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Nature, Spirit, and Spirituality in Husserl's Phenomenology

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Abstract: This article deals with the relationship between Spirit (*Geist*) and Nature (*Natur*) in Husserl's phenomenology and the potentially religious motifs involved in its treatment. I begin by outlining two different approaches that can be found in Husserl's work regarding the dyad Nature-Spirit: firstly, a schematic opposition between the two, and secondly, the recognition of their fundamental intertwinement. I claim that, even in this second approach, there remains a sense of subordination of Nature to Spirit that is due to the transcendental character of Husserl's phenomenology. I analyze this primacy in the context of Husserl's monadological theory, bringing forward certain religious elements of his account in order to connect this notion of spirit to a more contemporary idea of spirituality.

Keywords: Husserl; Nature-Spirit; monadology; teleology

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1. Introduction

The nineteenth century bore witness to the development of many humanistic disciplines whose methods and achievements did not seem to fit in perfectly in the mold carved out by the undisputed hard sciences. The subjective traits that necessarily played a role in the study of history or economics threatened the objective nature of the scientific method and called for further clarification. This concern brought about a canonical debate in late XIX and early XX continental philosophy about the foundations of science and the demarcation of different disciplines. As Andrea Staiti thoroughly shows (Staiti 2014), this debate, which originated between Neo-Kantians and *Lebensphilosophie*, soon sparked Husserl's interest as he set out to provide a transcendental clarification of the organization and hierarchies of sciences.

One of the interesting features of this debate is that it is often approached from an ontological perspective. Insofar as natural and human sciences appear to focus on different aspects of the world, elucidating whether those differences in perspective respond to differences in being is key in order to answer epistemological questions. This is especially relevant in the case of a phenomenological inquiry where subject and object are intimately related. I will go deeper into this in the third section, but to put it briefly, in the context of Husserl's philosophy, the mode of being of something is correlated to the way a subject *constitutes* it, that is to say, makes sense of it or discloses its meaning. This means, among other things, that the predominant naturalistic perspective of his—and arguably, our—time that considered the truth of an object to lie in its quantifiable (scientifically observable) characteristics was, in his eyes, mistaken. This perspective plays a vital role in Husserl's reflections on the being of Nature (*Natur*) and Spirit (*Geist*). In the following article, I will explore these reflections as they span over the course of many years and several works and present two different kinds of approaches present in them. A first approach, mainly found in *Ideas II* and the Nature and Spirit lectures from 1919 (Hua 32), considers a strong opposition between the spiritual and the natural realms and a relationship of mutual exclusion in which Spirit reveals itself to be absolute and foundational in the face of a relative and inessential Nature. The main problem of this dualist approach is its inability to account for the apparent interaction between realms that characterizes

human embodiment. A second approach can be found in the Nature and Spirit lectures of 1927. Here, Nature and Spirit are presented as abstractions of a concrete whole, and their fundamental entanglement is stressed. The potential consequences of this approach are not, however, fully explored by Husserl, who places subjectivity not in the midst of this entanglement but rather above it. In the third section of this paper, I examine the reasons behind this. Through a brief analysis of Husserl's long-winded feud with naturalism, I show how the notion of constituting subjectivity remains tied to the idea of a supranatural Spirit. Finally, in the fourth section, I tackle the issue of the relationship between Spirit and spirituality, where the latter is understood in a more or less open way as the connection to a transcendent—religious or otherwise—realm or attitude. Even though the original meaning of *Geist* at stake in the Nature-Spirit debate is not related to this kind of spirituality (and in fact, *Geist* is often translated in English as Mind instead of Spirit in order to convey this), what I aim to do here is precisely to connect the two in the work of Husserl. Intuitively, there might already be a potential link between Spirit and Spirituality given by a commonplace perspective in Western thought that places them both beyond the material realm or even at odds with it. In some of Husserl's late manuscripts and marginal writings, this connection is founded on the teleological character of experience in which the guiding force of God is manifested. After reflecting on the motives that led Husserl to this conclusion and the potential incompatibility of this view with the general *ethos* of phenomenology, I conclude by pointing in the direction of Tengelyi's work (Tengelyi 2014) as an alternative account of a phenomenological metaphysics.

2. Naturalistic Nature

The first approach to the relationship between Nature and Spirit can be characterized as one of strong opposition and of mutual exclusion. It would not be fair, however, to claim that Husserl advocated for such an opposition. While it is true that some "naturalistic assumptions"[1] played an inadvertent role in his dealings with certain key issues, his declared purpose was precisely to undermine the reductionist notion of Nature that naturalistic science put forward. In *Ideas II*, he takes this notion as a starting point to explore the constitution of the world as a whole and of its various dimensions or regions from the most basic one of mere physical nature to the spiritual world of social values and norms, mediated by psychic reality. The aim is to find the pre-scientific origins of the objects of natural and human sciences in order to provide a philosophical foundation for them.

In this context, the two antagonistic regions of spirit and nature are defined as abstract realms obtained through the adoption of two corresponding *attitudes*, the personalistic and the naturalistic one, that focus on one aspect of the world in order to thematize it in the manner of a scientific enquiry.

Attitudes can be roughly defined as contexts of meaning of intended objects. If I approach a certain object with a practical or an aesthetic attitude, I am looking at the same thing but considering it from very different perspectives, and that is what will make something be, for example, a tool or a work of art. The interest that determines the direction of my intentionality is the attitude I adopt (Luft 2002, p. 5).

The personalistic attitude is then presented as the attitude that corresponds to the sciences of the spirit, opposed to the naturalistic attitude that belongs to the realm of the natural sciences. These two attitudes focus on two different regions or *strata* of the world: the natural and the spiritual realms. The natural would be the most basic of these levels, the purely physical substratum of "every possible external concrete individual" (Husserl 2002b, p. 120), consisting of its materiality and its spatio-temporal location and tied to the laws of causality; the realm of "mere things" as opposed to the spiritual world of values and social meanings: "Nature in a specific sense, the subject of natural science, are the mere things, the things as mere nature, that is the *res extensae*" (*Natur im spezifischen Sinn, das Thema der Naturwissenschaft, sind die bloßen Dinge, die Dinge als bloße Natur, d.i. die* res extensae) (Husserl 2002b, p. 121). Described in this way, nature is completely disenchanted and devoid of meaning: "it is characteristic of these objects [natural objects] that a valuing

consciousness, as 'constituting' has contributed nothing to their essential composition, that is, to the content of their sense." (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 28). Theoretical attitudes not only focus on one aspect of the world instead of the other but also affirm the primacy of one over the other. About the naturalistic attitude, for instance, Husserl states that it does not only isolate the material dimension in order to focus only on this aspect, but it in fact attempts to reduce the higher layers to this more basic one and give an explanation of the spiritual accomplishments in material-causal terms: "naturalistically considered, all consciousness, and, in general, all lived experience, is founded bodily, and hence, in addition, so is the total content of that which, in the persons, intentionally constitutes the world and all its properties." (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 193). The adoption of a naturalistic attitude thus renders us "blind to the spiritual sphere, the special domain of the human sciences" (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 201).

However, Husserl presents the personalistic attitude not only as the theoretical attitude of the human sciences but as the true *natural attitude*, which is our everyday dealing with our surrounding world and others in it. While theoretical attitudes focus on only one aspect of the world in order to thematize it explicitly, abstracting one of the two aspects that constitute the concrete world as it is pre-given to us, the natural attitude does not require this type of "artificial" operation since it is simply the way we encounter the world (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 192). According to Husserl, since we come in contact with the world and others through acts of thinking, feeling, valuing, technically shaping, etc., this way of encountering the world in the natural attitude is meaningful, and therefore, spiritual. Spirit is, then, "the human being as a member of the personal world" (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 2014).

Yet, in the personalistic attitude, we do not completely ignore the embodied nature of persons and their belonging to an objective world: "even as spirit, apprehending and positing myself and others precisely not as nature, I find myself and others in the spatial and temporal world" (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 213). A person's body is apprehended as the same body that natural science can posit and study as object, and thus, a person is, in a sense, susceptible of being naturalized. However, this is because the possibility of practicing science—and thus the possibility of understanding human beings as dependent on material conditions—is already a part of our spiritual world (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 215), and it does *not* entail that a person is natural in any essential way. *The priority of Spirit over Nature*, which is the defining trait of the personalistic attitude, is manifest in the way embodiment is treated:

> The Body (*Leib*) is not only in general a thing but is indeed expression of the spirit and is at once organ of the spirit. And before we engage ourselves here in deeper expositions, we already recognize that everything properly "subjective" and Ego-like lies on the side of the spirit (this side comes to expression in the Body), whereas the Body is called "Ego-like" only in virtue of this animation, and its states and qualities are only thereby called "my" qualities, subjective, of the Ego. (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 102)

In this view, our bodies belong to the realm of "material things", and it is only in a derived way that they can be said to be "spiritual" as they become tools for the expression of the Spirit. The kind of topology that is presented in *Ideas II* indicates that our bodies have an ambiguous status, and in virtue of it, they are our means of connection to the natural realm. In the 1919 lectures on Nature and Spirit, he even refers to the body as a "connecting bridge" between subject and nature (Husserl 2002b, p. 186)[2]. This coincides with the idea that the Ego has a "natural side" and is tied to nature through affection (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 349). Now, this is a problematic description insofar as it does not disarm the Spirit-Nature dualism but rather just flips it over in order to hold that Spirit is foundational. The notion of nature that Husserl set out to contend would thus remain the same as in the context of a naturalistic science. In a manuscript from 1919 related to his course on *Nature and Spirit*, Husserl even speaks of nature as being "perceptually given in pure receptivity" (*wahrnemungsmäßig gegeben in reiner Rezeptivität*) without intervention of

egoic acts (Husserl 1986, p. 329), which shows to what extent he, too, was the victim of this mainstream understanding of nature.

The problems related to this dualistic view are many, amongst which are the difficulties in accounting for embodiment and the interaction between the passive, natural layer of subjectivity and the higher, spiritual layer. In the context of a genetic reflection on constitution, the strong division between the natural and spiritual realms appears to be challenged, which potentially motivates Husserl to move beyond it.

3. "Spiritualized" Nature

This second approach is mainly found in later writings, particularly the Nature and Spirit lectures from 1927 (Hua 32) and the lectures on Phenomenological Psychology from 1925 (Hua 9). However, there are some early antecedents. Already in 1910, in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, Husserl indicated:

> In keeping with their respective habits of interpretation, the natural scientist is inclined to regard everything as nature, whereas the investigator in the human sciences is inclined to regard everything as spirit, as a historical construct, and thus both thereby misinterpret whatever cannot be so regarded. (Husserl 2002a, p. 253)

He explicitly puts into question the characterization of Nature that is in opposition or in a completely exterior relation to Spirit. Contrary to the idea of the absoluteness of spirit, he treats both spirit and nature as abstractions that are, in fact, interdependent. He states:

> We have to learn to see deeper here, that even nature and spirit, though each designates a universal concept, a world-encompassing infinity, have their sense-dependency in relation to each other. Nature is not thinkable without spirit, [and] spirit is not thinkable without nature. What shows here is that what is grasped in universal concepts has along with its constitutive sense an outer, indefinite but not arbitrary horizon of sense. Nature has also spirit-determinations, [and] spirit has also nature-determinations. That means that indeed each scientifically closed-off conceptuality is an abstraction.[3] (Husserl 2001, p. 16)

The need to "see deeper" (*tiefer einsehen*) here does not refer to the overcoming of the natural attitude but rather to the overcoming of a scientific stance so well established that it represents a common place for reflection. This commonplace conception that Husserl himself was influenced by can be traced back to the canonical Cartesian division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* and to Galileo's mathematization of the knowable world. This epistemological organization is at the basis of the modern scientific view of the world, as Husserl sees it (Husserl 1970, 74 ff.).

This mainstream understanding must be counterbalanced with an examination of what is truly natural, namely our experience of the surrounding world. In the same spirit as the lectures, he states:

> The natural and the mental do not confront us clearly and separately so that mere pointing would suffice: here is nature, and here, as something completely different, is mind (*Geist*). Rather, what seems at first obviously separated, upon closer consideration[,] turns out to be obscurely intertwined, permeating each other in a manner very difficult to understand. (Husserl [1968] 1977, p. 39)

Arguably, the kind of radical genetic analysis Husserl increasingly engages in plays a part in the discovery of the intertwinement of Nature and Spirit. In the writings that focus on the constitution of time[4], Husserl is led to the analysis of the most basic level of constitution, namely that of primal temporalization, where he reaches a stage of undifferentiation of the "subjective" and "objective" poles of experience. These poles are described as *primal Ego* and *primal Hyle*, which can be considered respectively as proto forms of Spirit and Nature. *Urhyle* is described as the core and matter (*Stoff*) of the proto-impressional sphere (Husserl 2006, p. 110). It is matter before affection, since when the Ego turns towards it,

it becomes *sensation-Hyle* (*Empfindungshyle*). But matter before affection is precisely what the naturalistic notion of nature was about, and this material core in the origin of time is the basis for the constitution of nature. However, *Urhyle* is not something given but reconstructed, since once it presents itself to the Ego, it becomes already "spiritualized":

> *Die "Natur" ist Kern Materie (Hyle) der Welt als erfahrener—ein Kern, der "Vergeistigung" annimmt und im Weltbewusstsein vorweg schon hat; aber die objektive Natur ist nicht aufgrund der einheitlichen Hyle schlicht konstituiert, sondern erst konstituiert ist der primordiale Kern, durch den für mich der Sinn Natur in erster Stufe sich konstituiert.* (Husserl 2006, p. 111)

> "Nature" is the core matter (*hyle*) of the world as experienced—a core that accepts "spiritualization" and already beforehand has it in world consciousness; but the objective nature is not simply constituted on the basis of the unitary *hyle*, but first the primordial core is constituted, through which the meaning of nature is constituted for me in the first stage (translated by author).

Hyle is experienced as transcendent, but it is always transcendent for some Ego, and it cannot stand on its own outside this relationship. Since we can only reach the available content insofar as it is given to us, that is, since content is always content for an Ego, this natural material cannot be taken as something in-itself. At the same time, the Ego arises by turning to the sensation that draws its attention (Husserl 2006, p. 350). However, perhaps surprisingly, Husserl does not consider this a reason to question the absoluteness of the Ego but rather interprets that, because the Ego is the only one that can disclose—retrospectively—this fundamental entanglement, it is nevertheless foundational. Therefore, while he arrives again and again at a notion of a spiritualized nature, he does not take the plunge and consider the possibility of Spirit having "nature-determinations" or even of Nature being spiritualized in its own right and not by the hand of the Ego.

As late as 1934, he writes:

> *Alles in der Welt, die Welt unser aller ist, ist zuunterst Natur, physische Körperlichkeit. (. . .) Natur ist aber konstituierte Natur, mein körperlicher Leib konstituierter Leib; die Konstitution ⟨ ist ⟩ das ständige transzendentale Geschehen in meinem Ego und von ihm aus und in ihm die ⟨ der ⟩ anderen Egos.*

> Everything in the world, the world that is ours, is ultimately nature, physical corporeality (. . .) Nature is, however, constituted nature, my corporal body constituted body; constitution is the permanent transcendental happening in and from my Ego and the Ego of others in it. (Husserl 2014, pp. 79–80)

Is this merely a return to his first position, or is there something else to unveil? Up until this point, we have loosely identified Spirit with subjectivity in general. We have seen that for Husserl, Spirit is equated with the human being in the personal world, but is it also identified with transcendental subjectivity as a whole?

4. Spirit as Subject

From the perspective of transcendental phenomenology, the assertion of a primacy of constitution over nature is not surprising. One of Husserl's fundamental ideas is that, in order for anything at all to be, it has to be given to a consciousness, which means there is not anything like 'raw data' out there. This is the case in virtue of the way the world and things are experienced, which is necessarily meaningful: we perceive things *as* what they are (i.e., we *see* a chair, not pieces of wood arranged in a way that lets us infer we can sit on them). This *as-structure* shows that we are constantly immersed in a world of meanings. On the opposite side of that tandem, the being of consciousness—intentionality—is to be always directed at something, which ultimately results in the correlation of the subjective and objective poles of experience. This is what the *a priori* of correlation expresses: "Whatever exists, whether it has a concrete or abstract, real or ideal, meaning, has its manners of self-givenness and, on the side of the ego, its manners of intention and its modes of validity."

(Husserl 1970, p. 166). What the world and things are, are "sense-formations" correlative to transcendental subjectivity, which "constitutes" them by experiencing them *as* what they are. Nature is not the exception; it, too, draws its meaning from the constituting activity of the subject, that is to say that what nature is can only be unveiled insofar as it is given to consciousness. What makes it all the more interesting is that the meaning of Nature is precisely what is "in-itself", meaning that, paradoxically, we constitute Nature *as* that which is not constituted.

Going back to *Ideas II*, we can explain this by appealing once again to attitudes. Besides the particular theoretical attitudes, there is another attitude that rivals with the natural one insofar as it also all-encompassing. This is the phenomenological attitude achieved through the performance of the phenomenological reduction, the method whose formulation marks Husserl's so-called transcendental turn in *Ideas I*. After having suspended any interest or belief in the existence of the world through the performance of a bracketing or *epoché*, we encounter what is given as *phenomena*, that is, as a correlate to our intentional activity and focus on *how* it is given. Understanding the world and objectivity as phenomena means understanding them as meaning-formations that refer to ourselves as the ones that give or to whom that meaning is given. The reduction (from the Latin *reducere*: to lead back) then, reconducts phenomena to the constitutive activity of subjectivity.

Therefore, while in the natural and in the naturalistic attitude, affection, sensation, and the body are thematized as our own connection to nature, in the phenomenological attitude, they prove to be *constituted as* natural, that is to say as not natural in-themselves. Therefore, when Husserl speaks of the Ego as natural, he would be echoing a naïve understanding of the subject. On the contrary, the phenomenological attitude reveals that, being a constituted meaning, nature can never be foundational regarding spirit, but rather that it is us, as spiritual beings, that confer upon nature the sense of being "meaningless" and "in-itself":

> For, when, at the beginning, we posited nature straightforwardly, in the way done by every natural scientist and by everyone else sharing the naturalistic attitude, and when we took human beings as realities, ones that have a plus above and beyond their physical Corporeality, then persons turned out to be subordinated natural objects, component parts of nature. On the other hand, when we inquired into the essence of the person, then nature presented itself as something constituted in an intersubjective association of persons, hence presupposing it. (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 220)

The official response of phenomenology to the naturalistic claim that anything can be reduced to nature as the realm of physical causality is that "In virtue of the essential correlation between the constituting and the constituted, all nature must be relative" (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 189). In this context, while Nature is relative, Spirit is not. Rather, it is held as absolute:

> That is to say, if we could eliminate all spirits from the world, then that is the end of nature. But if we eliminate nature, "true," Objective-intersubjective existence, there always still remains something: the spirit as individual spirit. (Husserl [1952] 1989, p. 311)

This is given that the spiritual world is simply the world of meaning, and there is no brute nature without meaning. In this sense, everything is "spiritual". In the lectures on phenomenological psychology, Husserl wonders if it is possible to perceive the world pre-theoretically (Husserl [1968] 1977, p. 41) or even any object at all insofar as we always seem to "put" something of the order of the mental alongside what is given: "Is even a single thing actually to be designated as perceived, since it is always more than we actually perceive of it?" (Husserl [1968] 1977, p. 45).

As long as Spirit is equated with Constituting subjectivity, it will hold a primacy over nature. At the same time, Nature, defined as that which is constituted, will necessarily be considered relative and inessential. The very definitions given to the terms feed each other and create a vicious circle that prevents a genuine reflection on the intertwinement of

Spirit and Nature. The possibility of breaking that circle entails rethinking the notion of the Constituting subject. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into the details of how such rethinking could take place, but what I would like to suggest is that part of the reason why Husserl does not explore this option involves certain religious motifs that operate, more or less inadvertently, in his own consideration of subjectivity as an *immaterial Spirit*.

5. Teleology and the Divine

In a letter to Albrecht from the year 1917, while Husserl was mourning the death of his mother and focusing, amongst other things, on the future publication of *Ideas II*, he says to his friend that he has not yet reached the last "religious-philosophical stage" of his philosophical life, and that before his own time comes, it is important that he completes his work since it provides "the scientific foundations for a reconciliation between the naturalistic world-view that dominated the epoch just expired and the teleological world-view". He then adds: "But the teleological world-view is the definitively true one"[5] (Husserl 1994, 3.9, p. 52)

There are a number of interesting points to make about this passage. Firstly, the idea of a reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) between naturalism and teleology is immediately followed by the assertion of teleology's superiority over naturalism, showing the same kind of movement that characterized the relation between Spirit and Nature so far. Secondly, we now find that opposing naturalism is not only spirit and subjectivity, but teleology and, with it, religion. How are these last two related? Besides the casual mention to a religious stage of his philosophical life, and although he does not systematically touch upon these topics in his work, Husserl would often discuss teleology in connection to God and the divine and in the context of his monadological theory. Husserl reappropriates Leibniz's concept of Monad to refer to subjectivity as a whole, that is, as including both the noetic and the noematic poles of experience. A subject (a monad) is a particular world-experience, and it includes everything that makes up that experience. In this sense, monadology helps Husserl stress the importance of the correlation and the relative being of objective reality.

In a manuscript from 1934 on teleology and theology, he speaks of philosophy as a "non-confessional path to God" (*inkonfessioneller Weg zu Gott*) and of the coinciding of philosophy and religion in infinity (Husserl 2014, p. 259–60). In this view, philosophy and religion are intertwined because God is a guiding force that leads communities towards reason and culture, which are the eternal truths of humanity. The natural inclination human beings have towards reason is explained as the work of God, considered by Husserl as "not the monadic universe itself, but the entelechy that inhabits it, as the idea of the telos of infinite development, that of 'humanity' from absolute reason, necessary to regulate monadic being, and to regulate it from each own's free decision." (*Gott ist das Monadenall nicht selbst, sondern die in ihm hegende Entelechie, als Idee des unendlichen Entwicklungstelos, des der "Menschheit" aus absoluter Vemunft, als notwendig das monadische Sein regehid, und regelnd aus eigener freier Entscheidung*). (Husserl 1973b, p. 610). This sort of "divine inspiration", however, must be realized through the means of science, that is to say, philosophy:

> *Von Anfang an hat der Mensch die Welterkenntnis, aber, sie habend, muss er sie in unendlicher Arbeit erst erwerben als im Unendlichen liegende Wahrheit. Von Anfang an ist der Mensch das Vernunftwesen, er hat Vernunft, aber er muss im Wandel seiner Geschichte, in Stufen seiner geschichtlichen Seinsweisen (in seinen Historizitäten) sich Vernunft erst erwerben. Er ist von Anfang an Mensch und muss Mensch werden. Der Mensch als Vernunftwesen hat von Anfang an "Kultur", aber in seiner Geschichtlichkeit muss er Kultur erst entwickeln. Alle Entwicklung geht auf Wahrheit, wahre Kultur.*
>
> From the beginning man has knowledge of the world, but having it he must first acquire it in infinite work as truth lying in infinity. From the beginning man is the rational being, he has reason, but he must first acquire reason in the course of his history, in stages of his historical modes of being (in his historicity). He is human from the start and has to become human. As a rational being, man has

> "culture" from the beginning, but in his historicity he must first develop culture. All development is based on truth, true culture". (Husserl 2014, p. 260)

In a letter to an unknown receiver from 1935, he writes:

> *Der Mensch lebt als endliches Wesen, aber ist endliches im Horizont der Unendlichkeit.—Sein Schicksal ist dieser Unendlichkeit voll bewußt zu werden und sie vollbewußt auf sich zu nehmen—die Funktion dafür ist die absolute Wissenschaft, und diese ihm frei Möglichkeiten schaffend, als handelnder Mensch ethisch zu leben—in Richtung auf das absolute Ideal, das sein Gemüt konkret als Gott der Religion bewegt.*
>
> Man lives as a finite being, but is finite on the horizon of infinity. It is his fate to become fully aware of this infinity and to take it fully upon himself—the function for this is absolute science, and this gives him free opportunities to live ethically as an acting person—towards the absolute ideal of being moved specifically as the god of religion. (Husserl 1994, 3.9, p. 521)

How does this relate to the feud against naturalism?

Monadology serves here the purpose of providing an explanation for the emergence of consciousness in the world that eludes the scientific-naturalistic explanation.

Because considering such a being in-itself exists would be against the basic principle of transcendental phenomenology, Husserl considers it necessary to confront the alleged absolute being of nature with the true absolute being of consciousness, claiming that monads are eternal and are prior to any "natural" development. In a text from 1908 titled "Monadology", he writes:

> *Entwicklung der Welt ist Entwicklung des Bewusstseins, und alles Physische ist selbst nur eine Beziehung zwischen Bewusstseinen, deren Wesen so geartet ist, dass wir in unserem Denken sie setzen müssen in Form der physikalischen Materien, Kräfte, Atome etc.*
>
> Development of the world is development of consciousness, and everything physical is itself only a relation between consciousness whose essence is such that we have to put it in our thinking in the form of physical matter, forces, Atoms, etc. (Husserl 1973a, p. 7)

Although this is an exceptionally idealistic formulation, the idea is that Nature works only within an already present spiritual realm, as the set of rules that are put into play by a greater force. Nature is for Husserl "a structure of transcendental history" (*einem Gebilde der transzendentalen Geschichte*) (Husserl 1973b, p. 309), and the "rule of awakening of the monads":

> *Von den gegebenen Monaden mit ihrem gegebenen Empfindungs- und Wahrnehmungsbestand ausgehend, müssen wir sagen: Die feste Natur bedeutet für die Menschenmonaden gewisse Regeln ihrer aktuellen Erscheinungen und derjenigen inaktuellen Erscheinungen, die sie nach ihrer "psychophysischen Konstitution" haben könnten. Und "Natur vor allem erwachten Bewusstsein" besagt, dass für alle schlafenden Monaden gewisse Regeln des Zusammenhangs bestehen, die sich uns vorstellig machen durch analogische Gebilde und Erscheinungen, und dass eine Gesetzmäßigkeit besteht, welche die Monaden emporentwickelt ⟨zu⟩ "wachem" Bewusstsein.*
>
> Starting from the given monads with their given sensations and perceptions, we have to say: For the human monads, strong nature means certain rules of their actual appearances and those of inactual appearances, which they could have according to their "psychophysical constitution". And "nature before any awakened consciousness" means that for all sleeping monads there are certain rules of connection, which are presented to us by analogous structures and phenomena, and that there is a law that develops the monads up to "awaken" consciousness. (Husserl 2014, p. 158)

When it comes down to it, it does not make sense for Husserl to say that a physical cause could be the source of development of consciousness. It is the Monad, guided by a

theological-teleological force that accomplishes its development, that is at the origin. With this move, the priority of Spirit over Nature is once again asserted, only now Spirit has gained a new dimension.

On top of the biographical reasons that could explain this inclusion (the death of his mother, and previously, of his son in the war), there are also theoretical ones. After all, Husserl starts discussing monadology as early as 1908 (See Husserl 1973a, p. 5; 2014, p. 161), and if the question of teleology consistently gains presence throughout the years, so does Husserl's interest in questions of genesis. As I understand it, these two go together. Primal temporalization, instincts and affection, the beginning and end of transcendental subjectivity: these are some of the topics that increasingly occupy Husserl's mind. And the ever-deeper questions that a radical genetic phenomenology poses might not have been sufficiently responded by his theory of constitution alone.

As Dupré (1968) already noted, Husserl realized that the self-constitution of transcendental subjectivity was perhaps not enough to account for the absolute fact of existence, which is ultimately contingent: "The world remains a contingent fact that is not fully explained by the nature of consciousness alone" (Dupré 1968, p. 203). In accordance with this diagnosis, Husserl considered metaphysics to be the study of "the irrationality of the transcendental fact" (Husserl 2019, p. 194) and seems to be using teleology to explain this fact. However, as Dupré points out, this is not a perfect solution since it brings back the "problem of causality", meaning the need to account for "how the contingent could have its ground in the necessary without standing in some sort of causal relation to it" (Dupré 1968, p. 210). In other words, by rejecting the causality of Nature, Husserl would install another causality, namely that of God, which is as incompatible with phenomenology ("a philosophy of the spirit") as any.

In the lectures on *First Philosophy*, Husserl already criticized the dogmatism that was common both to the kind of metaphysics that characterized the tradition prior to him and the one of the natural sciences (Husserl 2019, p. 189). He traditionally reserved the place of "second philosophy" for metaphysics, subordinated to phenomenology as the descriptive science of eidetic structures of experience. This does not mean that metaphysics would be an idle endeavor or that the results of these reflections are indifferent. It is apparent that, for Husserl, there is a kind of metaphysical account that is more compatible with phenomenology—largely indebted to Leibniz's idealism—, insofar as it lays the ground for a stronger spiritual ontology. However, its results are not obtained through intuition but through a kind of construction that Husserl ties to faith: "In faith we experience the teleology that rules within us, that rules through sin and error as enduring (. . .)" (*Im Glauben erfahren wir die in uns waltende Teleologie, waltend durch Sünde und Irrtum hindurch als bleibende (...)*) (Husserl 2014, p. 261). Although faith is, for Husserl, a kind of judgement, it is nevertheless opposed to rationality:

> *Dieser religiöse Glaube stellt sich allem rationalen Wissen und Begründen direkt entgegen. Er beansprucht eine absolute Endgültigkeit, die nicht aus Sehen und Einsehen herstammt und nicht daraus seine Rechtsquelle, sein Maß je gewinnen kann.*
>
> This religious belief directly opposes all rational knowledge and reasoning. It claims an absolute finality that does not stem from seeing and understanding and cannot ever derive its legal source, its measure, from it. (Husserl 2014, p. 186)

In the context of a phenomenological practice, it would be at least problematic to accept faith as a valid source of knowledge. Yet, as Husserl approaches the end of his life, these boundaries become weaker. As I see it, Husserl's concern with leaving too much room for a naturalistic explanation to occupy is often a driving force towards a competing type of explanation that is not without its problems. At the bottom of his theoretical inclination towards idealism lie his own views on the opposition of Nature and Spirit—an opposition that is never fully overcome in his texts.

I would like to conclude here by merely pointing in the direction of a potentially more compatible account of metaphysics developed by Lázsló Tengelyi's in his posthumous work

Welt und Unendlichkeit. There, Tengelyi presents a conception of metaphysics largely drawn from Husserl's work but recuperated through the lenses of the posterior phenomenological tradition. This type of metaphysics does not resort to a transcendent being but offers a description of the primal facts (*Urtatsachen*) of experience: the existence of the ego, of the world, the givenness of others, and teleology as a striving towards unity; seeking to understand how the infinite is given *within* the finite. While there is no transcendent God in this scheme, some type of spirituality might still be possible as long as the encounter with the world and others involves this dimension of infinity, which falls beyond the scope of any naturalistic explanation.

Exposing the intimate intertwinement of the finite and infinite, however, calls for a reconfiguration of the fundamental dualisms that besiege phenomenology, amongst them the relationship between Nature and Spirit. The movement in that direction is one that Husserl already started (presented here as the second approach to the Nature-Spirit dyad) but ultimately did not continue. As Tengelyi shows, those that follow can be of aid to illuminate and strengthen certain aspects of Husserl's work rather than dismissing it entirely. Regarding spirituality, there still remains a great deal to explore.

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Notes

1 I'm echoing here the expression Steven Crowell uses to refer to Husserl's assumption that "*the person is founded on the human being considered as a natural kind*" (Crowell 2012, p. 42)

2 A thorough analysis of this can be found in L. Rabanaque (2010).

3 As translated by Bruzina (2010, p. 95).

4 Specifically in the Bernau Manuscripts (Hua 33) and the C-Manuscripts on time (Hua/Mat 8), although this type of genetic analysis can be found throughout Husserl's work starting as early as 1908.

5 "*Ich fühle mich freilich noch nicht genug religiös vorbereitet u. das Ende meines philosophischen Lebens sehnt sich nach dem letzten religionsphilosophischen Abschluß. Leider fordert die Pflicht meine langjährigen Arbeiten zu Vollendung u. Druck zu bringen, zumal sie durchaus für eine Versöhnung zwischen der naturalistischen Weltanschauung, die die abgelaufene Epoche beherrschte, u. teleologischer Weltanschauung die wiss <enschaftlichen> Fundamente bieten. Die teleologische aber ist die endgiltig wahre.*"

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