

Schopenhauer, Husserl and the Invisibility of the Embodied Subject

Yaoping Zhu
Soochow University

Abstract

For such refined idealists as Schopenhauer, Husserl and Wittgenstein, the correlation between the world and the subject must be recognized. Furthermore, the three commonly emphasize the distinction between the transcendental subject and the empirical subject as well as the distinction between the subject and object's mode of being. They all realized that the confusion of the transcendental subject and the empirical subject causes the paradox of that the subject as one part of the world is at the same time the a priori condition of the whole world. In the history of western Philosophy, Schopenhauer is the first to realize that the subject is no more than the invisible body, or the body playing the subject's role. Our body plays a role both as object and as subject. However, the fact does not mean that the body playing a role as a subject can be identified with the body playing a role as an object. As the subject, the body is the prerequisite of all the representations, but the body itself cannot simultaneously be represented by itself. If objects are always visible to me, then my body as a subject is invisible.

Keywords: Schopenhauer, Husserl, Wittgenstein, the transcendental subject, invisibility, body

Introduction

For both Schopenhauer and Husserl, the correlation between the world and the subject must be recognized. Furthermore, the two commonly emphasize the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical subject as well as

* The work on this paper has been supported by Chinese Government Scholarship no. 201706920015.

the distinction between the subject and the object's mode of being. Both realize that the confusion of the transcendental subject and the empirical subject causes the paradox that the subject as one part of the world is at the same time the *a priori* condition of the whole world. On the one hand, the relation between the subject and the object is similar to the relation between the eye and its vision; on the other hand, the relation between the transcendental subject and the empirical subject is similar to the relation between the Seeing Eye and the seen eyes. In each of these relational pairs, the distinction between the former and the latter is that the latter is visible and the former is invisible.

In the history of western Philosophy, Schopenhauer is the first to realize that the subject is no more than the invisible body or the body playing the subject's role. Our body plays a role both as object and as subject. However, before I grasp my body as an object that exists tangibly in time, in space and that is regulated by causality, I must comprehend my body directly as an invisible subject or ego. As the subject, the body is the prerequisite of all the representations, but the body itself cannot simultaneously be represented by itself. If objects are always visible to me, then my body as a subject is invisible.

Inspired by Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein emphasizes that those eyes which appear in my field and can be seen by myself are not the same eyes that allow me to see. They are seen objects rather than seeing subjects. Analogously, as the metaphysical subject and the presupposed condition of the phenomenal world, "I" will not appear in that world. As "the philosophical I", I am the limit of the world rather than an object in it.

Similarly, Husserl strongly emphasized the invisibility of the subjectivistic body in his posthumously published manuscripts such as "*Ideas II*" (Husserl 1952) and *To the Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity* (Husserl 1973), etc. For him, the subjectivistic body and the objectivistic body are especially important to distinguish; otherwise, we enter into the paradox of our body as one part of the world while simultaneously the *a priori* condition of the whole world.

1. Philosophy begins with the doubt and negation of the visible world's independence

What is philosophy's starting point? With regard to the world in which we live, how does the philosophical attitude distinguish itself from the natural attitude? This is a question that almost every philosopher must answer.

As the first philosopher who consciously calls upon the rational examination to our social and personal life, Socrates regards "To know yourself" as his own motto, and treats "having recognized the ignorance of myself" as the most significant distinction between himself as a philosopher and ordinary people. To him, this phrase means, in part, that he is the only one who realizes that the knowledge he has about the visible world is not genuine knowledge. Plato expounds on his master's doctrine most impressively in his famous "cave metaphor": people in everyday life possess only illusory knowledge about things in the visible world, not truth about the ideal world. Unfortunately, almost none of them realize this fact in their entire lives, just as the bound prisoners never realize that what they see on the cave wall is nothing but a shadow of real things.

As we have just seen, Socrates and Plato regard the doubt and the negation of ordinary people's natural views as the starting point of the philosophical wisdom. Analogously, Descartes treats the universal doubt of all kinds of beliefs people acquire in their everyday lives as the first step in philosophical meditation. This is the truth he tries to express through his famous formulation, "I think, therefore I am". It is the insight that nothing is more reliable in this whole world than the ego or consciousness. An ego can doubt the existence of anything in the world but itself, because the ego's existence is an indispensable precondition of its activity of doubting. Its doubting activity is exactly the most obvious evidence of its existence.

Descartes's philosophy has overthrown the following prejudice: in everyday life, I tend to think that is absolutely real which I see with my own eyes, hear with my own ears or touch with my own hands. However, in fact, these things are much less real than my action of seeing, hearing or touching or the "I"

who sees, hears or touches. As Descartes himself explained in the end of the *Second Meditation*:

Surely my awareness of my own self is not merely much truer and more certain than my awareness of the wax but also much more distinct and evident. For if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I see it, clearly this same fact entails much more evidently that I myself also exist. It is possible that what I see is not really the wax; it is possible that I do not even have eyes with which to see anything. However, when I see, or think I see (I am not here distinguishing the two), it is simply not possible that I who am now thinking am not something. By the same token, if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I touch it, the same result follows, namely, that I exist. If I judge that it exists from the fact that I imagine it, or for any other reason, exactly the same thing follows. And the result that I have grasped in the case of the wax may be applied to everything else located outside me". (Descartes 1996, 22)

In short, my seeing and touching of the wax, or "I" as the subject of such activities as seeing and touching, is more certain and evident than the wax. Generally, my experience or consciousness of things is more certain than the things experienced. Consciousness or thought is the only thing that cannot be doubted.

Kant's Copernican revolution of philosophy also starts with the overturn of the common sense, i.e., the following prejudice about the relation between the subject and the object: cognitive objects and their forms of existence such as time, space and causality are independent of subjects, who are negatively affected by them to acquire the knowledges about them, just as Locke's "theory of tabula rasa" has taught us. In contrast, for Kant, objects must conform to my form of knowing to become my cognitive objects. In other words, although objects exist within the forms of time, space and causality for me, this fact does not mean that objects as "things-in-themselves" exist in those forms. Rather, the idea of time, space and causality in my mind causes me to believe that they exist within those forms, just as the earth's rotation rather than sun's rotation around the earth produces the appearance of the sun's rise and fall. The essential meaning of Kant's revolution lies in the fact that we must rid ourselves of the view that the visible objects are independent of the subject's consciousness of them and regard them as dependent on "an invisible subject". The world

and objects in it are treated as appearances or representations that are given through the consciousness of the knower or subject rather than the “things-in-themselves”, which are independent of the consciousness of ego or subject. Thus, Schopenhauer can understand the Kant’s philosophy as “the world is my representation.”

On the one hand, the objects in the visible world become appearances depending on an ego or a consciousness, rather than as independent things; on the other hand, in a striking contrast, the ego or consciousness becomes the supreme “Substance”, requiring nothing but itself to exist. Just as Feuerbach has noted, Kant and Fichte’s transcendental idealism treats consciousness and ego as God. All things exist through the ego or consciousness, which takes the God’s place and becomes the absolute reality, the measure of existence and the indispensable precondition.

The supreme ego or consciousness of Kant and Fichte is the prelude of Hegel’s absolute spirit. Hegel’s philosophy purports to regard the thought abstracted from the human being as “the sacred, absolute essence”, as God. Compared to such a God, sensible individual things that are taken by common sense to be true and real become the most senseless and fleeting illusions. Only the universal or everlasting essence grasped by reflection or abstract thinking are the truth. In Hegel’s own words:

The universal does not exist externally to the outward eye as a universal. The kind as kind cannot be perceived: the laws of the celestial motions are not written on the sky. The universal is neither seen nor heard, its existence is only for the mind. (Hegel 1975, 35)

In one word, the invisible universal that our thinking grasps is much more true and real than the individual grasped by the senses. Philosophy’s task is to lead us from visible things to an Absolute by which all else is brought into being. This Absolute is an object of the mind and thought rather than the senses.

For Hegel, the negation of all of sensible things in our eyes’ vision is the starting point of every kind of philosophy. As an outstanding historian of philosophy, Hegel has much more precise insight into the boundary between philosophy and non-

philosophy. He has an especially clear-minded head on the following point: philosophy must begin with the overthrow of the prejudice formed unconsciously in everyday life that the visible world and all it contains are independent. Just as Hegel emphasizes repeatedly in his *Logic*, philosophy distinguishes itself from ordinary consciousness by the fact that “it sees the merely phenomenal character of what the latter supposes to have a self-subsistent being.” (Hegel 1975, 188) In other words, philosophy treats the visible world and all it contains as decided by “the other” – the ego or the absolute spirit.

According to Hegel, this character of philosophy is manifested most vividly in Spinoza’s philosophy. The significance or the greatness of Spinoza’s theory lies in its abandonment of all particulars and its upholding of the unique substance. For Spinoza, God is the only substance that exists in itself and can be known through itself, while the world’s particulars can exist and be known only through the substance, or God. Because Spinoza considers the world and all of its particulars as mere appearances, his philosophy is essentially an “acosmism” rather than an atheism or a Pantheism. (Hegel 1975, 215)

For Hegel, Spinoza’s suspicion and negation of the visible world and its things are the first step of all kinds of philosophy and the standard by which the philosophical attitude and natural attitude to the world can be distinguished. Therefore, “thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism”; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all philosophy. When man begins to philosophize, the soul must commence by “bathing in this ether of the One Substance”, in which whatever man has held as true disappears. This negation of whatever is particular, to which every philosopher must come, is “the liberation of the mind and its absolute foundation”. (Hegel 1996, 482-483)

2. The negation of “the pregivenness of the world” by both Schopenhauer and Husserl as solipsists

Even in his later years, Husserl still regarded the discovery of worldly phenomena’s subjectivistic aspect as the most significant breakthrough of *Logical investigations*, as he noted in *Crisis* (Husserl 1970):

What is new in the *Logical Investigations* is found not at all in the merely ontological investigations, which had a one-sided influence contrary to the innermost sense of the work, but rather in the subjectively directed investigations (above all the fifth and sixth, in the second volume of 1901). (Husserl 1970, 234)

For Husserl, the key to understanding his Phenomenology is to feel surprised by the correlation between the world and its subjective manners of givenness. On the one hand, the first significant step leading to Phenomenology is to feel shocked by the inherent correlation between the world and the world-consciousness; On the other hand, within our daily natural attitude, we are inclined to regard the world's pregivenness as reasonable and doubtless. People find it especially difficult to be "free of the strongest and most universal, and at the same time most hidden, internal bond, namely, of the pregivenness of the world." (Husserl 1970,151) And this difficulty causes the following regrettable fact –

the correlation between world (the world of which we always speak) and its subjective manners of givenness never evoked philosophical wonder (that is, prior to the first breakthrough of 'transcendental phenomenology' in the *Logical Investigations*), in spite of the fact that it had made itself felt even in pre-Socratic philosophy and among the Sophists (...) This correlation never aroused a philosophical interest of its own. (Husserl 1970, 165)

In short, for Husserl, the visible world and all it contains are given as phenomena based on an invisible subject rather than as independent entities. The philosophical attitude distinguishes itself from the natural attitude by its realization of the correlation between the world and its subjective manner of givenness. Likewise, Schopenhauer also thinks that only people who enter into philosophical reflections can realized that "the world is my representation", meaning that the visible world is given as representation or appearance, presupposing an "I". This attitude is confirmed in his words at the beginning of his prominent masterpiece:

The world is my representation': this is a truth valid to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. If he really does so, philosophical discernment has dawned on him. It then becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is

there only as representation, in other words, only in reference to another thing, namely, that which represents, and this is himself. (Schopenhauer 1969, 3)

Insofar as Schopenhauer regards the recognition that “the world is my representation” as the indication of the philosophical discernment, he is shocked by the inherent correlation between the world and the world-consciousness, even before Husserl. With regard to this fact, Husserl seems to have exaggerated the novelty of this breakthrough from *Logical investigations*. In an important note attached to the section 48 of *Crisis*, Husserl describes the course of his mind stretching over several decades:

The first breakthrough of this universal *a priori* of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness (which occurred during work on my *Logical Investigations* around 1898) affected me so deeply that my whole subsequent life-work has been dominated by the task of systematically elaborating on this *a priori* of correlation. (Husserl 1970, 166)

However, clearly Schopenhauer had been affected deeply by the *a priori* correlation between the world and its subjective manners of givenness before Husserl. Maybe for this reason he quoted the following sentence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau before he began his own argument at the start of *The World as Will and Representation*: “Quit thy childhood, my friend, and wake up.” (Schopenhauer 1969, 2)

The importance of “quitting one’s childhood” or “waking up” lies in the fact that people find it difficult to realize that the visible world around them depends on themselves as those who represent. In other words, it is difficult for someone to wake up and quit the prejudice of the world’s independence, an idea formed in childhood. The notion is similar to an idea Wittgenstein mentioned in his *Tractatus*: although the field of sight is dependent on the eye, but “from nothing in the field of sight can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye”. (Wittgenstein 2003, 123) In contrast, the field of sight and the objects in it appear to be independent of their manners of being given through the act of the eye’s seeing. Analogously, within the natural attitude of daily life, people are inclined to think that the world is independent of the subject through which it is given.

The inherent correlation between the world and its subjective manners of givenness is difficult to recognize because the prejudice that the world exists in-itself is difficult to shed. People are always constrained by this prejudice, which takes root in childhood, a fact that explains why Husserl called people's prejudice of the world's pregiveness, "the strongest and most universal, and at the same time most hidden, internal bond". (Husserl 1970, 151) Clearly, what Husserl calls the suspension of the natural attitude is essentially the same as what Schopenhauer calls "quitting" or "jumping out of " our childhood prejudice. Both of these states are preconditions to our recognition of the inherent correlation between the world and world-consciousness.

In brief, as solipsists, both Husserl and Schopenhauer regard the negation of the world's pregiveness and the recognition of the inherent correlation between the world and its subjective manners of givenness as the first phase of philosophical discernment.

3. Moving toward "the strictly carried out solipsism": from empirical idealism to transcendental idealism

By suspending the natural attitude, the objective world becomes the subjective consciousness's correlate. However, for Husserl, the difficulty lies precisely here. On the one hand, the subjectivity,

into which all objectivity, everything that exists at all, is resolved, can clearly be nothing other than the human consciousness; on the other hand, human consciousness itself is only a component part of the world. However, how can the human subjectivity as a component part of the world constitute the whole world? It seems as though that "the subjective part of the world swallows up the whole world and thus itself too (Husserl 1970, 180),

and nothing can be more absurd. While human subjectivity is a part of world, how could it play a simultaneous role as the world's condition? This problem is described as "the paradox of human subjectivity". (Husserl 1970, 182)

According to Husserl, this paradox originates from the confusion of the ultimately functioning-accomplishing subjects with the naively understood human being. In fact, "the

transcendental subjects, i.e., those functioning in the constitution of the world” (Husserl 1970,183) cannot be equated to human beings in the mundane world. After all, the suspension of the natural attitude or the “*epoche*” has turned the latter into “phenomena”. In Husserl’s own words:

(...) in the *epoche* and in the pure focus upon the functioning ego-pole, and hence upon the concrete whole of life and of its intentional intermediary and final structures, it follows *eo ipso* that nothing human is to be found, neither soul nor psychic life nor real psychophysical human beings; all this belongs to the ‘phenomenon’, to the world as constituted pole. (Husserl 1970, 183)

In short, the empirical self as a “phenomenon” in the constituted world should not be confused with the transcendental self as a subject who plays the role of constituting the world. Husserl’s transcendental reduction mainly distinguishes the transcendental from the empirical consciousness. The transcendental reduction consists of the following two steps: first, the reduction of the world and the objects to the phenomena given by the consciousness; secondly, the reduction of the empirical to the transcendental consciousness.

However, Husserl is not the first philosopher to confront the paradox of human subjectivity. In fact, Schopenhauer met a similar dilemma soon after he proffered his proposition, “the world is my representation”. As previously mentioned, for Schopenhauer, the world is entirely a representation; as such, it requires the knowing subject to support its existence, similar to how the field of sight requires the eye as its supporter. In his own words:

Thus animals existed before men, fishes before land animals, plants before fishes, and the inorganic before that which is organic; consequently, the original mass had to go through a long series of changes before the first eye could be open. And yet the existence of this whole world remains forever dependent on that first eye that opened, were it even that of an insect. (Schopenhauer 1969, 30)

However, the problem is, how can the eye of an insect as the result of a long chain of causes and effects and a component part of the world play as the substance on which the whole world is based simultaneously? As Schopenhauer himself writes:

Thus, we see, on the one hand, the existence of the whole world necessarily dependent on the first knowing being, however imperfect it be; on the other hand, this first knowing animal just as necessarily wholly dependent on a long chain of causes and effects which has preceded it, and in which it itself appears as a small link. These two contradictory views, to each of which we are led with equal necessity, might certainly be called as antinomy in our faculty of knowledge. (Schopenhauer 1969, 30)

In my view, Schopenhauer here speaks of as the antinomy of the faculty of knowledge, which is exactly what Husserl called the paradox of human subjectivity.

According to Schopenhauer, this antinomy results from the neglecting of the distinction between the subject and object's modes of being. While the object lies within the forms of space, time and causality, the subject – “the knower never the known” – does not; “on the contrary, it is always presupposed by those forms themselves”. (Schopenhauer 1969,5) In fact, insofar as it is taken to be a subject, the first knowing being lies outside of the causal chain. On the other hand, when it is taken as the result of a long causal chain, the first knowing animal is no longer a subject but an object. For Schopenhauer, Kant's chief merits is that he suggests the following theory: although the object lies within the form of time, space and causality, these forms are the subject's mode of knowing rather than the mode of the thing-in-itself, so they “can be found and fully known, starting from the subject, even without the knowledge of the object itself”. (Schopenhauer 1969, 5) To use Kant's language, “time, space and causality do not belong to the thing-in-itself, but only to its appearance or phenomenon, of which they are the form.” (Schopenhauer 1969, 30) On the other hand, although the form of space, time and causality as forms of knowing “reside *a priori* in our consciousness,” the subject itself doesn't exist in the form of time, space and causality. In other words, as the seeing subject, “the first eye that opened” does not appear in its own field of sight and does not lie in the forms of time, space and causality. Conversely, when “the first eye” is treated as the result of the biological evolution, or as existing in the form of time, space and causality, then it becomes the seen object rather than the seeing subject. To sum up, the relation of the object and the subject is similar to that of the field of sight

and the eye, in which the former presupposes the latter; the two do not coexist. As the supporter of the represented world, the one who represents never appears in that world; In contrast, the one who represents always lies outside of that world. Thus the above mentioned antinomy of the faculty of knowledge is removed by the following rule: the subject that plays the role of the whole world's supporter cannot be regarded simultaneously as a component part of that world.

Clearly, Wittgenstein was once deeply impressed by Schopenhauer's doctrine, just as we can see in such sentences in his *Tractatus* as: "where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye." (Wittgenstein 2003, 123) In other words, my eye as the precondition or supporter of my field of sight can see anything but itself; conversely, those eyes which appear in my field and can be seen by myself are not the same eyes that allow me to see. They are seen objects rather than seeing subjects. As the result, to prevent the paradox of "the eye in the field of sight plays as the supporter of that field outside of that field", the seeing eye should be distinguished from the seen eyes, such as other people's eyes or my own eyes seen through a mirror.

Analogously, as the metaphysical subject and the presupposed condition of the phenomenal world, "I" will not appear in that world. As "the philosophical I", I am the limit of the world rather than an object in it. In Wittgenstein's own words, "The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit – not a part of the world." (Wittgenstein 2003, 121) In one word, "the philosophical I" shouldn't be confused with "the concrete I" which exists as the unity of the human's body and soul. At this point, Wittgenstein is clearly consisted with Schopenhauer and Husserl.

For Wittgenstein, the subtle relation between the eye and its vision or that between an "I" and its world means, "In fact, what solipsism means, is quite correct, only, it cannot be said, but it shows itself." (Wittgenstein 2003, 121) The reason that what solipsism means cannot be said lies in the following two facts: first, the relation between the subject and the object

cannot be regarded as the relation between two parts of a world that is constituted by the subject; Second, as a picture of the world, language can be used to describe the objects in the phenomenal world and their relations, but cannot be used to describe the relation of the world with its presupposed subject.

Nevertheless, when most of the solipsists take the “I” as the basis of the whole world, they are inclined to regard “I” as an object among other objects in the world. For Wittgenstein, such a view neglects the boundary between the “I” and “I’s” world and is not the point of a pure and rigorous solipsism. “In the solipsism strictly carried out, the I shrinks to an extensionless point and there remains one reality coordinated with it”, and such kind of solipsism coincides with “pure realism.” (Wittgenstein 2003, 123) In my view, Wittgenstein’s distinction between these two forms of solipsism has a similar motivation and function with the Husserl’s distinction between transcendental and empirical idealism.

4. Schopenhauer’s exposition of the body’s double functions and the subject’s corporeality

For Schopenhauer, the world is the subject’s representation, and a subject always exists as an embodied individual. To regard the world as a representation means to regard the sun as the sun seen through my eyes, to regard the earth as the earth touched by my hands, etc. In other words, the subject’s knowledge of the world as representation is given “entirely through the medium of a body.” (Schopenhauer 1969, 99)

In Schopenhauer’s view, the peculiarity of my body lies mainly in “its double essences and functions”, which means that it is not only an object but also a subject. The distinction between my body and all kinds of other objects lies in the fact that the former appears as “will” in our consciousness. For example, my body appears as the appetite or sexual desire in my consciousness. In other words, “will” gives us information about what the body is, “not only as representation, but as something over and above this, and hence what it is in itself.” (Schopenhauer 1969, 103)

According to Schopenhauer, by recognizing the body’s double status, we attain the insight that the world is not only

will's representation, but also its manifestation. In fact, if "the investigator himself were nothing more than the purely knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body)" (Schopenhauer 1969, 99), then it would be impossible for him to understand what the world is in itself besides the mere representation of the knowing subject.

On the one hand, as a subject, my body is the precondition of my representation of the whole world; on the other hand, as an object, my body exists in time, space and necessity, like other objects. Furthermore, before I know my body as an object, I grasp it directly as a subject, i.e., as will. As a subject, "which knows everything but is never known", the body is the condition of the form of time, space and causality, and consequently is the condition of knowing any other things that exist as representations in the forms of time, space and causality.

Although the body plays a role as both an object and a subject, the two roles cannot be identified with one another. Before I grasp my body as an object which exists tangibly in time, in space and that is regulated by causality, I have comprehended my body directly as an invisible subject or ego. As a subject, the body is the prerequisite of all representations but the body itself cannot simultaneously be represented by itself. If objects are always visible to me, then my body as a subject is invisible. For Schopenhauer, this truth is exactly what the following beautiful passage from the Sacred Upanishad tries to tell us:

That which sees everything can't be seen; that which hears everything can't be heard; that which perceives everything can't be perceived; that which knows everything can't be known. It is nothing but that which sees, hears, perceives and knows everything. (Schopenhauer 1889, 166)

Schopenhauer once talked about the fate of his own philosophy as follows: "In short, professional philosophers do not care to learn from me, nor do they even see how much they might learn from me: that is, all that their children and their children's children will learn from me." (Schopenhauer 1889, 166) The prophecy has unfortunately come true. Schopenhauer is the first one in the western history of philosophy to credit the

body with supreme status, he even called “the theory of the identification of body and will” as “the highest philosophical truth”. However, only after more than one hundred years is his insight recognized as truth by such philosophers as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, etc.

5. Husserl’s phenomenological interpretation of the embodied subject’s invisibility

The problem of the body was not a major topic of works Husserl published during his lifetime. Rather, his elucidations of the body’s double statues of the body and the invisibility of the embodied subject mainly appeared in his posthumously published manuscripts such as “*Ideas II*” (Husserl 1952), “*To the phenomenology of intersubjectivity*” (Husserl 1973), etc.

According to Husserl’s opinion, the body’s duality is primarily reflected in the fact that “the body is originally constituted in a double way”. On the one hand, as a physical thing, the body has its extension, “in which are included its real properties, its color, smoothness, hardness, warmth, and whatever other material qualities of that kind there are” (Husserl 1952, 145); on the other hand, the body “senses”; that is to say, the body can have “the experience of specifically Bodily occurrences of the type we call ‘sensings.’” (Husserl 1952, 146) Husserl takes the following common fact as an example to explain his point:

“My hand is lying on the table. I experience the table as something solid, cold, and smooth. Moving my hand over the table, I get an experience of it and its thingly determinations. At the same time, I can at any moment pay attention to my hand and find on it touch-sensations, sensations of smoothness and coldness, etc.” (Husserl 1952, 146)

Those “sensations” occur on my hand and Husserl calls them “localized sensations,” but they are the properties of the Body as the organ of an ego or a subject rather than the properties of the body as a physical thing.

Husserl takes the case of the touching of my left hand with the right hand as another example to emphasize his point:

Touching my left hand, (...) I do not just sense, but I perceive and have appearances of a soft, smooth hand (...) But when I touch the

left hand I also find in it, too, series of touch-sensations, which are 'localized' in it, though these are not constitutive of properties (such as roughness or smoothness of the hand, of this physical thing). If I speak of physical thing, 'left hand', then I am abstracting from these sensations. (...) If I do include them, then it is not that the physical thing is now richer, but instead it becomes Body. It senses. (Husserl 1952, 145)

In other words, my left hand can not only be perceived as a physical object; it can also play a role as a subject to perceive other objects including my right hand. In later case, it functions as the embodied ego or subject rather than a physical object.

Generally, the Body's properties such as size, shape, color and temperature, etc. are its physical properties. On this occasion, it is viewed as a spatio-thingly object (Körper) rather than as an experiencing subject (Leib). (Moran 2013, 293) Thus, Husserl emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the experiencing Body and the experienced body. The former is given through unthematized pre-reflective body-consciousness, while the latter is given through the thematized consciousness of body obtained through an act of objectivation. (Zahavi 1994, 69)

Only the Body that functions as an experiencing subject is the Body in an authentic sense and in this sense, the Body is an essential precondition of the perception of any object, including the Body itself. In Husserl's own words, "..... in all experience of spatio-thingly objects, the Body is involved as the perceptual organ of the experiencing subject." (Husserl 1952, 144) As an experiencing subject, my unthematized Body-consciousness accompanies and makes possible every spatial experience, including the experience of my body viewed as a spatial thing.

In conclusion, before I perceived my body as an object, I have grasped it as the experiencing subject as "I can", as the organ of will; as such a subject, my body does not possess natural properties related to gender, height, weight, complexion, age, etc. My body possesses those properties only when it is viewed as an object. While my body is visible as an object, it is invisible as a subject. The corporeality of an ego or a subject cannot be viewed as a counterevidence of its invisibility.

The reason why the body which plays the role of a subject cannot be looked upon as an object simultaneously lies

on that it is the precondition of the constitution of an object. In the example of my vision, my eyes which function as the subject of seeing cannot be regarded as the seen objects simultaneously, because they are the precondition of the vision of all other things. Including those visible parts of my own body, all of visible things can be presented to me from various distances and perspectives. On the contrary, the distance between the invisible parts of my body and me is always zero. In other words, the invisible parts of my body is always “here” and never over there. When I see spatial object it necessarily stands over and against my bodily standpoint; it can only be “there”, as opposed to my lived-body which can only be “here”. (Alweiss 2012, 138) In Husserl’s own words,

Every external perception brings with it its current spatial present and within it, the absolute zero-point of all spatial orientation. The latter is located in the very lived-body of the perceiver (...) The zero-point is itself nothing visible (...) Thus, miraculously a perceptual object that we call one’s own lived-body is distinctive in such a way that with each perception of an object, whatever it may be, the lived-body is always there and always co-constituted. And this object is entirely unique by virtue of the fact that it always “bears within it” the zero-point, the absolute Here, in relation to which every other object is a There. (Husserl 2001, 584)

In brief, my lived-body is the absolute zero point of all experience. Farness, nearness, left and right make sense in relation to my lived-body. I cannot be anywhere else but here_ I can never be “there” because “thereness” is possible only in relation to my absolute standpoint. (Alweiss 2012, 139)

According to Husserl’s understanding, the embodied subject’s invisibility causes people to tend to take the ego or subject as a spiritual substance that exists independent of the body. I see with my unseen eyes, that is to say, I am not conscious of my seeing eyes but of my eye’s seeing. It seems as though I am a “Specter” or “ghost” that can see everything in the world without the naked eye. Analogously, I can touch something with my hand and become conscious of touching something without being conscious of the touching hand, and it seems as though I am a spiritual entity that can touch something without hands. (Husserl 1973, 229) Nevertheless, such a spiritual entity is essentially nothing but “the invisible body”.

In the final analysis, this mistake is caused by that we neglect the following fact: the body is both an object and a subject; as a subject, the body is incorporeal and invisible. I can be conscious of seeing something without seeing my own eyes and be conscious of touching something without touching my own hands. However, this does not mean that I am a spiritual substance that exists independent of my body. It merely means that, before I seize my eyes and hands as objects, I already grasp them as subjects of seeing or touching. My body is at first the perceiving subject rather than the perceived object.

Enlightened by Husserl's phenomenology of body, Merleau-Ponty bases his entire phenomenological project on an account of "bodily intentionality" (Carman 1999, 205). For him, if the essence of the so-called transcendental subject is no more than the invisible body, then the sensing body itself rather than the pure consciousness should be taken as the starting point of our philosophical meditation. At this point, he tries to distinguish his own philosophy from Husserl's transcendental idealism and assimilate Heidegger's theory of being-in-the-world. In spite of that, he agrees with Husserl on the invisibility of the embodied subject:

I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, examine them, walk around them, but my body itself is a thing which I do not observe: in order to be able to do so, I should need the use of a second body which itself would be unobservable. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 104)

He thus concludes,

In so far as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents its ever being an object, ever being 'completely constituted' is that it is that by which there are objects. It is neither tangible nor visible in so far as it is that which sees and touches. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 105)

In another word, if we confuse the body playing a role as a subject with the one playing a role as an object, then we will be faced with the paradox of that the subject as one part of the world is at the same time the *a priori* condition of the whole world. So far as an owner of such an insight is concerned, Merleau-Ponty is completely consistent with Husserl, Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein.

REFERENCES

- Alweiss, Lilian. 2012. "The 'truth' of Solipsism". In *Heidegger-Jahrbuch 6. Heidegger und Husserl*, Herausgegeben von Rudolf Bernet, Alfred Denker und Holger Zaborowski, 131-152. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber.
- Carman, Taylor. 1999. "The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty". *Philosophical Topics* 27(2): 205-226.
- Descartes, René. 1996. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translated by John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F. 1975. *The Science of Logic (The First Part of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 1996. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. New Jersey: Humanities Press.
- Husserl; Edmund. 1952. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie II*. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.
- _____. 1970. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- _____. 1973. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. I/II/III*. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.
- _____. 2001. *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. Translated by Anthony J. Steinbock. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Merleau-Ponty; Maurice. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge & Degan Paul.
- Moran, Dermot: 2013, "The Phenomenology of Embodiment: Interwining and Reflexivity". In *The Phenomenology of Embodied Subjectivity*, edited by Rasmus Thybo Jensen and Dermot Moran, 285-303. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Schopenhauer; Arthur. 1969. *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated by E.F.J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

_____. 1889. *Two Essays*. London: George Bell and sons.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2003. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C.K.Ogden. New York: Barnes & Noble Books.

Zahavi, Dan. 1994. "Husserl's Phenomenology of the Body". *Études Phénoménologiques* 19: 63-84.

Yaoping Zhu is professor at Soochow University and specializes in German Classical Philosophy and European Continental Philosophy, especially in Husserl and Heidegger's Phenomenology. His recent publications include *Heidegger's Ontological Transformation of Husserl's Phenomenology* (Soochow University Press, 2015) and other related articles.

Address:

Yaoping Zhu

Department of Philosophy, Soochow University

199 Ren'ai Road, Suzhou 215123

Jiangsu Province, P.R. China.

Email: zhuyaoping19@sina.com