

# Husserl's Lifeworld and the Priority of the Manifest Image



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## Abstract

Is Husserlian phenomenology committed to scientific instrumentalism? I find two different domains of science in Husserl: the “world of science” which is founded on the lifeworld, and the “physical substratum” of the lifeworld. The former is only instrumental; the latter allows for genuine scientific discovery.

- 1 Introduction: Manifest and Scientific Images
- 2 The Lifeworld
- 3 Two Domains of Science
- 4 Non-Instrumentalism and the Physical Substratum of the Lifeworld

Eddington sits down at two tables,

- 1 One of them “familiar [...] from earliest years”, an object of “that environment which I call the world”
- 2 The other is “mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed.”  
(Eddington 1928, ixf.)

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- Such acts are “acts of posit” or “positings”



# Positing Physical Things

What does it mean to posit a physical thing – to represent an object as **real**?

- Two questions about positing physical things:
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- All layers combine into the objectual sense of a posited thing
- Only a disappointment of 1.-2. disappoints the **existential** sense of a physical thing

# The Existential Sense of a Physical Thing

- The move from “apparent existence” to “existence” is made by extending the scope of fulfilled anticipations
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## Existence as Ideal Fulfilment (WIP)

A physical thing  $x$  exists, when in the possible courses of perceptual experience in optimal conditions, it would appear to an intersubjective community (of existing and possible egos) that at least some of us can be bodily affected by  $x$ .



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- Example: A dog and I can look at the same £5 note.
- But our shared lifeworld does not contain financial value
- The notion of a shared lifeworld allows for a natural transition to Husserl’s “physical substratum” of the lifeworld

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# The Physical Substratum of the Lifeworld

- In *Phenomenological Psychology*, the domain of science is opened up by a twofold **abstraction** from the lifeworld (Husserl [1925] 1968, 118f., 123).
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- The stripped off layers of sense are
  - 1 psychologically relative
  - 2 culturally relative
- On my reading, this is equivalent to considering physical things in a lifeworld that can be shared between all possible subjects

# The Idealized World of Science

- Contrast this with the world of science that Husserl discusses in the *Crisis*
- The world of science discussed there is based on idealization: the interpretation of determinable physical things as symbols for determinate ideal entities



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- 2 Scientific idealization is an interpreting apprehension, not a form of synthesis.
- 3 Entities introduced in scientific theories have no passive layers of sense (implication of 2.)
- 4 Therefore: Idealized objects of the scientific world cannot have the same existential sense as physical objects in the lifeworld
- 5 This rules out (REC)
- 6 A denial of (POS) then leads to (INSTR) about the idealized world of science

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- Scientific Experiments can motivate assumptions about the objects that superior egos would posit
- Such posits are determinations of the physical substratum of the lifeworld

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- In manipulating charges with an electron beam, it is evident to the experimenting scientist that he is producing real changes, subject to his will
- The mediacy of these experiences appears contingent. One could imagine the laboratory devices to merge with the body of the experimenting scientist, or to be replaced by an organic equivalent
- Even if no such merging actually appears, its apparent possibility motivates the assumption, that there are superior egos for which the existential sense of individual electrons can be fulfilled

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- Physical things for superior egos are still connected to possible sensory experience and thus have open horizons of further determinations
- The categorial distinction between determinable physical things of the lifeworld and idealized physical things remains intact
- But through motivating assumptions about superior egos, science can lead to genuine metaphysical discovery
- Therefore, this is a form of reconciliation (REC) in response to Sellars' problem.

# Thank you for your attention

Slides are available at `gboes.github.io`

Any comments are highly appreciated, also at any time via

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