



Husserlian Phenomenology: The Living Body at Crisis

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Course: Masterseminar Husserl Archives
June 11 2016, Leuven

The Living Body at Crisis

Abstract:

In this paper the importance of Husserl's concepts of the living body and embodiment will be investigated regarding his work of *The Crisis*. Further on will be shown that Husserl's concept of embodiment leads to a better understanding of 'The crisis of the European sciences and, secondly a better understanding of transcendental phenomenology itself'. In this paper the theme of the animate body forms a centre-point in seeing a key difference between a phenomenological and a scientific methodology.

First, I introduce some of Husserl's concepts. Then Husserl's concept of the embodiment will be briefly explained in this paper from within his *Ideas II*. I focus on the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*, double articulation of tactile sensations and kinesthesia. Thirdly, a global view of Husserl's project in *The Crisis* and a revision of the concept of embodiment will be given. Finally, given the above, I will explain how exactly Husserl's concept of embodiment fits his project of *The Crisis* and how this gives a clearer view of what problem exactly the crisis of the European sciences brings forth and how Husserl himself and transcendental phenomenology try to resolve that.

1. First steps into Husserl's thought

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is commonly known as ‘the father of phenomenology’. Phenomenology has been done for centuries, but it became a philosophical movement on its own in the early 20th century in the works of Husserl. Phenomenology can generally be comprehended in two ways: 1) as a disciplinary field in philosophy, or 2) as a movement in the history of philosophy. In short, the discipline of phenomenology may be defined as the study of structures of experience and consciousness. Literally, phenomenology means the study of *phenomena*: these are appearances of things as they appear or present themselves in our experience, or in short, the way we experience things. The historical movement of phenomenology is the philosophical tradition that initiated in the first half of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl and was later set forth by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, etc. In that movement, the discipline of phenomenology was opted as the proper foundation of all philosophy. Phenomenology then refers to an appropriate way of doing philosophy, a method.¹

Husserlian phenomenology contrasts to what Husserl called *naturalism*. In naturalism, material nature or things are pre-given (objects). In the naturalistic view, consciousness is a part of nature and can be approached by natural and scientific methods based on empirical facts and causal explanations. In contrast, for Husserl, phenomenology must focus directly on the evidence of lived experience or *Erlebnis* of first-person subjective life: phenomenology gives descriptions of experiencing and the experienced, rather than turning to causal explanations.² Husserl’s project to bracket this naturalistic attitude is known as the *epoché* or transcendental reduction. We must describe not the scientific or natural world, but the life-world or *Lebenswelt*. Husserl describes the life-world as the (natural and cultural) world of the pre-given, familiar, present, surrounding and taken for granted world. The life-world provides a set of backgrounds or horizons for all human activity. The life-world is the foundation for all human meaning and purposive activity.³

For Husserl, descriptions of experience and consciousness have to be *eidetic* or *essential*. This means that what is being described is not a specific set of empirical facts or data,

¹ David Woodruff Smith, Phenomenology, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, 2013, 4, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/phenomenology/>>, [last checked on 11/06/2016].

² Elizabeth A. Behnke, Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment, in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/husspemb/>>, [last checked on 11/06/2016].

³ Carman Taylor. The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, in *Philosophical Topics*, 1999, 2, pp. 208-215.

only referring to their own empirical status. This idea is also known as the *eidetic or phenomenological reduction* in Husserl's Ideas. Phenomenology must describe invariants or eidetic laws which cover a certain range of facts. Examples of an eidetic laws: any conceivable color has some extension or every moment has a duration. Husserl's investigations of essential structures of conscious life and experience define consciousness as *transcendental* rather than worldly or psychological, which means that consciousness is taken not as a part of the world or as something *constituted*, but as the constitutive condition for experiencing any world, as a *constituting power* or *constituent*. Husserl also speak about this constitutive consciousness as *noesis*. An example of a transcendental act then, is perceiving. It is in regard to this distinction that Husserl distinguishes between phenomenology as a science of pure consciousness (constituent) and psychology as a science of empirical (constituted) facts about consciousness.⁴

Husserl studied the structure of various types of experience such as perception, memory, imagination, thought, emotion, bodily awareness, language, etc. via both the eidetic and transcendental reduction, and focused on what he called *intentionality*. Husserl states in *Phenomenological Psychology*:

*"... the most universal essential characteristic of psychic being and living is exposed: intentionality. Psychic being is the life of consciousness; consciousness is consciousness of something."*⁵

Intentionality refers to the fact that consciousness is always consciousness of something. There is an 'aboutness' or 'directness'. You are aimed or oriented at a whether or not perceptible object. You are being directed toward something or have an experience of or about some object. That orientation or intentionality of experience can be understood as a correlation between 'subject' and 'object', between consciousness and reality. An experience is directed toward objects or things through concepts, ideas, (verbal) images, etc. These concepts and images make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are different from the things they present or mean.

Besides the intentional structure of forms of experience, for example self-awareness, temporal awareness, spatial awareness, attention, awareness of other persons, awareness of the body, etc., Husserl also investigated different conditions of possibility of intentionality

⁴ Elizabeth A. Behnke, Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment, in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://iep.utm.edu/hussem/>>, [last checked on 11/06/2016].

⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenological Psychology*. Translated by John Scanlon, (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), p. 34.

including embodiment, language, cultural context and social practices.

Intentionality hereby is best not understood as *a relation* between consciousness and reality, or subject and object because the ‘intended’ or motivated does not necessarily have to exist for an act to be intentional, for example imagination, misguided perception or hallucination. Intentionality is more like an intrinsic feature of an experience or consciousness. This is why for Husserl (almost all) objects of intentional acts are *transcendent*. An object is transcendent in Husserl’s sense, if it is given to consciousness through separate perspectives, or in adumbrations or *Abschattungen*, so that only one side or aspect of the thing is immediately present to us at any one time and the object itself needs to be constituted in perception, memory...: if I look at a house, I always only see parts of it, yet, I definitely see a house, but my perceived object is transcendent or constituted. In other words, a transcendent object is the perceived object as perceived, and what Husserl calls *noema*. An object is *immanent* if it is given to consciousness all at once, transparent, in a way that no variations in perspective alter our comprehension of it cf. eidetic structures and essences. For Husserl physical bodies, worldly states of affairs and mathematical or logical entities are transcendent. The contents of consciousness are immanent, since we each have immediate access to our own (current) thoughts and experiences.⁶

As mentioned above, one of the important conditions for intentionality (and thus ‘conscious’ experience) is embodiment. The body plays a major role, in that it seems to be an transcendent and immanent object (I never see my complete body at distance, yet I have ‘control’), and the body also seems to be intrinsic part of constituting consciousness and is, in that sense, transcendental. In what follows I investigate this claim and the theme of embodiment in Husserl’s Ideas 2 and Husserl’s Crisis. Ultimately I want to show the importance of embodiment in understanding Husserl’s Crisis.

2. Embodiment in Husserl’s Ideas Two

One of the most important texts on the theme of embodiment or corporeity is the second volume of his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, subtitled *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* and is usually referred to as *Ideas Two*.

⁶ Carman Taylor. The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, in *Philosophical Topics*, 1999, 2, pp. 208-209.

Husserl's Ideas were written with the vision to clear out the distinction between *phenomenological psychology*, which he regarded as a legitimate but secondary science, and *phenomenological philosophy*, which, for Husserl, had to be the foundation of all science. In his *Ideas* Husserl defines phenomenology as a descriptive analysis of the essence of pure consciousness. Husserl defines transcendental phenomenology as an *a priori* (or eidetic) science. He further distinguishes between *pure phenomenology* and *empirical psychology* and respectively, *between transcendental* and *psychological subjectivity*. phenomenology is a science of essences, while psychology is a science of facts of experience. In short, Husserl criticizes *psychologism*: the idea that naturalistic psychology is an appropriate method to solve philosophical matters, for example the enigma of consciousness: only an *a priori* science can define the essential or eidetic nature of consciousness.⁷

As already mentioned, we cannot leave the discussion of transcendental phenomenology without discussing the theme of lived embodiment, because it is one of Husserl's interesting insights. Husserl roughly shows four elements for a phenomenology of embodiment in his *Ideas Two*: 1) he shows the (traditional) naturalistic and scientific presumptions about the body as physical 2) he shows an phenomenological understanding of the body as embodied subjectivity; 3) he offers phenomenological descriptions of the structure of embodied experience; and 4) he shows that transcendental (inter)subjectivity itself must be understood as kinesthetic consciousness, or 'consciousness in movement'.⁸

1 and 2) The distinction between the physical body (*Körper*) and the living body (*Leib*)

Husserl's doesn't understand consciousness or subjectivity exclusively in terms of mental states. Traditional philosophy defines the realm of the mental or psychological as opposed to the realm of the physical. This distinction is also known as the mind-body dualism which originated from the philosophical works of Descartes and is criticized in Husserl's *Crisis* (see infra). Instead, the phenomenological notion of embodied experience offers an alternative to mind-body dualism. Husserl criticizes the assumption that the body is a psychophysical entity and investigates the body as directly experienced by the embodied experiencer. To understand experience and consciousness the body cannot be, as in the natural objective sciences, a physical or material body which can be operated like a machine and is governed by a psychological mind

⁷ Elizabeth A. Behnke, Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment, in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://iep.utm.edu/hussemb/>>, [last checked on 11/06/2016].

⁸ Ibid..

or immaterial agent. Investigating consciousness by reducing it to psychophysical and neurophysiological causal explanations based on scientific methods (and their assumptions) and referring to parts of the body (or brain) as objects, will never lead to a full understanding of consciousness and embodied experience. Sciences can split the body and the mind but can't put it all back together.⁹

The mind-body problem thrives on a concept of body that shifts between persons and non-persons, making Husserl's distinction between *Leib* and *Körper* necessary. Husserl writes:

*"What we have to set over against material nature as a second kind of reality is not the 'soul,' but the concrete unity of body and soul, the human (or animal) subject."*¹⁰

The concrete unity of body and soul can be grasped in the idea of the living body or *Leib*. The most important feature of one's own body as *Leib* is it never appears as discrete or complete physical object for myself and is thus never a truly transcendent object. Husserl clears this out himself:

*"I do not have the possibility of distancing myself from my body, nor it from me ... [since] ... The same body that serves me as a means of all perception, stands in my way in the perception of itself and is a remarkably incompletely constituted thing."*¹¹ [own addition]

At the moment of perception, the perceiving organ itself is excluded from the domain of objects that are perceived. Husserl didn't deny that the parts of the body can see or touch other parts, but the insight about the perceiving organ in relation to itself remains: I cannot see my eye seeing.

*"Naturally one would not say that I see my eye in the mirror. For my eye, the seeing qua seeing, I do not perceive. I see something, of which I judge indirectly, through "empathy", that it is identical with my eyeball (constituted, say, by touch), just as I see the eye of another."*¹²

⁹ Ibid..

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution, trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), p. 139.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 159.

¹² Ibid., p. 148. The term 'empathy' is a difficult term in Husserl's work and I will not discuss it here.

I can see my eyes but Husserl means that I cannot see my eye seeing. I don't know or feel eyes because I see them (in the mirror). Idem ditto with hearing: the ear is 'there', but the sensed tone, my perception is not localized in the ear. In short we will conclude that Husserl seems to state that the living body is constituting and, partly but not completely, constituted, that it is transcendental and not, or partly transcendent.¹³

The importance of embodiment or *leiblichkeit* also matters to understand Husserl's account of the intentional constitution of the body and its role in perception. Husserl shows the above cases of perception (seeing and hearing) are different from the sense of touch. When I touch something with my hand, I feel qualities of the object, and I also feel tactile sensations localized in the hand itself. Whereas the ear cannot hear itself hearing, the body can feel itself feeling. I do not locate visual sensations in my eye or auditory sensations in my ear, I do locate tactile sensations in the parts of my body involved in touching things.¹⁴

3) The double aspect of tactile sensations

Husserl's theory of bodily intentionality is based on '*the privilege of the localization of touch sensations*'.¹⁵ This is the double aspect of tactile sensations that grounds our bodily intentionality. Bodily intentionality can be considered as the immediate sense of being my embodied self(-control). Husserl sees a constitutive role for free bodily movement in our perception of the environment. In Cartesian Meditations he wrote:

*"Among the ... bodies of this nature I then find uniquely singled out my body ... the only one in which I immediately have free rein, and in particular govern in each of its organs —. I perceive with my hands, touching kinesthetically, seeing with my eyes, etc., and can so perceive at any time, while these kinestheses of the organs proceed in the I am doing and are subject to my I can; furthermore, putting these kinestheses into play, I can push, shove, etc., and thereby directly, and then indirectly, act corporeally."*¹⁶

¹³ Carman Taylor, The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, in *Philosophical Topics*, 1999, 2, p. 210.

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), pp. 155-159.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960), p. 97.

For Husserl bodily act and movement don't intentionally constitute the body as that of the embodied subject. Only in as far as the body perceives one of its organs by means of another and makes it an object, the body is intentionally constituted, for example if one hand touches the other, or the eye gets touched by the hand, etc. Husserl argues that this intentional constitution of the living body is exclusively dependent on the double aspect distinct to *the sense of touch*:

"The body as such can be constituted originally only in tactuality and in everything localized within the sensations of touch, such as warmth, cold, pain, and the like. ... [it] becomes a body only through the introduction of sensations in touch, the introduction of pain sensations, etc., in short, through the localization of sensations qua sensations" [own addition].¹⁷

The living body is not (completely) the same as the experiencer itself, but is a *field of localization* of sensations and feelings belonging to the subject:

*"The subject, constituted as the counterpart of material nature, is ... an I, to which a body belongs as the field of localization of its sensations"*¹⁸

For Husserl, the body is fundamentally a carpet for and of sensations, it is a thin sheet in between (the rest of) the material world and the 'subjective' sphere. It is the bearer and beacon of sensations.¹⁹

4) Transcendental consciousness as constituent of the living body through intrinsic kinesthetically motivation

Husserl tries to intentionality and embodiment of conscious experience in terms of motivation. Motivation is always subjective, a.k.a. the motivating, whose objective correlate can be real or merely apparent, a.k.a. the motivated. Motivation, for Husserl, remains a kind of inference of subjectivity and objectivity, rational or not. In Ideas II Husserl points out that kinesthetic sensations or consciousness of the *Leib* motivate or evokes sensations connected to externally

¹⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), p. 151.

¹⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), pp. 152, 261.

¹⁹ Carman Taylor. The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, in *Philosophical Topics*, 1999, 2, pp. 210-212.

perceived objects: if my eye turns, then my focus on certain aspects in front of me changes. If my eye turns in another way, the image does so accordingly. Kinesthetic consciousness is not consciousness “of” movement, but a consciousness in movement. This is subjectivity that is intrinsically characterized in terms of motility or moving ability; being able to move freely and autonomous. In Husserl’s phenomenology of embodiment, the *Leib* is a lived center of experience, and both its kinesthesia and its specific aspects of sensing and being sensed are key factors of how we interact with the world and other embodied agents in the shared seemingly ever-explorable world.²⁰

Husserl emphasizes on the double articulation in embodied consciousness: kinesthetic sensations on the one side, the motivating; sensations of features on the other, the motivated.²¹ When Husserl discusses motivation, then, he seeks a interworking position between a rationalist and an empiricist view: the motivating motivates and is being motivated by the motivated itself. My movement leads to meaningful perception and those lead to new kinesthesia and vice versa. Empiristic explanations cannot describe how kinesthetic sensations and outward sensations constitute genuine intentional attitudes toward my body as my own, because simple said conscious would be redundant in causality and the body turns into machine, a lightbulb. The same for rationalistic theories: consciousness needs input from the outside world, to be conscious about. On the contrary, for Husserl, intentional embodiment is experienced by the double aspect of tactile sensation, which makes a perceived organ a temporary object of my subjective consciousness. The body as such emerges in the coincidence of sensing and being sensed, specifically in my body sensing itself.²²

Conclusion Ideas Two

For Husserl, the living body is not itself constitutive of intentionality, but is an achievement of transcendental subjectivity or *noesis*. Husserl argues that I have a sense of self, logically prior to and independent of anything outside my consciousness, including my body, namely my awareness of myself as the ‘transcendental’ I or *ego*, acting at the center of all my intentionalities. The intentional constitution of the body then, is the product of a cognitive process whose steps we might trace back to the founding acts of a pure I. For Husserl, bodily

²⁰ Ibid..

²¹ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), p.58.

²² Carman Taylor. The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, in *Philosophical Topics*, 1999, 2, p. 212.

intentionality is a kind of intermediary phenomenon filling the gap between consciousness and reality. The body is no mere thing, no discrete object of outer perception and no fully transcendent object, but it is transcendental, it constitutes or is condition for intentionality. It is nevertheless a transcendent object in the sense that I always accumulate perspectives of it to form ‘an (incomplete) image’ of it. Yet I hold sway over it as something immediate and immanent. The body is that which the transcendental ego has as its locus of subjective sensations.²³

3. The project of Husserl’s Crisis

The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy (1936) is the last published and initially unfinished work of Husserl which is seen as a culmination and introduction of Husserl’s earlier thought. In this work Husserl shows the need for a reorientation of philosophy towards a transcendental and phenomenological philosophy by teleological and historical reflection on the origins and development of our contemporary scientific and philosophical situation. Husserl begins the Crisis by stating a crisis, not only for the successful natural sciences, but even for the ‘total meaningfulness’ of cultural life.²⁴ In Crisis §§ 1-7 Husserl roughly points out that there is a crisis of the foundations in philosophy, the exact and positivistic sciences, in human sciences or the *Geisteswissenschaften*, in psychology particularly and in contemporary culture or European humanity. All these crises are intertwined and yet ‘solvable’ according to Husserl. He will try to show how transcendental phenomenology offers a way out of these crises as transcendental phenomenology will properly ground the sciences and philosophy by clarifying the concept of consciousness and subjectivity.

Husserl’s aim is seeking to understand ‘the origin of the modern spirit’, and, especially the ‘giving of meaning’ or *Sinngebung*, that resulted in modern science and eventually European culture.²⁵ For Husserl, the ‘primal establishment’ or *Urstiftung* of philosophy is at the same time the primal establishment of European humanity. Husserl searches for the a priori conditions that made modern science, philosophy and culture possible, the ‘historical a priori’: understanding European humanity, for Husserl, involves reflection on the ‘source meaning’ or

²³ Ibid., p. 213.

²⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 12.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 57-58, 73.

Ursprungssinn, of modern sciences and philosophy.²⁶ This leads Husserl to a *historical-teleological analysis* of the genesis of the modern mathematical sciences and modern philosophy. Husserl states that in daily life, science and philosophy there is a need for ‘self-understanding’ or *Selbstbesinnung*.²⁷ Philosophers as ‘functionaries of mankind’ need to self-reflect about the meaning of its historical Greek origins and its final directedness towards its goal, or its ‘teleology’. Though it may seem Hegelian that Husserl talks about an inner sense of history and attempting to trace the teleology of the modern philosophical tradition, he never investigates history in a linear or straight-forward sense. Husserl presents the transcendental subjectivity as vividly, full of life and individual lives are oriented towards (ever changing) goals or individual teloses and are unified in terms of their overall or shared telos or purpose. Husserl says:

“... that being human is teleological being and an ought-to-be, and that this teleology holds sway in each and every activity and project of an ego.”²⁸

The main crisis, for Husserl, is the failure of European rationality, despite huge advances of science and technology. Husserl shows in Crisis Part Two §§ 9-14 especially, that Modern culture leans towards naturalism and objectivism just as scientific and philosophical inquiry do, resulting in a complete misconception of subjectivity. The crisis in science means that its scientific method has become questionable.²⁹ Modern science executes a mathematization of the world, sort of pushing everything through a rational grid, technically covering everything in a garb of ideas or *Ideenkleid*.³⁰ The ideal (mathematical) entities are swapped for and preferred above the concrete experiential life-world, the original ground or *Urboden* of human life.³¹

“One can truly say that the idea of nature as a self-enclosed world of bodies first emerges with Galileo.”³²

According to Husserl, the concept of ‘world’ changes in meaning, as it is split into the world of nature and the psychic or mental world. Since Galileo, everything found in the directly-experienced life world now is corporeality or *Körperlichkeit*³³ or, Cartesian speaking, *res*

²⁶ Ibid., p. 374.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 437.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 341.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

³¹ Ibid., p. 49.

³² Ibid., p. 60.

³³ Ibid., p. 30.

extensa. This leads to a change in appearance of the life world into a world of spatio-temporal bodies in a closed causal nexus: one rational, knowable, closed system.

The rest of Part Two of the Crisis further analyzes the opposition between objectivity and subjectivity that developed in modern philosophy and science from Descartes, to Hume, to Locke, to Berkeley to Kant to show that subjectivity has been misunderstood along the development of modern science and philosophy as an internal or psychological subjectivity. Yet, Husserl praised Descartes and Kant for recognizing ‘transcendental subjectivism’ as fundamental philosophy but both still had a naturalistic conception both of the objective world (Newtonian space-time causality) and of subjectivity (Neo-Kantian psychology):

“Only a radical inquiry back into subjectivity—and specifically the subjectivity which ultimately brings about all world-validity, with its content and in all its prescientific and scientific modes, and into the “what” and the “how” of the rational accomplishments—can make objective truth comprehensible and arrive at the ultimate ontic meaning of the world. Thus it is not the being of the world as unquestioned, taken for granted, which is primary in itself; ... rather what is primary in itself is subjectivity, understood as that which naïvely pregives the being of the world and then rationalizes or (what is the same thing) objectifies it.”³⁴

In Part Three A Husserl returns to topic of the pre-given, always taken-for-granted life-world and radicalizes Descartes’ and Kant’s project by re-orientating transcendental philosophy. In Part Three B, Husserl analyses the problematic status of psychology, and claims that psychology needs transcendental grounding in phenomenology.³⁵

4. The importance of embodiment in Husserl’s Crisis

Now how do we connect the above with the importance of embodiment in *the Crisis*?

1) Understanding of the historical-teleological analysis: **Körper** and **Leib**, the **Körperwelt**

First of all, embodiment helps us understand the transition of the concept of the world. As explained above, with Galileo the perception of the ‘life-world’ changed into a scientific and

³⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

³⁵ Dermot Moran, Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: an Introduction. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 52-53.

rationalized *Körperwelt* full of *Körperlichkeit*, a world of physical bodies or *Körpers*. Our own human body came the same fate. An illustration of this transformation is the conception of space: space scientifically or quantified is an idealization of the concrete lived space of *Leiblichkeit*. Husserl point out in Crisis 9 (a), that we have become so acquainted with the world of geometry and its ideal shapes it unnoticeably started dominating the lived-space view. The experience of corporeal bodies in intuitively-lived space is different from the account of these bodies in the idealized version of the exact sciences. Bodies in real space change constantly, are perishable, practical and are only approximate alike. Geometrical space, on the other hand, is formalized, theoretical and idealized.³⁶

To show this, Husserl distinguishes, just as in Ideas Two explained above, the living animate body or *Leib* from the physical body or *Körper* in The Crisis §28. As said above, the *Leib* is to be understood as the unity of body as living fleshly organism inseparably interconnected or united with an ego. In The Crisis Husserl speaks of ‘embodied I-ness’ or *leibliche Ichlichkeit*. It can behave like other physical bodies or objects in nature (as *Körper*), f.e. in causal relations with other bodies. It has volume density, mass, weight, physical parts... properties which can be quantified by science. The key difference between the *Körper* and *Leib* however, is that the living body is always given as my own body (Crisis § 28) and is experienced as the center from which I act and over which I have (almost complete) control, hold sway or *walten*. It is a series of ‘I can’s’, an ‘ego of abilities or capacities’, an *Ich der Vermögens*.³⁷ It is an ‘organ of perception’; it is experienced as a living functioning tool, but one that, in normal situations, does not call attention to itself. It only becomes apparent if something doesn’t functions or goes wrong. , e.g. I move my head but my neck is stiff. As locus of my ‘place in space’, But, as *Leib* have an immediate consciousness of changing the position of my body, walking, or shaking my arms. I first and foremost experience my body as an organ of perception, willing and action. The entire world is mediated through my body.³⁸ Husserl writes:

“Everyone experiences the embodiment of souls in original fashion only in his own case. What properly and essentially makes up the character of a living body I experience only in my own living body, namely in my constant and immediate holding-sway through my physical body alone. Only it is given to me originally and

³⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 24-25.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁸ Dermot Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: an Introduction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Pp. 52-54, 158-162.

meaningfully as “organ” and as articulated into particular organs; each of its bodily members has its own features, such that I can hold sway immediately through it in a particular way—seeing with the eyes, touching with the fingers, etc.. ”³⁹

2) Understanding the ego interconnecting with other egos through the *Leib*

Secondly, a phenomenological understanding of the living body gives key insights into how egos appear and how they constitute intersubjective relations. At first, Husserl investigated individual processes of consciousness such as perception, embodiment, time... as *Erlebnis* of an ego. Later he focused on the connection between the ego and other egos in a mutual and intersubjective life of the shared experience in the life-world. Husserl criticizes Descartes psychological or solipsistic envisioning of subjectivity and tries to radicalize the Cartesian project in The Crisis so phenomenology can come to understand the eidetic structure or the *constitution of intersubjectivity*. Husserl will focus on the nature of intersubjective, mutual or joined experience and how community or culture are constituted. Husserl says:

“In this regard we speak of the “intersubjective constitution” of the world, meaning by this the total system of manners of givenness, however hidden, and also of modes of validity for egos; through this constitution, if we systematically uncover it, the world as it is for us becomes understandable as a structure of meaning formed out of elementary intentionalities. ... Intentionality is the title which stands for the only actual and genuine way of explaining, making intelligible.”⁴⁰

Husserl then focusses on intentionality, rephrasing what I explained above regarding Ideas Two: “Intentionality then is the title which stands for the only actual and genuine way of explaining, making in ... The world as it is for us becomes understandable as a structure of meaning formed out of elementary intentionalities. The being of these intentionalities themselves is nothing but one meaning formation operating together with another, “constituting” new meaning through synthesis. And meaning is never anything but meaning in modes of validity, that is, as related to intending ego-subjects which effect

³⁹ Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 168.

validity. Intentionality is the title which stands for the only actual and genuine way of explaining, making intelligible.”⁴¹

To get insight in the intentionality of transcendental (inter)subjectivity, investigation is needed of the structures of *Leiblichkeit*, but also of structures of social and interpersonalistic life, the *we-subjectivity*.⁴² Husserl writes, for instance:

“What the person does and suffers, what happens within him, how he stands in relation to his surrounding world, what angers him, what depresses him, what makes him cheerful or upset—these are questions relating to persons; and so are questions of a similar sort relating to communities of every level: marriages, friendships, clubs, civic communities, communities of peoples, etc.”⁴³

Leiblichkeit is the basis for the experience of the subjective lives of others with whom we share the life-world. All (physiological, social and cultural) relations of the ego to the world are mediated through my body; even abstract thought. I am always related to things as speaking, carrying, lifting, grabbing, standing, looking, and so on. The body isn't passive but a place of action, a series of '*I Can*' (vs. Descartes '*I think*' or *Cogito*). The living body is never absent from the perceptual field but we are mostly not aware of it in perception.⁴⁴ We all do experience and constitute our embodiment in a primordial way through sensations of perception and movement all the time. Earlier I showed in Ideas II, that the lived body as we experience it, is primarily constituted as a field of localization of sensation by touch and by kinesthesia. Husserl emphasizes this in The Crisis. My living body is the center of my orientation, my ‘here’ (space) and ‘now’ (time), my empathy⁴⁵ and forms a unifying beacon for all my sensory and kinesthetic experiences. Again, it mediates between my consciousness and reality.

Only through *my* holding-sway over my body I can understand another physical body as *Leib* in which another “I” is embodied and holds sway.⁴⁶ Other subjects, persons or possibly animals, show facial expressions, move their heads, arms and legs or see, hear, smell, touch.... Without a fundamental bodily sense of self-movement or kinesthesia, a body-in-touch, we can't understand embodied experiences of other living beings. Husserl, however, doesn't provide

⁴¹ Ibid..

⁴² Ibid., p. 109.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 322.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁵ The term ‘empathy’ is a difficult term I will not work out here.

⁴⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 227.

such a science of embodiment. Merleau-Ponty does. One could expect the closer the structure of experience of embodiment of an ego towards that of the other, the easier to understand the other and to engage intersubjective relations. But, through the body-in-touch one can even try to imagine what it feels like to be a bat.⁴⁷

3) Understanding the transcendental phenomenological ground of psychology through the Leib

Thirdly, the body as organic *Leib* also leads to fundamental insights to psychology. Husserl shows that naturalistic psychology starting from individual embodiment as *Körperlich*, leading into solipsistic science of individual selves or soul. This also influenced other *Geisteswissenschaften* greatly.⁴⁸ A phenomenological psychology of embodied consciousness in the intersubjective life-world cannot be commenced from individualist assumptions of modern empirical psychology, but has to depart from the richness of the interconnected ‘nexus of life’ or *Lebenszusammenhang* to find its intentional structures, forms and horizons. Empirical psychology, due to its method, has treated the body in an objectivist manner... But; for Husserl, The embodied ego has a uniqueness that is not simply that of having spatial and temporal coordinates: for the (embodied) ego, space and time are not principles of individuation; but as being it is inseparable from spatiotemporality.⁴⁹ Psychology must investigate the body as *Leib* in the life-world.⁵⁰

Conclusion

To conclude: first I cleared out some of Husserl’s terminology. Next I focused on embodiment in Husserl’s Ideas Two. I spoke about the distinction between *Körper* and *Leib*, the double articulation of tactile sensations and kinesthesia. The body is a living body, that’s more than a physical body and our bodily intentionality gets constituted by perception of touch and perception of movement. Transcendental ego constitutes and lives the body and does not have a body to operate like in Psychology: it is a bearer of sensations. In part Three I spoke about

⁴⁷ Dermot Moran, Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: an Introduction. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.66-70.

⁴⁸ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 228.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 218-228.

⁵⁰ Dermot Moran, Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: an Introduction. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 135-138.

the project of Husserl's Crisis: A teleological-historical analysis of the *Urstiftung* and *Ursprungssinn*, of modern sciences, philosophy to understand the general crisis in European Western culture. In part Four I showed some thematic lines concerning the importance of embodiment to understand the crises of the European sciences and the solution of transcendental phenomenology. Embodiment helps us understand at least these three things: 1) the transformation of concept of the world as it changes from life-world to the *Körperwelt* since Galileo, 2) the ego interconnecting with other egos, 3) the transcendental phenomenological ground of psychology.

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