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IDEALISM, HUSSERL, AND MONOTHEISM

Uwe Meixner

1. The way to idealism

Idealism is based on a kind of skepticism: personal universally probing skepticism. Personal universally probing skepticism is defined by two radical questions and a radical resolve: *Of all my claims to knowledge, which ones are really justified? What do I really know? I shall only accept what I really know.* Personal universally probing skepticism is *personal* because it is about personal knowledge: in it, *the subject* is concerned with what *the subject* really knows, with what *I* really know, not with what you, he or she, we, or they know (in whatever mode) and not with what ‘one knows’ or ‘science knows.’ Personal universally probing skepticism is *universally probing* because no claim to knowledge of the subject is left unexamined by the subject: none is exempted from critical scrutiny and judgment concerning its fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the criteria of *real* knowledge.

But what is *real* knowledge? What makes knowledge ‘real’ can be seen in part by considering what, blatantly, is not real knowledge: whatever I accept on the mere strength of external authority, I do not really know. In general, whatever I accept without sufficient personal evidence – in other words, without sufficient personal insight – I do not really know. Now, the question that is absolutely crucial for the conceptual content of personal universally probing skepticism (and hence for the logically necessary consequences of adopting it) is, of course, this: What is *sufficient* personal evidence for a belief? Here is the radical (because maximally demanding) answer: it is personal evidence about the character and existence of which the subject cannot be in error and which *per se* guarantees the truth of the belief, guarantees it both in itself (objectively) and to the subject (subjectively). Accordingly, (a piece of) *real knowledge* can be defined as (being a) belief for which the subject has evidence that is such that about its (the evidence’s) character and existence, the subject cannot be in error and which *per se* guarantees the truth of the belief, guarantees it both in itself and to the subject.

It would seem that not much remains to be really known if *real knowledge* is defined in this way, and indeed, it is not without good reason that personal universally probing skepticism is called a ‘skepticism,’ which word connotes, at least in philosophy, a *far-reaching* rejection of knowledge claims. Nevertheless, besides the loss of large stocks of beliefs that the subject formerly claimed to own as knowledge, adopting personal universally probing skepticism brings along with it also the discovery of realms where (that is: about the contents of which) *real*

knowledge – or at least something very close to it – can, in fact, be had, huge realms, vast reaches that previously received hardly any attention at all: the world of consciousness, *the Eldorado of Phenomenology*.¹

Husserl credits Descartes with discovering this Eldorado for philosophers: Descartes found it when he was following the path of personal universally probing skepticism in his quest for the *true* philosopher's stone: the *fundamentum inconcussum* of knowledge (in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*; see, in particular, the Second Meditation). Sadly, Descartes discovered the Phenomenological Eldorado without properly recognizing and appreciating what he had discovered, for hardly had he arrived at this *other* New World: the world of consciousness; hardly had he made his great discovery, he already left again and returned to what was home to him in philosophy: the (deceptive) safety of scholastic thinking, which he was accustomed to since his youth (concerning Descartes's failure to understand his own discovery, see Husserl, 1956: pp. 63–67 and 72–74; Husserl, 1963: pp. 63–64).

As a matter of fact, Descartes was the father of idealism – without being an idealist himself. One of the unusual epistemological perspectives to which Descartes was led when proceeding on the path of personal universally probing skepticism was, *in effect*, the following idea:

May not all these appearances – my experiences – be just as they are while there is nothing whatever behind them: no mind-independent world at all? For these appearances – about the character and the existence of which I cannot be in error, and which are all the evidence I have – do not *per se* guarantee that my *prima facie* belief that there is a mind-independent world is true. I, therefore, do not really know that there is a mind-independent world.

As is well known, Descartes, in the *Meditations*, had resolved – for the sake of retaining, after a process of elimination, *the undeniable* – to *deny* all his *prima facie* beliefs in which he found the slightest possibility for doubt, in other words: where he had no evidence – about the character and existence of which he could not be in error – that *per se* guaranteed that the belief was true. Following his resolve, Descartes also denied that there is a mind-independent world – without, of course, really believing (believing in his heart) that there is *no* mind-independent world: his resolve was of a purely methodological nature. Later on in the *Meditations*, he was set on proving wrong his earlier view: the view that he did not really know that there is a mind-independent world; he did everything in his power *to prove* that there is such a world after all. Descartes's strenuous efforts in this regard were entirely unsuccessful (the philosophical community is as unanimous about this as it possibly can be) – which, however, is not Descartes's personal failure, for it is fair to say: no human being ever was, is, or ever will be able *to prove* that there is a mind-independent world.

Nevertheless, it remains an undeniable logical fact: From *not really knowing* (in the sense of *real knowledge* defined earlier) that there is a mind-independent world – and it is true of all of us, not just of Descartes, that we do not *really* know (in the sense defined) that there is a mind-independent world – it just doesn't follow that we know (*really* know, or even know in a less demanding sense) that there is *no* mind-independent world. Making the step from the one to the other – put briefly: from *not-knowing-that* to *knowing-that-not* – is a considerable leap of faith, the unprovability of the existence of a mind-independent world notwithstanding. Yet, in the wake of Descartes's thinking, many philosophers in the centuries after Descartes took this leap of faith (which Descartes himself had, after all, not taken) through the small window of rationality that had been opened by skepticism, skepticism in the rejuvenated form of Cartesian methodological (universally probing and personal) doubt – even

philosophers who were entirely unfriendly to other aspects of Cartesian thinking (notably, David Hume). In drawing the idealistic conclusion from the result of personal universally probing skepticism, they may have been helped along by the idea that we do not really need the hypothesis of a mind-independent world: by the idea – deserving serious attention – that the assumption of a mind-independent world has no positive function to play in the economy of human knowledge. Still, it is truly astonishing to what large extent idealism ruled the philosophical roost from the early part of the eighteenth century to the early part of the nineteenth (roughly, from Leibniz to Schopenhauer); only the current hegemony of materialism (alias physicalism) is even more astonishing. In view of the undeniable confirmative data from the history of ideas, one is forced to conclude (socio-psychologically) that the will to believe in a fundamental metaphysical position can, at the proper times and places, be *so* strong (for socio-psychological reasons) even in intelligent and open-minded persons that it obscures, eclipses, blots out all critical considerations – considerations which *otherwise* (that is: leaving aside the mentioned *will to believe*) may well have made those persons less dogmatic and more agnostic.

2. The character of Husserlian idealism

Husserl is the inheritor of the idealistic tradition; for him, Berkeley and Hume are among the main precursors of *Phenomenology* (see the third section of Husserl, 1956). Besides the non-idealists Descartes, Locke, and Franz Brentano (who was Husserl's main academic teacher and the initiator of phenomenological psychology), Berkeley and Hume certainly influenced Husserl the most.² Husserl – I do not hesitate to say – is also a great improver of idealism: never before him, and never after him, was the metaphysical option of idealism thought through with such care, in such depth, and with such *will* to clarity. Husserl accepts the basic tenets of idealism. In Husserl, too, the skeptical Cartesian thought *It might be the case that my experiences are just as they are while there is nothing behind them. I do not really know that there is a mind-independent world* is turned into a bold assertion: *There is no mind-independent world*. For Descartes (and for many other people, to this day), the assertion that there is no mind-independent world could only be an impiety, a blasphemy against the Creator (for had not God created a mind-independent world?), and for Descartes (and for most other people, to this day) that assertion entailed, if true, disastrous ontological loss: the physical world – *gone*; the social world (the world of *other* minds) – *gone as well*. However, as is well known, already for George Berkeley – Bishop Berkeley – the *negative* basic tenet of idealism – *There is no mind-independent world* – did not imply blasphemy or ontological loss. And the same is true of Husserl. Husserl's views regarding the relationship of idealism and monotheism will be considered in the final section of this chapter; regarding ontological loss, what must fittingly be said already at this point (in the general characterization of Husserl's idealism) is this: For Husserl, idealism is far from entailing ontological loss. For him, if there is no mind-independent world (what he believes to be the case), it does not follow that there is no physical world, and it does not follow that there is no social world; rather, the physical world and the social world do, of course, exist; they are where they properly belong: (*intrinsically-essentially*) *in the mind*. It follows that the physical world is *mind-dependent* for Husserl, as is the social world. Note that Husserl, just like Berkeley, would deny that such views are in conflict with common sense – as long as common sense stays free of the infiltrations of metaphysical realism.

The *positive* basic tenet of idealism, of which the negative basic tenet is a logical consequence (both tenets are to be understood in such a way as to establish this relationship) is this: *Everything is in the mind*. There are two absolutely crucial and important questions here: (1) *What is the*

mind? (2) *What does it mean to be in the mind?* (The no-less-important third question will follow later.)

3. The mind, consciousness, and Phenomenology

Husserl's answer to question (1) is the following: The mind is *consciousness* (and the *potential* mind is *potential* consciousness). Consciousness consists of conscious (hence actual) events³ and is itself an event: it is the total flow of conscious events, 'the total stream of consciousness.' Every conscious event (but not necessarily the total stream of consciousness) has – intrinsically-essentially⁴ – precisely one subject of consciousness: the subject that 'lives through' the conscious event and, in doing so, 'has it' (and is thereby itself 'conscious') in the light of its peculiar, more or less qualitatively concrete (but always 'felt' or at least 'feelable') subjectivity. Conscious events with *the same subject* form *consciousnesses* ('sub-streams of consciousness'): that is, the consciousness (the mind) of *this* subject or of *that* subject or of yet another subject.

The *subject(ivity)*-endowedness of conscious events is the general mark that distinguishes conscious events from non-conscious events. Moreover, most, if not all, conscious events are also distinguished from non-conscious events by intrinsically-essentially 'intending' (or 'meaning' or 'having as object') one or more 'intentional objects' (which can be conveniently taken to form one total intentional object: *the* intentional object of the experience). In a derivative sense, it can also be said that *the subject* of the conscious event 'intends' or 'means' these objects (via the conscious event of which it is the subject). Note that 'to intend' and 'to mean' are used here as highly general *technical terms* of *Phenomenology*, designating a highly general feature – an almost ubiquitously instantiated internal relation – of consciousness: *intentionality* (here are some special forms of it: perceiving, believing, thinking, wishing, imagining, intending [in the normal sense], etc.).

Phenomenology, in turn, is the *science* (in a broad sense, not in the sense of 'natural science') that Husserl envisaged and made a truly heroic effort to put on its feet and set going (sadly, without substantial success). Phenomenology was to be dedicated to the universal exploration of the essential features ('the essences') of the world of consciousness: in other words, of the inner Eldorado that Descartes had discovered (and then had not cared one jot to take a closer look at). The idea of such a science was not new in Husserl's time. Shortly after Descartes, John Locke was the first philosopher – as Husserl was perfectly aware – to conceive of a universal science of consciousness and to actually go about realizing such a science (in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*); a little later, David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* made a rather more sophisticated and radical attempt at a universal science of consciousness (concerning Locke, see Husserl, 1956: pp. 144–145; concerning Hume, see Husserl, 1956: pp. 156–157). Both Locke's and Hume's work is already steeped in skepticism-driven idealism (although, in Locke's work, it is only *epistemological* idealism,⁵ just as later in Kant's; in Hume's work, however, it is *ontological* idealism, just as earlier in Berkeley's). In Husserl's eyes, Locke's and Hume's idealism is a virtue of their thought about consciousness, not a vice; for idealism – whether it is ontological or only epistemological idealism – is what makes a universal science of consciousness truly *universal* (so that *in a sense* – that is, in foundational consideration – it even contains all of science). However, Husserl also diagnoses grave shortcomings in those earlier attempts at a universal science of consciousness: they are due to Locke's and Hume's *blindness* to *subjectivity* and *intentionality* (Husserl, 1956: pp. 112–114, 119–120, 122, 158, 163–165; Husserl, 1976b: pp. 87–88), which are the two ontological marks of consciousness. Locke's and Hume's failure to conceive *clearly and distinctly* of the intentionality and subjectivity of consciousness⁶ led these two *empiricist* philosophers (and also Berkeley) to the assimilation of the phenomena of consciousness to the phenomena of the physical world⁷ – a wrongheaded assimilation that Husserl, very appropriately, calls

‘naturalism’ (Husserl, 1956: pp. 124–125; see also pp. 150–151, 155, and 158). His criticism of naturalism is more pertinent than ever *today*, in the era of physicalism, where the assimilation of consciousness to the physical has monstrously evolved into the *reduction* of consciousness to the physical. Indeed, nobody who intellectually appreciated – truly appreciated – the intentionality and subjectivity present in a perceptual experience (in a visual experience, for example) could seriously propose that there is no such experience, or if there is, that then it can only be a neuronal representation in the brain, or a behavioral – mainly, linguistic-behavioral – disposition of the subject (or of the subject and other subjects), or a combination of both (i.e., of neuronal representation and behavioral disposition).⁸

Husserl intellectually appreciated consciousness to a degree and extent that, likely enough, nobody had reached, or would have cared to reach, before him; likely enough, nobody after him will ever reach, or care to reach, Husserl’s mark again (to this date, nobody has). Dealing exclusively with conscious events as its data base, the task of the universal science of consciousness that Husserl envisaged – that is, the task of Phenomenology – was to trace the essential forms of intentionality and subjectivity for every entity in consciousness (and under idealism, *everything* is an entity *in* consciousness), *provided* that entity was also an object *of* consciousness: with the – as objects of consciousness – relatively simple objects of sensation, pretending to no more than subjective reality, at one end and the – as objects of consciousness – highly complex objects of natural science, pretending to objective reality in the highest degree, at the other. The specific method for this science – its very own method – is, one might say, *the method of double abstraction in reflexive perception*. Firstly, the conscious events in reflexive perception – in ‘introspection’⁹ – are to be considered *in their own light*, not in the light of preconceived beliefs about what there is. To obtain a perfect introspective mirror, which is stainless and free of all distortions – this is what the famous Husserlian *epoché* (or ‘phenomenological reduction’) aims at (for a brief description of *epoché*, see Meixner, 2014: pp. 247–248). In *epoché*, all prejudices regarding existence (we all have them in huge numbers) are neutralized: are, in a sense, *abstracted* from (but not removed, not wiped from the plate; Husserl speaks of merely ‘bracketing’ them, turning them into *data for further Phenomenological consideration*). Secondly, the conscious events in reflexive perception are to be considered as mere instances of generalities, of *essences*; what is accidental or contingent in them does not count and must be left out of consideration: must be *abstracted* from (in ‘eidetic reduction’).¹⁰ Phenomenology is, for Husserl, a science of essences and necessities (like mathematics, only much more *colorful*, so to speak, and much more important), *not* an indiscriminate – or, alternatively, arbitrarily selective – description of the mind (or minds); Phenomenology is to be about the essence of subjective experience, not about its contingencies, not even about its contingent *laws*. For Husserl, Phenomenology is at once *a priori* (*qua* being exclusively interested in general essences) and *empiric* (*qua* drawing exclusively on reflexive perception: ‘introspection’).¹¹

In Husserl’s vision, not only Phenomenology’s all-important (because all-embracing) subject matter, but also its exemplary strictness and clarity (on firm and transparent foundations the rest of the structure was to rest firmly and transparently), designate Phenomenology as the center of philosophy and of all science: as the realization of an epistemological ideal (see Husserl, 1956: pp. 36–37), parts of which were – more or less articulately – shared by Plato, by Aristotle, Descartes, and, indeed, by John Locke (the first pre-Phenomenologist).¹²

4. Being in the mind

If everything is in the mind (i.e., in consciousness), *how* is it that everything is *in* the mind? There is a distinction to be made here the importance of which can hardly be overestimated, a

distinction that Husserl repeatedly urges and stresses: on the one hand, being in consciousness *via real parthood*; on the other hand, being in consciousness *via intentionality* (see, for example, Husserl, 1976a: pp. 83–89). And there is yet a third way of being in consciousness that Husserl is also perfectly aware of (though he extolls it not to the extent he extolls the other two): being in consciousness *qua subject*.¹³ These three ways of being in consciousness are vastly different. It is the main error of earlier idealists (in the absence of a clear idea of subjectivity and intentionality) that they did not – or did not clearly – distinguish between the three ways of being in consciousness; for them, the three ways were all one way, and that one way looked much like the first way: like being in consciousness *via real parthood*. As a necessary consequence, idealism acquired the reputation of absurdity. It seemed as if idealism proposed – had to propose – that everything is in consciousness *via real parthood*, which is, of course, absurd: material objects – tables and chairs and bigger things – just aren't, just cannot be, real parts of conscious events (of subjective experiences). In contrast to conscious events and their real parts, material objects are not 'mental'; they, therefore, do not have the right category for being real parts of consciousness.

A much more plausible conception of idealism is to take idealism to propose that everything is in consciousness *via intentionality*. However, although it is true that *many* real parts of consciousness are also intentional objects of consciousness (in reflexive perception, in 'introspection'), it is not entirely certain that *every* real part of consciousness (hence every conscious event, every phase of a conscious event, and every individual aspect of it) is an intentional object of consciousness. Now, if in fact some real part of consciousness were not an intentional object of consciousness, should idealists, then, consider themselves refuted? Certainly not (and Husserl would presumably have agreed). What idealists should do is to expand their notion of being *in* consciousness. Thus, the following improved formulation of idealism comes to mind: everything is in consciousness *via real parthood or via intentionality*.

This is certainly a much better formulation of idealism than either of the two previously suggested ones, but it is still not the best formulation. Consider any subject of consciousness (for example, yourself). Take any two temporally separate conscious events of which *that* subject is *the* (numerically identical) subject (and for *every* subject of consciousness, there are many such events), or in other words: take any two temporally separate conscious events *in* which that subject is *qua subject*. Because of the temporal separation of the two events, the subject in question cannot be a real part of both. Then, of *which one* of the two events is it a real part? The only plausible answer is this: of *none of the two*. Thus, subjects of consciousness are not in consciousness *via real parthood*. Are they in consciousness *via intentionality*? This is certainly true of many subjects of consciousness: every subject of *reflexive* consciousness – for example, every human subject – is in consciousness *via intentionality*. But it is not entirely certain that *every* subject of consciousness is in consciousness *via intentionality* (think of animal subjects of consciousness). Now if, in fact, some subject of consciousness, in addition to not being a real part of consciousness, were not an intentional object of consciousness either, should this, in itself, be considered a refutation of idealism? Certainly not (and again, Husserl would presumably have agreed). The only conclusion that idealists need draw here is that being in consciousness *qua subject* is a way *sui generis* of being in consciousness; it is the way every subject of consciousness is *in* consciousness. The best formulation of idealism, therefore, is this: *everything is in consciousness via real parthood or via intentionality or qua subject*. This is what satisfactorily explicates the lapidary idealistic assertion 'Everything is in the mind'; none of the three previously suggested explications does so.

Consider an entity that is not a real part of consciousness. It is a logical consequence of idealism (as it has now been explicated) that such an entity is an intentional object of consciousness

or a subject of consciousness; in both cases it is *in* consciousness; it is *internal* to it; it is, though not a real part, still a *virtual part* of consciousness (so to speak). Yet, in precisely what sense are intentional objects of consciousness or subjects of consciousness *internal* to consciousness? As far as intentional objects are concerned (only for them was the matter truly clear to Husserl), Husserl's answer was that such objects, though not normally real parts of consciousness, are nevertheless always *intrinsically-essentially determined* by the real parts of consciousness: in their being, in their so-being, and in their modality.¹⁴ Accordingly, the main task of Phenomenology was to describe for any significant type of intentional object (whether abstract or concrete, simple or complex, whether on a culturally high level or on a culturally low one) the relevant intrinsic-essential way of *object-determination* – or *object-constitution* – in consciousness. Using a term and concept that have become fashionable only in recent years (as employed by materialists!), it can very well be said that, for Husserl, the intentional objects of consciousness *supervene* (in the strongest sense: *logically*) on the conscious events: that, in other words, the totality of intentional objects – which, for idealists, is *the world*¹⁵ – supervenes on the totality of conscious events: on *consciousness* (adequately representing also the totality of the real parts of conscious events) (on idealism as a thesis of supervenience, see Smith, 2003: pp. 183–188; Meixner, 2010). *The world*, including the (purely) physical world, *supervenes on consciousness* – this is the very opposite of the supervenience many materialists (nowadays) propose, namely, the supervenience of consciousness on the (purely) physical world. Still, though one is the opposite of the other, there is also an interesting commonality between idealistic and materialistic supervenience. As the latter is a logical part of the most reasonable form of materialism (to the extent materialism can be reasonable at all), so the former is a logical part of the most reasonable form of idealism.

When did Husserl adopt *idealistic supervenience* (which was certainly the decisive step on his way to idealism)? He does, in fact, tell us *when* he adopted it, briefly characterizing it in his own philosophical idiom and briefly affirming, in the strongest terms, its paramount importance for him as a philosopher:

The first breakthrough of this universal a-priori-correlation of object of experience and ways of givenness (when working on my 'Logical Investigations,' roughly in the year 1898) shook me so deeply that since then my entire lifework has been ruled by this task of working out this a-priori-correlation systematically.

(Husserl, 1976b: p. 169 fn.)¹⁶

5. A difficulty for Husserlian idealism and how it can be overcome

Phenomenology, as Husserl originally intended it, was to be as far as it could possibly be from speculative metaphysics. Surprisingly, serious problems result from this – *prima facie* – laudable 'empiricist' precept. Strict abstinence from metaphysics is achieved when Phenomenologists practice *epoché*. However, Phenomenology is not a version of skepticism: the existence-beliefs, positive and negative ones, from which Phenomenologists *initially* detach themselves in *epoché*, are to be either *ultimately* retrieved or *ultimately* discarded. The important thing is this: whether a Phenomenologist ultimately retrieves an existence-belief or ultimately discards it, in either case, the final doxastic positioning is to be achieved *with perfect epistemological responsibility*: with the greatest possible justification, emerging from a perfect understanding of how the belief came about in consciousness in the first place. Now, one of the most prominent existence-beliefs from which Phenomenologists need *initially* to detach themselves in *epoché* is the belief that there are other subjects of consciousness ('other minds'). And here is the problem. Once

Phenomenologists have detached themselves from that belief, it is very hard, just about impossible, to retrieve it again *with perfect epistemological responsibility* – as is required of Phenomenologists if belief-retrieval is what they want here. (And how could they *not* want it?) The data from one's own consciousness are not sufficient for warranting the belief that there are other subjects of consciousness in addition to oneself; what they do warrant is the belief that, although there *seem* to be other subjects of consciousness in addition to oneself, it is plainly possible that there are none. Thus, *epoché* puts Husserl, and anyone else who practices it, into the same uncomfortable position into which methodological doubt (*-cum-denial*) put Descartes and anyone else who practiced it: solipsism seems an acceptable option, but, of course, solipsism *is not* an acceptable option.

Idealistic philosophers who were less epistemologically ambitious than Husserl – philosophers who, as a consequence, did not abstain from metaphysical speculation (or vision) – managed to sail around the cliffs of solipsism without difficulty; remaining still within the overall framework of (ontological) idealism, Leibniz and Berkeley simply assumed *pluralistic spiritualism* from the start. They made a barefaced metaphysical assumption: they just took for granted that there is a plurality of subjects of consciousness (Leibniz called them 'monads'); this effectively saved them from solipsism. But to do as Leibniz and Berkeley did was, at least originally, not good enough for Husserl, not good enough for Phenomenology. In a manner of speaking, Husserl heroically tried to conjure *the others* – the other *egos*, the other subjects of consciousness, to whom *he* must be *other* in the same way as *they* are *other* to him – out of the hat of *his individual consciousness*, as can be seen especially in his *Cartesian Meditations*. The three volumes on the Phenomenology of intersubjectivity in the Husserliana edition (Husserl, 1973) bear witness to the extraordinary degree to which Husserl was exercised by the topic of *other subjectivity*. As far as Phenomenological descriptions and analyses are concerned, a lot of good came out of this preoccupation of his, but it must be admitted in the end (whether or not he ever admitted it to himself) that Husserl could accommodate *the other subjects of consciousness* – in the manner they ontologically deserve, in the manner true philosophy requires: in their *true otherness* – only by introducing, to some extent, *metaphysical postulation* into the Phenomenological method (on this, see Meixner, 2003: pp. 372–383; Husserl was certainly aware of the size of the problem; see Husserl, 1974: p. 246), thus departing from Phenomenology's originally intended perfect 'empiricism' (or 'positivism in a good sense,' the true 'empirical intuitionism,' the 'true and genuine empiricism,' *not* the 'fake intuitionism' or 'fake empiricism' of Locke and Hume (Husserl, 1956: pp. 125, 148, and 136)).

Is this bad philosophy? No, it is not: not for those who have a friendly attitude towards *metaphysics*. Now, Husserl had extremely high epistemological ambitions for Phenomenology: it was to have apodictic certainty; it was to be knowledge with absolute foundation. But this did not bar Husserl from being friendly towards metaphysics, in spite of the fact that it must have seemed to him, as to most other serious philosophers of his time, that metaphysics could only fall miserably short of solidly built philosophical knowledge: metaphysics had a bad reputation, a reputation heavily damaged by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and by some of the more extreme irrational excesses of German idealism. Still, Husserl was inclined in a friendly way towards *the contents* of metaphysics – or rather, towards the contents of *affirmative* metaphysics, upholding God, mind, and meaning (which is *not* the metaphysics of Hobbes, or Hume, or Schopenhauer, or Nietzsche), and he did have hopes that in the end also (affirmative) metaphysics would be justified by Phenomenology.¹⁷ One might insist that such a justification just cannot be and that a predilection for certain metaphysical contents must not be allowed to compromise Phenomenology. Putting this aside, what if it is simply *not possible* to have a philosophy that is *reasonable in content* (which solipsism is not) without making certain metaphysical assumptions,

assumptions that are *far* from *real* knowledge (that is, from the ideal, absolutely doubt-resilient form of knowledge described in the first section of this chapter)? Regarding the existence of other subjects of consciousness, precisely such a situation of impossibility, of inescapable dilemma, is *live* for Husserl (and for any Phenomenologist): *either allow metaphysics to come in or have no reasonable philosophy!* Clearly, something must go here, and it seems Husserl's epistemological ambitions for Phenomenology are what must go here – without making Husserl a bad philosopher or Phenomenology bad philosophy. There are very strong indications that Husserl finally came around to accepting *pluralistic spiritualism*, thus becoming a brother in metaphysics of Leibniz and Berkeley.

To put this in the right perspective, it must be pointed out that metaphysics had already – much earlier – won *another* victory against Phenomenological empiricism in Husserl, a much greater victory. That victory occurred when Husserl became an idealist (see the quotation at the end of the previous section), for idealism is, of course, a metaphysical position *par excellence*. Consciousness itself does not determine that *everything is in consciousness* (be it via real parthood or via intentionality or *qua* subject), just as it does not determine that *something is not in consciousness* (neither via real parthood nor via intentionality nor *qua* subject). Who believes that consciousness and *Occam's Razor* provide a basis for (ontological) idealism – 'What do we need more than consciousness and what's in it?' – or who, in contrast, believes that consciousness and *Inference to the Best Explanation* provide a basis for (metaphysical) realism – 'Consciousness and what's in it is best explained by a representations-producing mind-independent world' – labors under an illusion; what makes one an idealist or a realist is fundamental inclination, fundamental decision (or, to put it more passively and realistically, fundamental *decidedness*) and not the use of this or that, as far as metaphysics is concerned, utterly unreliable (indeed *flimsy*) instrument of reasoning. The fundamental decision is so fundamental that it determines the very meaning of the discourse on 'objective' and 'natural' things: idealists cannot help seeing that discourse as *by its very meaning* (not only by that meaning's origin, but also by that meaning *in itself*) *relative to a cognizing consciousness*.¹⁸

6. The third question

Of the three central questions of idealism – and, in particular, of Husserlian idealism – the question *what the mind is* and the question *what it means to be in the mind* have now been addressed and answered. It is time for posing, addressing, and answering the third question, which, in a certain sense, is the most important one: *Whose mind – whose consciousness – is the mind of which idealism asserts that everything is in it?* The consciousness a Phenomenologist deals with, as the cognitive basis for pursuing the cognitive aims of Phenomenology, is no other consciousness than his or her own consciousness: the totality of the conscious events of which he or she is the subject. However, it would seem, a Phenomenologist's consciousness – Husserl's consciousness, for example – can hardly be the consciousness in which everything is (although, of course, it is much more comprehensive than, say, a spider's consciousness). Indeed, what plausibly could be meant by saying that everything is in consciousness *seems* to be that, for everything, there is some consciousness (the consciousness of some subject or other) in which it is, and *not* that there is some consciousness (of some subject or other) in which everything is.¹⁹ Yet, such a *purely distributive, purely disjunctive* construal of 'Everything is in consciousness' is contrary to what is, perhaps, the most powerful primary inspiration of idealism: the reflexive experience of being in a *subject-centered and subject-encompassed object-sphere with no outside*. Philosophically minded human subjects of consciousness see themselves in reflexive perception as living within a vastly extended – and, at the same time,

circumscribed – space of being (i.e., their world of consciousness); wherever they ‘go’ in that space, they are, so to speak, already there: they cannot get outside *themselves* – which must, of course, powerfully *suggest* to them, *Everything is in me* (that is: *in my mind, in my consciousness*). Thus, David Hume tells us:

[L]et us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appeared in that narrow compass.

(Hume, 1987: pp. 113–114)

And Edmund Husserl says the same thing (leaving aside the fact that he – but not Hume – is perfectly aware of the distinction between inclusion in consciousness via real parthood and inclusion in consciousness via intentionality):

[T]here is no conceivable place where the life of consciousness were pierced and to be pierced and we would come upon a transcendence that could have a different meaning than that of an intentional unity occurring within the subjectivity itself of consciousness.

(Husserl, 1974: p. 242)

(The emphasis in this quotation, and in subsequent quotations, is in the original.)

On the other hand, although it is quite true that we cannot ‘advance a step beyond ourselves,’ it cannot well be the case (*pace* Leibniz: see note 19) that there is (at least) one of us in whom – in whose mind, in whose consciousness – everything is. It is only rational to be modest here and admit that no human mind – not even the greatest – has the capacity to encompass *everything*. *Why*, after all, should *only* the minds of spiders, mice, cats, etc. – the minds of the smartest of them not excluded – lack the capacity to encompass *everything* (and that they do lack this capacity is granted by everyone)?

Is there is a way out of this impasse? If it is *not* going to be my mind or any human being’s mind (or any animal’s mind) in which everything is, and if it is also *not* going to be satisfactory for idealism that all things are ‘in the mind’ *only* by way of being distributed (certainly with overlap) among many minds (mine and all other minds) – is there, then, yet a third possibility for its being true that *everything is in the mind*? Husserl comes near to describing this third possibility when he writes:

I, the ‘transcendental ego,’ am the ego that ‘precedes’ everything worldly, namely, as the ego in whose life of consciousness the world constitutes itself as an intentional unity in the first place. Thus, I, the constituting ego, am not identical with the already worldly ego, with me as something psychophysically real; and my psychical – the psychophysically-worldly – life of consciousness is not identical with [the life of consciousness of (?)] my transcendental ego, wherein the world with all its physical and psychical entities constitutes itself for me.

(Husserl, 1974: p. 245)

How can this self-description be amended in such a way that it no longer is (or no longer sounds like) a bad case of self-conscious schizophrenia: ‘I am the A-Ego, and I am the B-Ego, and, lo and behold, the B-Ego is not the A-Ego?’ One way of making this self-description both clear and consistent, the way that comes to mind first, is this: ‘I am the transcendental ego. My worldly ego, to which I am not identical but to which I am connected in a special way, is *in my*

transcendental consciousness and is, therefore, *for me* – in a special way, yes, but nevertheless side by side with everything else that belongs to the world.’ However, the reason *this* particular way of amending Husserl’s self-description cannot be true – consistent though it is – is immediately evident: Can *Husserl* (or any one of *us*) be *the transcendental ego*: that is, *the world-constituting-and-encompassing ego*?²⁰ Certainly not! Another, and better, way of making Husserl’s self-description clear and consistent is this: ‘I am my worldly ego. The transcendental ego, to which I am not identical but to which I am connected in a special way, has me *in its transcendental consciousness*, and I am, therefore, *for it* – in a special way, yes, but nevertheless side by side with everything else that belongs to the world.’

The special way in which each one of us – not only Husserl – is connected to *the transcendental ego* is such that, once we get into a certain line of thinking, this can make it seem to us (to each one of us) that we must be (identical to) the transcendental ego, even though each one of us – that is, each one of us who is ‘in his or her right mind’ – knows perfectly well that this semblance of identity cannot be true (which complex inner state seems to induce the peculiar relativization that is transported by Husserl’s talk of ‘my transcendental ego’ in the above quotation, implying that there is also ‘your transcendental ego’ and ‘her transcendental ego,’ etc.). This is a ‘transcendental illusion,’ one of the illusions, in effect, that Husserl hopes – or expects – to be *dissolved* in the perfect light of the Phenomenological interpretation of experience (Husserl, 1974: pp. 248–249), their *dissolution* being rather better, philosophically, than their mere rational rejection in metaphysics.²¹ The worldly vastness of what is in the human subject’s consciousness (for example, heaven and earth and the abstract infinities) may irresistibly suggest to the self-reflecting human subject that what is (via intentionality) in its mind is, intrinsically-essentially, *the (entire) world*. In fact, Husserl himself sounds as if he is quite unaware of being under this latter illusion (it is, in fact, a part of the transcendental illusion considered) and as if, as a consequence, he is not even rejecting it rationally in metaphysics, when he asserts:

First and prior to everything conceivable am *I*. This ‘*I am*’ is for me, who says this and says it in the right meaning, the *primordial intentional ground for my world*, at which point I must not overlook that also the ‘objective’ world, the ‘world for all of us’ – taken by me in precisely this sense – is ‘my’ world.

(Husserl, 1974: pp. 243–244)

The subjective center of a vast consciousness – the *I* in whose consciousness and of *whom and to whom*, it seems, *the world* is – can, it seems, only be *the transcendental ego*. The necessary conclusion, therefore, seems to be: ‘I am the transcendental ego.’ However, the only thing that can reasonably be true here is that we human subjects, especially when we are doing Phenomenology, are approximations, representations, images, likenesses of the transcendental ego – nothing more than that.

Thus, the question with which this section began – the third of the central questions of idealism: the question *whose mind it is in which*, as idealism has it, *everything is* – has now been partly answered: it is *the transcendental ego’s* mind (or consciousness). That ego – the transcendental subject – is certainly not some human being’s subject of consciousness, let alone some animal’s, and of course, it is not a society of subjects of consciousness (for a society of subjects of consciousness is certainly not *a* subject of consciousness, hence not an *ego*). There is, therefore, a further question that still has to be answered if a complete answer to the third question is to be given: *Who or what is the transcendental ego?*

7. Everything is in the mind of God

Does Husserl answer this latter question? No, not in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. (First published in 1929, when Husserl was already 70 years old, the book certainly contains Husserl's ripe opinions.) In that book, he speaks of *his* transcendental ego and of the transcendental egos of *other people* (Husserl, 1974: p. 246), not of *the* transcendental ego. Later in the book (Husserl, 1974: p. 279), he prefers to speak, more abstractly, of 'the transcendental subjectivity' and 'the transcendental intersubjectivity' (the latter being 'the transcendental subjectivity in the extended sense'). Could it be that either the transcendental subjectivity or the transcendental intersubjectivity is *the* transcendental ego for Husserl? No: the context (Husserl, 1974: p. 279) makes it clear that the so-called transcendental subjectivity is, for Husserl, just Husserl's own transcendental ego and that the so-called transcendental intersubjectivity is just the plurality of transcendental egos constituted in Husserl's own transcendental ego (plus this latter ego). This is philosophically unsatisfactory; it indicates that Husserl – while avoiding *absolute solipsism* by assuming a *half-hearted kind of* pluralistic spiritualism, one that allows him to abstain from a purely distributive, purely disjunctive idealism – does not manage to avoid *transcendental solipsism* after all, and this although he does call transcendental solipsism an 'illusion':

The illusion of transcendental solipsism [. . .] If everything that can ever be taken by me to exist is constituted in my ego, then it does indeed seem as if all being is a mere aspect of my own transcendental being.

(Husserl, 1974: p. 248)

It is true that transcendental solipsism is an illusion – an illusion that was, in effect, already considered in the previous section. As we have seen there, Husserl himself can seem to have succumbed to it.

It is decidedly less suggestive of such a *lapse* when we find Husserl speaking in the following way:

Absolute being exists in the form of an intentional life which, whatever else it may in itself be conscious of, is at the same time a consciousness of itself. Precisely for this reason it can, in virtue of its essence (as deeper considerations reveal), at any time *reflect* on itself according to all its forms that stand out for it; can make itself thematic, can generate judgments and evidences that refer to itself.

(Husserl, 1974: pp. 279–280)

Husserl, when he is saying this, is in fact (and unfortunately) talking about himself, more precisely: about himself as a transcendental ego (one that constitutes other transcendental egos), but he might as well be taken to be talking about *the* transcendental ego, which cannot, in reason, be Husserl or any other human subject.

By now, one particular thought must strongly suggest itself to readers who have some familiarity with the ways of philosophy: Could not the transcendental ego be *the divine subject of consciousness*, could it not be *God* (for, whatever else God is, he certainly is the divine subject of consciousness)? Identifying the transcendental ego with God entails several advantages for idealism: (A) That *there is no mind-independent world* – the negative tenet of idealism – turns out to be equivalent to a longstanding and widely accepted tenet of monotheistic metaphysics: *There is no world which is independent of the mind of God*. (B) That *everything is in the mind* – the positive tenet

of idealism – turns out to be equivalent to another longstanding and widely accepted tenet of monotheistic metaphysics: *Everything is in the mind of God*. (C) That idealism can come to be accepted by human subjects of consciousness and, if accepted, is accompanied by the illusion of transcendental solipsism, is well explainable by yet another longstanding and widely accepted tenet of monotheistic metaphysics: human subjects of consciousness are *likenesses* of the divine subject of consciousness, but *not* – neither individually nor collectively – that subject himself. They are usually unaware of their *likeness to the divine subject*, but if they *are* aware of it – note that for having this awareness, it is not necessary to talk or think of God, let alone believe in him – and *live* in this awareness, then the illusion of *identity to the divine subject* is never far away, but need not be put in religious or theological language; a human subject may have the illusion of this identity without being aware of its theological import: it may simply think that it is the transcendental – the world-constituting – ego.

Connecting idealism with monotheism by identifying the transcendental ego with God (the *one* god) is an entirely natural move of philosophical theory. It is, moreover, the best move idealists can make in order to give a solid metaphysical basis to their position. But of course, this is true only if monotheism itself is true – and monotheism is nowadays no longer widely accepted, at least not among the intellectuals. The metaphysical tenets invoked in (A), (B), and (C) – (I) that there is no world that is independent of the mind of God, (II) that everything is in the mind of God, (III) that we are likenesses of God (simulacra of an original) – are tenets of monotheistic theology.²² If God does not exist, as nowadays most (Western) intellectuals believe, then these tenets are false. Thus, if God does not exist, then the best candidate for being the transcendental ego does not exist, and then it seems rather likely that the transcendental ego itself does not exist either. Therefore, if God does not exist, then the prospects for idealism are greatly diminished, if not annihilated.

It should be noted in this context: Although monotheism – if believed to be true – gives considerable support to idealism, idealism gives no support to monotheism, not even in its (idealism's) *best version*. As should be clear by now, the philosophically best version of idealism is *mono-idealism*, idealism with a *sole* transcendental subject: *the* transcendental ego. The order of rational support is as follows: monotheism significantly supports idealism via supporting its best version, mono-idealism (as we have seen), but idealism does not support monotheism, because idealism, even in the form of mono-idealism, stands in sore need of support, support that monotheism provides, thereby, however, disqualifying idealism – since circularity is to be avoided – from supporting it (monotheism).

It should also be noted that mono-idealism with God as *the* transcendental ego – in short: mono-*theo*-idealism, comprising (among other tenets) tenets (I), (II), and (III) – entails *panen-theism*, the doctrine that everything is in God; it does so in virtue of tenet (II), if 'is in God' is taken in an *analogical* sense: as following from 'is in the mind/consciousness of God' (just as people say that a feeling is *in them* when, literally, it is only in their mind/consciousness). In the *literal* sense of 'is in God,' however, mono-*theo*-idealism *does not* entail panentheism. The reason is this:

If *x* is in the consciousness (the mind) of God (via real parthood, via intentionality, or *qua* subject), it does not follow that *x* is *literally* in God. For example, the consciousness of God – like every consciousness – is a temporally extended entity; God is in it *qua* subject, and it (God's consciousness) is, of course, *in itself* via real parthood. The consciousness of God is, therefore, in the indicated analogical sense *in God*, just like God himself (both God and his consciousness being *literally* in God's *mind/consciousness*). The consciousness of God is, however, not in God in a literal sense (which can only be the sense of *being a real part of God*; the consciousness of God *is not* a real part of God), nor are, in a literal sense (as real parts),

the consciousnesses of other subjects or those subjects themselves. But they – consciousnesses and subjects – certainly are *in the consciousness of God* via intentionality, as intentional objects, and therefore they are – along with God (as subject of the consciousness of God) and the consciousness of God itself (as a real part of the consciousness of God) – at least *analogically* in God.

There are three distinct entities that, under mono-theo-idealism, can rightfully be considered to be *the Absolute*: God, the consciousness of God, and (total) *consciousness* (that is, as defined earlier, the totality of all conscious events, which include, as a sub-stream, also the consciousness of Husserl, the consciousness of one particular Phenomenologist and idealist). *Prima facie*, it does not seem to matter much which of the three is considered to be *the Absolute*, for none of the three can exist without the others (though it seems they could have existed – all three together – in ways vastly different from the way in which they really exist). However, if the idea of *origin* (and *outcome*) and the idea of *source* (and *emanation*) are taken into account and made to count, then God, as *origin and source* of his consciousness and of total consciousness, must certainly be considered to be *the Absolute*.

Mono-theo-idealism has two other interesting consequences: In contrast to human Phenomenologists (Husserl, say), God is not assailed by doubt concerning the existence of other minds; he is not forced to postulate their existence; it is perfectly evident to him. And in contrast to human Phenomenologists, God is not assailed by the illusion of transcendental solipsism. Considered in relation to us, transcendental solipsism is an illusion; considered in relation to God, it is the truth: all being is a mere aspect of his own transcendental being (compare the second-to-last quotation from Husserl).

8. Husserlian idealism and monotheism

Did the thought of identifying *the* transcendental ego with God (the *one* god) cross Husserl's mind? It did, though when it did, Husserl did not use the expression 'the transcendental ego.' In a text from the year 1908, Husserl takes the first stage of metaphysics to be this: 'going back to the first absolute, the one of Phenomenology and of the Phenomenologically reduced sciences, to consciousness and its distributions in henads [monads]' (Husserl, 2014: p. 164). Evidently, Husserl is here speaking of one of the previously considered candidates – under mono-theo-idealism – for *the Absolute*: (total) consciousness, partitioned into consciousnesses, each of which is the consciousness of one and only one subject. The second stage of metaphysics, according to Husserl, is to be this: '[disclosing] the unity of the manifold henads or monads [that is in them] through teleology, through harmony' (Husserl, 2014: p. 164). Husserl then asks whether the (unifying) teleology discernible in (total) consciousness (in 'the first absolute') can motivate a 'new consciousness.' It can, according to Husserl, and this 'new consciousness' is best regarded as a 'unifying consciousness' of the following kind:

It might be a consciousness which relates itself to the entirety of experience-nature, a consciousness which somehow encompasses all special consciousnesses (monads). [. . .] As a unifying consciousness, it need, in any case, not resolve itself in the several individual monads. It encompasses them, but it is, at the same time, also a surplus of consciousness, which establishes the unity of consciousness among what is separated.

(Husserl, 2014: pp. 165, 167–168)

Regarding this 'all-consciousness,' Husserl then asks purely rhetorically (for 'Of course that would have to be so' is his very next sentence): '*Now, is it in the overarching* [the

more-than-just-encompassing] of the unity that the ego of the all-consciousness lies?', 'the all-ego',²³ of which he says further:

Naturally, the *all-ego*, which has all egos in itself and all reality in itself [more precisely speaking: in its consciousness] and nothing outside of itself [outside of its consciousness], cannot be thought to be like an empirical ego. It is *infinite life, infinite love, infinite will*.

(Husserl, 2014: p. 168)

In these quotations, Husserl is evidently addressing the two other candidates (besides total consciousness) for the *Absolute* under mono-theo-idealism: the consciousness of God (alias the all-consciousness) and God himself (alias the all-ego). In fact, quite suddenly, from one sentence to the next (the text coming to its close), Husserl substitutes the word 'God' for the word 'all-ego' (and for its anaphoric pronoun, 'it'); almost immediately, he is saying such things as '*God is everywhere. God's life lives in all life*' (Husserl, 2014: p. 168).

However, all this is highly tentative. Five years later, in 1913, when *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology* [. . .] 1 was published, Husserl had left the tentative mode for the – in a certain sense – *negative* mode. In 1913, his position is this: If an extra-worldly divine being exists (and there are rational indications for this in the – for Husserl – 'wonderful teleology' of the world, i.e., of the factual intentional content of consciousness), then it is *transcendent* not only to the world but also to the Absolute *qua* (total) consciousness. He writes:

What matters to us here is [. . .] that it [the extra-worldly divine being] would be transcendent not only to the world, but evidently also to the 'absolute' consciousness. It would, therefore, be an '*absolute*' in a *totally different sense than the absolute of consciousness*, just as it would be, on the other hand, a *transcendent* in a *totally different sense than the transcendent in the sense of the world*.

(Husserl, 1976a: p. 125)

Since *such* a divine being is transcendent to total consciousness, to 'the absolute of consciousness,' it cannot have a consciousness (at least none *we* can conceive of), let alone a consciousness that unifies total consciousness by encompassing and overarching it (while belonging to it, of course); *such* a divine being would, therefore, not have the all-consciousness envisaged earlier, nor be the subject of it, the all-ego. To assume the existence of *such* a divine being would be a leap into metaphysics far greater than the leap idealistic Phenomenologists must take in order to incorporate *other minds* adequately into their system of being – and certainly far greater than the leap they must take in order to become idealists in the first place. In fact, to assume the existence of a divine being that is transcendent to total consciousness – that, in other words, is one of Kant's '*Dinge an sich*' – is a leap *beyond* the borders of idealism: it entails the denial of (ontological) idealism. It is a curious fact that Husserl – in *Ideas 1*, in his manifesto of idealism – favors a conception of God that is incompatible with idealism: that, *given idealism*, leads to atheism.

In the following quotation from his last book, *The Crisis of the European Sciences* [. . .], Husserl may seem to have returned to an idealism-compatible conception of God: to God as the transcendental ego:

But under all circumstances, for the deepest philosophical reasons, which cannot be addressed any further, and not only for methodological reasons, it is necessary to do justice to the absolute uniqueness of the ego and its central position for all constitution.

(Husserl, 1976b: p. 190)

However, it turns out (the context makes it clear: Husserl, 1976b: pp. 187–190) that the ego meant here by Husserl is Husserl's own ego, in world-constituting function, which ego he does, indeed, consider to be a transcendental ego among other transcendental egos, but which he nevertheless takes to be *the first and central transcendental ego of them all*:

I, who stand above all natural being that has meaning for me, and am the ego-pole of the corresponding transcendental life wherein in the first place world purely as world for me has meaning: I who, taken in full concretion, encompass all of this. . . . [The] primordial ego, [the] ego of my epoché . . . , [which] by itself and in itself constitutes the transcendental intersubjectivity.

(Husserl, 1976b: p. 188)

Perhaps it cannot – everything considered – be said that Husserl ever *really* succumbed to the transcendental illusion of transcendental solipsism, but he certainly seems to have been severely tempted by it. In any case, what we may be certain of is this: Husserl never thought that he was God. No idealist (in his or her right mind) ever thought this. One simple reason for this forbearance is likely to be the obvious fact that one's consciousness follows the commands of one's *will* only to a very limited extent. This, presumably, would be otherwise if one were God.

Notes

- 1 In this chapter, 'phenomenology' (and its derivatives) will be capitalized if what is intended is *Husserlian Phenomenology*, not another phenomenology (and certainly not what modern philosophers of mind often call 'phenomenology' – 'the phenomenology of a bat,' for example, meaning the totality of the subjective experiences of a bat and *not* its description).
- 2 In contrast, Kant and the philosophers of German idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) had not much to offer to Husserl. Leibniz, however (who was an idealist just as much as Berkeley), exerted a noticeable influence on Husserl: the less of an empiricist Husserl became, the more of a Leibnizian he waxed.
- 3 'Conscious event,' or also 'conscious episode' is the closest possible rendering in English of the German word '*Erlebnis*' – which latter is the word Husserl himself normally uses when referring to the immediate natural parts of consciousness. Note that an '*Erlebnis*' is not quite the same as an '*Erfahrung*' or, in English, an 'experience.' Every '*Erfahrung*' is an '*Erlebnis*,' but not vice versa (at least not clearly or obviously so). An '*Erfahrung*' is an '*Erlebnis*' that has objective validity; this is what the word '*Erfahrung*' suggests to German-speaking philosophically minded readers (and will irresistibly suggest to anyone who has read Kant). However, since the English substantive 'experience' and the English verb 'to experience' are more general than the German '*Erfahrung*' and '*erfahren*' in their philosophical acceptation, they, too, *can very well* be used as semantic approximations to the German '*Erlebnis*' and '*erleben*,' especially if qualified by the word 'subjective(ly).'
- 4 'Intrinsically-essentially' means *necessarily by inner constitution*.
- 5 *Epistemological idealism* does not propose – in contrast to *ontological idealism* (which is normally, though not always, meant here when the word 'idealism' is used *simpliciter*) – that everything is in the mind or that there is no mind-independent world. It does, however, hold that the mind-independent world and everything that is not in the mind is *unknowable*. Clearly, ontological idealism entails epistemological idealism, but not vice versa (for if there is no mind-independent world, then the mind-independent world is unknowable, but the reverse conditional does not hold true; and if everything is in the mind, then everything that is not in the mind is unknowable, and again, the reverse conditional does not hold true). This makes it possible to maintain epistemological idealism without ontological idealism; it is another question whether this is reasonable.
- 6 The first philosopher who had a fairly clear idea of intentionality (though he didn't use the word: it was taken from medieval scholasticism and introduced into the modern philosophical vocabulary by Franz Brentano) was Johann Gottlieb Fichte. However, the medieval philosophers – Anselm of Canterbury, for one – did talk of objects that are *in the mind* (and often *merely* in the mind); this is what inspired Brentano.

- 7 It is no accident that Hume's *impressions and ideas* remind one of atoms in the void, repelling and attracting each other, clumping together, flying apart. It must remain a mystery why Hume could think that the world of consciousness was in any way *like that*.
- 8 The Churchlands, Dennett, and already Ryle (in effect) are well-known examples of physicalistic reductionists about consciousness. It must, unfortunately, be noted that the philosophy of Wittgenstein (especially in the *Philosophical Investigations*) contributed much to giving physicalistic reductionism about consciousness a philosophically attractive appearance and to making it 'fashionable' (although Wittgenstein certainly did not intend this). The Wittgenstein connection of physicalistic reductionism about consciousness is extensively and in depth documented and discussed in Meixner, 2014.
- 9 Husserl did not like the word 'introspection' (in view of the misleading connotations that had become connected to it). On the other hand, he was a perfect friend of *the matter* behind the word (a matter that is absolutely essential for Phenomenology): perception directed at experiences, *reflexive perception*. On the central role of 'introspection' (alias *reflexive perception*) for Phenomenology, see Meixner, 2014.
- 10 Phenomenological reduction and eidetic reduction are considered 'side by side' in Husserl, 1962: pp. 281–285 (more specifically, in the fourth and last German version of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article of 1927; *ibid.*: pp. 277–301). *Transcendental reduction*, of which Husserl also speaks, is nothing but radically implemented phenomenological reduction: the existence prejudices that lurk in the Phenomenologist's natural (i.e., psychological) conception of inner experience must be 'bracketed,' too; see Husserl, 1962: pp. 292–295. Transcendental reduction brings one into the sphere of transcendental idealism: an ontological idealism that leaves the *natural* (the psychological) understanding of the mind behind.
- 11 The Husserlian meanings of the terms '*a priori*' and 'empiric' are certainly not the usual ones.
- 12 The ideal – or *dream* – in question is nowadays called 'foundationalism.'
- 13 Initially, Husserl did not take *the subject* – or *ego* – Phenomenologically seriously. Husserl's recognition of this fact and the total revision of his earlier views on the ego – together with a characterization of the ego's peculiar *in-being* in consciousness – can be found in Husserl, 1976a: pp. 123–124.
- 14 The modalities of a given intentional object are items picked from the following list of pairs (only one item from each pertinent pair): necessary–non-necessary, possible–impossible, actual–non-actual, real–unreal, genuine–non-genuine, probable–improbable, certain–uncertain, true–false, etc. Evidently, there are ontological and epistemological modalities, objective and subjective ones.
- 15 Note that *the world* is *not* necessarily also *the whole of being* for idealists. *The world* is for idealists *the whole of being* only if they hold that every subject of consciousness and every real part of consciousness is an intentional object of consciousness. It is not necessary for idealists (not even *qua* idealists) to have this view.
- 16 The translator of all passages quoted from Husserl in this chapter is its author: UM. I have found the published English translations of Husserl's writings to be often unsatisfactory. There is no point in using these translations and, at the same time, having to correct them in lengthy notes.
- 17 On Husserl's more or less *unofficial* love for affirmative metaphysics, see the editors' introduction to Husserl, 2014: pp. LXI–XC. On Husserl's *official* view regarding metaphysics and its relation to Phenomenology, see Husserl, 1956: p. 70. On a view that Husserl adopted and acknowledged to be metaphysical, which, however, transcends the original methodological framework of Phenomenology (though Husserl would presumably have denied this), see Husserl, 1963: pp. 166–168.
- 18 The idealistic decision determines the meaning of the discourse on 'objective' and 'natural' things; it is *not* the other way around – contrary to what Husserl asserted in a text written early in his idealistic period (in 1908 or 1909), which assertion shows, however, *how much* of an idealist he had become. See Husserl, 2014: pp. 137–138.
- 19 Note that 'There is some consciousness in which everything is' entails 'For everything there is some consciousness in which it is,' but not vice versa. Note also that the logical difference between the two propositions vanishes if everything that is in a given consciousness is also in every other consciousness. This is what Leibniz, in effect, assumed in his *Monadology*. The monads do not differ with respect to what is in them (they all contain *the world*); they differ only in the degree of *distinctness* (for them) of what is in them and in their *perspective* on it.
- 20 'World-constituting-and-encompassing' (in the idealistic sense) is just about a synonym for 'transcendental' when it qualifies the word 'ego' or the word 'subject.' But this is, of course, not the case when 'transcendental' qualifies 'philosophy' or 'illusion.'
- 21 I do not believe that the transcendental illusion in question can be *Phenomenologically* dissolved (*in addition* to being rationally rejected in metaphysics; this rational rejection is, of course, possible). The

- reason for my skepticism is that the illusion is produced precisely by the *phenomena* of consciousness themselves, once consciousness, helped by *epoché*, becomes deeply preoccupied with itself.
- 22 There is, of course, also occasion for conflict between monotheistic theology and idealism. Many monotheistic theologians do not mind agreeing with the proposition that *everything is in the mind of God*; yet they would add: 'but not everything is *only* in the mind of God: some things are both in the mind of God and outside of it, indeed even outside of God.' Evidently, if this is to be true, then some entity must, *in one sense*, be in God's mind and, *in another sense*, not be in God's mind; for example in the following way: (i) the entity is – nonliterally – in the mind of God because a representation of it is literally in the mind of God; (ii) the same entity is – literally – not in the mind of God because it is literally outside the mind of God. Idealists, however, will insist on a univocal understanding of 'being in the mind of God,' will insist on its meaning *univocally* the same as 'being in the consciousness of God via real parthood, via intentionality, or *qua* subject.' For them, it is out of the question that something is 'both in the mind of God and outside of it.' In this connection they will also underscore that an entity should not be taken to be in the mind of God like a stone is in a bucket, for if the bucket were destroyed, the stone would still be around. Rather, an entity that is in the mind of God is *intrinsically-essentially* in the mind of God and therefore would not exist if the mind of God did not exist: it depends (for its existence) on the mind of God.
- 23 The *all-ego* has to be distinguished from the *ego-all*, which is 'the system of monads' (in other words, the society of the subjects of consciousness); see Husserl, 2014: p. 177.

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