

# EMPATHY BEFORE AND AFTER HUSSERL

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Husserl's definitive treatment of intersubjectivity and the consciousness of other people is contained in the *Cartesian Meditations*, say commentators. On the transcendental ego and its constitution of objects in consciousness, consult the first and especially the second book of the *Ideas*. But to search the Husserlian scriptures without considering their intellectual milieu or the practices of their production is to collude with those texts as they construct a dogma of the ego by suppressing vital contextual considerations. At the same stroke, it is to elevate those texts to the status of a disembodied voice that, resounding from nowhere, becomes itself the prime evidence for what it asserts about egoic function.

I suggest, and will briefly demonstrate here, a different practice of reading Husserl. It adds two further steps to the customary methods of studying his texts. First, it places his evolving treatment of empathy into its contemporary intellectual context, particularly Munich phenomenology; and secondly, it examines how other people figured into Husserl's own professional practices of text production.

## *Einfühlung* and Motivation in Munich Phenomenology

*Einfühlung* does not mean "empathy." *Motivation* does not mean "motivation," in the sense of a psychological drive to do something. These two terms had a specialized technical meaning in the German hermeneutical tradition of the nineteenth century. They are the keys to unlocking the logical and aesthetic theories of Theodor Lipps, whose work set the agenda for Munich phenomenology from the first years of the new century down through the suppression of empathy theory under National Socialism. Husserl read Lipps's books closely, and he wrestled with Lipps's developing account of egoic function while he was formulating his own transcendental phenomenology. Moreover, Husserl was in sustained dialogue with Lipps's students and disciples.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, was Lipps saying about *Einfühlung*? Lipps was interested in the epistemological dimensions of psychology, aesthetics, and

logic—all fields in which he authored works taken as the standard of their day.<sup>2</sup> He framed issues for which familiar Husserlian formulations provide solutions. In his 1903 *Leitfaden der Psychologie*, Lipps wrote that there are three fields of knowledge: things, myself, and other human individuals. Knowledge of the first two comes by sense perception and by inner reflective perception, respectively; while other people are known by *Einfühlung*. One should translate this term as "inner awareness" or as "awareness-within." The "in" of *ein-* can indicate either position within, or motion toward, or both. Thus *Einfühlung* can occur "within" oneself or "into" another. It is the way in which one inhabits or coincides with one's own subjectivity, but it is also the way one overtakes and saturates someone else.

Perhaps Lipps's most astute observation is this: one cannot tell which kind of inward awareness has been going on until it is brought to termination. A busy, engaged, ecstatic deployment of *Ich*—nondifferentiated "i"—within activity is the prime instance of in-feeling, for Lipps. Only as in-felt activity concludes do individual i's emerge. I can then tell, reflectively, whether the i deployed in the experience has been my own or someone else's. This lived inner coincidentē is able to deliver knowledge of others as human individuals precisely because the "inner reflective perception" that lets me know myself *also* has that same character of saturating inner coincidence, *Einfühlung*.

Although he has received very bad press on this score, Lipps carefully distinguished between logic and psychology. Psychology, he wrote, investigates how knowledge and error alike are to be made intelligible, but it neither accounts for their difference—as logic does—nor claims that knowledge and error are the same. Logic, for its part, certifies knowledge by inspecting the forms of its genesis. Logic informs us that what we have is knowledge when the chains of inference delivering it exhibit the proper pattern. Logic tells us that we have error when the pattern is improper. It is the patterns, inference chains, and thought-forms themselves that interest Lipps. They are what the mind understands. *To think is to follow*

connections, that is, to live-through them. Intelligible connections are of two kinds. *Causal* connections are recognized in the world of real things, while *motivated* connections are experienced (*erlebt*) in conscious life. Lipps, then, depicts conscious life as a stream whose flow can be followed. When the flow has been directed by human choices, we have history and the arts, whose intelligibility is their motivation by those choices.<sup>3</sup>

For Lipps, causality and motivation are equally empirical. Both are patterns recognized in perceptions that have occurred serially, and both have the character of something understood rather than substantive. Motivation consists in a series of tugs from one perception to the next, tugs that register with an *i* as it flows along nonreflectively, therefore impersonally, through the serial connections among objects passing in conscious review. Or rather, this non-individuated *i* is the registration of that conscious flow. As such, the *i* is activity, not substance. The *i* is lived as a kind of midpoint between two contrasting dimensions of in-feeling. On one side, Lipps says, I in-feel me busy, active, and free in the willful realization of the comings and goings of the objects of consciousness for me. Those objects belong to me and depend on me. On the other side, I in-feel me bound, constrained, obliged, unfree, or passive in my presentation of objects of consciousness. Lipps positions the *i* as a conscious hinge between determined objectivity and creative subjectivity. (Husserl's later doctrine of "constitution" has its roots here.)

But in this early (1893) account, Lipps has not yet distinguished between *living* the *i* and *feeling* the *i* (*Icherlebnis* versus *Einfühlung*). Besides choices, he would say, one also lives-through or inhabits the *logical* connection between antecedents and consequents, and the *causal* connection between independent and dependent variables. Eventually Lipps restricts the term *Einfühlung* to instances in which the activity of the *i* contributes something original: something optional and dependent upon the *i* such as a mood, a desire, a striving, a choice. The *i* is then felt as the source of such colorings.<sup>4</sup> Husserl's own doctrine takes the other branch in the road. His transcendental ego constitutes objects without variance.

Because Lipps regards non-differentiated in-feeling as primary, he suggests we have the possi-

bility of recapturing it whenever we are confronted with a human expression, whether in art or in the human body. Lipps says that humans have a twofold instinct: to express, and to follow along with expression. What is expressed is the motivated in-dwelt freedom of the series of experiences. Its expression induces an imitation in which the motivated series replicates itself in the *i* of the beholder. Or rather, the two *i*'s coincide. Individuation is temporarily lost, and primal ecstasy is regained. Soon the coincidence ends, and I return to myself with the knowledge of the other human being.

Lipps postulated these "instincts" to account for how I choose apt targets for my projective feeling-into, and his aesthetics was rightly criticized for this. Yet his insistence that the possibility of understanding rests upon structures that *all people share* is a point that compares favorably with the theory that would supplant it. The Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg refuted Lipps's *Einfühlungslehre* on grounds that only racial traits can be the basis of the possibility of understanding.

#### Husserl's Framing of Transcendental Phenomenology in Lippsian Terminology

Space precludes an adequate account of the roots of Lipps's doctrine of *Motivation* in the earlier work of Dilthey and Schleiermacher. Suffice it to recall that Dilthey sought to establish the epistemological foundation for the cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). These would be sciences of *understanding through motivation*, rather than sciences of *explanation through causality* in the manner of the natural sciences. This was the ambition of Scheler and Reinach as well, who called for a new kind of psychology that would found the human sciences and set them apart from the natural sciences. In their view, the *teleological motivations* that impart intelligible coherences to occurrences in the cultural world (and to that world itself as a world) are quite different from the *genetic causes* that impart intelligible coherences to occurrences in the natural world (and to that world itself).

Husserl's quest was different. He wanted to investigate how it happens that one understands coherences and has worlds *at all*. Husserl noticed that one's understanding of causality and motivation is neither caused nor motivated. Something underlies both the human sciences and the natu-

ral sciences that itself is neither kind of science. Husserl would struggle to formulate his investigations of this "pure logical" source in spatial terms ("realm," "field," "foundation") and also in terms of cognitive activity ("i," "ego pole," "constitution"). At the outset, he needed to insist that logic was not a product of thought, nor was it the tried-and-true, habitual patterning built up by correct thinking. Thus he agreed with the Munich phenomenologists that one must consign a certain brand of psychological research, with its causal claims, to the realm of the natural sciences. Husserl alone, however, would come to regard the cultural sciences as equally problematic.

The new science that Husserl proposed—phenomenology—would investigate how the other sciences, both *Geisteswissenschaften* and natural sciences, could exhibit their respective varieties of coherence: motivation on the one hand, and causality on the other. This new science would be a *seeing of essences*, whereas the other sciences were *followings of coherences*. Essences are unwavering, whole, simple, and given all at once to the understanding. In contrast, both motivation and causality involve chains, segments, sequence, articulation. Thus the instantaneous *seeing* of essences contrasts with the quasi-kinesthetic step-by-step *following* of motivation and causation.

Husserl uses the (metaphorical) term "in-sight" to characterize the way in which one grasps essence, and he uses Lipps's term "in-feeling" to characterize the way in which one follows an articulated chain of whatever kind: a process of physical reactions, a sequence of emotional responses, a national history, a biography, or a logical proof. In-sight (*Einsicht*) and in-feeling (*Einfühlung*) are parallel but opposed means of cognitive access. How may the relationship between the two be characterized? In-sight and in-feeling are integral to one another. In-sight seeks the kinds of "why's" that connect the steps through which the understander flows—flows by progressively in-feeling them—as she picks out or relives physical or cultural events, constituting their coherence. These "why's" register as recognitions affirming the rational coherence of the directional flow of in-felt understandings. In-sight ratifies what has been experienced in inwardly aware coincidence (*Einfühlung*).

In Husserl's work before the Armistice, two distinct attempts were made to establish the cor-

relation between eidetic phenomenology and the other sciences—that is, between the seeing of essences and the in-felt following of coherences. The first is the 1911 *Logos* article, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science." Its tactic is of a piece with the Prolegomenon to the *Logical Investigations*: the relation must be one of logical foundation. The second attempt is Edith Stein's arrangement of the second book of the *Ideas*, which Husserl never approved for publication. There, the relation would be owing to the human person's direct access to other persons; all necessity is founded in that.

The metaphor of "changing places" let Husserl take his first tentative steps toward his doctrine of the transcendental ego, as can be seen already in notes from the 1905 Seefeld vacation and in lectures from 1910. At first blush, those lectures seem to derive the necessity of other people from the eidetics of appearing of the things of nature. Actually, they do no such thing. Husserl formulates a law that any *i* is capable of access to the same appearances as any other *i*; in other words, that what is *meant by* "i" is the capacity to be appeared-to without contributing anything to the contouring of any appearance. This law says nothing about whether there *are* any other *i*'s, or whether their consensus is needed for the certification of the appearances that come on to me. Stated another way, Husserl's law merely declares: the world must and does appear to me just as it would appear to anyone else who might stand where I stand; for my own unique individuality is irrelevant to my observations. In the *Ideas*, Husserl will develop this principle into the foundation of the natural sciences.

Husserl's primary use of the term "in-feeling" is logical, not aesthetic or emotional. In-feeling delivers only that component of someone else's experience that could be experienced in principle *by anyone at all*. *I*'s are interchangeable. In effect, the act of in-feeling is supposed to filter out whatever was owing to the particular individual who first had the experience. Husserl's pedagogical technique of the "reduction" is actually a version of Lippsian projective feeling-into. Both procedures mean to peel away personal conditioning so as to open access to pure-egoic activity. Lipps valued the peel; Husserl discarded it.

Constitution as the Suppression of Variance

EMPATHY

Let us pause for a moment to note that until 1913, and arguably throughout both books of the *Ideas*, Husserl's philosophy has been developing without an explicit treatment of the status of other people. Yet Husserl's others, like ninja turtles, are hiding in plain sight all over his work. Assertions such as the one just considered—that logical validity holds *no matter who* executes the proof—already presume that logic and the sciences are going to have more than one practitioner. The very terms “in-feeling” and “motivation” are loan words from other writers. That people necessarily live and think together was tacitly acknowledged, even presupposed, in the *Logical Investigations* when Husserl repeatedly appealed to what “we say” or “we know.” That phrase is more than a professor's droning mantra. The Husserlian refrain *wir wissen* discloses a tension: *Wir* is discounted as *wissen* is brought under phenomenological scrutiny. Moreover, Husserl's own professorial practice had always relied upon the kindness of strangers. Alien *i*'s flocked to him in the lecture halls and purchased his books. Colleagues co-edited his *Jahrbuch*, and assistants transcribed his manuscripts. Most of all, Husserl wrote that some of his readers misunderstood him. He complained about the misapprehensions of book reviewers, and he tried to correct the versions of his views played back to him by Lipps and even Dilthey, among other correspondents. One cannot help but wonder, then, why Husserl produced no phenomenology of *misunderstanding*. The thing itself surely confronted him on every side.

Instead, we find in the 1910 lectures some comments on the limitations of cognitive access to other individuals. Husserl says that in-feeling lets us learn about (*erfahren*) the consciousness of another empirical *i*, but does not let us live it through (*erleben*). In-feeling does not give the alien *i* as *i*, but as a content meant as—yet not experienced as—living. In-feeling thus has a structure similar to the reflective acts of remembering some past portion of one's own streaming life, or expecting some future portion of it. In both cases, an act that is alive *now*—as *i*—grasps another activity located elsewhere, as a “now.” With remembering and expecting, the grasped activity is meant as something that was or will be fully accessible to me, the one now grasping it. Such is not the case with in-feeling, says Husserl. What one experiences of another always turns out to be

non-live. The other's empirical *i* remains off-limits. It is known to be essentially something so particular that it can have no adequate analog concocted out of one's own imagining. Husserl concludes that the graspable act and the act of grasping may occur at two different times within the same *i*-stream, or at the same time within two different *i*-streams. But *i*-streams never flow together. There are no canals, he insists.

The discovery that Husserl has made is that the structure of one's in-feeling of the experiences of other people is similar to the structure of entertaining a memory or a hope. Husserl would later identify this discovery as having precipitated his breakthrough into fully transcendental phenomenology. He thought he had solved the riddle of intersubjectivity by extrapolation from the doubling of the *now*/"now" as experienced in memory and expectation. One's inner awareness of other people's experiences would be structured quite like one's own memories and expectations. Henceforward, Husserl no longer regarded *Fremderfahrung*, the experience of other people, as an interesting or provocative problem. His focus shifted to “constitution,” the egoic autonomic function of assembling unified identities out of the seriated appearances of objects in consciousness.

The transcendental reduction that precedes the analyses of constitution in *Ideas II* rests on the metaphor of trading places. That metaphor itself runs on the tacit reduction of individual identity to location. But *are you* your place? Could someone else take your place without epistemological consequences for your world? We need not look far for an answer. We can consider the practices through which the text of *Ideas II* was produced.

As a work of phenomenology, this book purports to recount what *anybody at all* would see simply by following the observations that the text suggests. Its claims are not supposed to be accepted on faith or authority; they are supposed to come true in the reader's own led re-enactment of originary egoic moves. Thus, it should not matter who wrote *Ideas II*. Ironically, then, scholars behave un-phenomenologically when they fret over the authorship of various passages, or chart the historic course of the text's development.<sup>5</sup> But also ironically, as we fret, we find that the portions of the text composed by Husserl's assistant Edith Stein do not match what is said about constitution elsewhere. Apparently, it made a differ-

ence when Stein took Husserl's place. Even his best student and most devoted disciple, attempting to write as he would, did phenomenology differently than he did it. Their struggles over "constitution" are documented in correspondence and underlined by the fact that Stein dug up Husserl's

own time manuscripts to confront him with his own divergent results in earlier days.<sup>6</sup>

Where Husserl took a wrong turn with constitution, Edith Stein pointed out an alternative. She has in-feeling itself do the work that constitution is supposed to perform in Husserl's phenomenology. But that's a story for another day.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Husserl worked closely with Lipps's students Alexander Pfänder, Adolf Reinach, Johannes Daubert, and Hedwig Conrad Martius, and he responded to the criticisms of Max Scheler, also a Lippsian phenomenologist.
2. Lipps also edited the German translation of David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*.
3. Lipps's student Alexander Pfänder would develop the doctrine of motivation into an argument against the blind irresistible drives postulated by depth psychology, and in favor of the intentionality of every choice toward a modification of the world meant as real. That is the kind of realism that Husserl turns away from when he embraces transcendental phenomenology.
4. By contrast, Lipps says in his later work, the *i* is not "felt" but "lived" in instances of judging, meaning, and believing. It doesn't create; it merely assents.
5. For example, see the critical discussion of Edith Stein's unchronological rearrangement of Husserl's time manuscripts, in John Barnet Brough's "Translator's Introduction" to Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991).
6. I make these observations on the basis of published materials: principally the editorial introductions and critical notes to relevant volumes of *Husserliana*, and Stein's correspondence with Roman Ingarden. See my *Body, Text, and Science in the Phenomenology of Edith Stein* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, forthcoming).

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## ■ TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction . . . . .	5
Debra Bergoffen and John D. Caputo	
Matters of Love and Justice	
Stigmata: Job the Dog . . . . .	12
Hélène Cixous	
Deleuze and the Ethics of the Prepersonal . . . . .	18
C. Colwell	
Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos . . . . .	24
Chantal Mouffe	
Critical Theory Between Modernity and Postmodernity . . . . .	31
Marie Fleming	
Fairy Tales for Politics: Unworking Derrida Through Irigaray . . . . .	40
Anne Caldwell	
Can a Woman Harass a Man? Toward a Cultural Understanding of Bodies and Power . . . . .	51
Susan Bordo	
Toward a Theory of Subjectivity . . . . .	67
Linda Martín Alcoff	
Opening the Future: The Paradox of Promising in the Hobbesian Social Contract Order . . . . .	77
Robert Bernasconi	
The Phenomenological and Existential Fields	
Fractured Passion in Kierkegaard's <i>Either/Or</i> . . . . .	87
Shannon Sullivan	
Liberating Experience from Structuralisms: The Methods of Merleau-Ponty and Nargarjuna . . . . .	96
David Michael Levin	

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■ Volume 41

Number ¼

Spring 1997

The Eclipse of Gender: Simone de Beauvoir and the <i>Différance</i> of Translation . . . . .	112
Anna Alexander	
Empathy Before and After Husserl . . . . .	123
Marianne Sawicki	
Whole Earth Measurements . . . . .	128
Don Ihde	
Postmodern Studies	
Much Obligated . . . . .	135
David Wood	
Derrida's Watch, Foucault's Pendulum . . . . .	141
Michael Naas	
Foucault's Reconfiguration of the Subject: From Nietzsche to Butler, Laclau/Mouffe, and Beyond . . . . .	153
Alan Schrift	
Foucault's Attack on Sex-Desire . . . . .	160
Ladelle McWhorter	
Foucauldian Mutations of Language . . . . .	166
Kristin Switala	
Nietzsche and the Value of Truth . . . . .	174
James Mangiafico	
Thinking With and Against Heidegger	
Egyptian Priests and German Professors: On Alleged Difficulty of Philosophy . . . . .	181
John Protevi	
Heidegger: The Philosophy and the Man . . . . .	189
Joseph Margolis	
Thinking Beyond Aesthetics: Heidegger and Benjamin . . . . .	199
Krzysztof Ziarek	
Neighbors in Death . . . . .	209
Steven G. Crowell	
Bread and Wine . . . . .	219
John Sallis	
Books Received . . . . .	229