

## 6 *Ineinandersein* and *L'interlacs*

### The Constitution of the Social World or “We-World” (*Wir-Welt*) in Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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“The problem of the existential modality of the social is here at one with all problems of transcendence.”

(Merleau-Ponty 1945, 423 [417])<sup>1</sup>

“Others are implicated in me as (already) implicated in one another, and I am, in turn, implicated in them; and ‘the’ world is constituted in the liveliness of the egoic life implicated in me, which is (in turn) implicated in the egoic within-one-another (*Ineinander*).”

(Husserl, Hua 15, 200, my translation)

“This interiority of the *being-for-one-another* (*Füreinandersein*) as an intentional being-within-each-other (*Ineinandersein*) is the ‘meta-physical’ fundamental fact; it is a within-one-another (*Ineinander*) of the absolute. Each has his or her primordially, in which is implicated the transcendental capacity of his or her ‘ego,’ and each is similarly in another, albeit no one can have the least really in common with the other. But each, as a primordially of intentional experiences of his or her experiencing—his or her self ‘self-sufficient’—ego implicates each other primordial intentionality.”

(Husserl, Hua 15, 366, my translation)

#### 1 THE PRIMACY OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE, PERSONAL WORLD IN HUSSERL AND MERLEAU-PONTY

As these three opening epigraphs indicate, both Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty were deeply interested in the kinds of intentional intertwinings that constitute the collective social and cultural life of human beings, for which both use the German term *Ineinandersein*. Overall, Merleau-Ponty was extraordinarily prescient in his interpretation of Husserl. He identified specific—and at the time, unnoticed—threads, especially in the Husserl’s musings that never became prominent enough to be explicitly thematized. Merleau-Ponty thus particularly underscored and reinterpreted

Husserl's emphasis on the priority of intersubjectivity and the on the touching-touched relationship as a cipher for human being-in-the-world.

Much has been written on Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl, but here I want to focus explicitly on Merleau-Ponty's interpretation and adaptation of Husserl's conception of the intersubjective constitution of 'sociality' (*Sozialität*) by examining in particular the manner in which Merleau-Ponty takes up Husserl's conception on 'being-within-one-another' (*Ineinandersein*), a concept that the mature Husserl usually discusses in relation to his own conception of the intersubjective joining together of subjects, which he calls, borrowing from Leibniz, the 'community of monads' (*Gemeinschaft der Monaden*, Hua 1, 149; *Monadengemeinschaft*, Hua 1, 158) or the 'within-one-another of monads' (*Das Ineinander der Monaden*, Hua 15, 268).<sup>2</sup> In his mature research writings (although without ever foregrounding it thematically), Husserl invokes this intersection of human living and striving (*Leben und Streben*) in terms of *Ineinandersein* (and *Ineinanderleben*) usually in relation to the collective constitution of the experience of one world 'for all.'<sup>3</sup>

Since the publication of Iso Kern's three-volume Husserliana edition of Edmund Husserl's writings on intersubjectivity, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* (Hua 13, 14, 15), it has no longer been credible to portray Husserl as a Cartesian methodological solipsist who sought to reduce the entire meaningful world to the activity of the *solus ipse*. Indeed, anyone who reads the *Cartesian Meditations* to the end will see that even there, where he is being most Cartesian, Husserl is stressing the ontological primordially of intersubjectivity in his discussion of the community of monads. In fact, beginning from around 1910, the mature Husserl stresses that phenomenological explorations must recognize the concreteness of intersubjective human social and cultural life, the collective 'life of spirit' or 'spiritual life' (*Geistesleben*) as it is grasped in the 'personalistic attitude' (*die personalistische Einstellung*), as he calls it in *Ideas II*, § 49 (Hua 4), which he thinks has primordially over the 'naturalistic attitude' (*die naturalistische Einstellung*) that saturates the modern sciences (including contemporary social sciences, especially empirical psychology). Indeed, Husserl insists, in *Ideas II* and elsewhere, that the chief error of the naturalistic outlook consists of thinking of the natural world (i.e., primarily 'the world of things,' *Dingwelt*) which, more or less, equates to the world as studied by the physical sciences) as in some sense *prior to* and *independent of* the human cultural world (which is explicitly excluded by the methodology of the natural sciences). For Husserl, the truth is precisely the reverse: 'nature' as such—the nature that is explored in natural scientific investigation—is itself a discovery and constituted achievement of human beings, a discovery of scientific inquiry as carried out by humans adopting a very peculiar and historically specific attitude (discovered by 'Galileo'—a name that stands for a whole movement of thought), for which he has various names including, 'the physicalistic attitude,' 'the naturalistic attitude,' and so on. It is one of the ongoing consequences of modern

Galilean science that a mathematically formalized, abstract concept of nature has been prioritized over the concrete, cultural world. Thus, in a note (Beilage XIII) accompanying his 1925 *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures, Husserl writes, “natural science—abstract; personal science—concrete” (*Naturwissenschaft—abstrakt; Personalwissenschaft—konkret* (Hua 9, 418).

Taking his cue from Husserl, Merleau-Ponty always accepts the priority of the intersubjective, cultural world as his starting point. The ‘world’ (*le monde*) for Merleau-Ponty—as for Husserl—means first and foremost the concrete *social, historical, and cultural* world, the common shared world of collective human interrelationality, the world of what Husserl calls ‘spirit’ (*Geist*). This is a temporally unfolding ‘world’ that is never given all at once, since it stretches into the past and points towards the future. This temporal world of social and cultural contexts can never be surpassed; it is ‘un-surpassable’ (*unhintergebar*).

We know that Merleau-Ponty’s fateful encounter with Husserl, especially his 1939 visit to the newly opened Husserl Archives in Leuven, transformed his research, as already is evident in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), where a meditation on Husserlian phenomenology dominates the famous preface. He read Husserl’s *Ideas II*, first in typescript in Leuven in 1939 and later in the 1952 Husserliana edition of Marly Biemel (Hua 4).<sup>4</sup> Merleau-Ponty was deeply influenced by what he knew of Husserl’s analyses of ‘empathy’ (*Einfühlung*) or ‘experience of the other’ (*Fremderfahrung*), and indeed, he several times emphasizes that the problem of empathy is one with the problem of the constitution of the commonly shared world ‘for all’ (*für Jedermann*) (a familiar theme in Husserl, cf. Hua 13, 14, 15). As Merleau-Ponty will put it in his commemorative essay, “The Philosopher and His Shadow” (Merleau-Ponty 1959) in *Signs* (Merleau-Ponty 1960):

It is never a matter of anything but co-perception. I see that this man over there sees, as I touch my left hand while it is touching my right. Thus the problem of *Einfühlung*, like that of my incarnation, leads into the meditation of the sensible, or, if you prefer, it is borne within it. (*Le problème de l'Einfühlung comme celui de mon incarnation débouche donc sur la méditation du sensible, ou, si l'on préfère, il s'y transporte*). (Merleau-Ponty 1960, 215 [171])<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the issues of embodiment and of other-experience are both instances of this sensuous intertwining and self-doubling that characterizes being-in-the-world itself. The problematic of being embodied and the problematic of experiencing others both depend on a certain kind of sensibility or sensuousness which itself is interlaced with its surrounding world. Merleau-Ponty sees the world as the outcome of the experience of intertwined perspectives. This is why in this very chapter on “Other People and the Human World,” he writes, “Transcendental subjectivity is revealed

subjectivity, revealed to itself and to others, and is for that reason an intersubjectivity” (PP, 361; 415).

## 2 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ONE COMMON WORLD

In general, Husserl’s discussions of embodied ‘self-experience’ (*Selbsterfahrung*), the ‘experience of others’ (*Fremderfahrung*) in ‘empathy’ (*Einfühlung*), and of the being-within-one-another or interpenetration (*Ineinander*) of subjects in the constitution of the common shared world-for-all, were all hugely influential on Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, a fact he underscores by often invoking these themes using Husserl’s German terms as a kind of shorthand (*Einfühlung*, *Ineinander*). Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty also understood how these themes mutually support and reinforce each other. In fact, the term *Einfühlung* and its cognates convey for Husserl this sense of intentional interwovenness (*Verflechtung*) and mutual implication as between persons, their bodies, and their streams of conscious life, in the commonly shared world. Human existence, for both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, is essentially embodied, egoic, conscious, and intentional, and is best understood as ‘being-in-the-world.’ In all human experience, there is always the backdrop of the shared horizon of the world. He writes, “To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world” (PP 453; 517). Furthermore, empathy is only possible against the background of a constituted common world:

Egotism and altruism exist against a background of belonging to the same world; and to want to construct this phenomenon beginning with a solipsist layer is to make it impossible once and for all—and perhaps to ignore the profoundest things Husserl is saying to us. (*Signs*, 175; [220f.])

Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty are preoccupied with how the sense of a one, common, shared, always ongoing world (a world that always transcends and outruns individual subjectivities and their intentional lives) itself emerges from living, finite, intersubjective intentionalities cooperating together. How is it that this world always appears as ‘always already there’ (*immer schon da*)? This constitution of the world as a whole involves a necessary paradox: how can subjects who find themselves already in the ‘pregiven world’ (*die vorgegebene Welt*, a concept that Husserl borrowed from Richard Avenarius) and who live finite lives with fixed temporal spans within that world, at the same time be, in their transcendental dimensions, responsible for the intentional *constitution* of a world that has the *sense* of being an ongoing, enduring, unending, unified world, a world that continues across generations and is always there as the permanent horizon for all human cultural achievements? For instance, Husserl writes about this

common world in his 1924 lecture, “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy”:

If we begin with human life and its natural conscious course, then it is a communalized life of human persons (*ein vergemeinschaftetes Leben menschlicher Personen*) who immerse themselves in an endless world, i.e., viewing it, sometimes in isolation and sometimes together with one another (*Miteinander*), imagining it variously, forming judgments about it, evaluating it, actively shaping it to suit our purposes. This world is for these persons, is for us humans, continually and quite obviously there as a common world surrounding us all (*als eine uns allgemeine Umwelt*); obviously *there*—it is the directly tangible and visible world in entirely immediate and freely expandable experience. It embraces not merely things and living beings, among them animals and humans, but also communities, communal institutions, works of art, cultural establishments of every kind. (Hua VII, 280 [cf. Husserl 1974b])

Merleau-Ponty already stresses the inexhaustibility of this one common world in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*:

The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. ‘There is a world,’ or rather: ‘There is the world’; I can never completely account for this ever-reiterated assertion in my life. This facticity of the world is what constitutes the *Weltlichkeit der Welt*, what causes the world to be the world [. . .]. (PP, xvi-xvii; xii)

And again in the same text, he writes, “[T]he world remains the same world throughout my life because it is the permanent being within which I make all corrections to my knowledge, a world which in its unity remains unaffected by those correlations” (PP, 327f. [378]). Much later, in his final working notes (1959–1961), in order to capture the character of this intentional world that outruns all our intentionalities, Merleau-Ponty recognizes that a new concept of infinity is required—not the infinity of mathematics, but “what exceeds us: the infinity of *Offenheit* and not *Unendlichkeit*—Infinity of the *Lebenswelt* and not the infinity of idealization—Negative infinity, therefore—Meaning or reason which are contingency” (VI, 169 [221]). Merleau-Ponty, therefore, follows Husserl not only in his conception of the open-ended, temporal, and horizontal character of world, but also in thinking of human subjectivity as essentially *embodied* within this world and essentially implicated with others. For both phenomenologists, the deepest form of embodied self-experience *coincides* with the equally primordial experience of others in empathy. Merleau-Ponty, accordingly, develops his account of the ‘I-other’ experience, for which he often uses the Husserlian term *Einfühlung* as a shorthand in relation both to the intertwined

intentionalities of living subjects and with the peculiarities of embodiment. Merleau-Ponty similarly stresses intersubjectivity, language, and ‘communication with other’ more and more in his later works. As he writes in *The Primacy of Perception*, “My first two books sought to restore the world of perception. My works in preparation aim to show how communication with others, and thought, take up and go beyond the realm of perception which initiated us into truth” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 3).<sup>6</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty, the world that we usually experience is specifically the *human* world, the world of commerce and culture, the world invested with specifically human signification. As he writes in the chapter “Other People and the Human World” (*Autrui et le monde humaine*) in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

Not only have I a physical world (*un monde physique*), not only do I live in the midst of earth, air and water, I have around me roads, plantations, villages, streets, churches, implements, a bell, a spoon, a pipe. Each of these objects is moulded to the human action which it serves. Each one spreads round it an atmosphere of humanity (*émet une atmosphère d’humanité*) which may be determinate in a low degree, in the case of a few footmarks in the sand, or on the other hand highly determinate, if I go into every room from top to bottom of a house recently evacuated. [. . .] The cultural world is then ambiguous, but it is already present. (PP, 347f. [399f.])

The experienced surrounding world, for Merleau-Ponty, as for Husserl, is a distinctly human *Welt* that is much more complex than the ‘*Umwelt*’ (*milieu*) of animals (see PP, 87 [102]).<sup>7</sup> This is what he calls “the social world, not [. . .] an object or sum of objects, but [. . .] a permanent field or dimension of existence” (*champ permanent ou dimension d’existence*, PP, 62 [415]). The human world is a world of embedded situatedness, but also, precisely because meanings are ambiguous, a domain of freedom. For Merleau-Ponty, our relation to this social world is “deeper (*plus profond*) than any express perception or any judgment” (PP, 362 [415]).

Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty always understands embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) as twofold: as my experience of myself and also my experience of the other animate organism. To express the two-sidedness of the embodied situation, the mature Merleau-Ponty chooses the term ‘flesh’ (*la chair*)—inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre’s discussions of the flesh in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) (cf. Moran 2010)—to characterize not only the *individual* living organic body (Husserl’s *Leib*), but also to explicate and negotiate the physical, emotional, and symbolic mediating spaces that allow one human being to encounter another human being. This is sometimes called ‘the inter-world’ (*l’intermonde*) by Merleau-Ponty. But in his late work, he settles on the word ‘flesh.’ Flesh is what joins us together as well as what separates us, the inside and outside of the one ‘skin’ (*le peau*).<sup>8</sup> Indeed,

Merleau-Ponty not only develops his notion of 'flesh,' but also other notions such as 'chiasme,' 'intertwining,' or 'interlacing' (*l'interlacs*) to express the manner in which one's bodily awareness is unified within oneself and also 'doubled' or 'reversed' such that one can experience oneself as other, e.g., when one hand touches the other, and a double sentience is revealed. Merleau-Ponty speaks of a general 'duplicity' (*duplicité*) of the flesh and a 'reflexivity of the sensible' (*une réflexivité du sensible*; Merleau-Ponty [1964a], 168). There is an "insertion of the world between the two leaves of my body" and "the insertion of my body between the two leaves of each thing and of the world" (VI, 264 [312]). Elsewhere, I have explored the relation between this conception of reversibility and Husserl's conception of *Verflechtung* (see Moran 2013, and 2014); here, I shall explore primarily Merleau-Ponty's conception of intersecting sociality as part of his concept of embodied being-in-the-world (*être au monde*, PP, vii and 94; and see '*le corps et le véhicule de l'être au monde*,' PP, 97).

Although Merleau-Ponty affirms over and over again in *Phenomenology of Perception* that the 'world' is primarily the *human* world, in his later writings, again following some of the late Husserl's meditations, which do refer to animality, he also expands his discussions in his later writings to talk of 'nature' in a broad sense (already implicit in the *Phenomenology of Perception* when he writes, "The natural world, we said, is the schema of intersensory relations" PP, 327 [377]). The late Merleau-Ponty even invokes the notion of 'interanimality,' where humans also encounter other animals within their world. In a late working note from January 1959, for instance, Merleau-Ponty comments on the need to develop a concept of the human with both physical and spiritual sides (following from Husserl), but also on the need for a new conception of nature (to replace the Cartesian conception), and to think about the human relation with animals: "Our relation with animality, our 'kinship (*parenté*)' [Heidegger] made explicit" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 168 [220]).<sup>9</sup> The concept of 'world,' then, continues to become more complex, nuanced, and indeed somewhat more horizontal and symbolic in the later Merleau-Ponty, but here, we shall remain focused on the human social world.

### 3 PHENOMENOLOGY OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND THE INTERWEAVING OF SUBJECTS

As we have seen, Husserl regards the spiritual or cultural world as that which is most immediate and primary. Already in a meditation written in 1910, he writes:

I am positing now other I's, other minds, and I do this, of course, through interpretative entering in (*Hineindeutung*). [. . .] In my cogitationes I myself am 'attuned' to these I's being subjects of their cogitationes, in

particular, in acts of my position-takings, of love, of pity, etc., in acts of communication, and acts made possible by (those that presuppose) communication, acts of commanding, etc. Likewise, the other I-subjects have a stock of such cogitationes attuned to their *socii* and to me as well. [. . .] These relations—the relations of life—which, through these acts, are brought forth between all subjects of mind, signify that each I, each ‘mind’ knows itself as a member of a ‘spiritual’ world and at the same time knows itself as a subject vis-à-vis a world of things. However, other minds confront me in a quite different manner than things. Things confront me as lifeless objects; minds are present to me as addressed or addressing me, as loved or loving me, etc. I do not live in isolation; I live with them a common, integrated life, in spite of the separation of subjectivities.

(Husserl 2006, 167f. (translation modified); Hua 13, 92)

As human subjects, we live and move and have our being in an intersubjective, cultural world, a world where we recognize each other as partner citizens, ‘*socii*’ (a word Husserl occasionally uses in his intersubjectivity writings, see Hua 15, 52; 193; 510; 512), a world of pregiven significations, a common, shared world of cultural objects, whose character is discovered rather than invented by us. Egological phenomenology not only must be complemented by intersubjective phenomenology, but intersubjective phenomenology must finally have primacy or, as Husserl would say, absoluteness (cf. Hua 9, 321f., Husserl 1997, 229; Hua 9, 321f.).

This phenomenology of intersubjectivity will describe how intentional subjects cooperate to co-constitute and jointly make up their experienced cultural world with its corresponding and enduring sense of a shared, common world of nature. Nature is, as it were, revealed *within* our cultural world, and especially in and through natural scientific research, which is itself a cultural activity. As Husserl would write much later in the “Vienna Lecture” (1935), (Husserl 1997) nature is drawn into the cultural realm:

Here the spirit (*Geist*) is not in or alongside nature; rather, nature is itself drawn into the spiritual sphere. Also, the ego is then no longer an isolated thing (*ein isoliertes Ding*) alongside other such things in a pregiven world; in general, the serious mutual exteriority of ego-persons (*das ernstliche Außer- und Nebeneinander der Ichpersonen*), their being alongside one another, ceases in favor of an inward being-for-one-another and mutual interpenetration (*eines innerlichen Ineinander- und Füreinanderseins*).

(*Crisis*, 298; Hua 4, 346)

What is first for Husserl is our intentional intertwining and interweaving, our *Ineinandersein*. Personalistic phenomenology studies human lives in their interwovenness, “in their ways of living and acting with one another and in-and-through one another” (*ibrer Weisen des Miteinander- und Ineinanderlebens und -wirkens*) (Hua 9, 418). Indeed, Husserl emphasizes that



we can take a 'social' or an 'asocial' attitude in our personal lives—there is a 'private attitude' (*die private Einstellung*, Hua 15, 510), which is 'asocial' and a public one, which is social.

Hans-Georg Gadamer has commented that Husserl came to recognize that his earlier phenomenological reduction had overlooked two essential insights, namely, concerning the nature of intersubjectivity and the constitution of what is not explicitly intended. Gadamer further claims that Husserl's later thinking of the horizon and world were efforts to remediate his earlier egoic phenomenology. He writes:

Husserl saw, in particular, that at least two unnoticed presuppositions were contained in this radical beginning [the discovery of the transcendental ego]. First of all, the transcendental ego contained the 'all of us' of human community, and the transcendental view of phenomenology in no way poses the question explicitly as to how the being of the thou and the we, beyond the ego's own world, is really constituted. (This is the problem of intersubjectivity). Second, he saw that the general suspension of the thesis regarding reality did not suffice, since suspension of the positing only touched the explicit object of the act of intentional meaning, but not what is cointended and the anonymous implications given along with every such act of meaning. [. . .] Thus Husserl arrived at the elaboration of his doctrine of the horizons that in the end are all integrated into the one universal world-horizons that embraces our entire intentional life. (Gadamer 1977, 154f.)

Gadamer astutely recognizes that Husserl does indeed seek to articulate the world's sense as a world for all. Furthermore, this 'for all' has the character of an insurmountable horizon. We cannot get past our sense of belonging to the one world—spatial, temporal, cultural—the horizon of the world outruns everything.

The composition of the unified world gradually emerged in Husserl's thoughts from around 1911 onward (he seems to have regarded the encounter with Avenarius's work as particularly significant). Husserl originally began discussing the interweaving and intersection of experiences in the unified flow of a single consciousness. His thinking on intersubjective interaction, furthermore, essentially parallels the way in which he describes the interweaving of our individual mental experience (*Erlebnisse*, such as perceiving, remembering, imagining, and so on) in the unity of a single stream of consciousness. The peculiar unity of the 'flow' of conscious experience (*Erlebnisstrom*) is unlike any object in nature. Thus, in his 1925 *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures, where he is meditating on the legacy of Wilhelm Dilthey, he writes:

But psychology and consequently all the socio-cultural sciences refer to the one mental nexus universally given by internal experience (*durch innere Erfahrung*). Internal experience gives no mere mutual externality

(*kein bloßes Außereinander*); it knows no separation of parts consisting of self-sufficient elements. It knows only internally interwoven states (*nur innerlich verflochtene Zustände*), interwoven in the unity of one all-inclusive nexus (*verflochten in der Einheit eines universalen Zusammenhanges*), which is itself necessarily given along with them as nexus (*Zusammenhang*) in internal intuition. Whether or not we look at it and its moments becoming singly prominent—the single perceptions, recollections, feelings, willings—whether or not we direct our noticing special regard towards their intertwinings, their passing over into one another and proceeding forth from one another (*auf ihre Verflechtungen, ihr Ineinander-übergehen und Auseinander-hervorgehen*): all that and as *one* nexus, is *lived experience* (*Erlebnis*).

(Hua 9, 8; Husserl 1997, 4f.)

Indeed, Husserl had sharply criticized Brentano for retaining a naturalistic orientation that prevented him from seeing the intentional interweaving and syntheses of psychic states in the stream of consciousness (cf. Hua 9, 36f.; Husserl 1997, 26;).

Husserl is here talking about the ‘intertwining and involution’ (*Verflechtung* and *Ineinandersein*) of individual, conscious experiences within the unified ‘nexus of consciousness’ (*Bewusstseinszusammenhang*)—but he expands this to include the peculiar manner in which groups of conscious lives and other subjectivities can intersect, interweave, and contribute to the constitution of higher collectivities. Indeed, Husserl’s *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Draft A2, written in 1927) explicitly talks about the necessarily interwoven layers of self-experience, intersubjective experience, and the experience of community (*die Erfahrung der Gemeinschaft*, Hua 9, 242), and in this text, Husserl further speaks, besides the Cartesian reduction to ownness, of an ‘intersubjective reduction’ (Hua 9, 246; Husserl 1997, 94;), which brings to light the nature of community and ‘intersubjectively entwined acts’ (*intersubjektiv verflochtenen Akten*) understood as communal acts (*Akten des Gemeinschaftslebens*, Hua 9, 246) that constitute the sense of a shared, common, natural world as well as the sense of a shared objective community.

Husserl sees the two kinds of interwovenness, singular and plural, as intrinsically related. Just as individual experiences (*Erlebnisse*) can be joined together, synthesized, modified, negated, crossed out, and so on, so can intersubjective experiences. Intersubjective experiences constitute a new class of experiences, *founded*, to be sure, on individual experiences, but creating new levels of higher objectivities, including the very objective sense of a common, natural world. These higher unities, as Edith Stein has insisted, are always spiritual unities.

Husserl insists that every subjective stream is not only in principle ‘open-ended,’ but in fact implies other streams and is in turn ‘implied’ in every other conscious stream, leading to an ‘open plurality of such egos’ (*eine offene Vielheit solcher Egos*). (cf. Hua 17, 246 [239f.]).

Husserl maintains that self-consciousness and the consciousness of others in the context of an overall 'intersubjectivity' are inseparable. Thus, he writes in *Crisis of European Sciences*:

Here we soon see, as another a priori, that self-consciousness and consciousness of others are inseparable (*untrennbar*); it is unthinkable, and not just a mere fact, that I be human in a world without being a man (*es ist undenkbar, und nicht etwa ein bloßes Faktum, dass ich Mensch wäre in einer Welt, ohne dass ich ein Mensch wäre*). There need be no one in my perceptual field, but fellow men are necessary as actual, as known (*Mitmenschen sind notwendig als wirkliche und bekannte*), and as an open horizon of those I might possibly meet. Factually I am within an interhuman present (*in einer mitmenschlichen Gegenwart*) and within an open horizon of mankind; I know myself to be factually within a generative framework (*generative Zusammenhang*), in the unitary flow of a historical development in which this present is mankind's present and the world of which it is conscious is a historical present with a historical past and a historical future.

(*Crisis* § 71, 253; Hua 6, 256)

Furthermore, Husserl focuses not just on current intertwinings, as in cases of contemporaneous subjectivities in communication with each other, but he also frequently speaks of the complex 'interweavings' (*Verflechtungen*) of human subjects in collective social life in history (See Moran 2014). Indeed, historical happenings have precisely this character of having-been-the-case, of having been 'on hand,' whereas in fact, history itself is possible only because of human interaction and historicity. Thus, in his late *Origin of Geometry* text, Husserl writes:

We can now say that history (*Geschichte*) is from the start nothing other than the vital movement (*die lebendige Bewegung*) of the with-one-another (*Miteinander*) and the interweaving (*Ineinander*) of original formations (*Sinnbildung*) and sedimentations of meaning (*Sinnsedimentierung*).

(*Crisis*, 371; Hua 4, 380, transl. modified)

We intertwine not just with present others, but with others in the past, and in preceding generations, and we also carry out intentional acts that are directed towards future generations (planting trees, planning urban expansion, and so on).

In his later works, more generally, especially those around 1931 when he was attempting to rewrite the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* for publication in the German edition, Husserl describes this intentional interrelatedness between human subjects as involving 'generativity' (*Generativität*), i.e., the interrelatedness continues across generations, and allows, for instance,

poets and philosophers to take up another thinker or writer from the past, to see oneself as belonging to the same tradition, exploring the same questions, and so on. Thus, in his research notes from August 1931 entitled “The pre-given world in intuitive discovery—the systematics of expansion” (Hua XV, 196–214), he recognizes that it belongs to consciousness to be able to iterate itself—to be able to see commonalities with other consciousnesses and to expand and enlarge its horizons to include not just the present now, but experiences in the past and future, and even experiences had by others, even others not directly experiencable by me at this time. This is, for Husserl, the phenomenon of intersubjective generativity (Hua 15, 199). As he writes, “In the same manner, generatively, I have my parents, I have also known the parents of my parents, but they in turn had their parents, who also had [. . .] etc.; those latter, I myself could absolutely not have known” (Hua 15, 200, my translation).

A kind of intergenerational community is founded and this is the typical kind of community for philosophers, poets, and indeed, for natural scientists. These different individuals are bound together by shared goals and shared values. As Husserl makes clear in the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* § 56, there is a real communion between subjectivities, although each subject is, in Husserl’s Leibnizian formulation, a ‘monad’ and thus an absolutely separately existing self, and at the same time, “[s]omething *that exists in intentional communion with something else that exists*. It is an essentially unique connectedness, an actual community and precisely the one that makes transcendently possible the being of a world, a world of humans and things” (CM § 56, 129; Hua 1, 157). Let us turn now to Merleau-Ponty.

#### 4 THE INTERSUBJECTIVE REDUCTION AND THE LIFE-WORLD

Initially, Merleau-Ponty, in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), praises phenomenology for not assuming a world that exists independently of our intersubjective involvements. He speaks of the ‘intersubjective world’ and he also recognizes that ‘monadic and intersubjective experience’ form ‘one unbroken text’ (PP, 54 [66]). It is through sensuous experience that I have a sense of the world as the ‘familiar setting of my life’ (PP, 52f. [64f.]). When we wake from sleep, we wake into the intersubjective world.

Merleau-Ponty was always aware of the limitations of Husserl’s conception of the reduction. He recognized that Husserl’s approach tended to be too one sided, too Cartesian. The transcendental reduction, for Merleau-Ponty, ought not to end in a monadological, transcendental subjectivity, in a Cartesian *mens sive animus*, but rather there must be—as Husserl also confirmed—an intersubjective reduction:

The passage to intersubjectivity is contradictory only with regard to an insufficient reduction, Husserl was right to say. But a sufficient

reduction leads beyond the alleged transcendental 'immanence,' it leads to the absolute spirit understood as *Weltlichkeit*, to *Geist* as *Ineinander* of the spontaneities, itself founded on the aesthesiological *Ineinander* and on the sphere of life as sphere of *Einfühlung* and intercorporeity.

(VI, 172 [223f.])

Although it is not clear what Husserlian texts Merleau-Ponty is reflecting on here, he does recognize that for Husserl, intersubjectivity comes together to produce 'absolute spirit,' understood as *Ineinandersein*, which produces the sense of one, objective, shared, common world for all. In *Ideas II* § 62, Husserl emphasizes the ontological primacy of the personalistic world over and against the naturalistic world (*Ideas II*, 294; IV 281), and in this section, he speaks of the Janus-faced experiential body that is experienced as an 'aesthesiological body' (which seems to find echoes in Merleau-Ponty's passage (quoted above) in *The Visible and the Invisible* [1964]) and the 'body for the will.' The aesthesiological body is the substratum underlying the body for the will. In this *Ideas II* § 62, Husserl has a footnote in which he states:

According to our presentation, the concepts I and we (*Ich-Wir*) are relative: the I requires the thou, the we and the 'other.' And, furthermore, the Ego (the Ego as person) requires a relation to a world which engages it. Therefore, I, we and world belong together (*gehören zusammen*); the world as communal environing world (*als gemeinsame Umgebungswelt*), thereby bears the stamp of subjectivity.

(*Ideas II*, 301f.; Hua 4, 288)

Merleau-Ponty is both gauging correctly and reaffirming the Husserlian idea of the 'spiritual world' as a complex *Ineinander* of intercorporeal and intersubjective relations and interactions. In his notes on Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, he again invokes the '*Ineinander* between present and past' (*Ineinander du présent et du passé*), in speaking of the 'openness' of historicity (Merleau-Ponty 1998, 22 [20]). Merleau-Ponty also speaks of *Ineinander* to express the peculiarly human character of embodiment in his *Nature* lectures (Merleau-Ponty 1995, 269). We are not a mechanistic body plus spirit, but an interweaving of a physical body and an animate body. Merleau-Ponty writes of an *Ineinander* which is not that of one body inside another, but a 'lived, perceived *Ineinander*' (*notre Ineinander vécu, perçu, La Nature*, 270) that we experience in terms of the blending of the senses in the world, as well as the 'animality-humanity *Ineinander*' (*L'Ineinander animalité-humanité*, *ibid.*), that we experience in terms of our occupation of both domains of nature. This focus on *Ineinander* in its various senses requires a new ontology and an overcoming of the "philosophy of 'consciousness'" that Merleau-Ponty considered still to haunt his *Phenomenology of Perception* (VI, 183 [234]). In his *Course Notes for the Origin of Geometry*, he similarly writes of *Ineinander* in our relation to our

occupation of both the corporeal and the symbolic (irreal) spheres—in this case, the token is geometry.<sup>10</sup>

Merleau-Ponty believes we live as human beings primarily in the realms of the imaginary and the symbolic. Merleau-Ponty is influenced not only by Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (especially *Volume Two: The Mythical World*; Cassirer 1955), but also by the writings of Lévy-Bruhl, Lévi-Strauss, and possibly also Roger Caillois. Subsequently, Jacques Lacan would criticize Merleau-Ponty for not having an adequate account of the symbolic world (Lacan 1986, and 1991), and this view has become established in the literature. I believe, however, that Merleau-Ponty wants to emphasize our finite rootedness in the social world rather than the infinite horizons that entrance into the symbolic world affords.

Already in his first book, *The Structure of Behavior* (Merleau-Ponty 1942),<sup>11</sup> Merleau-Ponty had distinguished environment and 'milieu' from 'world':

Science is not therefore dealing with organisms as the completed modes of a unique world (*Welt*), as the abstract parts of a whole in which the parts would be most perfectly contained. It has to do with a series of 'environments' and 'milieu' (*Umwelt, Merkwelt, Gegenwelt*) in which the stimuli intervene according to what they signify and what they are worth for the typical activity of the species considered.

(SB, 129–30 [139–40])

In fact, it is into this human world that nature and the natural world intrudes. Merleau-Ponty begins this chapter on "Other People and the Human World" by asserting that we are 'thrown into a nature' that is itself discernible at the center of subjectivity (PP, 346 [398]). He asserts that "nature finds its way to the core of my personal life and becomes inextricably linked with it" (PP 347; 399). For Merleau-Ponty, as for Husserl, natural things and the natural world that is experienced external to me are *secondary* to my incarnate experience of the human and of human others in an intersubjective cultural (or "spiritual") world. What we encounter first is the body of the other person. As Merleau-Ponty writes in this section on "Other People and the Human World" (echoing a similar statement in Husserl that the other (*Leib*) is the first objective other): "The very first of all cultural objects, and the one by which all the rest exist, is the body of the other person (*le corps d'autrui*) as the vehicle of a form of behaviour (*comme porteur d'un comportement*)" (PP, 348 [401]).

For Merleau-Ponty, this 'objective spirit' (PP, 348 [400])—this 'subjectless and anonymous' cultural world (PP, 349 [401]) challenges the sense of subjectivity as always emanating from an 'I,' but it also challenges purely objectivist thought that things it can simply think about humans as objects—animals—relating to other objects in a world: "the existence of other people is a difficulty and an outrage for objective thought" (PP, 349

[401]). Merleau-Ponty had already made the social, human world to be the center of life in *The Structure of Behavior*. There, he says that the relation of soul to body has to be relativized. There are a number of layers, and each one is the soul to the lower body (cf. SB, 210 [227])

Merleau-Ponty regards the cultural, human world as precisely that which overcomes both solipsistic egoism and objectivism. Rather than enjoying a 'pure contemplation' of the world, Merleau-Ponty claims in *Sense and Nonsense* that each of us has to take up as best we can "the acts of others (*actes d'autrui*), reactivating from ambiguous signs (*à partir des signes ambigus*) an experience which is not his own, appropriating a structure [. . .] which he puts together as an experienced pianist deciphers an unknown piece of music" (*Sense and Nonsense*, 93 [109]).<sup>12</sup> Rather than 'positing an object,' we have 'communication with a way of being' (*Il n'y a plus ici position d'un objet, mais communication avec une manière d'être*, SNS, 93; 110). Constitution cannot be considered as meaning-making done by an isolated subject, but more like the experience of being carried along on the wave of intersubjectively constituted meanings.

Following Husserl, the experience of others is understood from my initial relation to myself. But for Merleau-Ponty, my initial relation to myself is also somehow dispersed. Just as I experience myself first in a kind of pre-personal way, so also I grasp the other in a similar way:

The possibility of another person's being self-evident is owed to the fact that I am not transparent for myself, and that my subjectivity draws its body in its wake [. . .] the positing of the other does not reduce me to an object in his perceptual field [. . .] The other person is never quite a personal being, if I myself am totally one, and if I grasp myself as apodeictically self-evident. But if I find in myself, through reflection, along with the perceiving subject, a pre-personal subject given to itself and if my perceptions are centred outside me as sources of initiative and judgment, if the perceived world remains in a state of neutrality, being neither verified as an object nor recognized as a dream, then it is not the case that everything that appears in the world is arrayed before me, and so the behaviour of others can have its place there.

(PP, 352f. [405])

Our perspectives slip into one another—they are not separate and independent (PP, 353 [405f.]).

Already in *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945, Merleau-Ponty is explicating the manner in which we experience ourselves not in the full plenitude of self-aware subjectivity, as in the Cartesian tradition, but rather as partial and limited perspectives whose views are intertwined with those of others. I experience myself just as I experience others, and indeed objects in the world—as transcendencies that are never complete. This is the basis for Merleau-Ponty's conception of 'intertwining,' 'intercorporeality,' and

'*l'intermonde*'—all concepts that receive much fuller elaboration in *The Visible and Invisible*.

## 5 THE SPLITTING OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE OTHER

For Merleau-Ponty, self-experience and 'primary presence' (*Urpräsenz*) are experiences already of a transcendence according to which we already are not one with ourselves. Merleau-Ponty elaborates on this self-distantiation, that we experience in our own selves in terms of a very unique concept found in Husserl's *Crisis*—the concept of 'depresentation' (*Entgegenwärtigung*), which Merleau-Ponty invokes on rare occasions but specifically in his chapter on "Other People and the Human World" (see PP, 363 [417]).<sup>13</sup> Husserl uses the term 'depresentation' (*Entgegenwärtigung*) just once in *Crisis*, in his discussion of 'self-temporalization' (*Crisis* § 54b, 185; Hua 6, 189), another theme that recurs throughout the *Phenomenology of Perception*. The passage in Husserl's *Crisis* reads:

Thus the immediate 'I' performs an accomplishment through which it constitutes a variational mode of itself as existing (in the mode of having passed). Starting from this we can trace how the immediate 'I,' flowingly-statically present, constitutes itself in self-temporalization as enduring through its pasts. In the same way, the immediate 'I,' already enduring in the enduring primordial sphere, constitutes in itself another as other. Self-temporalization through depresentation (*Ent-Gegenwärtigung*), so to speak (through recollection), has its analogue in my self-alienation (*Ent-Fremdung*) (empathy as a depresentation of a higher level—depresentation of my primal presence (*Urpräsenz*) into a merely presentified (*vergegenwärtigte*) primal presence). Thus, in me, 'another I' achieves ontic validity as copresent (*kompräsent*) with his own ways of being self-evidently verified, which are obviously quite different from those of a 'sense'-perception. (*Crisis*, 185; Hua 6, 189)

Merleau-Ponty invokes this exact passage in the *Phenomenology of Perception* when he says (in the passage from which I have extracted the opening epigraph for this chapter):

The problem of the existential modality of the social is here at one with all problems of transcendence. Whether we are concerned with my body, the natural world, the past, birth or death, the question is always how I can be open to phenomena which transcend me, and which nevertheless exist only to the extent that I take them up and live them; how the presence to myself (*Urpräsenz*) which establishes my own limits and conditions every alien presence is at the same time depresentation



(*Entgegenwärtigung*) and throws me outside myself (*et me jette hors de moi*). (PP, 363 [417])

In this sense—and this is where Merleau-Ponty takes up Heidegger's notion of *ex-stasis*—I am always thrown outside myself. It is this possibility of self-transcendence that already gives an opening to others and to the world (cf. VI, 180 [232] and *Signs*, 176f. [222]). Merleau-Ponty is obsessed with this transcendental intersubjectivity, but he is also keen to defend Husserl against solipsism. In his essay “The Philosopher and His Shadow,” Merleau-Ponty correctly points out:

For the ‘solipsist’ thing is not *primary* for Husserl, nor is the *solus ipse*. Solipsism is a ‘thought-experiment’ (*Gedankenexperiment*; Hua 4, 81); the *solus ipse* is a ‘constructed subject’ (Hua 4, 81). (*Signs*, 173 [219])

Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty argues against the possibility of even conceiving aloneness without reference to others. A genuine *solus ipse* would be ignorant of itself. To posit oneself is to posit *one* self as already a self among other selves. This is a point that Merleau-Ponty already labors in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. There can never be a Robinson Crusoe (as Scheler also observes) in the pure sense of a totally isolated ego. As Heidegger, points out, even being alone is a mode of *Mitsein*.

True dialectical thinking has to recognize the spoken word, the silence out of which the word comes. It becomes dead if it focuses solely on the spoken world, *la langue parlée*, on the ‘thesis,’ as Merleau-Ponty says. This, Merleau-Ponty, says is the “*Ineinander* which nobody sees, and which is not a group-soul either, neither object nor subject, but their connective tissue, which *west* [becomes]” (VI, 174 [226]). In these and other fragmentary texts, Merleau-Ponty draws on his intellectual resources (Freudian, Lacanian, Saussurian, Lévi-Straussian, Marxist) to try to articulate this hidden invisible *Ineinander* that makes culture possible, that makes possible “the being society of a society, the being history of history,” as he puts it in working note from February 1959 (VI, 174 [226]). Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty did not live to complete his planned project, and it remains to us to try to piece together his mature conception of *Ineinander*, which seeks always to mine the resources bequeathed from the equally unfinished work of his master Edmund Husserl, in whose shadow he worked.

## NOTES

- 1 Henceforth, ‘PP,’ followed by the page number of Colin Smith’s English translation; then, the pagination of the French edition.
- 2 The term ‘*Ineinander*’ and its cognates appear 16 times in the *Krisis* (at Hua 4, 25, 52, 153, 177, and especially in § 71 at 258, 259, 260) and 262 (twice),

- 319, 346, 364, 380, 514, 530, 548. In *Ideas II*, the term ‘*Ineinander*’ appears approximately seven times, especially at § 58, 281, 283 (*Ineinandergreifen* of naturalistic and personalistic attitudes), but more usually in terms of the manner in which *Erlebnisse* are unified with one another in the stream of experience; see Hua 4, 92, 122, 150, 228, 300 (the interrelation of the temporal phases). In *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, it appears at Hua 17 pages 87, 210, 261, 366, usually to refer to the mutual entanglement of ideal entities and real, of psychological and transcendental attitudes, or between words and meaning. See also Husserl, *Erste Philosophie* Hua 8, 102.
- 3 The term *Ineinander* is primarily associated with the late Husserl from the mid-twenties on. There are only three references to *Ineinander* in anything like a technical sense in Husserliana XIII, which covers the period from 1905 to 1920 (75, from 1913; 206 (*Ineinanderverflechtungen*) from c. 1924; and 390, from 1918); but Husserliana 14 has an important text (no. 13) from early 1922 that discusses ‘*Das personale Wirken, das Miteinander- und Ineinanderleben*’ (Hua 14, 268). The term ‘*Ineinander*’ appears more frequently (more than a dozen times) in Husserliana 14 (at 90, 150, 172 (the interconnected caring between I and you, *die Ineinandergeborgenheit von Ich und Du*), 174, 219 (*Ineinander* between *Außenwelt* and *Innenwelt*), 268, 269, 271, 292, 318, 348 (*Ineinanderschlingung von Apperzeptionen*), 381, and 548. Hua 15 discusses *intentional Ineinander* at pages 371, 602, and *ineinander* at 9, 90, 148, 170, and 200.
  - 4 Hereafter, ‘*Ideas II*’ followed by English pagination, and ‘Hua 4’ with the German pagination.
  - 5 Hereafter, ‘*Signs*’ followed by English translation page number, and then the French original. Translation modified.
  - 6 Hereafter, ‘*Primacy*’ and the page number of the English translation.
  - 7 In PP, Merleau-Ponty references the *La structure du comportement* (1942).
  - 8 For a Freudian psychoanalytical discussion of the interrelation between egoic subjectivity and skin, which in many ways represents a parallel development of Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts, see Anzieu 1985.
  - 9 Hereafter, ‘VI’ followed by the pagination of the English translation and then the French original.
  - 10 “E. Husserl, [l. . .] c’est une humanité transcendante, intérieure; c’est le ressort philosophique de toute humanité qui est découvert par moi dans l’irréalité, le vide caractéristique, la précarité de ce qui a été librement créé. C’est dans cette irréalité que nous sommes *Ineinander*. Nous sommes hommes en ce que précisément nous visons une unicité à travers l’épaisseur de nos vies, en ce que nous sommes groupés autour de cet intérieur unique où personne n’est, qui est latent, voilé et nous échappe toujours laissant entre nos mains des vérités comme traces de son absence” (Merleau-Ponty 1998, 34 [29]).
  - 11 Hereafter, ‘SB’ and the page number of the English translation; then, the page number of the French.
  - 12 Henceforth, ‘SNS’ followed by the page number of the English translation; then, the page number of the French edition.
  - 13 Merleau-Ponty, in his working notes, wants to model his inquiry for a new ontology on Husserl’s *Crisis* (see VI, 183 [234]).

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ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN PHENOMENOLOGY

# Phenomenology of Sociality

Discovering the 'We'

Edited by

Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran

