



Husserl, the Monad and Immortality

by Paul MacDonald

Abstract

In an Appendix to his Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis dating from the early 1920s, Husserl makes the startling assertion that, unlike the mundane ego, the transcendental ego is immortal. The present paper argues that this claim is an ineluctable consequence of Husserl's relentless pursuit of the ever deeper levels of time-constituting consciousness and, at the same time, of his increasing reliance on Leibniz's model of monads as the true unifiers of all things, including minds. There are many structural and substantive parallels between Leibniz's monadic scheme and Husserl's later views on the primal ego, and these points of convergence are laid out step by step in this paper. For both theorists, the monad is a self-contained system of being, one "without windows"; a monad's experiences unfold in harmonious concatenations; a monad is a mirror of its proximate environs and comprises multiple perspectives; the unconscious is a repository of potential activation; and, most importantly of all, a monad knows no birth and death and hence is immortal. In his very last years, Husserl proposed a third ego level, below (or beyond) the mundane ego and transcendental ego - the primal ego. It is neither psychical nor physical; it permits the transcendental ego to carry out its constitutive activities, including the mundane ego's birth and death in time; it is always in a process of becoming, and so it can never be in a state of only "having-been", that is, dead: and hence the primal ego's enduring cannot itself ever come to an end.

In an Appendix to *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* (APAS) dating from the early 1920s, Husserl makes a startling assertion about the immortality of the transcendental ego:

Even if the presently 'enduring' unitary object or event can cease, the process of the 'enduring' itself cannot come to a halt. The 'enduring' is immortal This implies that the process of living on, and the [pure] ego that lives on, are immortal. ... Immortality is now given as the incapability of crossing out the present that is being ever newly fulfilled. (APAS, p. 467)

The present paper argues that Husserl's striking claim is an ineluctable consequence of his relentless pursuit

of ever deeper levels of time-constituting consciousness *and*, at the same time, of his increasing rapport with Leibniz's model of monads as the true unifiers of all things, including minds. There are many structural and substantive parallels between Leibniz's monadic scheme and Husserl's later views on the transcendental ego, which points of convergence this paper lays out step by step. In a recently published collection, edited by Renato Cristin and Kiyoshi Sakai (2000), of ten papers on the connections between Leibniz and Husserl, individual contributions discuss a wide variety of topics, ranging from their similar approach to a logical model centred on concepts and meanings, *mathesis universalis* as an early version of formal ontology, the notion of monadic totality as a teleological and regulative ideal, and the function of the spiritual monad as an

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internalized relation between subject and world. Not one of the papers in this volume, however, touches on the specific theme of the monad's immortality.

Husserl repeatedly cited Leibniz's genius in inventing the notion of universal science, a model for what phenomenology as a transcendental discipline of the essential structures of consciousness could achieve. It is also well known that, after a certain date (around 1911), Husserl often employed the term "monad" to characterize a well-defined picture of the transcendental ego. *Every* commentary on Husserl's ideas after the *Logical Investigations (LI)* mentions the fact that Husserl labels the transcendental ego as a monad: this is taken to refer to the idea that the ego is a self-contained complex of being, that it has "no windows", that it is an absolute self-founding origin. Without doubt, this is true of Husserl's remarks on the primordial awareness of one's own ego, but otherwise it is little more than shorthand for a long, complex argument. What we need in an analysis of Husserl's use of "monad" in his argument about the essence, genesis and structures of consciousness is not some kind of shorthand but the *longhand* version. My central claim in this paper is that there is a rich, complex parallel development in Husserl's use of the concept of monad, especially in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* and some late texts from the third volume of his papers on *The Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity (HUA XV, pp. 608-610)* which exactly matches, point for point, Leibniz's development of the concept of monad. And this parallel includes, surprisingly, Husserl's little-known claim that a complete phenomenological account of the community of monads is built from the ground up according to a divine perspective. Husserl himself said that the 1925 seminar was concerned with "the ultimate foundations of a systematic phenomenology of world-constitution, showing from below how God constitutes the world" (quoted by Hart, 2004, p. 149).

The next section provides a synopsis of the development of the concept of the monad in Husserl's thought from his lecture courses in 1910-11 to his papers on passive synthesis in the late 1920s. This is followed by a focus on, firstly, the functional role of the monad in Husserl's analysis of inner-time consciousness, and then, in the following section, on the monad's role in his analysis of intersubjectivity. The penultimate section deals with the active and inactive ego in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, and the final section with details of Husserl's argument for the mortality of the mundane ego and the immortality of the transcendental ego. One striking testimony to Husserl's view about immortality occurs in Alfred Schutz's memoir about

his last meeting with Husserl, shortly before his mentor's death, where Husserl had said that, even though he, the mundane man, will have to die, the transcendental ego cannot perish. In an unpublished manuscript dating from August 1937 and titled "The Temporalities of the Ego", Schutz develops the theme of immortality in the context of what he called the "deceased partial egos": upon the daily experience that we survive these partial deaths rests all our hope in immortality (cited in Barber, 2004, p. 65). I also argue against the accepted view that, whereas Leibniz's monadic metaphysics requires God as the divine agent who institutes pre-established harmony amongst all things, there is nothing like that in Husserl's thought. To the contrary, in a 1926 letter to one of his former students, Husserl characterizes the lecture course on association, affection and time-consciousness as concerned with, in these words, "the ultimate foundations of a systematic phenomenology of world-constitution, showing from below how God constitutes the world" (quoted in Hart, 2004, p. 149). There are *three things* that must be kept separate when one tries to unpack what Husserl thinks about a human being's relation to death. His statements about the essential finitude of human existence, that birth and death are ineradicable features of humans' worldly life, can be reconciled with his declaration that the ego knows no birth and death, that the ego is immortal.

The Development of the Concept of the Monad in Husserl's Thought

Husserl first uses the term "monad" in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" (*PRS/HSW*) (1911) when he contrasts the unity of an enduring spatial-temporal object with the unity of psychic being. He says that the "nature" of the spatial-temporal world of bodies denotes the fact that things and events present themselves in experience according to various appearances. But, despite their variety in appearance, they stand there as temporal *unities* of properties, incorporated in the totality of one world that binds them all together, under one "objective" space and one "objective" time. These spatial-temporal things are what they are *only in this unity*; only in their causal relations to or connections with each other do they retain their individual identity, that is, that which they carry as real properties (*PRS/HSW*, p. 179). The label "unity" for real-world objects signals their denotation as "monads" (units), and their essence ("they are what they are") in their relations to other objects confers on the one world a plenary character. When we turn to the psychical domain, he says, we find that it is "divided into monads that have no windows, which are in communication only through empathy". By "divided" he means not *from* "nature",

but divided within the psychical domain *amongst themselves*. There are many, many monads; their nature is not comprised by or through the *causal* relations that hold amongst them, but by their ability to appresent the other monads' experiences (*PRS/HSW*, p. 179).

He continues: "a phenomenon is not a substantial unity and has no real properties; it knows of no real parts, no real changes, and no causality". Nor does a psychical phenomenon have a temporal unity; "it comes and goes, retaining no enduring identical being that would be determinable as such in the sense of natural science It is simply not experienced as something that appears, rather it is a 'vital experience' ... seen in reflection; it appears as itself through itself, in an absolute flow" (*PRS/HSW*, p. 179). What is implied by what Husserl here calls "vital experience" (*Erleben*) is an experience as it is lived through, consciousness in its irreducible first-person character. "Everything psychical which is thus 'experienced' is then ... *ordered in an overall connection*, in a 'monadic' unity of consciousness, a unity that in itself has nothing at all to do with nature" (*PRS/HSW*, p. 180). The connections between natural things fall under the categories of substance, property, parts of wholes, change of state and causality – none of which categories pertain to the 'objects' of thought considered strictly as intentional correlates, nor to consciousness as the bearer of these intentions. The *monadic* unity of consciousness endorses one dimension of Leibniz's 'formal atom' or simple substance: it has no real parts, it cannot be divided, it is not causal, but it does have a *complex description*. Like Leibniz's monad, then, Husserl's unity is organized in a hierarchy of levels of *constitution*, dominated by the unique character, the transcendental ego, which determines it as *this* individual.

Moreover, Husserl goes on to say that psychical being is "a flow of phenomena, unlimited at both ends, traversed by an intentional line that is, as it were, the index of the all-pervading unity. It is the line of an immanent time without beginning or end, a time that no chronometers measure" (*PRS/HSW*, p. 180). To declare that consciousness is a monad with no windows, a self-contained complex of being, not bound by causal relations, and whose own "inner time" is without beginning or end, sounds like a clear echo of what Leibniz has to say about "spirits" as complex monads whose dominant entelechy (the mind) has an immortal nature. In their "Glossary", McCormick and Elliston, the editors of *Husserl: Shorter Works (HSW)* (1981), define monad as "the totality of ego-cogito-cogitatum; the self as subject of consciousness, together with its mental acts or processes, and the objects strictly as they present

themselves in those acts to the self" (*HSW*, p. 369). Dan Zahavi extracts from numerous indications the principal sense of monad as follows: "the ego in its full concretion, i.e. the ego in the streaming multifariousness of its intentional life along with the objects meant in this life and constituted for this ego" (Zahavi, 2001, p. 32).

Two years later, in *Ideas First Book (ID1)* (1913), Husserl says that no real being is necessary to the being of consciousness itself. Consciousness and real being are not two co-ordinate *kinds* of being that, under the right circumstances, are related to or connected with one another. Only things which are of the same kind, whose proper essences have a similar sense, can become connected in a legitimate manner, that is, can be considered as proper parts of a whole. Mental processes which are immanent to consciousness comprise absolute being, whereas the causal processes of worldly things pertain to transcendent being. A 'veritable abyss' thus yawns between consciousness and reality. Consciousness considered in its pure sense must be thought of as a 'self-contained complex of being', that is, an ordered arrangement of absolute being into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can escape. On the other hand, the whole world of spatial-temporal things is, from the phenomenological perspective, a merely intentional being, in the derivative sense that it has being only *for* consciousness. The world, then, is an acceptance phenomenon, in that it is tacitly posited in all experiences; to make any claim for the world having being beyond that is nonsense. Consciousness is a system of absolute being into which *nothing can penetrate*, as Husserl says on several occasions (*ID1*, p. 93; *ID2*, p. 180; *FTL*, p. 208) While this would include, as well, any experience of other egos as subjects of their own experiences, problems associated with intersubjectivity occupied Husserl for the next twenty years.

In revisions dated 1921 to his lecture course on "Basic Problems of Phenomenology" (*BPP*) (1910-11), Husserl reconsidered what he now thought to be an inadequate attempt to explicate the empathetic experience of the other in his own lived experience. He had originally said that, when the reduction is performed, when the existence of all things including the lived-body is disengaged, all that is left is my own ego. This ego is itself engaged in positing, through empathy, other egos as centres of their own lives; other lived-bodies are indices for contexts of conscious activities, but only by way of a represented (projected) point-of-view (*BPP*, p. 86). But, ten years later, he felt that an important feature of the analogizing experience had been left out, namely the "fact" that every other I can exercise the reduction,

“yielding in principle the same for it as what it has yielded for me.” Nature, as the organized totality of bodies, is an index (or system of indices) for the way that things appear, and “so is of course every other point of space, every other point in the objective space of nature an index, namely, for a certain coordination of the subjective appearances of nature and their order, as they are related for each I to its zero-point in the lived body. And again, each objective temporal point ... is an index for a definite lawful coordination that, so to speak, relates every monad to every other” (*BPP*, p. 155; *CM*, p. 117). Now, one may well remember that, for Leibniz, space was a product of the plenum of monads in their relations with one another; against Newton, who held that space was an absolute frame, like a container that provided every physical thing with its precise position, Leibniz held that space was a relative field, constituted by the sum total of every monad’s definite perspectives on other monads in its surroundings.

Husserl continues: the lawful coordination that relates every monad to every other does so “in regard to completely determinate motivations and connections of consciousness that are correlative and intertwined. Any possible empathy is the ‘mirroring’ of each monad in the other, and the possibility of such mirroring depends on the possibility of a concordant constitution of a spatial-temporal nature, of an *index* for the respective constitutive lived experience, which *index* extends into all I’s” (*BPP*, p. 156, emphasis added). Leibniz, of course, said that every monad is a mirror of the universe; in other words, it contains within its nature a representation of the determinate relations that it has with other monads in its proximate environs. Such an exact mirroring *in every monad* is only possible if there is a perfect “concordant constitution” of the whole of nature, established by God’s institution of this world. The Leibnizian notion of spatial-temporal indices, each monad mirroring others, and so forth, is extended to the mode of communication between Husserl’s empathetic egos. “In the factual world”, he says, “embodiment facilitates the communication of the minds of these bodies, that is, the communication of all human beings with respect to their ‘inner lives’ Each particular stream of consciousness is something completely separate (a monad) and it would remain without windows of communication if there were no intersubjective phenomena, etc. This is also the condition for the possibility of a world of things that is one and the same for many I’s” (*BPP*, p. 158). James Hart refers to a manuscript where Husserl is inclined to see the inner-worldly events of birth and death as transcendental “indices” for an infinite “trans-natural” mode of being of the monads, indices for a style of being for which the methods of

knowledge of the world in principle are inappropriate (Hart, 1993, p. 32, note 20).

The next set of revisions extends the Leibnizian model further, to the pervasive *harmony* amongst the community of monads. There must be some factual connection, Husserl argues, such that two (or more) monads can “accommodate each other”, implying that they can co-exist “in accordance with a rule impressed on both of them, and that they can encounter each other as minds through empathy and reciprocal understanding, and that they can mutually influence each other by mental motivation” (*BPP*, p. 162). The form of communication between minds is “reciprocal understanding”, and the “influence” they exert on one another is by means of “mental motivation”, which Husserl always distinguishes from causal interaction. Leibniz held that efficient causes operate across bodies, whereas final causes (that is, reasons or motives) operate across minds. “In its existence”, Husserl says, “each monad is not dependent on the other monads. Each monad would continue to exist, and the I would remain this I, even if the world ceased to exist To that extent Leibniz is right when he says that the monads correspond to the Cartesian rigorous concept of substance ... a being is independent if it is demonstrated that changes in the one substance do not intrinsically require changes in the other” (*BPP*, p. 162). Although each monad is ontologically independent of every other thing, in their communicative exchange they must still be in accord with each other’s point of view. Husserl poses a rhetorical question in this concluding statement regarding the possibility that “in the absolute one, monadic being is independent from every other, for although each monad is essentially an independent substance, must they not, *as facts*, be in a relation to one another, in ‘harmony’. And that leads again to a common world and to nature in the first place” (*BPP*, p. 163). In another late text he says that monadic generations “realize special functions in the harmony of God’s world” (*HUA XV*, p. 610).

The Monad’s Role in Husserl’s Analysis of Inner-Time Consciousness

Consciousness is constituted with past and future horizons; due to these temporal horizons, it cannot be simply given in the present; the concept of the “present” has to be widened to an “elastic” now. Time-consciousness is not merely constituted, it is self-temporalizing; consciousness as time-constituting is not “in” the Now, nor “in” the past or future. Rather, it belongs to its temporal phases as it constitutes them; as actively constituting, instead of constituted, it is not itself *in* objective time (*PCIT*, pp. 74-76). Time-constituting consciousness is both pre-

phenomenal and prior to immanent objects' time; it is the very process of temporalization, and as such it is the "origin" of the past, present and future. Husserl says that this issue is "perhaps the most important matter in the whole of phenomenology" (*PCIT*, p. 334). If this ultimate absolute, time-constituting consciousness, is pre-phenomenal, it must also in some sense transcend phenomenological analysis, at least as it has been presented, where the temporal dimension is shorn from consciousness. Husserl felt the need to develop a new level and method of phenomenological analysis, which he would call genetic phenomenology, and in doing so he felt the need to define and elaborate a new concept of the ego, the monad. "For Husserl, a monad is a being that is in temporal becoming or genesis, constitutes itself in a temporal unity of life as a structure of habitualities, and is ultimately a concrete ego, 'individuated' or 'factual'" (Steinbock, 1996, p. 33).

Husserl defined a monad as a simple, individual being, "that is what it is as continually becoming in time". It is not only what it is now, but is also what it is as having been in a living present, and transcending what it has been in the process of becoming (*HUA XIV*, pp. 35-36). He distinguished between the pure ego as timeless pole peculiar to static analysis and an ego as extended or enduring. Although the monad in its temporalizing process is not exhausted in a now-point, this does not mean that it exists in a mere series of now-phases. "Rather," as Steinbock elaborates, "self-temporalizing consciousness constitutes itself primordially as a unity of becoming in and through its experiences, that is, through its diverse living presents. The immanent time of an ego, asserted Husserl, can never be unfilled, have gaps, or fall apart into several separated streams leaving the monad fragmented in disjointed pauses" (Steinbock, 1996, p. 33). This underlines Husserl's later claim that it is monadic unity that permits the concrete ego to bridge long periods of unconsciousness, in sleep or stupor, and so forth (*HUA XV*, pp. 608-610). Husserl explicitly says that "In the monad everything is connected to everything else"; every experience is connected by virtue of the background or horizon that meets the demand of unity and temporal becoming; elsewhere he refers to its meeting the conditions of "harmonious unfolding", an avowedly Leibnizian turn of phrase. Living through temporal horizons, the monad is constituted as "a living unity" that carries in itself an ego as the affected and affective pole, as a unity of capabilities or dispositions, as a unity of that which is concealed or unconscious (*HUA XIV*, p. 34). All of these predicates, of course, have Leibnizian parallels: the harmonious unfolding of a monad's experiences through the unfolding of its inner programme; the monad as a unity of life-force, whose

capacities are enfolded within its concept as dispositions to behave in certain ways.

The monad is prior to being, Steinbock continues, "insofar as it is a process of genesis that makes the position of being possible Characterizing the monad as a living unity prior to static being implies still further that the monad is not simply a unity of acts, but a unity of affections" (that is, through the acquisition of habits). Husserl says that, "If the monad necessarily has the form of a unity of becoming, of a unity of an incessant genesis, then it has a concrete structure only from 'elements' that are themselves unities of becoming, and that have an abstract structure according to phases like the entire monad" (*HUA XIV*, p. 34). Steinbock interprets this as follows: "just as the elemental unities (living presents) are concrete in relation to its phases (impression, retention, protention), which taken by themselves are abstract, so too is the monad in genesis a concrete unity of becoming made up of phases that are unities of becoming (i.e. living presents, phases which in relation to the monad are abstract)" (1996, p. 35). Nicholas Rescher remarks that Leibniz's concept of monad as an entelechy means that the dominant monad serves as the unifier of the whole by representing all of its parts through linkages. The idea of the two levels, and the idea of an entelechy, comprises not just the trivial point that composites require units because composites are pluralities, but the profound idea that composites which are themselves unified require *true units* to serve as unifiers (Rescher, in Leibniz, 1991, p. 51). The concrete phenomenal being for Husserl is formed from elements which are themselves unities, just as for Leibniz the composite being requires true units to serve as unifiers.

Janet Donohoe summarizes Husserl's last most mature time theory: "Husserl recognizes that even within the absolute flow of consciousness, there is a difficulty in assigning temporal terms to the flow itself. This suggests a need for an even deeper level of temporality that cannot itself be referred to with temporal terminology" (Donohoe, 2004, p. 56). "In order to explain the genesis of the manifestation of consciousness, Husserl must resort to other language. He begins to refer to a pre-phenomenal temporality, calling it the streaming living present. It is a move further than the levels of the impression, or the flow, that are present in his work from 1907-11 [*PICT*]. The streaming living present is urphenomenal, meaning that it refers to a constitutionality [constitutive activity] that is not temporal. It is an attempt to address the constitution of the temporal by *the temporal*. The streaming living present cannot be intuited because it is not phenomenal, it is pre-

phenomenal. At the deepest level the absolute living present is not an atom, not a point, but already contains everything, even the whole world, in the sense of validity. It is the ego as well as the hyle, where the *Ich* and the *Nicht-Ich* are inseparable, where there is no distinction between subject and object” (Donohoe, 2004, p. 58; see also Hart, 1993, pp. 21-23).

“Unlike the description of the ‘flow’ of his middle writings, the language of the streaming living present allows Husserl to grapple with the anonymous level that is pre-being, prior to an articulated, single stream of consciousness. In Husserl’s own words, it is ‘the pre-being which bears all being, including even the being of the acts and the being of the ego, indeed, the being of the pre-time and the being of the stream of consciousness as a being’” (Donohoe, 2004, p. 58). On some occasions Husserl calls this the ego-pole, on others the primal ego, which is not to be confused with the “primordial ego” in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation. Husserl writes that, “on one side we have the temporal stream of consciousness and the transcendental ego of acts related to this temporality on the other side we have the *primal ego* as the primal ground of this temporalization.” Also, further, that: “I find indicated in this continual self-splitting and subsequent re-identifying of the ego an *ur-ego* which I will call the ur-pole, as originary functioning ego” (quoted in Donohoe, 2004, pp. 59-60).

The level of the anonymous streaming living present offers us a position where there is limited separation between the I and the Other. In our regressive inquiry into the origins of the ego, we are faced with a foundational level that precedes self-reflective individuation of the ego in its concrete form. This suggests that the ego has a foundation that is not of its [own] making and that connects the ego to other egos, prior to the self-reflective individuation of any ego. With the streaming living present replacing absolute consciousness as the foundation, the question of intersubjectivity shifts its focus from an I-Other position to a question of co-constituted monads. There is ‘a unity of an absolute self-temporalization, the absolute in its temporal modalities temporalizing itself in the absolute stream, in the streaming living, and primal present, the present of the absolute in its unity, its all-inclusive unity (!), which temporalizes and has temporalized in itself everything that ever is. Within this are the levels of the absolute: the absolute as an absolute human totality of monads.’ (Donohoe, 2004, p. 63, citing *HUA XV*, p. 669).

The Monad’s Role in Husserl’s Analysis of Inter-Subjectivity

In the famous Fifth Meditation of the *Cartesian Meditations (CM)* of 1931, Husserl expounds an intricate, even tortuous, argument about the constitution of other egos within the sphere of the primordial, first-given ego. He says that “what is specifically peculiar to me as ego, my concrete being as a monad” includes intentional directedness to what is other than me. There becomes constituted for me what “goes beyond my monadic self-ownness; there becomes constituted an ego, not as myself, but as *mirrored* in my own ego, in my monad”, an other ego, an alter-ego. “The other ... points to me myself; the other is a ‘*mirroring*’ of my own self and yet not a mirroring proper, an analogue of my own self and yet again not an analogue in the usual sense”, for it is not exactly the same, not given in the same way (*CM*, p. 94). By this means, there occurs “a universal super-addition of sense to my primordial world, whereby the latter becomes the appearance of a determinate ‘objective’ world, as the identical world for everyone, myself included There becomes constituted a community of egos existing with each and for each other, ultimately a community of monads, which moreover ... constitutes the one identical world”. Each of these other egos is “equipped with mutually corresponding and harmonious constitutive systems”, and thus “the constitution of the world essentially involves a ‘*harmony*’ of the monads”, as well as “a harmonious generation that goes on in each particular monad”. Husserl warns that this harmony is not a metaphysical hypothesis, any more than monads are metaphysical inventions (*CM*, pp. 107-108).

The first and lowest level of community comprises my primordial monad and the other as constituted by me; the only conceivable manner in which any other can have the status as an existent consists in his or her being constituted *in me* as an other. All others exist in a community through their connection with me as a concrete ego, a monad; as such they are separate from me, a mundane separation that “takes place” through their occupation of other places in space.¹ In their own being, “each monad is an absolutely separate unity”, and yet their reaching into one another is not a dream or a fantasy of mine; their intentional communion is an essentially unique kind of connectedness. “To this community there naturally corresponds, in transcendental concreteness, a

¹ In a late text from the 1930s, Husserl says that “It is not as if each monad were for itself ... and thus had being apart from the other monads. Rather, each one – insofar as within its being it has intentionally constituted the others (just as each one, in its present has constituted its past) – cannot be apart from the others” (*HUA XV*, p. 194).

similarly open community of monads, which we designate as transcendental intersubjectivity” (*CM*, pp. 128-130). In his summary, Husserl says that “our monadological results are metaphysical, if it is true that ultimate cognitions of being should be called metaphysical. On the other hand, what we have here is anything but metaphysics in the customary sense [that is] a historically degenerate metaphysics.” Despite this proviso, he asks whether it conceivable that there could be many separate pluralities of monads, each of which constitutes a world of its own. He declares that this is an absurd hypothesis – there can exist only a single community of monads, the community of all co-existing monads. “Leibniz is right when he says that infinitely many monads and groups of monads are conceivable but that it does not follow that all these possibilities are compossible.” Husserl agrees, since he recognizes that “each monad having the status of a concrete possibility predelineates a compossible universe, a closed world of monads, and that two worlds of monads are impossible” (*CM*, pp. 139-141). On the very last page, Husserl emphasizes that, even though phenomenology excludes every naïve metaphysics that works with things-in-themselves, it does not exclude metaphysics as such. Phenomenology does not “stop short of supreme and ultimate questions: the intrinsically first being, the being that precedes and bears every worldly objectivity, is transcendental intersubjectivity, the universe of monads which effects its communion in various forms”. It is within the factual, concrete sphere that all the problems of “accidental factualness” occur – death, fate and the meaning of human life (*CM*, p. 156).

In other texts from the 1930s, Husserl insists that there are many levels of mediate and immediate experience that reveal the character of the other. Husserl describes “instinct” as the hidden drive that functions behind perceptions to reveal the subject’s insertion in the world. This instinctive drive arises from the sedimentation of decisions and beliefs which all together form an individual’s “style”; it is responsible for the awareness that precedes any thematized encounter with the world. The ego is driven to constitute a variety of unified objects out of its sensory perceptions and affections. But, beyond the individual instinct, there is a communal instinct which results from inherited traditions; it is based on empathy with other egos and their affections. “There is a pre-connectedness of egos that does not depend upon active constitution of intersubjectivity, but is a passive connection functioning prior to the active constitution, prior to the ego’s self-reference” (Donohoe, 2004, p. 99). This instinctive intentionality suggests a connection between the ego and the other at the most primal level, a connection that does not

cease with the ending of any particular ego. Husserl says that, when an individual dies, “it does not lose its inheritance, but rather sinks into absolute sleep. Even then it functions somehow in the totality of monads, but this sleep cannot be converted into awakens as would the periodic sleep of human existence. It could only happen if this monad appears in the functional context of the human organism and has given to it the specific monad development as specific inheritance, that of this worldly human being” (Donohoe, 2004, p. 99, citing *HUA XV*, pp. 609-110).

The Active and Inactive Ego in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*

Near the beginning of *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, Husserl makes an important distinction between the wakeful and the unwakeful ego by rejecting various concepts of the ego, each of which could be labelled with a conceit (or metaphor). “In the course of our psychic life, waking life is only one type; there is another one besides this one, deep dreamless sleep, unconsciousness” (*APAS*, p. 16). The contrast between waking life and sleep is drawn along the line of an active ego that carries out specific cognitive functions, such as attending, inferring, valuing, wishing, willing, and so forth. Where the ego is the peculiar centre of the experience, it is the one absorbed in it, the one suffering. The wakeful ego is “everywhere living in these acts as carrying them out”; it is in all cases related through an intentional act to its object. Husserl prefers to describe the ego as a pole or centre: “it can be manifest in them as their outward radiating or inward radiating point, and yet not in them as a part or piece” (*APAS*, p. 16). In a well known image, Leibniz compared the monad to a mathematical point through which any number of lines or rays could be drawn. A monad has no spatial parts and no dimensions; it does not occupy space, although lines produced from its extension do bound planes, and planes extended from planes bound regions of space. It is *like* a formal atom (that is, the “form” of an atom as indivisible), but *unlike* a material atom, in that a monad is not composed of stuff. It is a unit of force where “force” is conceived in life-like terms; hence, he sometimes calls a basic monad a “soul” because the basic meaning of “soul” (*anima*) is life-force (Leibniz, 1714/1991, pp. 53, 62).

What is so striking about the parallel between Husserl’s and Leibniz’s respective images of the ego is not just the decision of both to call it a pole or centre, but that the contrast between waking ego and unawaking ego is drawn in the same way by both. “Wakeful life”, Husserl says, “has a background of non-waking, constantly and with eternal necessity.” For the ego to be awake means for it to be conscious

of the acts it is carrying out; such reflective, second-order awareness indicates an active ego. For the ego to not be awake means *not* that it is “asleep” or “unconscious” in the ordinary sense, but rather that it is not actively engaged in its conscious acts. It is as though the ego were in “neutral” instead of in “drive” or “reverse”, *not* that the engine is not running. So Husserl says that the ego is not “awake” when it is “lost” in memory or daydream or in any other of its as-if modes of consciousness. The parallel with Leibniz’s concept of the unconscious is underscored by the fact that both thinkers view the contrast between one state and the other as one of degree. There is a continuum between unconscious and conscious, where the vivacity of impressional contents increases in one direction and decreases in the other (APAS, pp. 216-221). Life is ascribed to the waking, active ego and un-life (or non-life) to the unwaking, inactive ego.

Sleeping and waking now have two senses for Husserl, just as they do for Leibniz. Sleep in the ordinary sense is a non-conscious state of a still living being, but sleep in the restricted sense is a non-active state of a *still conscious being*. Leibniz says that monads know no real birth or death, that phenomenal death is just a sleep, an *infimum* (an inferior order) of monadic life-force which continues forever. In one letter to Arnauld in 1687, Leibniz declares that “sleep, which is an image of death, ecstasy, envelopment, resuscitation [and other events] ... all these things serve to confirm my opinion that these different states differ only in degree” (in Leibniz, 1991, p. 241). In a late text from 1702, he says, “in dreams and unconsciousness nature has given us an example which should convince us that death is not a cessation of all functions but only a suspension of certain more noticeable ones” (in Leibniz, 1991, p. 77). Lest it seem that my attempt to draw this parallel is too strained, here is what Husserl himself says: “Phenomenology confirms Leibniz’s distinction between sleeping and wakeful monads, which have a consciousness in a particular sense, and the spiritual human monads. It is also a truth to be confirmed that each higher level includes the others in a certain way. The human contains in itself an other animal soul-life and in the structure at the deepest level of sleeping monads” (quoted in Hart, 1993, p. 32, note 21).

Husserl continues his expansion of the wakeful-conscious and unwakeful-unconscious theme in these words: “only upon awakening does the sun of the central ego, as the radiating centre of actual acts, first dawn in the stream of consciousness, and only now are the memorial experiences transformed into those that are centred in the current present ego” (APAS, p. 596). Husserl here makes rare use of a metaphor: the

“sun” provides light for the wakeful ego, the sun which “dawns” as consciousness is awakened. This metaphor is extended when he describes the general background consciousness of our past into which all retentions eventually slip away as “sheer nightfall” (APAS, p. 221). Husserl’s unusual concept of the unconscious is built around the twofold sense of affection and the streaming away of retentions into the past. With regard to the important concept of affection, he argues that sensible features of objects exert an “allure” (*reiz*) on the ego; this affective force draws the ego to turn toward the object, such that one passing phenomenon releases another by way of its sense. Its allure functions as an operative “reason” (or motive) for the ego; it awakens the ego’s interest which then turns its own affective force in other directions, through “associative intentions” (APAS, pp. 196-200). Husserl says that “an intuition never disappears without a trace after it has elapsed. We are still conscious of what it had intuited, now in a non-intuitive way; to be sure, in the end it fades away in a general undifferentiated emptiness” (APAS, p. 114). The general horizon of forgetfulness has become “lifeless”, in the special sense of not being carried out by an active ego regard (APAS, p. 123).

The unconscious is “the nil of the vivacity of consciousness, but it is not nothing” (APAS, p. 216). Husserl’s use of the terms “force” and “vivacity” may, on first blush, remind one of Hume’s criteria for distinguishing an impression from an idea; but, strictly speaking, “vivacity”, in Husserl’s lexicon, is another way of stating “liveliness” or “aliveness”, that is, the ego as wakefully active. It is not nothing, he continues, in the sense of not-being, but rather “almost nothing” with respect to its degree of affective force. Hence it is not zero either, a term that would indicate a permanently empty content; the affective force is always above zero (APAS, p. 216). “Every concrete datum of the sphere of the living present is submerged in the phenomenal *past*, it succumbs to retentional transformation and thereby necessarily leads into the region of affective nullity into which it is incorporated” (APAS, p. 216). Leibniz explicitly stated that consciousness of its own past provides identity of self for “spirits”, that is, mindful beings. “An immaterial being cannot be stripped of all perception of its past existence. It retains impressions of everything which has happened to it, and even has presentiments of everything that will happen to it It is this continuity and interconnection of perceptions which make someone really the same individual. So it is unreasonable to suppose that memory should be lost beyond any possibility of recovery [even after death], since insensible perceptions ... serve a purpose here too – preserving the seeds of memory”

(Leibniz, 1765/1996, p. 239).²

Husserl continues that affective force can become “dead”, the opposite of “alive”: “for affective force is the fundamental condition of all life in dynamic connection and differentiation; if it is decreased to zero, its life ceases, precisely in its vivacity” (APAS, p. 219). All retentions fade away further and further into an undifferentiated, cloudy horizon: the memorial past that is “less and less articulated” (no longer separable into discrete members) and that “coalesces more and more closely” (where temporal phases begin to merge together). In the more distant past, a particular tone, with its original temporal index, becomes less and less distinguishable from other remembered occurrences of the same tone. That particular tone’s connection with other sensory givens becomes lost: “no affective pull proceeds from this unity”. Although it is an essential characteristic of the passive synthesis of objects to be able to unite a manifold of aspects in one object, the retentional regress ultimately leads (at the zero-stage) to an inability to carry out this synthesis again, that is, to reproduce it. “But insofar as it contains the objective sense ... we can say from the standpoint of the object: less and less becomes affective from it. And when there is no affection coming from the diverse objects, then these diverse objects have slipped into *sheer nightfall*, in a special sense, they have slipped into the unconscious” (APAS, p. 221). Thus, Husserl’s image of the sun dawning as a presentation is awakened has its counterpart; where the original presentation can no longer be awakened, it passes into darkness and night closes over it.

As the retention becomes completely obscure, “the final remainder of vivacity is lost in the streaming process”; but what is essential to the process itself is preserved. There is “a never-ending typicality: the primordially instituting process of ever new sense-objects goes on and on ineluctably at the head of the living present.”³ This primordial temporalizing process is bound to the lawful form of the entire object-like structure; the process begins again and again in each successive now moment, “whose momentary givens immediately crystallize as co-existent objects and are systematically articulated. These formations are continuously modified in

² Personal individuality extends via memory into an immortal state: “Granting that the soul is a substance and that no substance perishes the soul then will not be lost, as indeed nothing is lost in nature Immortality without recollection is ethically quite useless, for it is inconsistent with reward and punishment” (Leibniz, 1991, pp. 103-105).

³ Here “ineluctable” means something useless to struggle against, there is no going against the current; and “at the head” means at the origin or source of a stream.

retention – since new retentions in succeeding them can confer new senses upon them – but this retentional modification leads further and further into the nil” (APAS, p. 226). Again, Husserl addresses the meaning of the concept of “nil” as not-nothing: he declares that it is “the constant reservoir of objects that have achieved living institution in the process of the living present. In it they are tucked away from the ego, but quite at its disposal.” To say that these distantly retained objects are “tucked away” is another way to express the idea of implicit containment (“implicit” as in “folded-into”) or, in another phrase, they are “concealed but can be disclosed” (APAS, p. 222). Once again, this is remarkably similar to Leibniz’s idea that the “shapes” (i.e. essential properties) of every individual are “folded” or “enveloped” within its concept and that its “development” is literally a process of stage-wise unfolding (see, for example, Leibniz, 1714/1991, pp. 81, 95, 210, 213, 229).⁴ In Leibniz’s view, the history of each composite thing is the unfolding of its constituent monads’ own inner natures. Each monad has an internal programme, designed to run through a very precise sequence of stages, and since a composite thing’s particular profile or aggregate shape is the “result” of a dominant monad’s organization of its subordinate monads, its entire history is contained in its concept. Thus, a composite thing’s perceptions at any given time and place are, strictly speaking, the consequences of its principal monad’s internal phase of development.

Every object’s original being, Husserl continues, consists in its being experienced in an originary manner: in the unconscious, one and the same object is no longer “constantly vivacious”, it no longer exerts its former affective force, “but the *sense* is still implicitly there in a ‘dead’ shape; it is only without streaming life” (APAS, p. 227). It is “dead”, of course, because it is no longer “active” in constituting new experiences. “Every accomplishment of the living present [an object’s sense] ... becomes sedimented in the realm of the dead, or rather, dormant horizontal sphere, precisely in the manner of a fixed order of sedimentation. While at the head, the living process receives new, original life, [while] at the feet, everything that is, as it were, in the final acquisition of the retentional synthesis becomes steadily sedimented.” Objects’ original senses are not literally dead in the unconscious, but dormant, in a sleep-like state, one from which they can be awakened, made actively constitutive again. “One is only acquainted with sleep by waking up – so too here” (APAS, p.

⁴ The concept of the baroque fold is discussed at great length by Deleuze (1993, pp. 3-26, 85-99), and explicitly links Husserl with Leibniz (pp. 107-109).

227). In an unexpected, strange way, these comments about sleep and waking, when given their peculiar glosses by Husserl, provide a fulcrum for his claim about the transcendental ego's immortality. If waking is an active, constitutive activity exercised over inactive, dormant contents streaming away into the unconscious, if zero-point inactivity is death and expectant activity is life, then one can never wake up from being awake. The transcendental ego is *always* in a process of becoming, and so it can never be in a condition or state of "having-been" – that is, "dead". The transcendental ego is what makes it possible for any thing, in its objective sense, to be able to wake; it does not create or bring about the mundane ego, but permits the ego to carry out its constituting activities.

The Mortality of the Mundane Ego and the Immortality of the Transcendental Ego

In *Ideas Second Book (ID2)* (1928/1989), Husserl raises the following question: according to an objective assessment of the thing-like qualities of things, is it not the case that how something behaves and how it will behave is predelineated by its own essence? "But does each thing ... *have such an essence of its own in the first place?* Or is the thing, as it were, *always underway*, not at all graspable therefore in pure Objectivity, but rather in virtue of its relation to subjectivity, in principle only a relatively identical something, which does not have its essence in advance or graspable once and for all, but instead has *an open essence*, one that can always take on new properties according to the constitutive circumstances of givenness?" (*ID2*, pp. 312-313). In the Fourth Appendix to the *Crisis of European Sciences (CES)* (1936/1970), Husserl clearly links his concept of the individual not having an essence in advance, an embodied being that is underway and always becoming, to the core concept of an internal, self-realized freedom – and, in doing so, clearly captures the Existentialist concept of freedom.

This life, as personal life, is a constant becoming through a constant intentionality of development. What becomes, in this life, is the person himself. His being is forever becoming Human personal life proceeds in stages ... up to the point of seizing in consciousness the idea of autonomy, the idea of a resolve of the will to shape one's whole personal life into the synthetic unity of a life of universal self-responsibility and, correlatively, to shape oneself into the true 'I', the free, autonomous 'I' which seeks to realize his innate reason, the striving to be true to himself, to be able to remain identical with himself as a reasonable 'I'. (*CES*, p. 338)

James Hart quotes from an unpublished manuscript where Husserl declares that, if a personal I is to live true to itself in consistency, there must be a nature in which is evident a divine mind which prevents the cosmos from becoming chaos. Husserl states that "the human being can only be satisfied when he experiences also the ideal of his self as an absolutely perfect being and when he can realize himself actively in infinite striving. He must bear a god in himself" (quoted in Hart, 1993, p. 44). In fact, this striving seems to be linked to immortality when he says that the human monad is "immortal in its share in the self-realization process of the divinity. The human is immortal in the continuing effects of all that is genuine and good". The human monad makes real its own inner perfection by striving for the good through a universal ethics of love: "in everything noble and good which I realize in me, I am therefore a realized god, a fulfilled will of god, mere nature which has become god, a fulfilled god – god as entelechy, god as energy" (quoted in Hart, 1993, p. 29). One strand in this line of thought to be further explored is the possible influence on Husserl's thinking of Franz Brentano's lectures on medieval philosophy in 1917. Here Brentano developed "a peculiar proof" of the soul's immortality based on the idea that the essence of human nature is to love God through striving to realize God's will for us in our mental lives (Gabriel, 2004).

In any case, the connection of Husserl's idea of the personal monad's realization of God's will with Leibniz's thoughts on this theme is abundantly clear. In his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), Leibniz explicitly compared human spirits (or minds) to "little gods" in their own domain: "Spirits alone are made in [God's image] ... since they alone are able to serve him from free will, and to act consciously imitating the divine nature. A single spirit is worth a whole world, because it not only expresses a whole world, but it also knows and governs itself as does God" (*DM* §36, in Leibniz, 1991, p. 279). In a letter to Arnauld of 1687, he states that, while all things express in their nature the whole universe, animal substances express the world rather than God, while spirits express God rather than the world. God governs animals and other things according to the material laws of force, but spirits according to the spiritual laws of justice. As well as being the author of nature as a whole, God is also the monarch or sovereign of the universal society of spirits, which is composed of "so many little gods". "For it can be said that created spirits differ from God only in degree, as the finite differs from the infinite the whole universe has been made only to contribute to the beauty and happiness of this city of God" (quoted in Leibniz, 1991, p. 280). And again, in *New System*

(1695): “Minds or rational souls are as little gods made in the image of God and having in them some ray of the light of the divinity” (*NS* §5, in Leibniz, 1991, p. 288).

Husserl returns to the theme of an always underway process of enduring in Appendix 8 §10 of *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*: “Even if the presently ‘enduring’ unitary object or event can cease, the process of the ‘enduring’ itself cannot come to a halt. The ‘enduring’ is immortal It could be the case that the world does not exist In contrast, it is absurd [to say] that immanent being (the present being that is being constituted in the enduring) would cease. It is inconceivable that everything would come to halt and that then there would be nothing” (*APAS*, pp. 466-467). The present moment as present is always filled with some thing; that which is now present (a phenomenal event) comes to an end and a new now is filled with another event, but the process of filling the present does not come to an end. “This implies that the process of living on, and the ego that lives on, are immortal; *nota bene*, the pure transcendental ego, and not the empirical world-ego that can very well die. We do not at all deny the latter’s death, its corporeal decomposition, and thus the fact that it cannot be found in the objective, spatio-temporal world, its non-existence. To be sure, an unending futural time is not yet posited with the immortality of the ego as immortality is now given, namely, as the incapability of crossing out the present that is being ever newly fulfilled” (*APAS*, p. 467).

James Hart argues that, for Husserl, the key word *erleben* should not always be translated by “experience”: in non-reflective self-awareness all experiences are indeed “lived” (*erleben*) but are not properly experienced. “Even in a stupor or death where there is no experiencing, there is the lived-experiencing of oneself. The irrepressible process or ‘whiling’ (*wahren*, also translated as ‘enduring’) cannot begin or come to halt because all beginning and halting presuppose its witnessing the ‘nothing prior’ or ‘nothing after’. Life may be content-less, shutdown, and bereft of all worldly apperceptions and hyle [sensory givens], but there is still the inexorable lived now-form. This inexorable process is precisely the foundation of the consciousness of time; as the living present it is the foundation of self-consciousness, the lived-experience, at the heart of all wakeful life; and *mirabile dictum* even when we are comatose or dead, for Husserl, even then *wird auch erlebt* [there also is experience]” (Hart, 1993, pp. 24-25; 2004, p. 154).

One striking testimony to Husserl’s view about the immortality of the extra-mundane ego occurs in

comments made by Eugen Fink in response to an invited lecture by Alfred Schutz at the 1957 Husserl Colloquium. In “The Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity in Husserl”, Schutz diagnosed several problems and “aporias” in Husserl’s Fifth Cartesian Meditation, specifically on the constitution of other egos through the appresentation of the other’s subjectivity. In his reply, Fink said that, where the transcendental ego must constitute others in their sense as “intramundane others”, “the finitude of my life as related to death also belongs, in a fundamental way, to this intra-mundaneity of myself and my fellow men. Can the transcendental ego die? Or is death only an objective fact which belongs to its objectivation in the world and which has no truth for its final transcendental inwardness? Is not the intramundane human situation under-determined when one does not keep in view such determinations of human existence as finitude, that is, the fate of death? Does this not concern transcendental subjectivity too? Here, then is a question” (quoted in Schutz, 1966, pp. 86, 89).

Fink proposed an answer to the very question he raised: in late manuscripts from the 1930s, Husserl “arrives at the curious idea of a primal ego, of a primal subjectivity which is prior to the distinction between the primordial subjectivity and the transcendental subjectivity of other monads [He] also tries to circumvent the difference between essence and fact by going back to the primal facticity of transcendental life which first constitutes possibility and thereby variations and ... also constitutes essences. ... [He said that] there is a primal life which is neither one nor many, neither factual nor essential. Rather, it is the ultimate ground of all these distinctions: a transcendental primal life which turns into a plurality and which produces in itself the differentiation into fact and essence.”⁵ One

⁵ Dan Zahavi reviews some of Husserl’s texts on this issue, as well as Fink’s interpretation: with regard to Fink’s claim that, in his late mss, Husserl seems to have come to the notion of “a primal subjectivity”, Zahavi argues that this view is “in blatant contradiction to Husserl’s constant emphasis on the difference of transcendental subjects from one another”. Later he says that “we can state that when Husserl speaks of a pre-egoic level, he is in no way referring to an absolute pre-individual ground; rather, seen with more precision, it is a matter of distinguishing between various egoic levels Temporality is an accomplishment of the I in every way and the pre-egoic level is the level of the anonymously functioning I that has not yet been objectified through reflection Although it cannot be excluded that passages that could confirm Fink’s interpretation are to be found in Husserl’s *Nachlass*, such a train of thought is fundamentally alien to the Husserlian point of departure, and probably derives from Fink’s influence” (Zahavi, 2001, pp. 66, 73, 77).

is licensed to infer, surely, that the essence of primal life is not bound by the factual death of the ego *objectivated in its mundane aspect*, that death is one of the differences which is instituted by its mundane character. When Schutz replied to Fink's comments, he recalled that, in Husserl's last conversation with him, his teacher had said that "the transcendental subject cannot die" (Schutz, 1966, pp. 86, 89).

In a brief memoir titled "Husserl and His Influence on Me", Schutz recalled this last visit with his mentor in more detail. "At my last unforgettable visit with him shortly before Christmas 1937, he expressed the confident hope that his book, should it ever be finished, would be the coronation of his life work. Husserl was bed-ridden and suffered already from the disease which led a few months later to his death [April 1938]. I was merely permitted to see him for a short time. But he must have had a presentiment of his forthcoming end, for he explained to me that the fully developed transcendental phenomenology makes it indubitable that he, the mundane man Edmund Husserl will have to die, but that the transcendental ego cannot perish." At Husserl's funeral, Eugen Fink gave the eulogy, in which he said that Husserl was "someone who took up his philosophizing as commission and grace from God, and so from the outset he had removed it from the limited contexts where life, enclosed in the finite, anxiously keeps death out of view. Death was never for him the alien sense-shattering power that can suddenly cut short an existence caught up in self-achievement as meaningfulness. To him death was always the mystery of life, the real fulfilment of its meaning. Just as the essence of righteousness refers beyond the earthly and points to the gateway of death, so the essence of life always seemed to him pervaded by death and in turn to pervade death itself" (Fink, 1938, quoted in Embree, 1988).

In an unpublished manuscript from August 1937 (recently recovered by Michael Barber), titled "The Temporalities of the Ego", Schutz develops the theme of immortality in the context of what he called the "deceased partial egos". This is "more than simply a metaphor", he wrote, "when we bring into connection with the ur-phenomenon of death these life-forms of our past ego that have sunk into the past and will never again see the light of day."

Death is no life-transcending phenomenon but rather a life-immanent one, a result that makes immediately visible in complete earnestness the problem of immortality. ... The irreversibility of that time is identical with the inescapability of death. We cannot avoid that death, which constantly threatens

our total ego in the now, our ego itself. In addition, we cannot elude those partial deaths, which concern basic attitudes of the most intimate layers of our personality, as well as the ego itself, which however will survive the death of those partial egos due to its ability to be always newly present as *ego agens*. In this experience of one's own partial deaths lies a significance to be found within every death, which must befall this *ego agens*, the ego, my ego. ... But upon the daily experience that we survive our partial deaths, upon this experience that we are only changed, rests all our hope in immortality, which takes from death its horrors and shows it to us as something to be trusted. (Schutz, 1937, quoted in Barber, 2004, p. 65)

Husserl clearly thought that the concrete, mundane ego was bound by birth and death, as manuscripts from the late 1920s and early 1930s indicate (Mensch, 1988, pp. 156-158, 258-260). Here he says that "death pertains to the duration (*Bestand*) of the pre-given constituted world. In other words, death is an event in the world of humans, in the constituted world". The constitution of a finite lifetime requires the constitution of organic bodies capable of birth and death, Mensch comments: "the sense of *my own* birth and death proceeds through the apprehension of these phenomena as pertaining, first of all, not to myself but to others in their embodied character". The absolute character of the final horizon is tied in Husserl's thought to the contingency of the world which the absolute grounds. "The horizon of the absolute is all embracing; as such it excludes the notion of contingency. The horizon of the world which the individual subject actually experiences is finite. It is something which the subject can only piecemeal experience and make actual to itself. *The second horizon thus acts to conceal the first.*" This concealment is simply a function of the self-objectification of the absolute in terms of beings with finite experiences, ones with a beginning and an end. "All of the finite subject's experiential acquisitions are regarded as contingent and relative. None of them has the stamp of permanence. This living ... 'in the consciousness of finitude in an infinite world' is, for Husserl, the basic 'structure of human existence'" (Mensch, 1988, p. 156).

From the natural attitude, the presence of other subjects is taken as a simple given of experience. But from the transcendental attitude, "the being of the world in its infinite extent seems to involve the necessary presence of an indefinitely extended plurality of subjects to whom it can be given".

Husserl expresses this idea of involvement through the dialectic of finitude and infinitude: “My life becomes a human life in the world My life in its open infinitude is indeed *finite* in and according to objective spatial-temporality. It will cease as a human life in the world – I shall die.” Husserl comments that, of course, my birth and death are not personally experienceable phenomena, in that “to experience a beginning of experience *as* a beginning, one would have to experience what went before it. But before such a beginning, there is, by definition, no such experience available to me. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the case of death. The underlying point here is that ‘life and death are in *objective* time and limit the temporal existence of every human being, i.e. limit its human duration which, like every duration, has its relations of coexistence, overlapping, length and shortness, etc’” (Mensch, 1988, p. 157, quoting Husserl). The sense of life and death as events in the world can be given to me only in a mediate fashion, that is, as phenomena that others undergo. The worldly sense of my essential finitude is that of my having a finite access to the world, and this is inherent in my having a finite lifetime.⁶

Husserl also holds that the ego lives on beyond its bodily death by way of the presence of the very others who provided it with its experience of death as a worldly phenomenon. According to a generative account, the other has priority over the ego, since it is only because of inherited traditions and sedimented habits that the ego has a sense of its own birth and death. The ego can make sense of its own birth and death because it transfers the experiences of others’ births and deaths “back into my own personal being which has already been constituted as a living entity” and is able to recognize then “its own human birth, its own human death” (*HUA XV*, p. 209). Since the constitution of the world whole extends beyond the individual ego, it is prior to an individual’s birth and continues after its death; but it is also prior to its proximate monadic community, and continues within it as well. Husserl argues that the sense of the world whole is a product of the constitutive activities of

⁶ Mensch likens Husserl’s discussion of “essential finitude” to Heidegger’s exploration of this theme. In one of his first books, *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida contrasted Heidegger’s death-bound Dasein with what Derrida took to be Husserl’s immortality thesis (Derrida, 1967/1973, pp. 53-55). According to Derrida, the relation of consciousness with presence described by Husserl puts one beyond the bounds of any empirical reality, and hence beyond death. Derrida claims for Husserl that the transgression of the empirical into the transcendental only putatively preserves being, since the relation with my death lurks in the determination of being as presence (ideality), the absolute possibility of repetition (see Sheets-Johnstone, 2003, pp. 248-251).

many subjects: “it transpires in a unity of tradition – this tradition that is constituted in the world itself beyond the pauses of birth and death of the individual” (quoted by Steinbock, 1996, p. 304). Without the accommodation of individuals’ births and deaths in a living ongoing tradition, every subject would have to constitute the world as if from a blank slate. “The individual ego is not just constituting the world from its own past experiences, but also the world out of a historical past. The historical tradition that is recognized due to the description of birth and death constitutes the sense of the world through the sedimentation of earlier historical sense formations” (Donohoe, 2004, p. 102; see also Hart, 1993, p. 31).

Thus, there are *three things* that must be kept separate when one tries to unpack what Husserl thinks about a human being’s relation to death. Although his interpreters are not consistent – or at least not complete – about these issues, Husserl himself is both consistent and complete. His statements about the essential finitude of human existence, that birth and death are ineradicable features of humans’ worldly life, can be reconciled with his declaration that the ego knows no birth and death, that the ego is immortal. The way to understand how these claims can be reconciled requires a brief recapitulation of Husserl’s mature ontology of human being. In his very thorough discussion of this topic, D. W. Smith argues that Husserl advocates a monism of substrate coupled with a plurality of essences. An individual human is *one thing* which instantiates three essences: material (or physical) body, living-body (or flesh) animated by the soul, and consciousness as transcendental ego. Material things, as they fall under Nature, exist in space and time; as bodies they are space-time occupiers. Conscious events, on the other hand, are not real (they are unreal); they do not occupy space and time, even though they are temporal events. As a real human being, I experience myself as having a physical body, a material thing which occupies space and time; my material body is made of material parts; it can causally interact with other bodies. But, in addition, as an animal being, I experience my body as animated by my soul, and thus my *bodily* experience of the world is one that is *lived-through*. As a human person, I live in the world as a spirit insofar as I am a member of a community of other spirits in a moral, social, and historical world. As a spirit, I can understand others’ beliefs and actions as the ‘products’ of other beings like myself. Through my lived-body, I experience the world as something that can be the matrix of moving through space and attaining the goals of my desires. The human spirit depends on the human soul, which itself depends on the lived-body, and the lived-body depends on the material body. In reverse order, Husserl says that the

material body *founds* the lived-body, which in turn *founds* the human soul, while the latter *founds* the spirit or ego.

If we employ these ontological categories, we can make the following inferences about humans' relation to birth and death: Inasmuch as he is an organic living embodied being, a human is bound by birth and death, the coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be of life-force. Inasmuch as he is an historical, horizontal being, in an inter-subjective community, a human's decisions, values and beliefs are – to a greater or lesser degree – carried on by successive generations. And, inasmuch as a human is a transcendental ego, an instance of consciousness as such, a human is not bound by birth and death. He (or it) is the primal ground upon (or through) which all phenomena are granted a beginning and an ending. So, when we consider again Schutz's memory of his mentor's last words to him, we can better understand what he meant: Edmund Husserl, the person, the old man, will die, whereas Husserl the thinker lives on in the thoughts of innumerable students of phenomenology. But, even then, this is not what Husserl was trying to convey to Schutz – that the transcendental ego as such is immortal, and, in this sense, it thus cannot die.

Let us return to the point where we broke off earlier, where Husserl had said that the transcendental ego was immortal insofar as there is “an incapability of crossing out the present that is being ever newly fulfilled” (APAS, p. 467). He had said that the transcendental ego has “an endless life with an endless immanent temporal form on both sides” (APAS, p. 454). He does not mean that the ego, *any* aspect of the ego, lives without limit, without an end in objective time. An “endless life” means that there is no point where in reflection the active ego will not find an ego acting. Both backward and forward, the ego can *always* identify itself as actively temporalizing yet another past or future sequence of now-points; that is, there is always another sequence, forever and ever. How so? Every remembered sequence of events is identical insofar as it has the same temporal order and duration; but it is also permanently, ineradicably, different as well. As each present moment passes, its just-gone now becomes a further point in a newly retained sequence. Every temporal sequence leads to the present; but, as time passes, each present is a new present, such that the original sequence now leads to that new present and hence comprises a further sequence which can itself be recalled. Each remembered sequence, as it joins its predecessors in a forever receding past, includes as its latest ‘member’ an act of remembering that whole sequence. And hence each moment becomes a ‘tile’ in a cascade of potentially infinite sequences, each of

which enfolds every other enchain sequence.

The living, immanent past is exponentially augmented by each new now's potential to be both the first point of an act of remembering and the final point of a remembered series. The same is true, Husserl argues, for the future: each upcoming now-point joins a forever iterable series of projected sequences as the now point becomes just-past and anchors yet another forward expectation. He says that every present, as an enduring being, has a protentional form that cannot be crossed out, implying that a new now must arrive, as well as a retentional form that cannot be crossed out, implying that a just-passed now is replaced by a new now. Even if one were to posit nothing prior to the beginning of the process of endlessly iterative memories, that would presuppose something with which “nothing” could conflict. “There can be an emptiness prior to the beginning, an undifferentiated monotone, mute stupefaction [or stupor], but even this is something past, and has the essential structure of something temporal.” Birth is the name for the event of moving from not-yet-life to life, from no thing outside time to something within time. But the temporalizing process is itself the “life” of conscious being – or perhaps, one could say, what makes life possible for (or as) an active ego. Hence, it is inevitable that “transcendental life, the transcendental ego, cannot be born; only a human being in the world can be born. The ego as transcendental ego was eternal, [since] I am now and belonging to this now is a horizon of the past that can be unravelled into infinity. And this means precisely [that] the ego was eternal” (APAS, p. 469).

Drawing near to the conclusion to this appendix, Husserl avers that “the necessity of an unending immanent time [is] the infinity of past transcendental life.” But this does not imply that the transcendental ego has always had a wakeful life. “Rather, a mute and empty life, so to speak, a dreamless empty sleep, is conceivable as a life that also had this necessary structure.”⁷ Except that, in this limit case, with an

⁷ Before its being alive, i.e. prior to its birth, the ego's self-temporalization does not occur. Birth is a transition from “primal sleep” to “primal awakening”: the primal sleeping ego is “that which possesses nothing as an existent and has nothing pre-given; it is, equally, an ego which is temporalizing nothing and has not temporalized anything as existent”. Husserl also says that the primal sleeping ego or monad is “nothing for itself”; but this does not signify that it is nothing *in itself*. As James Mensch phrases it: “to the point that the sleeping ego does not temporalize ... it may be regarded as a life which is collapsed into its centre Stripped of its being *for* itself, its being *in itself* is its being in an anonymous original present”. “Death is the collapse of the wakefulness [and] a return to the egological state which existed before birth, i.e. before the temporalization which

affect of nil, a near-zero of intentional activity, “the ego did not come on the scene, so to speak, and the slumbering ego was a mere potentiality for the ego cogito”. The same is true for the future as well as the past – it is without limit, without an end. “The ego lives on; it always is and necessarily has its future before it There is a forward directed ‘always’ for me as the ego.” What is yet to come will be past after it is present and it will coalesce with the current now which will then become a past lying yet further back, joining as a new transient end-point everything that is now past. “Again, it is inconceivable that the transcendental ego ceases. [This does not mean] that the human being has lived and will live for eternity, and that birth and death, the emergence of human beings in nature and their disappearance from nature, say, through creation or destruction, is quite compatible with the transcendental infinity of life.” Note well here that, in Husserl’s ontology, “human being” refers to the ego in its animate or psychic aspect. “Strictly speaking”, Husserl concludes, “the soul of the body is not immortal ... and it actually perishes since it is a part of everyday experience. But in a certain respect every human ego harbours its transcendental ego, and this does not die and does not arise; it is an eternal being in the process of becoming” (APAS, p. 471).

But perhaps someone who has followed the argument thus far might comment that this analysis pushes the congruence between Husserl and Leibniz too far. Aside from his naming the transcendental ego a monad, all the other terms used to describe it – such as “windowless”, “self-contained being”, “mirrored perspective”, and so forth – are only so many lexical accessories, metaphorical extensions. After all, as every commentator on the Leibniz-Husserl connection has declared, Leibniz’s monadic metaphysics requires God as the divine agent who institutes the pre-established harmony amongst all things, and there is nothing like that in Husserl. On the rare occasions in his works when Husserl mentions God, it is only as “a limit concept”, about which one can know nothing. Paul Ricoeur, for example, said that “in Leibniz all perspectives are integrated into a higher point of view, that of God, by an operation of over-viewing (*survol*) which allows passing from the monad to the monadology. No such view from above is permitted in Husserl. It is always from the side, and not from above, that each of us

gives the ego its life. It is thus ‘the cessation of all conscious life and, with this, also the cessation of the ego as the identical pole of *this life* and the capacities pertaining to it.’ This is not a collapse into nothingness; it is rather a return to the now which is the independent origin of this life. What remains is the now which, in temporalizing, first resulted in the ego’s presence as a pole, i.e. a middle-point, of its life” (Mensch, 1988, pp. 259-260).

discovers that the same world is grasped from different points of view” (Ricoeur, 1967, p. 133). Dan Zahavi agrees with this assessment: “Husserl’s monadic philosophy of intersubjectivity naturally cannot be seen as a mere resurrection of a Leibnizian conceptual heritage ... it is not only because Husserl does not presuppose a pre-established harmony running through the monadological community, but also because this monadological plurality is only to be regarded from the standpoint of the individual I, rather than from God’s view from nowhere” (Zahavi, 2001, pp. 79-80).

These bold claims are just plain wrong. It is true that, in all 650 pages of the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, God is not mentioned once; but, in a 1926 letter to one of his former students, Husserl characterizes the lecture course on association, affection and time-consciousness as, in these words, concerned with “the ultimate foundations of a systematic phenomenology of world-constitution, showing from below how God constitutes the world” (quoted in Hart, 2004, p. 149). James Hart comments on Husserl’s insight that, despite all the discordances in experience, the world as a whole coheres: “there is no necessity in the cohesion of our experiences. The associative demands that found what we call motivation can be annulled at any time. ... A totally chaotic confusion of the founding flux of hyletic data would make apperceptions impossible; the staying power of apperceptions would have to dissolve because there would be no corroboration What could expectation mean with a world of total chaotic confusion as envisaged by Husserl? ... It is a fact that the world holds, but there is no fact that we can appeal to that will say it *must* hold”. Husserl asks how it is that one’s experience of an external thing can be continually joined to another in such a way as to constitute the unity of world-certainty. “Can it not be that an external experience is the last one, while consciousness endures?” To which Hart responds: “we know for Husserl that this endurance of consciousness is to be taken in the strong sense” (Hart, 2004, p. 151). Hart thinks that Steinbock, in his Introduction to *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, is “incorrect when he suggests that a generative phenomenology would relativize this position and that we would attain a perspective that would account for successors and progenitors... . The original living present or primal presentencing is not ever displaceable by any generative considerations. Any suggestion that the ultimate sense of the individuality of the transcendental I, not the person as somebody gendered, acculturated, ineluctably tied to others in the world, is constituted by any factors outside of itself is also incorrect” (Hart, 2004, p. 151).

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On rare occasions, Husserl's regressive inquiries, going ever deeper in uncovering the strata of sense constitution, forced him to confront a strange enigma – what he once referred to as “the irrational fact of rationality of the world”. He sometimes confronted head-on the “fact” that transcendental phenomenology, as an effort to make sense of the process of making-sense, never failed to find evidence that permitted constitutive activities to cohere in one world. James Hart says that “this ultimate realm Husserl regarded as a fact that may be called irrational insofar as every explanation presupposes it. Metaphysics has to do with ‘the problems of the irrational matter of all objectifying forms belonging to a world and puts these problems in relation to the teleological-theological problems that are designated by the title – the rational character of the world.’ ... The transcendental sense of the world along with the community of monads is ‘a locus wherein necessarily ideas and the ultimate absolute values realize themselves stage by stage, as a locus of *divine formative acts*.’ ... [He also] makes use of the term ‘divine entelechy’ to elucidate this sense of the world and its formation in the [foundation] of the transcendental I” (Hart, 2004, p. 152, quoting Husserl). In the context of his discussion of monadic community, Husserl's recourse to an overarching rationality which “explains” the never-ending harmony of unfolding experiences, and his calling this ideal a divine formation or entelechy, can hardly be put down to an extended metaphor – it places his analysis squarely within Leibniz's realm.

There are many structural and substantive parallels

between Leibniz's monadic scheme and Husserl's later views on the primal ego, points of convergence that this paper has laid out step by step. Of course, it is important to acknowledge that, for Husserl, “monad” is one way to refer to conscious being; only insofar as the transcendental ego founds the absolute sphere of consciousness is it called a monad. For Leibniz, the universe contains an infinite plurality of monads, organized into an enormous variety of aggregated individuals; only some monads are conscious and deserve the name “spirits”. But, if we accept that where Husserl talks about conscious beings as monads he is referring to what Leibniz calls spiritual monads, then the substantive parallels hold. For both theorists, the monad is a self-contained system of being, one “without windows”; a monad's experiences unfold in harmonious concatenations; a monad is a mirror of its proximate environs and comprises multiple perspectives; the unconscious is a repository of potential activation; the necessity that explains why experiences endlessly unfold in harmony is due to “a divine formation”; and, most importantly of all, a monad knows no birth and death and hence is immortal. In his very last years, Husserl proposed a third ego level, below (or beyond) the mundane ego and transcendental ego – the primal ego. It is neither psychical nor physical; it permits the transcendental ego to carry out its constitutive activities, including the mundane ego's birth and death in time; it is always in a process of becoming, and so it can never be in a state of only “having-been”, that is, dead; and hence the primal ego's enduring cannot itself ever come to an end.

About the Author



Dr Paul MacDonald is Head of the Department of Philosophy at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, where he teaches existentialism and specializes in continental philosophy, in which area he is widely recognized as an authority. In addition to a number of journal articles, many of them devoted to issues in Husserlian phenomenology, Dr MacDonald's publications include three books – *Descartes and Husserl: The Philosophical Project of Radical Beginnings* (SUNY, 2000), *History of the Concept of Mind, Volume I: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit from Homer to Hume* (Ashgate, 2003) and *History of the Concept of Mind, Volume 2: The Heterodox and Occult Tradition* (Ashgate, 2006) – as well as an edited anthology, *The Existentialist Reader: An Anthology of Key Texts* (Routledge, 2001). His areas of research interest include philosophy, continental philosophy and applied ontology.

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