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Zahavi's Interpretation of Edmund Husserl's Theory of Intersubjectivity and Its Limits

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Abstract

This article offers a critical examination of Dan Zahavi's interpretation of Edmund Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity. It argues that Zahavi's influential claim regarding the "intersubjective transformation" of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology remains constrained by an insufficiently radical understanding of reduction. More specifically, Zahavi reads Husserl's distinction between egoic and pre– egoic levels as an internal differentiation within the ego itself, thereby neglecting Husserl's late analyses of a primordial, non– egological streaming that grounds both transcendental subjectivity and transcendental intersubjectivity. Against this reading, the article shows that Zahavi's account cannot fully overcome the charge of transcendental solipsism, since it preserves an ego– centered model at the very point where Husserl's later manuscripts aim to move beyond it. It further argues that the constitution of unified objectivity can be explained through Husserl's genetic analyses of temporality, especially the relation between primal impression and retention.

Keywords: Husserl, Zahavi, transcendental intersubjectivity, primordial streaming, reduction, solipsism, genetic phenomenology

1. Zahavi's Intersubjective Transformation of Transcendental Phenomenology

Dan Zahavi's interpretation of Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity deserves renewed scrutiny not only because of

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its considerable influence in contemporary phenomenological scholarship, but also because it articulates one of the most ambitious attempts to free Husserlian transcendental phenomenology from the longstanding charge of solipsism. Rather than treating intersubjectivity as a secondary problem that arises only after the constitution of an isolated transcendental ego, Zahavi argues that transcendental subjectivity must from the outset be understood as intrinsically intersubjective. The question of intersubjectivity is thus shifted from the margins of Husserl's project to its very center: it becomes a question concerning the reduction itself, the status of the transcendental ego, and the ultimate structure of constituting subjectivity. (Sandu 2021, 6-8)

If Zahavi is right, then Husserl's transcendental phenomenology cannot be understood as an essentially egological enterprise that must subsequently be supplemented by a theory of the other. It would instead have to be interpreted as already containing, in its transcendental core, an intersubjective dimension that neutralizes from the outset the accusation of solipsism. Zahavi's proposal is therefore significant not merely as an exegetical intervention, but as a systematic claim about the very possibility of transcendental philosophy after Husserl.

This article argues, however, that Zahavi's influential proposal ultimately remains constrained by an insufficiently radical understanding of reduction. More specifically, it advances three related claims. First, Zahavi interprets Husserl's distinction between egoic and pre-egoic levels as an internal differentiation within egoity itself, that is, as a distinction between the ego as objectified in reflection and the ego in its anonymously functioning, pre-reflective life. Second, precisely because of this move, Zahavi does not fully overcome the aporia of transcendental solipsism, but rather displaces it onto a more originary level while preserving an ego-centered framework at the point where Husserl's late analyses seek to move beyond it. Third, Husserl's late manuscripts point instead toward a genuinely non-egological dimension of primordial streaming, a temporalizing ground that makes possible not only the constitution of transcendental

subjectivity, but also that of transcendental intersubjectivity and of the world as universal horizon.

The central contention of the present study is therefore that a genuine intersubjective transformation of Husserlian phenomenology can be accomplished only if the reduction is radicalized beyond the already constituted transcendental ego. What is at issue is not merely a deeper or more originary layer of egoity, but a non-egological ground of temporalization without which neither egoity nor intersubjectivity can become fully intelligible. From this perspective, Zahavi's interpretation is illuminating insofar as it rightly recognizes that intersubjectivity cannot be treated as a merely derivative relation between already constituted egos. As Zahavi himself argues, such a transformation would require that intersubjectivity be understood not as a contingent relation, but as belonging to the very structure of transcendental subjectivity itself (Zahavi 1997, 304–5). Yet his account remains limited insofar as it internalizes the pre-egoic within egoity and thereby fails to do justice to Husserl's late analyses of egoless streaming.

The argument proceeds in five steps. The first section reconstructs the inner logic of Zahavi's project of an "intersubjective transformation" (Zahavi 1996, x) of transcendental phenomenology. The second examines his interpretation of the pre-egoic and argues that it renders the idea of a radicalized reduction effectively unintelligible. The third clarifies the sense in which primordial streaming must be understood not as a lower level of the ego, but as a non-egological ground of subjectivity. The fourth shows that Zahavi's reading tends to conflate the pure ego with the primordial "ego," thereby obscuring a decisive distinction in Husserl's late thought. The fifth and final part turns to Zahavi's appeal to horizontal intentionality and argues that the constitution of unified objectivity can be explained on the basis of Husserl's genetic analyses of temporality without presupposing "open intersubjectivity" as its enabling ground.

If the following interpretation is correct, then the debate with Zahavi concerns far more than a local exegetical disagreement. It concerns the sense in which transcendental

phenomenology can think the relation between selfhood, world, and alterity without silently reinstating the primacy of egoity at the very point where Husserl's later thought seeks to pass beyond it. The first step, therefore, is to examine more closely Zahavi's interpretation of the pre-egoic and the methodological consequences that follow from it.

2. The Pre-Egoic and the Limits of an Egological Reading

First of all, it must be pointed out that Zahavi rejects the idea of an absolute pre-egoic ground that might serve as the enabling ground of transcendental intersubjectivity, and construes the distinction between an egoic and a pre-egoic level as a distinction between the ego as an object of reflection and the ego prior to its constitution as a "thematic object of reflection". As he puts it:

> "[W]hen he [scil. Husserl] speaks of a pre–egoic level, he is by no means referring to an absolute pre–individuated ground [...] [M]ore precisely, what is at issue here is the distinction between different levels of the ego. Thus he says, for example, that when in the genetic regressive inquiry we construct a pre–ego as the beginning, we are not yet dealing with a person, but already with an ego–pole as a center of affection and action. [...] Put differently, temporality is in every respect an accomplishment of the ego [...] and the 'pre–egoic' level is the level of the anonymously functioning ego that has not yet been objectified through reflection." (Zahavi 1996, 59)

Zahavi therefore concludes that it is implausible that "Husserl should have maintained the thesis of the subsequent self-pluralization of a pre-individuated absolute" (Zahavi 1996, 61), even if certain isolated passages might appear to suggest such a view. He insists, however, that such a line of thought remains fundamentally alien to Husserl's project (Zahavi 1996, 63). It is precisely this claim that must now be examined. For if the pre-egoic is reduced to a merely pre-reflective level of egoity, then the very idea of a radicalized reduction loses its meaning. Husserl's late analyses suggest, by contrast, that the reduction does not merely disclose different strata of the ego, but leads beyond the already constituted transcendental ego toward a pre-egoic, in a stronger sense non-egological, ground

— what Husserl characterizes as primordial streaming (cf. Husserl Ms. B III, 23).

If one follows Zahavi's interpretation according to which the "primal ego" is nothing other than an ego not yet thematized through reflection, then the very idea of a radicalized reduction loses its force. For if the transcendental epoché still leads, even at its most originary level, to an ego that, although "not yet objectified through reflection," must nonetheless be understood as a "center of affection and action" (Zahavi 1996, 61), then the reduction never truly leaves the sphere of egoity behind. In that case, the charge of transcendental solipsism is not overcome, but merely displaced onto a more originary stratum.

The decisive issue is therefore not whether one can distinguish between different levels of the ego, but whether Husserl's late thought points beyond egoity altogether, toward a genuinely pre-egological or non-egological ground of temporalization. Zahavi's reading of Husserl's "essential two-layeredness" remains limited because it construes the "pre-ego" as an anonymously functioning ego-pole. Husserl's late manuscripts suggest something stronger. They repeatedly describe the pre-egoic level not as a lower layer of egoity, but as a "realm of inactively constituting association" (Husserl Ms. B III, 9, 23) in which the transcendental ego is itself temporalized. The same point reappears in Husserl's analyses of passive synthesis, where associative and passive processes are shown to condition the very possibility of egological accomplishments (Husserl 2001, 164f).

This is stated with particular clarity in a manuscript dating from August 1931 (Ms. C 2 I, 11), where Husserl writes: "At first we are naively compelled to presuppose this ego as the absolute subject of universal transcendental experience [...]. But this transcendental ego and this transcendental life proper to it are already constituted formations and must as such be bracketed. That means: through this reduction we ultimately arrive at a transcendental primal ego and a transcendental primal life in which that transcendental concrete ego [...] is temporalized." What is bracketed here is not merely the empirical or personal ego, but the transcendental ego insofar as

it is already a constituted formation. In other words, the point of the reduction, then, is not merely to disclose a more hidden or less objectified form of egoity, but to suspend the transcendental ego precisely insofar as it is already a constituted unity. Only in this way does the sense of a radicalized reduction become intelligible.

Why temporality, contrary to Zahavi's interpretation, cannot in any straightforward sense be an accomplishment of the ego, and how Husserl's claim that the ego is the origin of time must therefore be qualified, is well explained by Mensch. If the ego were the source of time in a direct sense, it would have to precede the very temporalization that first makes it possible as an enduring unity. Yet Husserl also insists that the ego is itself constituted as a temporal unity. Mensch formulates the difficulty with exemplary clarity: "If to be a Seiende – an individual existent – is to be in time and if time itself is constituted, then we cannot say that time constitution is the result of the functioning of an individual existent." He immediately adds that "the individual ego, taken as a constitutor of time, would then require for its own being in time … a prior constitution of time" (Mensch 1988, 219). The problem is therefore not simply that the ego cannot be said to "produce" time, but that any such thesis generates a circulus vitiosus: one would have to presuppose a prior temporal constitution in order to account for the ego that is then invoked as the constitutor of temporality.

For this reason, Mensch's reading supports a distinction between a pre-egological temporalizing ground and the ego that constitutes only in a derivative sense. Husserl's late analyses do not describe an ego that temporalizes itself by its own active accomplishments, but rather a field of passive and associative temporalization within which egological life first takes shape. In this respect, the claim that the ego is the "origin of time" can be maintained only in a qualified sense: the transcendental ego may be called the origin of time only insofar as it has its ground in a more originary dimension of temporalization that is not itself egological. Mensch makes precisely this point when he writes that "all egological activity, including the activity of remembering, is dependent on the non-egological, 'associative'

constitution of retentions. It is such constitution, understood as temporalization, which first gives us the cogito and its objects as persisting temporal unities" (Mensch 1988, 104).

Read in this way, Husserl's late thought no longer supports Zahavi's interpretation of the pre-egoic as merely an anonymously functioning ego not yet objectified through reflection. It points instead to a genuinely non-egological level that grounds both the temporal constitution of the ego and the very possibility of transcendental intersubjectivity. This is also why the late analyses of the living present are so important. As Held has argued, the *lebendige Gegenwart* cannot be understood as merely one more stratum within egoity, but names the more originary dimension from which the transcendental ego first becomes accessible as a constituted unity (Held 1966, 94f; 146f).

The problematic character of Zahavi's claim becomes especially clear in light of a passage from September 1933 in which Husserl explicitly describes primordial streaming as "ego-less": "The structural analysis of the primordial present (the standing-living streaming) leads us to the ego-structure and to the constant underlying stratum of egoless streaming that grounds it" (Husserl 1973c, 598). Primordial streaming, therefore – the pre-egoic in Zahavi's terminology – does not belong to the ego-structure and is by no means simply the transcendental ego before its reflective objectification. It is rather the ground of the ego-structure, the non-egological field in which egoity itself first becomes possible. To construe this level as merely pre-reflective egoity is therefore not simply to misdescribe one layer of transcendental life; it is to neutralize in advance the very methodological radicality of Husserl's late reduction.

3. Primordial Streaming as Non-Egological Ground

It must be emphasized that primordial streaming cannot be understood merely as a pre-egoic level of the ego, that is, as a more originary but still egological stratum of transcendental life. What is at stake in Husserl's late analyses is not simply a descent from one level of egoity to another, but the disclosure of a dimension prior to egoity as such, a non-egological ground

that first makes possible both the transcendental ego and the world. If this point is not kept firmly in view, then the radicality of Husserl's late reduction is neutralized from the outset, since the pre-egoic will have been silently reinscribed within the sphere of egoity.

This is precisely where Zahavi's interpretation reaches its limit. He is certainly right to insist that intersubjectivity cannot be conceived as a merely external relation between already constituted subjects. But because he understands the pre-egoic as the anonymously functioning ego not yet objectified in reflection, he does not adequately account for the fact that Husserl frequently characterizes this level as *the absolute*. Nor does he address with sufficient clarity the peculiar facticity of this absolute, namely, the fact that primordial streaming is not one constituted formation among others, but an absolute fact or *absolute factum* that cannot itself be traced back to a prior constitutive accomplishment. In this respect, Held's analyses of the *lebendige Gegenwart* are instructive: the living present is not to be understood as one more layer within egoity, but as the more originary dimension from which the transcendental ego first becomes accessible as a constituted unity (Held 1966, 94–122, 146–150).

The difficulty that emerges here is not marginal. If the pre-egoic is treated merely as pre-reflective egoity, then Husserl's discourse on primordial streaming loses precisely that feature which makes it philosophically decisive, namely, its function as the non-egological ground of constitution. Yet Husserl repeatedly describes this level in terms that exclude such an egological reading. This is already evident in the well-known formulation that "the first 'ego' of the reduction is an ego that is wrongly so called, because for it an alter ego has no sense" (Husserl 1973c, 586). The point of this claim is not merely terminological. It indicates that the ultimate residue of a radicalized reduction can no longer be straightforwardly identified with the ego in the usual transcendental sense. It is precisely at this point that Zahavi attempts to soften the difficulty by reinterpreting Husserl's language of uniqueness in a non-substantive way. He writes:

> Strictly speaking, one cannot speak of an ego if 'ego' indeed means ego. The 'ego' is absolutely unique and individual [...]. The indeclinability of the ego mentioned by Husserl, which excludes every multiplication, points to a uniqueness that is obviously indexical in nature – it is therefore not a matter of substantial uniqueness – and it quite readily allows other unities of the same kind! (Zahavi 1996, 66)

This characterization is entirely plausible so long as one is speaking about the pure transcendental ego. It is much less convincing, however, once Husserl's remarks concern the absolute "ego," that is, primordial streaming itself. For the latter is not described by Husserl as one ego among other egos, nor even as a uniquely indexical center of orientation, but as an all-encompassing unity "that temporalizes within itself, or has temporalized within itself, everything that in any way is" (Husserl 1973c, 669). What is at issue here is therefore not the numerical singularity of a pure ego, but the more radical irreducibility of that absolute field of temporalization in which every ego, every alter ego, and every constituted world first become possible.

For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish more carefully between the pure ego and the absolute "ego." Husserl's analyses in *Ideen II* are especially helpful in this regard. The pure ego, which accompanies all cogitationes and can be understood as the radiating center of conscious life, is fundamentally unchangeable and must not be confused "with the ego as the real person, with the real subject" (Husserl 1952, 104). What distinguishes the pure ego from the personal ego is, in short, that the former is not given perspectivally, as the latter is, but can be grasped immediately through "the single experience of a single simple cogito" (Husserl 1952, 104). As Husserl puts it: "As pure ego, it harbors no hidden inner riches; it is absolutely simple, lies absolutely in the open; all richness lies in the cogito and in the manner of functioning adequately graspable therein" (Husserl 1952, 105). In this sense, the pure ego is indeed simple and numerically unique, but not substantially unique, since it allows for a plurality of analogous unities: "if I posit several human beings, then I also posit several pure egos, separate in principle, and corresponding streams of consciousness. There are as many pure egos as there are real egos" (Husserl 1952, 110).

Once this distinction is made, the weakness of Zahavi's interpretation becomes easier to specify. His account of the absolute "ego" seems in fact to rely on determinations that properly belong to the pure ego. This is especially clear when he appeals to a manuscript passage that reads: "The only ego – the transcendental one. In its uniqueness it posits 'other' unique transcendental egos – as 'others' which in turn, in their uniqueness, posit others" (Husserl Ms. B I 14, 138b). Read in light of *Ideen II*, this passage concerns the pure transcendental ego and its correlative plurality, not primordial streaming as the absolute ground of temporalization. The latter cannot be characterized simply in terms of the formal uniqueness of a pure ego, since it is neither one center of orientation among others nor a merely indeclinable pole of experience. It is rather the absolute, egoless field that grounds the ego-structure itself.

The decisive point, then, is that the uniqueness of primordial streaming cannot be reduced to the indexical uniqueness of the pure ego. The pure ego is unique in the sense that each stream of consciousness has its own irreducible egological pole; but this uniqueness remains compatible with a plurality of pure egos. Primordial streaming, by contrast, is unique in a more radical sense: it is the absolute field of temporalization from which the branching of ego and alter ego, self and world, first becomes possible. This is also why Husserl can speak of the absolute as self-grounding and, in this sense, as an absolute factum. Zahavi's reading, by assimilating the pre-egoic to anonymously functioning egoity, leaves too little room for this stronger sense of absoluteness and therefore risks conflating two levels that Husserl's late analyses require us to distinguish sharply.

From this perspective, the issue is not whether Zahavi is right to reject a naïve substantialization of the transcendental ego. He is. The problem is rather that his rejection of "substantial uniqueness" extends too far, since it obscures the fact that Husserl's late descriptions of primordial streaming are not directed toward the pure ego at all, but toward a non-egological dimension that grounds the ego-structure without itself belonging to it. Only if this distinction is preserved can one make sense of Husserl's claims about the absolute, about

the facticity of primordial streaming, and ultimately about the possibility of transcendental intersubjectivity itself.

4. Pure Ego, Absolute "Ego," and the Constitution of Intersubjectivity

If this distinction is maintained, the limits of Zahavi's account of transcendental intersubjectivity become immediately visible, since he writes:

> It is indeed the case that transcendental subjectivity is, purely and simply, transcendental intersubjectivity, and that it, and it alone, is the constitutive correlate of the world. But within it a necessary ego-centering is already outlined, as the ego that has we-consciousness. (Zahavi 1996, 67)

This is a significant and illuminating formulation, because it rightly rejects the image of a self-enclosed transcendental ego that would first constitute itself and only afterward enter into relation with others. Zahavi is correct to insist that transcendental subjectivity cannot be understood apart from intersubjectivity. Yet the very form of his solution remains revealing. Even where he seeks to move beyond egology, he still reintroduces an "ego-centering" at the heart of transcendental intersubjectivity. This is not accidental. It follows from the fact that, for him, the final residue of the reduction is still an anonymously functioning ego, that is, a center of affection and action which, although not yet personal or reflectively objectified, nevertheless remains independent of the others (Zahavi 1996, 61, 67). In this way, the reduction never truly reaches a pre-egological ground; it merely arrives at a more originary form of egoity.

This is why Zahavi remains, despite his own intentions, more closely tied to the Cartesian guiding idea of the *Meditations* than he is willing to admit. He himself makes this clear when he writes:

> At the same time, however, it must also be noted that Husserl is obviously of the view that one can speak of the ego as the principle of unity of the stream of consciousness without including the accomplishment of the other. On this very rudimentary level there is a functioning accomplishment that is in fact solitary, one that is not first brought about by the other. (Zahavi 1996, 68)

Here the central difficulty comes fully into view. On the one hand, Zahavi wants to argue for an "intersubjective transformation" of transcendental phenomenology. On the other hand, he retains a rudimentary level of constituting subjectivity that is explicitly solitary and not first brought about by the other. The result is a deep tension internal to his interpretation. For if there remains, at the most basic level, an egoic principle of unity that is constitutively solitary, then the problem of transcendental solipsism has not been overcome, but only relocated to a more originary level. Husserl's late analyses, by contrast, increasingly point toward a more radical reduction that brackets not only the world, but also the transcendental ego in its already constituted form, in order to uncover the pre-egological ground of transcendental life itself.

The tension becomes even more evident when Zahavi claims that "although on this [scil. the pre-egoic] level we are not dependent on the other, in our originally temporalizing singularity we are already open to the others in their primordial living co-presence" (Zahavi 1996, 68). This is the crucial move in his argument. But it is precisely here that the decisive question is left unanswered. What does this "openness" mean, and what constitutes its enabling ground? It is not enough to simply assert that originally temporalizing singularity is already open to others; one must explain how such openness is possible in the first place (Sandu 2023, 59–61). Otherwise, the problem is merely named, not resolved.

This becomes particularly clear when Zahavi addresses the possibility that the pluralization of constitutive centers might lead to an irreducible disparity. He argues that "the pluralization of the constitutive centers does not lead to absolute disparity" (Zahavi 1996, 83), and attempts to secure this claim as follows:

> Plurality cannot be viewed from the outside, but only from the ego that experiences it, and its very experiencability guarantees its inclusion within the one common world. [...] It can 'only' be a factual incommensurability, one that can in principle be overcome. (Zahavi 1996, 83)

But this argument seems to presuppose precisely what it seeks to establish. The very possibility of an ego's experiencing

such plurality already presupposes that the constitutive centers are commensurable in principle. Yet that commensurability is exactly what must be shown. To begin from the experiencability of plurality is therefore to begin from the result rather than from the problem. The possibility of transcendental intersubjectivity cannot be secured simply by invoking the ego that experiences plurality, for the openness of such an ego to others is itself what stands in need of grounding.

Zahavi is well aware that Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity is haunted by a circularity, and he formulates it with considerable clarity: "How can one claim, on the one hand, that only the concrete experience of a transcendental foreign ego makes world-constitution possible, if, on the other hand, one must admit that my encounter with the concrete other always takes place in the world?" (Zahavi 1996, 92). The problem may be restated as follows: how can transcendental intersubjectivity be understood as the constitutive pole of the objective world if, as Husserl also maintains, "the relation between subjects, that is, intersubjectivity, cannot even be thought without at the same time thinking the world as the place of their encounter" (Husserl 1973b, 100; cf. Zahavi 1996, 92)? Zahavi's response is to argue that communalization and world-constitution are equiprimordial:

> The constitution [of the world] is in reality the self-realization of constituting subjectivity; that is, in the process of constitution, in the bringing-into-appearance of the world, transcendental (intersubjective) subjectivity is constituted. A self-constitution that also implies the constitution of the others (both *genitivus objectivus* and *genitivus subjectivus*), insofar as the ego needs the others in order to unfold itself as a constituting ego. (Zahavi 1996, 94)

There is something profoundly right in this insight. Zahavi correctly sees that transcendental subjectivity cannot be understood as the autarkic constitutive pole of a world that would be fully constituted independently of the other. He also rightly emphasizes the mutual dependence between world-constitution and the constitution of intersubjectivity. Yet the decisive question remains unresolved: in what sense are these two moments equiprimordial? To claim equiprimordiality is not yet to explain it. Such an explanation becomes possible only if one can bring to light the common ground from which both

transcendental communalization and world-constitution spring forth. From the perspective defended here, only primordial streaming can fulfill this role. Only if egoless streaming is understood as the absolute ground of both transcendental subjectivity and world-horizon does it become intelligible to speak of their equiprimordiality. Since Zahavi rejects from the outset the idea of such a primordial, non-egological ground, his appeal to equiprimordiality remains suggestive but ultimately underdetermined.

The problem becomes sharper still once one takes seriously the historical-generative dimension of transcendental subjectivity. If transcendental communalization can be conceived only as self-realization in the form of embodiment and self-mundanization (Zahavi 1996, 93), then transcendental intersubjectivity begins to assume the structure of concrete, historical intersubjectivity (Sandu 2018, 317–19). But if this is so, then one is no longer speaking of the constitutive correlate of the world as such, understood as universal horizon, but of the constitution of a determinate historical or cultural world. For this very reason, Husserl's radicalized reduction cannot simply come to rest at transcendental intersubjectivity. It must press further, toward the ground that makes both transcendental (inter-)subjectivity and world-horizon possible in the first place.

In a later essay, Zahavi attempts to address this difficulty from a different angle by asking whether the very structure of horizontal intentionality already implies transcendental intersubjectivity (Zahavi 1997, 304–321). His basic thesis is that "an examination of the structure of [the] horizontal intentionality must lead to a reestimation of the constitutive contribution of transcendental intersubjectivity" (Zahavi 1997, 306). He begins from a genuine phenomenological problem. Since every thing is given only through adumbrations, the absent profiles of an object must somehow be co-intended if the object is to appear as one unified reality rather than as a mere aggregate of partial views. Zahavi considers two possible explanations:

> 1. The absent profiles are appresented as profiles given in past or possible future perceptions. Thus, the back of the armchair is appresented as the side which I have seen, or which I would be able

> to perceive in a future perception. 2. A different possibility is to claim that the absent profiles are appresented as the correlates of fictitious co-present perceptions. They are correlated with the perceptions which I would have had, if it had been possible for me to be there now (instead of here). (Zahavi 1997, 308)

Zahavi rejects both options and concludes that "our horizontal intentionality seems to imply a reference to intersubjectivity, since the co-intended profile must be understood as the noematic correlate of the possible perception of an Other" (Zahavi 1997, 312). The thesis is therefore that the constitution of unified objectivity presupposes "open intersubjectivity" (Husserl 1973a, 463). As Zahavi puts it:

> I am, however, only able to perform this activity because my horizontal intentionality entails structural references to the perceptions of possible Others, and precisely for that reason, the structure of my horizontal intentionality is incompatible with any solipsism which, in principle, would deny the possibility of a plurality of subjects. (Zahavi 1997, 312)

This argument is subtle and important, but it is not yet shown to be necessary. For the appeal to open intersubjectivity may be too quick. Zahavi himself now describes intersubjectivity as an a priori structure of constituting subjectivity: "Thus, the actual experience of another embodied subject is founded upon an a priori reference to the Other. Prior to my concrete encounter with another subject, intersubjectivity is already present as co-subjectivity" (Zahavi 1997, 314). Yet this claim stands in tension with his earlier insistence that intersubjectivity cannot even be thought apart from the world as the place of encounter. If intersubjectivity is already present as an a priori structure of subjectivity, then it can no longer be said in the same sense to arise only through becoming-mundane and embodied. Zahavi does not explicitly reconcile these two lines of argument.

There is, however, a deeper problem. Even if one grants that the absent profiles of a thing cannot be "cobbled together" from merely past, future, or fictitious perceptions, it does not follow that their unity must therefore be grounded in the possible perception of an Other. This appeal to intersubjectivity may be premature. Husserl's analyses of time-consciousness suggest another route, one that remains internal to the genetic

constitution of objectivity itself. This can be illustrated by his example of the melody, which, though temporally rather than spatially extended, is no less given as a unified object. Husserl writes that the perception of a melody as a unified "time-object" is a "continuum of acts" and by no means "partly memory, partly punctual perception in the smallest degree, and partly expectation" (Husserl 1969, 23). Its unity is not assembled from external supplements, but constituted through the immanent temporal structure of consciousness itself. This is why Husserl distinguishes between primary memory, or retention, and secondary memory, or recollection (Husserl 1969, 35–36). He writes:

> The 'source-point' with which the 'production' of the enduring object begins is a primal impression. This consciousness is in constant transformation: the bodily tone-now is continuously transformed [...] into a having-been, and ever new tone-nows continuously replace what has passed over into modification. But when consciousness of the tone-now, the primal impression, passes over into retention, this retention is itself again a now, something currently existing. [...] There thus arises a continuous continuum of retention in such a way that every later point is retention for every earlier one. And every retention is itself already a continuum. (Husserl 1969, 29)

Retention is not a representation of what is absent, nor an image of what has elapsed. What it retains points back within itself to the primal impression (Husserl 1969, 34). It is, as Husserl famously says, like "a comet's tail that attaches itself to each present perception" (Husserl 1969, 35). Primary memory is therefore not reproductive consciousness at all, but a mode of perception itself (Husserl 1969, 41). The unity of the melody does not presuppose a structural reference to the perception of another subject; it is constituted through the temporal synthesis of impression and retention.

This example does not by itself prove that spatial objectivity can be explained exhaustively without any reference to intersubjectivity. It does, however, suffice to shift the burden of proof back onto Zahavi: the appeal to the possible perception of an Other is no longer self-evidently necessary, but must itself be demonstrated. And it shows that Zahavi has not established the necessity of invoking intersubjectivity as the enabling ground of unified objectivity. For thing-perception, too, is not a

punctual act, but a temporally extended and kinesthetically articulated synthesis of adumbrations. As Husserl's analyses of passive synthesis make clear, the unity of the object is generated through lawful syntheses of association, retention, and fulfillment internal to perceptual life itself (Husserl 2001, 164–165, 479–480). Once the problem is approached genetically rather than merely statically, the appeal to the possible perception of an Other no longer appears self-evidently indispensable. What Zahavi has shown is that horizontal intentionality opens beyond what is presently given; he has not yet shown that this openness must be grounded in intersubjectivity rather than in the temporally structured syntheses of consciousness itself.

The upshot is not that Zahavi fails to identify a genuine problem. On the contrary, he sees with great acuity that transcendental subjectivity cannot be understood as a self-sufficient constitutive center sealed off from alterity. But because he does not radicalize the reduction beyond egoity, and because he seeks to secure intersubjectivity while preserving a rudimentary ego-centeredness at the most basic level, his account remains caught between two incompatible demands. It wishes to move beyond egology, yet it retains a constitutively solitary residue. It wishes to think world and intersubjectivity as equiprimordial, yet it does not bring to light the non-egological ground that alone could render their equiprimordiality intelligible. For this reason, the "intersubjective transformation" of transcendental phenomenology that Zahavi so powerfully calls for can be completed only by taking seriously the reduction to primordial, egoless streaming as the absolute ground of both subjectivity and world.

5. Conclusion: Genetic Constitution and the Limits of "Open Intersubjectivity"

The preceding analysis has sought to show that Zahavi's appeal to "open intersubjectivity" is not required, at least in any straightforward sense, to account for the constitution of unified objectivity. Husserl's analyses of the time-object suggest that such unity can be explained genetically through the interplay of

primal impression and retention, without presupposing a constitutive reference to the possible perception of others. To be sure, one might object that Zahavi is not concerned with time-objects, but with the constitution of spatial objects. Such an objection is legitimate. Yet it does not suffice to invalidate the comparison. Even if a spatial thing does not itself endure in the manner of a melody, thing-perception as such is temporally extended and cannot be understood as a punctual act. A spatial object is given only through a succession of adumbrations, and these adumbrations are synthesized in and through the temporal flow of consciousness. Once this is granted, the problem of thing-constitution can no longer be treated exclusively within the framework of static phenomenology, but must be approached from the standpoint of genetic phenomenology. In kinesthetic perception, what is presently seen is continuously accompanied by retentional modifications of what has just been seen and by anticipatory orientations toward further possible appearances. The unity of the object is thus constituted through lawful syntheses internal to perceptual life itself, that is, through the interplay of impression, retention, association, and fulfillment (Husserl 1969, 23, 29, 34–41; Husserl 2001, 120–121, 164–165, 479–480).

If thing-perception is understood in this way, then the appeal to "open intersubjectivity" no longer appears self-evidently necessary. This does not show that intersubjectivity is phenomenologically irrelevant to objectivity, nor does it refute the claim that a fully objective world must in some sense be a world accessible to others. What it does show is something more limited, but also more precise: Zahavi has not established that the reference to the possible perception of an Other is the enabling ground of the constitution of unified objectivity as such. His argument identifies a genuine problem, namely the excess of the object over any presently given profile; but it moves too quickly from this excess to the conclusion that horizontal intentionality must therefore contain a constitutive reference to alterity. The analyses considered here suggest that this excess can be accounted for, at least in a fundamental sense, through the temporally structured syntheses of consciousness itself.

The broader consequence of this result concerns the status of Zahavi's "intersubjective transformation" of transcendental phenomenology. The central difficulty of his interpretation is not that it exaggerates the importance of intersubjectivity, but that it seeks to secure intersubjectivity while retaining, at the most basic level, an ego-centered conception of transcendental life. Because Zahavi interprets the pre-egoic as an anonymously functioning ego rather than as a genuinely non-egological ground, the reduction never fully breaks with the egological framework from which the charge of transcendental solipsism originally arises. His account therefore remains caught between two demands that it cannot fully reconcile: on the one hand, the demand to think transcendental subjectivity as intrinsically intersubjective; on the other hand, the retention of a rudimentary but constitutively solitary egoic residue.

For this reason, the present study has argued that a genuine intersubjective transformation of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology becomes possible only if the reduction is radicalized beyond the already constituted transcendental ego and if primordial, egoless streaming is taken seriously as the absolute ground of both subjectivity and world. Only such a non-egological ground can explain how transcendental subjectivity and transcendental intersubjectivity belong together without one being merely derived from the other, and only such a ground can render intelligible the equiprimordiality of world-constitution and communalization that Zahavi rightly emphasizes, but does not sufficiently ground. In this respect, the ultimate issue at stake is not merely the interpretation of several difficult passages from Husserl's late manuscripts, but the very possibility of conceiving transcendental phenomenology in a way that does justice to alterity without silently reinstating the primacy of egoity at the very point where Husserl's late thought seeks to pass beyond it. In this sense, the problem of intersubjectivity cannot be resolved by broadening egology, but only by radicalizing the reduction beyond it.

From this perspective, Fink's formulation remains decisive. If primordial streaming is understood as the "primal

ground from which the branching of fact and essence, actuality and possibility, exemplar and species, one and many first springs forth" (Fink 1959, 103), then it can no longer be conceived as a lower stratum of egoity. It must instead be grasped as the absolute, non-egological ground from which both egoity and intersubjectivity first become possible. Only on this basis, it seems to me, can the project of an "intersubjective transformation" of transcendental phenomenology be carried through in a fully coherent way.

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