a problem raised earlier about relations between objects of different regions: Husserl’s formal ontology seems to leave no room for these, and a fortiori no room for relations between the objects of

That is why phenomenology stops with the “exclusion” of the transcendent world. There is no science of what lies beyond that, no way of saying or knowing what it would “be like” to go farther. It would not be “like” anything at all.

Now, the Kantian transcendental ego has a good number of traditionally divine attributes. It is necessarily present, outside the (logical) categories, a generic (transcendental) cause of things. But it is not God, because it is a generic cause, not of being, but of knowability. It is something that must be present, not in order for objects to *exist*, but only in order for a particular finite, contingent being to have knowledge of them. And the Kantian *Ding an sich*, although it *is* a cause of being, is not (or at least, is not known by us to be) a generic cause of anything at all. That is why we can know that it is outside of the physical categories (the schemata), but are still free to think it (for *practical* purposes) under the logical ones.

The Husserlian transcendental ego, on the other hand, is the one generic cause of all beings *per se*, which can produce them from nothing and reduce them back to nothing in “perfect freedom.” It is the source of the “light” of truth and being, by participation in which all other things exist. It is the Absolute, the One Beyond Being. It is the Creator.

any region and the trans-regional ego. There are, of course, plenty of problems in traditional metaphysics as well when it comes to relations of which God is supposed to be one of the terms.

Chapter 4

Husserl and Cavell

I will now say something about the question with which I started, and also, as promised, about the problem of other minds.

4.1 Is Husserl a (Cavellian) Skeptic?

As for the former: there is good sense, according to Husserl, in questioning one's knowledge about (transcendent) specific objects. If I posit this now as a goldfinch, that will be on the basis of some process of constitution, by which, metaphysically speaking, a form is bestowed on the prime matter which is represented by the noematic X : in which, in other words, some hyletic sense data are construed in such and such a way as corresponding to such and such a noema (one in which, perhaps, the bird is given as "having a red head"). And there may be nothing uncertain in this, no "motive" for doubt; it may be "enough," under the circumstances. Still, a goldfinch is a corruptible thing. It *could* always turn out that it was not, after all, a goldfinch. If that happened (and it could only happen in *particular* circumstances), then it would turn out that what was there was not a goldfinch, but something else—i.e., either that the object which I took to be a goldfinch was actually not one, or (in case the goldfinch "explodes") that I was completely deluded about what objects were present.

It makes no sense at all, however, in Husserl's system, to doubt my knowledge of

the existence of a *generic* object. It makes no sense, not because this knowledge is somehow super-certain and assured, but because the “knowledge” itself is the *cause* of a generic object’s existence. It is a cause that requires no special preconditions (a cause both of form and of matter), so that the question “*How* do you know?” is unintelligible. There is, to be sure, a way in which I can “*attempt* to doubt” the existence of things, generically considered. I can, in fact, do so at any time: it lies within the realm of my “perfect freedom.” But the “dubitability” in question reveals, not that I have no absolute knowledge, but that the objects of my knowledge have no absolute being. My attempt to doubt annihilates them.

But am I not ignoring an important difference between Husserl and Cavell on this topic? Cavell’s generic objects, after all, do not count for Husserl as generic. There is something specific—some complex of noetic and noematic components—on the basis of which I posit this here as a tomato and not as, say, a baseball. It might literally be true, from this point of view, that I can tell “from the red skin.”¹ Doesn’t this show that Husserl and Cavell are not really considering the same thing under the title “generic”?

The conflict is not as deep as it might seem—or, anyway, its depth does not lie in the direction one might expect. It is true for Cavell, too, as I pointed out above, that “tomato” is not a *highest* genus. Cavell’s own discovery is not that tomatoes and baseballs, say, are *toto coelo* different (as different as bodies and spirits), so that there could not, in appropriate circumstances, be a problem of how to tell the one from the other. It is rather that, so long as I am *not* in such circumstances—so long as I am among people like us, for whom the identification of tomatoes and baseballs

¹Cf. *CR*, 55.

does not (in “optimal conditions”) come into question—then ordinary language itself forces me to treat a question of knowledge about the tomato, so considered, as if it were fully “generic.” The tomato or baseball becomes a “best case” of knowledge because I am forced to *take* it as a representative of its highest physical genus (the genus of “bodies,” or of “sensible substances”). Hence Cavell is correct to say that the “traditional title” for his generic objects is “material objects,” and that “‘material’ in that context bespeaks not a species of object (tomatoes or sticks as opposed, say, to shadows or flames) but the spirit in which the object is put in question.”²

So is Husserl a skeptic or isn’t he? I warned from the beginning that I would not have a yes or no answer to that question. There is both a deep similarity and a radical difference between him and the skeptics (including the “phenomenologists”) that Cavell imagines. The same “discoveries”—the reflection on the “seen as seen,” the consideration that all of our perceptual certainty is potentially reversible, or that the “evidence” upon which it is based is never “conclusive”—figure both in Husserl’s system and in the arguments of the Cavellian skeptic. But these common elements take on radically different function, because the two have already diverged from each other at the very first step.

²Ibid., 53. Only the concession that follows in Cavell is unnecessary: that, namely, “material” “bespeaks this . . . initially,” although “later in the investigation it may turn out that the object is taken in contrast, say, with non-material objects—mental things, perhaps, or divine.” As we have seen, such “non-material” objects (i.e., objects whose prime matter is different from that of the objects of sense) do *not* differ from “material” objects in *species*. (It is therefore slightly misleading to say that “I do not impose . . . in claiming to know of the existence and qualities of tables and chairs and bits and cliffs of chalk, an assumption that if I am right in claiming them to exist then I am right in my identification of them as material (vs. immaterial)” [421]. There is no such “identification” to be made, because being “material” is, for material objects, no different than existing—it is their mode of being. But this is not to say that the contrast with the “other minds” case is not instructive. See below, p. 239.)

The skeptic takes it for granted that, in our knowing the world, something is *revealed* to us (reveals itself to us). That is: the skeptic assumes that, if we are to know an object, then the object itself must be such that, as soon as it is uncovered (i.e., as soon as we see it in optimal conditions), it *forces* us to “take” it a certain way. If, therefore, there is a question of knowledge about the existence of a generic object, the question must be how a mere “something” could be revealed to us—i.e., how knowledge could be “revelatory of the world’s existence.”³ But this is impossible (no answer is forthcoming), because a generic object, a mere “something,” has *ex hypothesi* no identifying marks, hence no way of *forcing* anything (matter cannot be a cause of action because of the debility of its being). And yet the generic object is, or seems to be, a “best case.” The paradoxical conclusion is that it is impossible for *anything* to be revealed. The object has no hold over us. We can, as Cavell sometimes says, “withhold our concept” from it.

The “traditional” alternatives to skepticism that Cavell considers all start up after this point (and therefore, as he would say, too late). They try to explain what might nevertheless force us to accept this “something,” even though it itself is impotent to do so (even though we cannot know it “through the senses alone”). But Husserl’s response to skepticism is not like this. He has been on the scene before the skeptical question arises. Husserl notices, as everyone does, that skepticism is self-undermining, i.e. paradoxical—something which comes as no news to the skeptic. But that is not his fundamental criticism. Skepticism is fundamentally absurd (*widersinnig*), rather, because what the skeptic thinks of as *knowledge* is absurd on the face of it (is an “absurd absolutizing of the world”). If my positing causes the being per se of the

³Ibid., 224.

object (causes it as generic), then it is absurd to expect that the object will have some hold over me. “Something” cannot *deserve* to be brought into being from nothing. Creation is an act of grace. The generic object does not reveal itself to me, but I reveal myself (reveal my absolute power) in it, or by means of it. And the skeptical “discoveries” about the objects of sense therefore take on an entirely different meaning. What they show, now, is the possibility of the reduction, in which the “concept,” so to speak, is what is retained, while what I “withhold” is the *object*.⁴

If skepticism, then, is a kind of total evasion of responsibility—if in skepticism “we try to get the world to provide answers in a way which is independent of our responsibility for *claiming* something,”⁵ then Husserl, on the contrary, tries to *assume* responsibility in a fantastically total way: the responsibility for “claiming” (i.e., “affirming”) everything. And this means that he accepts, or rather explicitly asserts, everything that Cavell offers as a *reductio* of the skeptic’s position, or as a diagnosis of the fantasy that has produced it. To begin with the most fundamental point:

The reason that the philosopher’s conclusion constitutes no discovery is that what his conclusions find in the world is something he himself has put there, an invention, and would not exist but for his efforts (223).

Whereas in Husserl the generic object *is* an “invention.” It is something which I

⁴As I mentioned near the beginning of this dissertation, the peculiar relationship between skepticism and phenomenology—the sense in which one is the mirror image of the other—is one that Husserl takes up explicitly in *Erste Philosophie*. Skepticism, he asserts, “draws its power” from the phenomenological realm (169,27–30)—which is to say: the skeptic raises a question which cannot be answered from within the dogmatic attitude. Nor does phenomenology dismiss this question; it simply replaces the “paradoxical, playful, frivolous subjectivity” with which the skeptic approaches it with a “new, serious subjectivity” (7:61,23–5). Hence to “overcome” radical skepticism in phenomenology is “to make it true in a good sense” (147,36–7) or “in a higher sense” (61,21–2; 143,18; 185,18).

⁵*CR*, 216.

“put there” (posit)—although it of course does not follow, as de Boer and Philipse think, that I put it there *erroneously*. (I *am* the truth.) And objects really are my “moons” (202). It is *essential* to sensible substances that they are seen from one side only—not, indeed, in the sense that this is part of their generic or specific or individual essence, but in the (metaphysical) sense that it is essential to the way such things are posited, or in other words to their mode of being. The philosopher as phenomenologist, similarly, is indeed “the Recording Angel, outside the world, neither affecting it nor affected by it, taking stock” (212)—or rather, the philosopher’s reflection is the discourse, the mutual illumination, of such angels. At a deeper level, however (at the level of the transcendental ego), the philosopher is seen to be above any angel, to be beyond all discourse, to know the world from much *farther* outside than any angel could (from beyond its *logical* boundary): “to know the world as we imagine God knows it” (236–7).

Cavell’s treatment of skepticism will therefore not apply unchanged to Husserl. This does not mean, however, that Cavell (or Wittgenstein) have nothing to say to him or about him. Recall what I above called “Cavell’s own discovery”: that ordinary language itself forces us to take such things as tomatoes and tables as if they were fully generic, as if a question of knowledge with respect to them could only attach to their existence. The epistemologist or metaphysician takes advantage of this ordinary language fact, so as to make it sound as if we were talking about ordinary objects like tables and wax and so forth (about medium sized dry goods) when what has really been thematized is the same old topic that any metaphysician must always discuss: τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν, being as such. But the idea of “Wittgenstinian criteria,” insofar as I understand it, is to start with this same discovery and let it take us in a different direction. If there is no question about properly identifying such things, then, Cavell

and Wittgenstein point out, there is a mystery here. Why do we have, or how *can* we have, words for such things at all—how can “calling” them be possible at all, and what is the point of it? No answer to that question, certainly, could serve as a refutation of Husserl. But once the question is raised, we *might* (it if “struck” us in the right way) be inclined to think that it was *that* question that was bothering us all along, when we worried about our knowledge of transcendentals. And we might then be led to think differently about the non-empirical a priori, and to adopt a different model of self-knowledge.

4.2 Other Minds

Now as to the problem of “other minds”—the problem, that is, of how, even granting that external *material* things exist, I can know whether there are minds like my own “in” some such things (namely, in other human bodies). In Kant, this problem belongs to practical philosophy. Or that, rather, is an understatement. The problem of other minds is *the* problem of practical philosophy, in the sense that a question as to whether there are (“other”) minds is (1) a question about whether there is any such thing as practice, and (2) a question about that *alone*. (1) is a restatement of the fundamental principle of Kantian ethics, that the only absolutely good thing is a good will. Since the very idea of a “good will” requires the interaction of finite free agents (of bodies which “have” minds), a skepticism about the existence of these is a skepticism about the very existence of good and evil. (2), on the other hand, is a consequence of the critical solution to the Third Antinomy. For to be a “finite free agent” (to “have” a body and yet act freely) is, as Kant explains, to fall under the category (logical genus) of cause (as conditioning the *specific* being of appearances), but outside of its sensible schema (outside the order of necessary succession in time)—to be, in other

words, a *Ding an sich*. The question of whether there are multiple finite free beings is thus removed from the domain of theoretical inquiry. For the speculative intellect is incompetent ever to know whether there is any *Ding an sich* “outside myself”—i.e., whether there are different grounds of inner and of outer appearances: since *Dinge an sich* do not fall under the sensible schema of number (regarded as the successive additions of units), we cannot know them under the logical category of multiplicity (of mutual “externality”), either. And (2) is just as important as (1) for establishing the possibility of practice, because if we *could* answer the question theoretically, the answer would have to be “no.”

Since the thoroughgoing connection [*Zusammenhang*] of all appearances, in a context [*Kontext*] of nature, is an implacable [*unnachlässlich*] law, it would necessarily overthrow all freedom, if one wanted obstinately to subscribe to [the thesis of] the reality of appearances.⁶

All Kant’s theoretical philosophy—even, or rather especially, the difficult doctrine of the *Ding an sich*—is thus inextricably linked to his practical philosophy. Its ultimate purpose is to make the latter possible.

I can . . . not so much as *assume* [*annehmen*] God, freedom, and immortality for the benefit of the necessary practical use of my intellect, if I do not at the same time *take away* [*benehme*] from the speculative intellect its presumption of transcendent insights, because it must avail itself, in order to attain these [insights], of such principles as, since they in fact reach only to objects of possible experience, always, even when they are nevertheless applied to that which cannot be an object of experience, actually exchange it for appearance, and so pronounce all *practical extension* of pure intellect impossible. I had therefore to abolish *knowledge*, in order to get space for *faith*.⁷

⁶*KrV*, A537/B565.

⁷*Ibid.*, Bxxix-xxx.

A kind of theoretical skepticism about “other minds” is necessary, according to Kant, if one is to avoid the practical equivalent of dogmatic idealism—which would be an idealism, not only about “other” minds, but even about my own. Only the limitation of the realm of theory opens up the space in which the realm of practice may be located.

Husserl has little to say, in *Ideen I*, about other minds—assuming, that is, that we take “other minds” to mean other intellects: other pure *Erlebnisströme* and transcendental egos. For, of course, if we interpret “other minds” to mean other *souls*, then there is no question that these are just transcendent objects constituted on the basis of sense data. From a “physical” point of view (from the point of view of eidetic psychology) they (or the psychophysical unities to which they belong) are transcendent, corruptible, and hence, broadly speaking, *material*, individua; from a “metaphysical” (i.e., phenomenological) point of view, however, they are abstract entities—we could even say, in an Aristotelian vein, that they are a kind of “form” in comparison with which the *materielle Leib* is the matter. So if the question is whether (*materielle*) human bodies can be rationally posited without positing their souls, the answer, as far as Husserl is concerned, is: only in the sense that one can consider the realm of material nature in *abstraction* from the psychological. Absent such abstraction, psychological objects will exist in the same way as physical ones: they will have presumptive being, that is, as long as they are rationally posited, or in other words as long as they are properly constituted (on the basis, ultimately, of the hyletic data). And the same goes for higher order, *geistliche* objects, as well: one can (rationally) posit a group of human beings without their culture, for example, only

by abstraction.⁸

About other *pure* consciousnesses, on the other hand, one might well ask whether they can really be transcendencies, posited on the basis of sense data. It might seem as if the pure *Erlebnisströme* of others must somehow, like my own pure *Erlebnisstrom*, be posited absolutely—it might, that is, seem as if they must be immaterial and incorruptible.⁹ But it would then be problematic how the presence of a body, a

⁸It is interesting to speculate what could be said about this last issue (skepticism with respect to *Geist*) from a Cavellian point of view. It seems to me that there *is*, for example, such a thing as skepticism about the existence of other cultures—although its philosophical variant is, as might perhaps be expected, less important than its political one. And we do sometimes have the feeling that we are “sealed off” within our own culture, and therefore sometimes a desire to penetrate, or sometimes to conquer and occupy, the other, to make the analogy perfect. And this is a desire which we have acted out in history, with the predictable tragic result.

What literature would be large enough to record such a tragedy, i.e. to give us the knowledge of an Outsider here? I think the answer is that this is what science fiction, and associated genres, could be, and are trying to be. This explains both why we need them so desperately (because there *is* no cultural “other” left, certainly no “best case” of such an other, in our world) and why they are so terribly difficult to write well. (I am disagreeing, obviously, with Cavell’s assertion that “science fiction cannot house tragedy” [*CR*, 457]. But then Cavell is thinking of Dr. Frankenstein and Dr. No, not of *Dune*, *The Silmarillion*, *The Book of the New Sun*, *The Dispossessed*.)

If, incidentally, someone were to say that of course we cannot both accept the existence of other human beings and doubt the existence of their culture, because obviously human beings are social and could not be human if they did not have society and language, then that would be similar to arguing that a human body must have a soul because it is obviously organized. Both of these arguments have good Aristotelian bases. But, even if Darwin had not shown us the fatal ambiguity of the premises, we would still be faced with the modern fact that it is possible to reveal everything about how the liver produces bile and the brain thought without shedding any light on the existence of the soul. There could similarly be a science of human society (psychoanthropology? psychohistory?) which would reveal everything without shedding any light on the existence of its *Geist*.

⁹Even though the pure *Erlebnisse* of others may not be needed as causes of being, the fact that they function in any way analogously to my own may offer reasons for thinking of them as immaterial. Cf. Thomas’s argument for the immateriality of the human intellect: “For it is manifest that a human can know [*cognoscere*] the nature

materielle Leib, can be any kind of evidence for the existence of such a thing, since to take a sensible object as evidence for something non-sensible means to constitute that non-sensible thing on the basis of the sensible one: to constitute it as a transcendency, by means of adumbration. It would be problematic, in other words, how such an immaterial substance, which would have to be not just “physically” but even “metaphysically” independent, could nevertheless be the form of a body. This problem, obviously, is related to questions surrounding the human soul in traditional metaphysics: whether it, or some part of it, is an immaterial and incorruptible substance, and, if so, whether it is nevertheless in some way the form of the material and corruptible human body. And it is also related to the questions raised in Cavell’s long account (especially in Part IV of *The Claim of Reason*) of the differences between other-minds skepticism and skepticism about external objects. I have mostly avoided discussing either of these sets of questions here, just as Husserl avoids the corresponding questions in *Ideen* I, and have therefore also had to be content with merely alluding to various issues that turn on them.¹⁰

of all bodies by means of the intellect. But that which can know some [things] must not have any of them in its nature, because that which was in it [*in esset ei*] naturally would impede the cognition of the others” (*ST* 1.75.2 c.).

¹⁰There are two in particular that I have mentioned above. (1) The ontological status of humanity as such: whether *human being* is a species of the genus *animal*, or of the genus *intellect*, or is sui generis. See above, p. 51, n. 28. (This is also connected to Cavell’s statement that there are no criteria for the existence of the human soul: “There are not human criteria which apprise me, or which make any move toward telling me why I take it, among all the things I encounter . . . that some of them have feeling; that some of them ‘resemble’ or ‘behave like’ human beings or human bodies; . . . unless the *fact that* human beings apply psychological concepts to certain things and not to others is such a criterion” [*CR*, 83].) (2) The potency or impotence of human sexuality: whether and to what extent human beings can produce others, and whether and to what extent, to the contrary, each human being must be individually created *ex nihilo*. See above, p. 19, n. 6.

What little Husserl *does* say, in *Ideen* I, about other minds is enough to conclude, however, that they are *transcendencies*.

No absurdity lies in the possibility that every alien consciousness which I posit in empathic experience not exist [*nicht sei*]. . . . *my* consciousness . . . is originally and absolutely given.¹¹

Husserl, in other words, here takes what might be called an Averroistic view: that the intellects of human individuals (except for that one single individual in which my *Erlebnisstrom* is incarnate) are material and corruptible, whereas there is only one truly immaterial intellect.¹² On this view, the question of skepticism about other “intellects” is no different from skepticism about psychological objects. In his later works, on the other hand, Husserl apparently tried to move from this to a more Avicennan or Thomistic position: that each individual human has an immaterial and incorruptible part (i.e. a part which is posited absolutely, and which therefore has absolute being). But, however the details of this were worked out, it would not make much difference for our purposes, as long as my transcendental ego remains the generic source of all positing—i.e., remains the *transcendental* ego. Skepticism about other minds, like skepticism about individual objects, is a question about their *generic* knowability. And the answer to such skepticism is the same in the case of both transcendencies and immanent things: I cannot be wrong about their existence,

¹¹*Id* 1, §46, 85. See also *Id* 2, §46, Hua 4:169,19–20: “the object [*Objekt*], human being, is . . . a transcendent, external object.”

¹²One could go into more detail on the relationship between this view and Averroes’. In particular, my *Erlebnisstrom* is the “active intellect,” in the sense that all positing really emanates (from the transcendental ego) through it: the other human beings can posit existence only insofar as I rationally cooperate in (*make mit*) their positing (see *Id* 2, §46, Hua 4:168,32–5). And, to the extent that that is so—to the extent that others are, from my point of view, rational—they can attain a certain impersonal immortality in the absolute *Erlebnisse* through which the cooperation is carried out.

because I am its cause.

It is plain, however, that this victory over skepticism about other minds comes at exactly the cost Kant had feared. Once the existence of such “other minds” is theoretically settled, the space for an independent practical treatment is closed up. Husserl admits, of course, that there are “such things” as norms, values, moral laws, practical principles. But we have already seen what the existence of “such things” amounts to: they are higher order transcendencies, which I constitute on the basis of material and psychological objects by making use of the non-sensible “data” of emotions and “drives.” The reason I can be *sure* that there are “such things”—that norms, values, and so forth, generically considered, exist—is precisely the reason that they cannot be in any way binding upon the transcendental ego in its perfect freedom. Such things are, namely, caused (created) by my free positing. And this means that the absolute freedom of the ego is, as Kant would say, “devilish” (*teuflich*), or, as Kierkegaard would say, *demonic*: a freedom which does not result from the moral law, and which is not subject to it.¹³ In Kantian terms, Husserl’s doctrine is not only blasphemous in the fairly clear sense that it is a self-deification, but also in the subtler, but for Kant far more important, sense that it rules out the fundamental *attitude* of Kantian religion: the attitude of respect towards the moral law.

¹³It might look like the Thomistic God is also subject to this same characterization—a problem upon which Kierkegaard in effect seizes, and which Leibnizian optimism (regarded as a corollary of the principle of sufficient reason) is designed to solve. Kant’s elimination of *metaphysica specialis* as a theoretical discipline makes room for his Moral Proof, upon which the difficulty disappears—this being the difference between Kierkegaardian and Kantian “faith” (or, as Kierkegaard would say, the difference between *faith* and its mere simulacrum). It is in any case worth emphasizing that a doctrine according to which God is, in some sense, above morality, looks quite a bit worse when I add the assertion that *I* am God. It may be that the two are ultimately equivalent, or at least indistinguishable (so that it is impossible to tell if Kierkegaard writes in faith or in irony). But there is nothing obvious about that.

It is not quite so easy to make out what Cavell would say about these matters, in part because it is not so easy, in Cavell, to draw the line between a kind of skepticism, or a way of taking skepticism, which is an attempt to get out of human responsibility (a “rejection of the human conditions of knowledge and action”¹⁴), and what Cavell calls “the truth of skepticism”: a kind of skepticism, or a way of taking skepticism, which we can *deny* only at pain of denying our humanity, or even our competence as speakers of a language.¹⁵ But I think it is safe to say that the “truth of skepticism,” in the area of other minds, is so important to Cavell, precisely because moral responsibility to the other would be impossible without it. Cavell agrees with Kant that

the epistemological “foundation” so often sought for morality, the “knowledge” which is to “base” our moral conduct and judgment, is a knowledge of *persons*, an epistemology which explains and assesses our claims to know what anyone is doing, and the basis on which one describes one’s own action.¹⁶

Such an epistemology is bound to be disappointing. It will *not* show me to have “knowledge” of the other’s inner life—or rather, it will show that such knowledge as I do have is not capable of fulfilling the function I imagine for it, and will therefore show *me* to be always capable of monstrosity, of “withholding my concept” of the other. I will, in other words, learn both too little and too much—where, as in Kant, the problem will be at least as much about self-knowledge as it is about knowledge of the other.¹⁷ But it is precisely because of this disappointment, because I do not

¹⁴*CR*, 216.

¹⁵See especially, in *CR*, p. 448.

¹⁶*CR*, 265.

¹⁷Cf. *ibid.*, 440, 460, 476. In the case of what I referred to above as skepticism about the existence of other cultures, the connection between other-knowledge and

and cannot have “knowledge” in the way I imagine it, that the responsibility of *acknowledging* the other falls upon me. And it is responsibility that makes my act free, an act of choice (hence also an act that yields self-knowledge, an act that reveals my intelligible character—reveals me as intelligible). That I am “responsible,” one might say, means not that I *ought* to respond, but just that I that am *capable* of responding. It is what turns the physical fact of my treating another (as, for example, in pain) into a response, and the physical fact of my not doing so into a refusal.

My condition is not exactly that I have to *put* the other’s life there; and not exactly that I have to *leave* it there either. I (have to) *respond* to it, or refuse to respond. It calls upon me; it calls me out.¹⁸

On Husserl’s view, however, my relationship to the other is precisely one of “putting” (positing). There is therefore no question of my responding. Being responsible *for* (the existence of) others, I cannot be responsible *to* them. The other’s pain cannot call me. Morality is *widersinnig*. The refutation of skepticism has come, or so it seems, at a higher price—an infinitely higher price—than we should be willing to pay.

self-knowledge is perhaps even clearer. At least for us moderns, this skepticism tends to take the form of a doubt as to whether there are any “cultures” at all. The reason for that, I suppose, is that we have amongst us the terrifying phenomenon of modern science, which is not a cultural institution, and which therefore speaks without authority—i.e., with an authority that can never be challenged. (It is *not* true that someone who now refused to accept the evidence of telescopes about mountains on the moon might be declared “incompetent in *science*” [261].) And this is also why a Political Proof of the existence of other cultures (of “multiculturalism”) may easily end up looking like, or being, an attack on science and rationality.

¹⁸Ibid., 84.

Afterword: Poetry and the City

I could have ended this dissertation here, and I originally considered doing so. But I think that that would have been a bad and dangerous thing. And what I have to talk about now is precisely this question of danger in philosophizing—where it seems to be, where it is, what response it calls for. For surely Husserl’s doctrine *looks* like something dangerous, like something that should not be said. But perhaps you can already hear, in the very expression “should not be said,” a hint that there are other dangers to be reckoned with.

I want to go back once more to Cavell’s own ordinary language discovery, and in particular to the way in which the traditional epistemologist, as I said above, “takes advantage” of these ordinary language facts that Cavell has uncovered. “Takes advantage”—for what purpose? If someone takes advantage of some unnoticed facts about our language in order to discuss one thing under the cover of discussing something else, then it is natural to see this as a piece of active deception. That is what Austin’s word “wily” insinuates. And even if I am told that the metaphysicians are sincere, still I might think of them as being just too wily for their own good—as having at last succeeded in deceiving themselves.

This would be the wrong way to think about things. It would be false, and, to pick up another one of Cavell’s expressions, not just false but mythically false.¹ But

¹See *CR*, 365.

it would also, perhaps more importantly, suggest a false context in which to consider the question I have raised (the question of whether philosophers are corrupting the youth, and if so what should be done about it). We need to look for other models of this “taking advantage.” That will take us necessarily into the part of *The Claim of Reason* which I have called “bewildering.” Still, there are things that must be said. I will do my best, based on my limited understanding, to say them.

One obvious alternative is to think of the philosopher’s misuse of words not as active deception (or active self-deception), but as something passive—i.e., pathological. Cavell describes traditional epistemologists as subject to a certain “experience”: things have “presented themselves” to them in a certain way. They have been struck by the materiality of things.

When those objects present themselves to the epistemologist, he is not taking one as opposed to another, interested in its features as peculiar to it and nothing else. He would rather, so to speak, have an unrecognizable *something* there if he could, an anything, a thatness. What comes to him is an island, a body surrounded by air, a tiny earth (53).

This suggests that one context in which the badness or dangerousness of philosophical talk can be assessed is the context of therapy (or, broadly speaking, of psychoanalysis). Certainly Wittgenstein sometimes presents himself as trying to cure us of something. And Cavell sometimes wants us to read the “slight” forcedness of metaphysical language as a *symptom*: “to try to determine what (fantasy, thought, feeling) may be prodding you to this attempt, being expressed in it (‘acted out,’ a psychoanalyst might say)” (212). We are to regard the philosopher, in other words, not as willfully “taking advantage” of a means of expression, but as helplessly (and pathologically) “in the grip” of it. And if we want to know how inappropriate this expression is (how bad and pathological a symptom it is), then the question will be how seriously it

interferes with the philosopher's life (whether it is a neurosis or a psychosis).

There is, however, another way of looking at this question—a way which is also sometimes taken by Cavell, and which is sometimes exemplified in his own writing. It is by no means necessarily inconsistent with the first, but it does tend to show the traditional epistemologist in a more active light. For what the epistemologist has experienced, anyone could have experienced. And yet the typical symptom will not be philosophical talk (or writing). Someone subject to this experience “may *say* nothing at all; he may not have the courage to, or the words” (334). The epistemologist is someone who can and must find an expression for this experience in language (that is the epistemologist's “real need”): “he enters by providing the words” (*ibid.*). Hence the epistemologist's task is a creative one—a matter, as Cavell often says, of “invention,” or of “making”²—i.e. of *ποιεῖν* in the ancient literary sense. There is “taking advantage” here, in other words, but—as Carnap and Heidegger, among others, realized—it reflects not so much the wile of the rhetorician as the cunning of the poet.³

²“The philosopher has to *make* a problem for us, show us in what sense it might so much as *be* a problem” (159).

³It is interesting and perhaps important to note that if I wanted to *paint* the object for you (or perhaps more clearly, if I wanted to get a computer to render it on your display), then I would suddenly find myself in a context in which the geometrical question, “What ‘part’ of the object is in view?”, was automatically relevant. Nor is it so trivial to answer this question. For example, it is *not* true of a sphere (unless the sphere “is at infinity”) that the curve which separates the seen and unseen parts is a great circle. And in the case of most other objects this curve is not even a plane figure, let alone confined to a plane perpendicular to the line of sight.

I point this out—this non-triviality—because it shows that there are actually *discoveries* to be made here. They are discoveries which may not seem, on the face of them, to carry any epistemological weight (“You don't actually see the *whole* front hemisphere”). But isn't there something unsettling about the fact that the skeptic, of all people—or anyway someone trying to speak in the skeptic's name—could be so

Now Husserl, as I have just finished arguing at great length, is no “traditional epistemologist,” and neither, I think more obviously, is St. Thomas. And even in the case of someone like Descartes, who I guess is such a traditional epistemologist if anyone is, it may be misleading to describe him as a “poet” striving to express his “experience” in “our language.” It does not do justice, for one thing, to Cavell’s observation that the philosopher’s extension or projection of ordinary speech must be neither entirely “natural” *nor* entirely “unnatural” (i.e., metaphorical).⁴ It would be wrong, moreover, to think of the “experience” in question as one that could just as well have been expressed by laughing or grunting or shouting “hurrah!”—just as it would be wrong to think of poetry that way.⁵ And it is above all important to notice that the “we” whose words the philosopher wants to use is not just “we speakers of English” (or of German, French, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Greek) but “we philosophers.” As much as they strive to express themselves using “our” ordinary words (tomato, table, wax, tree), it is perhaps even more important to Husserl or Descartes (or to Wittgenstein or Cavell or, for that matter, to Carnap) that they are able to project, and not entirely unnaturally, the use of those old words of the philosophical tribe: genus, species, mode, substance, essence, intellect, will, absolute,

wrong about what we (actually) see?

⁴But probably poetry is not exactly “metaphorical” in this sense, either. (Probably that is a way of dismissing poetry.) Cavell himself is content, at least in *The Claim of Reason*, merely “to raise the question of whether, and how, we know differences between the writing of literature and the writing of philosophy” (478).

⁵It is worth remembering that Carnap, in comparing metaphysics to other forms of expression which are without “cognitive meaning,” chooses as his examples not chortles and groans but Mozart and Beethoven, and that Cavell chooses (among others) Shakespeare. (I doubt Cavell would say that Shakespeare is without “cognitive meaning.” That would be a terminological dispute—which is to say, it is *some* dispute, but not the one it seems to be. There are many ways of arguing about one thing under the cover of another, and philosophers have taken advantage of all of them.)

transcendental, power, possibility, science, intuition, cause, being, definition, object, form, matter, organ, dimension, sense, affection, passion, truth, self, freedom, God.

Still, misleading and oversimplified as the analogy may be, it is useful, in considering how we ought to respond to something like Husserl's system, to ask whether it is bad poetry. This at least has the virtue of making explicit the political dimension of our problem. For one of the most ancient questions about "bad" poetry is whether, if it is bad *enough*, we ought to exclude it from our city. As Plato long ago tried to warn us (by means of his usual technique of having Socrates claim or urge one thing, while the action of the dialogue, or the story of Socrates' life, or Plato's own way of writing, claim or urge something quite different)—those questions are not easy.

Consider, first of all, that "bad" here cannot mean "bad" in the sense that doggerel is bad. Anyone who has grown accustomed to reading Thomistic *quaestiones* or steps of the Hegelian method has learned how tension is built up and released there, and has experienced the thrill of understanding why only *that* word (*natura*, say, or *Zusammenschließen*) would be appropriate.⁶ How is such "poetry" supposed to be "bad" poetry? Cavell speaks of a kind of "philosophical failure" which "one could also think of ... at the same time as ... literary failure," which consists in the philosopher's "failing to provide genuinely freeing words."⁷ This shows, I think, how the two conceptions of philosophical expression (as symptom and as literary creation)

⁶It is in this latter respect, incidentally—in its need for the right word—that philosophical writing most resembles poetry, as opposed to prose literature or scientific writing. That is why philosophy, like poetry, is peculiarly difficult to translate well, and why, just as the quality of poetry translation often depends more on the poetic ability of the translator than on his or her knowledge of the original language, a translation of philosophy can often be ruined by the translator's lack of philosophical comprehension.

⁷*CR*, 334.

are reconcilable. The result of wrong expressive activity (of “literary failure”) is expressive passivity (or pathologicity)—much as in Kant the result of wrong choice is unfreedom. But what is not quite so clear (just as it is not so clear in Kant) is how we are to distinguish between right and wrong in a particular case. What is the difference between good and bad philosophical poetry?

One way of understanding what happens in Heidegger and in Carnap is that they insist that a certain implicit fiction—a fiction common to Husserl and to the traditional epistemologist—become *explicitly* fictional. The fiction is a fiction of aloneness. That Descartes was *necessarily* alone in his study (and not just “accidentally” so) is a fiction, an invention. In fact, we, his future readers, were already, so to speak, potentially present. “Authenticity” is never the actual state of the philosopher; it is something the philosopher constructs or invents to make a point. The purpose, I guess, of making this fiction explicit (the methodology of “methodological solipsism”) is that it allows us to pass judgment on it rather than being absorbed by it, so that we can see in the end how much, or how little, it really contained.⁸

Part of Cavell’s strategy, I think, in *The Claim of Reason*, is to do the same thing to metaphysical and epistemological talk in general (to make its fictitiousness explicit). Hence the sudden shift, for example, between the metaphysical-sounding “He would rather, so to speak, have an unrecognizable *something* there if he could, an anything, a thatness,” and the frankly poetic “What comes to him is an island, a body surrounded by air, a tiny earth.” Cavell speaks of the same technique in Wittgenstein as an attempt to “release the fantasy”⁹—to let it go, so that we can

⁸Carnap’s criticism of Heidegger is that his (Heidegger’s) linguistic (i.e., literary) means are insufficient (or over-sufficient) to this end. If one treats “nothing” as if it were a noun, then one cannot really say that there is *nothing* there (in the “self”).

⁹*CR*, 344.

see it, rather than be “in its grip.” And if I have understood this correctly, then the parallel with Plato is deeper than it might at first seem. The demand or desire for an exposure (or “release”) of fictitiousness is similar to Socrates’ demand, in the *Republic*, that the speech of disreputable characters should always be reported only indirectly.

But haven’t I got this exactly wrong? Isn’t the purpose of introducing an *interlocutor* here precisely to expose us, the audience, to the experience of the epistemologist, and hence to give vent to (to experience a catharsis of) the metaphysical terror or horror that it excites? Shouldn’t I, in other words, be comparing Cavell and Wittgenstein to Aristotle—i.e., to a position meant explicitly to counter Plato on this very point? Actually, I think that is not correct. If I were in pain, then no drama could “purge” me of that: I would still be just as much in pain when the curtain closed. But there is “the possibility of my gaining perspective on myself. I can, for example, sometimes gain a perspective on my present pain. It still hurts; I still mind it; it is still mine; but I find that I can handle it.”¹⁰ Assuming that the ever-present concept of pain in Cavell and Wittgenstein is supposed in part to be a stand-in or metaphor for skepticism, then this suggests a way of getting out of “the grip” which is quite different from Aristotelian catharsis. The effect of Cavellian and Wittgenstinian interlocutors, moreover, is not exactly one of different characters each speaking their pieces. It is more like (and as confusing as) being allowed to listen in on someone arguing with himself.¹¹

¹⁰ *CR*, 433.

¹¹ There is one point, near the end of *The Claim of Reason*, where Cavell explicitly personifies his interlocutor. But what he says there is revealing: “I knew you were still there” (*CR*, 492). Thrasymachus can leave.

I feel like I ought to say something about what the purpose of Cavell’s interlocutors

I'm not sure, in any case, that any of this makes much difference for our present purposes. I am less interested, here and now, in Aristotle's answer to Plato than I am in Plato's own answer. For if Plato has Socrates demand that the evil character should never be given direct expression, still, Plato himself (and this is an example of the technique which I mentioned above) conspicuously does not meet that demand in his own writings, least of all in the *Republic*. Nor does he do this for Aristotle's reasons. It is not Thrasymachus' (evil) speech that is supposed to purge us of our desire to be tyrants, but Socrates' (good) speech. Socrates shows—by what he says here, and by what he was, and by what became of him—that the desire to save the city by imposing good speech (the desire to save the youth from corruption) is liable instead to destroy the city's most valuable possessions, and hence to lead the city into injustice, deception, evil. Perhaps it should not be that way (perhaps it is so because our city is “fevered”), but that is how it is.

Is it true that “one can face the disappearance of justice from the world more easily than an amnesia of the very concept of justice”?¹² Let me try to release the fantasy here. Are we supposed to imagine a world in which some, or even all, people

is (and in general about why his writing is “bewildering”). Until recently I thought I had nothing to say about this, beyond simply reporting the brute fact that it bewilders *me*. But now I find that I can at least say the following. If we could be sure, namely, that we understood Cavell's meaning in *The Claim of Reason*, or if we could confidently fix the blame for our lack of understanding (chalking it up either to our own dullness or to Cavell's need for a good editor), then the book would be self-refuting. The philosopher must *make* a problem for us. On p. 359, after explaining at length why “I” might not want to tell “you” something, even though “I” want “you” to know it, Cavell adds that if “I” do tell “you,” then something must have overcome these reasons. “It may, for example, be of overriding importance to me to test the attunement of our intuitions, our agreements in judgment. Since I believe that philosophy can reach no further than these agreements, I am apt to be tempted to test them.” The book is fated to enact the tragedy which it describes.

¹² *CR*, 283.

act justly, but nobody knows, in the way that we *all* now know, what justice is? That, I think, is inconceivable. People in such a world would not deserve anything, and so could not be just to one another (though they might perhaps show mercy). But if we are instead to imagine a world in which people act justly, but in which the (philosophical, literary, religious) *theory* of justice has been lost, then why is that worse than “the disappearance of justice from the world”? Of course, Cavell does not say that it is worse, but only that it is less easy for “one”—i.e., for *us*—to face. And I would read that as an indictment. Our difficulty in facing this possibility is pride, vanity, hubris. We imagine that the existence of, say, Kantian moral theory is more important than the existence of morality (although I don’t think Kant imagined that for an instant). We imagine that philosophy, merely by confessing its faith, can be a light unto the nations. But in fact the city could be perfectly just without us—*unless* the act of banishing us would itself be an injustice. And if that is true, it will be true not because we are the sole possessors of a true theory of justice. Quite the opposite. (*Only you have I known, of all the families of the earth; therefore will I count against you all your iniquities.*) It would be true, rather, for the same reasons it might be true about anyone, beginning with: that *we* are just to one another.¹³

Husserl’s doctrine seemingly makes morality impossible. But Husserl’s own life, in its political significance, does not bear that conclusion out. What I have in mind here is not so much the usual argument about his devotion to the “tasks” of philosophy, his vision for the future of European culture, etc., as the far more basic fact of his

¹³According to Plato, the small advantage of the democratic city over other, much better, kinds, is that the just city can exist, as it were in miniature, inside the democratic city—i.e., that in the democratic city one can *choose* to be just; i.e., that one can, by choosing justice, come to deserve it; i.e., that justice is (grammatically) possible. See *Republic* 8.557^d.

need to *teach* us—his need for us to understand him properly.

This, of course, is a trait which he shares, to some extent, with every philosopher we know of (with the possible exception of Kierkegaard). The very fact that they have tried to express themselves in “our” language shows already that they have adopted some maxim that makes them responsible to us (that we are a law to them), and thus affirmed their humanity in deed, if not in word. That is the truth that I above took Carnap and Heidegger as trying to unmask. But although the need to communicate is obviously present in every philosophical writer (again, with the possible exception of Kierkegaard), it is not always of the same intensity. In Husserl it is very strong. There is nothing more palpable in his writing than the intense need to teach, and the disappointment, frustration, even rage, upon his failure to do so—upon our failure to understand the “sense” of his statements.

When someone fails to take my “sense” (when someone looks, so to speak, along the back of my hand towards my wrist, rather than following my pointing finger), then I must decide whether or not to continue talking (to continue teaching). And the extent of the willingness to continue *talking* in such a case is what measures the boundaries of civilization. Husserl stayed within those borders, stayed with us to teach us, even if what he taught was for us a hard saying.¹⁴ Some of Husserl’s

¹⁴A similar point might be made about Wittgenstein. It is utterly wrong to say, as some have said, that Wittgenstein showed more respect for the Azande than he did for philosophers. If he had gone off to live with the Azande, claimed to be one of them; if he had tried to reform their practices, to teach them new interpretations for their ancient words and customs; if he had remained with them and continued to teach them even though they could not understand how his terms were supposed to be a continuation of their series; if he had remained with them even after they had separated him off for treatment as a lunatic or worse—if, in short, he had been a Socrates to the Azande—*then* that charge could fairly be levelled against him. The problem with this accusation against Wittgenstein is not the analogy which is drawn between philosophers and the members of a “tribe,” but the failure to take that

successors, on the other hand, managed, by going very deep, to undermine the basis of his system, and to restore, in an extreme version, the Kantian doctrines that make room for the practical. But in doing so they simultaneously stepped closer to, or brought closer in, the border between civilization and barbarism (began to treat one another as lunatics). And at least one of them, at least temporarily, stepped clear over that border onto the other side. This is what Plato tried to warn us about. There can be worse things in the city than blasphemous poetry.

analogy *seriously*. (Rather than pining for the days when philosophy “was a way of life,” we ought to examine our way of life and make it better.)

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