The Limits of the Absolute Consciousness

Some Remarks on the Husserlian Concept of Monad

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For some decades after Husserl's death, his idea of a "monadological phenomenology" has been regarded with both suspicion and interest. The suspicion mainly concerns with the metaphysical implications of the concepts of monad and monadology. It could be considered inappropriate for a *phenomenological* philosophy to endorse a view, that is not only burdened with theological assumptions, but also with theses like the ones concerning the immortality of the soul and the absolute independence of the subjects from each other. These seem to be quite untenable from a purely phenomenological point of view.

On the other hand, it is exactly in regard to intersubjectivity that Husserl's proposal of a phenomenological monadology has been considered worthy of attention. In the phenomenological framework, the statement of a monadological system seems to give voice to the original plurality of subjects, and to reveal the transcendentality of intersubjectivity as such.

Another reason to appreciate Husserl's monadological sketches is because of the concreteness it is meant to express. Different from Husserl's previous understandings of subjectivity and subjective life, the monadological one aims to both grasp and highlight that (both transcendental and empirical) subjectivity is a *complex dynamic unity*. It entails parts which go beyond what a static analysis can reveal, and which go beyond actuality and adequate and clear consciousness. The monadological understanding of subjectivity can be considered as having overcome an idea of subjectivity both as a pure pole of experience as well as the merely noetic part of experience. In this sense, "monad" can be considered a label to express the phenomenological field constituted by *ego-cogito-cogitatum*.[1] However, is the idea that, in order to fully understand experience, we need to consider all these elements and their inner relationship, enough to endorse a monadological view of phenomenology?

Until recent years there have been few in-depth critical assessments of Husserl's idea of monad and monadology.[2] Some of these attempts have tried to evaluate the similarities and the differences between Husserl's and Leibniz' concepts of monad, while

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1. Cf. Hua I, § 21. See also Hua XIV, p. 257.

2. One of the first attempts in this direction is represented by Strasser (1975), who remarks that in the decades following Husserl's death, his references to Leibniz' monadology have mostly been considered as little more than a *manière de parler*. Later, among the most significant contributions, one should certainly consider the assessments by Strasser himself (1989), and then by Richir (1989), Kaehler (1995) and (2000), Mertens (2000), Iribarne (2002), Vergani (2004), Pradelle (2006), McDonald (2007), Shim (2014).

others have tried to establish the legitimacy and the proper sense of developing a genuine phenomenological monadology.

However, it is far from evident that Husserl's rephrasing of the concept of monad can really overcome the metaphysical implications clearly included by the Lebnizian one. It is not enough to state that Husserl's phenomenology cannot dogmatically accept the idea of a pre-established harmony, nor that Husserl's monads *do* have windows. It must be questioned whether or not such differences are coherent with a monadic understanding of *phenomenological* evidence itself.

In what follows, I will show that a phenomenologico-Husserlian understanding of monad cannot be considered to entail *per se* some metaphysical endorsements which characterize Leibniz' monadology, but a phenomenological monadology also does not allow us to take a definite position concerning such endorsements. I will claim, indeed, that Husserl's monad has to be mainly and exclusively interpreted in epistemological terms. As such, it offers some elements in order to deal with both metaphysical and ontological issues, like pluralism and monism, eternity and teleology, but it is not sufficent to determine them.

Since, as Husserl himself claims, the monadological understanding of subjectivity would involve a rephrasing of all phenomenological issues[3] — and, as I suggest, even extra-phenomenological ones —, in what follows I will just offer a schematic assessment of some main features of (a possible) Husserlian concept of monad. In this way, I hope to show what the Husserlian monad's core sense, limits and possible implications are.

1. Husserl's monad is born by reflection

Not simply for "philological" reasons, but, above all, for systematic ones, it has to be stressed that Husserl's idea of monad historically derives from a reflection Husserl has around 1908.[4] To be more precise, from a double reflection. The first reflection is represented by the so-called transcendental-phenomenological reduction. The second reflection concerns the result of this reduction. By observing what one is "left with" after the reduction, one realizes that it is a whole of experiences. The term monad is firstly aimed to exactly express the result of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. This must not be neglected, otherwise the proper sense of Husserl's monad is lost.

As previously mentioned, Husserl "speculates" about a monadological system as early as 1908. In a manuscript, he wonders if the result of the phenomenological reduction, i.e. what he calls the "absolute consciousness", should not be understood as a monad. In this manuscript, however, he also notes that some of the seemingly necessary features of a monadological system, like the eternity of the monad and the supposed independence of consciousness from a (given) body, cannot but create some phenomenological embarrassment (*Verlegenheit*).[5]

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3. Cf. Hua I, § 44: "Since the monadically concrete ego includes also the whole of actual and potential conscious life, it is clear that the problem of explicating this monadic ego phenomenologically (the problem of his constitution for himself) must include all constitutional problems without exception. Consequently the phenomenology of this self-constitution coincides with phenomenology as a whole."

4. Cf. Hua XIII, p. 5–8.

5. It is, indeed, a common experiential evidence that consciousness arises and fades, as well as that

Nevertheless, Husserl utilizes again, and this time publicly, a monadological terminology in the lectures he gives during the winter semester 1910/11 on *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Similarly to what he does in his previous research-manuscripts, he introduces such terminology in order to deal with the problem of intersubjectivity. By means of the word "monad" he thus seems to be aiming to stress that absolute consciousness is always individuated and that we have a plurality of consciousnesses which are reciprocally independent, but also somehow interconnected in the constitution of one, unique, common world.

Some years later, in the manuscripts for the second volume of the *Ideas*, he once more makes use of the term "monad", but this time the main reason for such an usage seems to be an attempt to better capture the full concreteness of consciousness and subjectivity.

Later on, in the manuscripts for a planned and never realized *Great Systematic Work*, dating back to the beginning of 1920's, Husserl tries to deepen the previous monadological understandings of consciousness and subjectivity by elaborating all the entailed aspects — i.e. mainly full-fledged concreteness, viz. individuality, of the "absolute consciousness" and its relationship with other absolutes — in a comprehensive systematic way. The concept of monad and the idea of a monadological system he proposes in the *Cartesian Meditations* are based on the reflections in those manuscripts. However, in the *Cartesian Meditations* we do not find much more than a summary of what monad means and what a phenomenological monadology looks like. A clear and robust justification of the concept of monad is missing, as well as a comprehensive and appropriate investigation of its systematic load, both from a phenomenological and a metaphysico-ontological point of view. Husserl himself is very aware of this, as the aforementioned quotation shows.[6]

In this sense, we first have to stress that the idea of interpreting phenomenology in a monadological manner stems from the attempt to put into focus and suitably appraise the result of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. This can be considered, indeed, a fundamental step towards a broader reflection. If one looks at Husserl's texts, one discovers, indeed, that Husserl does not first properly *individuate* the "absolute consciousness" which derives from such a reflection. This means, that at the beginning he is not concerned about the singularity of the "pure consciousness". However, it is exactly in the attempt to better sharpen such consciousness, that Husserl realizes that the absolute stream one reaches by means of the reduction, in order to be adequately understood in its full-fledged concreteness, has to be recognized as individuated. By means of the reduction we do not achieve a kind of universal, "panic", omni-ubiquitous consciousness. We rather realize that what we "purely" have, that is what we as a flow of consciousness actually *are*, is something structurally, viz. essentially, individuated and something which *differentiates itself* from an "outside", be this the "outer world" or the "other subjects". This latter aspect is of paramount importance.

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body is necessary for having perceptual consciousness. Even if the body could be understood as a kind of system of perceptual capacities, a coordinated multiplicity of sensations, it is also a common experience that it is constituted as a *Körper* as well. Can we cast out the necessity for a *Leib* of being also a *Körper*? Could we have a "purely conscious" body, without this being a part of the world we perceive by means of it? These questions can merely be brought up, but not dealt with nor answered, here.

6. Cf. *supra*, footnote 3.

One of the reasons to adopt a monadological view is, as you can see, suggested by the "thing itself" which is the result of the reduction. After the achievement of the reduction, one finds oneself in a field of experiences. A big part — indeed the majority — of these experiences stretch beyond the field of clear evidence. They are somehow intertwined and connected with the actual and clearer ones. The task of phenomenology, especially in its genetic shape, consists in analysing and elucidating such interconnections and twines. We will consider this aspect in a second. Let us first stress once more and more accurately why the findings of the reduction lead us to a monadological standpoint. We have seen that, when adequately understood, the result of the reduction is not a dis-individuated, universal consciousness. It is rather an individuated stream of experiences. Nevertheless, Husserl insists on considering such a stream as an "absolute consciousness". How is this possible? Husserl's seemingly awkward claim is actually legitimate and makes sense if we consider that the "pure" consciousness deriving from the reduction is certainly individuated, therefore *limited*, but the limitation is something which appears in the stream itself, thus constituting a kind of independent feature of the very same singular consciousness. I hold this (somehow contradictory) characteristic of the pure consciousness to be what leads Husserl, and perhaps inevitably leads any strict phenomenological reflection, to embrace a monadological mindset.

In order to understand, viz. to justify, this claim and to better assess the meaning of a phenomenological concept of monad, let us then finally sketch some main features of the latter.

2. Husserl's Monad is an epistemic unity

The aforementioned first hint to a monadological system made by Husserl is quite relevant, for it shows that a monadological understanding seems to logically follow from the achievements one realizes according to a purely phenomenological understanding of experience and its evidence. Indeed, the term monad seems first and foremost to give voice to the fact that, reducing our concern to what is given in experience (including what is given *as* experience), and given the mereological structure of experience, we cannot but end up with a field of experience as a whole. Under this respect, the term monad can be considered to highlight the unitarian feature of the pure stream of consciousness. The pure consciousness is not an aggregate, but, however complex and multifaceted it be, it is a "simple" unity, i.e. a whole of all reciprocally dependent parts. It is made of the several lived experiences and their respective moments. Such lived experiences are themselves moments of the whole field of consciousness, i.e. they are dependent, not independent parts.[7] Each lived experience is either immediately or mediately linked with, or rather founded on, the other lived experiences. In case of a mediated relationship, the mediation itself is part of the considered whole, i.e. of the monad.

This is a first, and perhaps the main reason, to consider the pure consciousness as absolute, although it is something limited. Due to its capacity to hold its pieces together

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7. The mereological terminology employed here in this "substantial" context by Husserl himself is clearly derived from the *Third Logical Investigation*: cf., *e.g.*, Hua XIV, p. 244–271.

by itself, it is something independent. The sharpening of this aspect leads to deem the pure consciousness as a substance.

3. Husserl's monad is an epistemic substance

The "substantial" aspect of pure consciousness is stressed by Husserl especially in some manuscripts from the Twenties, where he tries to understand what can be a substance from a phenomenological point of view. Also in this regard, however, it has to be stressed that the autonomy which characterizes pure consciousness is primarily — if not exclusively — of epistemological kind. Husserl's notorious definition of pure consciousness in *Ideas I* as *quod nulla re indiget ad existendum*, which is derived from Descartes' definition of substance, is better rephrased by Husserl himself some years later as *quod in se et per se concipitur*, which is Spinoza's definition of substance. Once Husserl adopts this definition of substance, he applies it to the monad. This formulation allows Husserl to better point out that the monad does not need anything else to "conceive" of herself. Pure consciousness does not need the existence of a world outside of itself in order to understand itself, because, for pure consciousness, what is relevant is the appearing of the world *in* experience. Therefore is an epistemic unit, *alias* an epistemic substance, *alias* a monad.

For the sake of clarity, let's briefly remind ourselves that pure consciousness is, for Husserl, made of three main types of elements, i.e. noesis, hyletic data and noema, *plus* the several relationships among these elements. The peculiarity of a strong, or simple, unity is that all elements are reciprocally connected by means of something which is either comprehended in the whole *or* by the whole itself.[8] Considered that the syntheses, be these active or passive, which permit us to see *a* world, are fulfilled *in* the stream of experience, there is no need for the latter to grasp beyond itself in order to understand and, what is mainly at stake here, to *know* both itself and the world it experiences. This also means that, if we assume the pure stream of experience as the result of the reduction, we are left with something more than a subject understood as a psychophysical unity, namely with this latter *and* all the correlates of its (intentional) experiences. This is one of the main reasons why the term "monad" is more apt than the term "pure subjectivity" to express the field we gain by means of the phenomenological reduction, and in which we move ourselves while conducting phenomenological research. To explore and to come to know the monad does not coincide with exploring and knowing the subject of experience, but rather with the exploration and the knowledge of all what is entailed in experience — of course, subject included.

For all these reasons, the monad has to be considered as a "conceptually" independent substance. It is a whole which entails all parts it needs in order to know and understand itself, i.e. not simply its subjective side, but the whole of its experience, including worldly objects and experiential contents in general. The conceptual independence means that it is capable of knowing itself and of becoming an object to itself without the need to reach beyond itself. In other words, in order to understand

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8. Which of the two is the case when it comes to the Husserlian monad, is difficult to state. At the end of the present contribution it will be possible to offer a (however only partial) answer to such a question.

experience and to know what appears in experience, there is no need to suppose something beyond it. To know itself, a monad does not need to postulate a further reality, i.e. a reality which is not in some way experienced. Therefore, the monad is cognitively self-sufficient.[9]

4. Husserl's monad stretches beyond the sphere of proper intuition, of clear and distinct intuition and of adequate knowledge

The field of evidence disclosed by the reduction is given clearly, apodictically and adequately. However it shows elements, i.e. other experiences and their respective contents, which reach beyond clarity and adequacy, though they maintain apodicticity. This idea is famously expressed by Husserl's concept of *lebendige Gegenwart*, living-present. This is the "moment" in which every apodictic evidence has to be found and on which any belief has to be founded. However, the foundation of the beliefs in the living-present does not transform such believes in knowledges. What is apodictically given in an inadequate way or as not properly known does not overcome such cognitive limitations by appearing in a clear field of evidence. Moreover, in the living present we find linkages to unactual experiences, both in terms of time and of modality. There are both recollections of past events and anticipations of future events, but also "immediate" and not properly representational consciousness of the past and of the future, i.e. what Husserl calls retentions and protentions. Especially the latter, together with a complex amass of latent and semi-conscious experiences (drives, habitualities, background sensations, etc.), show that the monad is much larger than what the living present clearly and, somehow, adequately shows.

   The stream of experience rephrased as monad is thus characterized by its reaching beyond full and clear evidence, but also beyond attentive and thematic self-consciousness. This seems to be a feature Husserl's monad clearly shares with that of Leibniz: the monad comprehends *petits perceptions* and stretches even to the paddocks of sleep and complete numbness. Indeed, especially in the so called "genetic phase", Husserl's phenomenology aims to investigate these aspects of experience as well. It is questionable if and how this can be possible in the frame of an analysis of consciousness. However, it must at least be acknowledged that there is a kind of "conscious" evidence of such experiences.

   In sum, the realm of a monad, that is its totality, reaches beyond evidence and — as we will further see — knowledge. The monad entails parts, i.e. experiences, which reach beyond clearness and distinctness.[10] The monad is larger than the sphere of clear and distinct evidence, and it even reaches upon experiences (and objects) which can barely be considered conscious. We see, indeed, that some semi-conscious experiences are

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9. In this sense, the notorious experiment of the *Weltvernichtung* should probably be understood as a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*: if we hypothesise that the world is destroyed, while we continue to have an experience of it, we should infer that our experience of the world is independent of the world. Following this, the world we experience *is not* the world which is destroyed. Which reasons do we have, then, in order to suppose the existence of that "other", invisibly disappeared world? Are these reasons, perhaps, not to be found(ed) in experience itself, thus revealing the primacy and, somehow, the *epistemic* independence of experience, following of the monad?

   10. Cf. Hua I, § 6; Hua XIII, p. 184–194.

connected to (more) fully conscious ones, indeed to the very actual ones, of which we have adequate evidence. Following, one has to admit that those half-conscious experiences are integral parts of the monad one identifies oneself with.

5. The Husserlian monad is characterized by a blurred closure of the field of evidence

Another feature Husserl's phenomenology shares with the Leibnizian philosophy, and which surely plays an important role in Husserl's elaboration of a phenomenological monadology, concerns the theory of knowledge. Indeed, Husserl shares Leibniz idea that knowledge is gradual, it stretches from obscure and confused ideas to clear, distinct and adequate ones. However, this gradualism mainly — if not solely — concerns the experience and knowledge of spatial reality and, to some degree, of the subjective side of a monad, while in the Husserlian framework it cannot properly be the case in the matter of other subjects, i.e. as far as the content of the "other minds" is concerned. Moreover, Leibniz presupposes that reality *is* in itself clear and distinct, while this cannot be claimed solely on the basis of the Husserlian *phenomenological* monadology. We will tackle this issue later.

　　Let us first consider the cases in which gradualism seems to hold also in the Husserlian framework.

6. Spatial reality is given as containing more than one has proper sensuous access to

Knowledge of spatial reality is founded on perception. It is perception itself which "teaches" us that we experience more than what we can properly know from time to time. This, however, does not mean that the Husserlian monadology leads us to posit things in themselves or noumena. In a certain sense, we become aware of the limitedness of our knowledge concerning the totality of the world we experience. This does not imply that we do not know things as they "really" are, but that the full reality of spatial things stretches beyond the limits of our intuition.

　　Husserl's (sometimes quite abused) concept of "horizon" is apt to express this apodictic evidence. Although there is no need to suppose a world that is different from what we experience, it must also be acknowledged that the world *shows* itself as going beyond the sphere of "proper" intuition. This aspect of "outer" experience has been famously investigated by Husserl, especially in his lectures and manuscripts concerning the constitution of space and of spatial things.[11] It is not possible to recollect such analyses in detail, here. It suffices to point out that they reveal that spatial perception is characterized by the consciousness of being the outer space and the spatial objects *more* than both what we properly see, i.e. have corresponding hyletic data of, and what we see in a clear and distinct way. This means, on the one hand, that we have experience of more than we can properly know from time to time — for instance, I cannot know how the opposite side of a cube looks like —, and, on the other hand, that not everything we

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11. Cf. Hua XVI; Hua XXI, p. 262–418.

perceive is given in a precise shape — for example, I see that there is something moving beyond the windows of the building on the other side of the street, but I cannot clearly recognize what it is.

Husserl further clarifies the inadequacy which characterizes perceptual spatial experience by means of the differentiation between inner and outer horizon.[12] In the case of the inner horizon, we deal with a more complete determination of the shape and the features of a given object, while the outer horizon concerns the surrounding of the object or the part of space which lies at the centre of our perceptual attention. From these two cases, one should differentiate the one concerning the "ungiven" or "improperly given" sides of the perceived objects. While in the first two cases mentioned one has to enrich, so to say, a given picture, in the latter one has to reveal an unseen canvas. It is important to remark this difference because in the first two cases one could, to a certain extent, gain an enrichment without loss, while in the last case, given the three-dimensional structure of space and, following, the perspectivity of spatial perception, one cannot reveal the missing part without losing a previously available aspect from one's sight.

However, we can state that all cases of perception and, following this, of knowledge of spatial entities are characterized by gradualism. We can start with a "poor" perception and knowledge of spatial things and proceed to richer ones. However, given the very structure of spatiality, an instantaneous full and adequate knowledge of spatial entities has to be excluded. This is particularly evident in the case of three dimensional objects, but it could probably be confirmed also for bi-dimensional ones, given their (potential) infinite determinability.

In general, we can state that, as far as spatial perception is concerned, the maximum grade of knowledge cannot correspond to the full determination of space, nor of any, even conveniently small, spatial object.

7. Self-consciousness is temporally structured and the self can only be given with fringes

If we turn to the subjective side of experience, the situation is even more problematic. Although the apodictic evidence of the *ego sum* is epistemically pivotal, what and how the ego is, is far from clear.[13] The establishment of one's personal identity is far from being apodictically realisable. It is, in fact, dependent on an uncountable amount of experiences, which are supposed to reveal at least one's tendencies, viz. one's character, and which largely stretch beyond the *lebendige Gegenwart*. Obviously, the situation does not improve if we avoid an understanding of the self in terms of personal identity or of essential features, i.e. if we assume that the self simply corresponds to the totality of a stream of consciousness *tout-court* — or, at least, to the noetic and hyletic portion of

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12. Cf. Hua III/1, p. 56f.; Hua XXXIX, p. 67–144. See also Geniusas (2012); Summa (2014), Ch. 7.

13. I am here considering the ego, or self, simply as the noetic and, to a certain extent, hyletic part of the monad, i.e. as the sum of the actions, intentions, and even non-intentional experiences (sensations and, perhaps, emotions) which are comprehended in a monad. I leave the pure ego apart, because, beside the difficulties connected to its phenomenological — not to say ontological — admissibility, it constitutes an element of the monad which is as easily grasped in full evidence as it potentially messes up the very structure of the monadic life.

it. Thus, it is clearly impossible to state that in any given moment we can have a full and adequate knowledge of the self. Instead, we are confronted with an epistemic impossibility which is even stronger than the one observed in the case of three-dimensional spatial objects. We can simply discover that the subject "of" experience is given as composed by a multitude of "comet's tails" which do not simply extend in the present and in the past, but also in the present, towards the abyss of unconsciousness, drives and unawareness. All Husserl's time-analyses can be considered as a tireless attempt to fully grasp this structure in all its detailed fringes. Something similar can be said about his (somehow sporadic) analyses of instinctual life.[14]

Basically, the monad as field of evidence centred in the living present does allow us to discover some essential structures of subjectivity, but it does not allow us to fully and adequately know ourselves. On the contrary, it shows us that such knowledge is impossible — at least if we abide by the idea of knowledge as *adaequatio*.

8. The monadic certainty being reflexively analysable permits us to see also its structural limits

We could say that one of the results we have achieved so far is that there is no certainty beyond actuality. All we can say there is more than we can clearly see or, to say it better, we experience and are aware of things we do not properly know — some of which are in principle even unknowable.

One could argue that here we are reducing knowledge to certainty and to adequate knowledge. This is, indeed, the case. After all, it seems difficult to avoid such an endorsement of knowledge as at least partially adequate certainty. In other words, we can know that something is how we think it to be if and only if there is evidence which supports such a thought. Evidence must be intuitive — at least in a Husserlian framework. Following this, there must be a primal intuitive evidence which supports our beliefs — be these linked to inadequate intuitions or even, as in the case of other minds, to the very impossibility of an intuition — of the posited object.

Certainly we could further observe that, given that a strictly correspondentist model of knowledge reveals itself inappropriate for almost any possible concrete knowledge we can achieve of ourselves, it makes almost no sense to endorse it. In principle, we do not adequately see anything in the living present which can permit us to build even a minimal idea of what we are. Memories are subject to error, and retentions are not exactly objectifying, thus they do not even offer us any knowledge of our past few seconds. We could perhaps further argue that we possess a self-knowledge of another kind — perhaps a Russellian self-acquaintance. I believe, though, that, even if Husserl is very well aware of all these problems, he generally holds by a correspondentist theory of knowledge also in the frame of the phenomenological analyses. The reason is that by means of this model, we can both detect the basic structures of experience, including the ones which somehow support our common and naïve self-understanding, and evaluate the limits of our beliefs. One quite relevant result of the application of such a model is, for instance, the evidence that our self-knowledge is somehow strongly limited and far

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14. Cf., *e.g.*, Hua XIV, p. 405-409; XV, p. 593–597. On the topic of instincts in Husserl's writings, see Holenstein (1972), Lee (1993), Mensch (1998), Depraz (2001), Brudzińska (2005).

from being based solely on self-observation. Moreover, we can notice that it is thanks to the reflective analyses and to the application of the correspondentist epistemic measure that we do actually discover a structural, perhaps even ontological, difference between noesis, hyletic data and noema. We can be wrong, or even unaware, of the real shape of each of these elements from time to time, but we can be sure that they belong to different categories and to different "realms" of experience. This is also a remarkable discovery, the importance of which is absolutely crucial to assess the various topics concerning realism and idealism and those related to intersubjectivity. I will limit my considerations here to some aspects of intersubjectivity.

9. Husserlian monads have closed windows

If we reduce our-self to the intuitively given, it has to be acknowledged that we experience other subjects. This seems to prove that, in order to recognize the existence of others, there is no need to dismiss the epistemic closure and independence of the monad we have described above. The others are experienced in the "primordial sphere". Of course, others need to manifest themselves as others, but this does not mean that in order to see and experience the others we have to step out of our field of evidence. The epistemic closure of the monad does not deny the existence of other monads, nor does it prevent us from experiencing other monads. On the contrary, the epistemic understanding of monad allows, and perhaps even compels us to adopt, a pluralistic understanding of experience and knowledge. Indeed, since other subjects are experienced, and since they are experienced as being themselves living beings (i.e. they are provided with, at least, some basic sensations and, in some case, emotions and thoughts), one is compelled to recognize that there is evidence of something one cannot have intuitive access to. This "inaccessible realm" cannot be denied, unless one denies one's own experience, that is the evidence which constitutes the basis for the denial.

Certainly the so called problem of the "other minds" is much more complex and multifaceted than it is possible to analyse here. However, we can at least notice that, given a distinction between the problem of the existence of other minds and the one concerning the knowledge of their contents, we have to state that the monadological viewpoint does not prevent us from acknowledging the existence of other minds, while it certainly denies the possibility of knowing their contents.

We can experience that there are other subjects. How this kind of experience functions is not relevant in the present context. It is instead important that the experience of other subjects goes hand in hand with the positing of a mental life different from one's own and basically unknowable.

Even if we endorse a rylian understanding of mind, and following of other minds, this would not entail a denial of the existence of sensations. In a rylian framework, sensations are not observations, but this does not mean that they do not exist.[15] Following, even if we assumed the existence of empathy, and that this puts one in touch with at least the sensuous-emotive life of others, empathy itself could not count as knowledge.

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15. Cf., *e.g.*, Ryle (1949), §. 7.3. Ryle's viewpoint would rather eliminate the possibility of acquiring a knowledge even of one's own sensuous life.

Empathy, if it exists, is more of a feeling than an observation. As any feeling, empathy can be objectified, i.e. it can become the object of an observation and thus, once adequately categorized, can become known. However, empathy does not overcome the distinction between different subjects, rather it is founded on such a distinction. Empathy, effectively, entails difference. We can say that, even if we feel the mood or the feelings of others, we ourselves are not in that mood, unless we have some kind of affective reason which leads us to be in a state of mind which is relative to the one of the other and similar to it. However, to feel that someone is in pain does not mean that one is in pain. Even affective contagion does not melt two subjects into one.[16]

In sum, even in cases we assume that empathy permits a non-observational understanding of the feelings and emotions of other subjects, these remain streams of experience which are not part of the monad in which they are empathically experienced. Therefore, what is empathically experienced, since empathy does not offer a "first-person experience" of other's sensations, cannot count as a verifier of other's hyletic data. This, however, does neither compel us to deny that in the monadic frame others cannot be encountered, nor that their experience "blows up" the epistemic closure of the monad. It rather confirms that *in* the monad there is evidence of plurality and that experience exceeds knowledge.

We can thus state that the kind of epistemic solipsism which is somehow entailed by a monadic understanding of experience, does not entail ontological solipsism. On the contrary, it commits to the acknowledgement of otherness or foreignness in as much as they appear in experience and somehow urges us to accept that we have to step over knowledge in order to both recognize or to deny other subjects. If we endorse the reduction to the primordial sphere as sole field of evidence, this compels us to accept that the others are what we see as others. It is "up to me" to recognize something as another subject or not. However, once I recognize the existence of another subject, I unavoidably posit a sphere of experience which is inaccessible to me. Any attempt to overcome such inaccessibility would constitute a betrayal of "my" sphere of evidence. The epistemic reduction implies that something counts as "other mind" in so far as its appearance falls under my scheme of "other mind". Also a kind of behaviouristic understanding of other minds could, in this sense, suffice to overcome a kind of ontological, as well as existential, solipsism. It just has to be acknowledged that, once something is recognized as another mind, a field of hyletic data is posited. A field that cannot be experienced, though. To admit this does not necessarily lead to a contrast with a position *à la Ryle*. Indeed, hyletic data are not primarily a matter of observation, neither for us, nor for the others. However, some form of introspection has to be admitted, which allows each subject to realize that one has pain — or pleasure, or any kind of sensation, thought or emotion. We know that we have pain, because pain is a part of our experience. The other's pain being a part of the other, as long as the other is observed, cannot be verified, i.e. cannot be an object of intuition. Even if we acknowledge that sensations are not primarily objects of observation, we cannot deny the privativity which characterizes at least part of our "mental" and almost the totality our "sensuous" life. This does not force us to endorse a "ghost in the machine" theory of mind, but simply to recognize the difference between living and observing as well as the

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16. Also what Scheler calls co-feeling (*Miteinanderfuehlen*) does not seem to deny the distinction between the included subjects. They share the same emotion, but this is, somehow, distributed.

plurality of subjects of experience.

10. The constitution of the transcendence of the world is founded in monadic singularity

Another issue related to the topic of intersubjectivity consists in understanding how separated fields of evidence, i.e. different monads, can "share the same world". To tackle this question, we first have to remind ourselves of the difference between intentional and real objects. Also in the case that noema is considered an "internal" part of experience, the real object is not reduced to the experience one has of it. This does not mean that the world is different from what we experience. The distinction between the world and our experience of it simply corresponds to the phenomenological evidence that we perceive things as being "out" of us. Despite the often emphasised intertwining between subject and world and between *Leib* and *Koerper*, our own body, as well as our both sensuous and intellectual life, correspond to a different kind of experience than the outer world.

We have to remind ourselves that the Husserlian monad is founded in the reduction to pure experience. The ontological question about the difference between mind and world cannot be properly tackled solely on this bases. There are various mental experiments, as well as clinical cases, in which misidentifications or alienations of oneself happen. However, besides the difficulty to clearly and univocally understand their ontological meaning, these experiments support the idea that there is, at least in conscious experience, a constant differentiation between self and world, lived sensations and objectual properties, real and intentional elements of experience.

If we accept these phenomenological differences as being given, we must then remark that the transcendence of the world, at least of the spatial one, is experienced in each single monad "solipsistically". To say it better, each monad realises the transcendence of the world simply on the basis of her "primordial" experience, that is her purely intuitive experience, without the mediation, or any kind of cooperation, of the consciousness of other subjects.[17] I myself *see* that the world, or whatever, is not me. I experience in my primordial sphere my difference from something else. In my own sphere of experience I realise that something is more than I can see, i.e. it is "made of" parts I have — temporarily or permanently — no direct access to.

Following this, the fact that the transcendent world can be shared with other subjects is far from being a real enigma. The world "is there". The others are perceived — or, in this case, imagined or supposed — as "being there" — or as "being almost there" as well. There is no reason to be baffled by their perceiving the same world, rather the opposite being the perplexing case. The normality is, indeed, not that we are puzzled by the fact that the others experience the same world we do, but rather that we are even worried that others can see what we feel or think. The world is there, there is also an entity I recognize as a subject, i.e. as a being able of sensations and perceptions, following it is

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17. This idea, as known, has been challenged by Dan Zahavi, who has opposed a transcendentally intersubjective constitution of the transcendent and objective world: see Zahavi (1997). Although Zahavi's thesis is based on some quite strong arguments, it lacks a differentiation transcendence and objectivity. What I am discussing here is first the problem of the constitution of transcendence. This constitutes the necessary condition for a discourse concerning objectivity, which, on its behalf, does almost unavoidably imply a reference to intersubjectivity.

intuitively given that such a subject is perceiving the world I perceive.

The fact that the world includes the perceiver among its elements, does not *per se* add any particular problem. It simply means that I can be an object of observation. However, as we have already — quite "rylistically" — recognized, sensations, emotions, etc. are primarily not a matter of observation, not only for the others, but also for the one "living" them. No wonder, then, that we can be scared that others can see what we feel, sense and even think. The first world we are aware of being normally the "outer" one, we must be trained to realize what others see and what they do not, what is public and what is private.

11. The objective world is in principle constituted in an intermonadical medium and cannot be an object of proper knowledge

In the primordial sphere I realise that something (let's call it "the world") is transcendent, as well as that "in" it there are other subjects and that they, being capable of perception, perceive the same world I perceive. Yet how can I be sure that they perceive it in the same way I do, given that our experiences, including our respective noema and hyletic data, are distinct? This is, again, a quite complex issue, and again we cannot tackle it thoroughly and adequately here. For the purposes of the present paper it is enough to briefly consider the problem simply in respect to the hyletic data.

We first have to establish a differentiation among the different types of hyletic data one can have experience of. Roughly, we can distinguish between objectual sensations on the one hand, and emotions and feelings on the other. Red is an objectual sensation, while nausea is a feeling and anger an emotion. The latter can be considered "subjectual sensations", since they do not directly say something about the object of perception, but rather of the state of mind of the perceiving subject. In short, we can say that there are hyletic data which refer to features of experienced objects, while other ones denote the "state of mind" of the experiencing subject. We have already seen that there is no possibility to know the "state of mind" of other subjects, at least in as much her sensations and, to a certain extent, emotions are concerned.

For the present discussion, it can be left aside as to whether or not the subjectual sensations can claim some kind of universality. We have, indeed, already seen that, since they are confined in the subjectual side of experience, they cannot be detected by anyone but, perhaps, the experiencing subject. As such, they cannot be shared and, therefore, they cannot be a matter of an agreement based on shared intuition.

Moreover, we have to remark that, in the framework of a phenomenological monadology, it is not particularly relevant whether or not all subjects can have or not the same objectual sensations in respect to the same objects. What is important is that in each monad it must be possible to understand whether or not another subject is referring to the same object. This can reach a quite high degree of evidence — not an apodictic one, though — only via ostension, i.e. seeing that the other subject is hinting at, or dealing with, the object I am intending as well. "What" the other sees, can be reasonably stated only in this way. However, "how" the other sees the object at stake, can under no circumstances be verified, but only comprehended. Indeed, if we admit that objects are constituted by syntheses of hyletic data, and if we assume that these are to be put on the "real", i.e. subjective, side of experience, it can only follow that they cannot be directly

shown as well, i.e. they cannot be given to subjects aside from the perceiving one.

All these considerations lead us to admit that there is no possibility to verify, i.e. to test the correspondence between ideas and intuitions, if and to what extent we do see the same things in the same way. One merely has the possibility, to a certain, still limited, degree, to understand whether or not others are somehow seeing, or more generally intending, the same things one does.

Furthermore, we have to remark that the knowledge about the unverifiability of others' views on the world depends on (at least) three elements we become aware of inside of the frames of our primordial sphere: i. that the world can have different looks; ii. that we can take the place of the other in space, but we would need to literally possess her own body or integrate it into ours to be sure about what she sees; iii. that we experience that the other can have a different view on the same things we intend, since we understand either what she communicates about it or because we see that her behaviour does not correspond to what we expect if she were seeing the things as we do.

If we exclude the attempt to realise ii., we are left with the fundamental impossibility to intuitively constitute a shared world. The question concerning an objectively shared world is, as the word quite unambiguously suggests, indeed a question of objectification, thus of observation. As such, it seems to unavoidably go beyond, perhaps even to "sublate", the sphere of hyletic data. This does not necessarily imply that sensations and emotions are not part of the world — so the enthusiasts of the mind-world intertwining can keep their shirts on —, but surely they cannot become a part of an objectively constituted world. The latter is a matter of communication and, to a certain degree, of ostension. At this point of our reflection, it should be quite undisputed that sensations and emotions cannot be literally shown. Therefore, they can solely be a matter of communication. Following, they cannot become a matter of knowledge in the correspondentist fashion endorsed so far.

However, this does not imply that no comprehension of others (and, actually, even of one's own) "sensuous life" is possible. We have already admitted that empathy could be possible. Other kinds of comprehension, more or less mediated by whatever kind of communication, are also to be admitted — and they constitute, indeed, a relevant part of our experience. Exactly in as much they are part of the latter, it makes no sense to deny them. What is to be challenged is their interpretation and their epistemic value. For this reason, comprehension and knowledge have to be clearly distinguished. Comprehension reaches beyond the sphere of evidence. Knowledge, on the contrary, can be realised only on the basis of evidence.

In sum, we can say that the advocated epistemic independence is not infringed upon by encounters with alterity and foreignness. Other's experience cannot determine my knowledge of the world nor of myself. It is, rather, *my* experience of the others, including what I see or assume the other to experience, which are epistemically relevant for me both privately, and in the field of intersubjective exchange, dispute and agreement.

Finally, we have to recognize the consequences of this evidence, i.e. that parts of the experience of the world cannot in principle be a matter of knowledge, for the question concerning the constitution of a common, objective world is about "objects" which can never be fully verified by any single monad. This, however, does not cast out objectivity *tout-court*. It simply means that objectivity is somehow over (correspondentist) knowledge, both in the sense that it is founded on and that it somehow "sublates"

knowledge. The latter, however, is essential to the possibility of objectivity. It is the ground out from which objective discourse can depart and to which it must always be able to come back, unless it abandons the task of speaking about "reality".

As we have abundantly repeated, knowledge basically consists in the fulfilling of an empty intention, i.e. knowledge happens by means of a coincidence between the content of a thought and that of an intuition. No matter how we conceive of thought, mental contents and intuitions, it is clear that knowledge as *adaequatio* requires that both the intuitive and the thought contents occur in the same stream of consciousness, i.e. in the same monad. Let's hypothesize that in one monad A occurs i. the vision of another subject B, ii. the understanding of B as referring to a certain object X, and iii. the experience of an object Y. To be sure that X and Y coincide, various strategies can be performed by A. However, what is of crucial importance is that, if possible, the identification between X and Y has to be performed in A. Like every criterial identification, such an operation is obviously subject to error. Following this, the comprehension that we share, or that we do not share, the same view of the same world and, perhaps, even the same world as such, cannot be a matter of apodictic knowledge. Indeed, we have to stress once again, it is no matter of "correspondentist" knowledge at all — if not in the sense that it is based on a core intuitive evidence which is, though, "individual" matter of the single monad to realise.

Finally and in sum, according to the understanding of Husserl's monad sketched above, we have to state that one's experience of things, of other subjects and even of oneself entails more than one knows, and even more than one will ever be able to know. As far as the spatial world is concerned, it does not imply any *per se* undetectable world or part of it. The limitation concerns the perception which one has from time to time. The fact that perception is perspectival prevents a truly apodictic knowledge about its total shape for any single subject. There is, however, a core-certainty which cannot be dismissed in the experience of any subject, i.e. the experience of a part of the world, in regard to which both one's non-intuitive beliefs and the other's perspectives must be somehow compatible. Otherwise, we should assume that one thinks or believes in a world, while perceiving a different world or, respectively, that the others perceive different worlds from one's own. It has to, however, be remarked that, while the first hypothesis is phenomenologically inconsistent, given the priority of intuition which must be methodically assumed in phenomenology, the latter case is not phenomenologically excludible. We have, indeed, to admit that the possibility that a perceived subject perceives another world, i.e. that the world of the perceiver A, that perceives the subject B, is different from the world perceived by B, cannot be cast out — at least not solely by means of phenomenological analyses, or unless we assume a quite robustly externalist understanding of the noema.

In any case, what is certain, independently of the interpretation of the noema we adopt, is that the objective world cannot be constituted on the base of a shared intuitive intentionality. We need discourse, communication, i.e. some form of an objectifying language.

Conclusions

At the end of this brief sketch of what an Husserlian monad could, or should, be, one

should try to see, on the one hand, what general epistemological canvas emerges, as well as, on the other hand, what its ontological and metaphysical implications are. As for the latter, once again, it is not possible to consider all of them here, nor to thoroughly challenge any of them. I choose to express some brief considerations only concerning two issues: the one of the plurality of subjects, because it is one of the most debated issues in the phenomenological tradition, and the one concerning determinism, because this could seem to follow from some of Husserl's texts and, actually, from the very understanding of the monad as fully concrete reality provided with an individual essence. Let's first draw the general epistemological canvas.

I. Monads are closed wholes, which entail subwholes
We have already seen that monads contain everything they need in order to know themselves. Moreover, they are composed of experiences and their various parts which extend beyond sight.

In a certain sense, we can state that each experience and content of experience, in order to possess a cognitive relevance, must be considered in as much as it is connected with some kind of aware actual experience. Potential, past or future experiences have to be linked to our living present in some way which is up to us to clarify from time to time. Correspondingly, if an actual, fully aware experience clearly shows a linkage to some unactual, unconscious or semi-conscious experience and, in case, its respective contents, both the experiences and their contents have to be recognized as belonging to the same monadic whole. Such an "admission" of parts of the monad beyond the field of clear evidence and adequacy is not a matter of mere belief, but rather of intuitive experience. We *see* the spatial objects being more than what we have proper experience of from time to time, and we "see" that our own life stretches beyond the limits of actual self-awareness.

This clearly means that the realm of a monad, that is its totality, reaches beyond evidence and — as we will further see — knowledge. Consequently, in the monad we must differentiate the totality of the monad as a whole of experiences and the part of it which corresponds to knowledge. We can call the latter part the sphere of evidence. It is constituted by the experiences which serve as justifications of beliefs, thus producing knowledge. From what has been said in the previous paragraphs, we have to state that in the monad there are experiences which are not evident and experiences of objects which can in principle never become evident, both being thus impossible objects of knowledge. Their existence, however, is, at least in part, intuitively given.

That being said, it has to be acknowledged that any representation of what is beyond clear and distinct intuitive evidence, any, also imaginative, idea which is formulated in order to account for our reality and the one of the world we find ourselves in, are always only partially intuitively justified. These intuitively justified beliefs concerning the extension of the monad, both on its objectual and on its subjectual side, beyond the sphere of evidence, somehow apodictically tell us that there is more than we can perceive from time to time, but guarantees us neither   the "true" shape of what is "over there", nor about its — both temporal and spatial — total extension. We can build an *idea* of how the monad extends beyond the horizon of clarity and adequacy.

The excess of the experienceable over the knowable is monadically stated and can only be monadically stated. It is, indeed, a matter of a single monad, in principle of each single monad, to realise it. No monad can do this kind of job for another. In this sense,

no subsitution, no collective or empathetical accomplishment is required or even possible. In consequence of the fulfilment of this insight into the epistemic structure of the monad, one comes to acknowledge its limits and, somehow, to cognitively determine them. Since such a determination must occur in a monad and it is not a matter of intermonadical, let alone supermonadical, constitution, the single monad can be the sole "court" of knowledge — and also of the limits of this court.

II. Metaphysico-ontological puzzle I. The plurality of monads is intuitively given, but it cannot be granted beyond the actual experience of alterity and foreignness
The epistemic independence of the monad and the positing of a private sphere inside of it do not imply the possibility — let alone the actuality — of adequate self-knowledge. Due to the limitedness of the sphere of clarity and distinction in the sphere of evidence, it is rather clear that a monad cannot fully know itself, nor solely its "private", "subjective" side in any given moment. If knowledge is only possible in a single monad, then knowledge can never saturate experience. Moreover, the monad can never be apodictically sure about its own total identity. The plurality of monads being a matter of actual experience and, to a certain extent, knowledge, there is no way to establish whether all monads are parts of a unique stream of experience, nor if they ever were, or will ever become, one unique stream of experience.

There is no sufficient intuitive evidence for an absolute and eternal ontological closure of the different monads towards each other. Indeed, what we experience is that there are other subjects from time to time. This does not simply mean that, at a certain point, one could be the only "real" subject in the world, but also that the two streams of experience one and the other consist in, at some point could melted together, and could constitute a unique substance.

If each monad stretches beyond the limits of clear consciousness, why should we not admit that, in the obscure depth of experience, all monads are propagations of a unique substance? Although this hypothesis sounds contra-intuitive, even bizarre, we must at least admit that the idea that two monads share, up to a certain moment, the same past cannot be dispelled easily. It is, indeed, almost impossible to dismiss it solely on the basis of phenomenological analyses. This impossibility, however, is far from being a phenomenological proof that it is really the case that two monads share, or can share, a unique past, thus having previously been one unique substance, merely shows that a purely phenomenologico-epistemic understanding of the monad does not suffice to tackle these kinds of questions. Indeed, epistemic closure does not imply ontological closure, nor its opposite. What the reduction to the Husserlian monad allows us to say is only that all limits of the field of experience start from a difference, be this towards the transcendent, spatial world or towards other subjects. The evidence of one's consciousness seems to derive from, or to be necessarily linked to, this difference. In particular, in several texts Husserl shows that self-consciousness and self-knowledge are strongly linked with, even founded on, the experience of alterity and of foreignness.[18] These, on their behalf, also show that experience is "distributed": The experience of other monads entails the consciousness of their being themselves wholes of experience, and that their experiences are different from one's own. In this sense, one could affirm that there is evidence that, if there is ontological monism, this does not concern self-

18. Cf., *e.g.*, Hua V, p. 109f.

consciousness nor self-awareness. [19] Consciousness, all the more in its "phenomenologically purified" form, emerges as individuated, i.e. as of a subject which is different from other ones. However, as already stated, this does not rule out the possibility that, apart from the very moments of the various forms of self-awareness and alterity-awareness which can occur, the "fundamental" stream of both our own and other's experiences belong to a unique one. Of course, this hypothesis seems to exclude that such a stream, if it were to exist and could still deserve the label of experience, could be individuated.

III. Metaphysico-ontological puzzle II. The epistemic closure of Husserl's monads does not imply determinism nor indeterminism or freedom

A similar reflection has to be made about the question of determinism, i.e. whether there is a pre-established course of experiences, including the various behaviours the subject of experience will accomplish in any given moment. We have seen that the monad is a fully concrete sphere of evidence. As the monad is epistemically self-sufficient, it has to be considered an epistemically closed unity, i.e. it entails all parts which are necessary to know itself, although this does not imply that it will effectively know itself adequately. One could rephrase this state of affairs by saying that all that is necessary to cognitively determine a monad is entailed in the monad and that, following this, the monad *is* fully determined, so to say "from the beginning" or "since forever". Otherwise, we should assume that the monad becomes what it is by means of knowing herself. Even if this latter hypothesis can make some sense, and it is actually not far from the idea of self-realization one can derive from Husserl,[20] it is also quite clear that this idea does not actually answer the question concerning the *determinism* of the monadic stream.

We should rather consider that, being the partially obscured given experiences somehow connected to the actual clear evidences, the stream of experience can be considered a systematic totality. Indeed, Husserl interprets the systematic connection among all parts of a monad as responding to an individual legality.[21] The idea expressed by Husserl in this regard is, however, biased. Let's shortly analyse it.

The idea which emerges from some of Husserl's manuscripts in this regard can be summed up as follows: Every experience and even every object of experience is somehow pre-figured in the actual experience. This depends on the fact that, as we have already mentioned, all experiences and the respective objects are bilaterally founded, i.e. each experience derives its meaning, directly or indirectly, from all other experiences.

These are claims which can be hardly justified on a phenomenological level. Although there are several hints by Husserl in support of them, it has to be noted that there is no experiential evidence that the totality of what will appear, as well as that the linkage between past and present experiences, is necessarily determined. One could, perhaps, investigate the general features of the objects which are accessible to a subject. However, it is difficult to claim that we can state what will be experienced, or that what

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19. As Zahavi has quite efficaciously shown, also on the basis of some of Husserl's manuscripts, there can fundamentally be no even minimal sense of oneself which is devoid of some kind of awareness of alterity and foreignness: cf. Zahavi (1999).

20. Self-knowledge is, indeed, somehow a pre-requisite of self-determination and responsibility, and to lead a responsible life, to determine oneself under the sign of full self-clarity, according to certain passages of Husserl, is the ideal of human life *tout-court*: cf. Hart (1996); Mensch (1997).

21. Cf., *e.g.*, Hua XIV, p. 1–54.

has so far happened was necessary solely because of the prior experiences. To affirm a full determinism, we should assume that all objects encountered in a stream of experience are also pre-determined — as well as the way of dealing with them. What phenomenological evidence do we have for this claim?

One could assume that Husserl's idea derives from two, seemingly undoubted, assumptions, which (also seemingly) directly derive from a monadic understanding of experience: I. the ontological closure concerning the hyletic data, and the following II. ontological claim about the "shape" of the world.

Both claims are, however, phenomenologically unjustifiable. Indeed, they reach beyond the reduction to apodictic experience and evidence. As for I., we can somehow infer how the future will be, in the same way we can inquire into the linkages between past and present experiences. There is no apodictic evidence, but only a probabilistic hypothesis, which, of course, can be formulated according to some more or less accurately formulated general physical and psychological rules. However, we can only discover some general rules, which do not rule out the very singular experiences which alternate in a monad.

Moreover, if we base our speculations solely on the basis of what is really found in the realm of monadic evidence, we should say that the monadic system entails unknown experiences and things. Can we assume that what is unknown is, *in se*, determined? But what do we, could we, actually know about such a determinacy?

If we assume that the unclearly and undistinctively given is "in reality" clear and distinct, we step beyond the epistemic understanding of the monad. In the living present we solely have clues concerning how experience and its respective objects could be. The modal step from possibility to actuality is epistemically unjustified. The idea that the totality of experience and, consequently, the totality of the respective world is fully and univocally shaped is unfounded. Even if we reduce the world to hyletic data and their syntheses — thus actually making a step from phenomenology to phenomenalism —, and if we acknowledge that the stream of consciousness stretches beyond the actual moment, thus bearing further hyletic data, there is no sufficient reason to state that the latter already has a definite shape, nor that its shape is univocally connected to the actually given. All we can assume, although only in a probabilistic frame, is that the legality of the syntheses will persist, but which ones will factually happen cannot be known.

In other words, the idea that the hyletic stream is fully determined does not follow from the idea of the epistemic self-sufficiency of the monad. The epistemic independence of the monad would rather — if ontologically understood – compel us to say that the horizon, including the objects entailed in it, is undetermined. Indeed, the monadic field of evidence shows indeterminacy. If we adopted an ontological understanding of Husserl's monad, we should accept as a consequence that the world itself is undetermined. This ontological assumption is, however, not necessary. Nor is its opposite. Unknown, indeed, does not *per se* mean undetermined nor determined. The epistemic limits of the monad cannot be phenomenologically overcome. All assumptions and beliefs concerning the world and the totality of the monad itself are based on reasoning and speculation, not on intuitive knowledge. That the totality cannot be adequately known is told to us by the "things themselves". Whether it can be known by an omniscient god is a matter of belief. Such a belief does not necessarily follow from experience.

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