

## Implications of the Phenomenological Concept of Intentionality

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### Abstract

The phenomenological concept of intentionality explains intentional consciousness having a specific structure. An analysis of the inter-relation between intentional consciousness and the objective world resulted in different aspects of transcendental experience leading to intersubjectivity and life-world functioning in a socially constituted world of meaning. The life-world is explained as the universal framework of human experience, the ground of intersubjective world. Sociologists are engaged in establishing a new science based on the concept of life-world.

**KEYWORDS:** consciousness, intentionality, intersubjectivity, life-world.

### Introduction

The aim of the paper is to indicate the logical development of the concept of intentionality in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, introducing consciousness and its structure, and culminating in the notions of intersubjectivity and life-world. Intentional analysis in Husserl's own way has contributed much in the development of a philosophy of the life -world, the immediately given and evident world. Husserl asserted that the world is the intentional correlate of consciousness, and the investigations have ultimately led Husserl to the concept of life- world in his later writings.

The relation between consciousness and intentionality in phenomenology is discussed followed by a historical account of the concept of intentionality. The role of the concept of intentionality in solving the problem of intersubjectivity, is attempted. Finally the concept of life world as the culmination of Husserl's phenomenology is worked out in relation to the concepts of intentionality and intersubjectivity.

### Consciousness and Intentionality

The Phenomenological concept of consciousness is arrived at by means of a method which excludes all relation to empirical existence. It is necessary to distinguish between a phenomenological and psychological theory of consciousness. The descriptive psychological sense of consciousness becomes

changed into the purely phenomenological sense of consciousness. The region of pure consciousness is revealed by the Phenomenological method so that the objective relationship between consciousness and things has its origin in the realm of pure consciousness which constitutes everything. Husserl treats consciousness as the absolute principle, an autonomous region that constitutes the world. The pure ego or the transcendental ego establishes sense and reality to the world. The phenomenological concept of intentionality helps to distinguish Husserl's transcendental approach from the metaphysical approaches of realism and idealism. Phenomenology in its approach is not idealistic but is concerned with the analysis of the apriori constitutive origin of the relation between subjective conscious experience and the objects experienced. To Husserl, transcendental subjectivity is not solipsistic but the constitutive sphere where the reality of the objective world is constituted giving objective sense to the objects of

experience.

The phenomenological way of treating consciousness based on its method has provided the phenomenological experience having an intentional character with a specific structure. The exact conscious relationship with objects of experience in phenomenology is characterized by the term intentionality. Intentionality reveals the different ways in which consciousness is related to the world. The main objective of phenomenological investigation is taken as a clarification of the intentional structure of consciousness. Husserl has made a complete analysis of the structure of *cogito*, arguing that one could say nothing about the objects of consciousness without fully understanding how consciousness operates with its unique structure. In phenomenology, intentional means an object intended by consciousness, object meant or intended by an act of consciousness<sup>1</sup>. The status as intentional is derived from its relationship to an intending act. The phenomenological concept of intentionality has played a significant role in demonstrating that consciousness is not a private affair but public and always related to the world or the objects of the world. There is an open inter-relation between intentional consciousness and the objective world.

### **Historical Account of Intentionality**

The sense of the word intentional in intentionality is not to be confused with the common use of the word intentional meaning ‘done on purpose’. A mental state is intentional does not mean that the mental state is brought about in purpose. The meaning of intentional in the phenomenological sense is that mental state is directed towards objects. The term intentionality is derived from the latin word

‘intentio’ derived from the verb ‘intendere’ meaning being directed towards something. Intentionality is to be distinguished from intensionality. Sentences are intensional, mental states are intentional. Only mental states have intentionality, no physical states have intentionality. The scholastics characterized mental phenomena by intentional inexistence, emphasizing that no physical phenomena have intentional inexistence. The importance of the concept of intentionality is recognized by the phenomenological tradition. In the

phenomenological tradition, Brentano’s concept of intentionality had the notion of intentional inexistence. The term intentionality was used as a philosophical concept by Franz Brentano in distinguishing between acts of consciousness and physical phenomena. Brentano claimed that objects of intentional states have a special type of existence, intentional inexistence being the characteristic of mental phenomena, containing an object intentionally within the mental phenomena. Brentano was responsible for making the term intentional alive in the philosophical circles. Meinong, Twardoski and Husserl were influenced by Brentano’s doctrine of intentionality. Meinong stated that it is essential for everything psychic to have an object. Twardoski starts his book with “it is one of the best known positions of psychology, hardly contested by anyone, that every mental phenomenon intents an immanent object<sup>2</sup>.

Husserl found much richer structure in conscious acts and developed descriptive psychology of Brentano into the most general descriptive science of consciousness. Brentano’s use of the concept of intentionality was ambiguous failing to grasp the real meaning of intentionality. Husserl made use of the concept of intentionality as the unique characteristic of conscious experience. In the *Logical Investigations* (1900) Husserl criticized Brentano’s notion of intentional inexistence. To Brentano the object is

not having independent existence but contained in the mental act. Husserl treated the intentional object not as object in

the mental act but as existing independently of the mental acts. The traditional way of distinguishing between the subject that knows and object that is known is transformed in phenomenology into the correlation of what is experienced with the mode of experience which is termed as intentionality.

### **Structure of Intentionality**

In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl interpreted consciousness as intentional meaning that intentionality is a characteristic feature of the acts of consciousness. A crucial change in the treatment of intentionality is noted in the second edition of the *Logical Investigations*, but stated in detail in the *Ideas*. In his *Ideas*, Husserl understood intentionality as the very essence of consciousness. The change was due to the introduction of phenomenological reduction which was first introduced in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, and explained in detail in the *Ideas*. After the phenomenological reduction, objects are treated in relation to acts of consciousness as objects of intentional consciousness as they are intended objects from a philosophical aspect. The term ‘noesis’ refers to the features immanently contained in the act that directs it to an object. The term ‘noema’ refers to the intended object as the intentional correlate of the act. Husserl is very specific in claiming that noema is given in originary way, evident and objects are not empirical objects but essences. The essence is grasped in its primordial form by setting out from intuition of an imaginative order<sup>3</sup>. The empirical intuition is transformed into essential intuition through a process called ideation in which the essence is given primordially<sup>4</sup>. The difference between empirical intuition and essential intuition is that empirical intuition is concerned with individual existence of the object while essential intuition is concerned with essence of the object. The essential difference between the two types of intuitions correspond to the difference between essence and existence<sup>5</sup>.

With the method of reduction, Husserl makes a turn to transcendental phenomenology. What remains after reduction is pure consciousness or transcendental consciousness which is absolute and all beings relative to it. At the transcendental level of experience, intentional analysis refers to pure consciousness and not to empirical consciousness. Essences at the transcendental level are intentionally nonexistent and existentially dependent upon the transcendental ego. Transcendental consciousness is the meaning giver to the world of our experience. The world exists as meaning for the transcendental consciousness. Husserl did not claim that noema and the perceived object are different, one sense and the other reference, but includes both sense and reference, reference devoid of existential status because of the reduction. The object as intended, meant by consciousness incorporates meaning and object, a meant object constituted by the intentional consciousness.

### **Intentionality and Intersubjectivity**

Husserl made use of the term intentionality in his own way in solving the problem regarding consciousness transcending itself and achieving an objectivity sharing with other conscious beings who exist in the world. The transcendental ego forms in itself intentionalities with in - existence sense transcending its own being. Experiencing the other is experiencing an objective world and other in it. The other is within the ego so that the ego is a transcendental intersubjective unit. The world is immanent in the

ego's experience. The transcendental ego constitutes the world, and the transcendental ego is the intersubjective and immanent ego. The constitution of world is an intersubjective constitution and the world constituted through intentional activity is a life-world shared by an intersubjective community. The reduction to the transcendental sphere of ownness give way to the transcendental constitution of the other. The ownness-reduction performed brings about an intentional substratum in which the reduced world is an immanent transcendency. The concrete ego includes the intentionality directed to what is other. The other becomes constituted through the synthetic affect of intentionality. The transcendental ego is the original sphere within which is contained the objective world in its full concreteness as a monad. The intentional explication of experiencing the other involves a number of levels such as the constitutional level pertaining to the other ego, an ego community, including the transcendental ego, a community of monads. The transcendental intersubjectivity has an intersubjective sphere of ownness provided by means of the communalization of constitutive intentionality. The constitution of the world involves a harmony of the monads.

'Mediacy of Intentionality' is an important concept in Husserl's Phenomenology for the transcendental clarification of experiencing the other. In experiencing the other ego, the subjective process of the other ego belonging to the other ego's own essence is not presented to the transcendental ego of the primordial sphere. The mediacy of intentionality make present to consciousness the other by reaching out from the primordial world. The making present to consciousness the other is called appresentation. The other is appresented by 'analogical apperception'. Apperception being an essential feature of experiencing the other, pairing is a universal phenomenon of the transcendental sphere too. Pairing is an associatively constitutive component of the ego's experiencing of the other. In original pairing the ego and the other ego are necessarily given.

The sense of the other is constituted as an 'intentional modification' of the transcendental ego of the primordial world so that the other is phenomenologically a modification of the transcendental ego. Within the sphere of ownness of the transcendental ego, a past present is given as intentional modification. The intentional modification is characterized as a correlate of the intentionality constituting it. Constitutive intentionality belongs to the mode of givenness in the others experience. The other receives sense analogically from the primordial ego by way of 'assimilative appereception'. The sense of the other is the sense regarding another world analogous to the primordial world. The primordial sphere is the original sphere. The promordial sphere of the other ego is appresented. The two spheres are identified which can be explained by way of the intentionality actually observable in the experience of the others essentially implicit in it. The intentionality of the primordial sphere and the intentionality of the sphere of the other is related to what Husserl calls 'associative intentionality'. There occurs an intentional reaching of the other into the primordial sphere. The transcendental ego constitutes other egoes, the intersubjective community of transcendental egoes, constituting the foundation for the objective world of an intersubjective community, the intersubjective world.

## Intentionality and Life-World

The phenomena takes its origin in the transcendental consciousness . The constitution of phenomena in our consciousness , the phenomenological approach, is called genetic phenomenology in which higher order meaning formation and clarification of meaning takes place. The specific activities of genetic phenomenology have given birth to the concept of life-world in the later writings of Husserl's philosophy. In the *Crisis*, Husserl assigns the role of being the 'Sinnes –fundament' or the foundation of meaning to the concept of life- world. The term 'transcendental' in Husserl's phenomenology used to characterize a stratum of consciousness in which the phenomena that are not part of consciousness are intended or meant. The transcendental consciousness is the ground for the constitution of meaning (sinn). In this respect, Husserl refers phenomenology as a transcendental investigation that is purported to investigate the meaning constituting acts of the transcendental ego.

In Husserl's philosophy of consciousness, he is interested in analyzing the role of consciousness in constituting the world based on the life-world. The concept of life-world in Husserl's phenomenology recognizes consciousness as functioning in a socially constituted world of meaning. Phenomenology is not a mere study of pure consciousness but study of pure consciousness in an intersubjective context, the life-world. The life-world is intersubjectively accessible and communicable. Husserl finds the origin of the world of common-sense and science in the life-world, which is pre-scientific, pre-logical and pre-predicative. Consciousness of the world of objects and egos living together, existing for consciousness through the living together, is emphasized by Husserl<sup>6</sup> . The collective intersubjective experience provides the objectivity of the world of experience<sup>7</sup> .The life –world is the ground of all shared human experience<sup>8</sup>.

The concept of intentionality finds its culmination in Husserl's phenomenology as life- world through intersubjectivity . The transcendental turn leads to the realm of pure essential possibilities of the features of our conscious life. Husserl's mature philosophy deals with the problems of intersubjectivity leading to his concept of the life-world. The term monad is used by Husserl to mean the concrete conscious life of the ego in its intentional experiences<sup>9</sup> . The constitution of the intersubjective life was an important problem for Husserl. The experience of an intersubjective world is claimed by Husserl as the experience of the reduced world<sup>10</sup> .A historical explanation of the problem of intersubjectivity is available in the *Crisis*. The new investigations available in the *Crisis* provided Husserl with the mature concept of life-world. The life-world is claimed by Husserl as a universal frame-work for human experiences. Pre-predicative experience is intuitive experience, experience before it is formulated as judgements or expressed in language. The pre- given world is the life-world which is pre- supposed in all cognitive experience, all scientific experience. Life-world is different from ordinary world in that the former is foundational to the latter. In Husserl's phenomenology the notion of objectivity was given primary importance treating it as the basis for intersubjectivity and environmental description resulting in the concept of life- world. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, intersubjectivity and life-world are logical developments of his treatment of intentionality giving way to objectivity. The life-world is the universal framework for

human experiences, and it is the general structure of objectivity provided by intentionality. Husserl's concept of life-world is made use by many sociologists in investigating and establishing a new science. Husserl's mature transcendental phenomenology with his mature concept of life-world is to be understood as the fulfillment of history and culture as constituted in the acts of consciousness .

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