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ABSTRACT

This work examines the relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science on the topic of intersubjectivity. I examine Husserl’s static phenomenological psychology, and cognitive science (conceived as a paradigm centred on computationalism and neurology), and demonstrate the relevance of Husserl’s account to contemporary studies.

Chapters one and two are an exegesis of Husserl’s work. Chapter one makes a novel contribution to Husserl studies by spelling out, in detail, what is entailed by phenomenological description, and chapter two provides Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity, which takes the form of an account of embodied empathy. Regarding Husserlian phenomenology, my central contention is that analogy—whereby a subject understands another person’s experience on the basis of their own—lies at the root of Husserl’s account. In chapters two, five, and six I suggest that the process of analogical empathising is underappreciated not only in Husserl studies but also in contemporary debates on social cognition.

My third and fourth chapters explicate a series of Husserlian concepts in order to show why the experience of the other’s subjectivity during empathy can be called ‘direct.’ These chapters show that four common objections to terming empathy ‘indirect’ fail. Furthermore, in closing the fourth chapter, I argue that, because the mental life of others is in a certain sense directly present to us, psychological science need not begin with the presuppositions that the mental life of others is inaccessible, as it traditionally has. The directness of the other’s mental life is a key point of difference between phenomenological psychology and cognitive science, and I discuss the implications of this difference for the direction of psychological science.

The fifth and six chapters argue that, Husserl’s account is largely parallel with the purely cognitivist simulation theory, even given Husserl’s endorsement of direct empathy. In chapter five, I contend that Gallese’s account of embodied simulation is congruous with Husserl’s account of low-level embodied empathy, contrary to various claims made by Zahavi. I claim that Husserl’s account provides the much needed phenomenological details of embodied simulation. In chapter six, I show that Husserl provides an account of high-level empathy that is very similar to the account of high-level simulation theory and
that, again contrary to Zahavi, and also Gallagher, there is much ‘phenomenological evidence’ (both textual and intuitive) for the notion of high-level simulation. Throughout this pair of chapters, instead of trying to deny the similarity between Husserl’s account and the simulation theory, I demonstrate how much clarity and concretion can be added to some of the key concepts of both low and high-level simulation theory when these concepts are reduced to a phenomenological framework.

My final two chapters argue for a reassessment of the nature and scope of phenomenological psychology. I do this primarily by challenging the facile position that phenomenology is just a study of mental states that we are aware of. Husserl thinks that we must reflect in order to gain thematic awareness of our psychic processes, and that reflection is partly a reconstructive process. So, it is by no means straightforwardly the case that we are aware of all the mental states which phenomenology is able to study. Also, Husserlian phenomenology theorises about mental states that we are not aware of, including passivities and the unconscious. Thus, by reassessing the scope and, therefore, the very meaning of ‘phenomenology,’ I reassess the importance and role it has been assigned within debates on intersubjectivity by authors like Gallagher and Zahavi and, hence, the suppositions underlying current models of interaction between phenomenology and cognitive science.
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Although the relevant sections have been somewhat revised, chapter one was published as “Phenomenological Description and the Problem of Describing Intersubjectivity” in the Journal of Consciousness Studies (23)7–8. Chapter three was published as “The Directness of Empathy” in Phenomenological Studies (1)1, and chapter four was published as “Explicating the Key Notions of Copresence and Verification in Relation to Husserl’s Use of the Term Direct to Describe Empathy” in Human Studies (40)2. Nearly all other sections of the thesis are under consideration at various journals, bar chapter six.

Signature: 

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The following works are referred to by shorthand:

*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology* = *Ideas 1.*

*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book. Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* = *Ideas 2.*

*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Third Book. Phenomenology and the Foundation of the Sciences* = *Ideas 3.*

*Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic* = *ACPAS.*

*Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* = *Meditations.*

*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* = *Crisis.*

*Basic Problems of Phenomenology. From the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910-1911* = *Basic Problems.*

Where I quote Husserl from a work which is not available in English, I always include the original source where the English quote came from (i.e., Husserl 1973b 338, quoted in Zahavi, 2014, 134). In these cases, it can be assumed that the translations are those of the original source. Except where I explicitly indicate, none of the translations are mine. Some of the Husserl passages which I cite contain gendered language. Due to the exegetical nature of this study, and for the sake of style, some of this gendered language remains in my text. Please excuse these anachronisms. Double quotation marks *always and only* denote a direct quotation, whilst scare quotes are single quotation marks. Within direct quotes, scare quotes using double quotation marks have been changed to single quote marks (this is the only way Husserlian texts have been altered), and American spelling has been changed to British. The referencing style is APA.
INTRODUCTION

Claims, scope, significance, and method

In the past twenty years or so, a hybrid space has opened up between two historically disparate paradigms: cognitive science and phenomenology. Building on earlier attempts to explore the relations between Husserl and cognitive science (Hall & Dreyfus 1982), a more recent approach guided by an ethos of ‘mutual constraint and enlightenment’ has been adopted and promoted by authors like Gallagher, Wheeler, Zahavi, and Thompson (to mention merely a few key figures), underwritten by the intuition that both phenomenology and cognitive science could benefit from cross pollination. Seminal works such as The Embodied Mind (1992) and Naturalizing Phenomenology (1999) were followed by a plethora of books, journal articles, and special journal editions working at the intersection of phenomenology and cognitive science, necessitating an entire journal entitled Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences dedicated to this project, which has attracted a Q1 ranking on the Scimago measure of impact. One of the key areas of debate has been over that which is termed ‘intersubjectivity’ or ‘social cognition,’ which concerns the ways that one person understands another. This thesis is designed to further our understanding of the interaction between phenomenology and cognitive science on the topic of intersubjectivity.

However, the term ‘phenomenology’ is far from univocal. My project does not span over all forms of phenomenology but focuses, first and foremost, on Husserlian phenomenology, and specifically on what is termed Husserl’s ‘static’ phenomenology. Static phenomenology will be explained in depth in the second chapter, but preliminarily we can say that it is a specific Husserlian method associated with the earlier period of his work, partly defined by the limited schema of temporality that underlies it, with a unique epistemological focus. Static phenomenology is epitomised by the three volumes of Ideas, and can be contrasted with Husserl’s genetic phenomenology, which is not central to my thesis, and has a much wider temporal purview. As we will see in the final chapter, we cannot separate genetic and static phenomenology cleanly, but I nevertheless attempt to delineate the focus of my thesis in this way because I think that, unlike genetic phenomenology, the static account of intersubjectivity interacts in interesting ways with contemporary accounts of intersubjectivity. So, in chapter seven, when I reach some pure
and assuredly genetic themes, I simultaneously reach the end of this avenue of investigation.

A guiding impulse of this thesis is that correct psychological methodology is an area in need of ongoing development. I believe this because, due to the infancy of psychology, its research methods are underdeveloped in comparison to the physical sciences, and cognitive science suffer a serious explanatory shortfall because it has no systematic way to incorporate human experience. For this reason, I focus my attention on Husserl’s phenomenological psychological project. Phenomenological psychology involves providing eidetic descriptions (i.e. generalised or universal descriptions), and analyses of psychological experience, based on reflection. I compare two different methodological approaches to psychology (cognitive science and Husserlian phenomenology) on one particular key topic (intersubjectivity). My project is crucially important because the continual development of psychological methodology, and the ensuing understanding of the human mind, is critical to the progress of human knowledge.

Phenomenological psychology should be differentiated from transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology is strictly a type of philosophy, and not a type of psychology. In the Husserlian sense, transcendental phenomenology is defined as the grand attempt to provide philosophy and all scientific endeavours with a rigorous and systematically stable foundation by discovering the transcendental conditions of knowledge. As we will see in chapter two, we cannot separate Husserl’s phenomenological psychology cleanly from transcendental phenomenology either. For my purposes though, I maintain a focus on the (humbler) topic of the method of carrying out the science of psychology, and disregard the progress or results of Husserl’s transcendental project, except when the latter intersects with the former. Again, I think phenomenological psychology interacts in an interesting way with cognitive science, and in ways that transcendental phenomenology does not. Even though I hope that an injection of Husserl’s foundationalism and epistemological rigour may serve to provide some grounding to psychological science, my project is not concerned with the overall success of Husserl’s transcendental project, unlike previous accounts of Husserlian intersubjectivity (i.e. Mensch 1988, Zahavi 2001).
Husserl never really provides a static phenomenological psychological account of intersubjectivity in one text. The differing aspects of this account are scattered across his corpus and, therefore, my exegetical approach has needed to be reconstructive. Often, my approach has been to draw on core elements of Husserl’s work and bring them to bear on the topic under analysis. The ultimate arbiter of the ‘correctness’ of these analyses is the Husserlian work entitled *Phenomenological Psychology*, and I have tried to consult it as much as possible throughout, to ensure that my account resonates with themes found therein. Unfortunately, *Phenomenological Psychology* provides no account of intersubjectivity, but many of its themes can be re-identified in works which do, including *Basic Problems, Ideas 2, Ideas 3*, and the *Meditations*. It is this which has necessitated the reconstruction. Regarding secondary sources, the most prominent author working on the intersection between Husserlian phenomenology and cognitive science on the topic of intersubjectivity is Dan Zahavi, and an account such as mine would be incomplete if it did not address his body of work. Therefore, this thesis contains a sustained examination of Zahavi’s analysis and appropriation of Husserl.

Methodologically, I do not rely on unpublished, untranslated, and/or obscure Husserlian manuscripts much. Bar where I provide short translations of a few contentious passages which need to be discussed, I rely on the entire voluminous collection of Husserl’s works which have been translated into English to build my cases, and Husserl is decisive enough about his stance on particular issues in these works for my purposes.

As Zahavi (2017) points out, our understanding of Husserlian phenomenology has been enriched as his research manuscripts have been published posthumously, and this has allowed the academic community to correct some common misinterpretations concerning Husserl’s philosophical program. However, I think it is problematic when authors offer revisionist readings based on untranslated and obscure manuscripts which Husserl never thought would see the light of day, especially in direct contradiction to works intended for publication. For example, a central exegetical point I maintain (contra Zahavi (2014, 134)) is that analogy lies at the core of Husserl’s static account of intersubjectivity. This point is repeatedly affirmed by seminal and translated works in Husserl’s corpus which, importantly, were either published or intended for publication by him.

**Definition of Cognitive Science**
I will explain in much greater detail the specifics of Husserl’s program as this dissertation progresses. However, a few introductory remarks are worth making about the label ‘cognitive science.’ Cognitive science is one instance of a contemporary culmination of the tradition of empirical psychology. Two conceptual keystones of cognitive science are naturalism and empiricism, both of which psychology inherited from the late nineteenth century intellectual milieu (Robinson 1995, 311 & 308). Naturalism dictates that the objects which psychology studies occur naturally, and can be explained by reference to natural elements and forces and that, therefore, psychology is a branch of, or at least continuous with, the natural sciences like zoology, medicine, and physics. Empiricism is the claim that all knowledge results from experience. The major ramifications of naturalism and empiricism in psychology are methodological: cognitive science inherited the empirical methodological approach from natural science in an explicitly self-conscious way, and therefore involves observation, experimentation, and quantification (Giorgi 2006, 45-46).

These philosophical roots determine a historical trajectory which can be seen to begin with the behaviourism of the early 1900’s, and terminate in cognitive science. Behaviourists held that psychology was to be continuous with the natural sciences, which, they noted, studied only public observables. Furthermore, mental states were private experiences, and as such were deemed unobservable (Robinson 1995, 362), Therefore, psychology should involve a purely objective third person methodology aimed at the control of behaviour, and not make reference to internal and unobservable mental states (Robinson 1995, 360). Methodologically, the behaviourists took the dictates of naturalism and empiricism to their logical conclusion. Although cognitive science has developed to the point of near unrecognizability, as its predecessor behaviourism passed on many conceptual traits. These traits include scepticism about the observability of mental states, and the belief that, strictly speaking, all we can legitimately be said to observe in a scientific context is physical states, such as psychological meaningless behaviour, or brain states. The development of psychological science throughout the twentieth century can in fact be characterised as an attempt to study the mind given these restrictive conceptual conditions.

However, during the twentieth century the theory of scientific knowledge changed profoundly, and shifted away from naïve observationalism. This meant that, in order to maintain continuity with natural science, psychology no longer had to be carried out
solely via the direct observation of physical states. Instead, psychology could now involve the incorporation of inferred theoretical entities which provide the best explanation for outward patterns of behaviour or experimental data. Often the best explanation was that the human person was in possession of internal mental states. This opened the way for the so-called ‘cognitive revolution,’ wherein psychology began making reference to unobservable but theoretically useful mental states of cognition which could bear an explanatory workload.¹ The cognitive revolt against behaviourism which took place during the second half of the twentieth century is more a recognition that we cannot but help smuggle supposedly theoretical terms into psychological science, than it is a reification of mental life.

Furthermore, the notion of a ‘function’ (re)presented itself as an ideal framework to model mental states on. For the functionalist, a mental state is not identical to a behavioural disposition, nor a brain state, but (very broadly) a mental state just is that which is in a causal relationship with perceptual inputs, other mental states, and behavioural outputs, and these can be realised through any number of material substrates. A functional model of mental states thus provides the sought after instrumental and operational explanatory power without needing to make any ontological or metaphysical commitments about the nature of psychic life. Moreover, a functionalist view of mental states combined well with what Simon and Kaplan call “the so-called information processing revolution of the fifties and sixties, which viewed thinking as a symbol-manipulation process” (1991, 3).

Cognitive science implicitly depends on drawing a complex analogy between the mind and the computer (Thegard 2014). Simon and Kaplan define cognitive science as “the study of intelligence and intelligent systems, with particular reference to intelligent behaviour as computation” (1991, 1). The prevalence of computationalism is witnessed by the habit of using terms for computational information processing functions metaphorically (terms like ‘coding,’ ‘search,’ and ‘matching’) to characterise psychological processes (Pfeifer & Scheier 2001, 37). The most important and prevalent analogy that is drawn between the mind and the computer is, as Pylyshyn explains, that “according to the classical view, certain kinds of systems, including both minds and

¹ This is the conceptual reason for the cognitive revolution. There is also the historically contingent fact that rigorous behaviourism was just impossible to practice from an experimental point of view.
computers, operate on *representations*, that take the form of symbolic codes” (Pylyshyn 1991, 57). As the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* informs us, the central hypothesis of cognitive science is that thinking can best be understood in terms of representational structures in the mind and computational procedures that operate on those structures… Most work in cognitive science assumes that the mind has mental representations analogous to computer data structures, and computational procedures similar to computational algorithms (Thegard 2014).

So, according to what I will refer to as standard cognitive science, thinking is best characterised as a computation, which is defined as an internal operation on representational structures which bear semantic content.

Empirical psychology has always tried to set itself apart from the so-called ‘softer’ human sciences like history and sociology and, as part of this tradition, cognitive science ‘hardens’ itself via mathematisation and neuroscience. The “influx of the mathematical psychologists… made the new psychology much more hard headed” (Mandler 2007, 174), and the development of mathematically structured and sophisticated models of computation is a defining characteristic of the late twentieth century cognitive science (Mandler 2007, 231). The technical ability to measure neural activity through PET, MRI, fMRI, and single cell recordings has greatly increased our ability to understand the neural basis of cognition, and neuroscience fulfils many of the empirical, observational, materialistic, and naturalistic impulses that gave rise to empirical psychology in the first place.

So, this is the broad understanding of cognitive science I am operating with in this dissertation. However, it should be mentioned that this is not the only way to conceive of cognitive science (but I think it is safe to say it is still the standard way, as the quotes I have provided show). Although they are not the focus of this dissertation, there are also (for example) connectionist and dynamical systems approaches. A prominent trend in recent theoretical cognitive science has been to rethink whether or not we really ought to define cognition as above. Beginning with the already mentioned work by Rosch, Thompson, and Varela (1992) there has been an upsurge of interest in so-called ‘4E-cognition’ (cognition which is Embodied, Embedded, Extended, or Enactive). Many authors working within a 4E paradigm draw from classical phenomenology, or utilise a hybrid empirical/phenomenological methodology. My dissertation also builds on the 4E
tradition, as the Husserlian account which I provide in chapter two also conceptualises
cognition partly in embodied terms.

In chapter four of this work I compare low-level simulation theory with Husserl’s
embodied account of intersubjectivity. One of the central claims of my dissertation is that
Husserl’s account overlaps with the one provided by simulation theory. This claim is all
the more interesting because, although low-level simulation theory draws on themes of
embodiment also, it is standard cognitive science, in that it sits squarely within the
functionalist, computational, and neurological paradigm.

As we shall see, the ‘mutual constraint and enlightenment’ thesis which
supposedly governs the recently formed hybrid space between phenomenology and
cognitive science often really equates to the constraint and enlightenment of
phenomenology by cognitive science. Another central claim of my thesis is that
Husserlian phenomenology should inform, guide, and constrain cognitive science. I think
that some of the theoretical (functional/computational) postulates of cognitive science
should be correlated with irreducible phenomenological concepts. I thus advocate for
correlating cognitive science’s concepts to phenomenological concepts; cognitive science
should make more of an effort to incorporate a phenomenological framework, and explain
itself in phenomenological terms. As I will explain, I think that such a correlation guards
against any attempt to reduce or eliminate from psychology the psychic life which
phenomenology gives a rigorous account of. I think phenomenology is a descriptively
accurate account of psychological life, and that cognitive science rests on (explanatorily
powerful) metaphors of computation. The correlation between cognitive science and
phenomenological psychology is underwritten by the undeniable correlation between
subpersonal (i.e. neurological/computational) and phenomenological levels, without
assuming a strict isomorphism between these levels. Throughout this dissertation I argue
why we ought to correlate cognitive science accounts with phenomenological ones, show
how this can be done, give an example, and discuss the extent to which it might be carried
out.

Outline

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2 In this thesis I address the phenomenological objections to simulation theory, and particularly the
attempts to distance Husserl from simulation theory. I do not provide a more general defense of the
simulation theory from criticisms which do not involve phenomenology, and so I do not discuss, for
example, the neural timing argument provided in Gallagher and Zahavi (2008).
The rest of this introduction outlines the narrative arc of the chapters which follow. The first chapter covers preliminary methodological ground. Husserlian phenomenological psychology is often defined as a descriptive practice, but my research found that the theory of phenomenological description was underdeveloped. The first chapter (which I have had published) makes a modest yet novel contribution to Husserlian and phenomenological studies by defining phenomenological description, and ends discussing the relation between description and intersubjectivity.

Chapter two is more exegetical and technical than the first, and expounds the details of Husserl’s static phenomenological psychological account of intersubjectivity. I show that, for Husserl, a precondition of intersubjectivity is embodiment. The other’s subjectivity is perceived with the senses in an act Husserl terms ‘Einfühlung’ (empathy), which involves recognising an analogy between our bodies. Although exegetical, in the second chapter I maintain that it is no mere contingency that Husserl’s static account of intersubjectivity takes the specific structural and constitutional form of an analogical relation.

I begin chapter three by briefly surveying the contemporary landscape of intersubjectivity studies. A key contemporary issue is the extent to which social understanding can be considered ‘direct.’ Chapters three and four discuss the relation between the concept of ‘directness’ and Husserlian empathy. These chapters address four objections to terming empathy ‘direct.’ I argue all four objections fail. The results of this analysis align Husserl’s account of empathy with the contemporary ‘direct perception’ model of intersubjectivity advocated by Zahavi (2011a, 2014).

Also, at the close chapter four, I discuss how the consequences of the thesis of direct intersubjectivity differentiate Husserlian phenomenological psychology from influential paradigms in empirical psychology like behaviourism and functionalism. This is because, contrary to the historical presuppositions of empirical psychology, which form the basis of cognitive science, the Husserlian position is that the behaviour of the other is actually always experienced as saturated with mental states, and during empathy we literally see the mental life of the other. Thus, the thesis of direct intersubjectivity puts psychological science on a different course based on the assumption that psychological life is more observable and less phenomenologically opaque than normally thought. In
closing this chapter I connect these discussions with my key thesis of phenomenological correlationism.

The fifth chapter makes the controversial claim, contra Zahavi, that Husserl’s account of direct and embodied empathy overlaps, not only with the direct perception model, but also with the cognitive science account of embodied simulation, and contributes a phenomenological perspective on the related topic of the mirror neuron system. In the final section, I address the objection that embodied simulation should be considered indirect because it is a kind of projectivist account, like the one forwarded by Lipps. I argue that the simulation theory thesis of shared representations of embodiment does not, in the end, differ from Husserl’s account of embodied intersubjectivity in any significant way. In fact, we can take Husserl’s account of empathy as a phenomenological explication or ‘descriptive filling in’ of the functional, neurobiological account of embodied simulation, and such an explication serves as an example of the phenomenological correlationism that I am advocating.

Staying with the theme of empathy, chapter six discusses Husserl’s account of high-level, imaginatively based, empathy. Husserl’s notion of high-level empathy is less direct than the embodied empathy I characterise in chapter two, and has been explicated far less in the secondary literature. This chapter provides detailed descriptions and commentary on high-level empathy, in order to fill an important space in the contemporary literature. In this chapter, I also provide evidence that even high-level imaginative empathy involves recognising an analogy between the self and other, and that empathy by analogy can even help us to empathise with people who are significantly different from us. I argue that the limitations of empathy are elastic, and analogically based empathy is more generalisable than we might think at first glance, as we only need recognise an analogy between relevant and not identical aspects of our experiences, and we can also just imagine how past or even possible versions of ourselves are analogous to others in the relevant ways.

The conclusion to chapter six uncovers areas of conceptual and terminological overlap between Husserl’s account of high-level imaginative empathy and high-level simulation theory, and argues that, as the former presents a solution to the generalisability problem, high-level simulation theorists would be well served by incorporating Husserl’s phenomenological insights. Highlighting the overlaps between these two accounts
presents a rejoinder to Zahavi and Gallagher’s so-called phenomenological argument against simulation theory. The closing of this chapter makes a further case for phenomenological correlationism, which sharpens the import of my discussion concerning the congruence of simulation theory and Husserl’s account.

The final two chapters address the relation between phenomenology and cognitive science more directly. In chapter seven I show that it is often thought that phenomenology studies personal level processes of which we are aware, whilst cognitive science studies subpersonal processes that we are not aware of. The purpose of my final two chapters is to challenge this interpretation of phenomenology, which I see as incorrect. I argue, first, that there is no process of consciousness that we are inherently aware of, because what we are aware of is the world in which we find ourselves. Second, ‘awareness’ is a complex topic, which requires accounting for prereflective and reflective forms of awareness, and even merely accounting for being aware of a mental state requires nuanced distinctions. Thus, it is a little oversimplified to associate phenomenology with mental states we are aware of. Throughout this chapter I show how the concept of awareness determines the difference between cognitive science and phenomenological accounts of intersubjectivity, and argue for a reorganisation of this determination in light of my discussions.

In the final chapter I argue that phenomenology is able to study mental states that we are not really aware of in the everyday sense. I make my case by showing, firstly, phenomenology studies passive processes which lie at the outer rim of awareness, and make up the core of perception and embodiment, and thus also the core of perceptually based accounts of intersubjectivity. A consequence of this is that we would not really expect to be obviously aware of the majority of the processes that make up Zahavi’s direct perception account of intersubjectivity, and this takes away the majority of the purported reasons for favouring it. I finish my case by showing, secondly, that phenomenology can study the unconscious. Throughout these discussions I also show that the usefulness of phenomenological concepts does not end at the limits of awareness and that, therefore, the program of phenomenological correlationism might be able to cut further into the divide between phenomenology and cognitive science than is commonly thought. I finish this dissertation by sketching some directions for future research.
CHAPTER 1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Hard to express that sense of the analogy or likeness of a Thing which enables a Symbol to represent it, so that we think of the Thing itself—and yet knowing that the Thing is not present to us...that likeness not identity—an exact web, every line of direction miraculously the same, but the one worsted, the other silk (Coleridge 1912).

What must be borne in mind is that the main function of a phenomenological description is to serve as a reliable guide to the listener's own actual or potential experience of the phenomena... Its essential function is to provide unmistakable guideposts to the phenomena themselves (Spiegelberg 1994, 694).

1.1 The genus of description

Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity is shaped by three restrictions, and this chapter and the first half of the next explain how these restrictions exert their influence. Husserl’s account takes the form it does because it is, firstly, descriptive, secondly it has a narrow temporal focus, and thirdly because it must meet certain epistemological conditions. Any account which warrants the label ‘static phenomenological psychology’ meets these three restrictions. The latter two restrictions have been discussed at some length in the secondary literature, and I will touch on them briefly in the next chapter. The restriction on the phenomenological account of intersubjectivity to maintain a descriptive focus has been discussed far less.

Although it is often mentioned that Husserl’s phenomenological psychology is descriptive, and is closely related to descriptive psychology, when I searched for a precise

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3 This chapter published as “Phenomenological Description and the Problem of Describing Intersubjectivity” in the Journal of Consciousness Studies (23)7–8.
characterisation of what this meant, I found there were shortfalls with the existing accounts. Toulmin and Baier’s 1952 paper *On Describing* does not mention phenomenology. Spiegelberg’s account (1994) provides only “a few features” of phenomenological description, as he himself admits (693). Ihde and Silverman’s edited work entitled *Descriptions* (1985) discusses the theory of phenomenological description (in Sokolowski’s contribution), and contains some examples of phenomenological descriptions throughout, but does not define nor explicate what phenomenological description is in any great detail (Natanson’s contribution in the Ihde and Silverman work begins to define description, but ends up being somewhat elliptical, though I do draw on many of the themes found therein). Consequently, I noticed that there was a lacuna in the literature—that there was no precise, detailed, and clear explication of phenomenological description—which this chapter fills. This chapter serves as preparation for my overall thesis, because a good understanding of the methods of phenomenological psychology will permit insight into the interaction with cognitive science, and the account of intersubjectivity. The initial sections of this chapter (§1.1-§1.3) characterise description generally. The latter parts (§1.4 onwards) characterise phenomenological description in particular.

A pertinent etymological feature of the word ‘de-scribe’ is that it can literally be rendered as ‘mark-down.’ A description must be a linguistic representation, but this is only a necessary yet insufficient condition of description, because a label or proper name represents an object linguistically, but cannot be said to describe it. The primary sense of the term description “calls for such epithets as ‘detailed’ and ‘graphic’” (Toulmin & Baier 1952). In its earliest English usage ‘describe’ meant ‘illustrate’ or ‘portray;’ a non-literal rendition might be the common phrase ‘could you draw me a picture’ (which is not normally a request for an actual pictorial representation).⁴ The etymology of the word thus informs us that descriptions involve, at the least, the *linguistic representation of something in an illustrative fashion.*

Descriptions have an essential structure. They are an intentional linguistic act. Descriptions are always descriptions of, and have an *object.* Descriptions also often serve a *communicative* function. Structurally, there is a *describer* and an *audience* (Toulmin &

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⁴ It is worth observing in this context that the latter phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty saw pictorial art as a form of phenomenological description (Wrathall 2011).
In describing, a describer attempts to represent the object of the description in a way that allows an audience to represent the object, even if the audience has not directly experienced the object themselves. Even if the audience does have a direct experience of the object, a good description can bring salient features we may not have noticed to our attention, like the way a gallery guide describes a work of art, and this allows us to experience the object with fresh eyes.

Descriptions can be good or bad, because they can achieve the structural/communicative telos of representing the object to the audience with varying degrees of success. If successful, then the audience need not have a direct experience of an object in order to ‘get the picture.’ Furthermore, for Husserl, description involves “a form of ‘verificationism’ in the sense that what guides the description is its potential verification by the reader, a verification that authorizes the reader to contest and discuss the proposed descriptions in terms of true or false” (Thomas-Fogiel 2014, 126). Thus, a criterion for the success of phenomenological descriptions is the maintenance of faithfulness or veracity to the object, which can in turn be verified (or contested) intersubjectively and objectively.

As Ginzburg (2012) observes, good descriptions are ekphrastic, and express what the ancient Greeks termed ‘enargeia,’ which can be translated as ‘vividness,’ and is connected to words like ‘clear’ or ‘tangible.’ When Latinised, ‘enargeia’ and ‘ekphrasis’ became synonymous with terms such as ‘palpability,’ ‘lucidity,’ ‘illustration by evidence,’ ‘illumination,’ and ‘actuality.’ Similar terms were synonymous with ‘demonstration,’ which originally refers to the gestures used by orators to indicate an invisible object. Enargeia suggests the sphere of immediate experience, which good description aspires to communicate as closely as possible by virtue of style. Enargeia is a quality of good historical method for the ancients. The Homeric hymns are characterised as highly ekphrastic and full of enargeia. Simonides claimed that the most effective historian makes his narrations like a painting by means of vivid representation (Ginzburg 2012, 11). Thus, enargeia is not merely aesthetic but is enrolled in the service of truth. Historical narration, description, vividness, and truth are connected conceptually, because

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5 One might of course describe something to oneself, but even this solipsistic act is potentially communicative, or is perhaps an intra-personal act of communication (see Toulmin and Baier (1952) for discussion on this point).
“truth was considered above all a question of persuasion” in the ancient world, and was only marginally linked to primary sources (Ginzburg 2012, 11).

Thus, qualities like vividness and clarity determine whether descriptions can be rated good or bad, and the simple amount of detail contributes to vividness. “Description is primarily predication,” as Spiegelberg notes (1994, 693). A definite description, for example, defines an object by listing a property that only that object possesses. Generally, the more properties of a thing we can list, the better the description. But specificity of detail is also important. For example, if I describe my radio as partly wooden, in my house, and electric I have not told you much that might distinguish it from other objects. This description is too general and so not very good. A better description would be that it is brown jarrah, with glass tuner display and plastic knobs, has a chip on the front left hand side, and stands on the sideboard in my study. This description is better because these details pertain more specifically to the object in question; they single it out—and the result is a more specific and ergo vivid image in the reader’s mind. Demetrius states that enargeia ensues from a description which contains nothing superfluous, yet also overlooks no important detail (Ginzburg 2012, 10). This is what Ginzburg terms the archival aspect of good description.

All species of the genus ‘description’ are neutral. This neutrality plays out differently in different species. In literature, descriptions of characters or settings are separable from plot and narrative. Natural scientific description alone cannot settle the taxonomic system, or theoretical concerns. Phenomenological descriptions are free from philosophical presuppositions. As Mall informs us, the notion of description “really aimed at philosophizing without any presuppositions” (Mall 1993, 15). The descriptive mandate thus prevents the phenomenologist from adopting pregiven philosophical positions, engaging in theoretical speculation, hypothesising, or dogmatism (ibid). The procedure of the reduction, which will be discussed in §2.2, is specifically designed to ensure that presuppositions of a certain type are avoided. Phenomenologists describe only what is given in intuition. Natural scientific descriptions similarly rely on intuition, though only outer perceptual intuition. For Husserl intuition comes in many forms, e.g. sensory, categorial, or essential. The basis of phenomenology’s claim to neutrality is that all Husserlian description refers back to the evidence provided by one of these forms of intuition.
Yet, good description is not merely cataloguing, but is also creative. This creative nature springs from what Husserl refers to as the ‘morphological’ nature of descriptive language and concepts. He states that there is an unavoidable ‘vagueness’ to the terminology descriptive practitioners use, in that this terminology is widely applicable and not domain specific. The descriptive practitioner develops morphological concepts which are expressed with terms like “notches, scalloped, lens-shaped, umbelliform,… concepts which are essentially, rather than accidentally, inexact” (Husserl 1983, 166). For Husserl morphological terms express “essences drawn immediately from intuition simpliciter” (ibid). Due to its interminably vague nature, there is nothing that precludes continual further specification and rearticulation, which results in the continual construction and development of new terminological frameworks. Description (and redescription) is infinite, iterative, and linguistically generative (not reductive). We might compare Husserl’s works to Constable’s endless depictions of cloud formations, which was “not just artistic but passionately empirical, observing and recording time and again, in an effort to understand something of the force behind… changing patterns” (Dixie 2008, 48). Husserl’s work, in its drive towards intuitive givenness via description, utilises a similarly empirical and repetitive form of creativity.

Thus, there is a productive tension between the archival/neutral aspects of description, on the one hand, and the creative aspects on the other. Good descriptions must be veracious, yet vivid and creative enough to evoke a powerful image that recalls immediate experience. Literary descriptions, for example, are often rich in details which create a sense of reification, but also employ creative devices like analogy and metaphor to generate vivacity. Thus, in the opening of Far From the Madding Crowd, Thomas hardy describes Farmer Oak this way:

When [he] smiled, the corners of his mouth spread until they were within an unimportant distance from his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared around them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun (Hardy 1874, 1).

Hardy’s use of analogy provides us with a vivid image and ergo successful description.

It may seem as if there is an inherent conflict between the need for veracity and the creative impulse in the context of scientific description. Yet, for an underdeveloped
discipline like the study of first-person experience, perhaps we may at first need to introduce

new words that would enable us to refer to the various dimensions of our experience—for example words coming from a disciplined and collective use of metaphor or metonymy… Why not refine our vocabulary gradually as we become more skilful and discriminating in exploring our lived experience? Why not follow the same way by which oenologists have created a very rich vocabulary in order to describe the olfactory and gustatory experience of wine (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 26)

Thus, phenomenologist might seek refuge in abstractions, metaphors, comparisons, and poetic imagery to convey experience as well as possible (Maso 2007, 169). Husserl endorses this point in a limited way when he states that we can draw certain conclusions from analogies (Husserl 1983, 169).

However, as Spiegelberg notes, though suggestive, analogies and metaphors are “not without dangers” (Spiegelberg 1994, 694). There is always the risk our metaphors get taken literally, and that therefore misdescription occurs. Husserl ultimately thinks that we must describe the intuitive “actual seeing,” presumably in literal terms, in order to call our results phenomenological (Husserl 1983, 169). For Husserl, analogical or metaphorical language needs to be spelt out literally at some point. An underlying thesis of my dissertation is that psychology needs to rely less on metaphors which it has worn out and no longer serve it (like computational terms), and more on literalist descriptions of psychic life. I have thus drawn on Husserl because, although he does not explicitly bar poiesis via metonymy, metaphor, and analogy, he considers such devices propaedeutic, at best. The progress of psychology is of utmost importance, and for such progress it is critical that we develop a precise and literal conceptual vocabulary, which will probably need to be at least a little dry and technical, and although there is no harm in lively and engaging writing which is as accessible as possible, we should never sacrifice precision for the sake of style (a sacrifice no one could ever accuse Husserl of making!).

1.2 The relationship between phenomenological description and natural scientific description

All of the important figures in the burgeoning field of psychological science in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century modelled some aspects of their
methodology on the increasingly powerful and impressive natural sciences, based on the expectation that psychology would be a natural science too. Husserl is in one respect no exception to this trend (though he rejected a naïve and all-encompassing naturalism, as is well known). One of the foremost archivists of the phenomenological movement notes that, in Husserl’s works, the reader is invited to read every finding therein described as they read “a zoological or a botanical description, with reference to the object itself, and consequently as an expression of something seen which can only be understood by means of direct intuition” (Farber 1943, 210). Description was long practiced by natural sciences such as zoology and botany, and it is from here Husserl found his inspiration.

The objects which new sciences study are at first unclear, ill defined, and need to be distinguished from the objects of other branches of science, and description can perform this function. The role of description in the natural sciences is, in this sense, similar to the role it has in phenomenological psychology. Brentano states that the relationship between descriptive and empirical psychology is similar to the one between anatomy and physiology (Brentano 1982, 138); for natural sciences and psychology, description is the means for distinguishing basic objects of study prior to theorising.

Description has its limitations though. For example, it can never settle what the natural sciences term ‘taxonomy,’ i.e. the hierarchy and interrelation between the basic objects of study. In phenomenology too, describing “is based on a classification of the phenomena. A description, therefore, presupposes a framework of class names, and all it can do is to determine the location of the phenomenon with regard to an already developed system of classes” (Spiegelberg 1994, 693) For Husserlian phenomenology, settling taxonomy is a task for analysis, an equally basic methodology. Brentano termed phenomenological descriptions “analytic descriptions” (Brentano 1982, 138). Analysis goes “hand in hand” with description (Spiegelberg 1994, 693), and occurs via the schema of parts and wholes outlined in the Third Logical Investigation. Furthermore, description alone cannot settle questions concerning the origin of a thing, and nor can Husserl’s static descriptive method, because describing does not involve inquiry into the preconditions of the intuitive phenomena. For natural science, the question of origins is, contemporarily, the purview of evolutionary theorists, or cosmological physicists. For Husserlian phenomenology, uncovering the origins of the structures of psychic life is the task of a sociohistorical genetic/generative phenomenology, yet it is unclear to what extent these
strains of phenomenology are still descriptive (and, because the scope of my study ranges over static phenomenology only, this is not something we need concern ourselves with).

As new sciences become established, their terminology gradually becomes known and used in the world of everyday human concerns, becoming part of everyday vocabulary, and thereby influences the way we parse the world. The vocabulary for discussing consciousness is still relatively poor, because psychology and phenomenology are relatively new disciplines (their crystallization as distinct sciences occurring only around the turn of the 1900s). Due to the youth of these disciplines, we “almost completely lack the concepts and competencies that would allow us to parse, think about, talk about, and remember the complexity of experience” (Hurlburt & Schwitzgebel 2007, 51 quoted in, Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 8). Because of this, forging descriptions of psychological life can seem like an exercise in muteness. Spiegelberg (1984) makes remarks that phenomenology “begins in silence. Only he who has experienced genuine perplexity and frustration in the face of the phenomena when trying to find the proper description for them knows what phenomenological seeing really means” (Spiegelberg 1994, 693). There is a great scientific need for phenomenological description and, because there is a deep yearning and ethical drive for an understanding of psychology and consciousness within society, there is an even greater human need for the vocabulary of first-person conscious experience to be developed and make its way into the common vernacular within the lifeworld.

Despite these observations concerning the concomitance between natural scientific and phenomenological descriptions, it should be noted that there is also a yawning disanalogy between the role of description in natural and phenomenological sciences (which mirrors the gulf between these two disciplines). As mentioned, Husserl thinks that description expresses and communicates that which is “in the proper sense experienced” (Husserl 1980, 58), i.e. directly, intuitively, and immediately experienced. In the natural realm, we never experience the essence (invariant structures) of physical things in this ‘proper’ way (i.e. directly). In these cases, we only ever ‘properly’ experience mere appearances—we only ever perceive contingent and partial profiles of physical things. Because a descriptive expression of that which is experienced of a physical object only depicts these appearances, and is not an expression of essence, the descriptive natural sciences (like zoology, botany, and geology) cannot assume a foundational role, they are not the “foundations of physics at all” (ibid, 5). However,
extended objects are the sort of things that sustain ratios (Michell 1999), and so their invariant structures can be expressed in exact mathematical and formal languages, i.e. via formulae (Husserl 1989, 386), and thus mathematical sciences lay the foundations for physical ones.

This situation differs from phenomenology for two reasons. First, unlike physical objects, psyche is “not a substance of appearances,” and we directly experience the essence of psychic life (Husserl 1980, 57-58). Phenomenological psychological descriptions express this direct experience of essence. Second, ‘in the case of phenomenology, which studies and describes lived experiences, its descriptive concepts have morphological rather than exact essences as correlates, because phenomenology deals with a fluid realm, that of ongoing conscious processes” (Larrabee 1990, 198, see also Husserl 1983, section 73-75). This second difference results because consciousness is fluid and in flux, and so its concepts fluctuate and multiply. Mathematical objects, for example, have precise and ideal limits, whilst the boundaries of psychic entities are inexact, fuzzy, or, as Husserl puts it, ‘morphological’ (ibid). Unlike the neatness of mathematics and deductive ontologies, the “psychic province... is of a completely different essential type; it has a multiplicity of immediate essential insights which continually grows with analysis and is never to be limited” (Husserl 1977, 36-37). Because of the creative potential, elasticity, and endless iterations afforded by language, linguistic descriptions (and not mathematical formulae) are ideally suited for expressing the fluid descriptive morphological essences of the psychic province.

Thus, although description is a method which Husserl borrowed from the natural sciences, due to the essence of psychic life, and the match between the nature of this essence and the method of description, description plays a foundational role in psychology, but not in the natural sciences. This very basic point about the match between the essence of psychic life and phenomenological description undergirds much of my thinking about the role of phenomenology in psychological science and the terms of its interaction with cognitive science. There is a unique fit between the method of description and the ‘object’ of psychological study—psychic life—which grants descriptive psychology a foundational status that other descriptive disciplines do not share.

1.3 Descriptive phenomenology and descriptive psychology
However, it should be mentioned that phenomenological psychology is not just descriptive psychology. Although, in the first edition of the *Logical Investigations* in 1901, Husserl states that phenomenology “is descriptive psychology,” in line with his growing conception of phenomenology, he more or less disavows this claim in the second edition of 1913 (see Husserl 2001a, 175-177). For Husserl, descriptive psychology studies ‘real,’ or, natural and empirical experiences, i.e. ones which occur within a causal chain (Husserl 2001a, 176), and is thus continuous with natural science. As I show in the next chapter, Husserl thought that phenomenological psychology was not continuous with natural science, as it operates under the conditions of the *phenomenological reduction*, which excludes and supersedes causal concerns.

The main way Husserl qualifies the difference between descriptive and phenomenological psychology, however, is by saying that, although phenomenological psychology *might begin* with the description of empirical/factual psychological phenomenon, it develops these descriptions into a study of psychological phenomenon in utmost universality. Phenomenological psychology describes pure (i.e. non-empirical) experiences and, therefore, employs the method of ‘eidetic variation,’ which involves randomly varying an example of the phenomena we are studying in the imagination until we come upon features that we cannot vary without the example ceasing to be the type of thing it is. These invariant structures are, as mentioned, termed ‘essences.’ Eidetic variation is thus a central method of phenomenological psychology (Husserl 1977, section 9).

Phenomenology, therefore, discusses the intentional experiences as such, in “unlimited generality,” as “pure” species (Husserl 2001a, 176). The individual and factual phenomena depicted in our descriptions are “taken as exemplary, i.e., taken as being what it is by virtue of the fact that it has an essence” (Welton 1983, 168). “Starting with a concrete case as an example, phenomenology tries to bring to light descriptively its essential structure and characteristics” (Kockelmans 1973, 231). In contemporary parlance, phenomenology describes mental state *types*, and the *tokens* of those types are only sometimes described precisely because they are examples of types. Phenomenological psychology is not a stream of consciousness style exercise, which would involve the description of the empirical contents of a singular person’s consciousness, but an *a priori* or eidetic exploration of that which belongs to the nexus of any sort of possible lived psychic process (Husserl 1980, 34).
The study of essences is what sets phenomenology apart from a descriptive empirical psychology, because the study of essences is what sets any pure science apart from its empirical counterpart. Phenomenological psychology is thus an analysis of universal psychological conceptual structures, and the pure counterpart of empirical psychology, in the same way that mathematics and geometry are the pure counterparts of applied physics.

1.4 Phenomenological description

So far, I have made some passing comparisons between literary, natural scientific, psychological, and phenomenological description as part of the project of broadly characterising the genus description. From here on, I leave these comparisons aside, and focus exclusively on outlining the distinguishing features of the species of phenomenological description.

1.4.1 The standard account: the ‘I-verb’ template of phenomenological description

It is commonly held that the most basic form of phenomenological description is a statement which utilises an ‘I-verb’ template, i.e., ‘I see…,’ ‘I imagine…,’ ‘I walk….’ In his short discussion of description, D.W. Smith provides ten examples which all conform to this ‘I-verb’ template (2006, 193). As Smith notes, the first-person pronoun in this template ensures that descriptions attend to conscious experience (which is always essentially first-person), whilst the verb in question obviously indicates the sort of experience depicted. The verb which we slide into this template might denote regular physical actions, expressed with action verbs like ‘walk,’ ‘touch,’ or ‘move,’ or they might denote mental operations which we express with cognitive verbs like ‘doubt,’ ‘imagine,’ or ‘desire.’

However, it is problematic to define phenomenological description on the basis of this template, as our definition becomes too wide. Any such statement which utilises this template would then count as a phenomenological description. An example of the problems which arise through such an inflation is when Gallagher, attempting to defend the use of phenomenology, states that if a patient in a waiting room reports “I have a headache and blindness in one eye,” then the attending doctor would be remiss to reply that phenomenology is not always reliable (Gallagher 2012b, 203). As we shall see in the final chapters, Gallagher sometimes operates with an oversimplified idea of what
phenomenology involves. In this case, he implicitly endorses the notion that, by simply utilising the ‘first-person pronoun-verb’ template to report experience, the hypothetical patient is automatically giving a phenomenological description and ergo ‘doing’ phenomenology.

If Gallagher were correct that phenomenology is any sort of self-report, then we all do phenomenology all the time, and it could not be called a science of consciousness. We need to bring some type of ordered analysis to our descriptions in order to put the logos in phenomenology. As Thomas-Fogiel writes, what distinguishes phenomenological description is not “discourse in the first person alone, since, though it distinguishes phenomenology from experimental psychology, does not alone constitute a sufficient condition of phenomenology” (Thomas-Fogiel 2014, 126-127). There is an obvious need to distinguish the varied first-person discourses engaged with ipseity, such as kinds of literature, religious confessions, psychoanalytic exercises, journal keeping, and ethnomethodology (ibid), and, of course, plain old fashioned self-reporting.

Husserl’s project is more detailed than the ‘I-verb’ template suggests. A mere conjunction of a series of ‘I-verb’ statements does not make a good phenomenological description, which is more than simply an expression of an experience that we are aware of (as Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 26, observe); phenomenological descriptions are about consciousness (which, as we shall see in the last two chapters, is not the same as that which we are immediately and obviously aware of), and a good description gives its audience an indirect experience of its object. Furthermore, Husserl’s descriptions have an “epistemic orientation and [a] requirement that philosophy be a discourse that professes its own validity and one that is universally justifiable” (Thomas-Fogiel 2014, 126). Statements which utilise this template might indicate phenomenology’s basic domain of study, or count as a proto element of phenomenological description, but this template is too wide to define description by. Lastly, a skilled phenomenologist like Husserl (or indeed any skilled writer with the creative resources of language at their disposal) is not restricted to this template, especially if descriptions target the eidetic level (at which point they would no longer be phrased in the first-person singular). Thus, defining phenomenological description via this template is not only too wide, but also too narrow—neither necessary nor sufficient.

1.4.2 A better account: intentionality
A better characterisation of Husserlian phenomenological psychological description is that it is concerned with the study and analysis of the universal features of psychological life, the most prominent of which is “an entirely new theme, namely, intentionality” (Kockelmans 1973, 231). The most basic distinction relating to intentionality is that between ‘act’ and ‘object,’ which Husserl dubs (in order to avoid ambiguity) the ‘noesis’ and ‘noema,’ terms that I will now expand on. Husserl thinks that intentional mental acts (noeses) structure, or interpret, intentional content (which Husserl terms ‘hyletic data’—a term I will explicate in §2.4.3), in order to ‘win’ reference to an intentional object (noema), which is simply an object as it appears to consciousness. Descriptions can be either noetically or noematically orientated. A noematically orientated description does not attempt to describe any ‘object in-itself,’ but only the way the object appears to a subject, determined by the type of noeses in which it appears. An example of a phenomenological description of a noema is Husserl’s meticulous descriptions of the appearing profiles of a cube in Thing and Space (Husserl 1997).

A third-person (non-phenomenological) description of a rotating cube (a cube ‘in-itself,’ so to speak) might hypothetically proceed along these lines: ‘a cube has six square faces and twelve edges. The area of each face is the length of an edge squared by itself, and each length is two inches long. The cube is rotating at a pace of two centimetres per minute,’ etc. In distinction, Husserl’s description of the appearing face of a rotating cube proceeds thus:

The square surface first comes to proper appearance… as a slight indication within a rather unclear, ‘incomplete’ presentation. The more the rotation proceeds, so much clearer becomes the presentation, so much more complete, and finally a high point is reached, in which the square ‘best’ presents itself in this direction of change, such that further changes would again decrease the completeness of the presentation, progressing on again to slight indication and then to complete disappearance (Husserl 1997).

Husserl’s description is of the experience of a rotating cube (not of any cube ‘in-itself’), and he excludes all that is not given therein. Phenomenological descriptions remain true to the intuitive data.

Phenomenological descriptions can also be noetically orientated. Phenomenology is often associated with this type of description, because often thought of as introspection,
but for Husserl describing both sides of the intentional relation is equally important. Phenomenological description is a more objective affair than introspection, because *noetic* descriptions correlate with *noematic* descriptions. For example, take the following (exemplary) phenomenological description:

I glanced over my shoulder and saw a letter in my [office] mail box. My perceptual experience, in this case, was my evidence: I saw it. After filling my coffee cup I walked over to the mailbox to pick up the letter, only to discover that it was a memo about a (then) forthcoming speaker. For me, then, my first experience (from the back of the room) was deceptive evidence. I reidentified it as such once I obtained better evidence, that of holding the memo in my hands and reading it. I experienced a conflict between my identification of that thing in my mailbox as a letter and as a memo. The latter identification took precedence for me because my perceptual experiences were better and more harmonious. All of this took place from my point of view, and are differences among the way things appear, the phenomena (Hutcheson 1979, 95).

In this description, the *noema* (the letter/memo), the object *as experienced*, indicates the correlated mental acts of evidentiary fulfilment. It is the ongoing experience of the *noema* (from a letter to a memo) which impels the *noetic* descriptions (of perceptual evidence/conflict/deceptive evidence/better evidence), and it is the correlation between *noesis* and *noema* which guarantees the veracity of the description of the *noetic* processes, and the overall soundness of the description.

Furthermore, different *noetic* modalities have distinct descriptive features. There are essential, specific differences in intentional relation between the modalities of experiences which gives them their descriptive character. In one of Husserl’s most well-known passages, he states that the

manner in which a ‘mere presentation’ refers to its object, differs from the manner of a judgement… Quite different again is the manner of surmise or doubt, the manner of a hope or fear, or approval or disapproval, of desire and aversion (Husserl 2001b, 96).

For Husserl, the different types of mental acts constitute the objects which they correlate with in essentially differing ways. Phenomenological description attempts to resolve these complex intentional acts into essential, primitive, and distinct intentional characters,
which cannot be further reduced, which have definite, determinable relations between
them (ibid).

1.4.3 Reflection

All description presupposes observing the target of the description beforehand. The mode via which we observe physical objects is sensory perception. For phenomenology, the mode for ‘observing’ psychic life is reflection. Thus, another marked characteristic of phenomenological psychological description is that it is the expression of reflective study of psychic life (which, as we have just seen, is always intentional). As Husserl writes, instead “of becoming lost in the performance of acts… and instead of naively positing the existence of objects intended in their sense… we must practice reflection, i.e. make these acts themselves, and their immanent meaning content, our objects” (Husserl 2001a, 170). The parallel between perception and reflection is revealed when Husserl uses figures of speech like ‘look at the matter more closely,’ when what he literally means is reflect more. Husserl’s use of the term ‘perception’ is multivalent, and he notes that, when he uses terms like ‘perceive’ or the expression ‘to see’ loosely like this, he means them in “the completely broad sense which implies nothing other than the act of experiencing things oneself, the fact of having seen the things themselves” (Husserl 1973d, 348). As Genova (1995) notes, Husserl’s use of phrases which are suggestive of vision mirror Wittgenstein’s use of such terminology, and the impetus to reflectively describe consciousness free from presuppositions is well summarized in Wittgenstein’s demand that we ‘Do not think, but look!’

However, the language of vision is metaphoric when applied to reflection, and often problematic, as it leads us to equate phenomenological reflection with introspection (see, for example, Vermersch 2011). Phenomenology is not merely ‘peering in’ on or ‘viewing’ cognitive processes (as the next chapter, and the final two chapters, emphasise). Furthermore, there are features of reflection (which I explore in more detail in §7.9.2) that suggest visual metaphors are unsuited to characterising reflection: reflection is a loosened, detached, and receptive sort of noticing which is non-intentional, and is unlike the direct intentionality of sense perception. Reflection is a step back from, and an opening up of, the experience; we do not and cannot take consciousness as an object as we do a perceptual object (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009). Thus, I will avoid characterising reflection in observational language. Bitbol and Petitmengin use the phrase come into
“contact” with experience but, I think, if we want to avoid metaphoric language, it is better to speak of reflection as being the mode in which we become acquainted with experience, as ‘contact’ relies on a metaphor of tactility, whilst acquaintance seems like a literal description of the phenomena in question (more discussion of this point can be found in §7.9.3).

In sum, phenomenological descriptions are about psychic life, and reflection is the cognitive act via which we become closely acquainted with this life. So, reflection necessarily comes before and is presupposed by phenomenological description. An unassailable structural feature of phenomenological description is its reliance on reflection.6

1.5 Ph |omenology and the practice of description

So, the process of phenomenological description has three essential steps:

1. Experience, or the living through of psychic life.
2. Becoming acquainted with experience (via reflection).
3. Marking down.

I do not intend here to discuss at great length the significant theoretical challenges faced by this model. What I will discuss in the twilight of this chapter is the problems which arise specifically for any attempt to provide a descriptive account of intersubjectivity, because I think these difficulties partly determine the nature of Husserl’s account (along with the two further restrictions I discuss in the next chapter).

There is a relevant and valid concern that the nature of the experience we wish to describe changes in the move from step one to two. Husserl admits as much, stating that “when we pass over from naively performed acts to an attitude of reflection…, our former acts necessarily undergo change” (Husserl 2001a, 171). One of the reasons latter phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty were sceptical of Husserl’s project is because they concluded that “attending to a phenomenon with the purpose of describing it actually prevents us from seeing the phenomenon as it is” (Wrathall 2011, 20). As Bitbol and Petitmengin put it, there are good reasons to suspect that becoming acquainted with experience “introduces an irreducible distortion” of an observational,

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6The question as to whether or not we have a pre-reflective acquaintance with experience, and how this prereflective acquaintance relates to reflection, is complex. I address this issue in chapter seven. For now, I can certainly say that for Husserl reflection, and not prereflective acquaintance, is the mode via which we come to know experience to the extent necessary to give a good phenomenological description of it.
temporal, interpretative, or verbal order (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 364). There is a
niggling doubt, then, about the similitude between experience before and after reflection.

This concern arises partly because of the temporal lag between steps one and two—we
cannot have an intuitive experience and reflect upon it simultaneously. As Zahavi
notes, when reflection commences, the experience reflected upon
has already been going on for a while. The reflected experience did not commence
the moment I started paying attention to it, and it is not only given as still existing,
but also and mainly as having just been… Viewed temporally, the reflection is a
grasping of something that has just passed; it presupposes a distance between the
reflecting and the reflected, which is then bridged, but never abolished (Zahavi
1998, 211).

The upshot of the problem of temporal lag is that we must “descriptively
reconstruct, after the fact” (Wrathall 2011, 20). This reconstruction is not only the
obvious methodological approach, but the common one too. Empirical research by
Petitmengin-Peugeot determined that people generally vacillate between successions of
periods of time in which they live through experience, and periods in which they describe
the corresponding experience whilst retaining an “interior trace” (Petitmengin-Peugeot
1999, 46). Reconstruction is aided by the fact that an ‘after-awareness’ remains once the
experience has lapsed. Husserl supports this idea, because he follows Brentano in
maintaining that “what has once been perceived will immediately thereafter remain
present to us in consciousness” (Bernet, Kern, & Marbach 1993, 101). Husserl names the
faculty responsible for this immediate after-presence retention (Husserl 1991).

Retention is an awareness of the past, but must be distinguished from memory,
because the latter episodically re-presents an experience which has passed, whilst
retention is a continuous part of present perception (Moran 2005, 142-143). A “retention
is the echo or ‘trace’ of what has just gone before” (Bernet et al. 1993, 251). For Husserl,
retention is both a descriptive feature of consciousness and makes phenomenological
description possible (Reeder 1986, 70). Retention forms a continuous unity between
current and (just) past experience. Reflective and temporally reconstructive
phenomenology is thus not relegated to describing memories, as it has experience ‘held’
in retention, and this guarantees that we can reconstruct experience after the fact with
some degree of veracity. This is how Husserlian phenomenology solves the temporal problem at the root of the concern over similitude.

Schmikking explains that, in order to become adept at exploiting retention,

Phenomenologists need to habitualise their interest in their subject matters (types of objects and correlative experiences). During performing everyday tasks, skills, etc. in the natural attitude the latent interest awakes immediately after certain experiences, acts, etc. In this way experience or worldly comportment can be analysed without distortions, thereby avoiding the paradox of self-observation (Schmikking 2010, 45).

However, a challenge to becoming habitually interested in psychic processes is that they are “involved: whether we are memorizing, remembering, imagining, calculating, understanding or deciding, the absorption in the object or the objective, the ‘what’ of the process, overrides the ‘how,’ which stays pre-reflected” (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 375). Yet, there are practical reasons why developing the habit of taking an interest in sensory perception presents minimal challenges. Namely, sense perception is continual whilst we are conscious; we are constantly presented with visual and auditory experiences. Consequently, we can have a perceptual experience, reflect upon it, become acquainted with it and, as we are reflecting, if the retentional trace begins to fade or our attention wanders, we can return to the basic perceptual experience and it presents itself again. We can continue our reflections in this fashion, altering back and forth between having and becoming acquainted with experience, and then make the move from step two to three and begin description proper at our own leisure. Importantly, the physical object itself is, obviously, indifferent to this process and undergoes no change as a result of it, and so our level of engagement and the habitualising of our interest present few challenges.

This illuminates why much early Husserlian description often focuses on describing sensory perception (and other solitary modes of consciousness like judgement and imagination which can be entered into at will). As long as we are conscious, perceptual experience is “always available” (Husserl 1983, 158), and it thus constantly presents and (if necessary) re-presents itself for grasping in retention and reflection, unlike more fleeting conscious phenomenon like, say, anger. As Husserl observes in Ideas I, anger, like many forms of experience, “may be evaporated, its content may be
modified by reflection” (ibid). Thus, as we will see in chapter two, sensory perception is one of the dominant modes of consciousness which Husserl’s static phenomenology analyses, and it is no coincidence that it is also the mode via which he approaches his account of intersubjectivity

1.6 The difficulty of describing intersubjective experience

Given the nature of the process I have just outlined, I will conclude this chapter by discussing the difficulty inherent in describing intersubjective experience. By ‘intersubjective experience’ I mean the ‘second person perspective:’ situations where we are no longer alone with our first-person perspective but engaged with another subject. This is defined by Fuchs (2013) as prereflective or explicit self-other interaction, which may involve embodiment, and be as subtle as engaging in eye contact and sharing space, or as complex as working together or conversing.7, 8

One might approach the description of intersubjective processes by observing them as they occur between subjects other than oneself. Yet, this method, which is already regularly employed in the social and psychological sciences, employs the third person perspective on two people who are in the second person perspective, and it lacks the experiential intuitional evidence and immediacy that Husserlian phenomenological description seeks to convey. The problem that interests me is how we gather an intuitively full description of a second person process from the first-person perspective. This task faces unique difficulties.

A difficulty arises in making the transition from having an intersubjective experience, to becoming acquainted with intersubjective experience via reflection, and then moving to description. These problems arise because other people demand our attention far more than inanimate physical, imaginative, or ideal objects. One reason for this is that human beings are active and free, and so unpredictable. On the other hand, inanimate objects object will behave uniformly, and remain unchanged regardless of what I do; we cannot rely on the other person we are engaged with to remain the same if we stray into reflection. Also, in contrast to physical objects, others are sensitive to the way

7 Generally though, linguistic exchange introduces a level of complexity above what I consider in this dissertation.
8 An obvious challenge is the ‘problem of other minds’, i.e., the fact that I do not have a direct access to the mental states of the other. I address this challenge in chapters three and four. In the present section, I address mainly the methodological challenges which pertain specifically to description, and how they affected Husserl’s approach to intersubjectivity.
we experience them. There is a close temporal demand for communicative feedback when we interact with others, a demand not present with other classes of things. As Frith notes this “is a big difference from my interactions with the physical world. The physical world is utterly indifferent to my attempts to interpret it” (Frith 2007, 175 quoted in , Zahavi 2014, 194). We may stray into periods of self-contemplation, but generally in social situations we must devote most of our attention to the other and our interactions with them. Small non-verbal changes like eye gaze or tone of voice let the other know if we are paying attention or not. If they notice we are not paying attention, the interaction is likely to alter course (I am sure we have all experienced the demoralizing effect of realising that someone is not paying attention to us while we are interacting with them). Thus, if we engage in reflection, the intersubjective experience probably changes course and is altered fundamentally.

The habit of taking a detached interest in the world, which Shmikking states is part of the practice of phenomenological description, does not account for the attentional requirement for feedback and the ensuing engagement of our interest into account. We find others engrossing on a deeper level than we find other objects engrossing. Thus the ongoing interactivity and temporal demands of intersubjective experience makes it a modality of consciousness which does not easily allow for the attentional movement demanded by phenomenological reflection and description. It tends to be when we are alone that we find the time and have the reflective capacity to turn our concern to phenomenological practice. Like philosophy generally, phenomenology is mostly ‘done’ by the individual in isolation. Perception, judgement, and imagination are all conscious modalities available to the isolated individual as elements of the phenomenological method, or for description via that method, closely available in retention. There is a normal or average temporal delay from the point of being in the modality of intersubjective experience to the point where we might turn our regard to phenomenological description and, because of this average lag, intersubjective experience tends to have fallen from retention and faded into memory. Thus, the demands made by the sensitivity and responsiveness of the other lengthen the temporal problem and thus heighten the concerns over the similitude between experience and experience in reflection.

We have the “further difficulty of stating such results, of communicating them to others” (Husserl 2001a, 171) via a description which, as we noted earlier, is necessarily
linguistic. Petitmengin-Peugeot also found that it is difficult for us to live out an intuitive experience (in the modes of say perception or fantasy), reflect upon it, and simultaneously put it into words (Petitmengin-Peugeot 1999). Schultze urged that “one gets much closer to the experience of everyday life if one observes them during that everyday life. These experiences should be analysed and described immediately… in a notebook” (quoted in Kusch 2005, 29) Practically, we need to write down (or somehow record) our reflections in order to enter into description properly. However, if merely reflecting on social processes threatens changing their nature, then moving into marking down our reflections inevitably will. That is, even if we become adept at becoming closely acquainted with intersubjective experience without letting others know that we are doing so, pulling out a pad or voice recorder in the middle of a social interaction will definitely alter its course. It is true that, as Husserl informs us, if I cannot “reach back to the still conscious experience (in so-called retention)” then I might recall it “in repeating recollection” (Husserl 1977, 117), but, relying on memory again strains the problem of underwriting the veracity and authenticity of experience. Thus, we either threaten the natural flow of intersubjective experience, or exacerbate the temporal tensions in the move from step two to three.

In both Basic Problems of Phenomenology and the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, Husserl asks whether the position of the phenomenological meditator is necessarily that of a solus ipse. In light of these discussions, I think we can see this question as probing the incommensurability between intersubjective experience and phenomenological methodology, including description. As we will see in the next chapter, Husserl approached the description of intersubjectivity from the perspective of a solitary individual existing in a purely natural world who then encounters another living human body. Like Ricouer, and countless other commentators, I have always found this approach paradoxical (1967, 118). It is generally thought Husserl tied himself into unnecessary philosophical knots with this approach, and that his phenomenology is unnecessarily solipsistic because of it. Why does Husserl feel it necessary to move his account from the sphere of first-person experience to intersubjective experience in that order? Would not the most logical approach be to turn to the description of intersubjective experiences without further ado?

Explicating the practical details of description partly answers the question as to why Husserl took the path of analysis he so often did: his approach was at least partly determined by the incommensurability of intersubjective experience and
phenomenological description. The egological and subjective dimensions of experience are far more commensurate with the methods of phenomenology than the social dimension, and Husserl’s approach of founding the account of the latter on the account of the former is partly due to a descriptive methodological expediency. However, this is not the only reason for the nature of Husserl’s account because, as the next chapter shows, there are other restrictions which shape Husserl’s phenomenological psychological static account of intersubjectivity.
Chapter 2 Husserl’s Static Phenomenological Psychological Account of Intersubjectivity: Empathy

...that sense of the analogy or likeness... that likeness not identity (Coleridge 1912).

Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness, but I feel or act them in the mind’s muscles. This is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of Einfühlung; there is nothing curious or idiosyncratic about it; but it is a fact that must be mentioned (Titchner 1909, 28).

2.1 Static temporality

The present chapter outlines Husserl’s static account of intersubjectivity, after first covering the final two restrictions which shape it. ‘Static phenomenology’ is a label which covers a wide range of Husserl’s philosophic work. Very broadly, static phenomenology is the analysis of immanent structures of consciousness, and particularly the intentionality of consciousness. Although a continual ‘stream,’ one structural feature of consciousness is that every such intentional mental process has a limited duration, and thus begins and ends. As Husserl relates in Ideas I, phenomenological time is a universal characteristic of all intentional mental processes (Husserl 1983, 192), and so the theory of phenomenological time overarches static phenomenology. I therefore discuss Husserl’s theory of phenomenological time, as it shapes the static account of intersubjectivity.

The theory of temporality which undergirds Husserl’s static style of analysis has three dependent components, the ‘now’ component, ‘retention,’ and ‘protention.’ Husserl terms these components ‘phases’ or ‘moments.’9 “These three moments... constitute for Husserl the concrete living present,” or, the originary temporal field (Bernet et al. 1993, 103). These phases are not sequential but simultaneously overlay each other (Husserl

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9 ‘Moments’ is the term Husserl typically uses to denote dependent parts. ‘Phases’ is the term he uses to denote dependent parts that are temporal. Both, unfortunately, carry other temporal connotations, but they are not to be seen as temporal units, like seconds or milliseconds. The terms ‘moments’ or ‘phases’ are simply equivalent to the phrase ‘dependent parts.’
and together they constitute experiential temporality, or, time consciousness (Husserl 1991).

The ‘now moment’ is the current present juncture of inner time consciousness; the mobile rolling epicentre of experiential temporality. “The ‘now moment’ is the experience of ‘now’ that belongs to every currently occurring lived experience… [It] is always a part or phase of the full lived experience” (Cohen & Moran 2012, 204). As far as the static analysis is concerned, the ‘now’ is the point at which objects impress themselves upon consciousness, and thus is a point of spontaneous genesis, or primal creation (Husserl 1991, 100). Within the schema of temporality, the ‘now’ phase has a certain pride of place, therefore, because it is the “source-point” at which the production of an enduring object begins, via “primal impression” (Husserl 1991, 30). The central motif of the static analysis is thus acts of perception as they are experienced in the continually progressing moment of primal sensory impression—‘the now.’

Summarising key passages from *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, Taipale notes that Husserl uses interchangeably the concepts ‘primal impression’ and ‘primal sensation.’ An ‘impression’ just is an original (sensory perceptual) sensation which occurs in the ‘now’ phase. Further, the notion of the ‘now’ phase is so closely related to the notion of the reception of sensations that they are interdefinable (Taipale 2014, 25). The ‘now’ is merely “a persisting form for ever new material” (Husserl 1983, 195). In fact, the entire temporal frame of ‘now,’ ‘before,’ and ‘after’ is merely an empty form that does not register without some ‘content,’ and “sensation is the ‘primal content’ (primären Inhalt) of time consciousness” (Taipale 2014, 24 & see 26). During perception, objects are ‘presented’ to consciousness when their material content is experienced as a sensation. Sensations are the “purely immanent consciousness of a sensuous content” (Brough 2005, lxii, see also Husserl 2005, 307). Husserl sometimes refers to these sensations as ‘matter,’ ‘content,’ or ‘hyletic data.’ Static phenomenology focuses on the ‘now phase’ because during it, via sensations, when we perceive, the content of objects make what Husserl variously characterises as an ‘intuitively full,’ ‘original,’ ‘primal,’ or ‘primordial’ impression upon us.

Each individual ‘now moment’ recedes or fades away, and is continually replaced by another new ‘now moment.’ Each ‘now moment’ distinguishes itself from the previous ‘now-moment’ because it is experienced as ‘currently now,’ and the previous is
experienced as ‘having-been’ (Cohen & Moran 2012, 204-205). The progression of ‘nows’ which static analysis focuses on thus continually progresses (Husserl 1983, 194) “in a steady flux” (Husserl 2001c, 600), and is not frozen like a photograph, as if time has stopped. If the ‘now’ were frozen, then the static analysis would be limited to an account of experiences and objects which are unmoving or unchanging, yet the static analysis explores activity, movement, and change (see for example section III of Husserl 1997). As Welton notes, static analysis “does not mean that we are restricted to a single second,” nor does it “give us the interiority of a moment,” and thus oppose one ‘now’ with many ‘nows’ (Welton 1983, 172). Instead, static phenomenology traces sense bestowing acts and the correlated process of the stratification of objects across time, during which the moments of ‘the now’ steadily progress.

So, we must ask, what is it that is static in a static analysis? The answer is the intentional correlation between noeses and noemata. The static analysis studies and describes these intentional correlations “as they are experienced…, almost as if they were simply there in nature like the objects studied by natural science” (Cohen & Moran 2012, 273). Husserl writes that, during a static analysis, the correlations between noeses and noemata are seen as an unchanging nexus (Husserl 2001c, 633). A static analysis involves the description of doxic modalities (i.e. doubt or belief) according to their seemingly unchanging noetic and noematic structures and possible types of fulfilment (Husserl 2001c, 628). As Derrida points out, a prototypical example of a static analysis is the descriptions of the correlation between different ontological regions of noemata, and different noetic species of acts of consciousness in Ideas 1 (Derrida 2003, 2). The static analysis does not inquire into the passive, developmental, and sociohistorical origins of these noetic-noematic correlations. This inquiry is the task for genetic and generative analyses. Husserl purposely excludes this direction, or dimension, of analysis from the initial and foundational static beginnings of phenomenology (Welton 2003a). We begin with intentionality as we experience it: as seemingly unchanged over the course of our life and history. We focus on identifying the noematic cores which are unchangingly the same across time and place, and the activities of consciousness which is correlated with the constitution of these cores, and relationships of dependence and priority.

The two other phases of the tripartite structure of temporal consciousness are protention and retention. As consciousness flows on via the progressing moments of ‘the now,’ it still retains a connection to the experiences which have just passed, through
retention, which I characterised briefly in the previous chapter (§1.5). The progressing ‘now point’ is metaphorically more like a comet trail, because the entire experiential temporal field has its tail dragging through the past (Husserl 1991, 32). As ‘now’ points progress diachronically, retentions (and the retention of retentions) move along or continually unfold along a plane which is synchronic to the flow of now points (Husserl 1991, section 11). Thus, retentions attend conscious experience in the moment of the now (Husserl 1991, 32). If the moment of the now did not contain within it an ongoing trace of the past, it would be impossible for us to make sense of an event which had an ongoing temporal duration, i.e. a melody or a conversation. So, even though static analysis has a focus on the moment of the now, this moment is not severed from the immediate past.

Furthermore, through protention, the unfolding of experience in the ‘moment of the now’ is not severed from the immediate future, either. Protention is the inverse of retention. Retention is characterized as the awareness of what is just past (the “Just Now”) (Husserl 1983, 195), protention is the awareness of the ‘not-yet’ (Russell 2006, 132). Protention is sometimes characterised as anticipation or expectation, but it is more basic than this, and is better described using the terminology of indication and motivation10 (see §4.1.3). If I am having an experience of a three dimensional spatial object, I have the sense that, if I move in certain ways, certain new profiles will come to presentation. If I hear a melody, and it stops, I can complete some of the pattern of the melody to myself. These future orientated senses are constituted via my protentional capacities (Husserl 1983, 1991).

So, in summary, the ‘now point’ is not static, but continually flowing. Furthermore, the ‘now point’ is surrounded by a ‘fringe,’ a ‘halo,’ or, a “horizon” of the awareness of the immediate past and future (Husserl 1983, 195). The hyletic impressions which we experience in the immediate now point are in fact saturated with a consciousness of the immediate past and the future. This is the theory of temporality which undergirds and guides—and, in a sense, restricts—Husserl’s static phenomenology. This determines the static analysis of intersubjectivity, because Husserl is interested in the type of intersubjectivity wherein we receive impressions of another person primordially in the moment of the ‘now,’ surrounded by the halo of retention and protention. Because my investigation is limited to Husserl’s phenomenological psychological static account, I

10 ‘Motivation’ is the phenomenological equivalent of the notion of ‘causation.’ A motive is a psychic cause. I discuss the meaning of technical term ‘motivation’ in chapter five.
will not explore Husserl’s accounts of intersubjectivity which involve other, deeper/wider dimensions of temporality, such as the genetic or generative accounts of intersubjectivity. Thus, topics like ‘developmental genesis,’ ‘sedimentation,’ and ‘historicity’ will be avoided.\(^{11}\) The advantage of maintaining this restriction is that the Husserlian account of intersubjectivity that emerges will address the same themes as cognitive science accounts of social cognition, and not be aimed at a different level. Yet there is another related restriction we must discuss before moving on to the static account of intersubjectivity itself: the epistemological.

2.2. The epistemological restriction

The impetus for Husserl’s philosophical project, from about 1905 onwards, is transcendental. This means that his motivations are to give an account of how it is that objects gain their ‘objectivity’—how it is that objects are experienced as existing independently of us. Epistemologically framed, Husserl wishes to account for how it is that we seemingly know that the world has objective being, and whether such knowledge is justified. He will ultimately look to show how consciousness bestows the sense that objects are objective—and he is for this reason a transcendental idealist.

As mentioned, the transcendental project is not the focus of this dissertation (readers interested in this project should consult Mohanty 1985, Mohanty 1989, and for the development of transcendental phenomenology see Hopkins 2011). I am ultimately here not interested in whether Husserl was successful in grounding our knowledge of the being of the world. Rather, I am interested in the static phenomenological psychological account of intersubjectivity. The reason I do not address the transcendental project is because it (rather obviously) goes beyond the concerns of contemporary cognitive science; the transcendental and the empirical do not address the same subject matter, and there is no point in gesturing towards the transcendental in response to empirical concerns (as phenomenology is sometimes wont to do). Also, given that the abandonment of foundational philosophy has characterised the latter part of twentieth century Anglophone philosophy, the worth of Husserl’s transcendental project has been called into serious question (albeit indirectly) by Wittgenstein’s development of the notion of family resemblances, Sellars’ attack on the myth of the given and his account of intentionality, and Quine’s rigorous naturalism and attack on the empirical/analytic distinction. Rather

\(^{11}\) Although some of these topics are mentioned in the final chapter, not for their own sake, but in the context of a much larger argument.
than trying to address these conflicts head on, and to make my discussion relevant to cognitive science, my approach is to utilise the grounding value of epistemologically rigorous descriptions of psychological life, whilst accepting that these descriptions may not fulfil the grand transcendental designs Husserl had in mind.

Though I do not address the results of the transcendental project, there is no doubt that Husserl’s “analysis of intersubjectivity is occasioned by the desire for a radical realization of his transcendental philosophical project” (Zahavi 2001, 16). The truth is that transcendental philosophy is the backdrop to much of Husserl’s philosophy, including the various accounts of intersubjectivity. And, it is Husserl’s transcendental motivations which calls for the stringent epistemological conditions which characterise static phenomenology in particular, and then determines an epistemologically motivated path of the analysis of intersubjectivity. The epistemological restraint enforces a degree of rigour on all of Husserl’s theories, and I am hoping to confer some of this rigour onto contemporary discussions. Thus, we need to touch on the epistemological restraint, although it is mainly connected with the transcendental project, in order to both properly understand Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity, and also in order to import the desired quality of epistemological rigour.

In order to give an account of the objectivity of objects—an account which justifies the belief in the being of the world—Husserl begins with the reduction.12 The reduction is Husserl’s attempt to avoid circularity in his transcendental account (Mensch 1988, 12). Any account which claims to provide evidence for the objective being of the world cannot rely, for its evidence, on the objective being of the world, in much the same way that the conclusion of an argument cannot count as one of the premises for that conclusion. Thus, the reduction is a method of ‘parenthesising,’ ‘bracketing,’ ‘excluding,’ or ‘cancelling’ the positing that the world factually exists (Cohen & Moran 2012, 106), a positing which is characteristic of our naïve ‘natural’ pre-philosophical attitude (Husserl 1983, 56-57). It is a suspension of our naïve and dogmatic pre-understanding and assumptions about the mode, manner, and ontological status of the world’s existence

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12 The *epoche* and the reduction are, in fact, two separate moments of a method, though in Husserl’s work and the secondary literature they are often referred to interchangeably. In this work, as I want to limit my already lengthy methodological discussions in order to get to the account of intersubjectivity, I will be using the terms ‘*epoche*’ and ‘reduction’ at times interchangeably when I quote other authors, but mainly use the term ‘reduction’ in my own writing. However, I do not use the term ‘reduction’ to refer to the *eidetic reduction.*
(Zahavi 2001, 4), and is characterized by Husserl as the hypothetical annihilation or annulment of the thesis of the world’s being (Husserl 1983, 109).

Husserl’s project is always epistemologically focused. He characterizes the reduction as placing all naively given knowledge in question (Husserl 1999a, 23). In this vein, he states that “the ‘phenomenological reduction’ is simply the requirement always to abide by the sense of the proper investigation, and not to confuse epistemology with natural scientific (objectivistic) investigation” (Husserl 1984, 410, italics removed, quoted in Zahavi 2009, 11). All philosophical investigations carried out under the conditions of the reduction conform to the “principle of the freedom from presuppositions” (Husserl 2001a, 177), and the edict to stick only to what is given to us in intuition, or, the so-called “principle of all principles” (Husserl 1983, 44). As it is presented in Ideas I, the principle of all principles is “that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimising source of cognition, that everything originary… offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there” (p. 44). Abiding by these principles entails not accepting any pregiven premise, be it theological, metaphysical, or scientific, that has not been justified satisfactorily by intuitional evidence.

Despite the fact that Husserl’s motivations for conceiving of and performing the method of reduction are transcendental, he did see the reduction as an important part of the phenomenological psychological project also. I acknowledge, however, this last statement is contentious. Kockelmans, for example, writes that phenomenological psychology remains within the realm of the natural attitude, and “does not employ the transcendental reduction” (Kockelmans 1973, 232). Zahavi also claims that phenomenological “psychology is a form of philosophical psychology which… remains within the natural attitude” (Zahavi 2009, 10). Husserl himself even states that the phenomenological psychological project begins in the natural attitude (Husserl 1977, 34), and that the difference between transcendental phenomenology and phenomenological psychology is that they are carried out in the transcendental and natural attitudes respectively (Husserl 1999b, 131).

However, this point requires some judicious interpretation. At the end of Phenomenological Psychology, Husserl informs us that a reduction has guided much of the analyses in that work. He says that all the preceding descriptions were implicitly
“carried out in the phenomenological reduction” (Husserl 1977, 147). Husserl says that only by performing the reduction do we acquire phenomena in the sense of phenomenology, and that is true whether we aim at “philosophically transcendental phenomenology, or… at a psychological phenomenology” (Husserl 1977, 144). Thus, close reading suggests that the reduction plays a role in both transcendental and psychological phenomenology.

Phenomenological psychological analyses are purely descriptive, and this is in large part equivalent to saying that they are phenomenologically reduced. As we saw in the last chapter, descriptions are ‘neutral,’ so using a purely descriptive method does much the same sort of work that the principle of freedom from presuppositions does, by excluding pre-given truths and hypothesizing, speculating, theorizing, etc. Good phenomenological psychological descriptions only convey intuitively given immediate experience and, that being so, they conform to the principle of all principles. Husserlian phenomenology is defined by an attentiveness to phenomena (within an intentional framework), this attentiveness is what the reduction equates to, and is separable from transcendentalism. The spirit of the reduction guides and shapes a descriptive phenomenological psychology, as much as it forms the entry point into transcendental phenomenological philosophy.

Even phenomenological psychology needs to enact a reduction of sorts, though not the transcendental kind. Husserl distinguishes between transcendental and psychological subjectivities, and phenomenologies (1977, 32). He also distinguishes between transcendental and psychological reductions (Cairns et al. 2016). The reduction which phenomenological psychology relies on provides access to “the purely psychic, purely mental” (Scanlon 1977, xiv), and “isolates the psychic from the non-psyhic” (Cairns, Embree, & Zaner 2016, 68). In the context of phenomenological psychology, the reduction brings the epistemological rigour, and applies the guiding principles of phenomenology (such as the principle of all principles), to the study of psychic life itself.

This reduction is the “great reversal” which leads to thinking subjectivity—the ego cogito—as the ultimate basis of all phenomenology (Husserl 1999b, 18). The reduction brings into view the subject matter of Husserlian phenomenology—consciousness—and isolates it for the purpose of investigation (Russell 2006, 58). Conscious experience is the “residuum” after the reduction, and makes up the field of
phenomenological research (Husserl 1983, section 49). Phenomenological psychology is concerned only with “mental facts, with men and animals, as far as they are mental beings and abodes of mental, psychic happening” (Husserl 1977, 39). Thus, psychological or ‘mental’ life is the ‘residuum’ left over when the reduction is carried out in a phenomenological psychological context.

However, what is remarkable about the reduction is how little actually changes after it is enacted. It is as “radical as it is subtle” (Russell 2006, 71). As Husserl writes, even after we have enacted the reduction, the whole world remains there for us, on hand, like the bracketed inside the bracket (Husserl 1983, 59). The entire intuitively given first-person experiential field becomes the limit of investigation. Experience remains “unaffected, even if we imagined the whole of nature annulled” (Husserl 2006, 38). As we have seen already, consciousness is descriptively characterised as intentional, and “within the immanence of the intentional act as a whole the objective referent of that act presents contents that cannot be reduced to the act’s partial immanence and that therefore ‘transcend’ it” (Hopkins 2011, 97). Moreover, “the intentional object as a content of phenomenological reflection continues to appear just as it did prior to its being reduced, save for what is manifest in its appearance being now taken as the meaning (Sinn) instead of the being of what appears” (ibid, 112) The reduction is therefore “not a method for abandoning the world” (Zahavi 2001, 9). Because experience is always intentional, and the content of an intentional act transcends it, yet such a content is captured within the scope of phenomenological reflection even after the reduction, we do not sacrifice the world via the reduction, but discover it anew as a world of intended meanings. Even though we turn away from our naïve positing of an objective world of things, intentionality reveals this world again in the form of noemata (Husserl 1983, section 88). Noemata simply are worldly objects, viewed phenomenologically, post-reduction, sans objective being. The reduction allows us to see the parts and pieces of these objects for the first time (Drummond 2003), and to grasp the role that subjectivity plays in their constitution. After the reduction, the world is revealed as correlated with my meaningful experience of it.

These remarks concerning noemata highlight that, as Giorgi (2006, 65) observes, it is critical in a psychological context not to confuse phenomenological intuition with introspection, because introspection “looks only at the conscious activity, not at its objective correlate (noema)” (Husserl 1965, 115). Giorgi does not unpack Husserl’s
elliptical comments concerning the noema, though. Husserl followed Brentano in maintaining that the acts of consciousness “were not introspectively accessible in the same way as contents were; indeed, they could only be studied through their results” (Kusch 2005, 39). The “psychic is not strictly presented for straightforward observation” (Cairns et al. 2016, 65). It is the complex stratification of objects which makes up the world which we experience that serves as the necessary, reliable, and systematic indicator that the psyche has been at work. As Husserl puts it in his uniquely technical prose style, every “category of possible objectivities designates an index for a methodic regularity of possible psychic life” (Husserl 1977, 34). Phenomenology is thus a regressive inquiry (Husserl 1977, 20). We must reflect, beginning with the immediately given object, which properly comes into view after the reduction, questioning back into its necessary constitutive conditions, in order to invoke or recreate an intuitive showing of mental life, much the same way that an investigator might reenact a crime in order to gain insight into a criminal’s motive.

The phenomenological method, therefore, quite obviously differs from introspection (Husserl 1980, 33). Thus, a reflective exploration is not merely viewing the inside of the head, but is an uncovering of psychic processes which are at first implicit and hidden (Husserl 1977, 19-21), and this is the reason why Husserl refers to his method as reflection, and not introspection, despite his acquaintance with the methods of self-observation which were in vogue at the time he was writing.

The study of phenomenologically reduced psychic life through reflection is what Husserl calls phenomenology psychology. Reflection is of “immanent contents that include intentional acts and non-intentional sensations” (Steinbock 1995, 23). The reflection on and subsequent phenomenological analysis of sensations is a particularly important part of the static account of intersubjectivity. Importantly, immanent contents, like sensations, are lived psychic experiences, and lived psychic experiences are given ‘adequately,’ and not exhibited through perspectival adumbrations (Husserl 1977, 131, 1983, 90, 101-102, 2001b, 226-229). Nicely summarising Husserl’s thoughts in §38 and §46 of Ideas 1, Steinbock (1995) states that reflection has a peculiar structure: it is a lived-experience which is directed towards other lived-experiences. In this case the cogitato belongs so inherently, so intimately to my perception of it that ‘act’ and ‘object’ form essentially the same immediate unity… Where an immanent being is
given in a closed lived-experience, all chance of error and conflict is precluded (Steinbock 1995, 23).

As Steinbock points out, for the static Husserl, adequate and immanent reflective perception is a form of indubitable, secure knowledge and, so, it is appropriate to provide the beginnings of philosophy (Steinbock 1995, 22, see also Husserl 1999b, meditation 1). This special structure of reflection on psychic life is what produces the quality of adequacy, thus the reflective methodological directive serves to satisfy the epistemological restrictions dictated by the reduction.

The epistemological and temporal restrictions which characterise static phenomenology are connected. In a manuscript from the 1930’s Husserl states that the reduction entails “a radical ‘limitation’ to the living present and a desire to talk only about this” (Husserl 2001d, quoted in Mensch 1988, 213). Husserl states, what is perceived in ‘the now’ “is necessarily given” (Husserl 2001c, 600). Experience in “the originary phase of the now is said to be given without adumbrations” (Steinbock 1995, 30) and, hence, adequately. It is, in fact, the attempt to impose the epistemological restriction which leads to the static focus on the moment of ‘the now,’ and these restrictions then characterise the static phenomenological psychological program. Husserl will come to characterise the drive for the adequacy provided by the focus on the immediately given ‘now point’ as naïve (for an excellent discussion of this point, see Cai (2013) ) and, in light of this, genetic and generative phenomenologies relax, or at least alter, the epistemological, and consequently the temporal, restrictions.

To summarize, Husserlian static analysis, which is my focus in this dissertation, is purposely restricted to the description of phenomena that exhibit the adequate evidence provided by immanent psychic experience given in reflection; phenomena such as sensations, and intentional acts and their correlated objects, as these experiences unfold within the tripartite structure of inner time consciousness.

### 2.3 Egology and the pure ego

The aforementioned restrictions determine, initially,

a motivated path which, starting from the problem of the possibility of objective knowledge, wins the necessary insight that the very sense of this problem leads back to the pure ego existing in and for itself (Mensch 1988, 9, my italics).
The pure ego is the centre of the immanent structures of psychological life, and Husserl thought it remained after the reduction. He characterises it in *Ideas 1* as the “residuum” which remains after the “annihilation” of the world (Husserl 1983, 65), and the necessary correlated constituent of the structure of internal time (196). The pure ego is a reoccurring landmark of Husserl’s philosophy, it frequently appears in his corpus (Husserl 1970, 155, 1977, 159, 1983, 64, 1989, 107-108, 1999b, 66, 2001c, 17), and it is the necessary analytic starting point of both transcendental and phenomenological psychology (Husserl 1999b, 38). The pure ego is a central and defining feature of static phenomenology.

A good explication of the pure ego, worth quoting lengthily, is given by Scheutz:

the numerically identical, undivided, and in itself unchangeable subject, constituted as a unity of inner time, which functions in all the active (and also passive) experiences pertaining to the same stream of consciousness. As such, the pure ego is the centre, the *terminus a quo*, the pole of all conscious life, of all cogitations in the broadest sense, including actions, affections, theoretical, evaluating, and practical attitudes (Schuetz 1953, 399).

The pure ego has no innate or acquired traits of character, capacities, or dispositions (Husserl 1989, 110). The pure ego is clear or empty, the equivalent of a geometric point, and, as Hart says, it harbours no hidden inner qualities (Hart 1992, 157).

The pure ego is also an “identical subject functioning in all acts of the same stream of consciousness” (Husserl 1989, 112), and this continuous sameness of the pure ego indicates that it is not given perspectivally (Mensch 1988, 81). As Husserl conveys, the pure ego does not present itself just from one side, but “is given in absolute selfhood… It can be grasped adequately in the reflexive shift of focus that goes back to it as a centre of functioning” (Husserl 1989, 111). Thus, the pure ego can be potentially grasped adequately in all acts of reflection on the immanent sphere of conscious. So, the progress from the reduction, to the immanent sphere of psychic life, to the pure ego, is the necessary departure of the motivated path of static phenomenological psychology.

In one of Husserl’s later works—the *Crisis*—he states that this particular “Cartesian” path of analysis is problematic because it leads to this empty ego “in one leap” as it were, so one is unsure how to progress the analysis from there (Husserl 1970, 155). Because of the transparency or lack of dimension of the pure ego, it cannot be described phenomenologically: it has no parts or properties (Husserl 1977, 162).
However, the analysis must somehow progress somewhere from there, and there are, at this point, two fundamentally different paths that Husserlian static analysis might follow. One path is intentional analysis. As Husserl defines it in the *Crisis*, this analysis begins with the pure ego and then progresses to describe the “multiplicities of manners of appearing and their intentional structures,” i.e. acts of doubting, believing, etc. (Husserl 1970, 172). This path of analysis is exemplified in the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas 1*. However, this path of analysis sees the ego as a disembodied Cartesian-like *cogito*. But, Husserl was well aware that psychic life is not like this, and, as he explains in *Phenomenological Psychology*, the Cartesian path of analysis (as important and fruitful as it might be) betrays a “monstrous” one-sidedness (Husserl 1977, 150), and requires correction via a consideration of embodiment; corrections which Husserl provided in works like *Ideas 2*, *Ideas 3*, and *Phenomenological Psychology*.

### 2.4 The embodiment of the ego

Thus, an analysis of *embodiment* of the pure ego stays on the motivated pathway of a static phenomenological psychology analysis (see section 39 in Husserl 1977). Characterising the embodiment of the ego is not only an epistemologically secure path, but is also a necessary stepping stone to an account of intersubjectivity. For reasons we will soon understand, a “pure I with no sensuously lived body... could consequently not perceive and understand other animated living bodies” (Stein 2008, 99, quoted in Zahavi 2014, 136). Embodiment is at the root of intersubjective understanding. However, the account of embodiment is not only important for the phenomenological account of intersubjectivity but, because of the rise of the embodiment movement within contemporary psychological science, this path of analysis is generally one of the most relevant to the interaction between cognitive science and phenomenological psychology.

#### 2.4.1 Embodied consciousness is a material thing; a Körper, an object of material nature

‘Natural object,’ for Husserl, is the heading for a very broad genus; it is a subclass of the highest purely formal genera ‘object in general.’ Nature is the entire spatiotemporal universe, the highest eidetic region, composed of material, physical, space-time occupiers—“mere things” (Husserl 1989, 27). Nature is the most basic, primordial, and foundational stratum of reality. Its logic is governed by eidetic ontologies like mathematics and geometry, and it is empirically studied by natural science (Husserl 1983,
The constitution of the material realm is correlated with acts of material (sensory) perception (Husserl 1980, 1). The naturalistic attitude which the scientist assumes when they study nature abstracts value, practical, cultural, and spiritual concepts and predicates (Husserl 1989, 4, 27).

However, one cannot exclude psychic life from the region of nature; psychological life is “interwoven” (Husserl 1980, 1) with the genus of nature, because it is embodied. *My body* is natural, and shares the categorical form of all material things, i.e. it is extended and has material properties, such as colour, weight, etc. Our physical bodies belong to the broad group of things Husserl designates as a *Körper*: a natural object/space-time occupier. The human body is in the same class of objects as comets, chemicals, rocks, and dirt—*Körper*. As D.W. Smith describes, if “I inspect my hand after an injury, wondering how deep is this cut, I take the hand as part of this physical body, *(Körper)*, this organism in nature, part of the natural world” (Smith 2009, 12-13).

Also, the psychic region presupposes material reality and a material body, and is thus a founded level of reality (Husserl 1989, 35). People have material bodies, and only to that degree do they have spatiality and concretion (Husserl 1989, 36). Last, only by virtue of its relation to a body does consciousness become real human psychic consciousness, acquire a place within spatiotemporal reality, and gain the potential to encounter other human bodies (Husserl 1983, 125). The material embodiment of consciousness is a primary and necessary condition for intersubjectivity. However, there are other features of embodiment, built upon material embodiment, which play key roles in intersubjective processes.

### 2.4.2 The body is a Leib; an animate psychic thing, an animal

A species of the genus of material nature is animated beings—living psychically animated bodies. As Husserl observes, the sense that the body is an animated psychic lived body continually accompanies conscious experience (Husserl 2006, 95). For Husserl, several unique, core features constitute the first-person experiential sense of the lived body. First, the body is the centre of temporal and spatial orientation: “the zero point of orientation. The bearer of the here and now, out of which the pure Ego intuits space and the whole world of the senses” (Husserl 1989, 61). Three dimensional space and the objects in it are always relative to first-person orientation, and the progress of natural space time is always relative to the flow of ‘now’ points in internal time
consciousness. Second, the body is the organ of the will, the seat of free movement. As Husserl notes, we cannot properly ascribe free movement to other material bodies that are only moveable mechanically and mediately. Only my own body is freely, immediately, and spontaneously moveable (Husserl 1989, 159). For Husserl, it is this which constitutes one of the senses we express under the heading ‘I can’ (ibid). The free movement of the lived body constitutes our sense of motoric possibility.

### 2.4.3 Sensations

Certainly, a highly important feature of the lived body for my thesis is that the embodied pure ego receives and is the bearer of sensations. An epistemologically restricted account, which involves the pure ego, leads quite naturally to an account of bodily sensations. Ostensibly, sensations do not have an appearance that points ‘beyond,’ to other (non-intuitive) temporal horizons; they are registered in and definitively bound up with the ‘now–phase’ (Steinbock 1995, 30). Thus, an account of sensations stays within the sphere of immanently given adequate evidence experienced in the ‘moment of the now,’ and opens the path for an account of embodiment. Furthermore, no “other thing is closer to the ego than its lived body” (Biceaga 2007, 184). The self is always embodied (Husserl 1989, 98). An account of the pure ego leads so naturally to an account of bodily sensations and embodiment that key commentators claim that at times these two accounts seem indistinguishable in Husserl’s static analyses (Bernet et al. 1993, 210).

Within the genera of material bodies, sensation distinguishes lived psychically animated bodies (Husserl 1989, 153-154, 1980, 105). However, ‘sensation’ is a broad term, as there are several fundamentally different types of sensations. As already mentioned, there are ‘impressions,’ or ‘hyletic data.’ Husserl states that the term ‘hyletic data’ denotes the “broadest extension” of the concept of sensation (Husserl 1977, 128). Paradigm cases of hyletic sensations are “data of colour, data of tone, data of smell, data of pain, etc.” (ibid). In a more restricted sense though, Husserl says that hyletic data present the contents of objects out there in the world; they constitute “corresponding features of the thing” (Husserl 1989, 62). But, by itself, hyletic data “does not refer” to anything (Husserl 1991, 94), but can be characterised as “proto-intentional” (Taipale 2014, 28). Hyletic data are “material for apprehensions” (Husserl 1980, 14, 103-104)—the raw stuff that intentional acts ‘structure,’ ‘apprehend,’ or ‘interpret’ in order to “win” reference to an intentional object (Zahavi 2003, 27). In virtue of the fact that the body is
the organ which receives these constitutive hyletic sensations, the body is, thereby, imbied with significance for the construction of the external world (Husserl 1989, 62).

The body is also the bearer of tactile sensations. In §3 of Ideas 3, Husserl seems to suggest that the ability to receive tactile sensations characterises an entire “somatological” region of reality, which is above the mere material region, and includes both the lower animalistic life forms, or “organismic” entities, and higher psychic entities like humans. Tactile sensations are also hyletic, in that they present features of external objects, like the rough surface of a table, for example. However, tactile sensations are special, because they are localised within the body itself, as are the sense fields like, temperature, taste, and pain (Husserl 1989, 152, 172, 1980, 5). With localised sense fields we sense ‘on’ and ‘in’ the body: “warmth on the back of the hand, coldness in the feet, sensations of touch in the fingertips” (Husserl 1989, 153). With tactile sensations, the body not only merely receives sensations which present objects, but it bears these presentations on or within the skin.

Relatedly, another localised sense field is the body’s sense of its own movement, the continual feedback loop of proprioceptive kinaesthetic sensations of movement. Kinaesthetic sensations are unique again, as they are in a functional motivational relationship with other classes of sensation like vision and touch. Every change in the system of kinaesthesia is functionally correlated with a motivated change in visual perception (Husserl 1989, 63, 1997, section 49). “In this functional manner, kinaesthesia and hyletic sensations operate together and stand in a reciprocal dependency” (Taipale 2014, 31). Conveying thoughts found in Husserl’s untranslated third volume on intersubjectivity (1973c), Taipale states that Husserl believed that the reciprocal functionality of kinaesthetic sensations helped to combine and coordinate the varied sense fields (Taipale 2014, 47).

Finally, kinaesthetic sensations are in fact an apperceptive moment of all sensory perceptions of the outer world (Husserl 1989, 62-63); a dependent part of the unitary experience of perceiving an object is what it is like to move around, or move whilst perceiving, that object.¹³ So, sensory perception is not only composed of “presentive,”

¹³ Due to ocular motor activity and small changes in body posture, even if we are standing still and watching an unmoving object, we still receive kinaesthetic sensation. Kinaesthetic sensations truly are a universal structural feature of every perception by an embodied perceiver.
“motivated” hyletic sensations, but also of entirely immanent kinaesthetic “motivational” sensations (Husserl 1980, 13).

2.4.4 The overlaying of the Leib/Körper in embodiment

Having a body which is a centre of spatial orientation, freely moveable, and the bearer of various types of sensations, constitutes the first-person immanently given sense that embodied consciousness is materialised in a Leib—a lived body. Husserl often describes the relationship between the lived body and the material body as one of overlaying or coincidence—a spiral or “a circle” (Husserl 1977, 151). As he states, the body is “simultaneously a spatial externality and a subjective internality, simultaneously a spatial thing, a bodily mass, and at the same time an internal body” (ibid). This relationship between the material body and the lived body is perhaps best demonstrated through the phenomenon of auto-affection. In auto affection, i.e. seeing one’s body, hearing one’s voice, or, in particular, touching a part of the body, the same body is at once, in simultaneity, material and lived.

The duality and reversibility of the lived and material body in auto-affection is demonstrated simply and effectively by laying the right hand across the left, for example. Husserl claims that auto-tactile experiences are a kind of “being-with-one-another of the touching and touched organ” (Husserl 1973c, 298, quoted in Costello 2012). Because of the localisation of touch within the body, during tactile auto-affection, “sensation is doubled” (Husserl 1989, 153) in a way that only localised sense modalities can be. “The cold, smooth fingertip touches the warm, somewhat rough back of the hand” (Husserl 1980, 106). Mensch stipulates that auto-tactile sensations are pivotal for establishing the duality of the self that is a necessary condition for the consciousness of the self as a spatial object: the “fact that the touching hand is spatially distinct from the touched hand prevents the conflation of the self that is aware with the self that it is aware of. The same spatiality is what positions the self in the world” (Mensch n.d., 122). The objects which, when touched, do not reciprocate a sense of being touched are excluded from my sense of bodily selfhood (ibid, 28). With doubled sensations, we simply cannot get closer to ourselves—yet we remain aloof enough to establish selfhood. This being-with-one-another implies an intimate possible reversibility, which is the epitome of the dual resonance, or the overlaying, of the lived and material bodies (Costello 2012).
As we will observe later, this overlaying of senses is mirrored in the phenomenon of intersubjectivity. Foreshadowing a pattern of description which will become familiar throughout this thesis, Husserl writes that the “foundation” of “the interpretive apprehension of perceived [unfamiliar] animate organisms” is “the direct somatic perception that every empirical investigator can perceive on [their] own body” (Husserl 1980, 7). Furthermore, the differing layers and modalities that contribute to our sense of embodiment are unified in experience, and experiential embodiment involves a complex synthesis of all of the various layers just discussed. A particularly pertinent combination for the constitution of intersubjectivity is the visual perception of (our own) touch organs when they experience reversible, double sensations (i.e., seeing one tactile organ touching another tactile organ, like seeing the arm lying on the leg, or seeing our legs crossed) (Husserl 1989, 174). In these cases my “hands and other parts of my Body appear as really connected with sense data” (Husserl 1989, 172). In this experience, a complex of double tactile sensations is integrated with visual sensations (sensations which are further in a functional relationship with the ongoing reception of kinaesthetic sensations), and we thereby internally, experientially, holistically, and prepredicatively ‘learn’ how some material objects which look a certain way (tactile bodies) are prone to experience dual sensations. Visual perception of tactile organs objectifies subjective sensation, and this motivates us to see certain other exterior objectivities as internal subjectivities during intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity relies on our capacity to see certain objective bodies as subjective sensing bodies, and it based on the reversibility of Leib/Körper self-experience. For Husserl’s static theory of intersubjectivity, the sense of embodiment must be experientially constituted as the dual Leib/Körper, as an animate object with a psychic life in and part of the natural world, for intersubjectivity to get off the ground.

2.4.5 Embodiment and perception

The third important consequence of Husserl’s account of embodiment is that the body affords the pure ego external perception of objects in the world. To use a famous locution of Merleau-Ponty (1963), the body is the fold where inner and outer worlds meet. Husserl writes that the “body is, in the first place, the medium of all perception; it is the organ of perception and is necessarily involved in all perception” (Husserl 1989, 61). For Husserl, “we can perceive the environment only insofar as we are embodied” (Taipale
2014, 40). Even once the reduction has been brought into play, the world remains, and this presupposes the body’s ability to perceive.

As I noted in §1.4.3, for Husserl, the term ‘perception’ has a broad extension—it refers to both reflective, immanent, ‘internal’ perception, and sensory, transcendent, ‘external’ perception. Husserl also refers to the perceiving or ‘seeing’ of essences and, for reasons I will explain in the next chapter, refers to empathy too as a type of perception or ‘seeing.’ In all cases, perception is an “originary” (Husserl 1983, 5) or “primitive mode of the giving of something itself” (Husserl 1969, 158). For Husserl, to have something given originarily, to have it given in straightforward intuition, or to perceive it, “are one and the same” (Husserl 1983, 6). ‘Internal’ reflective perception is a method of phenomenology. However, external perception, via the organs of the body, is the primary way the evidence of the being of the world is provided in everyday life (Husserl 1983, ibid, 1969, 157-158). So, though not a method of phenomenology, an investigation of external perception and the bodily organs is considered crucial to the phenomenological project.

2.5 The sphere of psychological ownness

What we end up with is a certain picture—the external perceptual experience of the embodied animate pure ego, in the natural world, as it unfolds or progresses in the moment of the now, analysed into a series of fields of sensation, studied phenomenologically through acts of reflection. Husserl interchangeably terms this picture the ‘primal’ (Husserl 1969, 158), the ‘original’ (Husserl 1999b, section 47), the ‘primordial sphere’ (Husserl 1999b, section 53), or the ‘sphere of ownness’ (Husserl 1999b, section 44), which I am reading strictly on the intentional psychological level. Although Husserl does not realistically entertain the notion of a solitary individual, when he is operating statically “he always begins with the solus ipse in his meditations” (Moran 2005, 205). The sphere of ownness is an expansive characterisation of the sphere of immediate first-person psychological experience post reduction (Cohen & Moran 2012, 233).

It is due to the epistemological restriction (the transcendental backdrop to Husserl’s project), and the desire to properly describe relationships of foundation, that only after the primordial sphere has been properly described does the account of intersubjectivity begin. This is one of Husserl’s most prominent and common paths of analysis in the works he intended for publication, and available in English. Furthermore,
Lee conveys that, in a very late manuscript from 1933, Husserl states that the ‘primordial world’ is “a layer of validity that is founding for the validity of the others” (Lee 2002, 171), so this was not a position Husserl wavered on. The attempt to provide a rigorous and analytically sound account of intersubjectivity, or indeed of any topic, is Husserlian phenomenology’s greatest promise and loftiest ambition. As Zahavi notes, for Husserl, intersubjectivity cannot be treated from an external third-person perspective, it can only be treated through an “interrogation of myself” (Zahavi 2001, 18, quoting Husserl 1970, 202). Zahavi adds that this path of interrogation “signals the decisive difference between Husserl’s work and alternative, non-phenomenological treatments of intersubjectivity” (ibid). The drive to provide an analytically sound account of intersubjectivity differentiates Husserlian phenomenology from the various other empirical psychological accounts of social cognition which are currently popular, and leads Husserl to begin his analysis with the sphere of ownness.

However, there is an indisputable ambiguity concerning the primordial sphere (one which becomes highly problematic in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation). As Lee cogently summarizes, in the Fifth the

primordial sphere is a sphere without empathy and this is the reason why Husserl calls it ‘the sphere of my ownness.’ Contrary to this position, however, he also maintains ‘that each consciousness of the other, each way of appearance of him, still belongs together to the first sphere’… that is, to the primordial sphere. With this statement, he is contradicting himself by claiming that the primordial sphere both includes and excludes the experience of empathy at the same time (Lee 2002, 167, quoting Husserl 1973e, 131).

Lee shows that Husserl has a problem at this point of his analysis. There is a tension within Husserl’s account that arises from a series of opposing impulses. Due to the transcendental motivation that is at the foundation of his methodology, Husserl needs to show how intersubjectivity is, in fact, constituted by my own psychic life, which I can adequately perceive in reflection. Husserl also needs to provide a description that suggests we have a non-inferential, epistemologically secure, and relatively ‘direct’ connection to the psychic life of the other. Nevertheless, the other’s psyche must be independent of my own consciousness, and respected *qua* other, because were “it not for the insuperable gap between ego and alter ego, the alter ego would collapse into my own
ego” (Russell & Reynolds 2011, 302). It would then become impossible to establish objectivity. Husserl requires a stepping stone, a givenness of the other, which is available within the sphere of ownness, yet leads outside of this sphere towards another who is in some sense independent.

Husserl attempted to make the leap from ownness to otherness *via a perceptual account of intersubjectivity*. Perception of the body of the other provides the necessary link in the chain of analysis, and this characterises the static phenomenological psychological account of intersubjectivity. However, Husserl never really adequately resolved the above mentioned tensions. In this work, I will avoid inquiry into the transcendental dimension that Husserl discusses in the *Fifth Meditation*. But, the degree to which our perception of the other is ‘direct’ is an ongoing question for both Husserl scholars, and for contemporary psychological theorists of intersubjectivity. Because of the importance of this issue, I will attempt to tease out the extent to which Husserlian intersubjectivity should be considered ‘direct’ in the next chapters.

Hence, Husserl’s static theory of intersubjectivity has a particular guiding question. If we begin from the sphere of ownness, how do we constitute a sense of what is other? This guiding question leads Husserl’s static theory of intersubjectivity to focus on how it is that intersubjectivity is constituted: “the constitution of intersubjectivity” (Zahavi 2001, 17). Thus, the analysis of intersubjectivity at this stage is unidirectional, moving from the embodied ego outwards towards the other. The static Husserl is interested in accounting for what happens when the ego gazes at the other, and not what happens when the other gazes back. Husserl wants to give an account of “the intentionality wherein the alter ego becomes evinced and verified” (Husserl 1999b, 90). Questions concerning other directions of constitution, i.e., how it is that others constitute the world, or indeed the ego itself (constituting intersubjectivity), are precluded (yet are reintroduced with the genetic and generative movements not discussed here). As it so happens, this is precisely the shape the current debates on intersubjectivity within the cognitive sciences take, as they too are mainly interested in developing a theory of how one subjectivity experiences the other, and this is one of the reasons why static phenomenology interacts in an interesting way with cognitive science.

2.6 Empathy
From the static-phenomenological perspective, the appearance of a non-objective, purely phenomenal and natural world does not rely on the intentional activity of others for its constitution. Hence, the natural world serves as the \textit{noematic} correlate of the sphere of ownness. However, the other’s material body is part of the natural world. One reason why the constitution of the body as a material thing is a condition of intersubjectivity is because \textit{the other’s} body (and not just my own) is thereby a member of the material and natural world, and \textit{only on this basis} (analytically speaking) can Husserl allow that it would appear within the sphere of ownness. In “making this allowance, Husserl describes the other as if [they] were finally allowed to enter my perceptual field for the first time” (Costello 2012, 36). We receive the immanent perceptual hyletic data which presents the content of the other’s transcendent body. Statically, this is the crucial analytic link between ownness and otherness. Husserl’s static analysis of intersubjectivity thus has a peculiar focus—it begins with, and is based on, external perception of the other’s natural body.

Husserl’s static psychological phenomenological account of intersubjectivity consists of an account of the intentional act he terms ‘\textit{Einfühlung},’ which is normally translated as ‘empathy.’\textsuperscript{14} Empathy involves the perception of the embodied form of the other. Farin and Hart explain that by ‘\textit{Einfühlung}’ Husserl means “the act by which we presence another and therefore another self-awareness on the basis of its bodily presence-in-the-world” (Farin & Hart 2006, xxvi). ‘Empathy,’ in Husserl is, therefore, not always equivalent with its common English usage, because it is a perceptual act, and thereby lacks the emotive, compassionate, or sympathetic connotations sometimes associated with the term in English. Husserl states that the phrase “empathizing perception” would be a better label for this act (Husserl 2006, 164).\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Einfühlung} is based on external perception of the other’s body, whereby a unidirectional relation of intersubjectivity is constituted; \textit{I see} that \textit{you} are a minded animate organism, like me.

Empathy is a species of the act-genus of external perception. Husserl is claiming that an essential or universal structure of empathy is its reliance on sensual perception, or, at least, that the type of act he is outlining, that which is properly termed ‘\textit{Einfühlung},’ is an act based on sensory perception. Outlining these sorts of hierarchical relationships of

\textsuperscript{14} Steinbock (1995) translates it as ‘intropathy’ (which mirrors the literal German word).

\textsuperscript{15} There is more to be said here about Husserl’s use of \textit{Einfühlung}, but I leave these discussions till chapter 6.
foundation is what makes Husserl’s account *eidetic*. The delineation of these sorts of categorical relations is the sort of task an analytic, *a priori*, descriptive phenomenological psychology performs. However, classing empathy as a form of perception is not without problems. For example, we cannot identify empathy as merely sensory perception, as some differentia is needed to distinguish empathy from the perception of non-living material objects. In §2.8, I suggest a simple answer to this problem, but chapters three and four explicate Husserl’s classification of empathy as an act of perception in more detail, and further discussion occurs in §5.7. The rest of this chapter explicates the phenomenological concepts related to empathy.

**2.7 Empathy as Apperception**

For Husserl, acts of sensory perception are not single-layered, nor do they subsist solely of directly presented hyletic contents. If this were the case, all we would know is a series of disconnected two-dimensional sensations. But, instead, perception is composed of stable and whole three-dimensional objects persisting over time. The identity, composition, and three-dimensionality of objects are not, strictly speaking, perceived, but ‘apperceived.’ If I view any material object, a house for example, I experience it as three-dimensional, and never assume that the series of two-dimensional surface profiles are the whole house. The front of physical things is always necessarily fused or saturated with the appresentation of a rear aspect (Husserl 1999b, 109). For Husserl, there is always more to seeing than the strictly seen two-dimensional surface.

Thus, even simple acts of sensory perception, i.e. perception of inanimate stationary physical objects, involve synthesis via special acts which Husserl terms ‘apperceptions.’ The prefix ‘ap’ in ‘ap’-perception denotes a ‘co’ or ‘doubled’ perceiving. Apperceptions involve ‘co’ given or double presentations—‘ap’presentations. ‘Perception,’ in the restricted sense, is the direct experience of the ‘self-givenness’ of the object, *during which* the “hidden sides of the object are apperceived or appresented in an empty manner. Perception always involves a horizon of sense that is co-intended and appresented” (Cohen & Moran 2012, 39). Empathy, having at its base an act of sensory perception of the body of the other, is at base an act of material apperception of this sort. Thus, the side of the other’s body facing me is strictly perceived—presented in a primal original perceptual profile—and the other “rear aspect” of their body is appresented (Husserl 1999b, 109).
However, empathy involves more than just material apperception of the three-dimensionality of the other's body (Husserl 1999b, 109). Husserl states that the empathy is effected via a “peculiar kind of apprehending”—a unique apperceptive experience (Husserl 1983, 125). At a deeper level during intersubjective experience, the other ego, their sensations, and their interior psychological life, are experienced through another, second appresented layer (Husserl 1989, 172, 2006, 150). This second, uniquely intersubjective layer is evidently complex: firstly, when I perceive another person, I apperceive that they are the bearer of fields of sensation (Husserl 1980, 105, 1989, 174). When I perceive someone else’s hand making contact with something, for example, their sensations fields “are co-given to me in the mode of appresence” (Husserl 1989, 172-173). Beyond this, I also apperceive foreign psychic “interiority” or “intellectuality” (Husserl 1989, 174, 2006, 150); I apperceptively grasp that the other is ‘minded’ (Husserl 2006, 98); I grasp that they are a subject which bears representations. The apperception of sensation fields, psychic life, interiority, etc., comprises the unique and proper sense of empathic apperception.

Together, the directly presented contents and the appresented contents combine in an act of unified and whole perception of a human person, which Husserl terms ‘empathy’ (Husserl 2006, 150). Sensory perception is the necessary “underlying basis” of empathic apperception (Husserl 1999b, 110, deitalicised). Yet, in empathy, multiform aspects of psychological subjectivity, the present perceptual profiles of the body of the other, and the absent perceptual profiles of the body of the other, are given as a unity, thanks to the unifying or synthesising activity of apperceptive acts (Husserl 1983, 126, 1989, 102). I show, in §4.1.2, that there is good reason why Husserl classes the apperception of material objects and empathic apperception as the same type of act. Also, the unifying nature of empathy takes on greater significance for Husserl’s phenomenological psychological account, as I explain in §4.2.2.

2.8 Analogy

Empathic apperception has many parts and is constituted by various processes which Husserl gives a rich account of. The rest of this chapter is focused on explicating these. As Costello notes, Husserl looks more closely at the ‘intentional situation’ of the apperresentation of the other, and identifies various synthesising processes (Costello 2012, 50). An important motif of Husserl’s account is the “analogising apperception” (Husserl
1999b, 111, 2006) which primes or enables a “transfer of sense” (Husserl 1989, section 45, 1999b, section 50, 2006, section 38) between the self and the other. “An analogy is a comparison between two objects, or systems of objects, that highlights respects in which they are thought to be similar” (Bartha 2013, section 1, italics removed). Husserl thinks that an analogy is perceived between bodies; that my and your body are seen as similar. Hutcheson (1987) and Mensch (1988) outline that Husserl’s analogising apperception actually involves four parts: just as my material body \((p)\) is experienced as an animated being with a psychic life \((q)\), by analogy, so the material body of the other \((r)\) is perceived as an animated being with a psychic life \((s)\). Husserl proposes that in empathic perception I analogically see the ‘system of objects’ ‘\(p\)’ and ‘\(q\)’ as similar to the ‘system of objects’ ‘\(r\)’ and ‘\(s\)’. In short, I see that, just as \(p\) is \(q\), so \(r\) is \(s\).

The relationship between the lived and material body of the self has already been outlined. The analogical apperception is established by the degree of similarity between the first and third terms: my material body and your material body. Because it is an initial, preparatory, and foundation moment of empathic apperception, the analogy or likeness is initially merely “a physical likeness, one that is recognizable… ‘before’ other living bodies have been constituted” (Smith 2003, 222). The likeness must be recognisable in a clear perceptual intuition, relying on sensory and hyletic data, data which would be available if the other were to appear within the sphere of ownness for the first time. The fact that the similarity which is recognised here is between two material bodies highlights again why Husserl (1973c, 660) insists that one of the first presuppositions of empathy is that the body is a material thing (quoted in Smith 2003, 222).

Even in a purely material world, the body of the other is not merely another material object amongst the others. In my primordial perceptual experience of nature my experience of the body of the other is uniquely singled out, because the relation of likeness is stronger with it than with all the other type of objects I might encounter in this sphere. The relation of likeness is so strong that the body of the other is seen as an analogue of mine. So, sensory perception is the genus of which empathy is a species, the noematic correlate of sensory perception is natural material objects, and the noematic correlate of empathy is a specific type of material object—the body of the other. Furthermore, in empathy, I see that our bodies are of “the same type” (Husserl 1989, 172); the “same phenomenal type” (Husserl 1973b, 4, quoted in Taipale 2014, 82). Thus,
a distinguishing quality of the species of empathy is that it has a unique noematic correlate, which is perceived as an analogous type to my body; two halves of a pair.

### 2.9 Pairing

In fact, Husserl describes two bodies as a “pair,” and states that a process called “pairing” establishes empathy (Husserl 1999b). Pairing “first comes about when the Other enters my field of perception” (ibid, 113). It is a sophisticated, special form of passive, synthetic association (Husserl 2001c, 50). Husserl discusses pairing briefly in Experience and Judgement, in §51 of the Meditations, and also mentions it during his lengthy discussions of association in ACPAS. Much of Husserl’s discussion in ACPAS is from a genetic point of view, and some authors (Lee 2002, Staehler 2008), thereby on these grounds (mistakenly) see pairing as a process which can be explicated only if set against the background of a genetic temporal framework. However, in ACPAS, Husserl does discuss how the process of association and pairing can be analysed statically/eidetically, via an analysis of the “lawful regularities” of association, within the parameters of the reduction and the purely “inner attitude” (Husserl 2001c, 163). As Steinbock (who translated ACPAS into English) points out, in some of his accounts of pairing Husserl’s analysis is static, and based on co-existent, co-present objects in the living present—the ‘now’ (Steinbock 1995, 70). However, because it is a passive process, pairing is best explicated via genetic phenomenology. (I discuss the implications of this point in the final chapter).

Statically considered, remaining in the “streaming present” (Husserl 2001c, 174), pairing can be cashed out in relations of similarity (homogeneity) and dissimilarity (heterogeneity). For example, if I see two isosceles triangles, one red and one blue, the shapes are homogenous, the colours heterogeneous. The relations of homogeneity form synthetic unities of what is akin. Husserl writes that, when we examine relations of homogeneity, we find a kind of “congruence” or “overlapping” (Husserl 2001c, 176). Similarly, in the Cartesian Meditations Husserl uses the terms “overreaching,” “awakening,” and “overlaying” to describe the process of pairing which occurs between our homogenous bodies (Husserl 1999b, 112-113). During pairing the sense of two objects is fused or united (ibid, 119).

Paring relations can be associated “tightly” or “loosely” (Husserl 2001c, 179). Husserl observes that the “intimacy” (i.e. tightness) of the pair is determined by the
strength of the initial similarity (ibid), and recall that, in the primordial sphere, nothing is more similar to my body than the body of the other. As a result of the similarity, an enriched shared sense pertains between bodies that are constituted as a pair. Yet, in Experience and Judgement, Husserl notes that, although the sense of paired objects is to some extent blended, “there also remains a duality of material separation, which is the separation and coincidence of what is ‘akin,’ … one is certainly like the other but ‘stands off’ from it” (Husserl 1973d, 191). The fusion of senses is never total, certain features remain heterogeneous, and this ‘difference-in-identity’ or “overlapping at a distance” (Husserl 1999b) forms the essence of pairing.

The presence of difference rules out identity, and paired things must remain different enough from each other not to become identical. Empathy involves “a ‘mirroring’ of my own self, yet not a mirroring proper” (Husserl 1999b, 94). In his descriptions of pairing it becomes apparent that, although extreme similarity forms the basis of the ‘transfer of sense,’ dissimilarity and distance also play a special role in the constitution of empathy. In the next chapter, and in §5.2, I show that Husserl emphasised how this difference-in-identity, in fact, serves as an enabling condition of intersubjective relations. Just how we go about balancing dissimilarity and similarity between the self and other in empathy, and the pitfalls of over-identification, is discussed in §6.6.2. In chapter six, I also show that even establishing the differences between the self and the other can be seen to rely, at some level, surprisingly, on analogical processes.

Thus far, the other’s body stands before us, straightforwardly perceived/apperceived, recognised as an analogue and paired with our own body. The relations of pairing and analogy, which arise within straightforward perception open a gateway for a ‘transfer of sense.’ A “mutual transfer of sense” between paired data occurs, “an apperception of each according to the sense of the other” (Husserl 1999b, 113). As Hanay explains, appresentation and transference typically fulfil their “function in the perception of the other… by filling in what is not directly presented… In this process, indirectly apprehended aspects of an object are transferred and assimilated to direct perception and serve to fill it out” (Hanay 1994, 48). “What I do in such cases is fill in the fourth term on the basis of the three that I can actually experience” (Mensch n.d., 125-126). We transfer over to the other senses which pertain to them over and above their materiality, senses which are in no way directly present or straightforwardly perceived.
like hyletic data is, but senses which can only be empathically appresented; senses like the psychic interior life of the other, and their sensibility.

Specifically, a sense is transferred to and assimilated by the third and fourth entities in the analogy—the $r$ (the material body of the other) is seen as an $s$ (a lived body belonging to another). This assimilated sense comes originally from $q$ (my lived body), and the transfer is based on my first-person experience of the unity between $p$ and $q$, and the strength of the directly presented similarity and pairing between $p$ and $r$.

### 2.10 Transfer of sense

#### 2.10.1 Similar movements

In a recent article, Luo (2016) reminds us that Husserlian empathy needs to be driven by more than a mere recognition of a similarity in shape between our own bodies. After all, Luo points out, from my perspective, our bodies do not always look the same, as I see my body and its parts from the first-person perspective differently from how I see yours from the third person perspective. Sometimes, of course, they do in fact look the same; our hands or feet, for example, often look very similar, when viewed from certain angles, or laid next to each other. But, I rarely see my head or my chest in the same way I see yours (unless in the mirror). So, more layers need to be added to the analogical recognition account to make it a plausible foundation for empathy.

The recognition of similarity in basic form can be built upon, and the initial analogous relation expanded, via the transfer of sense, as more complex layers of sense are added. For example, we also recognise that the other’s movements, i.e. gait, gesticulations, and facial expressions, etc., are similar to ours. It should be noted that the paired sense of movement is not visual-to-visual. I do not see my movement, and then see yours, and recognise similarity (after all, our movements do not look the same all the time either). Although I see you moving, the system of sense which recognises the analogy is my kinaesthetic system. The movements and “gestures of another’s body are paired with gestures of my own body” through the apperceptive transfer or “carrying over” of senses (Cohen & Moran 2012, 213). Thus, the analogical bond between our bodies is partly constituted by an inter-dyadic system of kinaesthetic sensations. True, neither movements nor bodily shape are exactly alike between the self and other, but they need not be. We need merely establish a layered analogy and likeness, not identity.
I already mentioned that kinaesthetic sensations are a dependent part of every sensory perception. However, not only does my perception of the other involve the same sort of standard kinaesthetic sensations that always attend perception (as my body moves whilst perceiving the other), but the perception of the other’s movement ‘reverberates’ or ‘echoes’ with my first-person kinaesthetic system, in a way that the movement of no other object can. This echo contributes a duplicated, added, and distinctively empathic species of ‘mirroring’ kinaesthetic sensations. The (re)activation of the kinaesthetic modality bestows a unique sense which is key to the perception or “apprehension” of animate organisms (see section f of supplement 1 in Husserl 1980).

Gallagher (2005b) gives a helpfully summary of the writings on kinaesthesis found throughout Husserl’s corpus (i.e. in Husserl 1973a, 1989, 1997). He notes that the Husserlian view emphasises the direct connection and intertwining between perception and the motoric, or, kinaesthetic system during empathy (Gallagher 2005b, 98), and Gallagher suggests that Husserl thinks that, when we perceive others, “our own kinaesthetic system is activated in a way that mirrors the perceived action” (Gallagher 2005b, 97). This kinaesthetic mirroring “keys us into what the other is experiencing… on the level of the sensory-motor body” (Gallagher 2005b, 98); due to the mirroring of our kinaesthetic (and other bodily) systems, I transfer the sense to you that you are a lived body. Motoric empathy has been of great interest to contemporary discussions of intersubjectivity also, and a critical discussion on this topic can be found in the final section of chapter five. For now, all I want to point out is that the unique sharing, or mirroring, of motoric/kinaesthetic sensations is part of the analogical transfer of sense which ‘fills out’ empathic perception for Husserl.

2.10.2 Apprehension of a sensing organism

When I recognise a similar body to mine, I transfer to it the sense that it must be a bearer or “carrier” of sensations (Husserl 1980, 105). The minimal condition that a thing must meet to be experienced as an animal—an ‘animate organism’—is that it is perceived as having localised fields of sensation, like touch and pain. Many of Husserl’s discussions around intersubjectivity reveal that he thinks some form of empathising between different species of the animal kingdom is possible to an extent (Husserl 1989, 251) (though full blown empathy should be possible only with members of the same species). As I will discuss in much greater detail in chapters five and six, Husserl’s theory concerning
interpersonal empathy is multileveled. At the most basic level, however, we apperceive the minimal animality condition of being the bearer of localised sense fields. (Ultra)-low level empathy involves the transfer over of “first of all that ‘localization’ I accomplish in various sense fields” (Husserl 1989, 172). When this basic transfer occurs, localised sensations are “given in the immediate experiential intuition as lying in or lying on the experiencing animate organism, spread out over it” (Husserl 1980, 105), and certain noemata are thereby perceived as living animals.

The sensation of touch is so crucial for the establishment of our subjectivity that Husserl says that a “subject whose only sense was the sense of vision could not at all have an appearing body” (Husserl 1989, 158, italics removed). Analogously, my first-person experience of localized sensation is so essential and foundational for empathy that Husserl at one point seems to suggest that a person who could see, but did not have localised sensations, would be unable to distinguish animate organisms from inanimate objects (Husserl 1980, 110). Presumably, because they lack the capacity to transfer the sense that the perceived object has localised sense fields and meets the minimal condition of animality. As this section has noted, empathy via analogy requires more than visual information to add thickness to the experience, and what Husserl is saying is that someone who had congenital anaphia (total tactile anaesthesia)\(^\text{16}\) would not be able to add the requisite thickness that full blown empathy requires, because they would be unable to add the tactile layer. Such a person would need to achieve social understanding via other means than empathy. Fortunately, because we have experienced various localised sense fields upon our body, and we have had the coordinated experience of visually seeing our sensing body, the very perception of an analogous body indicates in a motivated way the copresence of localised sense fields which we thereby transfer over.

2.10.3 Resonance with the overlaying of my Leib/Körper

I concur with Luo (2016) that vision alone which notices a “physiomorphic resemblance” cannot get empathy off the ground. Perhaps touch can. Co-touching (i.e. in a hug or a handshake) provides a very intimate form of empathic experience, wherein the other tactile body enters into our personal or oriented space, a space itself partly constituted by a sense of tactile possibility. The experience of double sensation is compounded and shared during co-touching.

\(^{16}\) Anaphia is mostly a result of injury, and is not congenital.
However, we do not touch most of the people we meet, and this precludes the possibility that touch can get empathy going all by itself (as Luo acknowledges). Furthermore, touching the body of the other without seeing them give us an inadequate sense that the touched body is an animate one, or at least a less adequate sense than vision with touch does. So, despite the primacy of touch, intersubjectivity and vision are inseparable. A further problem, that Mensch outlines, is that “I experience the other’s body visually. I experience my own kinaesthetically as I move my limbs. I feel my body when it is touched. When I touch other objects, I do not feel their being touched” (Mensch n.d., 119). So, to solve the problems raised by Mensch and Luo, there needs to be a coordination between the visual, kinaesthetic, and tactile systems, and this coordination is experienced, firstly, during self-experience. Recall that I am used to objects which look a certain way (my body parts) also being sensing organs; I already know what it is like to visually perceive a material body which is also a sensing body with an internal psychic life. Only visual perception seems to give us with the requisite level of detail and fullness that we need to enable this re-enactment. The perception involved in empathy is ‘thick’ or ‘smart,’ (‘smarter’ than touch or sound could ever be) in that it is more than the mere colours and shapes of the other’s body that I can see, and this perceptual intelligence is primed by the first-person overlaying of the lived body. I can actually ‘see’ my own tactility and kinaesthesia.

When I perceive the other’s body as analogous to mine, the circular auto-affective experience of bodies that look a certain way as being sensing organs is re-enacted. Thus, the overlaying of my body as Leib/Körper is central to empathic perception: empathy is spliced with the braid of the first-person experience of the lived/material body. The intertwining of objectivity and subjectivity that defines our bodily self-experience is the “bridge between the visual perception of the other and our tactile self-presence… What allows me to go from the exterior appearance of the Other to the Other’s interiority is the fact that my appresented body has both aspects” (Mensch n.d., 126-127). Husserl puts it as, because my externally appearing corporeality is continuously bound to an impressional interiority, when I note the fact that the body of the other is of the same phenomenal type, this accomplishes the apperception of a corresponding lived bodily impressional interiority (Husserl 1973b, 4, quoted in Taipale 2014, 82). Elsewhere, Husserl notes that all of my various sense fields are given to me in the first-person as copresent with each other in a unified complex. This whole complex “is then transferred
over in empathy: the other’s touching hand, which I see, apprresents to me everything… that must belong to it in presentified co-presence” (Husserl 1989, 174). Thus, the sense that is transferred is the whole complex coordination of the sense fields, based on, particularly, the interaction between localised and visual sense fields, and the concomitant interplay of the Leib/Körper.

2.10.4 Transference of psychological interiority

What is unique about Husserl’s account is that he goes on to assert that shared bodily senses form the basis for further higher level transferences: I impute “spiritual activities” to the other (Husserl 1989, 172). Husserl alternatively describes the transference of the sense that the other is an animated body as the recognition that “to the seen body there belongs a psychic life, just as there does to my body” (Husserl 1989, 174). Having an animated freely moving and sensing body is the distinguishing feature of organisms which are ‘ensouled,’ or, have psychic life. Experiencing the other as a corporeal lived body provides all the groundwork for seeing the other as an egoic, minded, psychic individual who is the originator of intentional acts. For Husserl, embodied empathy accomplishes many aspects of social cognition that, until very recently (and still today in some quarters), empirical psychology assumed was done by high level symbolic and theoretical cognitive operations. This is why Husserl heralds the modern embodied sociality movement, yet precedes it by some seventy-five years.

In all this, empathy presupposes self-experience. It is the priority of self-experience which lies at the core of the notion of an analogising apperception. In this chapter, I have emphasised that the self-experience which is presupposed for embodied empathy is bodily self-experience.

It is only when I have constituted my lived body that I can apperceive other lived bodies as such. This apperception is necessarily a mediated one; in so far as it associates the alien body with a co-presentation of this body as experienced from within, it already requires an antecedent apperception of my lived body (Husserl 1973c, 7, quoted in Taipale 2014, 84-85).

In chapters five and six, I will discuss higher levels of empathy, but there are two truths at the core of Husserl’s account which I emphasise throughout this dissertation: first, empathy presupposes embodiment (even higher level empathy presupposes it), and, second, the experience of the other in some senses presupposes an experience of the self.
To emphasise the second truth is not to argue for some kind of final constitutive priority. As I have acknowledged, there are some ways in which others constitute the world and even constitute my own self ‘before me.’ However, these constitutional relations are not the emphasis of the static account, or of this dissertation, and these are not the constitutive relations that are revealed by following the path of analysis outlined in this chapter. Importantly, I think the aspects of Husserl’s account I have discussed interact in a direct and interesting way with contemporary accounts of social cognition, and in a way that alternate constitutive accounts do not.

2.11 The Immediacy and Directness of the transfer

Finally, it is worth highlighting that it is misleading to describe the transfer of sense as a ‘process’ (as I have been doing). The sense that the other is minded ‘attends’ or is ‘co-present’ with the immediately apprehended perceptual presentations of the other’s body. In fact, Husserl postulates the transfer of sense because we immediately perceive others as minded in the first place: this serves as the point of departure for his analysis. The account I have just provided is constructive, and I have allowed it to be dictated by the ‘order of reason’ (which just means I have laid it out in the order that makes the most sense). Husserl’s phenomenological descriptive account follows the ‘order of being’ more closely (which means he follows the way things appear), and is regressive. He begins, let us assume that another man enters our perceptual sphere. Primordially reduced, that signifies: in the perceptual sphere pertaining to my primordial nature, a body is presented” (Husserl 1999b, 110). Husserl seems perplexed about the fact that, even in the primordial world, the body which has just appeared is nevertheless immediately apprehended as an animate organism (ibid). Thus, the point of departure for Husserl’s analysis is the descriptive yet vexing fact that the body of the other always appears immediately as an animate and minded creature.

This descriptive fact is noemtically orientated: it is a fact about an object of consciousness, which serves as a leading clue for the regressive analysis of the psychological acts which must be correlated with it. Husserl says, since

in this Nature and this world, my animate organism is the only body that is or can be constituted originally as an animate organism (a functioning organ), the body over

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17 See Zahavi (2001) and Taipale (2014) for discussions on this point.
there, must have derived this sense by an apperceptive transfer from my animate organism (Husserl 1999b, 110).

Husserl further reasons that

It is clear from the very beginning that only a similarity (Ähnlichkeit) connecting within my primordial sphere, that body (Körper) over there with my body (Körper) can serve as the motivational basis for the analogizing apprehension of that body as another animate organism (anderer Leib) (Husserl 1999b, 110-111, reprinted with the original German in Biceaga 2007, 200).

As Steinbock cogently summarizes, Husserl’s phenomenologically based argument is that, since my physical body is the only one which can possibly be originally constituted as a lived-body, yet nevertheless the other appears as a lived body, the other must appear as such by virtue of a derived transference of sense (Steinbock 1995, 69). Thus, Husserl’s account regressively infers that the noetic transfer of sense occurs based on the noematic description of the non-inferential, immediate, and intuitive appearance of the other’s body as an animated psychic organism within the primordial sphere. Finally, Husserl concludes that only a similarity between material bodies could motivate such transference.

What we can draw out from this account, and critical to further discussions, is that the apperception of a foreign subjectivity, and the analogising apperception and transference of sense that it is based on, are in no way theoretical or inferential operations. One popular solution to the so-called ‘problem of other minds’ (discussed in more detail in the introduction to the next chapter) has been to assume that I know you are minded because I inferentially reason that your mind must be analogous to mine. This diverges from Husserl’s account, which begins with the phenomenologically descriptive fact that the other is prepredicatively perceived as minded, and this descriptive fact is the point of departure for his analysis. Husserl’s theory is partly a response to accounts of empathy, such as Lipps’, which propose that empathy is some type of reasoning and inferential processes. Various analytic philosophers also held the so-called ‘argument from analogy for other minds’ after Husserl (i.e. Russell and Ayer).

In contrast, although Husserl’s analysis utilises inference and reasoning (as any philosophical analysis must), he states that apperception (including the analogising apperception operant in empathy) “is not inference, is not a thinking act” (Husserl 1999b, 111). As Hutcheson notes, Husserl is describing a form of “recognition” which is more
basic than the level of cognitive judgement. It is “a non-inferential taking of some body to
be someone else’s body” (Hutcheson 1987, 288). The early static Husserl, as Gallagher
points out,

suggests that our understanding of others involves processes that happen on the level
of bodily sensations, and that this provides access to others that predates or
prefigures anything that would involve [cognitive] analogy or empathic inference
(Gallagher 2005b, 96).

For Husserl, we literally see the other as minded, and this state of affairs is perceptual,
immediate, pre-reflective, and non-theoretical. These characteristics are the hallmarks of
the act which Husserl terms ‘empathy.’

2.12 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the two further restrictions which
shape Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity, and to illuminate the motivated path of
analysis which leads Husserl from the sphere of ownness to an account of empathy, and
in this way elucidate some of the noteworthy aspects of Husserl’s static
phenomenological psychological account of intersubjectivity. Following this, I discussed
empathy and the crucial phenomenological concepts which surround it: apperception,
analogy and pairing, and the transference of senses. The next two chapters will introduce
contemporary discussions of intersubjectivity. As we will see, Husserl’s account has
experienced something of a revival recently in various contemporary contexts. However,
Husserl’s account can be opaque and is still often misunderstood. For example, whether
Husserl’s account can be termed an account of ‘direct’ empathy, and the related concepts
of co-presentation and verification, are areas which are often misread. My explication of
Husserl’s account now behind us, the next chapter moves to these questions.
that likeness not identity... knowing that the Thing is not present to us
(Coleridge 1912).

3.1 Introduction

It is now time to see how Husserlian empathy fits into the contemporary landscape of debates on intersubjectivity. The present chapter discusses the relation between the concept of directness and Husserlian empathy. There are five major parts. The first part (§3.2) sketches the contemporary landscape of intersubjectivity studies, places the discussion in its contemporary context, and provides a very brief snapshot of the three major contemporary theories of intersubjectivity—the theory-theory, the simulation theory, and the phenomenologically based theory of direct perception. As chapters five and six show, the relationship between Husserl’s account and the contemporary landscape is more complex than merely aligning Husserl’s account with the direct perception model. Nevertheless, I will, within this chapter, show why Husserl’s theory of empathy should be thought of as a form of direct perception. In §3.3 and §3.4 I show that there are good reasons why Husserl described empathy in terminology largely synonymous with the term ‘direct,’ and why empathy can be profitably thought of in this fashion.

3.2 Survey of the contemporary landscape concerning intersubjectivity

I begin with a survey of the contemporary landscape of intersubjectivity studies. The guiding research question for contemporary philosophers of mind and cognitive scientists working on intersubjectivity has been what is termed the ‘problem of other minds.’ The problem of other minds takes for granted that the mental life of the other is unobservable. In a general sense it then asks, what is my justification for believing that the other has a mind at all, and, if they do, is it like mine (Hyslop 2015). Trying to provide such a justification is the philosophical problem of other minds. In a psychological sense, the problem is that, given that the mental life of the other is unobservable, how are we able to correctly identify the mental states of others, i.e. their beliefs, desires and emotions, as we often seem able to do? What processes underlie this ability? So, contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science approach

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intersubjectivity from a slightly different angle, and have a different departure point from Husserl. As I outlined, Husserl’s account begins with the phenomenologically descriptive fact that I do indeed perceive the other as minded, it then proceeds to regressively infer the conditions which make this perception possible. The arguments Husserl offers are not really designed to address the problem of other minds.¹⁹

For some time, the suggested solution to the psychological problem of other minds was the mindreading capacity. Mindreading is the ability to correctly attribute an unobservable mental state to another. During the eighties and nineties there were two schools of thought concerning which capacities underpinned mindreading within cognitive science—theory-theory and simulation theory. As Spaulding notes

Theory theorists and simulation theorists disagree over the process underlying the attribution of mental states, [but] they agree that how we understand and interact with others in social environments is by explaining and predicting their behaviour on the basis of mental state attributions. As such, they agree that the explanation for how we understand and interact with others is what has come to be called mindreading (Spaulding 2012a, 432).

Both theory-theory and simulation theory are naturalist approaches. That is, both theories work on the implicit premise that the ontologies and methodologies of the natural sciences extend to, and are the best approach to, the study of psychology. Both theories are, supposedly, merely an extension of the results of empirical experimental scientific work. Proponents of both approaches have, over the years, utilised the results from various empirical experiments to argue for their position. By surveying the publication of the debates between them, it can be concluded that both theory-theorists and simulationists hold, at least implicitly, that the psychological problem of other minds will be solved by drawing on and discussing experimental empirical scientific studies (see the special issue of Language and Mind, 1992, volume 7, issues 1 & 2).

Theory-theory is the earliest empirical psychological attempt to broach the problem of other minds via an explication of the processes underlying mindreading. Building on the work of Churchland (1984) and Stitch (1983), theory-theorists are somewhat sceptical about the nature of mental states and our awareness of them. Theory-theory relies on the presupposition that we do not have any form of direct access to even

¹⁹A point which is reiterated in Russell and Reynolds (2011, 303)
our own mental states, and certainly not to the mental states of others. These theorists “characterize ordinary understanding of mind… as a theory” (Gopnik & Wellman 1992, 145). Mental states are abstract entities—theoretical, or even fictional (to use Dennett’s (1991) preferred term) postulates, which help us to explain and predict our own and others behaviour (Hyslop 2015, section 3.2). Theory-theory’s position regarding the nature of mental states is ultimately indebted to the philosophic tradition inherited from Sellars, particularly the idea that mental states are theoretical constructs, modelled on the nature of linguistic entities (see the debate between Sellars & Chisholm 1957).

According to theory-theorists, instead of direct access to mental states (either our own or others), what we have is a body of theoretical knowledge about the relation between environmental context, behaviour and a group of theoretical/explanatory postulates termed mental states. This body of theoretical knowledge is termed ‘folk psychology.’ Folk psychology provides the rules governing what sort of mental states coincide with behaviour in context. Given these rules, and my perceptual information about behaviour in context, we can, through a reasoning process, infer the mental state of the other, in order to explain their behaviour and predict further behaviour (Spaulding 2012a, 431). The inference is the correct attribution of a mental state to another, or mindreading. Theory-theorists see the developmental progress of our theory of mind capacities as similar to the development of a theory in the sciences (Gopnik & Wellman 1992).

Theory-theory was challenged by simulation theory, which is, historically, the second school of thought concerning intersubjectivity. Simulation theory postulates that, in order to read the other’s mind, I ‘put myself in their shoes,’ so to speak, and simulate how I would think or feel if I were in their situation. I then take the mental state which is the output of this simulation process and attribute it to the other. Goldman (2006) states that such processes might be ‘high-level’ and involve conscious level cognition, imagination and projection. Also, Goldman and other simulation theorists, such as Vittorio Gallese, posit that such processes might also be ‘low-level’ and embodied, and further that they have a neural basis in the recently discovered and much discussed mirror-neuron system (Gallese & Goldman 1998, Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011b). I will be addressing the simulation theory in greater detail in chapters five and six. For now, we need only observe that, for some time, the debate was solely between theory-theory and
simulation theory regarding intersubjective processes, and authors argued for or against either option, or for hybridized approach of the two (Spaulding 2012a, 432).

Recently, a third option has arisen. Gallagher terms this option “phenomenological approaches” (Gallagher 2012b) and Zahavi terms it the “phenomenological proposal” (Zahavi 2011a). This option suggests that empathy, or understanding other people, is a more direct and unmediated process than theory-theory or simulationists assume. Proponents of the phenomenological approach claim that empathy occurs primarily via embodied, face-to-face and interactive processes. One form of this approach is the ‘direct perception’ model of empathy. The direct perception model rests on the claim that

we need to… acknowledge a more immediate experiential access to the minds of others which is prior to and more fundamental than any imaginative projection or theoretical inference. Whereas some have talked of this access in terms of an empathic understanding, others have referred to it in terms of a form of direct social perception (Zahavi 2011a, 546).

According to this model, the mind of the other is not hidden, but experientially and intuitively available, through direct—empathic or social—perception.

A uniting proposition of the varied contributions to the phenomenological approach has been to challenge the assumption that the mental states of others are unobservable phenomena that require cognitive processes (theorizing or simulating) to be made explicit. They challenge, firstly, what has been termed “the invisibility claim” (Zahavi 2014), the “unobservability principle” (Bohl & Gangopadhyay 2014), or the “supposition of hidden minds” (Gallagher 2012b). This is the claim that the psychological problem of social cognition results because of the inaccessibility or invisibility of the other person’s mental states. The unobservability principle is one of the presuppositions of the philosophical and psychological problem of other minds (Hyslop 2015). Secondly, if the other’s mental life is not hidden, phenomenological approaches further contend that we do not need extra-perceptual cognitive process, i.e. mindreading via theory-theory or simulation processes, to afford social understanding (Gallagher 2012b, 188). As Zahavi puts it, if the mind of the other is directly accessible and not, for the most part, hidden or unobservable then simulation and theorizing processes become mostly superfluous, as they are supposed to bridge a gap which does not in fact exist (Zahavi 2014, 179).
One aspect of the contemporary phenomenological approach is to draw on the philosophy of the classical phenomenological tradition, i.e. Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Levinas, Sartre, Stein, and others. Of course, classical phenomenological philosophy is not to be equated with the contemporary phenomenological approach, because, in keeping with the methodological spirit of the times, contemporary phenomenology is partly naturalised. Contemporary phenomenological approaches draw from the work of empirical psychology, as well as classical phenomenologists such as Husserl. The contemporary phenomenological approach is something of a methodological hybrid. In this chapter, I will not be drawing from empirical work but rely solely on a constructive exegesis of primary and secondary Husserlian phenomenological texts and ideas to build my argument. The fifth chapter is more methodologically pluralistic.

This chapter will answer whether we can profitably describe the phenomenon which Husserl terms ‘Einfühlung’ as direct. Although my analysis is in a Husserlian theoretical context, it has relevance to contemporary empirical psychology debates on intersubjectivity because the arguments I present here should apply, mutatis mutandis, to the account of intersubjectivity provided by the contemporary phenomenological approach, even though Husserl’s concept of Einfühlung is not totally synonymous with the contemporary direct perception model. However, in the fifth chapter, I show that, even though Husserlian empathy is direct, it is still largely congruous with some forms of the simulation theory.

Like almost all great thinkers, Husserl’s philosophy has many aspects, lends itself to differing interpretations and, at times, can seem contradictory. Unfortunately, pure exegesis does not settle the question as to whether or not empathy should be considered direct for Husserl. As Zahavi (2014) notes, Husserl struggled with the question of whether empathy was a direct experience of the other, or whether empathy was necessarily indirect and mediated. From my research, I have not been able to find any passages where Husserl uses the German term ‘direkt’ to describe empathy. However, there is also no doubt that Husserl at times characterised empathy in terms synonymous with ‘direkt;’ terms which suggest that empathy is indeed a direct form of experience of the other’s psychic life. For example, Husserl sometimes termed empathy an ‘unmediated’ or ‘immediate’ (unmittelbar) form of actual experience of the other and their psychic life. In Husserliana XIII, Husserl characterises empathy as “ganz unmittelbar” (Husserl 1973a, 188), which Farin and Hart translate as “completely without
mediation” (Husserl 2006, 84), which we could just as well translate as “totally direct.” Similarly, in a work written much later, Husserl states that empathy is “not a mediate experience… but is instead an immediate [Unmittelbar] experience of others” (1989, 385).

As Zahavi notes, in some places Husserl is “unequivocal. He writes that empathy is a distinct and direct kind of empirical experience, one that allows the empathizing ego to experience the consciousness of the other” (2014, 127). Zahavi is referring to another passage from Husserliana XIII, which we find translated in The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, where Husserl writes that, during empathy, we actually experience the inner life, or the consciousness, of the other person (Husserl 2006, 82).

At other times Husserl’s equivocality comes to the fore. His oft-cited (and much maligned) analysis of empathy in the Meditations reflects his ambiguity over the status of empathy. For Husserl, our experience of our primordial sphere of ownness is unambiguously direct experience. However, as I noted in the last chapter, Husserl is uncertain whether empathy belongs in or out of this sphere. In one sense, the sphere of ownness is a sphere without others, hence its name—“the sphere of my ownness.” On the other hand, Husserl also maintains “that each consciousness of the other, each way of appearance of him, still belongs together to the primordial sphere of ownness” (1999b, 100). Another example of Husserl’s ambiguity over the directness of empathy is found in the first book of Ideas, where he states that we do not have an original experience of others and their mental processes in empathy. However, he then states that “empathic viewing is… an intuiting, a presentive act” whereby the other and their psychic life are given as “themselves there” (1983, 6). Lastly, as we will see, it is possible to provide textual support to show that Husserl did not think empathy was a type of direct experience of the other’s psychic life. In what follows, I will unravel and explain this ambiguity, by clarifying the differing aspects of the directness of empathy.

Drawing on Husserlian phenomenology, I will argue that we find good reasons to support the, perhaps counterintuitive, claim that empathy is a form of direct experience of the other’s mental life. In order to argue for these points, I will need to outline precisely what Husserl means by the notion of ‘direct.’ I will sketch what the term direct means, and then see if this meaning applies to empathy. In the following chapter, I will argue that empathy is analogous to forms of experience which are unambiguously classed direct, i.e.
object perception. Because, as I have just shown, ‘pure’ or strict and unadulterated exegesis will not settle Husserl’s position on the directness of empathy (nor would pure exegesis necessarily be the most philosophically helpful line of inquiry), my discussions are a constructive exegesis and expounding of primary and secondary Husserlian texts and ideas.

There are four basic objections which can (and have) been utilised to support the claim that our experience of the mental life of the other is not direct. I will address each of these claims in turn. I will, firstly, present the objection and, secondly, present my response, whilst making reference to Husserlian texts and ideas.

3.3 Objection 1 The asymmetry between the sphere of ownness and empathy

The first challenge to the direct nature of empathy is that there is an obvious asymmetry between my experience of my own psychic life, given to me in reflection, and the experience of the mental life of the other, given to me in empathy. As Husserl points out, even though we might say that, “in empathy, I experience the other’s psychic life, no one will say that he lives it and perceives it in inner perception,… just like his own consciousness” (Husserl 2006, 83). The asymmetry between access to one’s own experience, and access to the other’s experience, is an obvious and oft cited objection to direct models of intersubjectivity, and much discussed in the philosophy of mind. For example, Hyslop (2015) writes that even though we “often know directly that we are in a certain mental state… we never have direct knowledge that other human beings are in whatever mental state they are in” (section 1.1). When I experience another person’s psychic life in empathy, the other’s experience is not given to me the same way my experience is. I do not have the same first-person immediate access to their consciousness that I have to mine. So, this objection claims, only the access I have to my own psychic life should be termed ‘direct.’ The access I have to the other’s psychic life is indirect.

The notion that empathy is, in this sense, not direct, finds prima facie support in Husserl’s writings. Husserl states that the psyche of the other is “inaccessible to direct perception as such” (Husserl 2001c, 373). Illuminating what he might mean by this, in another place he writes that empathy “does not belong to such modes of ‘direct’ consciousness that presentify my ‘own’ cogitationes to me” (2006, 143). He also writes that empathy “excludes an actually direct, and hence primordial” showing of the other’s psychic life “in perception proper” (1999b, 111). By this, Husserl means that empathic
perception is not a showing of the psychic life of the other through an internal, i.e. reflective, or self-perception (1989, 6), and empathy is therefore not direct in this sense.

### 3.3.1 The necessity of the asymmetry

As far as experience of another’s mind goes, however, Husserl’s notion of empathy is as direct as is possible, without the collapse of intersubjectivity entirely. If my experience of the other’s psychic life were totally or, as Husserl says, “actually” direct—the same as my experience of my consciousness, from within the sphere of ownness—we would not be able to tell mine and the other’s experiences apart. In the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl writes that we are “separated by an abyss I cannot actually cross” (1999b, 121, italics changed). He also states that “if what belongs to the other’s own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I would be the same… a certain mediacy of intentionality must be present” (Husserl 1999b, 109, italics changed). Husserl’s point here is not merely the contingent fact that we do not experience the other’s psyche as immediately as we experience our own. As he states, we “cannot” cross the abyss that separates the self and the other, and “must” have at least a degree of mediacy between our own psychic experience and the other’s. As we will see in §3.4, the mediating element that must be present is the body of the other.

We can draw out Husserl’s point, that we cannot cross the abyss which separates my experience from the other’s, with a thought experiment. Let’s say, somehow, we were capable of telepathy. Common representations of telepathy (in fiction), i.e. Professor X in the X-men, depict an individual who can tell you what a person is thinking, or what their intentions are, or someone who can communicate with another directly by speaking in their mind without external vocalisation. However, we might call these examples ‘selective,’ or ‘limited,’ forms of telepathy. The mental phenomena targeted (i.e. cognitions, communications, and volitional intentions) are only a part of our total first-person experience. Moreover, they are dependent parts of first-person experience. First-person experience is normally given to us in a ‘stream,’ as a unified phenomenon.

Imagine it was possible for me to somehow totally ‘plug in’ to another person’s experience and receive their unified stream of consciousness. The whole stream would include sensory perceptions, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive sensations, along with cognitions, beliefs, emotions, desires, intentions and motivations. It would include being
the centre of a spatial orientation. In essence, I would totally take the physical and mental place of the other. What seems apparent is that I cannot entertain two streams of consciousness, mine and another’s, at once. I cannot entertain two sets of visual sensations, two sets of kinaesthetic sensations, two sets of spatial orientations, etc., without coming into conflict and breaking up what is essentially unified. Therefore, in order to experience the other’s stream of consciousness, I would have to give mine up.

This is a point which is drawn out repeatedly in the secondary literature. For example, Mensch notes that if I were to experience the other’s consciousness the same way as I experience mine, my goal would be to experience their actual self-presence. The goal… would then be a literal looking through the other’s eyes. What I would really want to grasp would be how the world appears to this person, that is, what he sees, thinks and feels. As is obvious, were this goal fulfilled, our two consciousnesses would merge. A consciousness that was fully present would not be the other but would rather be part of my own. This means that the very success of my intention in finding a corresponding fulfilment would rob it of its intended object, which is, after all, not myself but rather someone else (Mensch 2009, 74).

Haworth points out that, if the abyss between the self and the other were to be crossed, or closed altogether, then it would mean the end for one or other of us… For… there would be no possibility of return once we had crossed the limit; or if we did come ‘back to our senses’ there would be no way of integrating this ‘out of body’ (or, rather, ‘out of mind’) experience into our own stream of consciousness without assimilating it; that is, without making it into my own experience. It would become either a blind spot or a memory of something that happened to me, and not a memory of somebody else’s experience (Haworth 2014, 261).

There is no compromise or median point between my sphere of ownness and the other’s, and so we must remain forever separated. To experience the other’s experience and maintain my own selfhood is an impossible hybrid. If I were to gain this form of access, “the very instant it is consummated the other evaporates” (Haworth 2014, 260). I cannot access the subjectivity of the other immediately, their psychic life must be appresented and not presented, or else intersubjectivity collapses as the other becomes a part of myself (ibid).
As Zahavi puts it, if I experienced the other the same way as I experienced myself, “it would lead to an abolition of the difference between self and other” (Zahavi 2005, 155). Slavoj Žižek writes that, if we were to ‘really know’ the mind of the other, “intersubjectivity proper would disappear” (2009, 178, quoted in Haworth 2014, 256). That the other’s mind is not totally knowable—i.e. in the same way that my own mind is knowable—is an enabling and necessary feature of intersubjectivity. Imputing a mind to another necessarily entails that the other’s mind is to a certain extent opaque (ibid). Spiegelberg puts this point by stating that the common phrase ‘if I were you,’ interpreted literally, is a contradiction in terms: “an ‘I’ that becomes a ‘you’ is no longer an ‘I’.” Such a complete absorption of the other would no longer be intersubjectivity (Spiegelberg 1980, 171). My inability to live the mental life of another from the first-person perspective is a precondition for experiencing another mental life at all (Overgaard 2007, 96). In sum, the secondary literature extensively, repeatedly and, I believe, convincingly, explains the claim that I cannot maintain my own internal perspective if I take the other’s internal perspective, thus illuminating Husserl’s elliptical remarks on this topic in the Meditations.

In conclusion, the objection that the way I experience the psyche of the other through empathy is not direct, because it is not as direct as the experience I have of my own mind, can be refuted, if it entails, involves, or relies on the implicit premise that I might somehow have an experience of the other’s mind which is akin in immediacy to the experience I have of my own mind. This premise must be implied if we want to cite self/other asymmetry as an objection to the characterisation of empathy as direct. This implicit claim is not only contingently false but necessarily so. Zahavi (2014) argues that “we should recognize that each type of acquaintance has its own strengths and weaknesses” (166), and that we do indeed have direct acquaintance with the other’s mind, though obviously not the same type or quality of direct acquaintance that we have with our own. The former type of acquaintance can only be considered imperfect (or indirect) in comparison with the latter (Zahavi 2005, 153-154)

The more profitable approach, I think, and one that explains Husserl’s ambiguity on this topic, is to distinguish between two senses of the concept of direct. Firstly, direct first-person experience (i.e., experience of the sphere of ownness) and, secondly, direct experience of the other’s mind (i.e. embodied empathy). There is, thus, sometimes a degree of equivocality to Husserl’s characterisation of the directness of empathy because
of these dual forms of directness. If we compare the two senses of ‘direct,’ one is not as direct as the other. This elucidates one of the counterexamples to my thesis where Husserl states that empathy “excludes an actually direct, and hence primordial, showing of” the psychic life of the other (Husserl 1999b, 110). One of the peculiarities of the directness of intersubjective experience is that it is less direct, i.e. less experiential and intuitive, than the directness of first-person experience. In many of the examples quoted at the start of this section, where Husserl states that empathy is not direct, the context shows that what Husserl means is precisely that empathy is not as direct as the experience of our own psychic life. Husserl’s use of the qualifier “actually” in the phrase “actually direct” in the above quote might be seen as doing the work of distinguishing between these two different implicit senses of the concept of directness.

However, this clarification of the asymmetry between direct intersubjective and direct first-person experience does not present a knock-down refutation of the objection we began with. We might accept the argument concerning the necessary asymmetry of the directness of self/other experience and then, however, respond by saying, ok, so empathy has to be less direct than the experience I have of my own mind, necessarily so. But, why should we consider it direct? Perhaps the peculiarity of empathy as necessarily being less direct than first-person experience means that we should term this form of experience indirect.

3.3.2 What Husserl means by direct: intuitive, simple and immediate experience

In response to this, this section contends that, for Husserl, directness is a concept which implies certain qualities. I will show that empathy has these qualities. There are three qualities that determine the directness of an act—intuitiveness, simplicity, and temporal immediacy—and this section explores these qualities, in this order. Firstly, intuitiveness. Highly intuitive acts are characterized as direct because, as Levinas notes in his study of Husserl’s concept of intuition, via “intuition we relate directly to the object, we reach it” (Levinas 1973, 67).

There are many major classes of intentional act, and analysing all these classes is within the scope of the phenomenological psychological project. An aspect of this analysis is giving acts a ranking or scaling in regards to intuitiveness. The reason reflection is a method of phenomenology, is because (static) phenomenology must stay within the limits of clear and “immediate intuition” (Husserl 1983, 150), and reflection on
consciousness is a type of ‘highest’ “philosophical intuition” (Levinas 1973, 134). On the scale of intuition, however, the second highest class of act (after reflection) is sensory perceptual experience.

As Levinas writes, for Husserl, what determines the intuitiveness of an act are the three axes of extension, vividness, and reality. These three axes determine the intuitive ‘fullness’ of an act. “These are three directions in which the intuitive content may tend toward an ideal, and this ideal is the act of perception” (Levinas 1973, 70). Perceptions are the fullest acts. There are a group of phrases Husserl uses to characterise acts of sensory perception. For Husserl, perception presents an object ‘in person,’ ‘bodily,’ ‘in the flesh,’ in ‘proprion persona,’ or in the ‘flesh and bones’ (Russell 2006, 102). Perception gives its objects in an originary way, “which denotes the fact that the thing itself is present to an immediate seeing” (ibid, see also Husserl 1983, 9). Husserl thinks that perception gives the object directly, and is the only type of intention that presents us with the object itself in its bodily presence (leibhaftig) (Zahavi 2014, 125).

Empathy is, for Husserl, definitely classed as an act of sensory perception. We can tell because, echoing the above characterisations of sensory perception, in the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl states that in empathy “the other is himself there before us ‘in person’” (108-109) and, in Husserliana XIV, he states that the other is perceptually present to us “in the flesh and blood” (leibhaft) (Husserl 1973b, 332, quoted in Taipale 2014). As we saw in the last chapter, it is crucial to Husserl’s path of analysis which is set in motion by his philosophical motivations that intersubjectivity is accounted for via an act which registers in a highly intuitive/sensory perceptual act. Empathy, for Husserl is defined as a perceptual act, where we sense that “to the seen Body there belongs a psychic life” (Husserl 1989, 175, my italics). It is no mere contingency, for Husserl, that empathy is an act of sensory perception.

Now of course, the interior of the other’s psychic life cannot be presented to us sensorily, and, as Husserl notes, such a sensory presentation of the other’s psychic life must be “excluded a priori” (Husserl 1999b, 109). Even though empathy is a type of perception, it is not merely identical to the perception of inanimate objects. Empathy differs from inanimate object perception because, as I discussed in the previous chapter, there is some unique intuitive content involved in empathic experience, i.e. the reverberation of the kinaesthetic system. However, Husserl does not think that to perceive
the other’s psychic life amounts merely to a presentation of hyletic qualities, i.e. sensory intuitive content. The other’s psychic life is co- or ap-presented, along with the presentation of the (unique or otherwise) hyletic data. But, this is no different than any other sort of perception, because all forms of perception are co- or apperceptions. Nevertheless, besides for the present explication of sense perception, the directness of empathy necessitates a consideration of the copresence relation, which I provide in §4.1 and §4.2.

Staying with the present theme, however, as Husserl elucidates and, as my epigraph at the opening of the next chapter shows, Descartes before him had already noticed, the widening of the use of the “seeing” locution, which is common in everyday language, is thus unavoidable in the case of empathy. It expresses the having and the grasping of the thing itself before oneself (Husserl 1977, 64). Unlike Descartes, however, Husserl thinks that it

it is not entirely without reason that we say that we see… a human being, that we thereby “see on” it its pain when pricked, its sensuous pleasure while eating, and thus also everything specifically psychic. Such acts belong to the sphere of experience (Husserl 1980, 8).

For Husserl, the apprehension of an animate organism is interwoven with the reception of primary impressions or sensations (ibid, 10), and sensations are given highly intuitively during acts of sensory perception, and it is thus justified to say that we ‘see’ the other during empathy. Thus, empathy carries a high degree of sensorial intuitive fullness, and this is one reason why we can characterise it as a direct form of perception.

We can make a broad distinction between intuitive and non-intuitive types of intentions. Non-intuitive intentions include meaning, signifying, judging, supposing, doubting, and theorizing. Intuitive intentions include reflection, sensory perception, sensory imagination, memory, picturing, and (controversially) categorial and essential intuition (see §3 of Ideas 1 and chapter six of the sixth investigation in book two of the Logical Investigations). The difference between non-intuitive and intuitive intentions is that the latter involve some type of qualitative presentations to consciousness—they present intuitable content. Of the latter class sensory perception has a certain pride of place in that the qualities it presents are the most lively, vivacious, or full. In fact, the fullness of some other intuitive acts (i.e. memory) is parasitic or derivative of the fullness
of external sensory perception (Husserl 1983, 339). “The being-characteristic *simpliciter* [of sensory perception] is the primal form from which all being modalities are derived” (Ferrarello 2014, 159). The concept of fullness characterizes intuitive acts, and this can be opposed to the ‘emptiness’ of signifying acts (Levinas 1973, 69).

Thus, empathy is not only intuitive, but belongs to the second highest class of intuitive act—sensory perception. Husserl writes that, although the other’s consciousness is not given as originary, empathic viewing is literally “an intuiting, a presentive act,” because the “other and his psychic life are, to be sure, given in consciousness as ‘themselves there’ and in union with his organism” (Husserl 1983, 6). Elsewhere, Husserl outlines that

as to the persons we encounter in society, their bodies are naturally given to us in intuition just like other objects of our environment, and consequently, so are they as persons, unified with their bodies... In their intuitive content... is expressed the spiritual life of persons... [T]heir individual spiritual character... comes to givenness... Everything is here of an intuitive character (1989, 246-247).

The apperception of the other’s psychic life is fused with my external sensory perceptions of their body. Empathy, then, is a marriage of an intention towards the psychic life of the other and a highly intuitively full presentation of their embodied form. It is, therefore, thought of as direct.

Further, sensory acts are simple, and the possession or grasping of objects in simple acts is the second characteristic of what Husserl means by direct. “There are presentations *simpliciter*... But there are also presentations of a second, third and essentially any order whatever” (Husserl 1983, 246). As Ferrarello explains, it “is possible to intend an object in different ways (phantasy, memory, representation), but all these ways can be figured out and collocated in a specific order” (Ferrarello 2014, 159) according to their degree of simplicity. For Husserl, a sensory perception ‘presents’ an object, and this is comparatively very simple act—“the simplest of all experiences” (Brough 2005, xlv). In simple perception, what appears is what is meant, and there is no distinction between the two (Brough 2005, xlv).

This is not to say that even simple perception is without parts and internal complexities. Nor is perception without preconditions or presuppositions, lack an
empirical history, or occur without context. When Husserl states that perception is simple what he actually means is that sensible objects are given directly in that the

acts which give them to us do not require other acts on which they are to be founded. They are, so to speak, of a single degree. “In sense perception the ‘external’ thing appears ‘in one blow,’ as soon as our glance falls upon it” (Levinas 1973, 79, quoting Husserl 2001b, 283).

As Husserl’s analysis in the *Sixth Logical Investigation* shows, intuitive acts such as simple or direct perception should be rigorously distinguished from more complex indicative acts such as judgement and expression (Husserl 2001b, 289). The experience of the other’s psychic life in empathy is a simple intuition, which is analytically separable from complex acts. Empathy does not require us to explicitly judge that the other is minded, or express our perceptual experience of the psychic life of the other. Although, of course, such simple intuitions might be joined with these sorts of complex acts.

So, empathy is direct because it is unmediated by any other first order acts. Husserl writes that “we intuitively ascribe to the other person his lived experiencing, and we do this completely without mediation and without consciousness of any impressional or imaginative picturing” (Husserl 2006, 84). We can contrast the simplicity and directness of empathy with image consciousness. If I see a photo of someone, what is meant—the other person—does not coincide with what is really present to me, which is photo paper and developing chemicals. The intention of this act finds its fulfilment through a mediative act—the presentation of an image (Brough 2005, xlvi). Similarly, we might contrast empathy with imagining others in their absence. “The intentional character of perception, as opposed to the mere representation of imagination, is that of direct presentation” (Husserl 2001b, 260). One of the reasons Husserl at times describes empathy in terms which suggest it is direct is that there is no mediating (i.e. impressional or imaginative) act at work. Furthermore, it is direct in comparison to other acts which are mediated.

Thus, for Husserl, empathy is direct in comparison to many other acts of consciousness, i.e., signification, imagining, picturing, meaning, or judgement. Zahavi argues that what is contemporarily meant by ‘direct perception’ is an act which is direct in comparison to social cognition acts of simulation or theorizing (Zahavi 2011a). As Krueger summarizes, contemporarily, direct
perception is direct in that the thoughts, feelings, intentions, motives, etc. of others are manifest in our experience of them such that we… see them without having to appeal to any sort of mediating ‘mindreading’ mechanism (…theories, simulations, etc.) beyond what is given directly in our perception (Krueger 2012, 151).

For Husserl, direct is partly a relational comparative concept—an act could be described as direct because of its comparative relation to other acts. Contemporarily, the term ‘direct’ is still being used comparatively, but ‘direct perception’ is direct in comparison to different acts than Husserl had in mind.

Contrary to many of the general claims made by theory-theorists, Husserl claims that empathy does not require one to reason from one’s own experience to the experience of the other, or even make a judgement that the other has a psychic life. For theory-theorists, mental states are theoretical postulates which serve an explanatory role in our folk psychological theory about social cognition. Theory-theory processes do not involve the direct observation of the other’s mental states, but instead involve inferring the other’s mental state based on observation of their behaviour in context. “It is appropriately referred to as a scientific inference in that, as standardly in science, no evidence depending on direct observation of mental states is used to support this inference” (Hyslop 2015, section 3.2). Thus, unlike Husserl’s account, theory-theory processes are undoubtedly non-perceptual cognitive acts, as they involve inference and attribution, and there is no such thing as a direct perceptual acquaintance with mental states in any context.

Furthermore, unlike some early high-level simulation theorists (Gordon 1986, Ripstein 1987, also Goldman 2006) Husserl thinks that embodied empathy does not require one to imagine the experience of the other. However, whether or not we can indeed describe low-level, embodied simulation as similarly non-perceptual and indirect is a question I will address in more detail in the closing of the next chapter. Furthermore, I think Husserl did give an account of a (less direct) type of high-level imaginative empathy, and that this account matches the high level simulation account, and this is the central topic of the sixth chapter.

In closing this subsection, however, the third quality that distinguishes empathy as a direct form of experience is that empathy is temporally immediate. Husserl stresses that there is constitutive priority but no temporal antecedence involved in empathy (Zahavi
Empathy “should not be understood as if there were any question here of a temporal sequence: first the apprehension of the body and then the man” (Husserl 1989, 252). It is in this sense that Husserl can write that, actually, in a temporal sense, empathy is not a process. It is as if “no empathy occurs… Nor does any kind of analogizing occur, no analogical inference, no transference by analogy.” Temporally speaking “the ‘apperception’ of the foreign psychic life takes place without further ado” (Husserl 1973a, 338-339, cited in Zahavi 2014, 134). In other words, it is a descriptive fact that the appearance of the other’s psychic life occurs at once with their body, “without further ado.” This temporal immediacy is a quality of directness.

In summary, there are three qualities which determine directness, and empathy has these qualities. First, empathy is a highly intuitive or ‘full’ act. Second, empathy is a simple act and, third, it is temporally immediate. These three axes are what determine the directness of an act and, because empathy ranks very highly on them, it is characterised by Husserl in terms that suggest it is direct, and can be profitably thought of as direct.

**3.3.3 The necessity of the classificatory division between types of directness**

Lastly, however, before ending §3.3, there is a point worth making regarding the classificatory function of these different senses, which we have determined within the Husserlian concept of direct. Drawing on Sokolowski (1998), I have discussed elsewhere (Williams 2016) that philosophy, and Husserl’s descriptive phenomenological project, operates largely by making distinctions. The justification for making a distinction is that there is a real difference between two things. If we do not have the terminology to distinguish two things that are different we are at risk of ambiguity and equivocality, and Husserl’s descriptive project is driven by the desire for a clear and univocal vocabulary. Within the class of intersubjective intentions, there is room for a distinction between direct and indirect forms of experience of another’s psyche, and so there is a general need to utilise the ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ qualifiers with regard to intersubjective experience. In short, one of the reasons we should term Husserl’s account of empathy ‘direct’ is that we have a need to distinguish it from other indirect experiences of the mind of the other.

As an example of indirect experience of another, imagine I am some type of nomadic prehistoric man, wandering in the bush. I stumble upon a circle of rocks with some burnt wood and ashes in the middle, perhaps with the remains of animal carcasses lying around. Or, I stumble across some cave art. I think, ‘other people have been here.’
might observe the remains of the fire and the animal carcasses and think ‘these people were cooking and eating,’ or, I might observe the cave art and recognise depictions of hunting scenes, or a map of the surrounding landscape, perhaps, helpfully, with the route to watering holes which are nearby.

In both of these examples, I gain a sort of understanding of the activities and the motivations of these other people. I gain an experience of their psychic life. Obviously, this is an indirect type of intersubjective experience. The intuitive elements of this intention—the fire remains or the rock art—are indirect indications (signs) of another subjectivity. I experience the other, but at a significant remove. I have chosen the above example to demonstrate this point because, in fact, this type of indirect intersubjective experience is commonplace within the modern world, and often goes unnoticed. Our modern world is rife with this sort of indirect experiences of other people’s minds, crammed as it is with cultural objects, books, buildings, chairs, etc. The most obvious example of indirect experience is when we read another’s writing. Not only do we understand the content of the passages of writing (which are sometimes indicators of mental life, i.e. reading a diary), but we often conjecture as to the author’s motivation, assumptions, background beliefs, etc. Even when a cultural object is not so obviously an indication of another’s mental states, Husserl states that when we experience a practical or cultural object we experience something of the purpose and sense of the work—we experience the other’s psychic life. This psychic life accrues to the object and is appropriated by it (Husserl 1977, 86). Say, for example, when we use tools, we experience the intentions of the toolmaker. When I use a hammer, I indirectly experience another person’s intentions to achieve a task, i.e., hammer in nails, or build with wood. We might contrast this with our experience of natural objects: the rock or the tree does not indicate another person’s mental life in the way that the hammer or the book does. During indirect intersubjectivity, the other is not before me in bodily presence, however, and so I do not experience their mental life as directly as during empathy. The psychic life of others is sedimented in my surrounding world (Husserl 1973d). Surrounded by cultural and practical objects in the modern world, we perceive others have always already been there before me. As Husserl also puts it in Experience and Judgement, the world has a garb or veil of ideas thrown over it (Husserl 1973d, 41). Husserl’s genetic phenomenology explores the intentionality of others, which is, in a distinct sense, constitutionally prior to my concrete embodied encounter with them. Husserl’s analysis
of and insight into the so-called ‘proto-geometer’ in The Origin of Geometry (Husserl
1970), or Dilthey’s historical method of Verstehen, are examples of indirect forms of
intersubjective experience. Husserlian phenomenology is thus in need of the distinction
between direct and indirect forms of intersubjective experience.

Thus, we need to distinguish between direct experience of oneself and direct
intersubjective experience. Husserl’s distinction between the sphere of ownness, on the
one hand, and empathy, on the other hand, does precisely this work. Husserl terms the
former “actually” direct, the latter we might term ‘merely’ direct. However, we also need
to further distinguish between direct intersubjective experience and indirect
intersubjective experience. So, if, as I have pointed out, in intersubjectivity we cannot get
any more direct than embodied empathy without the collapse of intersubjectivity, and we
need a distinction between direct and indirect forms of intersubjective experience, then
the act class of empathic perception does indeed require the qualifier ‘direct.’ In sum,
there is need for a classificatory distinction between direct and indirect forms of
intersubjective experience and, with his description of perceptually based embodied
empathy, Husserl is describing the type of experience that should be classified as direct
intersubjective experience of the psyche of the other. There is a real descriptive
phenomenological difference between this and indirect intersubjective experience. These
discussions clarify Husserl’s ambiguity on this topic, simultaneously suggesting again
why we should profitably describe what Husserl refers to as ‘Einfühlung’ as direct.

So, do we have one or two senses of ‘direct’? I think the seeming ambiguity from
the last section stems from the fact that ‘direct’ is an adjective, and as such it can apply to
a variety of cases, but it need not therefore be used in an absolutely univocal sense each
time. Moreover, this account respects the univocality and the equivocality of the term, by
unravelling and explicating the ambiguity with which Husserl seemed to apply the term in
the first place.

My claim is that we can talk about direct intersubjectivity (empathy), and direct
first person experience (reflection), and even indeed direct perception (sensory
perception). What unites the use of these different senses, and justifies using the label
‘direct’ to describe them all, is that they each score very highly on the three axes I
mentioned (i.e. intuitiveness, simplicity, immediacy).
However, this does not mean that the way it applies in all cases is absolutely identical. It is a bit like a family of applications. There is some sense in which the directness of empathy and, say, reflection will be the same (i.e. they both score on the three axes mentioned) but there will be other senses in which they are dis-analogous. The directness of reflection is ‘more’ direct, it scores more highly on the three axes mentioned. For this reason, empathy is less direct than reflection. But, as it scores relatively highly on the three axes mentioned, empathy still deserves the label ‘direct’. It is a bit like applying the term ‘red’. There is a united sense which justifies the fact that all members of the family fall into that class. But, reds also differ in regards to hue, chroma or lightness. Thus, there are different types of red: ‘merlot’, ‘scarlet’, ‘ruby’, etc. Surely, we do not need to either refer to all these as just red (this abolishing the differences between them), or say that they are totally different colours all together (this ignoring the similarity between them)?

The case of directness is analogous. There is a shared sense of the use of the word, but there is also a divergent sense. We can apply the word ‘direct’ to a variety of cases, thus acknowledging that they share some features, yet also acknowledge that the adjective applies slightly different in each case, and thus not ignoring the differences between them. This is not inconsistent. Both empathy and reflection are ‘direct’ modes of consciousness, but reflection is ‘more’ direct than empathy. I suggest that Husserl qualifies the more direct mode of consciousness—reflection—with the term ‘actually’ direct, whilst we could qualify the less direct form of consciousness—empathy—by labelling it ‘merely’ direct.

3.4 Objection 2 Getting past the body

This section addresses another potential objection to characterising *Einfühlung* as direct: my experience of the other’s psychic life is indirect because I cannot get past or through my experience of their body. As should be obvious by now, for Husserl, the appearance of the body of the other to a perceiving self is a necessary condition of empathy. With direct intersubjectivity my apprehension of the psychic life of the other must go through the medium of an appearance of the body. Could we not say therefore, in some sense, that the body of the other hides the other’s mind from me? This objection contends that the body is a mediating factor between perception and experience of the
other’s mind and, because of this mediation, experience of the other’s psychic life in empathy should not be considered direct.

My response to this objection begins with a conclusion drawn in §3.3.1: we need some degree of separation between my experience of myself and my experience of the other to prevent the collapse of intersubjectivity. Husserl states that, in empathy, a “certain mediacy of intentionality must be present” (Husserl 1999b, 109, italics changed). We might ask, what other thing, besides the other’s body, could play this mediating role? More to the point, could anything mediate between the self and other more directly than the body of the other? I think not. The only other way (besides telepathy—which, as I have shown, is impossible without the collapse of intersubjectivity as we know it) to become more directly acquainted with another’s mental life would be to somehow experience a disembodied mind. However, we can ask at this point, what would we experience? We might see some other type of outer perceptual encasing, perhaps as a translucent ‘spirit,’ or a disembodied voice. However, these options are really just weaker forms of perceptually experienced embodiment. Or, we directly receive this mind in our own mind (and here, again, intersubjectivity collapses). There are no other options.

There is no median point here; the mediation of another’s mentality via their embodiment is the necessary thing, which must mediate between my experience of my own psyche and my experience of the psyche of the other. As Husserl states, “it is only through intertwining with exteriority that interiority can be objectively posited, i.e., that an alter ego can exist for me” (Husserl 1973b, 336, quoted in Taipale 2014, 81). This is an important reason why the constitution of the self as a dual Körper/Leib is a presupposition of empathy, because it is this experience which serves as the analogous prototype for the enabling experience of the other as an ‘objective subjectivity.’

Derrida terms the physical embodiment of the other the “irreducible mediation” (Derrida 1973, 38, quoted in Haworth 2014, 260). Husserl states that my “experiences belong to me, his to him. Only in the manner of appresence can I have, co-given with his body, his appearances” (1989, 177, my italics). Thus, for Husserl we cannot possibly become any more directly acquainted with another’s experience—their ‘appearances’—than to experience their body. However, again, to claim that our experience of the other’s mentality is indirect, because it involves the mediation of the body, seems, like the above argument regarding the asymmetry of self/other experience, to contain the implicit
premise that we might somehow become more directly acquainted with the mind of the other, perhaps in a disembodied form. This implicit premise is false.

Summarizing the relevant conclusions from Husserl (2003) Iyer writes that, for Husserl,

with the disappearance of bodies the difference between the selves also disappear…
In the absence of bodies there is no basis for a distinction between selves. With the disappearance of the distinction between selves, the possibility of accomplishing an analogizing apperception also vanishes and with that the possibility of recognizing the existence of others subjects. Husserl therefore comes to the conclusion that a bodiless self is necessarily solipsistic (Iyer 2010, 71).

This quote from Iyer shows that, for Husserl, we need distance between the self and the other, and specifically the distance of the body, for intersubjectivity to get off the ground. Intersubjectivity is enabled because the other’s psyche is united with their body; embodiment is not only necessary, it is also an enabling condition of intersubjective experience. As Zahavi states, the other is manifest in their elusiveness and inaccessibility (Zahavi 2005, 155), which is enabled via their embodiment.

As noted in the above quote, Husserl himself concluded that this line of reasoning, regarding the necessary asymmetry of access and the enabling nature of embodiment, leads us to one of the defences against the charge that the path of phenomenology, which I outlined in chapter two, promotes solipsism. As Haworth notes, the inescapability of ownness and the fact that embodiment enables intersubjectivity does not equate to solipsism. Instead, in order to understand the enabling conditions for intersubjectivity, we must first explicate the embodiment of first-person subjectivity. In fact,

would it not be the other option that amounts to the truly solipsistic position? For, if I were not condemned to access the world only through my own [embodied] individual perspective, then this would condemn me to the ‘solitude of being the owner of all perspectives’ (Haworth 2014, 260, quoting Overgaard 2007, 102).

The solipsistic owner of more than one perspective is a monotheistic God. Only a monotheistic God could transverse embodiment and possess more than one perspective at once; would, in fact, assimilate all perspectives at once. As Coleridge writes, “God no distance knows, all of the whole possessing!” (Coleridge 1912, 988). For us mere mortals,
however, the distance created by first-person embodiment is what enables us to experience others, and thus an analysis which outlines the conditions of first-person embodiment is a logical and necessary path to the analysis of intersubjectivity.

Another way of putting this point is to say that embodied empathy is in fact already as close to telepathy as we could get. Telepathy can be translated etymologically as experiencing/feeling-the-others-mind (pathos), -at-a-distance (tele). Telepathy, as we commonly think of it, would close this distance such that I and the other would be identical. This would no longer be telepathy but assimilation (Haworth 2014). In this sense, Husserl’s account of empathy, as it involves the ‘distance’ of bodily mediation, is as close to telepathy as is possible. Therefore, the embodied mediation of empathy is a necessary mediation. Given the argument above that we need to distinguish between direct and indirect forms of intersubjectivity, and, given that bodily mediation is as direct as we can get, we are lead to conclude, despite the distance created by embodiment, embodied empathy still deserves to be described as direct.
Chapter 4. The Directness of Empathy Part 2

For we say that we see the same wax, if it is present, and not that we simply judge... From this I should conclude that I knew the wax by means of vision and not simply by the intuition of the mind; unless by chance I remember that, when looking from a window and saying I see men who pass in the street, I really do not see them, but infer that what I see is men, just as I say I see the wax (Descartes 1973, 155).

This chapter continues the discussion surrounding the rich and complicated topic of the directness of Husserl’s account of empathy. In §4.1 and §4.2, I clarify some key concepts which pertain to Husserl’s static account of intersubjectivity. In §4.1, I argue that there is a strong analogy between perception of regular material objects and empathic perception in all the relevant aspects and that, therefore, just as object perception is considered ‘direct,’ so empathic perception should be. In the final section of this chapter I go in to greater detail as to how, for Husserl, we verify the mental life of the other. My main claim here is that verification should be seen as a relation between conception and intuition, not as a relation between behaviour and mentality. Understood in this way, Husserl is more unambiguously a direct perception advocate than is sometimes assumed. In the conclusion, I draw a contrast between phenomenology and empirical forms of psychology on the issue of directness, and discuss the consequences of this contrast.

4.1 Objection 3 The asymmetry between empathy and object perception

In §3.3.2 I argued that the main reason Husserl’s account of empathy should be considered direct is because it qualifies as an act of sensory perception. However, as I have pointed out, empathy is not merely sensory perception. Empathy certainly involves material apperception, but it also involves a uniquely intersubjective apperceptive layer. J.

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20 Published as “Explicating the Key Notions of Copresence and Verification in Relation to Husserl’s Use of the Term Direct to Describe Empathy” in Human Studies (40)2.
Smith (2010) and Krueger (2012) contrast the directness of empathy with the directness of sensory perception of regular inanimate objects. According to their accounts, when I view an inanimate three-dimensional spatial object, although I see only a certain profile, I expect or anticipate that there is a back to the object. Moreover, this back can be brought to presentation. Husserl writes that object perception “involves the possibility of verification by a corresponding fulfilling presentation (the back becomes the front)” (Husserl 1999b, 109). So, as both Smith and Krueger note, during straightforward material perception/apperception, I might verify my anticipatory intentions of the backside of an inanimate spatial object by turning it over or moving around the object.

However, as Smith and Krueger also point out, during empathic apperception I cannot verify the other’s mental life in a similar way. I cannot ever merely ‘turn the other over’ and bring their sensations, psychic life, or ego to direct presentation. Such a ‘turning over’ amounts to telepathy (which we know is impossible). Following Husserl, Krueger notes that in empathy perceptual verification must be excluded a priori (Krueger 2012, 153). Krueger concludes that it is unclear that direct perception advocates would want to endorse Husserl’s view, “since it seems to contradict the directness of our perceptual access to another’s mental life. Our amodal experience of their (co-presented) mentality is phenomenally degraded with respect to our direct perception of their (presented) behaviour” (ibid).

So, there is further dispute over whether or not empathy, as Husserl conceived it, is direct, and Krueger thinks this should make contemporary direct perception advocates wary of Husserl’s account. The essence of this objection is that, if we rely on Husserl’s account, we are lead to conclude that ‘direct’ is a term we ought to apply, not to reflective experience, but to our experience of material objects, and, importantly, material object perception is a fundamentally different type of act than empathy in regards to directness. The asymmetry of directness in this case is constituted by the fact that we can verify our anticipatory intentions of material objects by viewing the backsides of those objects in a way that we cannot with empathy. This potential mode of verification is what justifies the use of the qualifier direct.

### 4.1.1 Husserl’s notion of the verification of material objects

My response to this objection is that it relies on a superficial reading of Husserl’s notion of the perceptual verification of material objects. It is true that, if I turn a material
object over or view it from another angle, aspects that were previously indicated are brought to presentation. Nevertheless, this type of verification is imperfect; we do not just view one side, and then the other side of a perceptual object and wholly know it from there on. It can be determined ever more closely.

In *Phenomenological Psychology* Husserl states that the “spatial object is without fail more” (1977, 136; see also 140). In ACPAS, he points out that object perception

is never finished as one expanse of perception progresses to another… This accomplishment, does not simply consist in bringing to intuition something new in a fixed pregiven sense…; rather in the process of perceiving, the sense itself is continually cultivated and is genuinely so in steady transformation, constantly leaving open the possibility of new transformations (Husserl 2001c, 57, see also Husserl 1983, 9).

Closer inspection of an object might reveal new qualities, even ones that contradict previous perceptions (i.e. what I thought, upon visual inspection, was hard is, on tactile inspection, actually quite soft). I never have an apodictic or certain knowledge of the properties, or even the existential status, of spatial and material objects (Husserl 1977, 143).

Furthermore, as I turn a three-dimensional object around or walk around it, and present new sides, not only is there always the possibility of new presentations, but every presentation of a new side leads to an occlusion of the current side. If we examine a series of such perceptions of a material object we see that gain “and loss are balanced at every step: a new act has richer fullness in regard to certain properties, for whose sake it has lost fullness in regard to others” (Husserl 2001b, 227-228). Naturally, the dis-appearing profiles are not lost forever—we still have them held, for a brief time at least, in retention. In this way, we do gain knowledge of an object. However, as they slip into retention they lose some of their fullness, and we can only retain so much information. With the presentation of a new profile we see the emptying of others that are further down the retentional chain. Every “momentary phase of perception is in itself a network of partially full and partially empty intentions” (Husserl 2001c, 44). There is a continual interplay and conversion of empty intentions into full ones, and vice versa (Biceaga 2007, 118). Knowledge of material objects “is achieved piecemeal and always blurred by such
additions” (Husserl 2001b, 228). Much like empathy, material object presentation always involves occlusion, absence, and loss.

The mode of verification of turning an object over only ever approaches, but never achieves, the all-sided presentation in a “single flash” which is the ideal, or limiting case, of adequation (Husserl 2001b, 228). Sensory objects are always given “one-sidedly,” or sequentially “many-sidedly,” yet never “all-sidedly” (Husserl 1983, 8). In sum, it is naïve and superficial to say that, for Husserl, we verify a material object by turning it over. I show, in §4.2, that Husserl’s notion of verification involves much more than this. However, Krueger and Smith’s hesitancy over the directness of Husserl’s account of empathy relies on the claim that we cannot verify the other’s psychic life in the same way as we verify the hidden aspects of a material object. My point here is that there is no reason to hold this mode of verification up as a perfect model to aspire to, as this type of verification is flawed in its own way. Importantly, the verification which occurs when we view the backside of an inanimate object still cannot get us past the inadequacy of the presentation and partial occlusion, and in this sense object perception is just like empathy.

4.1.2 Holding and extending the analogy

Smith observes that the “co-presentation of a [material object’s] rear aspect can be verified by an appropriately related presentation of it as a front aspect,” yet “the mentality of the other is never any more than co-presented” (Smith 2010, 740). Krueger agrees, and also observes that peering “more closely, moving around, or manipulating another’s head will never bring their mentality into direct view—at least not in a way analogous to co-present aspects of solid opaque objects” (Krueger 2012, 153). Based on these observations, both conclude that the analogy between the presentation of material objects and the appresentation of another’s mentality therefore breaks down. For Smith and Krueger, because this analogy breaks down, another theory concerning empathy’s directness will need to be articulated (one more complex than a theory of copresence, see §4.2.2).

The point I have drawn out here is that this analogy actually holds because the three-dimensionality of spatial objects is similarly never more than co-presented. Contra Smith and Krueger, Husserl states that the way that I become co-conscious of the other’s mental life is “similar to the way I become co-conscious of the nonvisible aspects of a thing” (Husserl 2001c, 373). The reason for this is, as Mulligan outlines, our normal
dynamic perception of three-dimensional objects is a continual series of presenting and occluding of two-dimensional profiles (Mulligan 1995). We only ever view a series of two-dimensional profiles, but they are synthetically combined in our experience of three-dimensional objects. Whether perception is of physical objects, or another’s mentality, presentations are always accompanied by appresentations. Husserl states that the moments of physical appearance are all that is genuinely seen, whilst the seeing of the mental states of the other is not genuine. He then adds that the non-genuine elements of empathic seeing are “of the same sort that takes place universally with regard to other nonappearing determinations” (Husserl 2005, 106 my italics), i.e. the non-appearing third dimension of an object. Therefore, the analogy between perception of material objects, and perception of the other’s psychic life in empathy holds as both, forever and continually, entail the co-presentation of non-appearing moments which are alike in crucial aspects.

A further analogy (explored more in the next sections) between empathy and the ability to build up a picture of what a spatial object is like is that both experiences unfold over time. I need experiences to unfold from one moment to the next in order for me to get to know both sorts of perceptual objects better. True, I cannot vary my perspective on

21 It might be objected here that there is a phenomenological problem with the claim that I only ever see a series of two dimensional profiles. There certainly is a phenomenological experience of depth, i.e., the third dimension. However, I maintain that it cannot be vision alone which gives me this experience of depth. Vision is two-dimensional but, admittedly, vision sometimes seems at first glance to be three-dimensional.

If I remain absolutely still and view my visual field, do I see a third dimension, or only a two-dimensional plane? Is there any difference between standing immobile and viewing an object that has depth and viewing a two dimensional trompe l’oeil painting of that same object? I think we don’t see the third dimension, all we can be said to truly see is that some things are smaller (or larger) than other things, or that some things are obscured by other things, and this gives me a sense of depth. But this is not the same as experiencing depth. The reason I think we can distinguish between seeming to see depth and experiencing the third dimension is because we can create the effect of seeing depth on a two dimensional plane, i.e. by viewing a painting or a movie, but in this case there really is no depth to experience. There is surely a difference between the depth we seem to experience when we view a painting, and the actual third dimensionality of spatial objects, and this difference cannot be accounted for by vision alone, because vision conflates the difference. We never see the backside of an object at the same time as we see its front profile. The front profile of an object is really just a mixture of two dimensional shapes and shading. In sum, we do in fact only ever view a series of two dimensional planes, yet we can make this claim and admit that we do seem to see depth.

Something else is needed to account for our phenomenological sense of depth. What differentiates a two-dimensional experience of a painting of a three-dimensional object from the actual experience of an object with a third dimension is that when we move around the latter new profiles are presented, whereas in the former case this does not happen. We must take movement, and future anticipations of movement, into account if we want to provide an account of depth.
the other’s mental life, but I do continue to have experiences of them which unfold in a harmonious way over time. I can interact with them and observe them, and these further experiences confirm (or deny) my initial impressions. The same is true of the spatial object: my further experiences can either serve to confirm or deny my initial experiences.

It is not the case that, as I experience a spatial object, the new profiles I experience are added to the old ones and that all these past and present profiles are therefore cumulative on a par. It is not like collecting series of snapshots which are all displayed one by one next to each other that we can take in in one glance. As I mentioned, experiences which are farther down the retentional chain are emptied as my experience progresses. So, each new ‘snapshot’ of a profile I collect leads to a fading of one of the other snapshots in my collection, and we can only take in so many at any one time. Thus, my experience of the spatial object is no more or less ‘built up’ as a result of this ongoing experience than my experience of other people. I am not collecting a fuller picture, but continually confirming or denying that the experience I have had is harmonious.

Now of course, I do not think that the perception of persons is the same as the perception of material objects. Certain differentia distinguish the species of empathic perception from regular perception, and these differentia were explored in the second chapter, and are further discussed in the final section of the next chapter. What I contend here is that empathy and perception are analogous in some ways, and that the ways that they are analogous outweighs the way that they are not, to the extent that we should not call one ‘direct’ and the other ‘indirect;’ they are analogous in just the right ways—on the dimensions which determine directness.

As Zahavi argues, because the analogy between material object perception and empathy pertains in the right places, it can be extended. Thus, even though we never see all of the parts and properties of a spatial material object at once, “we still say that it is the object itself rather than merely the intuitively appearing front that we perceive” (Zahavi 2014, 129). We still say that we perceive the object directly. Similarly, by analogy, we should claim that we directly perceive the mental life of the other, even though we cannot view all aspects of this mental life at once (ibid). Just because the other’s mental life is appresented, this appresentation is no argument against the direct nature of empathy, because regular perception involves appresentation, yet we term it direct. Because the
analogy between perception of the other’s mental life and object perception holds, we should term empathy direct.

4.1.3 Immanent and transcendent perception

In fact, a comparison of material object perception and empathic perception suggests that they are, in a very important sense, in the same class. In essential and reflexive intuition, the “intuition is adequate and immanent,” and so the intentional sense “coalesces with the object” (Husserl 1983, 300). Only some essences, and conscious experience itself (in reflection), are totally present, and only in these cases is there “no duality between what is intimated and what is present… between thing and appearance” (Orianne 1973, xiii). However, object and empathic perception are inadequate, thus the intuition is of a transcending character” (Husserl 1983, 300). The discussions in §4.1 and §4.2 really just fill in some of the details to the claim that both material things and the psychic life of the other are transcendent objects.

Transcendent perception is tricky to characterise. One of the problems with Krueger’s rendition of Husserl’s account is that he thinks of appreciation in terms of perceptions we could have “if, for example, we turned out eyes that way instead of this, or if we were to step forward or to one side, and so forth” (Krueger 2012, 152). Krueger spells out appreciation in Alva Nöe’s terminology of the foreknowledge “of the sensory effects of movement in relation to the occluded object” (ibid). However, we cannot cash out the sense of the three-dimensionality of inanimate objects solely in terms of the possibility of the presentation of occluded sides, as material objects are seen as three-dimensional from the start. We might say, the two-dimensional profiles we are presented with are soaked with three-dimensionality, and are, in this more subtle sense, transcendent.

Husserl states the two-dimensional profiles which appear contain a certain sense of indeterminateness, “a ‘more’ over against that which is appearing” (1980, 27). This ‘more’ is not just contained in the possibility of further perceptions, however, but is also there already in “the actually occurring perception” (ibid). “Perception of things therefore not only involves horizons of past and future but also, as Husserl argues, a horizon of simultaneity” (Taipale 2014, 72). Even the aspect of internal temporality which is future directed, protention, is itself is a moment of present perception (Husserl 1983, 196).
Protention is the ‘not yet’ contained with the ‘now’ as moment of the perception. Even protention is not merely future expectancy.

However, sensory foreknowledge does entail future expectancy. The notion of expectation is not prominent in Husserl’s account, because for Husserl the relationship between the presented sides of an object and its appresented sides is properly articulated in terms of the relation between an intuitive presentation and an indicative intention (Husserl 2001b), which differs from expectation. As Mulligan notes, expectation is future directed, and thus cannot explain that feature of my perception that is awareness of an aspect with which I am not presented. The relations which obtain between my present perception and possible future perceptions are relations of indication and motivation but these are more primitive than expectations (Mulligan 1995, 193). Husserl states that

it is quite wrong to think that every relation of an intention to its fulfilment was a relationship involving expectation. Intention is not expectancy, it is not of its essence to be directed to future appearances… If I see an incomplete pattern, e.g. in this carpet partially covered over by furniture, the piece I see seems clothed with intentions pointing to further completions… but we expect nothing (Husserl 2001b, 211).

It is true that some empty intentions are future directed, but not all. The three dimensionality of an object is partly comprised of intentional indication, and cannot be cashed out solely in terms of future directed expectancies. Thus, sensory foreknowledge does not exhaust the notion of copresence. Similarly, this sense that the other has a mind cannot be explained solely in terms of an (unfulfillable) expectation of an original presentation of their mind at some future point.

The three dimensional sense of a material object never wholly coalesces with our intuitive presentation of it. With object perception the “intuition of the object and the entity intended never fully coincide” (Russell 2006, 102). An “empty horizon is always still there, except that a partial emptiness has been filled” (Husserl 1977, 139). Similarly, others are experienced as minded, but this experience never wholly coalesces with our experience of them. The other’s mind is indicated by the intuitive presentation of their body, but we intend the whole person. A transcendent object “is not conceivable without this horizon of what is co-meant… It is meant from the start and continually with a transcendent sense” (Husserl 1977, 140). Because the intentional sense never coalesces
with the intuitive presentations we have, object perception and empathy are, in an important way, in the same, transcendent, class.

In conclusion, the differences between object perception and empathy are not critical enough to class the latter as indirect and, in fact, their similarity supports deeming empathy direct. Also, Krueger and Smith misread Husserl on some key aspects of his account of object perception and apperception, and their analyses are off the mark as a result.

4.2 Objection 4 Verification

The presentation of occluded sides is a trivial and unimportant form of verification. Emphasising the verification of the backside of an object is a sort of remaining within the natural attitude, which attributes evidence only to the empirical aspects of sensory perception. As Bohl and Gangopadhyay point out, Husserl indeed resists the notion that another’s mental life can be verified by confirming that their body has certain physical properties (Bohl & Gangopadhyay 2014, 214). There is no qualitative presentation of the psychic life of the other, no concatenation of shape or colour, that does all the work, without remainder, of verifying that the other has a psychic life, or what sort of mental state they are in. Hyletic data are only a part of an intuitive intentional act. As I quoted in the last section, Husserl acknowledges that, in empathy, perceptual verification “must be excluded a priori” (Husserl 1999b, 109). However, it is not correct to say, as Bohl and Gangopadhyay then do, that therefore the primary difference between regular sensory perception of material objects and empathy is that the former can be directly verified (2014, p. 214). The non-trivial account of the verification of material objects is, in key aspects, very similar to the mode of empathic verification. In this section, I explicate the notion of verification, and we shall see that the presentation of occluded sides does not lie at the core of this notion. I will further argue that the explications given by Smith and Krueger on the topic of verification are again off the mark in some key areas.

4.2.1 Verification of the mental life of the other

For Husserl, something is verified when we are provided with evidence for it. Evidence is provided by a ‘fulfilling intuition’ (Russell 2006, 100). Thus, verification occurs when intentions ‘find’ or ‘win’ evidentiary intuitive fulfilment. Importantly, every “kind of object has its own mode of self-giving, i.e., self-evidence, even though apodictic
self-evidence is not possible for every kind, e.g., not for the spatiotemporal objects of external perception,” and not for the objects of empathic perception. “Nevertheless, even they have their own kind of original self-giving and their own kind of objective self-evidence” (Husserl 1973d, 20, italics changed). Each major genera of intention has its own sphere of primordial intuitive data via which intentions of that class find evidentiary fulfilment, and are verified (Husserl 2001b).

In the case of the transcendent objects of sensory perception and empathy, we cannot unambiguously infer how experience will progress on the ground of our current experience (Husserl 1983, 343). Infinitely “many possibilities remain open, but which are prefigured with respect to their type” by a priori governing rules (ibid). Because of the open-endedness of our experience of transcendent objects, indubitable and apodictic forms of evidence are impossible, yet a limited form of verification occurs when our experience falls in to line with these a priori governing rules.

To demonstrate, let’s say I have before me a spatial object. My experience of this object has infinite possibilities as to how it might proceed. I might move my head 1cm to the left, 1.1cm to the left, 1.2cm to the left, and so on. I might stand up, sit down, or move left or right. I might move my trunk, hips, head, knees, or legs in order to shift my perspective. Each of these variations produces a different course of experience, and there are an infinite number of such variations. So, there are infinite possibilities of the way our experience of an object might unfold. However, I cannot, for example, see all of the sides of the object at once, and as I present new sides through movement, other sides will become occluded. Husserl describes perception as a “unity,” and expands on the nature of this unity by saying that, in perception, “the only alterations… are those that change the homogeneous into the homogeneous. The synthetic unity of the perceptual nexus… is firmly ordered. Every single member of this order belongs in the order with its own definite connection” (Husserl 2005, 65). So, despite the infinite variations available to me, all of these possibilities are constrained in that they must conform to a certain structure or pattern. These are the conceptual indications and empty intentions which can be fulfilled for verification to occur.

As we have already seen, all natural and worldly objects appear inadequately. They “cannot be given in complete determinedness and, likewise, in complete intuitiveness in a closed consciousness” (Husserl 1983, 342). We cannot ever experience
or foresee all the possible ways an object might appear. However, a continuum of potential and possible appearances is determined a priori by the regulative idea (in the Kantian sense) of the thing (see §143 of Ideas 1). A Kantian regulative idea is a pure concept of reason, formed independently of experience. Thus, despite the limited experiences of an object we do have in perception, all the further possible perceptual patterns are nevertheless prescribed in a law-like way according to the idea, or, pure conception, we have of objects of this type (Mulligan 1995). Given our limited experience, empirical indications (like what we think the backside of a particular object will look like) are merely inductively formed, but empty intentions regarding a priori patterns of progression (like that a backside of a three-dimensional object can necessarily be presented at all) can only be determined by Kantian regulative ideas. Thus, the core empty and indicative intentions we have of a thing are not determined by the empirical experience of things, but by ideal concepts. Key acts of fulfilment occur when our progressive experience of an object fulfils the empty intentions we have of a priori conceptually determined patterns. Fulfilment and verification really occur when the course of our experience of an object unfolds along one of the possible pre-prescribed a priori ordered lines, determined by the regulative ideas we have of objects of this type.

If an object behaves in a way that it is not supposed to according to the regulative idea of an object of that type, then it is immediately experienced as an object of a different type (perhaps even as a hallucination or imaginary object). There may be conflicting interpretations of intuitive contents (as in Husserl’s famous example of the wax figure apprehended as a woman)—the same ‘matter’ or ‘hyle,’ can be apprehended in different ways (Drummond 2003). But, ultimately, what supersedes and, sometimes, determines this conflict is which type of thing we determine the object to be, and this actually determines the nature of the intuitive contents themselves (Lohmar 2003, 114). In this sense, concepts determine the structural inter-organization of the content of objects. In another sense, for verification and knowledge to occur, there must in fact be a parallelism between intuition and idea, but the priority of this parallelism lies on the side of ideas.

22 These comments are meant to be taken in a static context. For Husserl, even regulative ideas have a historic origin, and our employment of them changes over the course of our cognitive development. Plotting these origins and developments is a task for genetic phenomenology. In Husserl’s latter genetic development the Kantian regulative idea, spoken of in Ideas 1, develops into his doctrine of types (see Lohmar 2003, for a fuller account).
In an illuminating passage from *Ideas 3* Husserl states that

However experience may run then; even if the object was other than it was posited at first; however far its determination may be altered and revised, as long as it is to be retained at all as existing, all experience… is regulated;… regulated by a formal sense composition, *which the idea of the thing includes* (Husserl 1980, 29, italics mine).

The idea, or conceptual schemata, of an object structures experience such that its possible progression of appearances must conform in a harmonious system, if we are to say that we come to know an object. There is a continuum of appearances which is “governed throughout by a fixed set of eidetic laws” (Husserl 1983, 342). This continuum determines the general lines along which an experience may unfold. Any “of its *lines* yields… a harmonious concatenation… in which the [object]… is more precisely and never otherwise continuously-harmoniously determined” (Husserl 1983, 342). Thus, in any particular sphere (either natural, or empathic), *noemata* become known or verified when the intentions we have of them are fulfilled in line with the continuum of possibilities that belong to them as ideas. In empathy, verification occurs when the person which I am presented with conforms, in a series of presentations, to the concept I have of minded creatures. When this happens, when we have an experience of a perceptual object which is intended in a certain way (a *noema*), our experience of the other is said, by Husserl, to unfold harmoniously.

Thus, the presentation of an occluded back side of an object is a minor form of verification, because the intentions which are thereby fulfilled are only singular and empirical ones. Even if the backside of the object turns out to be other than we thought, the intentions which are frustrated are minor, and the nature of the experience does not alter in any radical way. When a backside of a material object is presented, regardless of whether the backside is as we thought, the experience still unfolds in line with the idea we have of material objects in general. It is not the empirical content that confirms the majority of the experience, but the general form. It is not what we see in the new profile, but that another profile is presented at all, and that its presentation occurs in *the way that it was indicated it would* by the concept we have of objects of that type. Husserl writes that “a hidden ‘if-then’ relation is at work here”, there is “a certain systematic order; it is in this way that they are indicated in advance… in the course of a harmonious
perception… This is the intentional background of every straightforward certainty of being of a presented thing” (Husserl 1970, 161-162). Bohl and Gangopadhyay, Smith, and Krueger, think that the major act of verification occurs in the presentation of the content of backsides, and this mode of verification is what entitles object perception to the qualifier ‘direct.’ But this is mistaken. Most important forms of verification occur through the marriage of intuition and conception in ongoing harmonious experience, and such a course of verification is open to empathic experience and, therefore, so is the qualifier ‘direct.’

4.2.2 Husserl the behaviourist?

Building on their misreadings of the notion of verification, both Smith and Krueger reject the analogy between perception of the other’s mental life and inanimate object perception that I have demonstrated above, and so both think that ‘copresence’ is an inadequate concept to account for the directness of the relation between behaviour and mental states, and so a further theory is necessary. Although taking their inspirations from Husserl, the perceived inadequacies of his account drive Smith and Krueger to provide a more complex re-articulation of what might be meant by saying that we directly perceive the other’s mental states by reconsidering how mental states relate to behaviour. Smith (2010) postulates, to say we see the other’s mental states in their behaviour, means that we actually see the functional role or dispositionality of mental states, whilst Krueger (2012) postulates that behaviour partly constitutes mental states, and that this is the best way to understand direct social perception.

According to these authors, given that they think the copresence relation cannot characterise the relation between behaviour and mentality, if we want to do justice to Husserl’s basic idea (yet reject the details of his account), then the thesis of direct perception is best articulated in terms of some perceptual variation of analytic behaviourism or functionalism (Smith), or as a constitutional ordering (Kreuger). This was certainly not Husserl’s thesis however, because for him the relation between mentality and behaviour, such as it is, is more primitive and primary than a relation of functionality or dispositionality, and neither behaviour nor mentality has constitutive priority over the other. Instead, the relation between mentality and behaviour is indeed the simpler and more primitive relation of co- or appresence.
I believe that Krueger and Smith underappreciate Husserl’s thesis of copresence, and for telling conceptual reasons. The Husserlian passage which they both cite comes from the *Meditations*. There, Husserl states that the mentality of the other is verified via “changing but incessant harmonious behaviour,” and that we know the other’s mental life via “continuous change in behaviour from phase to phase” (Husserl 1999b, 114). This passage seems to suggest the unlikely proposition that Husserl is unwittingly endorsing some stripe a proto-behaviourism. As Zahavi points out, *prima facie* “there is something odd about accusing phenomenologists of being behaviourists” (Zahavi 2011a, 549).

Because, a characteristic feature of the phenomenological approach is its emphasis on the importance of subjectivity and the first-person experiential character of consciousness, and emphasis on the reality of our access to the mental life of the other. In contradistinction, methodological and psychological behaviourism downplays the accessibility of subjectivity, and denies that we can observe the other’s mental states, at least in any way that is significant for psychological science. Cognitive science has inherited this strong scepticism concerning the scientific reliability of reflective (first-person) or observational (empathic) access to mental states. There is a philosophical gulf between most types of behaviourally orientated psychological theorist and phenomenologically orientated ones, and if it were the case that Husserl is heading down a behavioural path, then the direct perception account would indeed need saving via a functionalist or constitutional re-rendering, as Smith and Kreuger believe. However, Husserl is not heading down this path, and his remarks about behaviour require qualification.

Larrabee states that, if a philosopher outlines a position which does not seem to adhere to the distinction between mind and body, it is easy to read into their words pregiven Cartesian senses (Larrabee 1990, 202), and we automatically try to fit authors, like Husserl, into the Cartesian mould. In the context of Krueger and Smith’s discussions, the particular term which is being (mis)read along Cartesian lines is ‘behaviour.’ Husserl’s meaning does not carry many of the conceptual implications that the term ‘behaviour’ does in the Western empirical psychological tradition. The difficulty arises because we tend to think that the term ‘behaviour’ denotes a phenomenon devoid of mentality; mere bodily movement, a moving *res extensa*, corpse, or *Körper*. This would

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23 I will leave aside here the analytic behaviourism of Ryle, because I focus primarily on the forms of behaviourism (i.e. methodological and psychological—Watsonian and Skinnerian) which have contributed to the intellectual milieu of empirical psychology that cognitive science arose out of.
assume that we can dissociate inner mental life from behaviour, which very much goes against the spirit of Husserl’s apperceptive account of copresence during empathy.

Apperception is “not merely consciousness of something, and then still something else that it does not include, but rather, a consciousness that points to this other one as one that belongs to it” (Husserl 2001c, 627). As I pointed out in chapter two, Husserl’s begins his analysis with the perplexing fact that the material body of the other appears as a psychically animated living body. As he says, “it is not as though the body over there, in my primordial sphere, remained separate from the animate bodily organism of the other Ego, as if that body were something like a signal for its analogue” (Husserl 1999b, 122).

What we intend is the person itself; the person is the noema which corresponds to the act of empathy. Behaviour and mentality are not split, for Husserl, requiring re-joining via the sort of accounts Smith and Krueger put forward.

It is common to think that Husserl holds some form of psychophysical dualism (Beyer 2012, 105 seems to assume this), and, in fact, at some level, he undoubtedly does, in the sense that he does not abandon the categorical distinction between mind and body (this comes though in Ideas 2 and 3 in particular). As B. Smith notes, though, Husserl attempts to minimize his dualism by stressing that the noematic object of empathy—persons—are an intertwined mutually penetrating unity of mind and body (Smith 1995, 406-407). It is the person that we intend. “I am, in empathy, directed to the other Ego and Ego-life and not to psychophysical reality… The others Body is for me a passageway… towards the understanding of the ego” (Husserl 1989, 358). Because we can intend more than is strictly given, the relation between behaviour and mentality is more primitive and unitary than a relation of functionality, dispositionality, or constitutional priority; for Husserl, behaviour includes, or, is fundamentally united with mentality (1983, 6); mental life interpenetrates and ‘animates’ the body (1980). The unity of body and mind into a person is experienced with regard to the other during empathy.

The trend of Anglophone empirical psychology has been to reduce mentality, either to behaviour, functional states, or computational ones. There has never been a non-reductive empirical psychology. Even cognitively orientated empirical psychologists operationalise their understanding of what mental states are in some sort of adopted terminology (the terminology of computation), because empirical psychology is not a descriptive science but an experimental one, and requires a third-person framework.
through which to interpret data. Because of its aversion to the first-person experience of mental states, all forms of empirical psychology require the shared assumption that mentality should and can be reduced to some sort of adopted framework, to explain mental states in some non-descriptive vocabulary; the urge to reduce mentality is driven by the perceived problems of reliable scientific access to mental states, and scepticism regarding the ontological status of mental states that results when a rigorous naturalism is maintained, and these shared commitments are foundational for all forms of empirical psychology. Clearly, for methodological and conceptual reasons I have covered in the first and second chapters, Husserl rejects the need for psychological reductionism, and thinks a psychology that does not deal with psychic life on its own terms is no psychology at all.

Understanding Husserl’s claim that we see the mental life of the other entails entertaining the opposing movement: phenomenologically, the behaviour of the other is psychologically significant from the start. A psychological behaviourist thinks that we can interpret psychological events in terms of behavioural criteria. Husserl’s antithesis to this is that, in empathic experience, we actually interpret the perceptual content of the other’s behaviour psychologically. To reiterate a phrase I have been emphasising, the other’s bodily “expressive phenomena are from the start already soaked with mindedness” (Zahavi 2011a, 551). They are not only soaked, they are overwhelmingly saturated. As Taipale nicely summarises, for Husserl,

[it] is not the case that perceived body movements originally appear as meaningless physical distortions, and that they somehow indicate a subjectivity beyond them, but it is rather the case that body movements originally appear as actions, gestures, postures, and facial expressions (2014, 88).

As I have emphasised, Husserl’s theory of empathy is based on the analogy between self-experience and experience of the other. Regarding self-experience, Husserl writes that

I experience my own lived body in such an absolutely immediate way that I not only perceive the body thing and its physical behaviour, but also perceive in the meantime my own psychical life, and, ultimately, perceive both precisely at once: the self-embodiment of the psychical in the physical (Husserl 1959, cited in Luo 2016, 52)
I perceive the psychic life of the other in an analogously unified way, ‘at once’ with their physical embodiment.

4.3 Conclusion

The passage in the *Cartesian Meditations* which immediately precedes the one that Krueger and Smith draw on, presents a clearer statement of Husserl’s ultimate position, on both unity and verification, and nicely brings home the dense discussions contained in §4.2. This passage shows that, for Husserl, the embodied behaviour of the other and their mentality are a united phenomenon which we wholly perceive during empathic experience. This passage is worth quoting at length:

The appresentation which gives that component of the Other which is not accessible originaliter is combined with an original presentation… In this combination, moreover, the Other's animate body and his governing Ego are given in the manner that characterizes a unitary transcending experience. Every experience points to further experiences that would fulfil and verify the appresented horizons, which include, in the form of non-intuitive anticipations, potentially verifiable syntheses of harmonious further experience. Regarding experience of someone else, it is clear that its fulfilling verifying continuation can ensue only by means of new appresentations that proceed in a synthetically harmonious fashion (Husserl 1999b, 114).

One of the things that becomes crystal clear in this passage is that there is no divorce of behaviour from mentality. At no point does Husserl ever say that behaviour verifies mentality, because Husserlian phenomenology does not endorse a “dichotomy of behaviour-reading and mind-reading” (Zahavi 2011a, 551). There is a simple holism between psychic life and behaviour, and the theoretical denudation of the two creates false problems—the sort of problems that Smith and Krueger’s accounts are designed to overcome. The challenge for the phenomenologist is to articulate a view which is “embodied, and emphasizes direct perception, but without reducing to behaviourism that is preoccupied less with person-level meanings and more with a view from outside” (Reynolds 2015, 341). We just do not ever experience mindless behaviour from a third person perspective, and a key aspect to Husserl’s account is the denial of any rigorous phenomenological distinction between the mentality and embodiment of the other.
Furthermore, this passage illuminates how the harmony which does the verifying during empathy is not between mentality and behaviour, but arises through the “uninterrupted verification of experience by experience” (Husserl 1973d, 284, my italics), according to our conception of minded creatures. Appresented empathic experience is verified when the empty intentions and indications that are generated by our conceptual schema are fulfilled through a noema which conforms in further harmonic appresented empathic experiences.

Finally, there are widespread implications of the directness of empathy. The unobservability principle is not just a supposition of studies on social cognition: it is a supposition that has driven empirical psychology since its inception. If the unobservability principle is assumed, the methodological primacy of observability impels the psychological scientist to reject the importance of the descriptive characterisation of mental states. Unlike the behaviourist, the modern cognitive scientist might be willing to assign mental states a place in psychological theory, but they would stop short of granting them the status of an observable phenomena, and observable phenomena continue to occupy a privileged place in the theory of science. A science which grants mental states the status of an observable, and not merely the role of an explanatory postulate, looks very different to the psychology we currently have. Thus, if we appreciate Husserl’s intersubjectivity thesis, not only does it alter our account of social cognition, but we actually glimpse a radically new kind of psychological science, one that begins with the assumption that we can actually perceive psychic life, in both the first and second person, and in a scientifically significant way. In this sense, then, phenomenological psychological science begins by taking a counter-position to Western, empirical psychological science.

Just as the arc of empirical psychology begins with the assumptions that all we see is the other’s psychologically stripped behaviour, and do not have scientifically reliable and valid access to mental states, a phenomenologically based science might hold that we can reliably see the psychological life of the other. Furthermore, just as the empirical arc ends in the reduction, elimination, or theorisation of properly psychological mental states, the arc of phenomenological psychology prevents this movement by correlating purely physical and theoretical states with the concepts of phenomenological psychology. For the phenomenologist, when empiricists talk about brain states, behaviour, functions, or computations we might present the correlationist thesis that what they are also talking
about are psychological states of the human person, which can be characterised descriptively. Within the context of psychological science, for the phenomenological psychologist, psychological states (and the concepts from which they are derived) have an irreducible priority, and should be the focus of psychological science. Thus, Husserl’s theory of empathy opens the way for a new trend of psychological science that we might term phenomenological correlationism. What this correlationism entails is merely that claim that psychological science should look to provide phenomenological descriptions of psychological entities, and that other (non-descriptive and non-literal) theories are more valuable if they include phenomenological descriptions of the psychological entities in question. Such a paradigm is the parallel to the research methods of psychology what the phenomenological reduction is to the individual phenomenologist: both serve the function of keeping phenomenological psychic life at the forefront of investigation. I will discuss the prospects for this paradigm further at the end of chapter five.

The last two chapters had four major parts. Firstly, I began chapter three by briefly surveying the contemporary landscape of debates on intersubjectivity by laying out the theory-theory, simulation theory, and the direct perception model. Secondly, I discussed the asymmetry between self-experience and experience of the other in empathy, and the need to term the latter form of experience ‘direct’. As an addendum to this, I discussed the necessity of embodiment as the thing which mediates between self and other. Thirdly, I showed that the perceived asymmetry between empathy and regular object perception, and the consequences thereof, has been overstated in recent literature, and that the similarity between empathy and regular perception lends support to the idea that we should term empathy direct. Lastly, I discussed how it is, for Husserl, we verify the mental life of the other via harmonious verification of experience by further experience, and how we can be said to perceive the other’s behaviour as a psychic phenomenon. I finished by discussing that the directness of empathy thus provides us with a contra-foundational position to a cognitive science that begins with the unobservability principle.

However, we have only just begun to scratch the surface regarding the relationship between Husserl’s phenomenological psychology and contemporary discussions of intersubjectivity. As I outlined at the start of this chapter, it is not only advocates of direct perception but also simulation theorists who have drawn connections between Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity and their model. My next chapter will explore this relationship. I will argue, in the next chapter and chapter six, contrary to
some of Zahavi and Gallagher’s remarks, that there is more similarity and confluence between Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity and the simulation theory than they would prefer to acknowledge. As I will now show, there is no inherent conflict between arguing for this and the arguments laid out in the last chapters. I argue that the directness of Husserl’s account can be reconciled with the simulation theory account.
...an exact web, every line of direction miraculously the same, but the one worsted, the other silk (Coleridge 1912).

...an unknown sage—it is called the unconscious self; it dwells in your body, it is your body (Nietzsche 2010, 31-32).

5.1 Introduction

The third and fourth chapters illuminated the interrelation between the concept of Husserlian empathy and the notion of directness. The arguments of these chapters concerning directness could easily be adapted to argue for the direct perception model of empathy that Zahavi has articulated—but saying as much does not really contribute a new or interesting claim. Zahavi is pre-eminently a Husserl scholar, and probably the foremost scholar on the relation between Husserl and contemporary accounts of intersubjectivity, and so to say that Husserl’s model of direct intersubjectivity resonates with Zahavi’s model of direct intersubjectivity is merely to say that Zahavi has not strayed, in content at least, too far from his sources of inspiration. What I contend in this chapter and the next is the more controversial (and interesting) claim that Husserl’s account of empathy also resonates strongly with the account of intersubjectivity proposed by the simulation theory. This claim is more controversial because simulation theory is rooted in neurologically based functional psychology. The simulation theory is as pure a form of cognitive scientific theory as any.

5.1.1 Simulation

What is a simulation? In the social cognition context, to ‘simulate’ means to internally model, copy, or replicate the experience of another, on the basis of self-experience. In order to understand another person I ‘put myself in their shoes’ (metaphorically speaking). What this commonly used metaphor means is that I simulate

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24 In this thesis, when I use the term ‘simulate,’ I always mean simulation as a form of social cognition.
the mental state of the other based on what my mental state would be, if I were in the other’s situation.

Simulation theorists distinguish between high-level and low-level simulation processes. Gallese and Goldman (1998), Goldman (2006), and Gallese (2014) posit that low-level simulation targets non-propositional mental states, such as perception and embodiment, and this can be contrasted with high-level simulation, which targets propositional attitudes like judgement and belief. This chapter tackles the relation between Husserlian embodied empathy and what I will variously refer to as ‘low-level,’ ‘perceptual,’ or ‘embodied’ simulation, whilst the next chapter looks at the relation between Husserl’s ideas concerning high-level imaginative empathy and high-level simulation processes.

Embodied simulation

proposes that our social interactions become meaningful by means of reusing our own mental states or processes in functionally attributing them to others. In this

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Shaun Gallagher has criticised the notion of reuse that I am here employing. What Gallagher points out is that there are two possible readings to the notion of reuse. On the first, the idea of reuse is just that the first person systems are used in intersubjective scenarios. This might more properly be called a ‘dual use’ theory rather than a ‘reuse’ theory. The idea here is that some neurons achieve a dual purpose, and this dual use at the neural level instantiates a dual use at the level of bodily representation. So, the same neurons are used twice for two different purposes, and these neurons are responsible for the instantiation of a format of bodily representation, and concomitantly this format is employed for two purposes. This is the sense that I endorse the notion of reuse and, as Gallaher notes, it is really just a standard articulation of the simulation theory.

The other notion of reuse is one which provides an evolutionary explanation as to how this dual use system evolved. As I do not address evolutionary psychology, I avoid employing reuse this way.

Gallagher’s criticism of the first notion is that it does not have any explanatory power, over and above the variety of explanations of the mechanisms via which simulation theory works that have already been offered. He states “that the reuse hypothesis doesn’t actually introduce any new or alternative understanding of the simulation mechanism into the account of subpersonal simulation; we understand how the mechanisms – MNs and/or forward-inverse models – work independently of the reuse hypothesis. Whether we stay with Goldman’s inter-cranial conception of matching, or with Rizzolatti’s intra-cranial model, or add to it processes of inverse modelling or other processes found in Hurley’s Layers 4 and 5, these remain the candidates for explaining how simulation works at the subpersonal level” (Gallagher 2015, 40).

So, Gallagher’s main criticism of the term ‘reuse’ is that it doesn’t truly add anything “novel” to simulation theory (as Gallese claims it does). I don’t really have any problem with this charge. Indeed, my account here only hopes to rearticulate and defend what I think the most standard account is and, to my mind, the notion of reuse is just another (the most recent) re-articulation of simulation theory.
context, simulation is conceived of as a non-conscious, pre-reflective functional mechanism of the brain–body system (Gallese 2014, 3-4).

Low-level simulation is a functional mechanism which reuses “mental states and processes involving representations that have a bodily format” (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011b, 515, see also Gallese & Sinigaglia 2014, Gallese 2014). Simulationists like Gallese propose that we represent information about our own body, such as movement and motor goals, in a bodily format. During embodied simulation, I ‘reuse’ this bodily representational format. However, I reuse this bodily format, along with my perceptual system, to create representations of your body. We thus ‘share’ a bodily representational format. Embodied simulation is ‘embodied’ because it involves the bodily representational system, not, as Spaulding (2011, 581) claims, because embodied simulation has a neurological base. The notion of representation has been a central issue within the philosophy of mind and within cognitive science of late. In this chapter I argue that, although Husserl is not a representationalist, the notion of representation in bodily format that simulationists rely on is so different from your average form of representationalism that Husserl can be seen to endorse it. I leave these arguments until the final section.

Finally, Gallagher states that if one accepts this and therefore reverts back to a ‘matching’ mechanism explanation of simulation, then the problem is that there isn’t in fact a one-to-one match between the mechanisms which underpin action/observation and the other person’s motor movements. As Gallagher puts it: “…the idea that my motor system goes into a state that matches or mirrors the other person’s motor system may work for instances where imitation is called for, but is problematic when I have to respond in a non-imitative way to the other. If you trip and start to fall down the stairs, it makes no sense for me to do the same, to match your fall rather than try to catch you (Gallagher, 2008)…there is accumulating empirical evidence that much of the work of the mirror system does not involve strict intracranial matching (Csibra, 2005; see the discussion of Hurley, below), and that MNs are activated in a way that does not necessarily match the observed action (Catmur, Walsh, & Heyes, 2007; Dinstein, Thomas, Behrmann, & Heeger, 2008; Iacoboni et al., 2005).” (2015, 37)

I also accept Gallagher’s latter point. I reject the thesis that my empathic processes and your first person experiences must be absolutely identical for empathy to occur. The match which occurs between our mental states is a rough one, and not an identical match. The relation between you and I during empathy is an analogical one, not one of identity. One of the main goals of my dissertation is to show how empathy can occur despite a lack of absolute identity between individuals mental states (see §6.5.2). Moreover, I actually show that a lack of absolute identity is an enabling condition of simulation (see §5.2 and §5.7).

26 After all, if merely having a neurological base made something ‘embodied,’ given that it is commonly held that all mental processes have some neural basis, every mental process would be embodied. As Goldman and de Vignemont put it, letting “the brain qualify as part of the body would trivialize the claim that the body is crucial to mental life, simply because the brain is the seat of most, if not all, mental events” (Goldman & de Vignemont 2009, 1)
Low-level, or, ‘embodied,’ simulation theory asserts that an intersubjective understanding of another’s body constitutes a large part of the understanding of the other’s mind, as do contemporary phenomenologists and direct perception advocates like Zahavi. However, Zahavi and embodied simulation theorists disagree over how such an understanding is gained; for a direct perception advocate this understanding is grounded in perception. For a simulation theorist like Gallese, this understanding is grounded in the shared embodied representational format.

5.1.2 Mirror neurons

Gallese postulates that there are many underlying biological and functional mechanisms involved in embodied simulation, i.e. canonical neurons, neurons which map peri-personal space, mental motor imagery, and language. Gallese’s simulation theory is multifaceted. However, Gallese also posits that a key aspect of embodied simulation is that it has a neural basis in the mirror neuron system (Gallese & Goldman 1998, Gallese, Keysers, & Rizzolatti 2004, Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011b, 2014). 27

Mirror neurons were discovered in monkeys by the ‘Parma group’ 28 of neuroscientists in the mid-1990’s. A mirror neuron is one which fires during the execution of a behaviour, and during the observation of the same behaviour. Strong evidence suggests that humans have a mirror neuron system (Molenberghs, Cunnington, & Mattingley 2012, Mukamel, Ekstrom, Kaplan, Iacoboni, & Fried 2010). ‘Classical,’ or, standard areas where mirror neurons are found are the areas involved in the planning and execution of movement, such as the pre-motor cortex (Di Pellegrino, Fadiga, Fogassi, Gallese, & Rizzolatti 1992, Fadiga, Fogassi, Gallese, & Rizzolatti 1996) and the inferior parietal lobule (Bonini et al. 2010, Fogassi et al. 2005), but mirror neurons are also found in ‘non-classical’ areas such as the motor cortex (Tkach, Reimer, & Hatsopoulos 2007, Dushanova & Donoghue 2010). Some of the areas of the brain involved in emotion have so-called ‘mirroring properties’ (i.e. they are active during execution and observation of

27 A key topic of this chapter is embodied simulation via the mirror neuron system, and (for style’s sake) the phrases ‘embodied simulation’ and ‘embodied simulation via the mirror neuron system’ will be used interchangeably, even though not all simulationists are mirror neuron theorists, and vice versa. Furthermore, I take the arguments that discuss the role for the mirror neurons system to be discussing the role of Gallese’s strain of embodied simulation, as embodied simulation is the cognitive realisation of the neurological mirror neuron mechanism.

28 A group of neuroscientists working out of the University of Parma, i.e. Gallese, Rizzolatti, Fogassi, Ferrari, Fadiga, Umiltà, Fabbro Destro, etc. The Parma group have a published a large amount of the research on mirror neurons. I primarily examine the work of Gallese and the Parma group in my discussions of embodied simulation and the mirror neuron system.
emotions) (Wicker et al. 2003, Pfeifer, Iacoboni, Mazziotta, & Dapretto 2008, Carr, Iacoboni, Dubeau, Mazziotta, & Lenzi 2003), but these are not technically mirror neurons, as it is generally held that mirror neurons are a motor phenomenon by definition (as Lamm & Majdandžić 2015, 15 point out).

Some mirror neurons are ‘strictly’ congruent, and fire only when the executed and observed movement is close to identical. However, most mirror neurons are ‘broadly’ congruent, and are “typically active during the execution of one action (e.g., precision grip) and during the observation of one or more similar, but not identical, actions” (e.g. precision grip, power grip, and grasping with the mouth) (Cook, Bird, Catmur, Press, & Heyes 2014, 179). The location and behaviour of mirror neurons indicates that they are (somehow) involved during the psychological processing of the observation of another person’s bodily movement. Gallese suggests that mirror neurons are the biological underpinnings of the ‘sharing’/‘reuse’ of functional representations of embodiment which enables embodied simulation.

5.1.3 Simulation, mirror neurons, and phenomenology

Simulation and mirror neuron theorists have already linked their accounts with phenomenology. For example, mirror neuron and empathy theorist Marco Iacoboni terms his project “existential neuroscience” or “neurophysiological phenomenology” (quoted in Zahavi 2014, 156), and claims that the work of Merleau-Ponty provides a first-person account which is correlated with his empirical neuroscientific account (Iacoboni 2009). Gallese has advocated for what he terms the “phenomenologizing of the neurosciences” (Gallese 2011). Gallese and Iacoboni are what we might term ‘hybrid’ theorists, because their work explicitly looks to combine distinctly empirical cognitive scientific and phenomenological methods, “questioning what both approaches have taken for granted” (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011a, 119). Gallese & Sinigaglia state that phenomenology is the departure and arrival point of the investigation of subpersonal mechanisms (ibid, 120). Echoing Kant, they state that “we believe that such an investigation would be ‘blind’ were it not driven by an accurate phenomenology”, yet phenomenology is “‘empty’ were it not anchored to the study of its corresponding neural underpinnings” (ibid, 120). Thus, Gallese and some other mirror neuron theorists are very much operating with the model of a relationship of mutual constraint and enlightenment between phenomenology and cognitive science.
More specifically, in regard to Husserl, Gallese has seen similarity between his neuroscientific account of embodied simulation and Husserl’s account of empathy, and has drawn on Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity in order to enrich his theory (Gallese 2001, 2003b, 2005, 2008, Gallese & Cuccio 2015). Gallese postulates that the mirror neuron mechanism may underlie the establishment of the pairing relation, and Husserl’s writings concerning the importance of the first-person sense of the lived body for establishing intersubjectivity provide a kind of phenomenological account of his embodied simulation hypothesis (Gallese 2003b). More recently, Gallese has found Husserl’s distinction between Körper and Leib useful (Gallese & Cuccio 2015). A link between mirror neurons, Gallese’s account of embodied simulation, and Husserl’s phenomenological account of intersubjectivity, has already been drawn numerous times by Gallese in print.

It is not difficult to connect Husserl’s claim that our first-person sense of embodiment is an important constitutive precondition for establishing perceptually based intersubjective relations with the dual first-person execution/observation operation of mirror neurons. In fact, as Zahavi notes, many authors (Petit 1999, Thompson 2001, Lohmar 2006, de Preester 2008) have suggested that mirror-neuron research is “a further development and perhaps even a scientific vindication” of Husserl’s account of embodied empathy (2014, 157). Zahavi acknowledges that there are “striking similarities” between Husserl’s account and the theory of embodied simulation via the mirror neuron system, but he is generally “cautious” (ibid), or sceptical and critical, of claims of similarity between simulation theory and phenomenological accounts such as Husserl’s. Zahavi argues that we should not overlook important differences between the phenomenological account of empathy and the theory of embodied simulation (ibid, 158).

This chapter has two related aims. Firstly, Zahavi attempts to dampen the enthusiasm over the link between mirror neurons, simulation theory, and Husserl’s account of empathy, and this chapter will, instead, highlight and expand on this link. I maintain that mirror neuron based embodied simulation and Husserl’s account of empathy can be seen not only as parallel to each other, but also as offering support for each other via filling in different aspects of the account of one particular form of social cognition. Secondly, I defend the importance of mirror neuron based simulation. Zahavi, and others (Spaulding 2011, 2012b, 2013) have critiqued the simulation theory and mirror neuron theorists, sometimes by relying on phenomenological insights (see Gallagher &
Zahavi 2008, Zahavi 2014). I contend that certain criticisms of embodied simulation, and the related attempt to separate embodied simulation from Husserlian empathy, are both unsuccessful.  

5.2 Respecting the presence-in-absence structure of intersubjectivity

Although Zahavi has done much to further our understanding of the relationship between Husserl and contemporary accounts of intersubjectivity, he has also separated simulation theory from phenomenological accounts by drawing on aspects of Husserl’s account to criticise claims made by mirror neuron theorists, and by proxy to criticise embodied simulation theorists, like Gallese, who rely on the mirror neuron hypothesis. An example of this approach is when Zahavi argues that mirror neuron theorists fail to acknowledge the presence-in-absence structure of intersubjectivity that is emphasised in Husserl’s account of empathy.

As I have discussed in some detail in §3.3.1, there is an asymmetry between my own self-experience and my experience of the other’s psychic life. For Husserl, we do indeed directly experience the other’s mind but essentially as the other’s mind and necessarily not the same way as we experience our own mind. The other’s mind is present, but it is not present in the same way our own mind is. The experience of the other’s mind is direct, but (as already stressed) it is not as direct or intuitively filled as our experience of our own mind. The other’s mind is in this sense manifest in its elusiveness—to use a distinction I drew previously, empathy is direct (in a sense) but not ‘actually’ direct. This ‘manifest elusiveness’ is what is sometimes termed a ‘presence-in-absence’ structure.

Respecting the presence-in-absence structure of empathy is important for debates on intersubjectivity which intermingle with Husserl scholarship as, for some time, Husserl was seen as an author who did not respect the alterity and absence of the other. Both his theory of intersubjectivity, and his phenomenology generally, have been

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29 As Zahavi himself presciently acknowledges, such a project as the one I undertake in this chapter leaves many important metatheoretical questions unanswered (Zahavi 2014, 162), for example, questions concerning Husserl’s views about naturalist and empirical psychological theories (of which simulation theory is a type). This chapter is something of a rejoinder and so, for now, these metatheoretical questions are suspended until later chapters.

30 Readers who find this last comment equivocal should refer to chapter three for a refresher. There I explain that empathy is ‘direct’ in a sense because it scores on the three axes of intuitiveness, yet Husserl says it is not ‘actually direct’, because he reserves the label ‘actually direct’ for first person reflective experience, which scores the most highly on the three axes mentioned.
criticised by, for example, Habermas (see Russell 2010 for a summary) and Derrida
(1973, 2003) on this point. Zahavi recalls that Derrida characterised Husserl as a “thinker
who remained stuck in the metaphysics of presence, stubbornly conceiving of absolute
subjectivity in terms of a self-sufficient immanence purified from all types of exteriority
and difference” (Zahavi 1999). Staiti notes that Zahavi is one of “second wave” of
Husserl scholars who, responding to critics such as Derrida, have “attempted to show in
various ways and in different contexts that… absence plays an essential role [and that]
Husserl thoroughly acknowledged the interplay of presence and absence” (Staiti 2010,
35). Zahavi has tried to show that Husserl is “a thinker of alterity… and passivity”
(Zahavi 1999, 201). Another member of the second wave of Husserl scholars echoes a
now common sentiment when he observes that Husserl thinks that experience is “shot
through” with absences and alterities (Costello 2012, 10).

In order to avoid a circular debate, it is important for contemporary Husserl
scholars to emphasise that Husserl acknowledges the presence-in-absence aspect of
intersubjectivity, and a phenomenologically informed contribution would emphasise and
incorporate this point into contemporary discussions of intersubjectivity. Therefore, for
phenomenologists, mirror neuron theorists who do not acknowledge and respect the
presence-in-absence structure of intersubjectivity are making a significant conceptual
mistake.

A number of mirror neuron theorists do not acknowledge this structure. As Zahavi
points out, in Husserl’s account we find “a recurrent emphasis on and respect for the
otherness and alterity of the other,” and some mirror neuron theorists do not have “a
sufficient focus on the other-centred character of empathy” (Zahavi 2014, 161). Keyser,
for example, argues that “the mirroring of mirror neurons makes ‘others become part of
us’ [and] the classical divide between self and other ‘becomes fuzzy and permeable in the
process’” (Zahavi 2014, 161, quoting Keysers 2011, 6 & 16). This description of the
mirroring of our mind with the other’s, which operates via the mirror neuron system,
seems to disrespect the necessity of the asymmetry, and the unbridgeable divide, between
the self and other. Thus, some mirror neuron theorists diverge, in important aspects, from
Husserl’s account.

However, some mirror neuron theorists do respect the alterity of the other. Neurologists
working in the area of social cognition note that the neurological
underpinnings of self- and other- understanding are not identical, despite the fact that representing one’s own, and representing the other’s, embodiment shares some neural circuitry; that is, despite the existence of a mirror neuron system. A common locution in this area is to say that the mirror neuron system instantiates or underpins a system which enables the ‘shared representation’ of the embodiment of the self and the embodiment of the other. In their discussion of the neural substrate for shared self- and other- representation, prominent neurological researchers Decety and Grèzes note that, despite this sharing, if there were a “complete overlap between self and others representations” then “confusion and chaos” would ensue (2006, 12). This confusion and chaos is of the type I explored through the thought experiments involving telepathy in the third chapter. Decety and Grèzes acknowledge the necessity of the asymmetry between the self and the other. They even point out that this asymmetry is reflected at the neurological level, as would be expected if a broad correlation between cognition and neurology is assumed.

A similar point is made by Gallese. He states that the mirror neuron system instantiates a shared representational manifold of intersubjectivity. However, drawing on Zahavi’s own contribution of Husserlian themes to the debate on intersubjectivity, Gallese adds that it

should be clarified that the shared manifold of intersubjectivity does not entail that we experience others as we experience ourselves… As noted by Husserl…, if this were the case, others could not anymore be experienced as such (Zahavi, 2001). On the contrary…, the alterity of the other… is present also at the subpersonal level, instantiated by the different neural networks coming into play when I act with respect to when others act (Gallese 2003b, 178, citing Zahavi 2001).

Thus, Gallese acknowledges and respects the presence-in-absence structure of intersubjective relations and, again, points out that this phenomenologically based claim is reflected at the neurological level. In fairness, in his 2014 work, Zahavi acknowledges that Gallese acknowledges the presence-in-absence-structure of intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, Zahavi’s criticism that mirror neuron theorists do not respect the presence-in-absence structure of intersubjectivity must be qualified by adding that this criticism applies only to some mirror neuron theorists (i.e. Keyser). This criticism can is further weakened when we admit (as Zahavi does) that some mirror neuron theorists do, in fact, explicitly acknowledge this intersubjective structure. We must recognise that some
simulation/mirror neuron theorists, such as Gallese, are on this point indiscernible from Husserl. Thus, this particular attempt to separate Husserl’s account of empathy from simulation theory fails.

5.3 An objection from Zahavi concerning levels of intersubjectivity

Zahavi objects that another important and perhaps intractable difference between Husserl’s account and the theory of embodied simulation is that Husserl thinks we need to distinguish various levels of empathy. Though Husserl thinks the first level of empathy is constituted by an embodied bond between of self and other on the basis of bodily similarity, he thinks that there are many other levels too (Zahavi 2014, 158). My response is that the simulation theory is similarly multileveled. This chapter shows that low-level simulation corresponds to low-level Husserlian empathy, and the next chapter will show that high-level simulation corresponds to high-level empathy.

In addition to the split between low and high-level empathy, Husserl also discerns several hierarchically organised aspects or ‘levels’ within low-level empathy itself. In his discussions, Zahavi (2014, 158) expounds an untranslated manuscript from the third volume on intersubjectivity during which Husserl discerns three such levels. At the first, I experience the passive bodily actions of the other, i.e. that the other performs nominal ‘actions’ like ‘touching’ and ‘seeing.’ But I experience the touch and vision of the other “from there” (“von dort aus”), or, vicariously, “as if I were there” (“wie wenn ich dort wäre”) (Husserl 1973c, 435). At the second level, I understand the other as carrying out active bodily actions, i.e. pushing, carrying, or shoving something with the organs of the body. However, the second level of the threefold schema is an “underground” or “understorey” (“Unterschicht”) of action, because it merely involves seeing the body which moves as a “bodily materiality” (“körperlich”) (ibid). It does not grasp this movement as psychologically meaningful, or performed by a lived body (Leib). The second level involves grasping movement, but not what we commonly refer to as action. The third level, however, does “go beyond” (“hinausgehend”) the grasping of mere movement, and involves grasping bodily action in the full sense; it grasps the purpose of the actions, i.e. biting as eating, running as fleeing from something, etc. (ibid). The third level of the threefold division corresponds to seeing ‘mere’ (physical) movement “as” (“als”) psychically animated and psychologically meaningful.
What I will now show is that aspects of the theory of embodied simulation via the mirror neuron system parallel the important divisions within low-level embodied empathy shown above. Thus, in the next section, and in chapter six, I show that simulationists also distinguish many levels of intersubjective processes, and the various processes which simulationists distinguish parallel the processes Husserl distinguishes.

5.4 The parallel between Husserl’s levels and simulation theory via the mirror neuron theory

Although simulation theorists do not use the language of ‘levels’ of intersubjectivity, their account is certainly multifaceted, and I believe there is support for the claim that aspects of the theory of embodied simulation via the mirror neuron system corresponds to Husserl’s threefold schema of low-level empathy; that we can carve the reality of the two systems at comparable joints. The lowest level of Husserl’s schema involves sensing that the body of the other is a tactile sensing and perceiving body. As we saw in chapter two, the experience of tactility is a condition of primary organismic animality for Husserl, and it is a base feature, which distinguishes lived from inanimate bodies. A strain of embodied simulation via the mirror neuron system corresponds to empathically perceiving this base feature of animality.

As Gallese outlines, neurons with mirroring properties have been found in the cortical regions underlying first-person experience of sensations such as touch, pain, and pleasant touch (2014b).

Studies that measure brain activity while participants witness the sensations… and somatic pain of others consistently show vicarious activation in the somatosensory cortices… [The] vicarious activations of somatosensory cortices may have the unique potential to provide a somatic dimension to our perception of other people’s experiences” (Keysers, Kaas, & Gazzola 2010, 417, see this article for a literature review).

It is postulated that somatosensory neurons with mirroring properties underpin a process of the embodied simulation of somatosensory experience of the other, and touch in general (Ebisch et al. 2008, Keysers et al. 2010). Thus, some aspects of the theory of embodied simulation strongly correspond with the first level in Husserl’s threefold division of intersubjectivity, which is the level at which the body of the other is co- or app-presented as a sensing body.
I do not think that the second “understorey” level is particularly important to Husserl’s account, as it merely involves identifying psychologically stripped movement. Either way, comprehending that a human body is merely moving is the sort of process we would uncontroversially expect standard mirror neurons to be involved in, and this is not something anyone would be interested in contesting, because nothing is at stake. The question whether mirror neurons and embodied simulation match with the third level in Husserl’s schema—the level of seeing mere movement as psychologically saturated purposeful intentful action—is where things become interesting. I will argue that embodied simulation can account for this third level, and thus there is a multileveled confluence with the important aspects of Husserl’s schema. Therefore, Zahavi’s claim that Husserl devises many levels of intersubjectivity does not in any way serve to separate Husserl from simulationists.

Recall that mirror neurons are defined by the fact that they contribute to both observation and execution. Regarding the execution side of the equation, the areas where mirror neurons are located are involved not just in the execution of mere movement, but in the execution of goal fulfilment. Mirror neuron theorists, and neurobiologists generally, distinguish between, firstly, mere movement, secondly, a motor act, and, thirdly, an action. A motor act is “a series of movements performed to reach a goal (e.g., grasping an object).” An action is “a series of motor acts (e.g., reaching, grasping, bringing to mouth) that allows individuals to fulfil their intentions (e.g., eating)” (Fabbri-Destro & Rizzolatti 2008, 173). These distinctions thus relate to each other as parts to wholes—movements comprise motor acts, and motor acts comprise actions. Goals, according to the schema used by neurobiologists, are the teloi of motor acts, and they are a level below the more complex level of action and intention, but above the level of mere movement.

Some motor neurons are involved in the specific task of executing motor acts. These neurons do not activate when we merely move, nor does their activity depend on force or direction of movement. The activity of motor act neurons is correlated to “the relationship, in motor terms, between the agent and the object of the action” (Gallese & Metzinger 2003, 367). Motor act neurons “discharge selectively during particular goal-related hand movements such as grasping, holding, manipulating” (Fadiga et al. 1996, 131). Goal related neurons fire whenever a specific goal directed behaviour is executed, regardless of the effector employed, be it the hand or the mouth (Fadiga et al. 1996). The activity of these “neurons is correlated with specific hand and mouth motor acts and not
with the execution of individual movements like contractions of individual muscle groups” (Gallese & Goldman 1998, 493). They even discharge if the goal is accomplished with a tool (Umiltà et al. 2008). Thus, “there is evidence that some markers of motor processing are correlated with action outcomes rather than narrowly kinematic or dynamic features of action” (Butterfill & Sinigaglia 2014, 122), or bodily effector employed. In sum, we have neurons which are coded solely for motor acts, that is, they fire during achievement of a motor goal. Because these neurons are in the motor cortex, yet fire during goal fulfilment, neuroscientists postulate that they represent the fulfilment of goals, but in a bodily motoric representational format.

Regarding the observation side of the equation, a subset of the neurons responsible for executing goal related movement are mirror neurons. This set of mirror neurons do not fire merely when we observe another person moving, but fire when we observe other people performing goal-related motor acts, regardless of the effector (hand or pliers) or sequence of movements (opening or closing the fingers) that the other uses to accomplish the goal (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011b, 513). “The activation of [mirror neurons] can be selectively related to the observed action goal regardless of its kinematics, dynamics, and the body effector involved” (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2014, 200). The original research on this topic by Fabri-Destro & Rizolatti concluded that there is strong experimental support for the notion that the activity of mirror neurons underpins the understanding of the motor acts of others (2008, 174). The “crucial factor for mirror neuron visual response is the match between the observed act, regardless of how it is attained, and the goal represented motorically by the same neuron” (Fogassi & Bonini 2015). Thus, some mirror neurons encode the observation of goal related actions (motor acts) and not the mere movement of body parts.

One facet of embodied simulation theory, then, is that the mirror neuron system reuses premotor and motor neurons involved in fulfilling motor goals, and this enables the shared representation of not just movement but psychologically meaningful goal related movements. Basically, like Husserl, the theory of embodied simulation distinguishes higher levels of intersubjective understanding, and acknowledges that understanding movement as goal related is different and at a different level than understanding mere movement. The theory of embodied simulation can thus account for the advance in understanding which occurs at Husserl’s third level. Embodied simulation corresponds with Husserl’s theory of embodied empathy at key points; there is similarity and
confluence between them. These two accounts, I claim, depict the contours of what seem to be a similar entity; an entity which may turn out to be, in fact, in most important senses, the same. Because mirror neurons are coded to fire during the observation and execution of goal related motor acts, they are said to enable the functional mechanism of the embodied simulation of goal related motor acts, and this is said, by Gallese and other members of the Parma group, to constitute a proto form of embodied action understanding.

5.5 An objection concerning action understanding

My aim in the preceding section was to show that embodied simulation can account for the various levels of understanding depicted by Husserl. Although not concerned with showing the confluence (or lack thereof) between Husserl and simulation theory, much has nevertheless been written about whether or not mirror neurons and embodied simulation constitute the understanding of action (for a sample see Spaulding 2013, and Rizzolatti & Fogassi 2014). It is controversial to claim, as I have just done, that understanding movements as goal directed contributes to the constitution of action understanding. In this section I will, from a phenomenological perspective, respond to some of these discussions, and thus provide a defence to some of the more general criticisms which have been levelled at embodied simulation theory.

One such criticism is that intentional actions are, generally, considered more complex than the level of goal related behaviour, and thus showing that one comprehends the latter is considered insufficient to show that one comprehends the former. Spaulding notes that, according to the standard account, to understand that something is an action, one must understand that it is tied to a propositional mental state of intention31 (2013, 238). If understanding intentions bestows movement with psychological significance (i.e. differentiates ‘mere’ movement from purposeful action) in a top-down fashion, then it is difficult to see how grasping motor goals bears psychological relevance, as this cannot constitute intentional understanding. So, even though embodied simulation might be able to account for understanding movement as goal related, as it cannot account for the understanding of propositional mental states like intentions it cannot, Spaulding contends, be said to account for action understanding. A more complex account would be needed (Spaulding suggests a hybridised theory-theory account).

31 The term ‘intention’ is here being used to mean purposiveness. An intention would be expressed in the propositional attitudinal format of ‘I intend that p.’
But this criticism misses the mark. A fundamental claim of embodied simulation theorists is that action understanding occurs in a bottom-up fashion, and via simpler and more primitive means than comprehending complex propositional attitudes like intentions. Propositional attitudes like intentions, beliefs, and desires involve a propositional format, which differs fundamentally from a motor representational format. Gallese contests the standard account of action, and “suggests that beliefs, desires, and intentions are neither primitive, nor the only bearers of intentionality32 in action” (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2014, 200). In a recent co-authored paper, Gallese states that we do not need to metarepresent the intentions of others in a propositional format in order to understand them. “Motor outcomes and motor intentions are part of the ‘vocabulary’ that is spoken by the motor system” (Gallese & Cuccio 2015, 8). Gallese and Cuccio contend that, motor representation can ground the directedness of an action to its outcome, and that therefore understanding that certain movements fulfil goals (represented motorically) is enough to constitute action understanding. This is certainly not the only model of action understanding via motoric representation (see for example Butterfill & Sinigaglia 2014, and Brozzo 2017), but what we need to take away is that, if action understanding is generated in a bottom-up fashion, then the processes that lead to action understanding need not constitute the understanding of intentions or other high-level propositional attitudes in order to be said to be psychologically significant. If action understanding is generated in a bottom-up fashion from the understanding of motor goals, then showing that understanding motor goals is insufficient for understanding intentions does not serve to prove that understanding motor goals is insufficient for action understanding, nor that understanding motor goals is just perceiving a type of movement which is denuded of psychological meaning.

In a recent paper, Catmur defines intention as a high-level propositional form of motivation that produces action (Catmur 2015, 427). She then asks whether mirror neurons can account for this higher level and, unsurprisingly, answers no. But embodied simulation holds that the representation of the goal directed movement of the other in bodily terms is a more primitive form of action understanding than the grasping of higher-level propositional intentions. Proffering the top-down standard account of ‘action understanding via propositional intention understanding’ merely reasserts what is being

32 The term ‘intentionality’ is here being used in the phenomenological sense, ‘being about something’ or ‘meaning something,’ and this term is to be kept clearly distinct from the other key term in this section — ‘intention.’
contested by embodied simulation (and the embodied cognition movement more generally).

There are good reasons to support a bottom-up model of action understanding. As Brozzo’s recent paper shows, the complexity of motor movement suggests that actions cannot be constituted by propositional attitudinal intentions alone, as intentions are too coarse grained in comparison to match motor actions—motor intentions must be doing some of the work (Brozzo 2017). The same goes for understanding others—if we only understood the actions of others at the level of detail involved in the ascription of intentions, then nothing would be left to account for the richness of non-linguistic perceptual data (the way, say, minor changes in facial expression or posture which we would not be able to express in a proposition still manage to key us in to the other’s mental state). It is for this reason that we can say, non-metaphorically, that we understand others at the bodily motoric level, and that this understanding must be generated by a finer grained format than propositional attitudes.

The other good reason to support the idea that action understanding is generated in a bottom-up fashion via a bodily format is because of the support this notion finds in the phenomenological tradition; it is because Gallese contests the standard account of action understanding that he has found value in the exegesis of classical phenomenological texts. Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty also describe a variety of different types of embodied, non-propositional forms of understanding that are more primitive than propositional attitudes. A key difference between the phenomenological and analytic traditions is the importance granted to so-called propositional attitudes like belief, desire, etc. In the analytic tradition (and within empirical psychology), propositional attitudes are often assumed to be the primary bearers of intentionality, because (following Sellars) it was assumed that intentionality is linguistic first, and mental only derivatively, and propositional attitudes are in a linguistic format. Of course, for the phenomenological tradition, intentionality is a core feature of mental life, it is primarily a feature of perceptual states, but it is even a feature of low level ‘passivities’ and embodiment.

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33 Passivities are non-voluntary, low-level, pre-conscious organisational functions of consciousness. See section 8.3.
34 However, understanding intentions and other forms of propositional attitudes is obviously a key psychological ability, and is not unrelated to motoric intentions and action understanding. Thus, it is important to at least attempt to give an account of how motor representational action understanding relates to more complex levels like propositional intentional understanding, and, aside from Gallese and Cuccio’s account, one might refer to the excellent discussions found in Brozzo (2017), and Butterfill and
Husserl or Merleau-Ponty’s account of perception (2012), and Husserl’s account of embodied empathy, exploit the notion of a prepredicative ‘operative’ embodied form of understanding, which sits below the level of predicative and propositional knowledge, yet is still part of the account of concepts like purposefulness, action, and understanding. The growing endorsement of embodied forms of understanding has driven the resurgence of phenomenology within cognitive science. Gallese’s account of embodied simulation relies on the notion of a prepredicative, non-propositional constitution to action understanding.

Thus, Gallese, along with other members of the embodied cognition movement, contend that propositional states account for a smaller share of psychological activity than has been assumed in the history of (particularly computationally based) cognitive science, and that propositional states are not the only bearers of intentionality. Gallese’s position is unique among the embodied movement because he proposes that a functional embodied mechanism (the shared representation in bodily format) might replace a capacity that would traditionally be considered as an internal symbolic/propositional function or computation. He is an embodiment theorist, yet remains strictly speaking a cognitive scientist (because his account is functionalist, and neurological to boot). It is this straddling of the cognitive/embodied divide which brings him close to Husserl, too, as we shall see in §5.7.

Most importantly though, motor goals are the vocabulary of action understanding. If this is the case, then it is entirely plausible to think that motor goals are psychologically significant. Because Husserl’s third level is the level at which movements become psychologically meaningful actions, and because embodied simulation can account for this level via the understanding of goal fulfilment, then embodied simulation runs parallel with Husserl’s account.

Sinigaglia (2014). As the latter point out, only by unravelling “how intentions interlock with motor representations can we hope to understand how our intentions ever make a difference to the world around us” (Butterfill & Sinigaglia 2014, 139-140) A promising model is that intentions involve concepts which refer to actions, but intentions refer to actions by deferring to motor representations, which are in a bodily format. These deferring action concepts are thus a midway that connects intentions to bodily movements (ibid). Precisely the sort of motor representation that might be deferred to by action concepts is motor goal fulfilment. Thus, reconstructing this account intersubjectively, understanding that a movement is designed to fulfil a goal is the type of motor representation that the understanding of action defers to. Motor goals are the semantics of the language of action. These deferential action concepts are the necessary stepping stone to understanding an agent’s intention. In this way we understand how an agent’s movements become psychologically meaningful, interlock with their intentions, and how cross the divide between motoric and propositional formats.
5.6 Simulation theory/Husserlian empathy as foundational processes

So, a promising line of inquiry is accounting for how motor goals causally constitute action understanding, and then tie into intentions in a propositional format. But this has not been the key issue. Historically, the focus of the debate has been on whether mirror neuron processes (like understanding motor goals) are necessary or sufficient for empathy. Theorists have expressed concern about the professed explanatory scope of mirror neuron activity, and that the necessity and sufficiency of mirror neuron processes and embodied simulation for empathy has been overstated (Spaulding 2011). A critical deflationary backlash concerning the scope of mirror neurons theory was unavoidable after authors made optimistic predictions like “mirror neurons will do for psychology what DNA did for biology” (Ramachandran 2000) in the popular press. However, a tension in this area arises surrounding Zahavi’s critique of mirror neuron theory. On the one hand, Zahavi also attempts to curtail the proposed explanatory scope of mirror neurons, but on the other hand, he claims that the more mirror neuron researchers restrict their scope, then the more the mirror neuron system hypothesis matches Husserl’s account of embodied empathy (Zahavi 2014). The next section will unpack why there is a tension between these two claims.

The tension arises because, Husserl’s account of embodied empathy looks for the more basic and foundational features of empathic experience. As Zahavi notes, the lower forms of embodied empathy, such as embodied pairing, are, supposedly, the “most basic and fundamental” (2014, 137). Husserl’s account of empathy explains how social understanding can be enabled through the simple phenomena of an ego which is embodied and afforded perceptual experience. If Zahavi decreases the range of phenomena the mirror neuron hypothesis sufficiently explains then, by his own admission, he makes it compatible with Husserl’s account of embodied empathy, and this raises the spectre that embodied simulation is also a foundational sort of process. A foundational process need not be sufficient for the process that it founds, because by definition a foundational process is one that has another process added to it (built ‘on top’ of it). Far from decreasing the importance of embodied simulation, restricting the scope of this theory, and thereby increasing its compatibility with Husserl’s embodied account, actually increases its importance. Zahavi’s attempted contraction of the explanatory scope of the mirror neuron system leads to a concentration of theoretical import.
In the next section, I will show that the mirror neuron system is active in higher forms of social processes, such as the imaginative projection of others in complex social scenarios. It turns out that embodied simulation/Husserlian empathy is *nestled within* other more complex social phenomena, and is the foundation of them. §5.6.1 anticipates the work of chapter six, as I show how mirror neuron activity can be plausibly found at the base of other more complex imaginatively based social phenomena.

### 5.6.1 Mirror neurons and imaginative projection

Objecting to the sometimes overinflated claims about the scope of mirror neuron theory, Zahavi notes “there are obviously many instances in which I speculate about the mental states of another in that person’s absence” (Zahavi 2014, 159). Zahavi further asserts that, in cases “where there are no perceptual cues available, where there is no access to the facial expressions, vocal tone, movements and postures of the other, it is doubtful whether or not the mirror neurons can be of much help” (Zahavi 2014, 159). The examples of social understanding without perceptual cues that Zahavi gives are things like anticipating how one’s partner might react to a marriage proposal, or speculating how an audience received a lecture. Spaulding (2013) provides a similar example (239). So, an objection to mirror neuron theory is that, in situations where I predict the reactions of another, in the absence of a sensory perception of their body, it is unlikely that mirror neurons are contributing in a significant way to any understanding I gain here. Because mirror neuron activity is supposed to underlie or enable embodied simulation, we can further conclude that Zahavi thinks that it is unlikely that embodied simulation is in play during these scenarios.

However, one of the ways we predict the behaviour of others in their absence is via imaginative projection. Mental states like conjecture, anticipation, or speculation often involve the projections of sensory imagination. Zahavi thinks that this sort of imaginatively gained social understanding is very rare. In the next chapter, I show that the sensory imagination is more plausibly commonly found at the base of understanding others than Zahavi is willing to concede. For now, all I will show is that imaginative projection involves mirror neurons, and the only concession I require at this point is that the sensory imagination is sometimes at play when I gain understanding of another in their absence (rarely or otherwise), in order to show that mirror neurons can indeed sometimes be of much help in the absence of perceptual cues.
Mirror neurons are not only active during perception, but are also active when we imagine others. A 2001 meta-analysis by Decety and Grèzes found that action execution sites activate when we imagine ourselves performing an action (Decety & Grèzes 2001, 8). A 2006 meta-analysis found that the execution/imagination substrate is triggered during the observation of action in others, and also when we imagine others moving (Decety & Grèzes 2006, 12, citing Decety & Ruby 2001, see also Szpunar, Watson, & McDermott 2007, 644); imagining “being the agent of an action or imagining another person being the agent of that action elicits partial similar neural responses” (Decety & Grèzes 2006, 7). So, there are common activation sites when, one, we execute an action, two, observe another executing a comparable action, three, imagine ourselves moving, and, four, imagine others moving.

The studies reviewed by Decety and Grèzes only investigate imagining one’s self and others performing basic motor actions (such as imagining grasping an object in view, or imagining moving a joystick), and not the type of complex social situations that Zahavi explores. In order for embodied simulation/mirror neuron theorists to provide an empirical defence against Zahavi’s charge, studies would need to show that pre- and motor cortex mirror neurons are active when we imagine other people in complex social scenarios. In my research, I have not been able to find any studies that explore this possibility. This represents an interesting new direction for neuroscientific research.

However, it is entirely plausible that mirror neurons would be active when I imagine others in complex social scenarios, because when we imagine another person’s reactions in an imagined complex social scenario, we normally imagine the other in embodied form. The sensory imagination, what Husserl terms ‘phantasy,’ is an intuitive modality, and precisely because it contains some form of qualitative content. The sensory imagination of another is enabled by the presentation of some type of intuitive or sensory content, albeit imagined sensory content. For example, I might imagine the look on my fiancé’s face when I propose. Of course, I might imagine an indirect form of intersubjective experience, which does not involve the embodiment of the other. For example, I might imagine finding a rather lengthy note rejecting my marriage proposal. Or, I might speculate and predict using other (non-intuitive) cognitive capacities, like estimating my partner’s receptiveness to a marriage proposal. But sometimes, at least, imagining the direct and embodied reactions of another is an important form of imaginative intersubjectivity.
One of the basic insights from Husserlian phenomenology is that the sensory contents represented to us in the imagination (what Husserl calls phantasms) are in many important senses parallel to the sensory contents presented to us in perception (sensations) (Husserl 2005, 81, 1980, 2) (this point is further elaborated in the next chapter). Regarding my own body and the body of the other, the Decety and Grèzes studies show that the neuronal networks responsible for the intuitive contents of the perceptual presentation and imaginative representation of the embodiment of self and other overlap. This neuronal overlap is predictable, given the phenomenological overlap between sensory and imagined contents, the shared representational system for the body of the self and other, and an assumed rough correlation between psychological and neurobiological life. There is a parallel between empirical neurological evidence, and phenomenological descriptive evidence.

There is further phenomenological evidence that the embodiment of the other plays an important part in insights gained via imaginatively projecting the reactions of others. Arnd-Caddigan (2012) gathered a series of qualitative accounts of what occurs when we imagine others in complex social scenarios, by gathering interviews with therapists about imagined conversations with their clients. The imagined conversations occurred after therapy sessions in the absence of the client. The descriptions gathered from the Arnd-Caddigan study support the hypothesis that the embodiment of the other plays an important part when we imagine others in complex social scenarios in the absence of perceptual cues.

Arnd-Caddigan’s study was looking to determine what role the imagination played for therapists in gaining insight into the nature of the analysand and the therapeutic process. The Arnd-Caddigan study looks at complex social understanding processes, like the ones Zahavi characterises in his examples. Arnd-Caddigan’s study asked therapists to recount salient features of imagined interactions they had with clients after therapy sessions. Many of the reported salient features resulted from aspects of imagined embodiment.

Several therapists described imagining the visual and auditory aspects of interaction, for example the “client’s facial expressions and tone of voice” (Arnd-Caddigan 2012, 338). Therapists imagine their own facial expressions and tone of voice as well. During imagined conversations, therapists imagine hearing their vocal quality—
pitch, rate, volume, prosody, and vitality. Another therapist described that they imagine seeing how the analysand moves, their posture, and facial expressions. In response to an imagined question one therapist reported seeing their client “slumped on the couch in his typical posture... I see the effort on his face: eyes scrunched, lips pursed. He sits up... he... looks pensive” (Arnd-Caddigan 2012, 339).

These first-person descriptions strongly demonstrate the embodied aspect to the imaginative projection of others in complex social scenarios. Contrary to Zahavi’s claims, it seems that we do indeed have access to the “facial expressions, vocal tone, movements, and posture of the other” (Zahavi 2014, 159) in these scenarios, albeit imagined expressions, tones, etc. Given the neurobiological data gathered by Decety and Grèzes, it is plausible that this embodied imaginative projection involves the same neurons responsible for perception of others, a subset of which are, we know, mirror neurons.

So, in response to Zahavi’s claim that mirror neurons do not play a role in imagined social scenarios, three things are worth pointing out. First, whenever we imagine others in complex intersubjective scenarios via imaginative projection we often imagine them in embodied form. Second, it is likely that the imagination of the embodied form of the other involves the same neurons responsible for the perception of the embodied form of the other, a subset of which are mirror neurons. Thus, it is likely that the imagination of others in complex intersubjective scenarios relies on or involves the mirror neuron system. Third, at least sometimes, when I gain an understanding of another in their absence, I do so via sensory imaginative projection. Conclusion: at least some of the time, the mirror neuron a system plays a role when I gain understanding of another in their absence. Mirror neuron activity during imaginative processes would effectively be another form of neuronal reuse of the motor and premotor system. When we imagine others, mirror neuron activity again constitutes the shared representation of embodiment, and constitutes a foundational form of intersubjective understanding—a keystone in the social cognition puzzle.

A very basic tenet of both embodied simulation theory, classical phenomenological accounts of intersubjectivity, and indeed Zahavi’s own direct perception model, is that the embodiment of the other forms the basis for social understanding. Embodiment is also an important part of social imaginative projection.

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35 It is here worth mentioning that both mirror neurons and embodiment are multimodal phenomena, i.e. auditory as well as visual.
Because mirror neurons are part of the neurological underpinning involved in the social imaginative projection of embodiment, mirror neurons are an important foundational part of the causal story of the imaginative projection of others.

Zahavi, however, wants it both ways: he emphasises the foundational role that embodiment and perception play in social cognition, and acknowledges the complexity of social cognition, on the one hand, but then wants to deflate the importance of embodied simulation and mirror neurons for high-level social cognition. We need not show that embodied simulation is the only explanatory factor in high-level forms of social cognition, only that embodied simulation is nestled within some higher forms of intersubjectivity that often rely on it and is, in this sense, foundational for them. The mirror neuron system is, evidently, only a part of the story of social cognition via imaginative projection, and much more needs to be said for the account of imaginative projection to be exhaustive. However, the previous example of imaginative projection demonstrates how mirror neuron activity, and embodied simulation/Husserlian embodied empathy, can be said to play a foundational role in processes where they are explanatorily insufficient, and be of great help when I try to understand another in their absence.

5.7 The objection concerning embodied simulation as an indirect form of projectivism

As we leave the discussion of the imagination behind for now, and move back to the central themes of this chapter, there is one final objection to seeing similarity between Husserl’s account and the account of embodied simulation that I will now address. It has been objected that embodied simulation is unlike the phenomenological account, because Gallese’s version of embodied simulation is a sort of inner imitation/projectionist account, like the one advanced by Lipps. Furthermore, this objection asserts, because embodied simulation postulates (the additional non-perceptual) processes of inner imitation/projection, simulation should be classified an indirect form of intersubjectivity.

There are essentially two objections under the banner of the inner imitation/projection objection. The first objection is that a model of inner imitation cannot account for understanding the other as other. If I project myself into your shoes, how would this help me to understand a problem you are having that I might not have if I were

36 My next chapter will contribute to a more expansive account of imaginatively based forms of intersubjectivity. Also, more could undoubtedly be said about other (non-imaginative) processes that come into play when the other does not stand before me, but these are not addressed in my dissertation.
in your situation? For example, if I am an adult and I am trying to understand a child, why should my knowing how things would be for me if I were there help me understand how things are for the child? If empathy relies on inner imitation, how could I empathise with anyone who is unlike me in the relevant aspects? I will not answer this objection here, but I will say two things preliminarily. First, Husserl’s account of empathy faces precisely this objection (and is, in this way, similar to the simulation theory). Second, for Husserl, the differences between self and other can be empathically grasped still “by analogy” (Husserl 1989, 287) but, albeit, by analogy with a possible self, and not an actual self. I have dedicated the next chapter, where I discuss high-level Husserlian empathy and high-level simulation theory, to answering this objection by expanding on what I only mention here elliptically.

The second objection is that the inner imitation/projectivist account that is purportedly endorsed by Gallese amounts to an indirect account of intersubjectivity, and as Husserl endorses a direct account of intersubjectivity, then Gallese and Husserl differ on this key point. This objection I will address forthwith. This second objection is made by Zahavi, who first observes that “Gallese is quite explicit in arguing that the mirror neuron system allows for a direct experiential understanding of others” (Zahavi 2014, 160). Zahavi then states that Gallese’s adherence to directness is contradicted by the fact that he “explicitly and repeatedly aligns himself with simulation theory and, like Lipps, considers empathy a form of inner imitation” (ibid). Lipps characterised empathy as the inner imitation and subsequent projection of our own psychical states into others. It is often claimed that simulation theory requires “perception, plus this extra additional subconscious representation/replication stage that is dependent on mirror resonance processes” (Reynolds 2015, 349), and is thus indirect and non-perceptual. Husserl and other phenomenologists argued that these sort of accounts should be “replaced by a theory that took empathy to be a special kind of perception of the psychical states as they are manifest in the bodily expression” (Zahavi 2010, quoting Ingarden 1994). To say that Gallese follow’s Lipps is to say that Gallese rejects a direct perceptual account of empathy, in favour of an indirect extra-perceptual inner imitation/replication model.

However, Gallese only mentions Lipps in his historical exegesis of the origin of the term ‘empathy,’ and nowhere provides a wholesale endorsement of Lipps’ account, nor claims that empathy entails imitation (although Iacoboni (2009) does endorse the imitation account). Although, in a co-authored paper from 1998, Gallese characterises
simulation as a type of “mimicry” or “impersonation” (Gallese & Goldman 1998, 497),
what he later claims (in the paper which Zahavi’s bases his criticisms on), instead, is “that
actual imitation of observed actions involves a network of brain areas whose activation
can be accounted for in terms of simulation” and that “motor imagery, action observation,
imitation and empathy all share the same basic mechanism, the mechanism of embodied
simulation” (Gallese 2003a, 524, my italics). Thus, for Gallese internal imitation is
merely another type of intersubjective process, beside empathy, which can be explained
by reference to the model of simulation and the mirror neuron system. Lastly, Gallese is
generally far more influenced by Husserl than Lipps is, and explicitly endorses aspects of
Husserl’s account on various occasions (see my discussion in the introduction).

As we will see in the next chapter, some forms of high-level simulation certainly
rely on an imaginative form of projection. It is uncertain, however, just what the charge of
inner imitation and projection regarding low-level embodied simulation amount to. There
is, undoubtedly, some extra process occurring in embodied simulation, besides mere
perception. Specifically, the other’s bodily activity is represented via the same bodily
schema that is used to represent our own bodily movements. It is implied by Zahavi’s
concern over projectivism and inner imitation that utilising the notion of shared bodily
representation—mapping the other’s movements onto the same schema which maps my
bodily movements—introduces a degree of mediation which Husserlian phenomenology
sees as unnecessary. Zahavi’s concerns seem to boil down to the fact that embodied
simulation involves representing the other’s bodily movements in bodily format, and this
representationalism goes against Husserl’s direct account of intersubjectivity, and his
more general direct account of perception.

The general spirit of recent philosophy of mind has been to challenge traditional
theories of representationalism (see Chemero 2009). Furthermore, Zahavi is one of the
Husserl scholars who adheres to the so-called ‘East coast’ non-representational
interpretation of the noema (Zahavi 2003, 60). According to non-representational
accounts, the perceptual noema is not an extra, intensional, entity for Husserl (like
Frege’s Sinn) via which our perceptions are referred to the real entity itself. The object of
the perception does not do any mediating or representing of an object-in-itself. As Zahavi
writes,
When I perceive a rose, then it is this rose, and nothing else which is the object of my perception. To claim that there is also an immanent rose, namely an intramental picture or representation of the rose, is a pure postulate that does not explain anything, as Husserl rightly emphasizes (Zahavi 2003, 18).

Thus, Zahavi is keenly sensitive to the ‘directness’ of perception in general, and not just as regards intersubjectivity. His underlying concern seems to be, then, that the simulationist introduction of inner imitation and projection involves the perceptual representationalism he rejects.

True, Gallese has some extreme views concerning representation that are common among neurobiologists. For example, he states that the world is never itself given, but always recreated or represented by the brain via the means of simulated models (Gallese & Metzinger 2003). These sorts of claims would alarm phenomenologists and direct perception advocates, like Zahavi (as, I think, they rightly should). However, the thesis of shared representation in bodily format is a very different from your average forms of representationalism. Representation in bodily format is ultimately a type of action-understanding, and as Wheeler notes, action-orientated representations do not “aspire to the sort of complete or detailed modelling of the world” that is indicative of traditional representationalism (Wheeler 2013, 152). An action-orientated representationalism might entail “sparse, outcome-directed, egocentric and context-specific” representations which are “dynamically constructed through precisely the kind of repeated sensorimotor interaction that is indicative of situatedness” (ibid). Furthermore, this sort of representationalism, I claim, does not penultimately differ in great detail form Husserl’s account of empathy.

All forms of representationalism involve a representational format which does the work of carrying some sort of content. For example, a landscape painting uses the format of pictorial forms to represent the contents of a scene in nature. A linguistic representationalist assumes that language represents concepts, or things out there in the world, via vehicles like meanings or the symbols of natural languages. The representational theory of mind assumes that mentality consists in being related in some attitudinal way (i.e. belief or desire) to mental contents. According to the traditional computational theory of mind, “cognitive states and processes are constituted by the occurrence, transformation and storage (in the mind/brain) of information-bearing
structures (representations)” (Pitt 2013) Other purported mental representational states are perceptions, which represent the contents of properties of physical objects in a phenomenal format, i.e. via *qualia* (ibid).

In difference to these classical representational accounts, on Husserl’s rendition, perceptual acts structure ‘hyletic data,’ a type of sensation, in order to win intentional reference. Hyletic sensations are the presentational ‘stuff’ of intentional acts. There are many reasons why this account is more direct than your average representational account (i.e. the notion of structuring instead of representing, and the use of sensations themselves instead of representative phenomenalistic *qualia*). In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl does, however, use what he later terms the “misunderstood expression” (1980, 10) ‘representative contents’ to mean hyletic data, but by these phrases he means only *sensations*. Sensations “are the indispensable material foundation for all basic sorts of *noeses*; …even experience of [another] animate organism” (ibid). Husserl states that the term hyletic data denotes the “broadest extension” of the concept of sensation (Husserl 1977, 128). For Husserl, then, sensations—representative contents which are structured by *noetic* acts—are a broad class which is composed not only of externally orientated visual and auditory formats of sensations, but also internally orientated proprioceptive and motoric/kinaesthetic formats of sensation.

For Husserl, “kinaesthetic sensations form continuous multidimensional systems” (Husserl 1997, 143). Further, Husserl thought that the kinaesthetic system was in a ‘functional’ relationship with other systems, i.e. that different kinaesthetic sensations which perform the same role were functionally equivalent. In order to see an object to my left, I might move my head, my trunk, or my entire body, but the resulting change in visual data has the same outcome. The kinaesthetic system is thus *functionally adaptable*, and works across several dimensions of movement. Husserl even suggests that kinaesthetic sensation might be functionally adaptable to expanding into incorporating new objects, like a walking cane. The kinaesthetic system is therefore *prone to reemployment* (Husserl 1973c, 299, cited in Taipale 2014).

In the context of contemporary cognitive science, the notion of representation in bodily format is one of the strongest and most non-trivial versions of the embodiment thesis, and there are a variety of bodily formats, i.e. motoric, somatosensory, affective, and interoceptive (Goldman & de Vignemont 2009). One of the strongest and most
parsimonious ways to understand Gallese’s claim that I represent your movements in bodily format, is to think that he merely means that I reemploy or “reuse” (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011b) the sensation format of my first-person kinaesthetic/motoric body schema to do the work of conveying content about your body. Gallese’s representational format—the motoric body schema—is ultimately composed of the sensations of kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, and any other bodily sensations. We could, as Husserl does, envisage that the reemployment of sensation formats is rooted in an analogical transference based on the foreknowledge and experience of seeing our own lived body whilst we experience a complex of kinaesthetic sensations, and the adaptable nature of the kinaesthetic system. The kinaesthetic system is here merely fulfilling another function, and coordinating with another (intersubjective perceptual) dimension of sensation. In empathic perception, the hyletic data which constitute the visual perception of the other’s body is mingled with attributed transferred kinaesthetic data.

Husserl states that

Transferred over to the other Bodies thereby is first of all that ‘localization’ I accomplish in various sense fields (fields of touch, warmth coldness, smell, taste, pain, sensuous pleasure) and sense regions (sensations of movement) (Husserl 1989, 172, my italics)

Phrased phenomenologically, in embodied simulation first-person bodily kinaesthetic sensations are an extra (non-externally orientated) form of sensation that intersubjective perception additionally structures in order to win an intentional reference to another psychic being. The format which is doing the representing in this case is the very same schema of proprioceptive kinaesthetic sensations that carry the contents of the information I receive about my own body during regular perception (which, as I noted, always comes with kinaesthetic experience). External hyletic data (sensations of shapes and colours of external objects) and kinaesthetic sensations are always a “constitutive duet” (Taipale 2014, 36), however, when I see the other, the kinaesthetic system takes on a ‘mirroring’ function within the duet which could be characterised as a type of ‘simulation’.

As I discussed in §3.3.2, empathy is a species of perception, and is thus a presentative type of act. But, Husserl even states, although the presentation of another psychologically animated being “belongs to the sphere of [direct] experience and not to
the mere reproduction of experiences,” the other is given “by means of a kind of representation” (Husserl 1980, 8, my italics). The German phrase which is translated here as “kind of representation” is “Art von Vergegenwärtigung” (Husserl 1952a, 9), which means in the ‘manner’ or ‘style’ (Art) of ‘re-presentification’ (Ver-gegenwärtigung). We might explicate this phrase by saying that the perception of the other happens in the style of a re-presenting, presumably, one might conjecture, a re-presenting of contents which have already been more directly presented in some other way, i.e. first-person bodily sensations.

In what, I will admit, is one of his less than perfect phrasings, Husserl seems to endorse the notion of reusing sensation contents to represent animate organisms when he writes that

the same sensations that function in the realizing apprehension of material perception as presentive contents for material characteristics receive localization as sensation states and make specific animate organicity appear in the new realizing apprehension we call experience of animate organism (Husserl 1980, 10).

In other words, the same sensations that I normally experience in myself when I perceive are reused, transferred over, and receive localisation in the other, which allows them to appear as a living, psychically animated body. As I outlined in chapter two, empathy operates by transferring the sense that accompanies my first-person sense of embodiment over to your body. My sense of kinaesthesis echoes or reverberates within my perception of your body. There is no fundamental difference between Husserl’s characterisation and the claim that we share representations in bodily format, though the latter is phrased in distinctly cognitive science terminology.

Finally, it is necessary to introduce some extra form of sensation to our account of intersubjective perception. As Husserl rightly emphasised, dynamic sensory perception of inanimate objects already includes within it the hyletic data of our own bodily sensations, and the kinaesthetic data of movement. I stated in §2.4.3 that a dependent part of regular perception is what it feels like to move around the objects that we perceive. The hyletic data of my movement and the position of my body is as much a dependent part of my perception of inanimate objects as the visual sensations are. Furthermore, empathic apperception already involves regular material apperception. Husserl intimates that intersubjective perception cannot be merely cashed out by relying on the same types of
data as sensory perception does (Husserl 1999b). There *must* be *some other* form of data involved in intersubjective perception that is *not* involved in my perception of inanimate spatial objects. Zahavi and others have long complained that the supposition of hidden minds is what necessitates the postulation of extra perceptual (simulatory) processes. However, rejecting the hidden minds hypothesis cannot amount to claiming that empathy and the perception of inanimate objects are identical; for Husserl, empathy is not merely perception, but a special type of analogising apperception. Empathy is a *form* of perception, but is not thereby indistinguishable from all other species of perception. What I am suggesting here (and what I think all embodied simulation theory boils down to) is that there is a resonance and reverberation between my bodily movements and yours, and this resonance is the hyletic data which characterises empathic perception, and distinguishes empathic perception from perception of inanimate objects.

There is no good reason why we should not see the extra content that Husserl’s account of empathy requires as parallel with Gallese’s notion of representation of the other’s body in a bodily format—and why we should not think of both as direct. Kinaesthetic and proprioceptive sensations, if they present my body, are classed as intuitive and direct. Given the ‘immediate’ (i.e. hyletic, non-pictorial/significative) nature of bodily sensations, and given that empathic perception requires some extra, new content, the embodied simulation account of representation of the other’s body in bodily format is as direct a form of ‘representationalism’ as we could wish for. Gallese’s account is not representational in the sense that it relies on some unnecessary intra-mental immanent object or process, or refers to an extra experiential thing-in-itself, and it specifically rejects the invocation of propositional content. It only introduces a postulate that Husserl’s own account deems necessary. It merely involves the claim that we refer to the other’s body using the format of our own body schema. We can see the simulation account (when stripped back to its core) as an explication of Husserl’s account, or at least parallel with it in most important senses, especially in regards to directness.

Such a spelling out of Gallese’s functional and neurobiological account in various sense fields amounts to a static phenomenological psychological account. It amounts, in other words, to a phenomenologically reduced version of a cognitive science theory. This provides us with an excellent exemplar of what I mean by a program of phenomenological correlationism. Cognitive science accounts, such as Gallese’s neurological and functional account, require re-description in the appropriate
phenomenological terminology, or correlation with the appropriate phenomenological concepts. This removes cognitive science postulates from the theoretical realm and reconnects them with the concrete field of psychological and phenomenological experience, which is the proper space for psychological discussions. Thus, Gallese’s account, ultimately, does not contradict Husserl’s account, and can even be viewed as a contemporary expression of it. Furthermore, correlating Gallese’s account with Husserl’s provides concrete details and serves to validate the simulation theory. I suggest that all cognitive theories should be constrained by how successfully they can be correlate with a phenomenological account, and such a successful correlation contributes to the validity of cognitive science theories.

In conclusion, we have good reason to think that Husserl and embodied simulation theory were tracing the contours of the same social process, though they have very different assumptions, aims, vocabularies, and methodologies. Furthermore, many of the objections raised by Spaulding and Zahavi fail to have their intended impact on simulation theory. My next chapter will continue with the project of showing the similarities between Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity and the simulation theory. However, I will shift the grounds of the discussion to higher level intersubjective processes than we have thus far been discussing.
Chapter 6. High-Level Simulation Theory and High-Level Imaginative Empathy

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed several hierarchically organised aspects, or ‘levels,’ within embodied empathy. As briefly mentioned, additional to these intra-divisions, embodied empathy can be characterised as a ‘lower’ form of empathy on the whole, and contrasted with ‘higher’ forms. These higher forms of empathic intersubjectivity, which are the focus of this chapter, enable more complex forms of social understanding.

As background to a discussion of higher forms of empathy, we must observe that Husserl thinks that reality can be carved into three ‘regions.’ The first, ‘lowest’ or most basic region is the material/physical region of “mere things” I characterised in §2.4.1. Second is the region of psychically animated living bodies (Leib). Third, the final ‘highest’ region is the ‘spiritualistic’ or ‘personalistic’ region (Husserl 1989), which is correlated with the personalistic attitude (personale Einstellung) or the ‘spiritual/mental’ attitude (Geisteseinstellung) (Kern & Marbach 2001, 76). These three regions are populated by differing genera of objects: physical things, living animals and psychic life, and ideal objects (like sciences, cultures, propositions, and numbers), respectively. We thus “have an intermingling of three realities, each successive one in the series including in itself the preceding one” (Husserl 1980, 12); these regions are nestled inside one another. The low-level empathy discussed is peculiar to the psychically animated region, but there is also a higher form of empathy peculiar to the higher personal region.

Within the personal region, I am no longer considered as just a ‘pure’ (but embodied) ego, but also a “personal ego” (Husserl 1989, 231); I have a ‘personal self-notion,’ or an ‘individual notion.’ A facet of this personal self is its distinguishing system of beliefs. In Husserl’s terms, the personal self ‘takes positions’ (ibid, 232) such as assent,

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37 Which I will mostly refer to as the personal region. Although I think there might be some confluence between Husserl’s ‘personalistic’ region, and what is contemporarily termed the ‘personal level,’ the latter carries connotations, particularly in the psychological context, which the former does not. Also, as we’ll see in the next chapter, I strenuously resist the characterisation of phenomenology as a form of ‘personal level’ psychology. It is thus better to keep separate Husserl’s ‘personal’ region from contemporary notions of the ‘personal’ level.

38 This is the region of ‘Geist,’ a term which is notoriously difficult to translate. ‘Geist’ can be translated as either ‘mind’ or ‘spirit.’ It is the ‘spirit’ in the ‘spirit of the times,’ or, zeitgeist, or when people talk about ‘the human spirit,’ or someone being ‘spirited.’ Husserl follows Dilthey and Hegel in adopting this term (Moran 2005, 215). It is best not to think of this term as denoting some type of hypostatic religious spiritual realm, or a purely earthly cognitive realm, but something in between. Historically speaking, the spirit or soul and the mind were not as easily distinguished as they are in the contemporary Anglophone world, and the German term Geist points towards this ambivalent historical meaning.
disbelief, doubt, etc., on a variety of propositions and states of affairs. Thus, our self-
notion is constituted by a unique web of beliefs. Because of this, the personal self
exercises the freedom to decide its own values, and make ethical and moral judgements.
Another facet of the personal self-notion is that we each also experience differing
temptations to differing degrees, determined by a system of drives and instincts, and have
habits of yielding to or resisting these temptations (ibid, 267). So, the personal self-notion
includes “personal features” or “properties of character”: peculiarities, preferences, etc.,
that distinguish me from others (ibid, 261). Self-experience, within the personal region, is
of “what sort of personal subject I am” (ibid). Our personal self-notion is developed by
reflection on our experience, via which we come to understand who we are, how we
comport ourselves, and what motivates us (ibid, 260). In contemporary terms, Husserl is
outlining that, via reflection on our life, we develop an individual and distinguishing
identity, a self-haecceity, which he terms the ‘personal ego’ or ‘personal subject,’ and
which I will call (following Beyer 2012) a ‘personal self-notion.’

As part of my exegesis in chapter two, I noted that embodied empathy functions
via an analogising apperception between my body and the body of the other, which is
based on a perceptive recognition of similarity. The empathy which occurs within the
personal region is also based on an analogical recognition of similarity, but in this case
“others are apprehended in analogy with one’s own [personal] ego” (Husserl 1989, 240).
As is befitting the constitutional directional focus of static phenomenology, high-level
empathy begins with self-experience of my personal self-notion, and then involves
identifying that the other is analogously a ‘personal self.’ I understand that others have a
web of beliefs and values, individual temptations determined by drives which they are
prone to yield to or resist, and have prototypical modes of comportment to their
surrounding world (ibid). Just as I do.

However, grasping the self–notion of the other involves grasping their
peculiarities of character, and their distinguishing and individual identity. An obvious
problem with this outline is just how an analogical recognition of similarity can allow me
to grasp your uniqueness and difference from me. If I am relying on analogy, how do I
empathise with another who is disanalogous to me? As I mentioned in the last chapter,
this problem faces both simulation theorists and Husserl. It will be the purpose of this
chapter to explain how this is possible, defending both Husserl and high-level simulation
theory.
6.1.1 The intertwining of low and high-level empathy, and the definition of high-level empathy

In the secondary phenomenological literature, what I term ‘high-level empathy’ is similar to what Spiegelberg (1980) and Depraz (2001) describe as “second stage” empathy, and resembles what Ratcliffe (2012) has more recently described as “radical empathy.” In the primary sources, in one text Husserl terms low-level empathy “improper empathy” (uneigentliche Einfühlung) and high-level empathy “proper empathy” (eigentliche Einfühlung) (Husserl 1973a, 438, 457, quoted in Zahavi 2014, 138). The former is a perceptual, passive, and associative phenomenon of the psychic or ‘animal’ region, whilst the latter is more active and targets the beliefs, decisions, and attitudes of the other (Husserl 1973a, 435, 455, 475-436, cited in Zahavi 2014, 138).

The division into proper and improper empathy is a facsimile of the division we find in Ideas 2—the main textual source for this chapter. A parallel with improper (or, perceptual) empathy is outlined during Husserl’s discussion of the psychic region in the second part of Ideas 2, and a parallel to proper empathy is outlined during the third part of Ideas 2, where Husserl discusses the personal region. Perceptual empathy is the sort we have been discussing in previous chapters, and it is clear in Ideas 2 that, in distinction, high-level empathy is a species of the genus of the imagination. The genera of perception and imagination are related in complex ways, as are low and high-level empathy. For example, I argued in the last chapter that understanding others via imaginative projection often involves elements of embodiment (§5.6.1). As Depraz puts it, high-level empathy is often “highly embodied, because it relies upon a concretely dynamical spatializing of imagining” (Depraz 2001, 173). To fully understand the complex facets of the other’s personal self-notion we will need more than perception and embodiment, though, and the unique functions of the imagination provide this further understanding.

During the most extended discussion of high-level empathy in the third part of Ideas 2 it is referred to by the term ‘Einfühlung.’ Low and high-level empathy are the same type of act, and involve understanding the other on the basis of self-knowledge. We can affirm this because Husserl uses another illuminating descriptive phrase at one point in Ideas 2 to characterise high-level empathy—“nachverstehendes Erleben”39 (Husserl 1952b, 269), which Beyer explains means “comprehending on the basis of one’s own

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39 This is rendered in the English translation merely as ‘empathy’ (Husserl, 1989, 282).
lived experience” (Beyer 2012, 112). Another Husserlian phrase which characterises high-level empathy is sich Hineinphantasieren, which is often rendered as ‘imaginative self-transposal’ (Depraz 2001), or could literally be rendered as ‘to put oneself into (or through) via the imagination.’ So, what I term high-level empathy is defined as understanding the other on the basis of my own lived experience by putting myself into their place via imagination. As we will see, an important addendum is that I can understand the other on the basis of a past or possible lived experience. In order to flesh out these cursory definitions and provide a rich description of high-level empathy (in §6.5 and §6.6) we need to expand our vocabulary of Husserlian concepts (§6.2), and deepen our understanding of self-experience (§6.3 and §6.4).

6.2 Expanding our Husserlian conceptual vocabulary

6.2.1 Motivation

Importantly, in the personalistic sphere I interpret myself and others through the framework of motivation. Motivation is the psychic and personal level equivalent of physical causality: it comes in many varieties, yet is always a determining relation, which provides law-like regularity. Husserl thinks that rationality is motivated, like the way judgments are motivated by perceptions or by other judgments, or he also speaks in terms of passive associative motivations, like when a thought reminds a person of other thoughts, and calls back into memory a past experience. The central point is that motivations are relationships of dependency that pertain amongst experiences (acts and contents) (Kern & Marbach 2001, 77).

Our personal self-notion contains a web of such motivations (Husserl 1989, section 56). For example, the way that underlying political beliefs influence my judgements about given policies, or my propensity to enjoy classical music, or the fact that certain times of year and places reliably remind me of certain times in my life, are aspects of an interrelated motivational nexus which serves to partly define my personal self-notion. High-level empathy essentially grasps that others too “are subject to the laws of motivation” (Husserl 1989, 240). In order to fully unpack how this intersubjective grasping happens, though, we must first make the observation that Husserl thinks that our awareness of the motivational relationships within our personal self-notion influences our assessment of how we ourselves will behave in the future.

6.2.2 The future
Take these two propositions about the future.

**Proposition one:** I can complete my dissertation.

**Proposition two:** I cannot complete my dissertation.

Now, one of these statements is true but, at the moment, I just do not know which one. As Husserl notes, I cannot assuredly say “what I would do in the future under circumstances of this or that kind. For until then much will have elapsed in my consciousness… Needless to say, the future cannot be predicted with certainty” (Husserl 1989, 310). Due to the indeterminacy of the future, both of these statements are practical possibilities. However, I can tell what I *probably* will do in the future, and not merely what I *possibly* could. I have a sense which statement is true and which false. I get this sense, Husserl thinks, via an *imaginative* process which calls on the motivational nexus.

### 6.2.3 The imagination

Our discursión into Husserlian concepts brings us to an exploration of the broad genus of conscious activity that is the imagination. For Husserl, the terms imagination and phantasy are roughly synonymous, though technically he terms mental imagery or the sensory imagination ‘phantasy,’ as will I. Both phantasy and sense perception are experiences of something extensive (Husserl 1980, 2), and intuitive, and Husserl states that “almost all of the distinctions we made in the case of perception find application in the case of phantasy” (Husserl 2005, 17). Thus, although the imagination can recreate all types of conscious activity, it is uniquely suited to feign sensory perception. Both acts present hyletic data/qualitative content, and there is thus no *essential* difference in the *content* of phantasy and perception—they are “of the same sort” (ibid, 81)—though can vary in vivacity or intensity. Husserl terms the contents of imaginings (‘phantasms’) ‘modifications’ of sensation (ibid, 332). Phantasms “are sense contents, and sense contents of the same genus and species as those to be found in sensation” (ibid, 81). Yet, perceptual sensation “is the mark of reality; all reality is measured against it; it is a primary, actual present. On the other hand, the *phantasm*, the sensuous content of phantasy, gives itself as not present” (ibid, 87). Phantasms are nullities; irreal (ibid, 84).

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40 At the time of writing.
41 I adopt the ‘ph’ spelling of ‘phantasy’ following the translators of Husserl’s magnum opus on the topic—*Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory* (2005). The Husserlian use should be kept separate from the unconscious imagination in the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition which is also spelt ‘phantasy.’
Thus, the essential difference between perception and imagination is an act-quality. In perception the quality is ‘in person,’ ‘in the flesh and bones,’ ‘present.’ On the other hand, the quality of the imagination is ‘as-if’ I perceive, as if “but not quite” (Jansen 2013, 68). In the imagination the mode is ‘as though,’ ‘quasi or inactual,’ “completely saturated with the characteristic of the as-if” (Brough 2005, lxvi, see also Husserl 2005, 18 & 546). The object of an imagining appears “as only possible (but not actual)” (Jansen 2013, 68); the existence of that object is neither posited nor denied, but put into a state of suspense—neutralised (Husserl 2001b, 165). Husserlian imagination involves the recreation of experiences which have the quality of possibility and not actuality (Jansen 2013, 67), which underpins our capacity to represent counterfactuals.

Furthermore, unlike sensations, phantasms appear intermittently. “While the sense fields of sensation are continuously filled in the course of conscious life and change conformably to law, the same is not true of the sense fields of phantasy. They arise and disappear” (Husserl 2005, 82). When I perceive it is not necessary that I simultaneously imagine, but the reverse does not hold true. Indeed, imagination without ongoing perception becomes delusion, hallucination, or dream (Jansen 2013). Our sensual perceptions might fade into the background whilst we are in phantasy, but never completely dissipate. This ceaselessness of perception constitutes the ‘unreal,’ ‘quasi,’ and ‘as-if’ nature of imagination; through perception, reality constantly knocks at the door of consciousness when we are imagining, and this knocking in the background lets us know that what we imagine is not real and stamps our imaginings with a distinguishing ‘as-if’ or ‘quasi’ quality (Husserl 2005, 45).

The imagination is not limited to feigning sensory perception, however, but can mimic all different types of experience (Husserl 1989, 275), including elements of the motivational nexus (ibid, 277). Imagined motives are ‘neutral,’ ‘inactual,’ or ‘quasi’-motives. Exercising the full imagination is normally a compound activity. For example, I might be going camping in a few days. Whilst daydreaming, I imagine myself arriving and putting up the tent. This imaginative exercise has both a qualitative phantasy aspect (I envision the tent and the campground) and imagined ‘quasi-motives’ (I want to get a good spot and put the tent up quickly).

6.2.4 Pure (empty) and real (motivated) possibilities
In a general sense, an imaginative projection like my daydream can be understood as a representation of a possibility. An “experience ‘in’ phantasy is itself a possible experience” (Husserl 2005, 661). As Mohanty (1984, 26) notes, Husserl has a “widely ramified” account of possibility, and not all types of possibility are comparable, as possibilities can be given in many ways—symbolically, intuitively, emptily, doubtfully, etc. However, Husserl makes a fundamental distinction between ‘pure’ or ‘empty’ possibilities and ‘real’ or ‘motivated’ possibilities. In Phenomenological Psychology Husserl refers to this a difference between “sheer, pure fantasy-possibility” and “actuality and real possibility” (63). Husserl’s most well-known demonstration of this distinction comes in Ideas I, where he writes that it “is emptily possible for the desk I am writing on to turn out to have thirty legs; the possibility of the desk having four legs is motivated” (Husserl 1983, 337). Pure possibilities are arbitrary creations of the imagination, and no reality is co-posited with them (Husserl 2005, 661). “Real or motivated possibilities,” on the other hand “are possibilities [that] might reasonably be expected to turn out in future” (Bower 2013, 26). Thus, arbitrary, pure, or empty possibilities are unlikely whilst real or motivated possibilities are likely or probable.

The capacity to generate pure possibilities affords the phenomenological method of eidetic variation. To grasp an essence one varies an exemplary object of its type in the imagination. However, our variations must be truly random to ensure that essentiality is captured, and the imagination allows the shift from empirically conditioned variation, to truly random unconditioned variation through pure possibility (Husserl 1973d, section 87). Abstract essences (like ‘colour’ or ‘shape’) are only purely possible, because they cannot in fact exist independently in concretion, and grasping them requires the imaginative faculty (Mohanty 1984). What we need to take away for our purposes is that Husserl thinks that we can imagine “a pure fiction..., in no place and no time, free from all weight of actuality” (Husserl 1977, 53), and that the pure imagination, because it is ultimately free and unfettered by reality, provides access to this non-empirical ‘pure’ alterity—“unconditional arbitrariness” (Husserl 2005, 642).

However, as Brough outlines, for Husserl, normally phantasy is contaminated by other acts (2005, xxxix). Husserl even at one point questions if pure phantasy is possible (Husserl 2005, 683); our imaginings are rarely completely pure and random. Other acts, such as memory, positionality, and probability calculations, normally intermingle and weave their way through our phantasy acts and affect their phenomenological character.
Although the imagination is the foundation of the ability to conceive of pure unconditioned possibilities, mostly phantasies and other imaginative acts are at least partially conditioned and shaped by reality, and thereby depict impure possibilities (Brough 2005, xxix & xi).

6.3 Probable future selves: ‘I can’

In light of these discussions, we can think of propositions one and two (from §6.2.2) as possible futures which I can imagine. Furthermore, I class the first proposition, that I will complete my dissertation, as a likely/motivated possibility, whilst the proposition that I won’t complete it seems emptier and more random. I think this because, as Husserl outlines in Ideas 2, reflection on life experience develops my self-notion, which in turn “predelineates an intentional horizon of possible future experiences that are to be more or less expected” (Beyer 2012, 111); I develop my self-notion through reflection on previous modes of comportment, and on that basis “I anticipate subsequent modes of comportment” (Husserl 1989, 278). Because I have the sense that my self-notion is a reliable indicator of my future comportment,

If I now phantasise, if I settle myself (as the one I am) into a phantasised actuality or into the world given in the neutrality modification…, then I am judging how such and such motives (more precisely: the quasi-motives of the phantasised environment) would affect me, how I, as the one I am, would act and could act (ibid).

Thus, the likelihood of phantasied future scenarios is a function of the closeness or congruence between imaginative quasi-motives and the actual system of motivation within my personal self-notion, and comparing the two serves as a type of probability calculator concerning future action.

In this way, our personal self-notion also determines our assessment of our capabilities: the sense that ‘I can’ or ‘I cannot.’ The former involves the consciousness of the ability to overcome resistance, to know that something is within my power (Husserl 1989). With the latter the “resistance can become insurmountable; in that case we come up against the… ‘I cannot,’ ‘I do not have the power’” (ibid). Just as our bodily sense of ‘I can’ expresses motoric affordances, our sense of ‘I can’ at the higher level expresses our sense of our higher abilities. The sense of ‘can’ and ‘cannot’ defer to an assessment of the likeliness of a possible future, and a comparison of that possible future with our self-
notion (ibid, 277-278). In this way, our personal self-notion defines our sense of what we can and cannot do.

So, returning to my personal example (in order to flesh all these concepts out), over the past few years I have often asked myself whether or not I can complete my dissertation. To this end, I have imagined what sorts of tasks are necessary to achieve this, well in advance of them occurring: the reading, the ceaseless writing and rewriting, and the discipline required to apply oneself to a self-directed project. As Sokolowski (1992) notes, when I imagine myself as such, there “are not two selves, but one self duplicated” (17). My imagined self-notion is based on reflection on my past experience. In the past, I have enjoyed reading and writing philosophy immensely, and do not struggle to be disciplined at things I enjoy. Reflection on these past experiences has formed part of my identity—my personal self-notion, which is a reliable predictor of future comportment. Naturally, because there is a high level of congruence between the quasi-motives which I have in a phantasy where I complete my dissertation and my actual personal self-notion, I thereby feel that this phantasy is likely. As Husserl writes, when I affirm a statement like proposition one, I do not remain in a purely imaginative attitude but also “I am saying something about the way I am (and perhaps about how I used to be and supposedly will be)” (Husserl 1989, 343). This sort of imaginative exercise gives me the sense that, although proposition one remains at this stage in the realm of possibility, it is probable, or, it is a real or motivated possibility. This constitutes a real noticeable phenomenological sense that ‘I can’ complete my dissertation.

6.4 Unlikely and improbable future selves: ‘I cannot’

Unfortunately, the option that ‘I cannot’ complete my dissertation is not nonsense or a logical contradiction. It too is possible. For example, I might lose interest in my topic, begin to find it tiring and boring, and stop working. Admitting as much admits a mere “practical possibility to the extent that I, assuming I desired it, had the ability to carry it out” (Husserl 1989, 343). However, thus far I have not lost interest, and I have the sense that any imagined future where I have a different motivational system than the one I actually do is an unlikely, empty, or improbable possibility. Thus, we might call the motives that I have in unlikely imagined scenarios double quasi-motives; motives which are ‘quasi’ for two reasons. First, like all quasi-motives, they are imagined, second, they are not found within or congruent with my actual system of motivations. A double quasi-
motive is thus ‘purer’—in that it has less intermingling with empirical reality—than the (single) quasi-motives I had in the imagined scenario from the previous section. In order to represent how proposition two might come about I need entertain a phantasy where I have quasi-motives which are incongruent with the horizon of my self-notion. I thus very much need to imagine a different self.

In a work which was central to the development of this chapter, Beyer (2012) spends a lot of energy attempting to solve how Husserl thought that we might represent a scenario like proposition two. He questions, understandably, how Husserl thought that we can come up with and represent a motive which we do not actually have. On what basis can I imagine a version of myself which is different than I actually am? Importantly, this question concerning self-knowledge parallels the one we opened this chapter with, i.e. how can we understand someone who is dissimilar to us on the basis of analogical self-knowledge?

I believe that one aspect of the solution which Beyer does not consider in his 2012 book chapter lies in an understanding of the capability of the imagination to generate pure possibilities. Husserl states that, if we allow the imagination free reign, it has “the ability to run through freely… the endless manifolds… of possibilities of lived processes” (Husserl 1980, 44). It is this capacity that makes the imagination invaluable for the phenomenological method of eidetic variation. The solution to how it is we generate pure, double quasi-motives lies in recognising the ‘simple’ or ‘pure’ function of the imagination. To generate a double motive we ‘merely’ remain in a pure imaginative attitude, and allow no actuality to intermingle. It is thereby possible to generate random variations on motivations. From this perspective, we have to grant the imagination the capacity to represent any possible system of motivations, including ones which are entirely alien to our own self-notion.

Alternatively, the solution to this problem which Husserl proposes in Ideas 2 is that I might recall a time when my motivational system was different. Husserl notes that motivational systems change from youth to old age (Husserl 1989, 279), and, as Sokolowski observes, we continually mix and blend recollection with imagination (Sokolowski 1992, 80). For example, in my youth I was easily distracted and prone to

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42 Professor Beyer has intimated to me that he considers this solution elsewhere.
43 Simpler in the sense of less complex. Coming up with pure phantasies may not be ‘easier,’ or involve less cognitive effort than having impure phantasies, which seems more natural.
despondence and boredom. If I still had this motivational system, I might not complete my dissertation. I can thus imagine how the practical possibility of proposition two might come to fruition. However, because I no longer consider these features part of my personal self-notion, if I imagine a future self which has this motivational system, they are double quasi-motives. Motives I could, but do not actually have, but once did. So, double quasi-motives need not only be drawn from the imaginations capacity to generate pure possibilities. They are not always plucked merely from ‘thin air’ so to speak, but can be drawn in a sense from reflection on experience as well. Even double quasi-motives can be, in this sense, related to the self. Of course, double quasi-motives might be generated through a combination of pure imagination and past experience; we might imagine variations on old motivational systems.

6.5 Two different forms of high-level empathy

6.5.1 Understanding the other who is like me

We have now done all the preparatory work we need to in order to discuss high-level empathy. In the previous sections, I have shown how Husserl thinks that we garner a sense of what we probably will do in the future, yet can also represent what we only possibly could but probably will not do.\footnote{As one reviewer observed, these capacities to some extent already presuppose others. This is undoubtedly true. We must keep in mind my work’s restriction to static phenomenology and a unidirectional form of constitution.} It was crucial to outline as much because, as the next sections show, for Husserl, these two aspects of self-understanding involving single and double sense quasi-motives are parallel with and constitutionally foundational for two forms of social understanding which I can gain in high-level empathy. So, for the rest of this chapter, the discussion returns back to empathy and thus to the main theme of this dissertation, i.e. Husserl’s phenomenological psychological treatment of intersubjectivity. In a latter section, I relate this discussion back to cognitive science and show the similarity between Husserl’s account and the work of some of the early high-level simulation theorists.

In the third part of Ideas 2, there are two different forms of social understanding which Husserl wants to delineate in his discussions of high-level empathy. The first grasps what about the other “is typical in general” (Husserl 1989, 282). Human beings share typical motivational systems. For example, “people are in general determined in their comportment by previous experience” (ibid, 285). That is, to some extent, all of us...
act the way we do because of our past, and none of us lack a personal history. Understanding others along the lines of these sorts of typical or generally shared motivational relationships is one of the two forms of social understanding which Husserl thinks we gain through high-level imaginative empathy.

Say I have a friend who tells me that they have a lot of fear and anxiety before their first year exams for university. I might say, ‘yes, that is typical.’ Here, I mean that is typical for people in general who are in that kind of position. I might rephrase this by saying, ‘yes, you are human.’ In essence I’m identifying my friend’s reaction as a ‘normal’ reaction, which is determined by a universal and shared motivational system: people in general are fearful when being assessed for something important, including myself. Husserl states that,

I secure these motivations by placing myself in his situation… *I must needs share in that situation:* I not only empathize with his thinking, his feeling, and his action, but I must also follow him in them, his motives becoming my quasi-motives (Husserl 1989, 287).

The parallelism here between self-knowledge and empathic knowledge is not hard to grasp. Just as there is congruence between my imagined future quasi-motives and the motives contained in my self-notion when I entertain a probable future, so there is congruence between the motives I imagine in the other and the motives contained in my personal self-notion when I use high-level empathy to recognise typical features of the others motivational system. As Iyer and Staiti note, for Husserl, “both the foreign self and my fantasy self are modifications of my own self” (Iyer 2010, 70), both empathy and future projection “imply an ego other than the one performing the act i.e., respectively the [future] ego and the alien ego” (Staiti 2010, 50). Specifically, the probable future self and the alien ego *which is akin to me* are grasped analogously, in that they both have quasi-motives which are part of the motivational system which makes up my actual self-notion; the way I understand future selves is similar to the way I understand the other. In this way, self-understanding sets a precedent and lays the foundation for high-level empathy

However, the empathised motives are still ‘quasi,’ not because they are the motives of a probable future self, but now because they are imagined as belonging to someone else. Also, as discussed (§6.2.3), perception continues even during the exercise of the empathic imagination, and thus we are constantly reminded of what is real. So, I
can empathise with my friend without becoming anxious about exams, just as I can phantasise about completing my dissertation without thinking that I am actually doing so. The ‘unreal,’ ‘not quite,’ or ‘as-if’ quality of the imagination allows me to represent other’s motives whilst not being ‘contaminated’ by or ‘contagious’ of them. Recently, it has been stressed that accounts of mental state contagion need to be distinguished from accounts of empathy, as I can empathise with another’s fear or anger, for example, without being fearful or angry myself (Zahavi 2011a). Accounts which rely on the imagination (at least as Husserl conceives it) allow the simulation of the other’s mental states without assuming the same mental state ourselves, due to the imagination’s hallmark ‘quasi’ stamp.

A critical consideration regarding accounts of empathy concerns generalisability. Can I only empathise with a person who is very similar to me, or is empathy more generalisable? My conclusion, given what has just been said, is that empathy has limits, but these limits are elastic. I can outline some of the elasticity of empathy in the context of the present discussion. To recognise the analogy between the first year student and myself, the situations where I have had analogous experiences need not be identical, but only similar enough in the relevant aspects. I may never have had first year exams, but I might remember another event in my life when I was being assessed in a way which would affect my future, like a job review, and I recognise the motivational system which generated my fear in this scenario as an instantiation of the universal motivational feature that people are fearful when being assessed for something important. When I imaginatively project myself into the others shoes, I recognise aspects of their experience which are analogous to mine in the relevant ways, and I empathise. For example, if you tell me that your partner has left you, I can empathise because I know the pain of losing a partner, but I do not need your partner to have previously left me. Thus, the generalisability of empathy is stretched by the relevance stipulation. Furthermore, given this line of reasoning, we should be able to empathise with the more universal aspects of anyone’s self-experience. Falling in love, old age and sickness, feeling anxiety, grief, or joy are all fairly close to universal features of experience and, although we each go through them very differently, we can still recognise the relevant similarities. We only need to have had similar experiences to empathise with each other, and some experiences are universally similar enough.

6.5.2 Understanding the other who is unlike me
Husserl distinguishes a second form of high-level empathy. This form grasps “what is typical in particular and for the individual” (Husserl 1989, 282). For example, say I have a friend who has a renowned temper, and who tells me she yelled at another driver on the road today because she got cut off. I might say, ‘that is typical,’ and in this case I mean typical with respect to my friend. I might say ‘typical you.’ Our preferences, beliefs, tendencies, drives, and dispositions differentiate us, and the form of social understanding in question grasps each individual as a unique character different from other people. Thus, high-level empathy allows me to understand others in two very different ways: in a general/universal way, and also as a unique individual.

As Husserl writes, despite the general empathising just discussed, “there are still unsolved and unsolvable remainders here: e.g., the original dispositions of character” (1989, 287). As Spiegelberg puts it, we must be able to “take on in imagination the individual’s ‘personality,’ one’s intellectual and moral equipment, temperament, and all that goes customarily by the name of character” (Spiegelberg 1980, 171). I need to understand the features of another which I do not share with them to truly grasp the other qua other. Perhaps counterintuitively, Husserl states that it can still be “by analogy” with the self that I make these so-called ‘remainders’ clear and understandable (1989, 287).

Take the above example, where my friend yells at a driver. I think ‘I wouldn’t have done that,’ because I do not share my friend’s motivational system. Perhaps I am a singularly calm person. However, I can still empathise with my friend. I do in the same way that I represent the motivations of a possible but unlikely future self that has incongruent motivations with my current self-notion (like the ‘me’ who failed to complete his dissertation). I outlined that we create ‘inactual’ motivations in two ways. Firstly, I might simply use random imagination. Thus, if I want to understand my friend’s angry reaction on the road, I might merely try to conjecture what motivated her via randomly generated imagined motives.\(^{45}\) I may have to use this method if the other person’s motivations are completely out of line with mine at any point in my life. I would get a

\(^{45}\) And of course, I might in this circumstance use other non-empathic forms of social process, such as those outlined by theory-theorists. The understanding I get thereby would be different, however, but might fulfil the same function. Either way, I am only discussing how Husserlian style empathy contributes to this form of understanding, and am not arguing that this form of understanding can only be gained by empathy, nor even that empathy has some sort of empirical or constitutional priority in these circumstances. See §6.7.3 for discussion.
less intuitively full form of empathy out of this process, and the analogy that obtains is between the other and a *purely possible version of myself*.

Or, alternatively, the easier, more efficient, and presumably common way would be to recall a time or circumstance in my life when my motivational system was different, and I reacted differently to the world, and place this variation of myself in the other’s place. This option presumably provides a more intuitively full phantasy, as I have first-hand experience of what it is like to have motivations I once had. Husserl proposes this solution, and gives the example that if I am, by my nature, sombre, and I want to understand someone who is “constantly and predominantly disposed towards mirth,” then I might recall the way I felt and acted after a couple of glasses of wine, when I too was briefly disposed towards mirth (Husserl 1989, 288). I thus understand the other’s traits via recalling a time when I was temporarily in a similar state. When my friend tells me about their road rage, I might recall how, in my youth, I similarly had a bad temper. I might recall the motivational system of my younger self—particularly my habit of becoming enraged and yielding to my temper—and imagine myself in my friend’s position, getting cut off. This sort of imaginative process creates the sense: ‘I understand you, because I used to be like you.’ Or, perhaps I do not suffer from road rage, but there are other situations which make me comparably angry, and I merely generalise the relevant aspect.

Essentially, I empathise via either a ‘pure’ or ‘purer,’ ‘double’ quasi-motive. This motive is double quasi because it is empathic/imaginative and incongruent with my actual self-notion. The motivational system I insert into this phantasy is at least partly pure—not a real part of my current actual self-notion. It relates still analogously with me, but via my past self, or another possible self, and thus indirectly so. As Depraz puts it, ‘second stage empathy’ (sich Hineinphantasieren) is a process whereby I grasp your psychic states “as being possibly mine. I recall similar experiences where I had such mental states and I am then able to feel empathy” (2001, 173). By these means we “thus form, by analogy, the quasi-motives enabling [us] to understand the motivation” of people who are very different from us (Beyer 2012, 114).

To signpost the conclusion of this chapter, Beyer puts these Husserlian processes in simulation theory terms and states that “off-line simulation by analogy with our own case still allows us to understand the motives of a person that is in this sense alien to us”

46 See §6.6.4 for discussion on this point.
(Beyer 2012, 114-115). Before I move on to this conclusion, however, I will provide commentary and analysis of high-level empathy, because, as I observed in my introduction, it is contemporarily a neglected aspect of the phenomenological account of empathy, I suspect because prominent contemporary phenomenologists want to distance themselves from accounts which resemble the simulation theory. As we shall later see, actually, the denial that there is phenomenological evidence for imaginative high-level empathy is a key claim of the contemporary hybrid phenomenology/cognitive science camp.

6.6 Analysis of high-level empathy

6.6.1 Studying high-level empathy with the phenomenological method

I have five remarks to make concerning high-level empathy. Firstly, methodologically, high-level empathy can be an easier entity to study phenomenologically than low-level empathy. As I discuss in the first chapter, because of the continual feedback loop that is inherent in embodied face-to-face interactions with others, low-level empathy does not easily allow for the attentional shift and practical demands required of a reflective and descriptive methodology. When we are engaged in embodied temporally embedded interaction with others, it is difficult to shift our attention to reflect, and then to somehow mark down our descriptions, without breaking the natural ‘flow’ of interaction, and relying on memories of empathy is problematic. Although high-level empathy might simultaneously occur in the bodily presence of the other, it does not necessarily rely on the bodily presence of the other. Thus, a contingent bonus to studying high-level empathy is that there is not always an interactive feedback loop. High-level empathy more easily lends itself to be studied by phenomenological description. Interestingly, the same bonuses are offered by spying on another from a distance, or, less creepily, merely watching another person on film or television. Of course, empathy is normally a dynamic process and so, in describing this form of high-level empathy this way, we cannot describe actually interactive aspects of intersubjectivity (because the other is not in fact there to interact with us). We gain in quietude what we trade in spontaneous interaction. So, the correlation between phenomenological method and the phenomenon it studies has advantages and shortfalls.

6.6.2 The psychological consequences of high-level empathy
I have noted a few times throughout this thesis that empathy involves an interweaving of closeness and distance; presence and absence; similarity and difference; homogeneity and heterogeneity. When I empathise via a single sense quasi-motive I see us as alike, whilst double-sense quasi-motives maintain difference and distance. I contend that empathy can become unhealthy when one aspect of this balance is over-established to the detriment of the other. In Ideas 2, Husserl’s discussion around the themes of this chapter revolves around trying to resolve an antinomy. Husserl wonders how “I can represent that I would commit a murder and yet I can represent that I wouldn’t commit a murder” (Husserl 1989, 277). Because I desired simplicity, I transformed this antinomy into trying to resolve how I might simultaneously represent proposition one and two. The television series Hannibal depicts a scenario which is closer to Husserl’s original concerns, because it shows how someone, who would not commit a murder, phantasises as to why they would. This series follows the work of Will Graham, a serial murderer profiler. Will gains insight into the motivations of the murderers he tracks, even though those motivations are incongruent with his. It thus provides a fictional portrayal of the second type of high-level empathy just discussed, and also serves to demonstrate the dangers of destabilising the balance between identity and difference.

Often Graham literally bodily places himself in the crime scene and re-enacts the murder. Walking through the physical location adds to the fullness of his phantasy recreations. Through imaginative projection, Graham represents the motives of murderers as if they were his own, and gains empathic insight for the purpose of catching killers. Graham empathises with his quarry by drawing analogies with himself, by digging through and recognising his own psychopathic sub-tendencies. He empathises with his killers because he recognises he could possibly be one of them. Nietzsche famously wrote that he “who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you” (Nietzsche 1989, 89)! Because Will is all too able to empathise he is often on the point of a psychological breakdown; his continual representation of analogously derived empathic double quasi-motives lead to him begin identifying these motives with his own personal self-notion. The double quasi-motive begins to merge into a single sense quasi-motive; as he gains deeper levels of insight into his analysands, the imagined motives becomes more motivated and less empty. The ‘pairing’ empathic relation between Graham and the serial
killers he hunts overemphasises or over-establishes the ‘likeness’ and ‘similarity’ aspect to the detriment and loss of the ‘distance’ and ‘difference’ aspect.

We have, in this case, an example of over-functioning detrimental empathy, an ensuing loss of identity, and Husserl’s account provides an explanation of the underlying mechanisms. In some cases, from both a psychological and moral perspective, we are unprepared and unwilling to engage in high-level empathy. We do not empathise with the most heinous and morally reprehensible criminals because it can be taken to excuse them, and damages our sense of self. It seems that we need, in some cases, to be able to claim that ‘I cannot understand people who do that.’ But, this expresses a psychological limitation, and is not a descriptive claim about the limits of empathy. This claim could be clarified by rephrasing it as, ‘it is too much for me to understand people who do that.’

6.6.3 The moral consequences of high-level empathy

A real world example of empathy via a double quasi-motive is empathy for Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumar. The executions of Chan and Sukumaran where a topic of much discussion in Australia, and one discussion I had with a friend of mine stood out. This friend had a drug addiction in her youth, and remarkably she said she could imagine how she might have been motivated to attempt to commit the crime of drug smuggling when she was in the desperate grips of addiction. Although she never had committed this exact form of moral digression, she had committed others, and could thus imagine Chan and Sukumaran’s motivations by drawing an analogy with her own motivational nexus at a different time. She expressed his awareness of this empathic double quasi-motive with the cliché ‘there but for the grace of God go I.’ Empathic double quasi-motives help us, as Spiegelberg writes, to “realise that what has happened to others might… just as well have happened to us” (Spiegelberg 1980, 173), and this enables compassion.

In some cases we morally value people who can empathise with others whose motivational nexus differs from theirs, but empathy is certainly not the only basis of morality. Many who felt strongly about the executions of Chan and Sukumaran, for example, did not feel empathy with them, but indignation at a foreign power capitalising punishing Australian nationals. However, drawing a line on when we do or do not empathise with others seems to function partly as an expression of which moral virtues

47 Chan and Sukumaran were Australians who were executed in 2015 for smuggling drugs in Indonesia.
we endorse in which circumstances; whether we think that compassion or punishment is the appropriate moral response, and in the latter case we do not necessarily engage in empathy.

So, as Reynolds (2015) asks, could Mother Theresa, for example adequately simulate/imagine the mental states of Adolf Hitler, and thereby empathise with him? The purpose of this question is to dramatically express the question as to whether or not we could adequately empathise with people whose motivational system differs from ours (Mother Teresa and Hitler having polar motivational systems). Reynolds (2015) certainly thinks not, but I suggest she could. Is it really so difficult to grasp Hitler’s motivations? The unfortunate fact is that the sentiments floating around the Austria which Hitler grew up in are very similar to the nationalistic fervour and racial fears which continue to drive all-to-many contemporary political events; they are neither unique nor uncommon. Furthermore, his genocidal impulses were widely shared by many others. Humanising a figure like Hitler and gaining insight into his motivations is precisely the sort of business biographers and historians often engage in, and is the sort of enterprise undertaken in the 2002 film *Max*, which depicts Hitler’s early days as an artist. Hitler’s motivational system does not lie in the realm of utter inconceivability and surely, in truth, we can imagine how such a system could at least possibly be our own. We can make a distinction between empathising with someone’s motivations, and subsequent judgements about actions that are based on these motivations. We are confusing this distinction when we say that we ‘just can’t imagine’ what motivated so-and-so. To say that we just cannot imagine the motivations of immoral actions is to make a moral (and, as just discussed, perhaps psychological) statement (one I would of course endorse) by distancing ourselves, but it is not to make a descriptive statement about empathy’s limits.

Thus, although she could probably not match with Hitler’s mental states, Mother Theresa would surely be able to generate a double-sense imaginative quasi-motive for them. Furthermore, the message of the New Testament, in comparison to the old, is to unconditionally forgive and practice compassion instead of punishing and condemning. Despite the numerous controversies and imperfections of various church groups, Christians often practice compassion towards those that society otherwise condemns, such as murderers, drug addicts, and the homeless, and empathy is sometimes a precondition of such compassion. Sympathy is another ethically relevant process which might also follow after understanding another’s mental life via empathy. But sympathy
does not involve an analogical relation. We can sympathise with another without recognising that we might, in some (at least possible) way, be like them. I would thus suggest that, as Mother Theresa was deeply committed to Christian values, then at the least she could imagine Hitler’s motives, and would also feel compassion and perhaps sympathy thereby.

But my central claim is that, regardless of these extra processes like compassion and empathy, even just recognising via empathy “that what has happened to others might… just as well have happened to us” (Spiegelberg 1980, 173) is already morally relevant, because it engenders humility about one’s own moral character. Saying that one cannot empathise with others who have committed immoral acts demonises them, and in effect makes the claim that one has such a morally superior constitution that one cannot possibly imagine the sort of character in question.

In summary, Husserl’s theory allows us to show how it is that we might empathise with others that are significantly different from us, even those who seem to have grossly immoral motivational systems, and to do all this by relying on analogue empathy. These empathic processes are a sort of first order psychological capacity, and are analytically and descriptively separable from, and in some sense supervene on, higher order psychological desires, and moral judgements, and higher order moral emotions like sympathy and compassion.

6.6.4 The limits of high-level empathy

At its core, Husserlian empathy, at all levels, depends on a relation of analogy between the self and the other. Because of this, we might conceive of a series of concentric circles of fullness and clarity: we strongly empathise with others who are similar to how we are now, less so with people who are similar to the way we once were, and the limit of empathy is people who we can conceive of ourselves as possibly being like. Stein (2008) draws out one of the conclusions from this schema:

the extent to which I am able to bring the other’s experience to empathic fulfilment depends upon my own experiential life… When there is a greater divergence between our respective constitutions, it might be impossible for me to fulfil the empathically intended but emptily given experience. I can certainly empathise with humans of other age groups and gender than myself, and I can also empathize with some non-human animals. But the further I deviate from the type human being, the
emptier and more lacking in fulfilment the empathy will be (cited in Zahavi 2014, 137-137).

All forms of race, gender, and culture, etc., all stand in a relationship of similarity or dissimilarity with oneself, which fosters or hinders empathy (but, due to the elasticity of empathy, does not serve to enable or prevent it). According to this schema, Mother Theresa would not *strongly* empathise with Hitler, in an intuitively full way, but in an empty way, as their respective constitutions are so different, and the relation of dissimilarity so strong.

As Reynolds observes, it has been unclear to what extent self-knowledge can “provide a basis for knowledge of other people, especially in situations of significant cultural, historical, or temperamental diversity” (Reynolds 2015, 348). On Reynolds’ thinking it is unclear, if we join Husserl’s theory of empathy with the notion of analogy, to what extent empathy generalises. My point is, firstly, social knowledge based on self-knowledge comes in degrees, and there is no problem with saying that empathy between a purely possible self and the other is very weak and nearly intuitively empty. But, as long as even a weak analogical relation remains, then we can dub the process ‘empathy’. Secondly, although I think that generalisability of empathy is elastic, I cannot see any problems with admitting that it has limitations, and I especially do not think we should redefine empathy as a result (as Ratcliffe 2012, and to some extent Zahavi, try to do). Once the other’s experience moves out of what Ratcliffe terms our own “modal space” (2012, 480), or space of conceivable possibilities, I do not think we should term our understanding of what lies beyond ‘empathy.’ At the very least, we can safely say that these forms of social understanding are *not* what Husserl was trying to characterise under the banner of ‘empathy.’ There is no need to overreach the explanatory scope of empathy, and working out the limits of empathy is just the sort of job the phenomenologist can perform; we can give a clear description of any phenomena and then, via the exploration of limiting cases, define when it ceases to be the sort of phenomena it is.

Generally speaking, people who have had similar experiences or worldviews tend to congregate together, partly because they more easily relate and empathise with each other. Also, just as we *can* empathise with *universal* features of everyone’s experience, we *cannot* empathise with some of the more *unique* and specialized types of experiences. A classic example is that it is often said that a man could simply not empathise with the
experience of childbirth. Even imagining examples of extreme pain seem to miss the mark, as the experience of childbirth is more than merely extreme pain. Men cannot grasp the relevant aspects of childbirth—i.e. nurturing one’s progeny inside one’s body for nine months—obviously because men lack the relevant biological capabilities. There are undoubtedly non-analogical (and therefore non-empathic) forms of social understanding, and to admit as much concedes little. We might engage in theory-theory style processes, and understand someone’s behaviour by explaining it via reference to a general rule, a rule which does not apply to us, or at least is not understood as such; or we might just sympathise with another, without acknowledging any actual or possible similarity between us—but these processes are not empathy. As it involves analogy at its core, the type of social process which Husserl calls ‘Einfühlung’ has limits.

6.6.5 The generalisability of high-level empathy

However, my final remark concerning elasticity is that reflection has the capacity to stretch the limits of empathy. The reliance on analogy highlights a relation between reflection and empathy, because to know the other we must know ourselves, and reflection enables self-knowledge. As Kern and Marbach explain, in early childhood we undergo subjective intentional experiences in the first-person, often unreflectively. However, not until we develop our reflective capacity are we likely to become aware that other creatures, too, have similar experiences. Prior to self-reflection, the attribution of intentionality to others is merely theoretical. In order to intuitively “understand other persons as representational subjects, one must oneself enter into the motivational connections of their experiences, i.e. understand them as subjects, in the first-person”, and only when this occurs can we establish deep authentic intersubjective relations (Kern & Marbach 2001, 80-81). Because of the analogical core of empathy, as we understand ourselves through reflection, we gain the ability to understand others in an intuitively full way, and this capacity does not stop developing at physical maturity. The directive inscribed upon the temple of Apollo’s to ‘know thyself’ is simultaneously the key to an intuitively full form of intersubjective understanding. Interestingly, this is very much the reverse of the historical assessment of Husserl’s theory of empathy, which has been critiqued on the grounds that the notion of analogy cannot account for understanding the other qua other. On this rendering, analogy enables the understanding of other qua other, qua subject with its own representational system.
It is only recently that someone who does not understand themselves nor others, yet has the ability to sift through and manipulate empirical experimental data, or has objective knowledge about a series of theories, could be considered a psychologist. In the work in which Titchner translated the term ‘Einfühlung’ as ‘empathy,’ he also wrote that

I do not see how one can fairly approach the psychology of thought, whether as critic or as expositor, without taking account of the machinery of thought in one’s own case (Titchner 1909, 6).

Husserl intimates that developing the ability to grasp other people from a mental/intellectual or personalistic perspective, and not as mere objects, is not only one of the defining qualities of empathy, but it is also a necessary feature of the understanding required by a descriptively governed phenomenological psychology too (Husserl 1980). Husserl thinks phenomenology is an exploration of the possibilities of consciousness, and not merely the empirical actuality of consciousness. Ratcliffe (2012) contends that the ability to stretch the limits of conceivable possibilities of experience opens the gateway to phenomenological practice and empathising with those who are very different from us. Similarly, it is recommended that counsellors and psychologists engage in reflective personal growth, because it allows them to understand psychological processes and the possibilities for change more than merely theoretically. In sum, traditionally, deep and variegated reflective acquaintance with our own minds was an obvious prerequisite for being an expert on the psyche and other minds, and the phenomenological approach suggests as much.

In reflection we become acquainted with ourselves. We need to consciously recognise what goes on for us internally as we go through certain experiences to relate to others as they go through similar experiences. The more regions of the self we are familiar with, the more we identify with others. We do not need to have gone through the exact experience of the other, but merely roughly analogous experiences, or we need to recognise our possibilities. We do not have to have acted in the same way as another, but merely understand their motivations for doing so on the basis of a possible self. To acknowledge our imperfections and the undesirable and publicly taboo regions of the soul, or to explore the worldviews of people who have beliefs which diverge from ours, allows us to gain insight into others whose way of life, ethics, and behaviour may differ from ours in fundamental ways. Good literature illustrates the potential richness of
experience, and the variability enabled by reflection. Varying our experience in phantasy allows us to entertain “innumerable” or “endlessly many possibilities for experiential progress” (Husserl 1980, 28). As Ratcliffe (2012) observes, we “can also study the structure of experience by engaging with the ways in which it can be altered” (483). If we take note and savour the complexity of our experience, and then imagine many subtle variations of ourselves, we can empathise with many aspects of the other. The imagination, combined with explorative reflection, provides us with a capacity to represent infinite possible variations of ourselves and thereby understand others via analogical processes, and this contributes greatly to the elasticity of empathy.

6.7 The similarities between high-level empathy and high-level simulation

I now outline some characteristics of high-level simulation, and emphasise its comparability with Husserl’s account of high-level empathy, concluding my project of showing how, pace Zahavi, they can be combined and yield support for each other. Generally, as Goldman (2006) explains, the English verb simulate is derived from the Latin simulare, which means ‘imitate’ or ‘feign.’ This in turn is derived from the adjective similis, which means ‘similar’ or ‘like.’ So a generic notion of simulation is best approached in terms of similarity, likeness, or (approximate) copying or duplication (36).

High-level social simulation

is usually equated with role-taking, or imaginatively ‘putting oneself in the other's place.’ This metaphor is understood to embrace adoption of different spatial and temporal perspectives… and further, adoption of alternative character traits (Gordon 2009).

High-level simulation is defined as a type of feigning, pretending (Gordon 1986), or pretence (Goldman 2006) during which I imagine what it is like to be the other and create a pretend state, which is similar to the other’s states (ibid, 39, 147), and that, when projected, transferred, or introjected, creates an adequate fit for explanation of behaviour (Gordon 1986).

There are many terminological and conceptual overlaps between high-level Husserlian empathy and high-level simulation. Broadly speaking, both processes are abilities of the imagination (Gordon 1986, Ripstein 1987, Husserl 1989, Goldman 2009).
Like Husserl, Goldman terms imaginative states “quasi” states, i.e. “quasi desire” or “quasi fear” (2006, 48). Simulation occurs in a cognitive style which theorists describe using the computational metaphor of ‘off-line processing,’ during which “the output is not actual behaviour but only predictions or anticipations of behaviour” (Gordon 2009). As Beyer observes, offline processing is the equivalent of Husserl’s key notion of imaginative ‘neutrality modification’ (Beyer 2012, 114). A striking terminological overlap is when Husserl states that, during high-level empathy, “I put myself in the place of the other subject” (Husserl 1989, 287, see also Husserl 1977, 87) which, of course, resonates with the simulationist catchphrase of ‘putting ourselves in the other’s shoes’ (Gordon 1986, 2009). Anyone familiar with the discussions of intersubjectivity in the third part of Ideas 2 will find strong resonances within high-level simulation literature.

Goldman’s brand of simulation theory relies on ‘pretence,’ a “species of the imagination” that involves ‘enactment’ (2006, 47). Enactment and pretence correspond to Husserlian quasi-motivations in phantasy and, although some (Magrì 2015) have tried to distance pretence from phantasy, Husserl actually directly states that that the terms ‘phantasy’ and ‘imagination’ express “pretence” (Husserl 2005, 4 italics removed). Other likenesses are that, for Goldman, pretence reproduces a variety of mental states, i.e. perceptions, emotions, or so-called propositional attitudes like desire, hope, and doubt. Thus, pretence is not an attitude on par with other states (2006, 46) as its output is an alteration, and “not a single type of state but any one of a number of mental-state types” (2006, 47). Husserl makes the same point when he notes that all the basic categories of consciousness can be modified in the imagination into neutrality: there might be quasi-perceptions, -joys, -values, or -beliefs etc. (Husserl 1989, 275). Because empathy is based on the imagination, and the imagination has the capacity to recreate all types of conscious activity, we can empathise with not just another’s physical or emotional states, “but all his or her cognitive states” (Moran 2005, 222). For both simulationists and Husserl, the capacity of high-level empathy/high-level simulation is underpinned by a chameleon like faculty, which modally alters other mental states into non-actuality ‘quasi-ness’—namely, pretence or the imagination.

Lastly, I showed that for Husserl cognising about our own future and cognising about the mental states of others are parallel processes, and the same goes for simulation theorists. It is this, in particular, which links the two accounts. Indeed, the “basic idea” behind simulation theory is that the resources that guide our own behaviour can be
modified to represent other people’s mental states (Gordon 2009). Goldman explicitly says as much, writing that “first-person future mindreading is just as open to simulation as third person mindreading” (Goldman 2006, 190). He adds that simulation “might be used for self-ascription of future... or hypothetical states” (ibid, 24) and that “attributing states to others (interpersonal attribution) and attributing future states to oneself (intertemporal attribution) are equivalent” (ibid, 164). Gordon states that the same simulatory capacity of taking pretend beliefs and feeding them into an offline decision making mechanism, that allows us to predict the behaviour of others, can be used to predict our own behaviour under counterfactual circumstances (Gordon 1986, 161). Thus, simulation theorists and Husserl posit that similar capacities enable the representation of our own behaviour in future scenarios and understanding others. A relationship of analogy between self and other characterises both theories.

There are just too many terminological and substantive similarities between high-level simulation and high-level empathy to think that the two theories are not depicting a very similar, if not the same, capacity. They fill almost identical conceptual spaces. At the very least, then, they provide mutual support for, and complement, one another. We can say that both the methods of empirical cognitive science and phenomenology endorse the notion that some process along the lines of high-level empathy/simulation occurs, and that both approaches provide different details of this process. Trying to distance the two because the simulation theory has certain cognitive presuppositions, or because some aspects of the simulation theory seem phenomenologically implausible,48 is the wrong approach. Yet, there are stronger relationships than mere mutual support present in this case. Instead of creating distance, better, I think, to ‘phenomenologise’ simulation theory.

Not only do these two accounts complement one another, but the phenomenological approach adds concrete details to a cognitive science theory, by providing precise descriptions of the theory under discussion. The simulation theory certainly needs to add more phenomenological details to its account (like the ones provided in this chapter), and rely less on computational metaphors, like ‘off-line processing.’ We do not literally simulate the psychic life of another, in the way that I might sit inside a flight simulator, or the way that computers simulate scenarios via the creation of models—these are metaphors. What we actually do, as I have explored, is to imagine what the mental life of the other must be like on the basis of what I know my

48 See the next section.
own mental life to be like. This is a descriptive characterisation of the metaphorical notion of simulation, and it avoids potential misunderstandings because it precisely targets the phenomenon under question as we find it in consciousness, and does not look to another (non-psychic) domain for terminology. It characterises ‘the thing itself.’

Husserlian phenomenology is not just descriptive, but also involves the development of rigorous and robust *a priori* distinctions. Simulation theory could also be bolstered by incorporating some of the detailed and fine distinctions that Husserl develops on the topic of high-level imaginative social processing, i.e. the parallel between likely and unlikely future selves, or past and possible selves, and others who are like and unlike us. Gordon comes close to recognising these distinctions when he notes that a prediction of how I would act in the other’s situation is not, of course, a prediction of how the other will act—unless, of course, the other should happen to be, in causally relevant respects, a replica of me. But people claim also that by ‘putting themselves in the other’s shoes,’ in a somewhat different sense of that expression, they can predict the other’s behaviour. As in the case of hypothetical self-prediction, the methodology essentially involves deciding what to do; but, extended to people of ‘minds’ different from one’s own, this is not the same as deciding what I myself would do. One tries to make adjustments for relevant differences (Gordon 1986, 162).

Gordon does not, however, postulate as to how to make these adjustments by drawing analogy with either past or possible versions of ourselves. Again, Husserl’s account brings characteristic meticulous, rigorous, and concrete detail.

Finally, there are good reasons why the simulation theory would want to adopt and rely on some of the details Husserl develops. Drawing on Husserl’s incorporation of past or possible selves allows the simulation theory to address the objection that understanding others on the basis of self-knowledge suffers a shortfall in generalisability. Husserl’s account answers how to remove simulation theory from what Zahavi calls a “kind of egocentric predicament that prevents us from truly understanding others” (Zahavi 2014, 110). Husserl solves how, if I project *myself* into your shoes, this helps me to understand a problem you are having that I, *as I actually am now, might not* have if I were in your situation. Thus, simulation theorists would be well served by adopting some of Husserl’s distinctions that I have discussed in this chapter. Further, certain simulation
theorists are uniquely suited to incorporate the insights of the Husserlian static phenomenological psychological take on intersubjectivity, as they too assume that empathy begins with acquaintance with oneself (i.e. Goldman 2006, 147). Thus, not only is there is fertile hybrid soil to be tilled between simulation theory and Husserl, but there are good reasons to incorporate phenomenology with cognitive science in this case, and even favour the former over the latter.

6.8 A rejoinder to the phenomenological argument against high-level simulation

However, as I mentioned, the phenomenological camp have been resistant to simulation theory. Gallagher and Zahavi contend that one of the supposedly phenomenologically implausible aspects of simulation theory is that, “when we consult our own common experience of how we understand others,” we simply do not find phenomenological evidence for simulation processes (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008, 196, see also Zahavi 2014, 135, and Gallagher 2012b). They think it telling that “there is no experiential evidence that I use such conscious (imaginative, introspective) simulation routines,” and they conclude that simulation is rarely used to gain social understanding (ibid). This objection is repeated in Reynolds (2015), who states that “there seems to be little phenomenological evidence of the indispensability of such introspective and imaginative simulations to our everyday dealings with others even in an average adult life” (348). As we see in the next chapter, I think there is reason to doubt the structure of this argument. Nevertheless, unfolding the account of high-level empathy which we find in Ideas 2 (as I have in this chapter), and connecting this account with high-level simulation, presents a substantive rejoinder to the phenomenological argument against conscious level simulation, by contesting the purported lack of phenomenological evidence.

Gallagher states, as part of this so-called ‘simple’ phenomenological argument, that what we are aware of typically is interacting with others, and not imaginative simulation of their psychic life (Gallagher 2012b, 582). In response to this, I argue that one of the problems with reflective descriptive analysis of psychological concepts is that our descriptions of psychological phenomena always seem more contrived—always seem slower and more intentful, conscious, and cognitive—than the targeted psychological processes in question actually are. As Mensch notes, “Husserl’s analysis of intersubjective recognition”, for example, “is often taken as excessively formal. The
immediacy of our recognising Others seems to belie the complicated descriptions” that Husserl gives (Mensch n.d., 128). This is one of the shortfalls about reconstructively theorising about pretheoretical life, and linguistically expressing the prelinguistic (and trying to do so with style and rational coherency). As much as I have tried to minimise it, some of the descriptions in this chapter suffer this shortfall, as does the simulation literature, and in Husserl’s case the problem is magnified, given his technical manner (as many of his detractors in the past have pointed out). We shall see in the next chapter, we actually have cause to be sceptical of a phenomenological analysis which does not have these qualities, and merely appeals to that which we are simply and immediately aware of, as Gallagher’s does.

For the present purposes, I just wanted to point out that we should not think that individuals carry out imaginative empathy in full awareness with great intent and effort with their eyes closed in quietened rooms sitting by themselves, like some sort of visualisation technique. In the next chapter I show that just because a process, like high-level empathy, is supposedly available to reflective awareness, does not mean that it is obvious and transparent when it occurs. A reasonable account allows that high-level simulation is probably often an indistinct, very fast, and difficult to detect process, which is always simultaneous with some form of perception, and often added on top of perceptual empathy.

Some form of perception always continues whilst we are imagining, even if the other is absent, or else we slip into delusion or hallucination. Because, in this sense, perception constitutes imagination, “it is impossible to investigate imagining accurately or appropriately without investigating its relation to simultaneously occurring perceptual processes” (Jansen 2013, 75). One feature of the unique and peculiar relation between the imagination and perception is that the imagination is often most active when it is not the sole focus of attention, and we busy ourselves with other (perceptually based) tasks (like driving a car). So, perception seems to draw attention, and confers on the imagination a disposition to remain in the background even when it is active. Conversely, Lohmar (2005) suggests that so-called ‘weak phantasmata’ might actually play a constitutive role by contributing to perceptual experiences indistinctly: for example, as I read Lohmar’s article, I imaginatively ‘hear’ the text in his slow deep rambling German accent (which went unnoticed until the article mentioned the notion of an ‘inner monologue’). If all this is true, high-level empathic activity would be anything but obvious, and it would be
difficult to draw a fine line between imaginative and perceptual processes, and decide the importance of the former to empathy as Gallagher and Zahavi try to do.

Furthermore, as Husserl writes, “there is no doubt that we can experience sensations and phantasms at the same time” (2005, 81), and we can also experience low and high-level empathy at the same time. The functions of the imagination include the recreation of motivations, and not all imaginative motives need be accompanied by phantasms. The motivations which I imagine you have might latch onto my perceptions of your body, without any accompanying qualitative phantasy (phantasms). High-level imaginative empathy thus does not present an either/or alternative to perceptual empathy, but an additional layer on top of it. Often when we are in dialogue or interaction we begin to empathise with the other at the higher level, perhaps in the background, and in the subtle ways just indicated. Counterfactual positionality contributes all sorts of indistinct empathic forms of understanding. But high-level imaginative forms of empathy never consume consciousness, and are always a comparatively pale image of perceptions. Gallagher’s claim that primarily we are aware of our interactions with others fails to exclude the presence of imaginative processes, because we might interact with others and attempt to imaginatively simulate their psychic life simultaneously, and subtle forms of imaginative processes can be overshadowed when intertwined with low-level empathy.

As is clear, I acknowledge that high-level empathy presupposes low-level empathy (in the ways discussed in the previous chapter). However, we do need an account of higher forms of intersubjective understanding, as perception just will not cover everything. Saying that we are aware of one form of social process more frequently than the other is problematic, and is not very informative, and moving to then conclude that one thereby occurs more than the other, or is perhaps more important, are invalid inferences. Mere frequency is an empirical, not a conceptual, issue. Reflection on psychological concepts gives us insight into topics like the conditions of foundation, and the sorts of social understanding which are correlated with different processes. This chapter answers these sorts of conceptual questions, and further shows that there is in fact a rich phenomenological and Husserlian tradition, which describes in detail imaginative simulation routines used for social understanding. Contrary to Gallagher and Zahavi’s claim, there is a plethora of phenomenological evidence (both intuitive and textual) for high-level imaginative simulation.
6.9 Concluding remarks

To summarise the previous four chapters: Husserlian empathy is ‘direct,’ and therefore Husserlian phenomenology provides indirect evidence for the direct perception model. More controversially, though, I uphold Gallese’s claim that embodied simulation should also be considered direct, that Husserl and simulationists are in fact portraying the same social activity, and therefore Husserlian phenomenology broadly supports simulation theory, and vice versa. I have also shown, particularly in this chapter and the last, that there are advantages to the phenomenological approach to psychological science. Particularly, that phenomenology adds concrete descriptive detail and important distinctions to our psychological concepts, and that therefore we would be well advised to regularly ‘correlate,’ or, re-describe, our cognitive science theories in phenomenological terms. In the present section, I take the next step in this discussion, and offer some thoughts which serve as segue into the final chapters, which moves on to meta-questions concerning the relation between Husserlian phenomenology and empirical naturalist cognitive scientific theories.

It might be asked, what does the level of support Husserl provides for contemporary models matter? An awkward fact is that cognitive scientists do not normally highly value phenomenological accounts, not least of all Husserl’s. It is probably thought that phenomenological psychology provides a very ‘soft’ form of theory, and is closer to ‘armchair’ philosophy, literature, or cultural studies than cognitive science. If phenomenology can be said to be in any relationship with cognitive psychology, then empirical experimental studies do the verifying, constraining, and therefore the ‘real’ science. Most cognitive scientists would feel that phenomenological descriptions become interesting if and only if they can be correlated with some sort of empirical research. Contemporary hybrid phenomenological psychology studies normally need to cite some form of empirical study to support a phenomenological thesis, and so a presupposition which informs even these studies, is that the empirical method ultimately judges what is true and offers ‘proof’ of phenomenological accounts.

The current bottom line of the ‘mutual constraint and enlightenment’ thesis is most clearly articulated in Wheeler’s supplement of the ‘muggle constraint.’ Wheeler stipulates that if a phenomenological description conflicts with science, then it must be rejected, on the grounds that the phenomenologist is a scientific ‘muggle’ (Wheeler 2013,
If there is conflict between empirical and phenomenological accounts, then it is always the latter that needs revising, due to the epistemological weight conferred on empirical evidence. In this sense it does not matter what Husserlian phenomenology has to say about contemporary accounts, because, if they are in agreement, then it is only an interesting fact in the history of philosophy that Husserl’s work was seemingly prescient, and if they are in disagreement, then the muggle constraint kicks in.

Contrary to this position, I think we should re-evaluate the weight conferred on phenomenological evidence, and reconsider the relationship between empirical psychological science and phenomenological psychology. Firstly, the latter should be considered rigorous enough to serve as an a priori guiding theoretical science for cognitive science. Secondly, a rich psychological science should regularly correlate at least some of its cognitive scientific explanations with phenomenological descriptions, much like the way I correlated embodied simulation with a series of descriptions of various sense fields at the end of chapter five, or the way I have correlated high-level simulation with imaginatively based high-level empathy in this chapter.

In favour of my first suggestion, it is worth recalling the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the mirror neuron. This discovery was largely happenstance, and “owes as much to serendipity as to skill” (Winerman 2005). The Parma group were in fact studying neurons responsible for goal related motor movement, not investigating sociality or intersubjectivity. During these studies, as one researcher was preparing the experiment and went to replace objects which the monkeys were reaching and grasping for, they noticed that the single cell recorder planted in area F5 of the macaque brain registered activity. Unexpectedly, this neuronal firing occurred as the monkeys were merely observing the researcher reach for the objects. One of the most significant discoveries in neuroscience came down to sheer luck. Before this discovery, no neuroscientist had ever supposed that such a system might exist. There simply is not one neuroscientific textual source which predicted the mirror neuron system.

The present resurgence of interest in phenomenology is partly due to researchers like Iacoboni and Gallese who found in the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and Husserl theorists who were, oddly, presciently describing the sort of psychological phenomenon which would be correlated with the neuronal system they had only just unearthed. Foreknowledge of phenomenological literature might have led to a suspicion
that a component like the mirror neuron exists, or at least that some sort of biological system performs a similar function. The retrodictive correlation between phenomenological accounts and the mirror neuron system could just as well have been made predictively. Currently, prediction and hypothesising in cognitive science involves constructing theoretical models which resemble information systems, yet the human psyche is of course not literally an information processing system, but a psychological system, and so a science which treats it as such should have greater predictive power.

Admittedly, the suggestion that we predict neurological structures based on phenomenological analysis assumes that phenomenology accurately studies the psyche, and further that psychology and neurology are correlated. But surely this correlation can be extended over phenomenology, as an assumed correlation between psychological life and the brain is why neurology is not just another member of the human biological sciences but considered psychologically relevant in the first place. Prediction also requires that phenomenology is a heavily analytic enterprise. It is normally the analyticity of mathematics which sciences lean on for predictive power. Given a set of quantitative data, and a formula gleaned from previous modelling, reliable predictions can be made. However, one problem with this type of prediction is that psychological entities do not lend themselves to mathematical measurement in the way that physical entities do, because they are not extended in space, and are therefore not necessarily the sorts of things which sustain ratios (Michell 1999). The use of mathematical modelling in psychology frequently fails to capture the essentially psychological nature of the objects of study.

As Husserl points out, the respective essences of psychological and physical spheres are different (see §1.2). The essences of the psychological sphere are inexact, morphological. As he says, it “it is only a misleading prejudice to believe that the methods of historically given a priori sciences,” like mathematics, “must serve as models for every new science,… as though there could only be eidetic sciences of but one single methodic type, that of ‘exactness’” (Husserl 1983, 169). Phenomenological psychology is an eidetic science, but different from mathematical eidetics (ibid).

Psychology needs a different framework which makes reliable predictions with analytic security (though psychology will never achieve the predictability of physical sciences, because motivational laws are just not as reliable as causal ones, and
morphological essences are less precise than mathematical ones). Husserlian phenomenological psychology is a method for *a priori* analysis of psychological concepts, and offers precisely such a guiding theoretical science—a science which is to psychology what mathematics is to physical sciences: a meta-framework which confers analyticity. Although we may not want to pursue Husserl’s foundational project, we can at least salvage from it a method for garnering analytic apodicity in the psychological realm. What has been confirmed by the interaction between phenomenology and mirror neuron theorists *post hoc* is that the phenomenological method is rigorous enough to be a reliable guide for psychological research.

This proposal might seem unpalatable to contemporary thought, given the sheer dominance of mathematisation, scientific naturalism, and empiricism. However, to a large extent, phenomenological insight *already* guides a large degree of empirical psychological research and experimental design. I agree with Gallese and Sinigaglia that phenomenology is “the departure and arrival point of the investigation of” the subpersonal mechanisms that cognitive science deals in (Gallese & Sinigaglia 2011a, 119). By this, what I mean is that many empirical studies either begin with an account of basic so-called experiential phenomena which is to be explained, or end by explaining a complex theory in experiential/psychological terms. These personal level accounts are often simply very poor and unrefined phenomenological descriptions, which have not been developed analytically. I merely suggest that we make the relationship between experience and psychology formal and that, in doing so, develop more rigorous methods of gathering our clues from experience via phenomenology and analysing conceptual structures before empirical work proceeds, in the same way that the physical sciences construct mathematical models and make predictions.

Importantly though, even if empirical studies do not produce the results expected, a physical scientist does not question basic analytic mathematical or geometrical laws. Similarly, I suggest that an empirical psychological experiment cannot automatically invalidate an *a priori* conceptual phenomenological analysis, if the analysis was correctly executed; an empirical study could of course disprove a phenomenological one if the latter is done poorly and, as I discuss in the closing postscript on naturalism, I do not object to being open to revising descriptions on the basis of empirical data. However, the evidence provided by an *a priori* phenomenological intuition cannot easily be

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49 It will be equally as unattractive to transcendental phenomenologists, I imagine.
contradicted by empirical results, just as a physicist could never convince me that the Pythagorean Theorem is false, or that one plus one was not in fact two, no matter how much favourable data they produce. Analogously, if a cognitive scientist claimed that studies showed that some perceptual objects are not always given from a particular perspective, I would suspect some sort of sleight of hand. This claim would raise more suspicion about the purported empirical studies than the phenomenological axiom. Empirical scientists are just as prone to making gross conceptual oversights as we armchair philosophers are, and it is precisely this sort of overreaching phenomenological analysis guards against. At the very least, I suggest that Wheeler's dictate that phenomenology always give way to empirical science needs to be revised.

In the introductory section entitled ‘What is Cognitive Science?’ I explained that, due to the seeming unobservability of mental states, the general thrust of psychology in the last hundred years has been to somehow exclude mentality in favour of behaviour, or explain it in terms of functions or computational processes. In chapter four, I explained that the phenomenologist holds that the psychic realm can be explored scientifically, because it can in a sense be directly observed both reflectively and empathically, and so the phenomenologist begins in a very different position to the cognitive scientist. For the phenomenologist, the mind is not a ‘black box’ but at least partially open to view, and my comments in this chapter on the reflective exploration of possible selves and possible others opens wider avenues for self-exploration. With the phenomenological movement the study of psyche returns ‘home’ to itself.

Thus, not only do I suggest that phenomenological psychology serve as the guiding science for psychological research, but I also think that at least some cognitive explanations are better off if correlated with phenomenological descriptions and concepts. Importantly, the original (computational and neurological) concepts would remain (because this is not an eliminativism I am suggesting), as do the methods of the cognitive scientists, but these accounts would be now altered, because correlated with a phenomenological account. I suggest that when a cognitive scientists talks about functions or computational processes, they are merely using useful metaphors or analogies (this much is often admitted), and I further suggest that what they are really talking about is psychic entities that exists within consciousness, and such entities can be more accurately characterised in the terminology provided by a phenomenological framework. Psychological correlationism is the admission that theories which involve
computational, functional, or neurological processes are actually referring to psychological entities, entities which can be described by the phenomenologist. Adopting the quite literalist position that psychology is in the business of analysing psychological entities that exist within consciousness is much more natural and attractive to common sense. It is time for the cognitive sciences to leave behind the old behaviouristic dogmas and embrace the psychic in psychology, recognise that the psychic need not mean unscientific, and need not be explained in an adopted terminology.

This is the core claim of phenomenological correlationism. This claim boils down to urging cognitive scientists to rely less on metaphorical (particularly computational) terminology and models, and more heavily incorporate a descriptive vocabulary developed by the reflection on psychological concepts, or insisting that the former at least be frequently re-described in the latter where possible. In Husserlian terms, the thesis of phenomenological correlationism is the request that psychological theories are eventually brought to an *authentic intuitive givenness*.

What might be objected is that cognitive science is mostly in the business of providing subpersonal explanations via the analysis of empirical experiments, phenomenology cannot trade in subpersonal explanations, and so some cognitive science concepts just cannot be correlated as they have no phenomenological counterpart. It is at the hinterland between personal and subpersonal levels that the cognitive scientist draws a strict line around their own purview. In the next chapter, by challenging the common conception of what phenomenology involves, I critically reassess the current perception of the relationship between phenomenological and cognitive empirical psychology precisely at the point where the personal diverges from the subpersonal, and in doing so further open the path for phenomenological correlationism.
CHAPTER 7. THE PERSONAL/SUBPERSONAL DISTINCTION AND
PHENOMENOLOGY WITHIN THE INTERSUBJECTIVITY DEBATES

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I suggested how the simulation theory might profit from incorporating some of the insights from Husserl’s account of empathy. For example:

- Husserlian phenomenology offers a series of rigorous distinctions which can solve various problems the simulation theory suffers from, e.g. incorporating the Husserlian theory of past and possible selves can solve the problem of the generalisation of empathy.
- A descriptive account of empathy adds concrete detail to the simulation theory using concepts drawn from the realm of experience which are, thus, literally depictive. This gives us a more realistic picture of the psychological phenomena we are dealing with. The key examples are re-describing the computing metaphor of high-level ‘simulation’, as the imagining of what the mental life of the other must be like on the basis of what mine is like, or describing the notion of low-level ‘simulation’ as the analogical echoing or resonance of various fields of hyletic data, particularly kinaesthetic data.

The ways that phenomenology might improve the simulation theory has motivated a more general discussion of the relationship between cognitive science and phenomenological psychology. Some of the advantages to the program of phenomenological correlationism are:

- Developing an analytic, guiding science for psychology which can refine the conceptual landscape, and which may have predictive power regarding general neurological structures.
- Formalising the relationship between psychological science and experience via the adoption of a rigorous analytic and descriptive method.
- Developing a psychology which capitalises on our direct acquaintance with psychic life, as opposed to our current psychological science, which marginalises such acquaintance.
This chapter further examines the relationship between cognitive science and phenomenology. As I will show, phenomenology and cognitive science are often understood to be ‘personal’ and ‘subpersonal’ forms of psychology, respectively. As I pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, the term ‘psychology’ is multivalent. Empirical psychology is by no means a homogenous discipline. There are many different psychological fields, frameworks, methods, and discourses. Contemporarily, one of the distinctions which serve to classify widely divergent types of psychological schools is the personal/subpersonal distinction. Dennett originally discerned the distinction between personal and subpersonal, in his 1969 work *Content and Consciousness*. As he outlined there, personal and subpersonal psychologies are governed by differing sets of key concepts.

The key concepts of the personal level are unanalysed mental states such as propositional attitudes (states of belief, desire, love, wish, etc.) and perceptions. Theorists suggest that the personal level is the psychological framework supposedly used by all of us every day; the level of common sense, or, ‘folk,’ psychology. Personal level, folk psychologies involve understanding, explaining, and predicting ourselves and other’s behaviours using these mundane quotidian psychological concepts like belief and desire. Furthermore, the “personal level of explanation takes as its model an idealised agent… who knows her own mind” (Elton 2000, 3). The theory of the personal level assumes that, generally, people are aware that they have desires, loves, beliefs, and so forth, and that this awareness is both linguistically and inferentially available for use in our everyday cognition and explanation about psychological processes. Though there is some ‘interface’ between subpersonal and personal frameworks (like the way that Freudian and neuroscientific theory has crept into common parlance), the ‘folk’ (you and I) supposedly have what Block (1995) refers to as access awareness\(^{50}\) of personal level psychological processes, and rely on personal level concepts to provide rationally coherent explanations of behaviour.

Subpersonal psychologies, on the other hand, map out the inner states and mechanisms (the parts of agents) that causally underpin personal-level phenomena (Cappuccio & Wheeler 2010, 131). The subpersonal level is a framework composed of, firstly, the concepts peculiar to physical and human biological sciences. Molecular and

\(^{50}\) That Block terms access ‘consciousness.’ I have avoided Block’s phraseology for reasons I explain in the next footnote.
cellular levels are subpersonal, as are the genetic influences on behaviour. Dennett held that the subpersonal level utilises “mechanical explanations in terms of brain states… and events in a person’s nervous system” (Mandik 2010, 114). The subpersonal level is not only physicalist, though, as it is also composed of the psychological processes which are postulated by contemporary cognitive science. Functional and computational processes are subpersonal, e.g., the information processing functions performed on symbolic representations bearing semantic content according to the standard cognitive science account.

As the name implies, the subpersonal level is ‘beneath,’ or, ‘underneath’ (to speak metaphorically) the level of everyday awareness; below reflectively available, quotidian, psychological activity and explanation. Despite the just mentioned interface between personal and subpersonal frameworks, we do not rely on subpersonal discourses, generally speaking, in our everyday common sense ‘folk’ psychology; subpersonal activity is not linguistically and inferentially available for our everyday psychological speculations. As Thompson observes, according to cognitivism, subpersonal mental processes, when they are “understood to be computations made by the brain using an inner symbolic language,” are, by their nature “completely inaccessible to personal awareness under any conditions” (Thompson 2007, 5-6). As Searle observes,

The general tendency in cognitive science has been to drive a wedge between conscious, subjective mental processes, which are not regarded as a proper subject of scientific investigation, and those [nonconscious] processes that are regarded as the genuine subject matter of cognitive science (Searle 1992, 151).

What Dennett was originally trying to distinguish when he coined the distinction between personal and subpersonal were two levels of explanation, i.e. I might explain my behaviour by reference to my beliefs and desires, or the cognitive scientist might explain it by reference to subpersonal computational procedures, my genetic predisposition, or neural wiring. However, like many distinctions, it has taken on something of a life of its own, and is often used to mean things different from what Dennett intended. Another meaning of the personal/subpersonal distinction is that it can be taken to signify the difference between mental states that we are aware of and mental states that we are not
For Zahavi and Gallagher, the personal level is what we can potentially be aware of (but often may not be), whilst the subpersonal level is what we cannot be aware of. This chapter and the next concern the enrolment of the personal/subpersonal distinction to distinguish between awareness and nonawareness. It is often only implicit in discussions that use the personal/subpersonal distinction that it has multiple meanings but, as I will show, when using it, authors often mean the distinction between awareness and nonawareness, and the employment of this meaning has further flow on consequences for the relation between cognitive and phenomenological psychologies.

Cappuccio and Wheeler repeat the oft-mentioned conception that “phenomenology is a species of personal-level explanation. Cognitive science, by contrast, is a subpersonal enterprise” (Cappuccio & Wheeler 2010, 131). Reynolds contrasts subpersonal neurological analyses with “the personal-level descriptions of phenomenology” (Reynolds 2015, 334-335), and Gallagher contrasts “personal-level (intentional) explanation” with “subpersonal-level explanation” (1997, 196), and

In the literature this meaning of the distinction has many interchangeable signifiers. Often it is expressed as the distinction between the ‘nonconscious’ and the ‘conscious.’ It is common to find the ‘non’- ‘un’- and ‘sub’-conscious prefixes used interchangeably. Other root terms associated with this cluster are ‘threshold,’ ‘intentional,’ ‘tacit’ ‘verbal/linguistic’ and ‘doxastic.’ This cluster of terms are all used interchangeably and thus, at least in practice, all serve to denote the same thing—which I claim is (at least some of the time implicitly) mental states that we are not aware of. Indeed, the topic of the following chapter could have been entered into via an analysis of the use of any one of these terms, and not just via an analysis of the personal/subpersonal distinction. For the interchangeable use of these terms see Gallagher (2005a), Arkway (2000), Ratcliffe (2006) for but a few examples. I will try to use the phraseology of ‘not being aware’ as much as possible as it seems to be a more direct depiction of the concept I wish to analyse which, I claim, is being denoted by this cluster, and often unthinkingly by the personal/subpersonal distinction. However, when style calls for it, I will use the term ‘nonconscious’ to represent this cluster, but avoid the ‘sub’- and ‘un’- prefixes, and any other members of the root cluster.

It has been pointed out to me, however that, if desired, we might profitably designate different phenomena with the ‘non’-; ‘un’-; and ‘sub-conscious’/’subthreshold’ terminology, and it is a fact that certain terms (such as ‘subdoxastic,’ ‘subpersonal’ and ‘nonconscious’) were not, when they were coined, meant as synonyms for each other. Making such fine-grained distinctions is not the practice in contemporary literature, which often uses these terms synonymously. However, at the end of this paper, I do refer to the Husserlian ‘unconscious’ and (and in a way I will specify) mean something slightly different from nonconscious.

Similarly we find the terms ‘conscious,’ ‘consciousness,’ ‘awareness,’ ‘doxastic,’ ‘linguistic’ clustered together. Again, I will try to stick to using the phrases ‘aware/ being aware’ to be more precisely depictive, but will occasionally refer to the ‘conscious level’ to mean the level of mental activity of which we are aware. I will strictly refrain from using the term ‘consciousness’ as an adjective or predicate which is synonymous with ‘awareness.’ I will only use the term ‘consciousness’ as a noun, which refers to the putative thing which is the designation of all mental processes and states: the term ‘mental states,’ ‘mental processes,’ ‘consciousness’ and ‘experience’ will all be used interchangeably.

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classifies phenomenology as the former.52 In this chapter and the next, I contend that the current perception of the relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science needs to be reconsidered precisely at the point where the personal-awareness/subpersonal-nonawareness distinction is employed.

7.2 The personal/subpersonal distinction within current debates on intersubjectivity

The personal/subpersonal distinction has been important to deliberations on social cognition. There have been personal level versions of both theory-theory and simulation theory, which means, in effect, that there have been versions of these theories that posit processes that we are supposedly aware of. Within the intersubjectivity debates it is held that personal level processes can be studied via phenomenological method, so interrogating our experience—gathering ‘phenomenological evidence’—is a valid way to investigate personal level accounts. In fact, detractors from within the camp of phenomenology have called upon phenomenological evidence to refute personal level forms of simulation and theory-theory.

For example, as I noted in the last chapter, Gallagher and Zahavi claim that, if we consult “common experience,” we simply do not find “experiential evidence” for personal high-level simulation (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008, 196. See also, Gallagher 2012a).53 However, the focus of the latter simulationists, such as Gallese, was on low-level processes. This meant that Gallese’s account was immune to criticism from Gallagher’s personal level based arguments, because low-level functional embodied processes based in the mirror neuron system are subpersonal, and phenomenology, supposedly, “after all, does not directly say anything about [subpersonal] brain processes” (Reynolds 2015, 348). Thus, phenomenology is invoked to refute personal experiential level versions of simulation, but one of the defensive advantages to the subpersonal theory of embodied simulation is that it is not susceptible to these charges.

Furthermore, Zahavi levels a bilateral attack against theory-theory, directed at the subpersonal and personal level, respectively. First, Zahavi argues that the very notion of social theorising implies personal level processes that we would be aware of. For Zahavi, the subpersonal and the nonconscious are synonymous, and he contends that it is “better to avoid using the term “theory” when speaking of a nonconscious information processing.

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52 The earliest example of the conflation of phenomenology with personal psychology that I have been able to find is from 1959 (Snygg & Combs 1959, 16, quoted in Ashworth 2006, 35).
53 See §6.8 for my refutation of this claim.
mechanism” (Zahavi 2008, 222, italics mine). Zahavi contends that the idea of a subpersonal/nonconscious theorising processes is vacuous (ibid), and thus theory-theory processes necessarily cannot be subpersonal. This means that theory-theory processes, if they occur, must occur at the personal level, and are fair game for phenomenological investigation. The second line of attack in Zahavi’s argument is largely the same as the just cited argument against personal level simulation. Zahavi argues that phenomenological investigation discredits the idea of frequent theorising, and that social understanding is almost exclusively via direct perception. In sum, the two flanks of Zahavi’s argument are that, one, the mechanisms of theorising cannot be subpersonal and, two, phenomenology suggests that personal/awareness level theorising is rare.

I relay Zahavi and Gallagher’s arguments here, not because I want to endorse or deny them, but only to show how the awareness/nonawareness aspect of the personal/subpersonal distinction incorporates phenomenology, and how the distinction then performs in phenomenological contributions to discussions on cognitive theory. Zahavi and Gallagher operate on the assumption that the personal level is composed of mental states that we are aware of, the subpersonal of states that we are not, and phenomenology is limited to the study of the former and should avoid discussing the latter. Gallagher and Zahavi explicitly say as much, conceeding that if a process

is subpersonal, and not something of which we would be aware, then phenomenology is not in a position to raise objections, since phenomenology doesn’t give us access to the subpersonal domain (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008, 197).

On such an understanding, however, phenomenological investigations are wide open to repudiation by subpersonal accounts.

Mitchel Herschbach (2008) employs precisely this method of repudiation, and puts forward a position which dips into the subpersonal level in order to deny Zahavi’s argument against theory-theory. While Herschbach concedes the second flank of Zahavi’s argument, he claims that “there remains a story to be told at the sub-personal level” (ibid, 224). Against the first flank of Zahavi’s critique, Herschbach claims that theory-theory may in fact involve subpersonal/nonconscious processes. Contrary to Zahavi’s claim that the notion of subpersonal theorising is vacuous, Herschbach notes that there are some models of theorising, i.e. Gopnik and Meltzoff’s, which do not require us to be aware of theorising processes. Herschbach highlights that “phenomenological evidence... is
insufficient to rule out sub-personal theorizing… Different kinds of evidence is needed to evaluate claims about sub-personal processes” (ibid, 228). Herschbach’s tactic demonstrates that, because phenomenology is paired to the personal/aware level, recourse to the subpersonal/nonconscious level can circumvent phenomenologically based arguments.

The above is indicative of an underlying conceptual framework, and the literature is rife with textual evidence of this. Close readings of Zahavi’s work show that he thinks that the personal/subpersonal distinction distinguishes between states we are aware of and ones we are not. A clear example is when, writing about theory-theory, Zahavi states that some take theorising “to be something the agent is conscious of; others presume it to be… something that operates on a subpersonal level” (Zahavi 2008, 181) In Zahavi’s recent work he takes the personal level as synonymous with “experience,” and the subpersonal as synonymous with unconsciousness (Zahavi 2014, 161). I have yet to find a commonly used\textsuperscript{54} example of either a personal level process which we are in principle unaware of or, vice versa, a subpersonal process which we are aware of. If an author were to counter my claim that the personal/subpersonal distinction is in fact a proxy for the distinction between awareness and unawareness, it would be incumbent upon them to provide such an example. At the very least, textual proof shows that Zahavi commonly construes the distinction this way, and this point remains uncontested within the hybrid phenomenology/cognitive science literature.

Despite what they disagree on, Zahavi and Herschbach (and Gallagher, for that matter) all implicitly agree with the assumption that the personal/subpersonal distinction does the work of denoting the divide between awareness and nonawareness, and all three explicitly agree that phenomenology only has access to the personal/awareness level. In all these discussions, the personal is equated with the conscious and with phenomenology, and the subpersonal is associated with the nonconscious, the non-phenomenological, and the cognitivist.

As Thompson notes (paraphrasing Jackendoff (1987)), the cognitivist revolution created a paradigm where the cognitivist, nonconscious, and subpersonal level was

\textsuperscript{54} The phrase ‘commonly used’ (as opposed to merely theoretically possible) is important here. I am not claiming that the concepts of personal/subpersonal cannot be used to distinguish between anything else but aware/unaware, merely that that is what they usually do. For an excellent discussion on the use and misuse of the personal/subpersonal distinction see Drayson (2012).
opposed to the phenomenological and the personal level (Thompson 2007, 6). Thus, Herschbach’s tactic in his debate with Zahavi is not unprecedented. For example, Pylyshyn notes that a basic source of uneasiness seems to come from the fact that we do not have the subjective experience that we are manipulating symbols. But subjective experience has been a notoriously misleading guide for what goes on in the mind. Research in human information processing reveals countless processes that clearly must have been occurring… of which we have little to no subjective awareness.

Perhaps surprisingly, I will argue that the phenomenological position is not too dissimilar from Pylyshyn’s. The point, for now though, is that, as van Gelder recalls, when cognitive scientists are challenged by the (supposedly) ‘phenomenological’ claim that we are not aware of computational processes, the response of standard computational theories of mind is to “suggest that the posited computational processes are sub-conscious, and so the phenomenology does not directly bear on the issue” (1999, 257). Thus, generally speaking, when the personal/subpersonal distinction is drawn in the way it has been in the above debates, and phenomenology is associated with the personal level and awareness, it undermines the relevance of phenomenology to cognitive science, and the capacity of phenomenology to constrain cognitive science in any way.

7.3 Concept clusters

Now that I have outlined the background of this topic, in this chapter and the next I will contend that two sets of concepts, which are commonly clustered together, should not be.

Cluster 1: The personal level–awareness of consciousness–phenomenology

Cluster 2: The subpersonal level–mental states that we are unaware of–cognitive science

My strategy to dissolve this clustering has two stages. Firstly, drawing on Husserl, from §7.4 on, I will cast doubt on any sort of clear-cut distinction between awareness and nonawareness. This chapter follows recent literature which challenges the binary distinction between awareness and nonawareness (i.e. Bayne, Hohwy, & Owen 2016). For Husserl, the paired concepts of awareness and nonawareness are, like all the concepts which pertain to consciousness, because of their morphological material essences,
necessarily vague and imprecise. This means the distinction between awareness and nonawareness does not admit of simple division. Instead, if we want to veraciously and vivaciously describe this pair, we require many graded distinctions, and a nuanced and sophisticated discussion. If awareness is what is sometimes contemporarily referred to as a ‘fuzzy concept,’ then it is futile to attempt to cleanly cluster phenomenology with it, and we will need to reassess the scope of phenomenology. I will disclose more about the second stage in chapter eight.

This chapter also aims to draw out a consequence of the separation of this cluster of concepts. Namely, we will have cause to call into question the terms under which the above debate about social cognition between Zahavi and Gallagher and their interlocutors is being conducted. I show that both sides are operating with an inadequate conception of what doing phenomenology involves.

7.4 The transparency of consciousness

It is a descriptive fact that, in life, we are aware of the world which surrounds us, and the objects in it, but normally unaware of consciousness, i.e. of our subjective acts, processes, and states. Husserl suggests that we are continually caught up in a natural urge of life (Husserl 1983, 53). As is well known, he thought that life goes on in the ‘natural attitude,’ which is the default mode that consciousness finds itself in; all of us begin in, and are in, the natural attitude, most of the time; we are ‘thrown’ into the natural attitude (to borrow a Heideggerian idiom). In this state, the being of the world remains unquestioned, and the ego is constituted via its cogitations and merely naively exists engaged with the world, which appears immediately and intuitively; it is as if we merely incidentally receive and naively take up the world (Husserl 1983, section 27-29).

In the natural attitude we merely go about our business: theorising about a philosophy paper or engaged in the practical activities of our day to day lives, like doing the dishes, playing sports, loving our kids and partners, being in conversation with others over coffee, etc. As Husserl says, we live “in the midst of the naïve pressure of life and activity” (Husserl 1970, 392). We pay attention to and are aware of what we are directed towards throughout these activities; we are aware of the thing we are doing. This state of affairs “is of course the natural attitude. In my daily life, I am absorbed by and preoccupied with projects and objects in the world” (Zahavi 2008, 22-23). In the natural attitude, what is termed (by Kriegel 2004) intransitive awareness collapses mainly into
transitive awareness: the property of awareness is the property of being aware of an object or event in the world.

In the natural attitude we focus on the world, and consciousness is elusive and obscured, as several Anglophone philosophers have observed. As Dewey puts it we “primarily observe things, not observations… The natural and original bias of man is all toward the objective” (Dewey 1958, 37). William James puts it as, in the ever present “moment, what we attend to is reality” (James 1981, cited in Thompson 2015, 50). Goldman echoes that when “we are thinking about \( x \), the mind is focused on \( x \), not on our thinking of \( x \)” (Goldman 1970, 96, cited in Gallagher & Zahavi 2015).

Husserl also affirms that our awareness is directed towards objects and away from consciousness. Russell notes that Husserl thinks that for “the most part, lived experiences (Erlebnisse) are simply lived through; we are usually caught up with whatever we have regard to, and thus for the most part have no regard to our experiences themselves” (Russell 2006, 103). In his article for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Husserl writes that “when we are fully engaged in conscious activity, we focus exclusively on the specific thing, thoughts, values, goals, or means involved, but not on the psychical experience as such” (Husserl 2014, 78). In Phenomenological Psychology, Husserl states that “unreflecting straightforward-experiencing”, and perception of the res extensae, is first and foremost (115). Prior to reflection, our awareness is directed towards “the experienced thing and its determinations” (112), and not consciousness, its processes, and states. The bestowing of objective sense which consciousness performs is carried out

by virtue of definite series of flowing processes. A person in the natural attitude, however, knows nothing of this. He executes the acts of experiencing, referring, combining; but, while he is executing them, he is looking not toward them but rather in the direction of the objects he is conscious of (Husserl 1981, 13, cited in Cerbone 2016, 370).

As the above descriptions indicate, this world which we are directed towards is not only corporeal and correlated with sensory perception, but also includes ideal objects, like natural numbers, propositions, and philosophical arguments, which are constituted by “comparing and distinguishing, of collecting and counting, of presupposing and inferring: in short, of theorising consciousness in its different forms” (Husserl 1983, 53-54). However, as Petitmengin-Peugot observes, we need not be aware of the complex
theoretical activities which constitute these types of objects; nonawareness of conscious activity “seems to be present even at the centre of our most abstract activities, those most conceptualized, those most lacking in affectivity” (Petitmengin-Peugot 1999, 45). Even forms of abstract reasoning requiring conceptualization and language can be carried out without us being aware of consciousness. Husserl echoes this point in Experience and Judgement when he states that, if we are engaged in predicative activity which might, for example, take the form of judging that ‘S is p,’ we are not
directed toward the identifying process, toward the multiplicity of lived experiences in which the synthetic unity between S and p is established… [W]hen we accomplish this synthesis itself we are directed objectively towards S in its partial identification with p (Husserl 1973d, 207).

Thus, when we are making a judgement we are focusing on the judged and not the judging. For example, as I sit here I might be trying to work out how to frame an argument. This process is linguistic and cognitive. It would thus seem to be the sort of process we would expect to be aware of. However, as I focus my attention and concentrate, I am unaware of my cognitive activity, as the object (the argument) that I am thinking about becomes the focus of my attention and awareness. Our cognitive processes are “involved: whether we are memorizing, remembering, imagining, calculating, understanding or deciding, the absorption in the object or the objective, the ‘what’ of the process, overrides the ‘how,’ which stays pre-reflected” (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 13). A nuance to be noted here is that, although we do not normally notice them, it seems to me, however, that we might more easily become aware of linguistic and conceptual activities.

In the natural attitude, the ego and the constitutive activity of consciousness lie concealed, because the natural attitude is an unreflective state, or, it is a mode of being which is prior to reflection. The unreflectiveness of the natural attitude is indicated by its naivety. Welton observes that, even though first-person consciousness is the prototypical immediately accessible phenomenon, we do not grasp and observe the subjective aspects of “consciousness immediately in the course of our everyday experience. We have to reflect” (Welton 2003b, 268). The continual possibility and potential to reflect on consciousness shows us that our life is naturally unreflective because, as Husserl points out, the possibility of reflection necessarily presupposes an unreflected form of conscious
life (Husserl 1989, 259). The unreflectiveness of the natural attitude is the default mode of consciousness. Far from there being certain types of mental states which we are naturally aware of, for Husserl we are naturally, normally, and automatically unaware of the states of consciousness.

A reason that, prior to reflection, consciousness is aware of objects yet unaware of itself is because the essence of consciousness is intentionality. Intentional consciousness strives or drives at the object for satisfaction, “wants” to go directly to an intuition that gives the object itself (Husserl 2001c, 126). Consciousness is propelled towards the world and thereby ‘about’ something other than itself. The cause of the transparency of consciousness and mentality when we are in the natural attitude is our intentional directedness towards the world.

The intentional directedness of consciousness is, furthermore, receptive to the intuitive fullness of the world. Not only is consciousness conscious of ‘x,’ it is conscious of ‘x’ in a specific way. It is not raw qualia or brute objects which appear, it is objects of a certain type, with certain (often complex) properties. We are conscious of the object as a red bouncing ball, as the beautiful woman, as my car, etc. Mere objects do not appear, but specific and perspectival types of embedded, value riddled, and practical objects appear, and this complex stratification partly explains our engrossment. The liveliness and vivacity of the world distracts us, or detracts from, becoming acquainted with consciousness itself.

Consciousness is not only directed away from itself, but objects also act as ‘stimuli’ (Husserl’s German term is ‘Reiz’). Objects exude what Steinbock eloquently (if not a little loquaciously) translates (in Husserl 2001c) as “affective allure.” The directedness of consciousness is not determined only by the intentional drive, but is also determined by a pull of the objects themselves. To use an analogy, acts of consciousness have their own propulsion system, but the objects which they aim at have their own gravitational pull. The affective allure of the world elicits a turning towards objects, what Husserl terms being affected or affection, which is a form of motivation. Affective allure is “a motivational solicitation or pull to attentiveness” (Steinbock 2001, xlvi). Characterizing affective allure and the correlated turning of attention, Husserl writes that “stimuli are experienced and… there is motivation in a determinate sense. I experience the stimulus of the beautiful, and I am motivated to turn to it, to pay attention to it, to take
pleasure in regarding it” (Husserl 1989, 229). Objects and the world are like magnets for consciousness; they draw us in to them because they radiate something which our attention is pulled towards. For example, when I wake I immediately desire coffee and food, begin to think about the day, and become active. From the moment I wake in the morning, the world and its projects call to me and interest me. They allure me in an affective way; I feel like they call to me. In the affective aspect of Husserl’s notion of affective allure we see the seeds being sown for Heidegger’s notion of attunement.

7.5 Relevance of the opacity of consciousness to discussions of intersubjectivity

Now, all of this applies, mutatis mutandis, to the conscious processes which underlie intersubjectivity. It is a mistake to attempt to designate certain types of intersubjective processes as ones we are aware of, and others as ones we are not. As Overgaard notes, Wittgenstein puts this point by saying that, if I were to write a book which describes the world as seen from my first-person perspective, other people’s experiences would figure in the description as part of the world, but my own experiences would not, because they are the experiences which manifest the world. My mental life is that through which I am thematically aware of the world—including the mental states of others (Overgaard 2007, 92), and it is not thereby thematically experienced itself.

If our social relations proceed normally, then we are immersed in them; our attention is on the conversation, the other person, the joke and their laughter, their anger, their beliefs, etc. As these social events occur, no particular type of first-person conscious social process is inherently at the forefront of our awareness; the first-person processes are in the prereflective background (see §7.6), and might only enter the foreground via reflection (see §7.9).

As I pointed out in the opening chapter, the ‘what’ takes strong precedence over the ‘how’ during intersubjective experience in particular. We are absorbed during intersubjective scenarios because of the close temporal demands for interaction and the loop of verbal and non-verbal feedback. When we are in intersubjective scenarios what we think about is the other person and our interaction with them. We wonder what they are thinking, follow what they are saying, consider what they are thinking about us, and plan what we might say or do next. Our intentional directedness in intersubjective experience is hard to reverse, because the stimulus, affective allure, or ‘gravitational pull,’ exerted by other people is so strong. We are normally very much unaware, then, of the
conscious activity involved in intersubjective processes. A problematic assumption that I think we ought to doubt that underlies the Zahavi vs. Herschbach exchange, for example, is that there are *any* personal/conscious level intersubjective processes of which we are immediately aware of. This claim is based on a false assumption concerning the way that awareness of our mental life manifests in consciousness.

Thus, contrary to Gallagher’s presupposition that we should expect that simulation processes would be at the level of everyday awareness if they occur, and Zahavi’s presupposition that, because of the personal level nature of theorising, we should expect to be aware of theorising processes if they occur, Husserl thinks that, in the natural attitude, we are unaware of most of the processes of consciousness. Even ones like high level-simulation or theorising which seem to imply awareness because of their voluntary, rational, representational, or linguistic nature. Using the logic he has employed against simulationists, Galagher might respond to my last chapter by saying that we just do not seem to be aware of most of the elements of high-level empathy that Husserl outlines, like the personal self-notion, quasi-motives, possible selves, etc., and so Husserl’s account is inconsequential. However, if the structure of awareness of consciousness is as I have depicted, then this would be a moot point, because it gestures towards a lack of evidence for phenomena that we would expect to be largely unaware of anyway. Finding phenomenological evidence for the intersubjective processes of consciousness (or a lack thereof) involves more than merely consulting so-called ‘common experience,’ because common experience normally consists of an awareness of the objects in the world, and the reflective/analytic explorations of consciousness that phenomenology trades in are uncommon.

This discussion should also make us wary of the practice of standardly conceiving of cognitive processes as ‘subpersonal.’ As we are not normally aware of our mental life, we can ask, when a theorist (like Herschbach) states that a process is subpersonal, do they mean that we are merely not normally aware of it, or are we are unable to give a reflective account of it? Searle suggests that cognitive science hoped to show “not just that there are mental phenomena that just happen to be unconscious, but that somehow, in some way, they are *in principle* inaccessible to consciousness” (Searle 1992, 153). However, it seems that this is now often just taken for granted. There is, as of yet, no clear criterion which would allow us to determine if a cognitive operation is in principle inaccessible. Until we determine such criteria there will continue to be a pervasive conflation of states
that we are not normally aware of with states that we cannot be aware of, and debates like
the one between Gallagher and simulationists risk turning into mere gainsay.

The subpersonal sphere is supposedly composed both of physiological life, and
mental life. Physiologically, we are unaware of the firing of neurons and the expression of
genes (and I am not suggesting we might somehow become aware of these sorts of
processes), yet we can feel our muscles moving, hear and feel our heartbeat under
certain conditions, and experience sensations in the digestive tract intermittently. Some
physiological processes, like ocular motor activity, remain in the background until we
turn out attention to them. So, embodiment is

experienced ambiguously, partly available for phenomenological reflection if we
can bring it to the foreground and, when made conspicuous, rather than being the
presupposed background, partly ensconced in an evolutionary historicitiy and
physiology that we cannot fully comprehend in reflection qua Leib (Reynolds 2018,
153).

And, a similar shifting gestalt pattern pertains amongst our grasp of psychic processes,
particularly during intersubjectivity. The constitutive operations of consciousness can be
uncovered by sustained phenomenological reflection and analysis, but the awareness of
psychic life which we thereby gain is of the reconstructive and reflective kind. We do not,
and cannot, catch the activity of consciousness ‘in the act,’ as my earlier treatment of
Husserlian methodology showed (see §1.4.3 and §2.2).

Given this shading, how can we tell if a psychic process is completely off limits,
or merely very difficult to bring to reflective awareness? To resort to the claim that the
reason that we are not aware of a cognitive mechanism is because it is subpersonal,
especially in response to the criticism that we are not aware of it, is a piece of
philosophical naivety—a twin naivety to the claim that a particular type of personal level
process is rare or inexistent because we are not aware of it. Both naiveties are
phenomenologically and philosophically inadequate. What is highlighted in these
discussions is the importance that the relationship between awareness and reflection
assumes for the phenomenologist. These discussions demand a closer account of the
notion of reflection, which the rest of this chapter provides.

55 More discussion concerning the limits of awareness, and our capacity to grasp subpersonal processes,
can be found in the next chapter.
7.6 Prereflection

I am merely advocating, in the above, the descriptively obvious and relatively commonplace position that we are normally thematically directed towards, and thereby aware of, the world. This thesis has made various appearances in analytic philosophy under the guise of the thesis of the transparency or diaphanousness of consciousness, and has been held, for example, by Moore (1903) and, more recently, Stoljar (2004). In the analytic tradition, the thesis of the transparency of consciousness is somewhat more radical than what I am advocating, though, because in this tradition the transparency in question extends through even into reflective experience. All I wish to claim here is that, in the natural and unreflective attitude, thematic awareness collapses into transitive awareness of the world and the objects in it. The thesis I will develop is that we can become aware of consciousness via reflection, but that what we become aware of is different from the world and from the objects that are in our awareness during everyday experience.

Also, in the claim that consciousness is transparent, all I want to suggest is that we are not normally thematically aware of consciousness because, instead, we are aware of the world. It does not follow, therefore, that we are always totally unaware of our mental states. An important proviso must be added to the above exposition. Namely, we also normally have a minimal prereflective awareness of consciousness. In fact, from the phenomenological viewpoint, “a minimal form of self-consciousness is a constant structural feature of conscious experience” (Gallagher & Zahavi 2015). Prereflective awareness of consciousness can be described as unthematic and peripheral, pervasive yet subtle. It differs in quality and intensity from regular transitive awareness of objects in the world. In the natural attitude, prereflective awareness of consciousness, and thematic awareness of objects, stands in an attentional relationship of background to foreground, respectively. For Husserl, pre-reflective is not “unconscious,” just “unnoticed” (Zahavi 2011b, 9).

The doctrine of prereflective awareness does not obviously stand out from first glance at Husserl’s seminal works because of the central role of his theory of reflective awareness. However, Zahavi has been particularly active in the last few decades in showing that Husserl also thinks, as do latter phenomenologists such as Sartre and Heidegger, that there must be a pervasive prereflective awareness of consciousness.
Zahavi has provided many examples of textual support to show that Husserl thinks that being a subject entails being always prereflectively aware of oneself (Husserl 1973b, 151, cited in Zahavi 2008, 11), or that consciousness involves self-appearance (Husserl 1959, 189, 412, cited in Gallagher & Zahavi 2015). It has thus emerged that Husserl does not think that awareness of experience is constantly constituted by reflection alone, or that “we are always and incessantly conscious of our own experiences as objects. But this does not prevent the experiences from being conscious in a pre-reflective and non-objectifying manner” (Zahavi 2002b, 59). Even though Husserl held that we are naturally directed towards objects, and that thematic awareness of consciousness comes via reflection, he distinguishes between reflective and pre-reflective forms of awareness (ibid).

The reflective study of consciousness is a step removed from the natural flow of experience, and is reconstructive or regressive (and this is why reflection and introspection differ—see §2.2). However, prereflective awareness of consciousness is a necessary condition for the thematisation of consciousness via reflection; it is a “precomprehension that allows for subsequent reflection and thematization” (Zahavi 2008, 23). Consciousness is no exception to Husserl’s rule that every type of thematic knowledge is preceded by the passive synthetic constitution of that which is known (Husserl 1973d, 343). Experience of oneself is, like every experience, “a mere directing myself towards something that was already there for me, that was already conscious, but not thematically experienced, not noticed” (Husserl 1973b, 492-493, quoted in Gallagher & Zahavi 2015). As Ratcliff summarizes, Husserl’s phenomenology attempts to articulate and make explicit the taken-for-granted structure of prereflective experience, but adds that the “structure disclosed… is not evident to everyday thought” (Ratcliffe 2006, 33). Mental life does not merely expose itself to us, but phenomenologists draw conclusions about consciousness based on the evidence provided by experience, which is lived through prereflectively.

Prethematic awareness is constituted sort of ‘indirectly,’ by passive processes (see §8.3 for more details about passivity), and structural features of experience. For example, the interaction between the body and world provides a prethematic sense of embodiment (Zahavi 1998). Tactile experience of an object contains a tacit reference to, and an implicit sense of, the organs and sensations of touch. Visual experience includes the same implicit awareness of ocular-motor kinaesthetic activity. Every aesthesis includes a
kinaesthesis, which contributes a prereflective awareness of embodiment. Every
cognising activity is ‘coloured’ by the modality in which it occurs. Also, the interplay
between self and other in intersubjective relations partly constitutes prereflective
awareness, and the fact that I never fail to distinguish between mine and your experience
during empathy tacitly affirms the existence of prereflective self-awareness.

A theory of prereflective awareness is an important nuance to an account of the
concept of awareness. Everyday conscious life is accompanied by qualitative phenomenal
consciousness, and we need something other than reflection to account for this sense of
awareness. So, a refinement must be added to the brute cleavage of awareness from
nonawareness of consciousness: we are not normally focally, but are always peripherally,
aware of consciousness. This refinement supports my more general point that relying on a
clean distinction between awareness and nonawareness is theoretically naïve, the
boundaries of awareness are (necessarily) unclear, and the relation between awareness
and phenomenology is far from simple.

7.7 Reflection

The model of ‘focal awareness of objects and peripheral awareness of
consciousness’ applies to the natural attitude. It is, of course, possible to leave the natural
attitude and enter into a reflective one by carrying out an act of reflection. Secondary
sources note that, according to Husserl, mental processes can not only be lived through,
but “it is an eidetic law that any mental process (Erlebnis) can become ‘regarded’ or
‘reflected upon’” (Russell 2006, 103), “after undergoing a certain modification which
transforms it from a nonreflective state into a reflective state” (Levinas 1973, 135).
Concomitant with the claim that we are naturally inclined and directed towards a world of
objectivities, Husserl is equally adamant that acts of consciousness are nevertheless in
principle grasurable in reflection. He writes:

in the cogito we are not conscious of the cogitatio itself as intentional object; but at
any time it can become an Object of consciousness; its essence involves the essential
possibility of a reflective turning of regard and naturally in the form of a new
cogitatio... In other words, any cogitatio can become the object of a so-called ‘internal
perception’ (Husserl 1983, 78).
In *Phenomenological Psychology* Husserl states that in the natural attitude, experience itself is “anonymous,” and it only “loses this anonymity by reflection” (1977, 112, see also 14 & 177, 2014, 78, 1973d, 207).

**7.8 The threefold model of awareness**

Thus, broadly speaking, we have a threefold model of awareness. 1) We have the natural attitude, in which we are thematically aware of objects, attendant with 2) a prereflective awareness of consciousness. Lastly, we have 3) reflection, whereby consciousness becomes thematised. Prereflective and reflective awareness are not mutually exclusive, of course. There is no contradiction in holding that we have a tacit and pervasive sense of phenomenal self-awareness which constantly accompanies experience, and that we can also become thematically aware of consciousness via reflection. In fact, there is an interrelation between these three facets: the complexity of the world which we are aware of serves as the clue for the activity of consciousness, which we thematise via reflection, because it was available for such prereflectively.

What is more, as I have alluded, the middle ground of prereflective phenomenal awareness is a crucial theoretical addition. It is so because without the notion of prereflection, the reflection theory suffers some implacable challenges. For example, it is highly doubtful that one can account for background awareness, or, phenomenal consciousness, via the reflection model. It is just phenomenologically untenable that our everyday awareness of consciousness comes about as the result of reflection. “I do not first scrutinize a specific pain and subsequently identify it as being mine” (Zahavi 2007a, 273). Furthermore, not only is the notion that I rely on reflection for self-awareness phenomenologically untenable but, theoretically, it creates an infinite regress from which all so-called ‘second-order’ or ‘higher-order thought’ models of reflection suffer. If we only become aware of mental states when they are taken as objects by occurrent second-order mental states, then we can only become aware of these second-order mental when they are taken as objects by occurrent third-order mental states, and so on ad infinitum (Gallagher & Zahavi 2015). In order to prevent the above regress, I must be aware of the reflective act without in turn reflecting on it. Thus, a theory of prereflective awareness prevents this infinite regress by accounting for the awareness of a reflective act without in turn relying on the postulation of further reflective acts.
The upshot of all this is that any discussion of ‘awareness’ necessitates a discussion of the rather complex relation between the elements in this tripartite model. Furthermore, as my next section shows, even a relatively straightforward reflection model of thematic awareness still requires a significant degree of sophistication.

7.9 Some refinements of the concept of reflection

7.9.1 Motivation

Reflection is by no means in itself a simple concept, and for a theory of reflection to be valuable in the contemporary context it needs to be sophisticated. Instead of simply associating some mental acts with awareness and not others, primary and secondary Husserl studies offer a nuanced discussion of how we become thematically aware of consciousness through reflection. Thus, offering a sophisticated model, and recounting some of the nuances which a theory of reflection must incorporate, further serves to add colour to any black and white division between awareness and nonawareness of mental states. This will be the purpose of the next section.

Let me first reiterate that, because of the intentional directedness of conscious activity and the affective allure of external objects, our awareness is naturally detracted from consciousness. We can evince, therefore, that when we do become aware of consciousness via reflection, we must somehow have been motivated to initiate the reflection in the first place. Here, the peculiar nature of reflection must be mentioned. From where and for what reasons would a person receive the impetus to reverse the natural direction of straightforward experience? What would force us to break our engagement with the world? A necessary refinement to a discussion of reflection is thus explicating the fact that reflection, like all types of intentional acts, is not a mere spontaneity.

That “which motivates the reflection must be particularly conspicuous, must stand out in some way if it is to rouse my interest” (Zahavi 1998, 4). Husserl notes an analogy between our awareness of consciousness and our awareness of the external world. Reflection is, in some sense, similar to all acts because it is a response to affection (ibid). Although we are continually confronted with a world full of stimuli, in the sensual sphere certain noises or colours are “more or less obtrusive... [and] exercise on the ego a

56 Here I am using the term motivation in the sense outlined in the last chapter.
stimulus more or less powerful or weak” (Husserl 1973d, 76). In “the same way, a thought which suddenly emerges can be obtrusive, or a wish, a desire can get through to us from the background with insistence” (ibid). Some conscious processes “stir us, one thought, for example, stands out from all the rest and has a sensitive effect on the ego, as it, so to speak, forces itself against the ego” (ibid, 77). Reflection is a motivated response initiated by the uprising of certain aspects of conscious acts out of the prereflective sphere.

As Costello (2012) observes, the moment of reflection is normally initiated by some form of dissonance, a crisis, or problem. Reflection can be described as a fault that shakes us from the world. “If things are going well—if we, like things, appear to ourselves simply as moments of the world—then reflection does not appear to be necessary” (12). Reflection on intersubjective processes is no exception. We might lead to question and perhaps acquaint ourselves with our thinking about others because, for example, we realise that we misunderstood another’s intentions at the workplace, or find ourselves resentful at a person or group of people. It is sometimes a fault in the world which forces us, like a phenomenologist, to regressively trace the source of this fault back to consciousness. At this point, we might bring to awareness conscious processes lying in the background, right at the edge of our thematic regard, and gain an intuitive understanding of our previously pre-conscious psychic processes. For example, we realise that someone reminds us of someone else that we dislike, and we conclude that this must be the source of an otherwise inexplicable aversion to them. However, this sedimentation of sense and the ensuing association was deeply buried in the subsoil of our consciousness, and was operating at a level far down the continuum of nonawareness—passively and subconsciously, more or less without our awareness (the next chapter goes into more detail of examples such as this), and required some reconstructing to become intelligible.

Thus, what I suggest is that the interesting and fruitful conceptual questions are ones like: ‘which circumstances give rise to the reflective awareness of different sorts of intersubjective processes?’, ‘why are we more aware, or more prone to become aware, of certain types of intersubjective processes?’ For example, as I pointed out in the last chapter, it is the relationship between perception and imagination which makes the latter comparatively opaque. Yet, we might inquire, when am I prone to become aware of my phantasies, what motivates this awareness, and what are the processes via which I might
gain this awareness? For example, often when I am daydreaming a perceptual datum brings me back to my senses (e.g., a knock at the door), and it is in this moment, as the phantasy ends and perception comes crashing back in, that I realise I have been daydreaming and see the imagining more clearly for what it was, in an ‘after-perception’ (Nachgewähren). What is the nature of this after-perception? There seems to be a peak of nonawareness right in the middle of my phantasising, when I am the most taken by it. Or, what sort of motivation drives us to gain a reflective awareness of bodily empathy (if any)? This is precisely the sort of eidetic conceptual questions based in experience that phenomenology investigates. Pre-emptively designating one or another process as personal or subpersonal, or claiming that I am not aware of personal level process \( a \) or \( b \), are dubious procedures, and precludes these more nuanced questions concerning our possible motivations for becoming aware of intersubjective processes. Moreover, the way these sort of debates are being conducted presents an inadequate idea of what it means to do phenomenology.

7.9.2 The special structure of reflection

Another refinement is that reflection cannot be said to simply take or grasp its object in a straightforward manner, in the way outer perception or theoretical evaluation does. Consciousness is not another object. It is, by definition, the subjective, and if consciousness becomes an object, it loses its essential structure. As Thompson puts it, the problem with some reflection models of awareness is that they attempt to impose “the subject-object structure of ordinary perception onto consciousness itself” (Thompson 2015, 17). Overcoming this problem might seem difficult to reconcile with Husserl’s account because, as Zahavi notes, in many passages (some if which I have provided above) it is just undeniable that Husserl seems to assume that reflection involves a subject/object dichotomy which entails a sort of dualism within consciousness (Zahavi 2011b, 12).

However, as Bitbol and Petitmengin note, Husserl’s position as expressed in Ideas I “on this issue of inner dualism is… nuanced” (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2011, 27). Husserl opposes regular or mundane reflection (via which the common folk become aware of their mental processes) with phenomenological reflection (via which the phenomenologist studies the psyche). “In the latter case, the dualist metaphor is soon attenuated, and what replaces it sounds remarkably different” (ibid, 27-28). Husserl characterises
phenomenological reflection as a modification or transmutation of lived experience as a whole, which opens up the field of consciousness (ibid). Husserl characterizes the natural ‘direction’ of lived-experience as ‘straightforward,’ as it is directly oriented towards the object of lived-experience, whether inner or outer, rather than towards lived-experience’s content as an experience. Phenomenological reflection, in contrast, is directed towards the content of lived-experience (Hopkins 2011, 99, my italics).

And, such ‘content’ might be noematic or noetic.

Bitbol & Petitmengin, and Depraz (2008), take these internal tensions in Husserl’s characterization of reflection as an opportunity to articulate and embrace a model of reflection which can be characterised as a receptive form of openness to what is given and appears (Depraz 2008, 103, cited in Bitbol & Petitmengin 2011). This model opposes the dualist characterisation of reflection as an act that grasps or takes hold of consciousness as an object. Despite some objections Zahavi raised in his article entitled Varieties of Reflection to Bitbol and Petitmengin’s Husserlian inspired non-dualistic characterisation of reflection, elsewhere Zahavi too endorses a Husserlian inspired basic distinction between awareness of objects, and awareness of the contents of consciousness (Zahavi 2008, 15). Zahavi endorses the distinction “between intentionality, which is characterized by an epistemic difference between the subject and the object of experience, and self-consciousness, which implies some form of identity” (ibid, 28). He also notes that, in places, Husserl acknowledges that consciousness is not merely another object, and that the structure of object-intentionality cannot be applied to experiential self-givenness (Zahavi 2002b, 58).

The refinement that we can draw out of this is that, when we become acquainted with consciousness, it is not ‘grasped’ or ‘intended’ as objects in the world are. The nature of reflection is, in this regard, different from the nature of other acts. Reflection “necessitates a reversal, a break with... habitual attitude,” which “is far from trivial,” and when we attempt to reflect what we often do is imagine, or unreflectively think about, what we are doing (Petitmengin-Peugot 1999, 46). Husserl states that the difficulty of a phenomenological psychology “lies in the fact that we are indeed always mentally active, but must first learn laboriously to reflect upon this being active and bring it tangibly to sight” (Husserl 1977, 65). “Of particular importance, but noticed very late, is the fact that
reflective, so-called ‘internal’ experience… is exceedingly difficult to put into practice whenever one strives to go beyond the most superficial level” (ibid, 21). Reflective self-knowledge is highly fallible. This fallibility explains Dennett’s observation that there are many “circumstances in which people are just wrong about what they are doing and how they are doing it” (Dennett 1991, 94). These difficulties result precisely because to ‘grab’ at an act of consciousness, as if it were merely another object, is to have it slip away.

Because consciousness is naturally intentionally directed, and ‘shooting’ intentional ‘arrows’ is the natural activity of the mind, when we attempt to flatten the arrow of intentional directedness via reflection, often what we do instead is create new acts of recall, imagination, or theory. These new ‘arrows’ originate from and move away from consciousness. In contradistinction, what “reflection really brings about is a decrease of distance. Reflection is what allows us to come into closer ‘contact’ with, or, become better acquainted with, our experience” (Bitbol & Petitmengin 2009, 378). Instead of dividing us, reflection gives us back our unity (Zahavi 2011b, 10). Reflection is not a new intentional act, but a loosening of intentional focus and a flattening of intentional direction, which allows us to thematise our prethematic awareness of consciousness.

7.9.3 Metaphorical reflectiveness

Lastly, Heidegger detects that reflection “means, in the optical context, to break at something, to radiate back from there” (Heidegger 1982, 159, quoted in Zahavi 2008, 83). Levinas characterises Husserlian reflection as “a falling back of consciousness upon itself” (Levinas 1973, 135). This “falling back” is why the term ‘reflection’ has a descriptive function. However, Zahavi (2011b), and Waldenfels (2004), have questioned whether the optical metaphor of reflection is best suited to the act via which consciousness comes to know itself. Perhaps ‘expansion’ or ‘opening’ of awareness are better physical metaphors for the act that we currently term ‘reflection.’ Perhaps we require a better optical metaphor like internal ‘illumination.’ But, in all these options, we are still talking spatially/visually, and thereby metaphorically. Either conceptually or in actuality, reflection has no spatial structure or visual appearance. It is commonplace in

57 The term ‘intention’ in fact springs from the Latin term ‘intendere,’ which means drawing and aiming an arrow in a bow.

58 Some authors, such as Jeff Malpas, may disagree with this point. If it is the case that this language is not mere metaphor, and that concepts can indeed be said to have a spatial structure, then choosing a
philosophy (and everyday language) to use metaphors to describe conceptual manipulation and change, and I see no reason why it should be particularly problematic here.

However, as I explained in the first chapter, according to my (very Husserlian and un-Heideggerian) way of thinking, we still need to be able to spell out our metaphors somehow, at some time, in non-metaphorical and ultimately plain descriptive language if we want to accurately depict the phenomenon in question. For example, Zahavi states that, for Husserl, in non-metaphorical terms, we can say that reflection ‘transforms’ consciousness. “Husserl also spoke of reflection as a process that *discloses, disentangles, explicates, and articulates* all those components and structures that were implicitly contained in the pre-reflective experience” (Zahavi 2008, 88, italics mine). For Husserl, these are some of the descriptive terms that non-metaphorically characterise reflection in language that is suggestive of the preferred non-dualistic model.

So, in summary, reflection is a sophisticated concept, and in five ways: firstly, the reflection model of awareness needs to be supplemented with an account of the relation between reflective and prereflective awareness to be tenable. Secondly, reflection is motivated, and of interest is the question of why we might become motivated to reflect on and bring certain intersubjective processes to awareness. Thirdly, reflection cannot be a subject/object modelled act. Even for Husserl, a model of reflection need not and must not adhere to the traditional subject/object dichotomous structure. Instead, fourthly, the favoured model of reflection involves a flattening of the intentional arrow, a structural modification of an already existing act. Lastly, the term reflection is ultimately metaphorical. Husserl clarifies this metaphor in the descriptive terminology of disclosure, explication, and articulation of experience.

In conclusion, if we want to associate phenomenology with awareness, then we must associate it with a fuzzy concept of awareness, which means different things in different contexts (i.e. in the natural and reflective attitudes). Furthermore, there is a considerable conceptual narrative which necessarily needs to be recounted in order to understand what phenomenology means by the notion of bringing processes to awareness, and it is not as simple as ‘just being aware’ of certain processes, or just ‘taking a look,’ so

‘metaphorical’ term or choosing a descriptive term are the same procedure with the same function. Both *depict* the thing.
to speak. Even the claim that phenomenology studies what we are aware of requires some considerable unpacking, and reference to notions like “common experience” or everyday awareness do not do phenomenology justice. Here ends my first attack on the concept clusters I mentioned in §7.3. My approach in this chapter has been to disassociate phenomenology from the naïve and binary conception of ‘awareness’ (and thereby disassociate it from the personal level). My next chapter continues to dissolve this clustering, but approaches the dissolution from a different direction.
CHAPTER 8 PHENOMENOLOGY AND SUBPERSONAL STATES OF NONAWARENESS

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was the first stage of my sustained deconstruction of the cluster of concepts I outlined in §7.3. This chapter is the second stage, it finishes with some reflections about the relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science, a summary of my position on phenomenology and naturalism, and this brings us to the end of this work. In this chapter, I argue that Husserlian phenomenology is able to study states we might normally say we are unaware of. Phenomenology is not necessarily excluded from explorations into the subpersonal arena, because Husserl develops an account of passive and subconscious processes. I contend that consciousness “comprises a continuum of levels of awareness, ranging from gross to subtle” (Thompson 2015, 7) and in this chapter, I show that phenomenology studies processes which are subtle, and score very low on the continuum of awareness. Just as I showed in the last chapter that the clustering of phenomenology with certain concepts (i.e. personal/awareness) in cluster one is problematic, so in this chapter I show that some of the concepts in set two (subpersonal/unaware) can actually be associated with phenomenology. The target of this chapter and the previous one is thus the naïve conception of phenomenology, which results when it is clustered in the way I depicted in §7.3.

8.2 Husserlian phenomenology and states of nonawareness

True, what Husserl refers to as mental processes (Erlebnisse) “can be defined only by an enumeration of paradigmatic examples such as feelings, sensations, perceptions, memory images, imaginations, thoughts, beliefs, desires, volitions, etc., which are generally conscious” (Grünberg 2007, 237). Despite our natural nonawareness, and the need for reflection, it is relatively easy to reflectively thematise certain acts, for example, conceptually rich and voluntaristic acts, like high-level judgement, or the hyletic data which make up visual perception. When I am performing a high-level conceptual task, like solving a math problem, or trying to come up with a synonym for a word, the subjective processes of these types of mental states seems ‘louder,’ and easier to become attuned to in reflection. Problematically, many think phenomenology concerns only the sorts of mental states that we can easily become aware of. Yet, there “are also subconscious or unconscious mental processes, but these are still potentially conscious in
the sense that they can become actually conscious as a result of the person’s turning his attention to them” (ibid). Thus, Husserlian phenomenology does in fact concern itself with mental states we might classify as subpersonal, or unconscious.

However, the problematic misconception of phenomenology as concerned only with obvious mental activity is common within cognitive science and analytic philosophy of mind. For example, definitional texts will note that the term ‘phenomenology’ can refer to the tradition initiated by Husserl, or to “the phenomenal character of experience (qualia)” (Rakova 2006, 142). The *Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Mind* entry on phenomenology points out that ‘phenomenology’ can be used to refer to “the feature of conscious experience that makes conscious experience conscious” (Graham et. al., 513). That is, ‘the phenomenology’ is that feature of consciousness that makes up our awareness. It is the conflation of these two senses of the term ‘phenomenology’—the conflation of what we are immediately aware of with the study of consciousness (noun)—that the present chapter (and the last) objects to. I contest the characterisation of phenomenology as a study of the ‘what-it’s-likeness’ of a mental state, and this is a pretty standard conception of phenomenology within analytic philosophy of mind and cognitive science. ‘Qualia’ and ‘what-it’s-likeness’ are characterisations which stem from work within the analytic tradition. Personally, I cannot see how the phenomenal character of experience warrants the label ‘phenomenology’ at all, as there is no logos to speak of. Either way, though, we need to separate the mere phenomenal character of experience from the rigorous study of consciousness that is phenomenology. Most worryingly, the practice of conflating these two senses of the term ‘phenomenology’ seems to have been adopted by some contemporary phenomenologists who are indebted to the Continental tradition.

One of the strongest critics of phenomenological contributions to social cognition debates, Shannon Spaulding, characterises phenomenology as the provision of what she terms “phenomenological reports… These are first-person reports on one’s conscious experience. Examples include reporting that I am experiencing a painful sensation, seeing a yellow patch, feeling angry, or thinking about what I had for breakfast” (Spaulding 2015, 1070). One of the main problems with this conception of phenomenology is, as I have pointed out in the first chapter, a series of such reports is neither necessary nor

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59 Spaulding seems to feel that the problem a phenomenologist might have with this conception of phenomenology is that it presupposes the verbalisation of experience.
sufficient to count as doing phenomenology. Importantly, Spaulding thinks that phenomenology merely involves verbalising the mundane, common experience of what we are aware of in our everyday lives. As she notes, such a conception is common amongst empirically oriented analytic philosophy of mind, and moreover she cites Zahavi and Gallagher as her source for this conception (ibid).

The static method certainly begins with what is immediately given in full intuition, and thus can be characterised as a ‘phenomenology of presence.’ Static phenomenology studies processes which are right at the forefront of consciousness; processes that we can easily become aware of, like the moment when physical objects make an impression upon consciousness and appear in perception. In this sense, I guess we might say that static phenomenology is concerned with qualia, but this seems like an oversimplification, to say the least. Nevertheless, as Cai outlines, during his static period Husserl studies experiences wherein objects are given in absolute self-evidence. At this point “what one is directed to in phenomenological reflection is… merely a transcendental subjectivity living at a ‘now-point’” (Cai 2013, 18) (albeit surrounded by a certain temporal halo or fringe of protention and retention). The static method is an exploration of what is present or presented to intuition in the streaming now moment (see §2.1).

However, some mental activity which occurs outside of these temporal confines is characterised by its distance and absence, can be described as much ‘softer’ or more subtle, scores lower on the continuum of awareness, and is more difficult to bring to reflective awareness. In the middle to latter parts of his career Husserl began to utilise what’s termed a ‘genetic’ method of phenomenology, as he became increasingly concerned with “the function of the passive constitution of meanings and their hidden intentional accomplishments in the constitution characteristic of all meaning and being” (Hopkins 2011, 148). The genetic method increasingly recognized the importance of the fact that we are each “a concrete ego that has a history and will continue to have an experiential life in the future” (Cai 2013, 18). This history is not only temporal, but passive/constitutive. The genetic project is interested in a variety of preconditions for conscious activity.
I do not here have room to expand on what the genetic method involves, and to do so would go beyond the stated scope of this study. However, it is worth reiterating that even static phenomenology is not a form of introspection (as contemporary commentators are wont to think of it), but a reflective, analytic, and (partly) reconstructive study of the concepts which pertain to consciousness. The analytic aspect of phenomenology alone distinguishes it from introspection, no matter how we think of the latter. Also, as Hopkins elucidates, “phenomenological reflection is driven by the cognitive concern to provide philosophical ‘legitimization’ for the implicit and explicit cognitional claims that issue from lived-experience’s straightforwardness” (Hopkins 2011, 99, my italics). Any given present lived experience entails a pervasive background network of meanings that remain implicit, until reflection coupled with analysis makes these meanings explicit via a process of rigorous description. Thus, a reconstructive exercise is necessary, because there is a gap between experience simpliciter and the moment when we enter into phenomenology via reflection and analysis. The genetic method is also reconstructive, but my point is that this does not in fact represent a radical departure from static phenomenology; the genetic project is already heralded in the static notion of the horizontality of meaning, and it merely alters the temporal parameters of Husserl’s purview in order to enter into the study of deeper and more subtle dimensions of conscious experience (and, with the historical project, even beyond consciousness). The genetic method alters the epistemological parameters of phenomenological analysis in order to enter into the study of deeper and subtler dimensions of conscious experience (and beyond). Husserl states that becoming acquainted with experience via reflection leads to “very many levels and depth dimensions” (Husserl 1977, 21), and we are, for the most part, totally unaware of what sits in these depths. Husserl’s genetic turn enables him to plumb deeper and deeper levels, and his investigation becomes considerably removed from the moment of primal intuitive impression.

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60 I will briefly touch on some genetic themes now because they pertain to my discussion concerning the relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science, but we arrive at a topical limit point of this investigation. We have thus moved in this dissertation from the primal static point of genesis (the now point where sensations make their impression) to the passive and temporally distant outer rim of consciousness.

61 All I wish to show in this chapter is that Husserlian phenomenology studies low-nonconscious states. Details on how he does this—the issue of Husserlian phenomenological methodology—is a much more complicated and larger problem. See Steinbock (1995), Larrabee (1976) for introductions to genetic methodological discussions.
Early commentators (and some contemporary ones) have not always appreciated the implications of Husserl’s genetic turn. As already mentioned in §5.2, Derrida, for example, criticised Husserl as a “thinker who remained stuck in the metaphysics of presence, stubbornly conceiving of absolute subjectivity in terms of a self-sufficient immanence purified from all types of exteriority and difference” (Zahavi 1999, 201). Gallagher, as another example, thinks that, according to Husserl, intentionality appears ex nihilo, and that consciousness is a pure spontaneity which begins at the noetic act. Furthermore, everything “of importance happens in full phenomenological view, ‘out in front’ of the noetic act” (Gallagher 1995, 232-233, quoted in Smith 2007, 14). Gallagher thinks that Husserl ignores the origins of the act. As A.D. Smith points out, these characterisations are “a serious misrepresentation of Husserl’s position. Much of what Husserl refers to as ‘consciousness’ is unconscious” (Smith 2007, 14). Nowadays, Husserl scholars recognise that Husserlian phenomenology is not just a study of what we are aware of, particularly since his lectures on passive synthesis were published (Husserl 1966) and translated (Husserl 2001c). Zahavi, for example, recognises that Husserl is “a thinker of alterity… and passivity” (1999, 201), and Costello writes that, for Husserl, “experience is always potentially shot through with… absences and alterities” (2012, 10).

Husserlian phenomenology is not solely interested in the high-level finished products of intentional activity, but also studies the subtle preconditions and unconscious processes—the passivities and absences—of consciousness. The phenomenological arena of passivity and unconsciousness is, unsurprisingly, dissimilar to (and should be distinguished from) the subpersonal sphere postulated by functionalists, computational theorists, and cognitive scientists. Husserlian phenomenology, therefore, offers a differing set of subpersonal processes, which can be studied from the phenomenological perspective. So, my contention is that the domain of phenomenology (consciousness) is much wider than what contemporary cognitive science and analytic philosophy of mind suppose, and that Zahavi and Gallagher are, at times, reinforcing the conception of phenomenology that I wish to challenge.

A couple of provisos are in order. Regarding Zahavi and Gallagher, I do not wish to claim that the problematic conception of phenomenology which I object to is the only one that they operate with, or that they have no other conception of what phenomenology involves. It would be unsustainable to hold that Zahavi and Gallagher have an inadequate idea of phenomenology. What I claim is that, at very specific times, when they are
discussing points related to social cognition and dealing with their cognitive science interlocutors, their method of argumentation begins to rely on a problematic conception of phenomenology. Sometimes, as I more than readily admit, they demonstrate their expertise in phenomenology, and at other times Zahavi has even explicitly denied the sort of characterisation of phenomenology that I am objecting to (Zahavi 2017). What I object to, then, turns out to be a tension and contradiction between certain parts of the Zahavi/Gallagher take on phenomenology. As I will show, there are important consequences for the intersubjectivity debates which result from this contradiction.

I also recognise that, normally in cognitive science, the ‘subpersonal’ refers to neurological processes, or psychological computational procedures, which causally underpin the personal level. I am not suggesting that we can give a phenomenological account of these, nor am I conflating these processes with the ones that Husserl discusses. I further acknowledge that neurons do not contribute to present experience in the way the types of processes I am about to cover contribute. We should not confuse causal conditions with passive preconditions that operate via different underlying mechanisms. My point is merely that the ‘subpersonal’ umbrella should be widened to include more than is currently postulated by cognitive science, and phenomenology can give an account of some of this terrain. If even this much is conceded, the landscape of the debate between phenomenology and cognitive science is altered.

Regarding the relationship between cognitive science and phenomenology, my claim is limited to the notion that phenomenology has something to contribute to an area where, now, it is thought it cannot, i.e. in discussions concerning subpersonal mechanisms, if we broaden our perspective on what the subpersonal realm consists in. I do not claim anything as brash as that we can just replace subpersonal cognitive science with subpersonal phenomenology; that all the subpersonal mechanisms which cognitive science postulates can be replaced with phenomenological concepts. While I believe there is good reason to think it is possible to push the program of phenomenological correlationism further than the border between personal and subpersonal, to reiterate I am by no means advocating a program of total reduction of cognitive science concepts, nor am I advocating for a program of eliminativism. I am just claiming that the scope of phenomenology is wider than is sometimes assumed, for instance in the debates discussed in §7.2, and includes the study of some processes which should fall under the subpersonal umbrella, alongside the other processes which are already there. In summary, the border
between phenomenology and cognitive science is not homologous with the border between the personal and the subpersonal.

8.3 Passivity

Husserl notes that some acts score highly on the continuum of awareness, particularly those acts which seem to involve activity and voluntary effort on the part of the ego. In Ideas 2 he observes that one sense of the ego is that it is active and takes positions on various propositions and states of affairs. On the other hand, there is a sphere of processes which are spontaneous and occur with no activity on the ego’s behalf (Husserl 1989). This arena of consciousness Husserl refers to as the passive sphere, which mostly sits very lowly on the continuum of awareness. Steinbock states that, for Husserl, passivity is equivalent to pre-predicative, pre-linguistic experience, and passive processes constitute what is pre-given to consciousness (Steinbock 2001).

Despite sitting at the very fringes of nonawareness, we can garner a sense of, and thematise, passive processes. In fact, Husserl’s descriptions of the passive sphere are some of his most resonant. In ACPAS Husserl begins his discussion of the passive sphere by observing that active attentive waking life always has a non-wakeful passive background. Consciousness always has active and passive processes occurring simultaneously. The passive background might be composed of so-called ‘hyletic data,’ i.e. sights, sounds, or bodily feelings like kinaesthesis. It might also be composed of processes, i.e. tendencies, drives, “flashes of insight, imaginings that arise, memories, theoretical insights or even stirrings of the will” (Husserl 2001c, 19). Thus, all sorts of mental contents and processes drift in and out of, and at any time consciousness is an amalgamation of, passivity and activity.

In ACPAS Husserl also describes processes of consciousness which wholly tend towards passivity, and discusses how they are the precursors to high-level activity. An example of such a process is the basic or core tendency of consciousness to be affected by the world and the individual objects in it, which is the precursor to taking active thematic interest. Another important process is the association of homogeneous forms (like shapes and colours), which is a precursor to processes of identification. Other processes include the retrograde cancellation or ‘crossing out’ of retentions after our indicative intentions are frustrated (the precursor to mistaking, doubting, and negation), habitual and instinctual life and, at the very lowest end of passivity and nonconsciousness, the
associative reawakening of senses which have been ‘sedimented’ (see next section). All of these low-level processes lay the foundations for intentional acts (Husserl 2001c).

Thus, Husserl elaborates the general structures which set the conditions for high-level activity (Dahlstrom 2007, 33). The activity of consciousness requires a pre-established passive constitutional background. Constitutionally speaking, passive syntheses “take place prior to the occurrences of ‘higher lying activities’” (Steinbock 2001, xxxix); passivity is “the soil upon which the free activity of the ego moves” (Husserl 2001c, 386). Smith writes that, in this sense, passive synthesis is accomplished “behind the back” of everyday consciousness (Smith 2007, 14).

What is of importance to our discussions is that many features of embodiment are passive. Husserl highlighted, for example, the importance of proprioception (immanent sensations), ocular motor kinaesthesis, and other forms of kinaesthetic activity, for the constitution of perception (Husserl 1997). The lived body is largely passively constituted. Recent scholarship has emphasised the role of a variety of embodied senses which contribute to experience, including social experience, e.g., general interoceptive and visceral sensations (de Preester 2007), and the role of the body schema (Benassi, Ferri, Frassinetti, Gallese, & Maini 2011, Gallese & Sinigaglia 2010, Gallagher 1995, Iacoboni 2009).

Another more readily available example of a passive embodied process is breathing. Breathing is automatic and involuntary, and “one of the most simple, basic, ever-present bodily activities” (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch 1992, 25). Nevertheless, we are normally unaware of it and, if we try to become aware of breathing, through say, mindfulness meditation, we may be surprised at how difficult this awareness is to gain and maintain (ibid). If we consider the varied examples of kinaesthesis, breath, body schema, and interoception, we see that our sense of embodiment consists of “various sensory input layers, ranging from surface to in-depth body and from explicitly conscious information to information closed off from conscious awareness” (de Preester 2007, 215-216). Despite this variety

[P]ersonal life shows a profound continuity between the deeply instinctive, pre-predicative levels of consciousness, intertwined with the body but still belonging to the life of consciousness, and the highly theoretical and behavioral performances that ground social and ethical life (Pugliese 2016, 78).
De Preester notes that bodily information is not obvious, and might not ever reach the personal level of awareness. Nevertheless, there is quite obviously a submersion of personal life within anonymous life (de Preester 2007, 205).

Passive processes exert a centripetal force on the ego, whilst activity is centrifugal from the ego. However, it must be emphasised that passivity and activity are ends on a continuum, and are blended, and this mirrors the blending of that which we are explicitly aware of with what we are not. Steinbock discerns seven divisions along Husserl’s continuum of passivity and activity (Steinbock 2004). Furthermore, active intentionalities “are already at work on the passive level and… intentional acts are immersed in or surrounded by passive elements” (ibid, 18). As Husserl states, not only is passivity prior to activity (constitutionally speaking), but there are forms of “passivity in activity”. He immediately adds that statements like this show “that the distinction between activity and passivity is not inflexible” (Husserl 1973d, 108).

For example, a process which lies at the hinterland of passivity and activity is the receptivity of consciousness to stimuli. Consciousness is malleable and absorbent, and affords stimuli to make an impression. However, even this seemingly passive affordance is a type of allowance—a type of activity. As Welton points out, receptivity is the activity of complying with the affective allure of the perceptual field (Welton 1982). Consciousness undergoes stimulations from things and “yields to the attractive force” (Husserl 1989, 255). As Biceaga notes, for Husserl, even constitutionally prior to the operation of affection, consciousness “opens its field of receptivity”, and “lets the affection arrive” (Biceaga 2007, 78). Husserl gives an example which demonstrates the blending of active and passive spheres when he describes how something seen very obscurely determines me to get up and approach [or how] a room’s stale air… stimulates me to open the window. In each case we have here an ‘undergoing of something,’ a being passively determined by something, and an active reaction to it (Husserl 1989, 229).

De Preester states that, even within phenomenological psychology, there has been a tendency to neglect the blending of active and passive spheres, and to consider lack of conscious awareness “a sign for lack of importance” (2007, 215). The descriptions of passive embodied processes given by foundational phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Husserl were prescient in this regard, as it was not until recently that the fundamental
role of passive background bodily senses to the account of self and consciousness has been again rediscovered. There are now an increasing number of contemporary phenomenologically inspired accounts of the contribution of background bodily processes to social cognition (see for example Fuchs & De Jaegher 2009, the account of pairing in Zahavi 2014, Gallagher 2005a, the variety of passive and prereflective processes discussed in Gallagher & Zahavi 2008). However, these accounts are at odds with the standard conception of phenomenology as a study of everyday awareness.

Ever since the work of the Würzburg school on so-called ‘imageless thoughts’ at the turn of the century, empirical psychology (on the other hand) has recognized the importance of low-level/non-conscious processes, but the processes which cognitive science supposes to fill the theoretical spot of ‘the unconscious’ are characterized in computational and neurological terms. Cognitive science is hesitant to consider that other non-neurological or non-computational processes might be operant within the subpersonal domain, or that these processes might be studied by phenomenologists, largely due to a certain conception of phenomenology as dealing with that which we are obviously aware of, and a blinkered conception of the sort of processes that the subpersonal domain might be composed of. I suggest that philosophers of mind of all stripes need to consider that the subpersonal domain might be filled with a variety of heterogeneous processes (i.e. the firing of neurons, embodiment, or the passive association of meanings). Consideration of this variety needs to permeate discussions of the underpinnings of our personal lives.

These discussions can be transposed into the context of deliberations concerning intersubjective experience. Every type of intersubjective experience has its passive precursors, occurs within a network of passive processes, and is in a sense a response to and continuation of them. Sensory perception in particular is heavily embedded in a passive background. Sensory perception is at the base of Husserl’s account of empathy, as it (obviously) is at the base of Zahavi’s account of direct perception. Thus, the actual moment of the act of direct social perception, via my perception of the other’s body, has a

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62 Steinbock even goes as far as to classify all passive processes as perceptual. However, we need not go this far, because, as Dahlstrom notes, Husserl thinks that the structures of passivity “are not restricted to perceiving, but can be found in feeling and appreciating as well” (2007, 33). As I discussed, all high-level logical activity has passive precursors. Thus, Husserl’s choice of focusing on passive perceptual structures serves merely the purpose of exemplification.
lengthy passive constitutional history; an account of the passive background of embodied empathy tells a large part of the phenomenological story.

One of the biggest problems with trying to maintain a strict delineation of static from genetic phenomenologies is that the object of static analysis *par excellence*—sensory perception—is riddled with passivities, and passivities are best studied via a genetic method. This is the reason why my study has ended with the current seemingly outlying discussions, which in fact bring us full circle. We only ever really actively empathise with another because of the passive processes which allow them to stand out from all the other objects in the world, and allow us to take some form of special interest in them. A crucial, passive, embodied, precondition of empathy is the low-level associative process of pairing, which is rooted in a passive sense of kinaesthetic reverberation (see §2.9 & §2.10.1). These kinaesthetic and bodily reverberations at the base of embodied empathy are the uniquely person-to-person forms of passive association. The associatively developed sense of analogy with the other serves to constitute the pregiven sense that is present before we actively take an interest in others; this sense determines that it is another person that we might become interested in, in the first place. In fact, it is just undeniable that the greater part of the embodied processes, which were the focus of this thesis up until chapter six, are supposedly passive.

So, we would expect that Zahavi’s direct perception model should mostly be composed of passive processes, as it is enabled by embodied and perceptual mechanisms. The *moment* of empathy may be intuitive, but this moment accounts for a fraction of the process of social perception as a whole, as any sustained phenomenological analysis reveals. Given the (mostly) passive and nonconscious nature of perceptual and embodied processes, it is hard to see why Zahavi’s model should be granted the appeal to any sort of *intuitive* advantage over either personal or subpersonal versions of simulation or theory-theory. Given that we are for the most part unaware of passive processes, *prima facie* it seems unjustified to claim that we are or should be aware of the processes depicted by the direct perception model of intersubjectivity.

Such an intuitive advantage is precisely what Zahavi and Gallagher hope to gain with their appeal to common experience. A central premise of their argument against their interlocutors is that we have no ‘phenomenological evidence’ for theorising, or simulating, which, as I showed, must mean that they think that we are not aware of these
processes occurring frequently. One can assume from this that they think we must have phenomenological evidence, or awareness of, our perception of the other’s mind, or else the former premise does not really amount to much. Zahavi says, we should “acknowledge a more immediate experiential access to the minds of others” (Zahavi 2011a, 546). What does the claim that I am immediately aware of the perception of the mind of the other really amount to? Does this sort of claim really square with everyday experience and, even if it did, what would this matter? How do you prove this sort of claim, and what can you say to someone who denies it? These sort of question undermine the structure of Zahavi and Gallagher’s argument, and show that their argument does not really approach the apodicity phenomenology desires.

Zahavi and Gallagher are implicitly endorsing the notion that what phenomenologists do is refer to that which we are aware of. Let me be very clear that, whether a premise which serves to affirm direct perception, and deny simulation/theorising, is made as a result of phenomenological reflection, description, analysis, and argumentation, or whether it merely relies on the reference to everyday awareness, is precisely what is at stake here. Emphasising the passive and prepredicative nature of perception should give us reason to question the latter style of argumentation around social cognition, and these discussions in general should make us wary of the structure of any form of argumentation which appeals to everyday awareness on phenomenology’s behalf. More discussion of these points will be had in the conclusion.

8.4 The unconscious

In the context of the present discussion, an important Husserlian theme is the unconscious, though it is rarely mentioned. As Fink elucidates in an appendix to Husserl’s Crisis, the current situation, where the dominant psychological paradigm opposes itself to mental states we are aware of, and supposedly thereby opposes itself to phenomenology, is not novel. Although his comments are addressed towards Freudian psychology, Fink recognises an “ever growing tendency of… biology… to conceive of consciousness as a [mere] stratum of the concrete man and to oppose it to other dimensions of life not traceable to consciousness…” (Fink 1970, 386). However, this opposition “is based on a fundamental philosophical” naivety (ibid). Fink states that this naivety consists in claiming an opposition between, on the one hand, a common conception of consciousness as that which is immediately and easily available throughout
waking life with, on the other hand, readily available examples of states of nonconsciousness like sleep (ibid, 387). Fink thus thinks that the historical opposition between phenomenology and Freudian psychology resulted precisely because of very similar preconceptions to the ones I am objecting to in this chapter.

Husserl, on the other hand, has a sophisticated conception of both consciousness and unconsciousness. For Husserl too, the ‘unconscious’ is very much the ‘unaware.’ ‘Consciousness’ (as a noun—the comprehensive thing which contains all mental processes—not synonymous with awareness) and ‘unconscious’ (as an adjective, meaning processes we are not aware of) are not mutually exclusive; some unconscious processes still occur ‘within’ consciousness. I will now discuss some of the unconscious processes that occur within consciousness that phenomenology studies, which differ from the unconscious processes that occur within consciousness that the cognitive scientist studies.

For Husserl, there is a continuum between what we are aware of and unconsciousness, “where the vivacity of impressional contents increases in one direction and decreases in the other” (MacDonald 2007, 8). The unconscious sphere, for Husserl, comes about because consciousness has a temporal dimension, and experiences are modified as internal time passes. Unconsciousness results because experiences pass into expanses of retention, and beyond.

Statically conceived, perception of an object consists in punctuations or slices of intuitable primordial impressions experienced in the moment of the now (slices which, as we saw in §2.1, continually ‘flow’). Husserl describes how, as perception of an object progresses, these slices of the now pass continually over into retention. Initially these slices pass into fresh, or, vivacious, retention. “The primordial impression initially passes over continuously into a retentional expanse that we can describe as the expanse of fresh retention” (Husserl 2001c, 218). At this initial point the object of the perception and its attributed senses are still distinct. If we begin to expand our temporal purview, however, we see how, as a slice or punctuation passes further and further into the past, and moves from this expanse of fresh retention, the perception and the object it is of becomes more and more unclear: it loses its distinguishing traits and prominences…

The expanse of fresh retention, then, continuously passes over into an expanse of empty retention. One can characterize this as the genetic primordial form of empty presentations… [The] affective force goes back inexorably, the objective sense
becomes inexorably poorer with respect to internal differentiations, thus emptying itself in a certain way (ibid).

Finally, the senses which we perceived primordially in the object in the moment of the now become completely ‘undifferentiated,’ which means that the object has lost all of its vivacity and affective allure. The experience no longer has any intuitable content, “its life ceases, precisely in its vivacity” at this “zero point” (Husserl 2001c, 219 & 216). Husserl describes this loss of differentiation as a progressive retentational “clouding over” (ibid, 220). When there is no longer any affective force issuing from an object the experience has slipped into the “sheer nightfall” of the unconscious (ibid, 221, see also Husserl 1973d, 279).

At this zero point the vague and murky object-like formations 63 have not become a nothing, nor have they ceased exerting influence on consciousness. “Submerged below the threshold of awareness, empty presentations form a passive retentional deposit of stale and dormant acquisitions” (Biceaga 2007, 118). For Husserl, the unconscious is composed of these dormant senses.

Because these previously-constituted-but-now-dormant senses are contained in the unconscious, they can be reawakened. Awakening occurs through a variety of passive and active associative syntheses (Biceaga 2007). For example, “a thought reminds me of other thoughts and calls back into memory a past lived experience” (Husserl 1989, 234). As Biceaga explains

Fleeting rememberings (flüchtig aufblitzende Erinnerungen) work by sudden flashes back into the past. Not being encumbered by constraints of continuity, involuntary memory spontaneously connects different strata of sedimentation and employs passive mechanisms of self-organization... [D]istant awakenings can leap from one sedimented layer of sense to another (Biceaga 2007, 124)

Thus, the passive associative capacity can reawaken dormant senses.

Unconscious senses are buried with varying degrees of depth. In some cases, we may become aware of how a passive association awakens an unconscious sense and motivates a current experience. However, in most cases, unconscious senses are a form of

63 It would be improper to call them objects anymore.
motivation which “is indeed actually present in consciousness, but it does not stand out; it is unnoticed or unnoticeable” (Husserl 1989, 234), and thus remains unconscious. Sedimented senses might affect us passively in the form of whims, free floating ideas or habitualities (Husserl 1973d, 279).

Husserl’s descriptions bring forward a rich and suggestive vocabulary which conveys well the kind of position assigned to empty presentations within the storied structure of consciousness. Empty presentations are to be found in ‘the subsoil of non-vivacity’ (Untergrund von Unlebendigkeit) (217); they sink into ‘the night of forgetfulness’ (Nacht der Vergessenheiten) (464); they are relegated to a ‘zero stage’ (Null-Stadium) (220)…; they descend into the ‘sheer nightfall’ of the unconscious (221). Although devoid of affective force, empty presentations count as epistemic acquisitions and as such, they provide a framework of sense, a horizon of familiarity, a network of dormant but articulated and determinate meanings (Biceaga 2007, 118-119, quoting Husserl 2001c).

Interestingly, giving an account of the passive sphere and the unconscious represents only the first layer of the genetic phenomenological project. The project continues with an inquiry into senses sedimented in the garb or veil of ideas which clothe the lifeworld, and their historical intentional genesis. The phenomenological psychological project surely reaches its limits at the Husserlian account of the unconscious thought. From here, the phenomenological historical project emerges.

All we need take away, for our purposes, is that Husserl’s project does not stop at the limits of the boundaries of everyday awareness; it is not exclusively concerned with processes fully present to awareness. In fact, it forays into the deep, murky, vague, inarticulate dimensions of consciousness. Thus, Husserlian phenomenology gives an account of states at the edges of our thematic regard through its account of passivity and the unconscious.

8.5 The Upshot

To recap, I showed that the personal level is sometimes thought of in terms of mental states of which we are obviously aware, that it is generally thought that phenomenology studies this level, and that therefore the personal level, awareness, and phenomenology are clustered together. I showed that, not only do analytic philosophers of
mind generally consider phenomenology as the study of mental states of which we are aware, but also that this implicit concept cluster is operating within the debates on intersubjectivity, and is present in the work of Gallagher and Zahavi. I have dissolved this clustering by arguing that phenomenology studies aspects of conscious experience which lie right on the passive and subconscious outer boundaries of consciousness. Thus, we can associate a type of phenomenology with some aspects of nonawareness.

Zahavi and Gallagher have contributed so much to the development of the phenomenological account of low conscious states (Gallagher & Zahavi 2015, Zahavi 1999, 2002a, 2007b), and to reinvigorating of Husserl studies. It is undeniable that Zahavi is aware of Husserl’s phenomenology of passivity and the unconscious. An appendix to Self-Awareness and Alterity is devoted to discussing these themes. Zahavi distinguishes “surface” phenomenology, which is concerned with object manifestation and act-intentionality, or, a phenomenology of presence, from depth phenomenology. He argues (as I have here) that the idea “that anything that cannot be accessed through direct reflection is off limits for phenomenology, is based upon a superficial conception of phenomenology” (Zahavi 1999, 207). Zahavi acknowledges that Husserl’s genetic phenomenology deals “with constitutive processes which remain inaccessible for direct appropriation” (Zahavi 1999, 207-208). That is, genetic phenomenology deals with mental processes of which we do not have direct access, or everyday awareness.

So, why does Zahavi then appeal to everyday awareness, or why does he sometimes suggest that phenomenology cannot go past it? Surely not ‘et tu, Brute?’ Such a position allows authors like Spaulding to straw man phenomenology, or authors like Herschbach to dismiss it via reference to subpersonal processes. The dilemma is this, then: one either implicitly contributes to the characterisation of phenomenology in oversimplified terms (and is prey to arguments which appeal to subpersonal mechanisms without a right of response), or one relies on the more technical (yet accurate) conception of what is actually involved in the doing of phenomenology (and thereby gives up the appeal to everyday awareness, and loses one’s authority to speak about what ‘common experience’ tells us). On the one hand, phenomenological investigation need not stop at the limits of everyday awareness, but because of this, on the other hand, it also will not do to appeal to everyday awareness in order either to affirm or deny some process on phenomenology’s behalf, because the phenomenological situation may be particularly more complicated, nuanced, and complex than what everyday awareness reveals.
Anyone familiar with Husserl (or Heidegger, or Sartre, or Merleau-Ponty) would agree to the technicality involved in the doing of phenomenology. In stark contrast to the idea that it is the mere reporting of everyday experience, traditional phenomenology is renowned for being one of the most alien, strange, and difficult philosophical disciplines. The classical phenomenological tradition has never appealed to common experience, and has always proceeded by reflection, rigorous description, analysis, and argument. Zahavi and Gallagher undeniably have these tools. If I am right, then it is only one type of argument, which Gallagher and Zahavi only rely on sometimes, which becomes barred to them. But, it is an important shift in the terms of the debate.

Perhaps, when Zahavi and Gallagher say that “phenomenology cannot speak about subpersonal processes”, we should interpret this to mean just that phenomenology does not have anything to contribute to discussions of neurological or computational mechanisms.\(^{64}\) This would be true. However, there is reason to doubt this interpretation, because, as I mentioned, Zahavi speaks of the nonconscious, the subconscious, and the subpersonal synonymously. This intimates that the ‘subpersonal’ is a term which ranges over more than just neurology or computations, and so I think what they mean with this quote is actually that phenomenology does not have anything to say about processes that we are not aware of. This last claim is not true.

But even if the interpretation given in the previous paragraph is right, then this means that the term ‘subpersonal’ is being used by Zahavi and Gallagher in a very limited fashion. Normally, in cognitive science, the subconscious refers to brain processes that are described in computational terms to account for intelligent behaviour. These brain processes are not Husserl’s unconscious. They do not contribute to present experience the way past or passive experiences do. Yet, all these sorts or processes can by any account be called ‘subpersonal’. One of the central points of this chapter is that brain processes/subpersonal computational procedures, and processes within the phenomenological unconscious, are both, broadly construed, considered as ‘unconscious’ or ‘subpersonal’ processes—yet one is counted by the cognitive scientist, the other is not even on their radar (but it should be). Indeed, the phrase ‘phenomenological unconscious’ is probably considered an oxymoron. If Zahavi and Gallagher are using the term subpersonal to mean the cognitive science subpersonal, then they are falling prey to the

\(^{64}\) This is what one reviewer has suggested they mean.
same fallacy the cognitive scientist is—thinking that, to explain everything psychological that falls outside of everyday awareness, we need only refer to brain process or computations. I argue that we would be better off with more tools in our psychological toolbox, not fewer.

Now of course, none of this is to argue that via phenomenology we might give a phenomenological account of processes which are not ‘in’ consciousness at all, like the firing of nerve cells. In a mature psychological science, the role of the different processes which contribute to psychological life would, in an ideal system, each be afforded a distinct place. A mature psychological science has many facets, and will need neurology, metaphors of computation, as well as an advanced depth phenomenology, and these disciplines will often be, for the most part, methodologically and explanatorily distinct (yet not necessarily contradictory). My arguments merely grant phenomenology a wider scope than the examination of so-called common, everyday experience, and allow phenomenology to share a theoretical area within psychological science which has previously been held only by cognitive subpersonal processes.

One of the goals of psychological science is to develop ‘vertical’ explanations, which move from the rational and conscious personal level, to the mechanistic subpersonal level smoothly. Many cognitive scientists would believe that the shift from the personal to the subpersonal is equivalent to the move from the phenomenological to the empirical/cognitive. But this is not right as, for Husserl, we move from activity and presence to the passive and unconscious; from the static to the genetic. The description of intentional activity with the static methodology acts as the guiding clue for a regressive inquiry via genetic methods into the passive and subconscious spheres. Thus, in contrast to common opinion, we do not move from ‘the phenomenology’ down to the underlying subpersonal cognitive mechanisms. What I have been trying to show is that there is phenomenology deep down. Importantly, we might be able to engage in depth phenomenology, and reduce some of the subpersonal computational procedures described by the cognitive scientist to phenomenological terms.

8.6 Postscript on Naturalism

Now that the concrete analyses are over, I am able to sketch my position on the question of the relationship between naturalism and phenomenology. I will only discuss the relationship between phenomenological psychology and empirical psychology, and
not discuss the relation between other forms of phenomenology and the other natural sciences. As many authors have pointed out, a lot hinges on exactly what one means by naturalisation. Strong naturalism, as I defined it in the introduction, has two branches—one metaphysical and the other epistemological. The metaphysical branch asserts that we must only refer to naturally occurring elements and forces, or processes that could, in theory at least, be reduced to them. The epistemological branch: that claims to knowledge in any area are commensurate with the explanations offered by the so-called ‘hard’ physical sciences, like chemistry and physics, and that all legitimate branches of inquiry are continuous with them.

I take the very typical phenomenological position of not attempting to put forward any metaphysical thesis about the substance of mental states. Yet, I have explained in detail why I think that the essences of psychological concepts are different than the essence of physical matter. There is a fundamental difference between psychological laws and physical ones. As Husserl puts it,

the synthesis of consciousness is completely different from the external combination of external elements, that instead of… spatial intermingling and interpenetration…, it pertains to the essence of conscious life to contain an intentional intertwining, motivation and mutual implication by meaning, and this in a way in which in its form and principle has no analogue at all in the physical (Husserl 1977, 26).

Motivational laws and causal ones operate via different underlying processes. The former is based in rationality and grounded in the flow of internal time consciousness, the latter by the collision of physical forces situated in space. You just cannot explain the former in terms of the latter. Thus, the psychological realm is not solely composed of physical elements and forces, and for this reason there is a necessary degree of discontinuity between physical and psychological sciences. The relation between psychological processes and physical ones will never be like the relation between the body and the cell, or astronomy and physics. The difference is not in levels or degrees, but in kind. So, you cannot naturalise psychology in the strong sense of naturalisation without giving up the essential characteristics of the mental.

Yet, the psyche is always embodied, and the body is physical, and is experienced as such. Accordingly, as one of the primary data of phenomenological analysis are natural objects, phenomenological psychology unavoidably addresses the natural world, and not
merely as intentional object, but as amongst it, and as a member of it. The study of pure consciousness leads ineluctably back to a study of nature, even in a transcendental context, but certainly in a psychological one, as the analytically motivated path which I traced in chapter two showed us. Nature is ‘in’ consciousness, and consciousness finds itself ‘in’ nature. There is not an opposition between consciousness and nature, but an intertwining of the two which remains to be explicated. Husserl’s analysis of bodily touch is pivotal here, as touch is the medium of the initial and base sense of spatiality which begins with the difference between inner and the outer. Naturalising phenomenology is always taken to mean giving a naturalist account of consciousness, but we can just as well think of providing a phenomenological account of nature along these lines as a variety of naturalism (albeit, not the traditional type), as such an account relativizes perceived oppositions between the two.

The challenge of the modern philosopher of mind is to work out how the mental and physical realms are intertwined. The assumption of the physical sciences is that, once neurology reaches a level of detail or complexity, we shall finally be able to see how it is that physical matter gives rise to consciousness. Maybe. However, we have good reasons to doubt this. For example, Mensch thinks it is impossible for the physical sciences, which assume a third person perspective that has temporality drained from it, to ever solve the so-called hard problem of consciousness. Equally futile is a Kantian perspective, which fails to understand that experience is just as spatially based as it is temporal. Mensch’s most recent analysis (n.d.) (which I can only give the barest outline here) concludes that the processes of retention and protention, which ground external spatial and internal temporal perception, are what accounts for our sense of time and space. The processes of protention and retention transcend the first and third person perspective, and are not known directly, but only by their effects. Mensch further observes that we can interpret these processes “as formal structures of the physical processes underlying perception and seek their physical analogues in the functioning of the brain” (Mensch n.d., 115), assuming, of course, we do not need to interpolate some other computational cognitive micro-process before making the transition to the brain. Such an account holds great promise for crossing the explanatory bridge from the phenomenological side of the gap, so to speak, and I relay it here to show that the phenomenological perspective has viable pathways concerning the relation between the mental and physical. There is no a priori reason to assume that it will be the physical sciences which unweave the tapestry of
mind and body. The promise of the hybrid relationship between cognitive science and phenomenology is that it might allow us to develop accounts which leap over the explanatory gap, but we ought not to be picky about where we jump from.

No serious contemporary philosopher of mind could ever support the thesis that there is no connection between the psychic and the physical realms, because psychological life is so reliably altered when the functioning of the brain is altered. As Thompson (2007, cited in Reynolds 2018, 32) suggests, neurophenomenological studies on time consciousness suggest that there is a relation of close correlation between mental and physical processes. The relationship between kinaesthetic sense data and mirror neurons also suggests a strong correlation. Endorsing a correlation stops short of claiming that the brain causes consciousness, however. The thesis of correlation attempts to preserve the irreducible differences between the mental and the physical, whilst accommodating for the obvious connection between them.

Asserting a correlation between psychic processes and physical ones is to accept a weak form of naturalism. This is to admit that the psychological realm is not totally independent of and disconnected from material nature. One important task, then, is to narrow the gap between the correlated mental and physical processes as closely as possible, so as to make the leap over the explanatory gap deftly, and forget about trying to close or annihilate this gap. To this end, due to the essence of psychic life, the specificity offered by phenomenological description provides a degree of detail which can help to closely plot these correlations. The more detailed our descriptions are, the more we understand the psychic process in question, and the more chance there is that we may be able to correlate psychic processes with specific neuronal ones, supplement computational accounts, or smooth the transition between personal and subpersonal levels.

It should come as no surprise that I support what Zahavi (2009) terms “soft naturalization”, whereby phenomenologists stay up to date with the most current research in cognitive science. This concerns the continuity of the empirical and phenomenological psychological sciences, and is to admit that, at the least, they sometimes address the same or related subject matter. Phenomenological philosophers have much to contribute to debates within psychology and the philosophy of mind, and might enlighten cognitive science via the provision of analytically refined descriptive accounts of psychological
phenomena, and the only way to do any of this is to be up to date with research in cognitive science. If the phenomenologist wishes to contribute to psychological science, then they will need to know its history, trends, trajectory, and issues.

This enlightenment undoubtedly goes both ways. Reynolds points to the growing phenomenological engagement with psychological case studies, and claims that this engagement represents a form of naturalisation, as these empirical studies sometimes challenge phenomenology, i.e., accounts of the schizophrenic symptom of thought insertion challenges the phenomenological claim about the basic ‘mineness’ of experience. Reynolds asserts that such cases show “the phenomenological philosopher will need to be prepared to replace their claims and to consider whether their phenomenological account has been missing something or is impoverished in some way” (Reynolds 2018, 31). However, we ought to question whether this sort of reconsideration is really naturalisation at all. Case studies are, after all, just roughly gathered descriptions. Drawing on clinical descriptions of psychopathology, or qualitative work generally (as I did in chapter five), is often merely to cast a wide descriptive net. For the phenomenologist, such descriptions are just as answerable to the principle of all principles, and must bring the phenomena in question to intuitive givenness for the reader, just like all phenomenological description. It is not the case that the phenomenological philosopher relies on empirical hearsay. So, it remains to be seen whether this sort of methodological innovation is any sort of rejection of phenomenological methods in favour of naturalised ones.

So, we should distinguish between these sorts of examples, and engaging with third person observational or neurological studies. If we accept correlationism, then it seems sound to suggest that there is relationship of mutual support between neurological evidence and descriptive accounts, like the way that the work on mirror neurons has served to support the phenomenological position on intersubjectivity, and vice versa. I also cannot really see any problem with the possibility that one might revise one’s phenomenological analysis in the light of third person empirical or neurological studies. As Reynolds contends, not only might these forms of research provide a more filled out thought experiment than phenomenological reflection alone can provide, and hence act as a spur to deeper phenomenological reflection, but they are also able to challenge what has been taken for granted in a given
phenomenological account that aims at describing invariant structures of our experience (Reynolds 2018, 31).

This follows if we accept that the empirical psychologist and the phenomenologist sometimes address the same subject matter, and that the phenomenologist is not infallible. In the interest of intellectual open-mindedness and humility, any academic, phenomenological or otherwise, ought to shy away from claims to infallibility and accept inspiration from wherever they can get it. We can accept all this, and still have to consider these potential challenges on a case-by-case basis by via reference to the matters themselves.

These last few points are pretty mundane, and concede little. The real question is which form of evidence to privilege when there is conflict. As my last chapters have shown, even cognitive science and phenomenology are variegated disciplines. Contemporary hybridised philosophical psychology draws from many more sources besides these, i.e. analytic philosophy, qualitative science, meditative practitioners (such as those drawn on by Evan Thompson), and first and second person introspectionists (like Claire Petitmengin). As we cannot yet rank the epistemological, theoretical, explanatory, or descriptive value of these various methodologies, we do not know which evidence to privilege and when, and we do not have an adequate solution on how to settle areas of disagreement. After giving an analysis of two such widely divergent models, Gallagher ends one essay with the rather prosaic claim “that philosophical ideas… can be aligned with, and can inform, current ideas in cognitive science. I also believe that philosophers can learn… from psychologists, neuroscientists and other cognitive scientists” (Gallagher 2000, 20). Gallagher’s diplomacy seems to ignore a rather large elephant in the room: it is unclear who is supposed to constrain whom, and in which circumstances.

Although the diplomacy of the mutual constraint and enlightenment thesis is commendable, it remains to be seen how practically it can be operationalised. That there are many competing answers to any given philosophical or psychological question is not particularly pressing, in fact it is unavoidable and should be encouraged in the interest of furthering critical inquiry; my point is that the mutual constraint and enlightenment approach fails to advance this state of affairs, and yet it seems to aspire to do so. The problem is not that we have contradictory claims, but that each form of data professes the rights to an epistemologically privileged position which the other lacks. When we have
widely divergent frameworks and varieties of forms of evidence cohabiting together conversations can reach a stalemate, and the disciplines never really progress. It is one thing to extol the virtue of laying polemics aside, another to cultivate a psychological landscape which cannot resolve tensions between tenets which range from wildly divergent to directly contradictory of each other.

So, the thorny problem comes down to what we might do when there is a direct conflict between empirical and phenomenological research, especially when the former is distinctly not first person. It is here where one takes a position on the epistemological branch of strong naturalism. One can accept the suggestion to stay up to date with research that we might gain insight and inspiration from, and even be ready to revise our analyses as a result, yet still object to the idea that one might revise something that one has clear phenomenological evidence for purely because there is contradictory third person empirical evidence.

My position is that, in a psychological context, from an epistemological perspective, when these two forms of evidence are in conflict, then the phenomenological evidence will always win out. Phenomenology is prior in terms of careful, non-biased, theory free descriptions and analyses of the phenomena as they appear. Like I said at the end of chapter six, if an empirical researcher suggests that it is possible to have a perceptual experience which is not given for a particular perspective, or that my understanding of others is a mere inference and has nothing to do with my understanding of myself, or that time is merely an illusion, we should always suspect they are overplaying their hand. There is no possibility that some study might serve to invalidate these core and basic structures of my first person experience, and, if one tries, you can bet it is underwritten by the unjustified assumption that first-person experience is illusory, and that the theories of the hard sciences alone confer reification. If the naturalist wants to hold onto this last assumption, then there will always be disagreement with phenomenology.

To take a stance on the question of conflict is to negotiate the terms of the mutual constraint and enlightenment thesis. To say, as Wheeler does, that phenomenologists ought to revise their position automatically in the light of empirical research sells phenomenology short. This is solely the naturalisation of phenomenology by empirical science, and is to concede the epistemological branch of naturalism wholesale. If our
constraint and enlightenment is to be truly mutual, then not only must we reject the “muggle” constraint, but we must have some idea of how exactly we can phenomenologise psychology. This is the role of phenomenological correlationism, which asks the cognitive scientist to correlate their theories with phenomenological concepts, and acknowledge the value of doing so. The phenomenologist is justified in drawing a line in the sand around psychology.

If my arguments in the last two chapters are correct, then there seems to me to be no inherent theoretical block to carrying a program of phenomenological correlationism out to a greater extent than would be initially thought. Depth phenomenology means then we can even spell some of our subpersonal cognitive accounts out in phenomenological terms. One advantage to incorporating depth phenomenology is that we would need to rely less on purely theoretical postulates, which we express with computational metaphors, to explain the rich complexity of psychological life. One of the current challenges for psychological science is to develop truly ‘vertical’ explanations. A vertical explanation moves from the personal level, to the subpersonal psychological level, to the neurological and biological level. A truly vertical explanation amounts to no less than jumping over the explanatory gap. A smooth vertical explanation would narrow the gap between psychological process and neurological mechanism as much as possible. Most cognitive scientists concede that the use of computational terms like ‘inference,’ ‘matching’ and ‘encoding’ are only usefully employed at the subpersonal level because they allow for a vertical explanation which has some sort of instrumental value. Such explanations are only satisfying as far as instrumental value goes. A depth phenomenology might make the move from the personal, to the subpersonal, to the neurological via reference to concepts which have more than just instrumental value. Instead, we might employ phenomenological concepts to explain psychological activity which occurs below the personal level, descriptive concepts forged to interlock with experience; concepts which more easily allow us to conduct psychological research in literal—human—terms.

8.7 Further directions for research

This work has been limited to the static framework, and only began to touch on genetic themes towards the end. Genetic phenomenology (of intersubjectivity) opens up a whole new field of research, which may interact with contemporary accounts in
productive ways, and offer up new phenomenological concepts which we can correlate with cognitive science themes. This is the next logical line of inquiry to pursue, but it represents a project at least as large as the one just finished. However, it remains to be seen to what extent genetic phenomenology corresponds with the phenomenological psychological project, whether it truly interacts with contemporary empirical psychological schools like cognitive science, or if its topic is something else entirely. The new directions of constitution which genetic phenomenology studies, i.e. the ways that the lifeworld and the other constitutes the self, do not obviously align with the study of psychology (this is in fact why I have avoided them), and a study which compares these Husserlian analyses with sociological or historical theory might be more fitting.

There is also further work to be done on the relation between the personal/subpersonal distinction and phenomenology. In particular, how does the personal/subpersonal distinction relate to phenomenology when taken in the way that Dennett intended when he coined it, i.e., as a distinction between two types of explanation, and not as a distinction between awareness and nonawareness? This opens up a very interesting area for discussion concerning the relation between description and explanation, which the hybrid psychological space will need to address soon. Also, though I have tried to distance the two in the last two chapters (because I think they are being over-identified), there is some relationship between phenomenology and the personal level, and further work which clarifies this relationship is in order. These are lines of research I have already begun pursuing.
References.


