

Husserl's Perceptual Realism

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Abstract

'Idealism' and 'Realism' are two antithetic metaphysical positions. Whether Husserl is an idealist or a realist has been a controversial issue in the research of Husserl's phenomenology, because this problem is related to how to interpret Husserl's discussion of the nature of acts of perception and the nature of the objectivities which appear in perception.

In this thesis, I am going to point out that Husserl is neither realist nor idealist in the traditional sense, and his position should be known as 'Perceptual Realism'. Referring to Husserl's discussion, the embodiment of subjectivity is an essential feature of perception. The conscious subject appears as a Bodily being and interacts with real objects, and the objectivities are given in perceptual experience through different forms of sensation. Perceptual objects are constituted in this complicated process. That is to say, the real objects given in perceptual experience are not, as what traditional idealism says, just subjective projection of our mind, and also not, as what traditional realism says, objects that are independent of conscious subject. Rather, they are co-determined by physical and psychological factors. In this sense, Husserl affirms the existence of the external world, and further points out that it is an inter-subjectively confirmed cultural world.

Our discussion will be divided into three sections. Firstly, I will point out how the nature of perception can be disclosed to us through the pure description and analysis of perceptual experience. Then, I am going to explain that the core argument of Husserl's theory of perception is that the conscious subject is not a pure mental being, but an embodied being and apprehends the real objects through sensation. Lastly, based on Husserl's understanding of perception, I would like to clarify Husserl's conception of 'transcendental idealism' and 'perceptual realism'.

論文撮要

「實在論」和「觀念論」代表傳統形上學中兩個對立的立場，而到底胡塞爾支持觀念論還是實在論，一直是胡塞爾現象學研究中一直爭論不休的課題。這問題涉及對胡塞爾就知覺活動以及在知覺活動中呈現的對象的本質的討論有不同詮釋。

本文要指出，胡塞爾的立場並非傳統意義下的觀念論者和實在論者，而他的理論立場可理解為「知覺實在論」。對於胡塞爾而言，知覺活動的本質是意識主體表現為一具體的肉身存在，而在肉身主體與物理事物的互運過程中，通過感覺而形構成關於真實外在世界的經驗。換言之，在知覺經驗中呈現的真實事物，並非如傳統觀念論者所言是一心靈投射；亦非如傳統實在論者所言是獨立於意識主體存在的物理事物，而是由心理和物理等因素而共同決定的存在。從這個意義上說，胡塞爾肯定外在世界存在，並且是通過交互主體而肯定文化世界。

本文討論要分三個部分，首先，要指出胡塞爾建基於對知覺經驗本身作純粹描述和分析，能向我們揭示知覺經驗的本質。然後，要指出胡塞爾知覺理論的核心是要揭示進行知覺活動的意識主體，並非一純粹心理存在，而是展現為一肉身主體，並通過不同感覺把握真實對象。最後，建基於胡塞爾的知覺理論，本論文進一步釐清胡塞爾超越論觀念論和知覺實在論的立場。

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Introduction

Phenomenology aims at giving a pure description of subjective experience and disclosing the essence revealed in it. According to Husserl, consciousness cannot be understood on its own terms, because the essential nature of consciousness is being 'intentional', which means consciousness is essentially directed to objectivities. According to Husserl, consciousness shouldn't be considered as an abstract entity that exists independently, rather, consciousness is revealed in continuous conscious activities, which are characterized by the relation between consciousness and the objectivities presented in it. The structure of consciousness can only be explained in terms of such relations. Husserl proposes a two-pole structural model to explain the structure of conscious experience. These two poles are the subjective pole and the objective pole of conscious experience. All contents appearing in conscious experience pertain to either one of these two categories. Throughout Husserl's discussions, he tries to develop his own terminology to explain this complicated situation. The terms 'noesis' and 'noema' is a pair of concepts that are used to represent this two-pole structure. However, the meaning of this pair of concepts, especially the concept of 'noema', is not crystal clear, and the interpretation of the meaning of 'noema' becomes an important issue in the research of Husserl's phenomenology.

'Noema' refers to the objectivities which appear in our conscious experience and it is a general term which refers to all kinds of objectivities that appear in conscious experience. Here, the main problem is that there are many kinds of conscious experience or conscious activities, and our consciousness is related to different kinds of objectivities (for example, our consciousness is directed to the objects of judgment in the acts of judging, the objects of hallucination in hallucinating, or the perceptual objects in the acts of perception); so, how our consciousness is directed to these kinds of objectivities demands further explanation.

In this thesis, I am going to focus on the interpretation of perceptual noema, which refers to the objectivities appear in perceptual experience. This question is important because it is related to a series of epistemological and metaphysical questions. Perception is considered to be the most fundamental conscious act, because in perceptual experience the conscious subject is supposed to be related to the 'real external world'. But the question: "how can consciousness reach out beyond itself and make contact with an object wholly external to it?"¹ is a question that we need to answer. Face to this question, the traditional idealist claims that the true perception is impossible, and the existence of external world is doubtful; but the traditional realist does not agree with that. And whether Husserl is a realist or an idealist is a

¹*The idea of phenomenology*,pp.3

contradictory issue in the study of Husserl's phenomenology.

In this thesis, I am going to argue that Husserl supports the standpoint of realism on the one hand, and he supports the transcendental idealism on the other. However, his realism is different from the traditional one. In my point of view, the perception of the real objects is mediated by 'sensation'. The appearance of the spatial-temporal objects in our conscious experience should be conformed to our forms of sensation, and sensation, which is really an immanent entity, plays an important role in the constitution of the perceptual experience. Here, the affirmation of sensation doesn't imply the affirmation of the traditional idealism, which claims that our consciousness 'creates' some kinds of entity to represent the real object. Actually, the organization of sensations is not ruleless; there is a necessary connection between sensations and our own body. It is the real case that the both our own body and the perceived objects co-determine the givenness of sensation and the content of our perceptual experience.

We can find a lot of textual support to the point of view mentioned above. We should notice that the concept of 'hyle' in "*Ideas I*"² and the concept of 'sensation' in the "*Ideas II*"³ are two concepts with similar meaning and both of them are crucial

² Husserl, Edmund, F. Kersten trans., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy (first book)*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague, 1982. (*Ideas I*)

³ Husserl, Edmund, Richard Rojcewicz & Andre Schuwer trans., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy Second Book: Studies In the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989. (*Ideas II*)

technical concepts in Husserl's discussion. Although Husserl never gives a clear definition of 'hyle' and 'sensation', however, we shouldn't underestimate the importance of these two concepts. These two concepts are keys to justify the mediator interpretation of 'noema'.

In this thesis, my discussion will be divided into three chapters.

In the first chapter, I will firstly explain the main problem that we will face when investigating the nature of perception. This problem is known as 'the riddle of transcendence'. After that, I will discuss Husserl's phenomenological research method and how the phenomenological research helps us to access our perceptual experience from a special point of view. In this chapter, I will also talk about Føllesdal's understanding of intentionality and his interpretation of 'noema'. The conceptual framework and standpoint that is explained in his famous passage, "Husserl's Notion of Noema"⁴ are good reference for our further discussion.

In the second chapter, I will focus on the role played by 'sensation' and our bodily experience within our perceptual experience. Firstly, I would like to clarify that 'sensation' is dependent object in nature, which means that there is a necessary connection between our Body and the sensations given to us. We should notice that

⁴Dagfinn Føllesdal, Husserl's Notion of Noema, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 66, No. 20, Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division (Oct. 16, 1969), pp. 680-687.

sensation is localized in our Body on the one hand, and our Body is the origin of sense on the other hand. As the perceptual noema is founded on 'sensation', I will explain how these two issues contribute to the constitution of the perceptual noema. "There is no pure point of view and there is no view from nowhere, there is only an embodied point of view."⁵ This statement can point out the essential nature of perception, and it is consistent with the mediator interpretation of 'noema'.

In the last chapter, I am going to argue that the mediator interpretation of noema can lead to a more consistent understanding of Husserl's theory of perception, especially in the explanation of the concept of 'thing itself' and the relation between 'adumbration' and 'transcendent objects'. Furthermore, I will focus on the question: "Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?" In this section, I will analyze the problems of both realism and idealism in the traditional sense, and how Husserl's discussion can help us to clarify those misunderstanding. And finally, I will argue that Husserl is more likely to be a realist, but he reformulates the meaning of 'real'. This makes him becomes a realist but he is not a realist in the traditional sense.

⁵ Zahavi, Dan, *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford University Press, 2003. p.98

Chapter 1:

The Riddle of Transcendence and Husserl's Phenomenological Approach to it

This thesis contains two main objectives. The first objective is to understand the nature of perception, and to make sense of the perceived objectivities, which is known as the perceptual noema, within perceptual experience. The second objective is to clarify whether Husserl is a realist or an idealist, which means we need to decide whether the realistic interpretation or the idealistic interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology is more convincing. These two objectives are closely related to each other, because our understanding of Husserl's theory of perception is the foundation for deciding whether Husserl is a realist or an idealist.

Actually, the antithetic standpoints between realism and idealism have been discussed for a long time before Husserl's phenomenology. But based on the phenomenological research method, Husserl's approach does provide new perspective for us to reconsider this problem. In this first chapter, I am going to start with discussing the problems that we will face in the investigation of the nature of perception, and then, I am going to discuss how phenomenology helps us to tackle these problems.

In this chapter, our discussion will be divided into two sections. In this first section, I am going to discuss two problems, which are known as 'the riddle of

transcendence' and 'the problem of correspondence'. 'The riddle of transcendence' is the major problem that we need to solve in the investigation of perception and the problem of correspondence refers to the theoretical problem that we will encounter if we accept the idealistic interpretation of perception. In the second part, I will introduce the phenomenological research method and discuss how phenomenology contributes to our investigation of the problems mentioned in the first part.

The Riddle of Transcendence

As I have mentioned, we always struggle between the standpoints of realism and idealism. It seems that they are the only two answers we can have, and we need to choose either one of them. But in fact, these two positions are somehow problematic. Realism affirms the existence of the mind-independent world, and this position coincides with our common sense. However, Husserl always considers this kind of realism as 'naïve realism'. It is 'naïve' because it totally neglects the involvement of the perceiving subject and this position fails when it is challenged by idealism. The idealist tries to argue that realism is a position that could never be justified. The idealist emphasize that the involvement of the knowing subject cannot be neglected, and this knowing subject is known as a conscious mental being. In this context, the 'external world' that we can talk about is never the 'external world' in itself, because

it is just a kind of mental being existing in consciousness, and the real 'external world' is actually unreachable. It is true that the position of idealism seems strange to us, but it is not easy to reject this position. We can understand the conflict between realism and idealism more thoroughly by considering 'the riddle of transcendence'.

In the riddle of transcendence, we try to formulate the same issue in another way. It is agreed that when we talk about perception, we consider it as a real-time action, which means that perceived object is supposed to be spatio-temporal object existing in the 'real world'. And this is the essential difference between perception and other kinds of conscious act. For example, when we talk about an object that appears in the experience of remembering, this is an object that we have encountered before; when an unreal object is given to us, we consider the related conscious experience as imagination or hallucination, but not perception. So, act of perception is a kind of conscious act in which the conscious subject is apprehending an existing spatio-temporal object in the present moment. But we face to 'the riddle of transcendence' if we understand perception in this way. The word 'transcendence' refers to the situation of the existing spatio-temporal objects in the real world in relation to consciousness. But the apprehension of this kind of object becomes a riddle to us. Lee Hardy explains this riddle clearly in the translator's introduction of "The

Idea of Phenomenology"⁶. According to Hardy, the suspicious point that demanding an explanation is that "how can consciousness reach out beyond itself and make contact with an object wholly external to it?"⁷ Actually, this suspicious point is founded on a kind of understanding of 'consciousness' and 'real world'. We find that it is quite reasonable to distinguish between the realm of conscious experience and the realm of reality. The former one refers to a realm of content that is 'mental' and 'private' in nature, since it exists in personal conscious experience. In comparison, the latter one refers to a realm of content that is 'physical' and 'public' in nature. The difference between these two realms leads us to consider them to be two separate realms. Meanwhile, we also agree that the object which is given in our perceptual experience does not originally belong to the consciousness, and it is also not created by the consciousness as well. Rather, this object is supposed to be spatial-temporal in nature and an object existing in the real world. So, how this kind of object can 'enter' our consciousness and given in our perceptual experience seems to be a problem for us.

However, if we do accept the conceptual framework mentioned above, we will further find that 'the riddle of transcendence' is indeed a problem that defies solution.

⁶Husserl, Edmund, Lee Hardy trans., *The idea of phenomenology : a translation of Die Idee der Phänomenologie Husserliana II*. Dordrecht ; Boston :Kluwer Academic, 1999. (*The idea of phenomenology*)

⁷*The idea of phenomenology*, p.3

If we consider the realm of conscious experience and the realm of reality as two separate realms, we could never explain the linkage between these two realms. And then we should admit that what the conscious subject can reach is just the content of conscious experience, but never the spatial-temporal real objects themselves, because they are something which transcend conscious experience.

René Descartes has developed similar argument in his work "Meditations on First Philosophy"⁸. Descartes uses the concept of 'idea' to represent all contents of our conscious experience, including perceptual experience. He claims that all these ideas are just something existing in our mind and he tries to doubt the validity of all these ideas when he carries out the methodological doubt. Later, he finds that the 'origin' of the ideas that represent the objects in the real object is questionable, because the linkage between ideas in our mind and real objects in the real world is unsure to us. Then he further proposes that it is probably that the perceptual ideas were put into our mind by the Devil Demon in order to deceive us; or they were created by our own just like the ideas we have in our dream⁹. In spite of this, Descartes still affirms that perception can help us to apprehend the external world finally, but this claim is based on a strange reason: the existence of God. As God exists, and God is

⁸Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies*. John Cottingham trans and ed, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁹ This is known as the "Dream Argument".

omnibenevolence, God will ensure that our perceptual ideas are reliable. Descartes' justification of the validity of perception is weak. Indeed, Descartes' solution does create more problems for us, because to justify the existence of God is even a more difficult task.¹⁰

Actually, the riddle of transcendence could never be solved. It is more likely to be a justification of traditional idealism. If we accept the conceptual distinction between conscious experience and the real world as two separate realms, we should further admit that the realm of spatio-temporal real objects is unreachable to the conscious subject. We can only accept that perceptual content is some kind of mental entity existing in consciousness and admit that the origin of that content is unknown to us. Indeed, those claims are unacceptable to us. Not only because they are too counter-intuitive, but also because they may lead to a serious epistemological problem. This problem can be known as "the problem of correspondence".

The problem of correspondence challenges the reliability of perceptual experience based on the riddle of transcendence. If it is really the case that the conscious content and the spatial-temporal world belong to two separate realms, and there is no essential linkage between them, then the belief that the conscious subject can apprehend the spatial-temporal real world through perceptual experience is

¹⁰ I am not saying that Descartes' solution is totally non-sense, but many scholars have already pointed out that the proofs of God's existence proposed by Descartes, i.e. the ontological argument and causal argument, are problematic.

unjustified. The problem of correspondence challenges our certainty about the correspondence between the givenness of perceptual experience and the features of spatial-temporal real objects. The implication of this challenge is that our perceptual experience as a whole is unreliable, and all knowledge that is based on perceptual experience is unreliable too. But we will admit that this conclusion is somehow problematic, it is too counter intuitive. And how to override the riddle of transcendence will be the focus of this chapter.

The riddle of transcendence and the problem of correspondence are related to a bundle of metaphysical problems and epistemological problems. The riddle of transcendence is founded on a kind of understanding of ‘consciousness’ and ‘real world’ which cannot be verified through empirical observation. Furthermore, those problems challenge the reliability of perceptual experience. We should be careful that these problems do not just challenge the reliability of a moment of perception, but perceptual experience as a whole. If we say that a moment of perceptual experience is unreliable, for example I cannot be sure what he looks like in the first glance, we can verify this moment of perceptual by conducting further observation. But if perceptual experience as a whole is doubtful, the problematic situation cannot be solved by conducting ‘further observation’. Therefore, specific research method should be called upon to tackle these problems.

Until now, we should notice that investigating perceptual experience is not just investigating some kinds of event or objects in the world. Perception is supposed to be the foundation of our experience of the real world. The affirmation of the validity of perceptual experience is a presupposition of the possibility of empirical ‘knowledge’ (the judgment of facts in the real world). But now, this presupposition becomes problematic to us. So, how to tackle this difficult problem is the first task we need to undertake. In this situation, Husserl’s phenomenology provides us a possible solution, and his discussion is guided by the phenomenological research method. In the following section, I am going to explain this method and discuss how it can help us to justify the validity of perceptual experience.

The phenomenological research method

In the previous section, I have alluded to the riddle of transcendence and the problem of correspondence. It seems that no knowledge can be justified if the validity of perceptual experience cannot be affirmed. In my point of view, we will accept this problematic standpoint only because we are misled by the riddle of transcendence, and in fact, the riddle of transcendence is based on two problematic pre-suppositions: the first one is to believe that the realm of conscious experience and the realm of reality are two independent and separate realms; the second one is to believe that the

realm of conscious experience is a self-contained mental object. These two pre-suppositions lead us to accept that the linkage between 'perceptual experience' and 'reality' could never be explained and idealism (in the traditional sense) is the only justified position that we can hold. But Husserl's phenomenological research, by clarifying the content of perceptual experience, helps us to understand that these two pre-suppositions are mistakenly formulated. According to Husserl, phenomenology is a field of knowledge which aims at giving a pure description and disclosing the essential structure of conscious experience, including perceptual experience. And through this kind of investigation, misleading presuppositions or unjustified ideas can be dismissed.

The phenomenological research is based on phenomenological method and it gives us a new attitude to approach the problem of perceptual experience. In *'Ideas I'*, Husserl discusses the methodological concepts of phenomenology; they are known as 'epoché' and 'phenomenological reduction'. These two concepts represent two steps of accessing the investigation of our conscious experience. The first step is 'epoché', which means that we should parenthesize all theoretical judgment, especially judgments about existence. In *'Ideas I'*, Husserl points out that: "With regard to any positing we can quite freely exercise this peculiar 'epoché', a certain refraining from judgment which is compatible with the unshaken conviction of truth, even with the

unshakable conviction of evident truth."¹¹The practice of 'epoché' can let us maintain a pure or neutral attitude towards conscious experience. In face of the challenges of the riddle of transcendence, we always stick to some unjustified and misleading conceptual framework, such as 'the separation between the mental realm and the physical realm', or 'consciousness is a private and self-contained mental object', etc. 'Epoché' requires us to keep silence on all those theoretical judgments. That means we have no need to accept any theory or judgment as pre-supposition of our research, no matter they seem to be justified or not. However, just keeping silence on all judgments doesn't help us to explain anything, so we need to move forward to step two: 'phenomenological reduction'.

After the exercising 'epoché', we will notice that only certain limited domain of research objects is left for us. The objects that exist in the world cannot be our research subject if we do not presuppose the validity of perceptual experience. Also, no theoretical object can become our research subject because we could never apprehend any theoretical object without presupposing any theoretical judgments. But Husserl claims that there is still one thing which is valid to us without presupposing any judgments, that is our own conscious experience. The idea of 'phenomenological reduction' refers to this fact. Here, the meaning of 'phenomenological' is similar to

¹¹*Ideas I*, pp.59-60

'directly given' after exercising 'epoché'. We would find that only 'conscious experience' is directly given to the subject, and we can reach it without presupposing any theory or judgment. Husserl claims that 'conscious experience is 'absolute' because these contents are directly given to the subject and this kind of object is the only thing that we can affirm after exercising the 'epoché'. Conscious experience, including perceptual experience, is the most reliable thing that we can have in the sense that they are revealed in our consciousness and are facts that we could not deny.

Husserl says:

"If we concentrate on the first concept of the a priori, then phenomenology will deal with the a priori in the sphere of origins, the sphere of absolute givenness, with species that can be grasped in a general seeing, and with the a priori states of affairs that constitute themselves on the basis of these species in a way that can be immediately seen."¹²

The main point is that after exercising 'epoché' and 'phenomenological reduction', our attitude towards conscious experience is changed. In this context, Husserl does not consider conscious contents as psychological facts that can be distinguished from physical fact. If we understand 'conscious content' in this latter sense, we need to affirm some conceptual frameworks which are supposed to be parenthesized. The phenomenological research method helps us to maintain a neutral attitude towards

¹²Husserl, Edmund, Lee Hardy trans., *The idea of phenomenology : a translation of Die Idee der Phänomenologie Husserliana II*. Dordrecht ; Boston : Kluwer Academic, 1999. pp.39 (*The idea of phenomenology*)

perceptual experience. Husserl proposes to investigate the content of conscious experience without making any presupposition in order to avoid any misunderstanding of the nature of perceptual experience. So, in the *Ideas I*, Husserl claims that he does not consider 'consciousness' as a mental being¹³, rather, he considers the 'conscious experience' as 'phenomenological residuum'.¹⁴ It is 'residuum' because it is the only thing we can affirm after exercising the 'epoché'. To consider 'conscious experience', including 'perceptual experience', as 'phenomenological residuum' implies several things. Firstly, it helps us to recognize that the givenness of conscious experience is the only thing that can be considered as 'true' to us in the primary sense. For example, in my perceptual experience, I see a bird; I meet a person, etc. Or, in hallucination, I 'see' a unicorn. All these contents are given to me in different conscious experience is a fact that I cannot deny, no matter these objectivities are real objects or not. This implies that our apprehension of different kinds of object is founded on our conscious experience, and the involvement of consciousness is a necessary condition of the possibility of the apprehension of different kinds of objectivity. In this context, Husserl considers consciousness as 'transcendental consciousness' because he wants to specify the constitutive role of

¹³ Husserl admits that consciousness is mental process. For example, he claims that "In a broadest sense, the expression consciousness comprehends (but then indeed less suitably) all mental processes." *Ideas I*, P.64 But he avoids to call it like this to avoid misunderstanding.

¹⁴"It therefore remains as the "phenomenological residuum," as a region of being which is of essential necessity quite unique and which can indeed become the field of a science of a novel kind: phenomenology." *Ideas I*, pp.66

consciousness in our apprehension of different kinds of objectivities. And then, the practice of 'epoché' and 'phenomenological reduction' can also lead us to consider the conscious experience in a reflective attitude and helps us to maintain a neutral attitude to study the contents revealed in it. According to Husserl, phenomenology aims at giving a pure description and eidetic analysis to these contents.¹⁵ That's why Husserl's phenomenological position is anti-metaphysical, because all claims developed by phenomenology are supposed to be pre-suppositionless and purely founded on 'conscious experience' which is directly given.

Husserl's phenomenological research of perceptual experience can help us to clarify some misunderstandings brought up by the riddle of transcendence. As I have mentioned above, the riddle of transcendence seems to be a problem that defies solution because it is based on two problematic pre-suppositions, the first one is to believe that the realm of conscious experience and the realm of reality are two independent and separate realms; the second one is to believe that the realm of conscious experience is a self-contained mental object. The riddle of transcendence founded on these two presuppositions renders that the problematic idealism seems to be justified. However, we find that these two presuppositions are neither founded on

¹⁵“First of all, without as yet effecting the phenomenological judgment exclusions, we shall subject it to systematic, though by no means exhaustive, eidetic analysis. What we absolutely need is a certain universal insight into the essence of any consciousness whatever and also, quite particularly, of consciousness in so far as it is, in itself, by its essence consciousness of “natural” actuality.” *Ideas I*, p.65

experiential observation, nor deduced from justified statements. Rather, they are just based on a problematic conceptual distinction. Husserl's phenomenological research of perceptual experience can help us to tackle this problem. Husserl does not try to argue against the argument deduced from 'the riddle of transcendence' by providing another metaphysical conceptual distinction. Rather, he focuses on the absolute conscious experience by practicing the phenomenological research method of 'epoché' and reduction.

Idealism seems to be a problematic position to us because it is too counter-intuitive. Normally, we have a strong sense that we are experiencing the real external world in our perceptual experience, and we affirm that the real spatio-temporal objects are given to us and we are living in the real world intuitively. However, the riddle of transcendence becomes a barrier for us to accept this view point. In this context, if our intuition is correct, then, a systemic research of perceptual experience can disclose the real situation to us and settle the riddle of transcendence. The clarification of the nature of perceptual experience can let us understand the relation between consciousness and the external world. This is the strategy that Husserl uses to settle the riddle of transcendence. Hardy comments that "he [Husserl] shift from transcendence to immanence was motivated by the need to locate and

secure a type of knowledge not afflicted by the problem of transcendence."¹⁶ In my point of view, Husserl's phenomenology does not only locate and secure a type of knowledge not afflicted by 'the riddle of transcendence, it further dismisses the problem through clarifying the relation between consciousness and external world. What Husserl wants to do is trying to transform the problem generated by the riddle of transcendence. In Husserl's point of view, the main point is not 'what' consciousness or perceptual experience is and whether it maps the objects in the external world, but 'how' experience of the external world is constituted in our conscious acts. We are always misled by groundless metaphysical claims or conceptual distinctions. Through the guidance of the phenomenological method, we can investigate our perceptual experience in a neutral attitude. And by understanding 'how' the real external world is given to us can help us to settle the riddle of transcendence and the problem of correspondence.

The structure of consciousness

In the previous section, I have discussed the methodological concepts of phenomenology and shown how it can help us to settle the riddle of transcendence. In this section, I will start to discuss Husserl's theory of perception. The development of

¹⁶*The Idea of Phenomenology*, p.6

Husserl's theory of perception is based on pure description and analysis of our perceptual experience. In the follows, our discussion of perceptual experience can be divided into two parts. On the one hand, as perceptual experience is a kind of conscious experience, it shares some common structural features of other kinds of experience, such as experience of hallucination. Firstly, I will go through the common structure of perceptual experience. On the other hand, perceptual experience contains some unique features, and these features make perceptual experience possible to be distinguished from other kinds of conscious experience. To understand these unique features of perceptual experience is much more important. In the previous section, I have pointed out the problematic idealism claims that we can only reach the mental entity in our consciousness but not the real object in the external world through perception; and this conclusion is unacceptable to us. However, this judgment is quite fit to describe the experience of hallucination, because we agree that in the experience of hallucination, we do not experience real object in the real world but only some kinds of object in our mind. Therefore, the situation is quite different between perceptual experience and experience of hallucination. And the difference between them can only be stated through understanding the unique features of perceptual experience. But in the following discussion, I am going to point out that Husserl's discussion about perceptual experience is not crystal clear, and there are different

interpretations of Husserl's theory of perception. I will also go through this problem in the following paragraph.

Let's start with discussing the common structure of different kinds of conscious experience. Conscious experience refers to the acts of consciousness and the contents revealed through these acts in consciousness. Conscious experience is not simply an object. It is more likely to be an 'event', and this event is about how different kinds of objectivities are given in consciousness. The meaning of 'consciousness' is quite complicated. We should explain this idea first. Actually, Husserl never considers consciousness as an abstract entity. Rather, he tries to explain consciousness in terms of its activities. He provides the following definition of the idea of 'consciousness': "Consciousness as a comprehensive designation for 'mental acts', or 'intentional experiences', of all sorts."¹⁷ Throughout his discussion, he always use the term 'conscious acts' instead of 'consciousness'. He understands the essential meaning of 'consciousness' in terms of its activities.

Furthermore, all kinds of conscious acts have a common feature: they are intentional. Referring to Husserl's discussion in "Logical Investigations", the most fundamental feature of conscious acts is known as 'intentionality'. 'Consciousness' must be 'intentional' means that consciousness is essentially 'conscious of something',

¹⁷ Husserl, Edmund, *Logical Investigations, Volume 2*. J. N. Findlay trans., Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1970.pp.81 (*Logical Investigation (Vol. 2)*)

that means it is essentially connected to objectivities. Consciousness always reveals itself in the connection between consciousness and the objectivities that is given in it. This feature of consciousness implies that conscious acts cannot be explained in its own terms, our investigation must focus on the relation between consciousness and its objectivities. That's why the idea of 'intentionality' is essential in Husserl's phenomenology. But here, we should be careful that the relation between consciousness and its objectivities is not similar to a relation between two actual objects, e.g. books and bookshelf. Husserl clearly refuses the idea that consciousness is just like a container in which objectivities are put inside. I will evaluate this point in the following discussion. What we need to keep in mind first is that the essential meaning of consciousness can only be explained through its relation with its objectivities.

When we pay attention to the stream of consciousness, we will find that it is composed by different kinds of conscious acts, such as acts of perception, acts of hallucination, acts of imagination, acts of judging, etc. In a stream of consciousness, different kinds of conscious acts are co-founded on each other. Furthermore, different kinds of objectivities are given in different kinds of conscious act. For example, in the acts of judging, the subject is conscious of judgments; in the acts of perception, the subject is conscious of spatial-temporal objects, etc. Although the content of

conscious experience is complicated, but actually, all kinds of conscious act reveal a two-pole structure. As I have mentioned, consciousness reveals itself in the relation between consciousness and the objectivities given in it. That means consciousness is connected to some kinds of object which originally do not belong to it. Here, the two-pole structure is not difficult to understand, they are the subjective pole and the objective pole. The subjective pole refers to the constituting conscious subjectivity; and the objective pole refers to the objectivities that are given in conscious experience. According to Husserl, all contents of conscious experience pertain to these two categories. All contents revealed in conscious experience either belongs to the subjective pole or the objective pole, and the conscious experience is characterized by this two-pole structure.

In "Logical Investigations", Husserl distinguishes between 'act quality' and 'act matter' to explain this two-pole structure. Explaining with an example will make it easier to understand this pair of conceptual distinction. The statement: "I admire Mary's picture" is describing a moment of conscious act. In this conscious act, two kinds of contents have been mentioned. The first one is represented by the words of 'I admire' and the second one is represented by the words of 'Mary's picture'. For the former refers to my manner towards Mary's picture; the word 'admire' can refer to a kind of emotion or manner which is originated from the subjective consciousness.

Husserl calls it the 'acts quality' of a conscious act. In contrast, the latter refers to a spatial-temporal object in the real world, Mary's hat, and Husserl calls it the 'act matter' of a conscious act. Here, the nature of a conscious act is characterized by the 'acts quality', for example I am hallucinating in the acts of hallucination, I am perceiving in the acts of perception. Meanwhile, the content of a conscious act, in the narrow sense, is determined by 'act matter'. All conscious acts are determined by the mix and match of 'acts quality' and 'acts matter'. On the one hand, the same 'acts matter' can be intended in different 'act quality', for example, I perceive Mary's hat in an act of perception, I hallucinate Mary's hat in an act of hallucination. On the other hand, different kinds of objectivities can be intended in the same kind of 'act quality'. Therefore, Husserl says "Acts are therefore unambiguously determined by their quality, on the one hand, and by the object they will intend, on the other."¹⁸ One more thing we need to clarify is that 'act quality' and 'act matter' is a pair of concept that cannot be understood separately. Husserl says: "Quality and matter were distinguished by us as two 'moments', two inner constituents of all acts."¹⁹ That means there is no 'act quality' that can be presented without an intended object; and vice versa.

It is agreed that Husserl preserve the understanding of this two-pole structure of conscious acts throughout the different periods of his phenomenological research. In

¹⁸*Logical Investigations (Vol. 2)*, p.121

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.128

the *'Ideas I'*, he tries to apply another pair of concepts to explain this two-pole structure of conscious acts. He uses the term of 'noesis' instead of 'act quality' and the term of 'noema' instead of 'act matter'. One of the major objectives of this thesis is to provide a possible interpretation of the concept of 'noema' in the context of perception. In this first glance, it seems that the meaning of 'noema' is quite clear: 'noema' means the objectivities which appear 'in' conscious experience. For example, Husserl says that:

"Perception, for example, has its noema, most basically its perceptual sense, i.e., the perceived as perceived. Similarly, the current case of remembering has its remembered as remembered, just as its <remembered>, precisely as it is "meant," "intended to" in <the remembering>; again, the judging has the judged as judged, liking has the liked as liked, and so forth."²⁰

Referring to this quote, we will notice that 'noema' is just a general term. It does not refer to a specific kind of objectivity. In acts of judging, noema refers to the 'judged as judged', in acts of remembering 'remembered as remembered'. And for the reasons I have mentioned before, we will focus on the meaning of 'noema' in case of act of perception.

In case of perception, 'noema' means the 'perceived as perceived'. Here, we will easily misconceive that 'noema' refers to some kinds of 'mental entity' because it is 'the perceived as perceived' but not the real object. However, if we also consider the

²⁰*Ideas I*, p.200

practice of 'epoché', the situation may change. The practice of 'epoché' requires us to parenthesize all theoretical judgments, in this context, we do not consider the content of 'conscious experience', especially the givenness of objectivities, as mental being, since this kind of judgment already presupposes the distinction between mental being and physical being, which is some kind of metaphysical framework. It is true that exercising the 'epoché' can help us to maintain a neutral or pure attitude towards our conscious experience, but it also makes the meaning of 'noema', e.g. 'the perceived as perceived', unclear to us. Some scholars think that it is more reasonable to consider the objectivities which appear in acts of perception as some kind of mental entity. But the opponents claim that Husserl considers those objectivities as 'perceived as perceived', but not mental entities, and they think that it is the fact that we do experience the 'real world' in the perceptual experience but not 'mental entities. Indeed, further explanation about the true meaning of 'noema' is needed.

To make sense of the meaning of 'noema' in perceptual experience, just focusing on the objective pole of acts of perception is not enough. We also need to understand what 'perceiving' is, because the 'perceived as perceived' is the objectivity that is constituted in the perceiving process. And the content of a moment of perceptual experience is co-determined by both the noetic and noematic moment of it. More concretely, the same object can be intended in different acts of consciousness. For

example, 'I perceive Mary's hat' and 'I dream of Mary's hat' are two different conscious acts, but the same objectivity is intended in both of them. So, the differences between the 'perceived as perceived' and the 'dreamed as dreamed' cannot be explained just in terms of the intended object. We should also consider the conditions provided by the constituting subject in order to state the essential differences between different kinds of conscious act. Those subjective conditions of conscious acts are represented by the concept of 'noesis'.

In *'Ideas I'*, Husserl tries to explain the concept of 'noesis'. Let's see the following two quotes first:

"The noematic is the field of unities; the noetic is the field of "constituting" multiplicities."²¹

"Such noetic moments are, e.g., directions of the regard of the pure Ego to the objects "meant" by it owing to sense-bestowal, to <the object> which is "inherent in the sense" for the Ego; furthermore, seizing upon this object, holding it fast while the regard adverts to other objects which appear in the "meaning" ["Vermeinen"]; likewise, producing pertaining to explicatings, relating, comprising, multiple position-takings of believing, deeming likely, valuing; and so forth."²²

Husserl clearly states that the 'noetic moment' is the field of constituting multiplicities in the first quote and it is the 'sense-bestowal' in the second one. In conscious act, the appearance of conscious content is co-determined by the subjectivity and objectivity.

The concept of noetic moment refers to the conditions of conscious experience that

²¹Ibid., p.200

²²Ibid., p.200

are originated from the constituting subject. Here, the concept of 'constitution' becomes an important technical concept in our discussion. When we are using the word 'constitute', we must presuppose the involvement of a constituting subject. As the concepts of 'noesis' and 'noema' are a pair of concept which cannot be understood separately, it is necessary to understand the constituting subject if we want to understand the nature of constituted object. Related to the idea of 'noesis', there are several important themes within Husserl's discussion, such as the internal time consciousness, pure Ego, etc. But compare to other kinds of conscious acts, there is a special theme of noesis within the investigation of perceptual experience. This specific subjective condition that involves in the constitution of the perceptual experience is our 'Body'. The conscious subject appears to be an embodied subject within perceptual experience. 'Body' plays a special role in the constitution of the external world, and Husserl's discussion about our bodily experience help us to clarify this special role of 'Body'. I leave the discussion about our bodily experience to the next chapter. In the next chapter, I am going to argue that the involvement of Body is the essential feature of perceptual experience, and the feature helps us to define what perception is.

'Noema' in acts of perception

Until now, we are quite clear about the common structure of conscious acts. They are composed of two parts, which are the noesis and the noema. Then, we will move forward to the particularity of acts of perception. In the case of perception, we always stick to the problem of the nature of the objectivities that is given in perceptual experience. The reason is that the spatio-temporal objectivities given in perceptual experience are supposed to be real objects that exist in the world. In comparison, the objectivities given in some other kinds of conscious acts, such as hallucination and imagination, are just intentional objects, but they are not supposed to be corresponding to real objects. In the case of perception, when we claim that consciousness is directed to perceptual spatio-temporal objects, we need to further explain how consciousness can be directed to a spatio-temporal real object in the external world. We need to explain this kind of ‘directness’ of consciousness clearly.

Husserl always struggles between the idea of ‘actual object’ and ‘intentional object’. Here, ‘intentional object’ refers to the objectivity presented ‘in’ consciousness, and the ‘actual object’ refers to the real object that exists in the spatial-temporal world. The problem is that if the ‘intentional object’ is identical to the ‘actual object’, but we will find that it is both problematic to be affirmative or negative. If we affirm that ‘actual object’ is identical to ‘intentional object’, it is difficult to explain the phenomenon that our consciousness can be directed to unreal objectivity. Føllesdal

says that “the view that the [intentional] objects of acts are real leads to difficulties in the case of centaurs and hallucinations”²³, since it is contradictory to say that the unreal intentional object is real. In contrast, if our answer to the question is negative, it is hard to explain acts of perception. According to Føllesdal, “the view that the objects are unreal, whatever that may mean, leads to difficulties in the case of many other acts, e.g., acts of normal perception: it seems that, on that view, what we see when we see a tree is not the real tree in front of us, but something else, which we would also have seen if we are hallucinating.”²⁴ In face of this situation, “Husserl uses a third, intermediary notion, what he calls the noema, which is introduced to account for the directedness of the mental phenomena. While Brentano had tried to characterize directedness by talking about the object towards which the act is directed, Husserl instead characterizes the directedness by the introduction of this entity, the noema”²⁵, therefore, the concept of ‘noema’ is the key concept in the explanation of the ‘directness’ of consciousness.

In my point of view, Husserl’s standpoint is closer to the latter standpoint,

²³Føllesdal, Dagfinn, Husserl’s Notion of Noema, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 66, No. 20, Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division (Oct. 16, 1969). p.680

²⁴ Ibid., p.680

²⁵Føllesdal, Dagfinn, “Brentano and Husserl on Intentional Objects and Perception,” in *Husserl, intentionality and cognitive science*, ed. by Dreyfus, Hubert L. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982. p.37

which affirms that intentional object is not identical to actual object. We need to be careful about the meaning of ‘actual object’ in this context. My position is that our perception of an object is different from the real object in itself; however, our conception of ‘actual’ can only be found on our perception of it. To make this point clear, we need to understand the relations between those jargons that applied in Husserl’s discussion. Let’s consider the following graph first. In this graph, Føllesdal tries to compare and summarize Husserl’s and Brentano’s conception of the acts of perception. Through this graph, we can understand those concepts more clearly.

Føllesdal’s table ²⁶		
	HUSSERL	BRENTANO
experience	intentional phases of experience =noesis =informing (animating, meaning-bestowing) stratum	mental phenomena
	material phases of experience =hyle =matter (Stoff) =sense data =primary contents (Logische Untersuchungen) =perspective variations	physical phenomena
features of objects	objective phases of experience =perspected variable	

²⁶Ibid., p.38

Referring to the graph, Brentano explains the structure of perceptual experience by simply distinguishing between ‘mental phenomena’ and ‘physical phenomena’. Let’s consider an example: I am watching Mary’s hat and think that it is beautiful. In this case, Brentano considers that my admiring emotion and all those subjective conditions that make my ‘watching’ possible are subjective mental phenomena, meanwhile, the objectivity, Mary’s hat, is physical phenomena, which is something that does not belong to our mind originally and can be distinguished from my mental acts. The whole stuff of perceptual experience is a complex of mental phenomena and physical phenomena. Føllesdal points out that Brentano is trying to argue against the view that the intentional object is something in our mind²⁷. His standpoint is just opposite to the idealism derived from the riddle of transcendence. But his theory fails to settle the riddle of transcendence because he fails to provide a convincing explanation about how consciousness is directed to the ‘real’ object.

In contrast, Husserl’s view point is much more sophisticated. According to the graph, the idea of ‘mental phenomenon’ is converted to ‘noesis’, and the idea of ‘physical phenomenon’ is transformed into two different ideas, which are the idea of ‘hyle’ and ‘perspectical variable’ of the features of perceived objects. The mentioned changes represent that Husserl’s conception of acts of perception is totally different

²⁷Ibid., p.32

from Brentano's. In my point of view, Brentano's theory of perception fails because the linkage between physical phenomenon and mental phenomenon is missing, but Husserl's does not face to the same problem, because in his theory of perception, he does take into account the involvement of our own 'Body' in it. I am going to explain this in the next chapter, but in the last paragraph of this chapter, I want to outline Husserl's theory of perception based on the table above.

First of all, Husserl uses the term 'noesis' instead of 'mental phenomena', because the constitutive conscious subject shouldn't be summarized by the term 'mental phenomena'. This conceptual distinction always misleads us to think that there is a mental conscious subject on the one side, and the physically perceived object on the other, but the linkage between them is missing. To avoid misunderstanding, Husserl tries to make use of the term of 'noesis' to refer to the subjective conditions provided by the conscious subject in the process of the constitution of conscious experience. Actually, those conditions are not essentially mental in nature, especially in the case of perception. According to Husserl's analysis of perceptual experience, the constitutive subject does not appear as a purely mental being, rather, the perceiving subject is essentially embodied in his/her own 'Body' and appears as a psycho-somatic being. I will explain the details of this phenomenon of embodiment of subjectivity and its significances in the constitution of perceptual

experience in the next chapter, but what I want to point out here is that our own 'Body' is not merely an perceived object that is given in our perceptual experience, rather, it appears as an animated Body and involve in the constitution of perceptual experience and determine the appearance of the perceived object. More precisely, the involvement of the animated Body is also a necessary condition for the possibility of perceptual experience. To be sense-bestowal does not only refer to position-takings of believing, deeming likely, valuing, etc, which is mental in nature, but also some psycho-physical process such as bodily gesture. So, to use the term 'mental phenomena' to refer to the constituting subject is not accurate, and Husserl prefers to use the term of 'noesis' instead of 'mental phenomena' to avoid misunderstanding.

Referring to the graph, we also find that the idea of 'physical phenomena' is further divided into 'material phrase of experience' and 'objective phrase of experience'. The material phrase of experience is represented by the idea of 'hyle' in Husserl's discussion. In *Ideas I*, 'hyle' is a crucial operating concept in Husserl's discussion; it is the synonym of 'sensation' or 'sense data'. According to Husserl's discussion in *Ideas I*, a conscious subject perceives spatio-temporal objects through sensation. For example, a red object is given to the subject through 'red-sensation'; a piece of music is presented in perceptual experience through 'sound-sensation'. But sensation is just the material phrase of experience. To be 'material phrase' means that

sensation is just 'raw material' but not the 'product', i.e. the perceived object itself. Through the sensation, different perspectives or features of the perceived object are presented to the perceiving subject in perceptual experience. And the perceived object, noema, is founded on this complicated constitution process. I am going to explain this in the next chapter.

However, affirming the existence of 'sense data' doesn't imply that Husserl supports the idealism in the traditional sense, which claims that the perceiving consciousness 'uses' some mental entities to represent the physical objects in the real world. The difference between them is that idealism considers the 'mental entity' as 'ready-made product' and the perceiving subject 'uses' them to represent the real object. On the contrary, Husserl considers the 'mental entity' as material, and the organization of 'sensation' is not rule-less, because there is a necessary connection between 'sensation' and the Body, and the givenness of 'sensation' is co-determined by different kinds of 'physical' and 'psychological' factors. And the perceived object is constituted in this complicated process. We should notice that 'sensation' and 'noema' belong to two different gradations in the constitution process. The difference between these two concepts is that only the intended object, 'noema', contains unity of meaning, but 'sensation' does not. The formation of an intentional object is the result of the act of sense-bestowing of the conscious subject upon the hyle or

sense-data given through sensation. That's why Husserl always emphasizes that consciousness is directed to the objects through sensations, but never directed to sensations in the original intuitive sense, we can only intend to sensations in the reflective sense. The possibility of perception of an object presupposes a series of conditions, through disclosing how all these conditions put together; we can understand how the perceived object is constituted and what its nature is. Thus Føllesdal concludes: "That is to say, studying the noema is to study the different features of consciousness to see how they all fit together, so that they seem to be features of one object."²⁸To understand the perceptual noema, two features of consciousness cannot be neglected, they are (1) the different forms of sensation which determine the material phrases of experience; (2) the animated Body which is the embodiment of subjectivity. The discussion of these two features of consciousness can help us to clarify the nature of the perceptual noema.

Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed the riddle of transcendence and the problem of correspondence, and pointed out the difficulties in the investigation of perception. After that, we have talked about Husserl's phenomenological research method and

²⁸Ibid., p.36

how phenomenology helps us to settle those problems. However, we find that the nature of the perceptual objects in perceptual experience is still ambiguous to us and further explanation is needed. But so far we confirm that noema in perceptual experience is founded on 'sensation'. So, in the next chapter, our discussion will focus on the concept of 'sensation', especially the connection between sensation and our own Body.

Chapter 2: Sensation, Body and the Structure of Intentionality

In the previous chapter, I have mentioned that ‘hyle’ or ‘sensation’ is a crucial concept in Husserl’s theory of perception, as Husserl considers ‘sensation’ as the ‘material phrase’ of perceptual experience. When talking about the concept of ‘sense data’, we might be tempted to think that Husserl supports the standpoint of idealism. But in the following discussion, I am going to argue that although Husserl makes use of the idea of ‘sensation’, his theory of perception is different from idealism in the traditional sense. In Husserl’s phenomenological research, he finds that ‘sensation’ is not an independent mental entity that exists in the perceiving consciousness; rather, there is a necessary connection between ‘sensation’ and ‘Body’. Through the relation between ‘sensation’ and ‘Body’, the essential structure of acts of perception can be disclosed to us.

In this chapter, the discussion will be divided into three parts. Firstly, I am going to explain Husserl’s conception of ‘sensation’ and its relation to the Body. In this part, I will also explain the part-whole theory which is developed in “The Third Investigation” of “Logical Investigations” in the first part, because important conceptual tools for analyzing ‘sensation’ can be found in it. Secondly, I will discuss how the investigation of ‘sensation’ facilitates our understanding of the perceptual experience and the noema included in it. Through the discussion of ‘hyle’ and bodily

experience, the structure of perceptual experience and the unique features of this kind of experience can be disclosed to us. Based on our understanding of acts of perceptual experience, we can make sense of the idea of ‘perceptual noema’. Lastly, I am going to explain how Husserl’s clarification of natural experience can help us to settle the riddle of transcendence and the problem of correspondence, and further justify the validity of perception.

The part-whole theory

Before entering the discussion on ‘hyle’ or ‘sensation’, we need to understand the ‘part-whole theory’ first. ‘Part-whole theory’ is important here because it helps us to understand the concept of ‘dependent parts’, which is an important concept in the explanation of conscious experience. Unlike a physical object, which is composed by concrete independent parts, conscious experience is complicated and the relations between the ‘parts’ included in it are difficult to explain. Therefore, special conceptual tools should be applied to explain those relations, and those technical concepts are developed in the “The Third Investigation” of “Logical Investigations” by Husserl. In this investigation, Husserl tries to investigate different kinds of part-whole relation formally. The importance of this investigation has been pin pointed by the scholar, Robert Sokolowski: “Neglect of this Investigation [The Third Investigation] could

indeed prove disastrous to understanding Husserl's thought; although it seems to treat merely questions of logic and method and says nothing about subjectivity, it proves a formal structure that reappears at many strategic places in the Investigations and in Husserl's later work."²⁹

In the Third Investigation, Husserl points out that 'part' and 'whole' are relative concepts. He says: "Every object is either actually or possibly a part, i.e. there are actual or possible wholes that include it."³⁰ Here, we use the head of a person as an example. On the one hand, a head can be 'a part' of a body. On the other hand, a head can also be considered as 'a whole' which is composed of eyes, ears, mouth, etc. So, whether a head is 'a whole' or 'a part' depends on the context. And Husserl points out that there are different kinds of 'part-whole' and 'part-part' relation.

To clarify those relations, Husserl further points out that there are two different kinds of 'parts' which can be found in 'a whole' object; they are the 'independent part' and 'dependent part'. Actually, Husserl defines the concept of 'part' in a very broad sense. Husserl says that "we may call anything a 'part' that can be distinguished 'in' an object, or, objectively phrased that is 'present' in it. Everything is a part that is an object's real possession, not only in the sense of being a real thing [...]"³¹ In the

²⁹Sokolowski, Robert, The Logic of Parts and Wholes in Husserl's Investigations, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Jun., 1968), p. 537-553.

³⁰*Logical Investigation (Vol. 2)*, p.4

³¹ Ibid, p.5

quote, Husserl clearly states that ‘a part’ is not necessary a real possession, it could be anything, such as a fact, a character, a concept, etc. To be a ‘part’ means that it can be distinguished from a ‘whole’. And all those ‘parts’ pertain to two categories: they are either ‘independent parts’ or ‘dependent parts’.

Let’s start with an example. Now, we are considering a strawberry cheese cake as a ‘whole’. In this ‘whole’, we can say that the strawberry on the top of the cake is an ‘independent part’ of it. In contrast, the round shape or the yellow color of the cake are also some kinds of characters which can be ‘distinguished’ from the whole, so they are also ‘parts’ of the cake and they are considered as ‘dependent parts’ of the cake. The idea of ‘dependent part’ is very important in our following discussion about Husserl’s theory of perception. So, I will try to give a detailed explanation about this concept first. In this section, I am going to explain the concept of ‘dependent parts’ by comparing it with ‘independent parts’.

In the Third Investigation, Husserl starts his discussion by criticizing Stumph’s definition of ‘independent parts’ and ‘dependent parts’. Stumph’s proposed definitions are as follow:

S1a: “Independents parts are parts that can be freed from all blending with co-existent contents”

S1b: “dependents parts are parts that cannot be freed from all blending with co-existent contents”³²

³² Ibid., p.7-8

Husserl criticizes that the definition of S1a is too narrow. According to these definitions, no parts or objects can be considered as 'independent parts', since no objects can be 'freed from all blending with co-existent contents'. Husserl contends that an object must be presented in a background. He says: "we inescapably present it in a context, the content stands relieved from an objective background that appears with it, it is inescapably given with many other contents, and is also in a way united to them."³³ Therefore, Stumph's definitions fail because, the words 'freed from blending from' cannot clearly state the relations between dependent/independent parts and the co-existing contents.

According to his discussion in "the Third Investigation", Husserl tries to explain these two concepts in many different ways. Here, I summarize Husserl's discussion into four pairs of statements which are the definitions of these two concepts. They are as follow:

H1:

"A part is independent if it doesn't have a necessary connection to other content."

"A part is dependent if it has a necessary connection to other content."³⁴

H2:

"An independent part is an object which can possibly exist independently."

"A dependent part is an object which can never exist independently."³⁵

³³ Ibid., p.9

³⁴ Ibid., pp.9-10

³⁵ Ibid., p.9

H3:

“A part is independent if it is ‘presented by itself.’”

“A part is dependent if it is ‘noticed by itself.’”³⁶

H4:

“An object is independent, if it does not contain ‘law(s) of essence’ that govern the relations of this object with some other contents.”

“An object is dependent, if it contains ‘law(s) of essence’ that govern the relations of this object with some other contents.”³⁷

Let’s go through those statements one by one. With reference to H1, Husserl uses the words ‘doesn’t have a necessary connection to’ instead of ‘freed from all blending with’ to describe the relation between independent/dependent parts and the co-existing contents. Husserl admits that both independent and dependent parts are inescapably given with many other contents, but the most important point is that if there is necessary connection between them. In this context, the term ‘necessary connection’ does not refer to some kinds of functional relations or causal relations. What Husserl wants to emphasize is that ‘dependent part’ is essentially connected to other contents, but it is not the case in ‘independent part’. These statements can be applied to explain the situation in the example of strawberry cheese cake. In this example, the strawberry is an ‘independent part’ of the cake, because there is no necessary connection between the strawberry and the remaining parts. By contrast, the whiteness or the round shape of the cake does have necessary connection with some other contents. For example,

³⁶ Ibid., pp.10-11

³⁷ Ibid., pp.11-13

the shape of the cake (extension) must appear in connection with the surface of the cake. There is necessary connection between these two kinds of property.

Based on H1, Husserl further deduces H2. According to H1, the 'independent parts', such as color, extension, etc, have some necessary co-existing content. For example, 'color' must combine with 'extension' and presents as a color block. That means 'color' cannot be presented to us separately. The presentation of 'extension' is a necessary condition for the presentation of 'color', and vice versa. Husserl further points out that "what cannot be thought, cannot be, what cannot be, cannot be thought – this equivalence fixes the differences between the pregnant notion of thinking and the ordinary subjective sense of presentation and thought."³⁸ Based on this premise, Husserl points out further that a dependent part is an object which can never exist independently. Actually, it even can never be present independently.

According to H3, Husserl points out that the independent part is 'presented' by itself. In contrast, dependent part is 'noticed' by itself. The difference between them is that an independent part is always a 'concretum'. To be a concretum means that it is a concrete, unified whole, so that it can be presented by itself. On the contrary, to be an abstractum means that it can only be presented as a part of a whole, so it can only be noticed in this combined whole object. Let's consider an example to make this point

³⁸ Ibid., p.11

clear: when we are enjoying a movie, we find that the background music is very touching. In this case, the background music is an independent part of the movie. It is a 'concretum' that can be presented by itself. If somebody further praises that the 'sound quality' of the musical instrument in it is excellent. In this case, the 'sound quality' which is an 'abstractum' becomes a dependent part of the background music, as the 'sound quality' can't be presented by itself. It can only be noticed when we are listening to the song, which is a combination of melody, rhythm, etc. 'Sound quality', as a dependent part, can be distinguished from the song through abstraction. That independent part can be presented and a dependent part can only be noticed is one of the differences between them.

Finally, in H4, the conception of 'law of essence' is applied to explain the characters of dependent part. We have already mentioned that there is a necessary connection between dependent part and other content, such as the relation between color and surface. Husserl claims that this relation is a priori and it is determined by the essence of this kind of object. The a priori law that governs this relation is called 'law of essence'. In "the Third Investigation", Husserl claims that there are two kinds of 'law of essence'. The first one calls 'a priori analytic law of essence' and the second one calls 'a priori synthetic law of essence'. The former one appears in some relative expression. As Husserl says: "There cannot be a king (master, father) without

subjects (servants, children) etc.”³⁹ Those relative expressions presuppose the necessary connection between two objects. However, the relations between dependent parts, e.g. color and extension, cannot be found through conceptual analysis, but there is still law of essence to govern the relation between them. For those laws, Husserl calls them ‘a priori synthetic law of essence’, and those ‘a priori synthetic law of essence’ is always found in dependent parts.

From the discussion of H1 to H4, the meaning of the concept of ‘independent part’ and ‘dependent part’ is quite clear to us now. Through introducing the concept of ‘dependent part’, we can explain the nature of ‘sensations’ more clearly.

The idea of ‘sensation’ and Body

In the first glance, ‘sensation’ or ‘sense data’ is something ‘immanent’ in our mental process; and it always appears in the construction of the theory of idealism. The reason is that if we agree that ‘sense data’ is entity that exists in our consciousness, then, it will be quite reasonable to accept that what we can really apprehend is just ‘sense data’ but not object exists in the real world. A good exemplar is that the representative theory of perception suggests that we use visual sensations (visual pictures) to represent objects exist in the real world. However, through the

³⁹ Ibid., pp.19

investigation of phenomenology, we will find that understanding the idea of 'sense data' in this way is too rough and leads us to misconception of acts of perception.

When we try to understand 'sensation' in this way, that means we think that they are abstract independent entities given in our conscious experience. Actually, 'sensation' can be understood as some kinds of qualities of objects. And those qualities pertain to several forms, such as the visual sensations, tactual sensations, sound sensations, etc. The perceived the spatio-temporal objects are presented to us through sensations. However, 'sensations' shouldn't be considered as independent objects. Refers to Husserl's discussion in "*Ideas II*", we find that it is more appropriate to treat 'sensations' as dependent objects, because there is necessary connection between 'sensation' and our own body.

Let's us reflect on our own experience first, we will find that sensation never present to us as independent object. Let's use tactual sensation as an example. When we touch the surface of a piece of butter, the smoothness of it is presented to us. In this experience, we find that it is imaginable that the smoothness is detached from the object, butter, because we can experience the same smoothness through touching a piece of jelly or cheese, however, we find that it is impossible to imagine that such smoothness can be detached from our own body. We can touch the piece of butter by different parts of my body and the smoothness will be presented to me, but this

smoothness must connect to specific parts of my touching body. Here, I would like to point out the fact that sensation is not independent object that exist in our mind, rather, it is dependent object that contains necessary connection to my own body.

The necessary connection between Body and sensation can be explained from certain aspects. Actually, when we focus on a moment of sensation that is presented in our consciousness, we always find that sensation does not appear randomly in 'somewhere' of our conscious experience. Sensation is essentially positional and conditioned by our own Body, we cannot even imagine a moment of sensation presented to us that is not related to our own Body. According to Husserl's analysis of perceptual experience, he points out that our Body is the unity of our sense organs, and the occurrences of givenness of sensation are necessarily related to their corresponding sense organs. We should pay attention that this claim shouldn't be explained from the physiological point of view; rather, it should be understood from the phenomenological point of view. That means I am not going to investigate how a physiological body can generate 'sensations'; I only want to point out the fact that the presentation of different forms of sensations are always connected to and determined by specific parts of the 'Body' in conscious experience. The necessary connection between sensation and Body is very obvious in the tactual realm. It is because tactual sensation is essentially localized. For example, I touch the surface of an apple, the

'smoothness' of it does not only appear in my consciousness experience, but appears as 'smoothness' that is localized in my fingertips. Through this example, we can understand that the tactual sensation must be tactual sensation of a part of our own Body because it is essentially localized and this demonstrates the necessary connection between Body and sensation. About the other kinds of sensation, such as visual sensation and sound sensation, the necessary connection between sensations and Body is not so obvious because they are not simply localized in Body. However, we should notice that the presentations of those kinds of sensation are also positional, because they are still determined by sense organs. Let's consider a simple visual object, e.g. a red color block, as an example. When we are looking at a color block, our visual sensation of it is positional. The color block can only be presented in our visual realm as something stands in front of me and in a particular height level. As I have mentioned in the discussion of part-whole theory, we consider that 'color' and 'extension' are necessarily connected to each other because color must appear in a particular surface. Now, the situation is the same, the presentation of color sensation must presuppose a perspective, and this perspective must be an embodied view point which is undertaken with respect to the correlated sense organ (Body). In this sense, although the other kinds of sensation are not simply localized in Body, but they still contain necessary connection with the Body.

Based on the above discussion, we should notice that the four definitions mentioned in previous section are fit to explain the presentation of sensation. Firstly, there is a necessary connection between ‘sensation’ and ‘Body’ (H1). Then, we find that sensation cannot be presented to us and exist independently, it can only be ‘noticed’ in a combined whole of sensation and sense organ (H2-3) and the relation between is determined by synthetic law of essence (H4). Based on these premises, sensation is dependent object and there is necessary connection between sensation and the Body.

The relation of sensation and our own Body will be the focus of the following discussion. ‘Body’ and ‘sensation’ are two important determining factors of the constitution of perceptual experience. Through the discussion of ‘Body’ and ‘sensation’, we can understand how perceptual noema is constituted and the nature of it can be disclosed to us. Furthermore, the involvement of ‘Body’ becomes the unique feature of acts of perception among all kinds of conscious acts. It is because the involvement of ‘Body’ is a necessary condition for acts of perception, and the ‘Body’ involved is not purely physical in nature, but appears to be an animated being which is a psycho-physical unity. This point is very crucial in our discussion of perception. I am going to explain this in the following paragraphs. But before that, let’s start with Husserl’s description of perceptual experience and see how the ‘Body’ is involved in

it.

In *Ideas I*, Husserl tries to describe our perceptual experience of a table like that:

“The table-perception, however, is a continually changing one; it is a continuity of changing perceptions. I close my eyes. My other senses have no relation to the table. Now I have no perception of it. I open my eyes; and I have the perception again.”⁴⁰

In this quote, what Husserl wants to point out is that the involvement of our own body is a necessary condition of perception. Husserl says ‘I close my eyes. My other senses have no relation to the table. Now I have no perception of it. I open my eyes; and I have the perception again.’ Husserl claims that our ‘senses’ must have relation to the physical object to make our perception become possible, and this relation is determined by our body, since our body is our sense organ. He says “We have seen that in all experience of spatio-thingly Objects, the Body “is involved” as the perceptual organ of the experiencing subject [...].”⁴¹ Here, we can restrict the meaning of being perceptual organ within the realm of conscious experience. As Husserl doesn’t aim at investigating how the Body (or our neurons) generates the sensation in the biological or neurological sense, rather, he just points out the fact that there is a necessary causal relation between the encounter of physical objectivities and our own body and the generation of correlated sensations. And this necessary

⁴⁰*Ideas I*, p.86

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p.152

connection makes that the involvement of our own body becomes a necessary condition of perception. Furthermore, considering our own body as perceptual organ is the foundation for classifying different forms of sensation. Actually, sensations can be classified into different forms, such as the touch-sensation, visual-sensation, sound-sensation, etc. And we find that each kind of sensation corresponds to their own sense organ and constitute a specific perceptual realm. For example, the visual sensation is corresponding to our eyes, and the visual perceptual realm is constituted in terms of visual sensation. The same situation appears in all forms of sensation which are correlated to different parts of our body.

Until now, we find that the relation between sensations and Body can be clarified from two aspects. Firstly our own Body is the origin of sensations, and secondly sensations are necessarily localized or presented to us from an embodied point of view. The relations between sensations and our own body can be summarized in the phenomenon of the double sensation character of our own body. About the double sensations character of our own body, Husserl gives the following description:

“Touching my left hand, I have touch-appearances, that is to say, I do not just sense, but I perceive and have appearances of a soft, smooth hand, with such a form. The indicational sensations of movement and the representational sensations of touch, which are Objectified as features of the thing, “left hand,” belong in fact to my right hand. But when I touch the left hand I also find in it, too, series of touch-sensations,

which are “localized” in it, though these are not constitutive of properties.”⁴²

In the quote, Husserl uses a phenomenon in the tactual realm as an example: when my right hand is touching my left hand, the tactual features of my left hand appear in my right hand, and the same situation appears in my left hand. The significance of this phenomenon is that on the one hand our own body appears as a physical object, which is the constituted objectively. On the other hand, it is the sense organ, which means it can be considered as parts of the constituting subject. As Husserl says:

“Hence the Body is originally constituted in a double way: first, it is a physical thing, matter; it has its extension, in which are included its real properties, is color, smoothness, hardness, warmth, and whatever other material qualities of that kind there are. Secondly, I find on it, and I sense “on” it and “in” it: warmth on the back of the hand, coldness in the feet, sensations of touch in the fingertips.”⁴³

In this quote, we find that our own body plays a special role in the perceptual experience. It is a perceived objectivity in the perceptual realm. But unlike the other physical object, which is a contingent part of perceptual experience, our own body is a necessary part of it, because our own body is the embodiment of the constituting subjectivity and only through which our perceptual experience is possible. This special character of our own body becomes an important determining factor of the constitution of perceptual experience.

⁴²*Ideas II*, p.152

⁴³*Ibid.*, p.153

The double character of our own body

Based on the above discussion, we understand that sensations are the foundation of our perceptual experience, and the presentation of sensations is determined by the encountering of our own body and the perceived object. However, as a sense organ, our body is not just a motionless object which responds to stimulation and generates sensations. Rather, it is a living thing. Within the realm of perceptual experience, to have a Body does not refer to the fact that I possess a psycho-physical object which is a sensations generator, rather, it is more appropriate to consider that 'I have a Body' means that 'I am a bodily living being'. I can perceive the facts that are happening in the external world and also carry out some responding actions through this Body. I am involved in the external world because I am a bodily being. To be a bodily being means that the 'Body' is an essential part of I as a conscious subject, that means my own body 'belongs' to me in a much more intimate way than other perceived physical objects. Husserl tries to explain our bodily experience by distinguishing between 'Leib' and 'Körper', because my own body can be apprehended from two perspectives.

Firstly, our body can be considered as 'Körper'. To be a 'Körper' means that it is just a physical thing, it contains its own real character and co-exists with other physical objects. Husserl says "if, despite all this, we apprehend the Body as a real

thing, it is because we find it integrated into the causal nexus of material nature.”⁴⁴

The most important point here is that to be a physical object means that it is integrated into the causal nexus of material nature and determined by physical law. As the presentations of sensations are correlated to the body, and the body is integrated into the causal nexus of material nature, the perceptual experience can be constituted passively. We will notice that in many cases, the encountering of body and the physical objects are unavoidable and are not controlled by the perceived subject. For example, when I am sitting on a chair, the pressure between my back and the chair are unavoidably presenting in perceptual experience, because the reaction force between them are determined by natural law, and this kind of relation between them may contribute to the contents of perceptual experience.

On the other hand, our own body is not just a physical object, it can also be considered as ‘Leib’. When I say that I am a bodily subject, I mean that I experience my own body in a more intimate way and I can control my own body and move it spontaneously according to my own will. In this way, I, as a constituting bodily subject, constitute the experience of the external world actively. As Husserl says:

“Sheer material things are only moveable mechanically and only partake of spontaneous movement in a mediate way. Only Bodies are immediately spontaneously (“freely”) movable, and they are so, specifically, by means of the free Ego and its will

⁴⁴Ibid., p.167

which belong to them.”⁴⁵

“In particular, it is the precondition for the fact that it, already taken as Body (namely, as the thing that has a stratum of localized sensations) is an organ of the will, the one and only Object which, for the will of my Ego, is moveable immediately and spontaneously and is a means for producing a mediate spontaneous movement in other things, in, e.g., things struck by my immediately spontaneously moved hand, grasped by it, lifted, etc.”⁴⁶

In this two quotes, two important concepts, ‘spontaneously movement’ and ‘will’, are mentioned. Here, Husserl emphasizes the concept of will again and again. I agree that throughout Husserl’s discussion, the idea of ‘will’ is ambiguous, it is not a well-founded concept and Husserl never provides a clear definition of it. In some paragraph, Husserl may treat ‘will’ as a synonym of ‘motivation’. By using this concept, Husserl wants to point out that within our perceptual experience, our own body does not only follow the natural law, but also follow the will and motivation of the ego.

However, only the involvement of will/motivation is not enough. Husserl points out that we apprehend our own body in a special way so that our own body can act according to our own will, and this is the foundation of ‘spontaneous movement’. In the quote mentioned above, Husserl points out that ‘sheer materials things only partake of spontaneous movement in a mediate way, but body are immediately spontaneously movable’. For example, when a physical object is falling down, I move

⁴⁵Ibid., p.159

⁴⁶Ibid., p.159

my hand and grasp it. At this moment, both the movement of the physical object and my hand is in accordance with my 'will', but the material things only partake of spontaneous movement in a mediate way, which is my hand, and only my hand is spontaneously movable. Here, the idea of 'kinesthetic sensation' is the key to explain the difference between them. Actually, we experience the physical object by apprehending their real properties externally, e.g. through touching, watching, etc. But we experience our own body in a more intimate way, and the idea of 'kinesthetic sensations' refers to this 'intimate way'. Husserl says that "[Kinesthetic sensations] It makes the unity between the Body and the freely moveable thing more intimate."⁴⁷ We can understand that kinesthetic sensation is a special kind of sensation through which we can apprehend the movement and position of the different parts of our sensing organs. For example, when I want to raise my left hand, I have no need to confirm the starting position of my left hand externally, such as through watching at my left hand; rather, I can directly apprehend my left hand's position and raise it up. The sensation that I rely on is known as kinesthetic sensation. Through kinesthetic sensation, the bodily subject can easily coordinate different parts of sense organs to be involved in the apprehension of physical object and we can experience our own body as a unity. It is true that the conception of 'kinesthetic sensation' is very essential in the explanation

⁴⁷Ibid., p.158

of our bodily experience, but Husserl doesn't elaborate on or explain 'kinesthetic sensations' from the biological or neurological point of view. Rather, he just tries to explain the role of kinesthetic sensations in perceptual field.

The reason for emphasizing the involvement of 'will' and spontaneous movement of our own body is that these elements let us understand that the constituting process of the perceptual experience is an active process. The relation between our sense organ and the perceived physical object is not only determined by natural laws, but also my own will. We can alter the perceptual content by altering our bodily gesture, and adjust the relation between I, as a bodily subject, and the perceived physical objects. In this context, Husserl claims that a kind of "if-then" causal relation contributes to the constitution of perceptual experience. In the process of constitution of perceptual experience, the conscious subject does not only consider the content which appears in the present moment of perceptual experience, but also consider how the content of experience will change to correspond to the alteration of the bodily gesture. To give a more precise example, in the visual perceptual field: if I am looking down at a table, the upper surface of the table will be given to me. At the same time, I aware that if I squat and look up to the same table, then the bottom surface of it will be given to me. The 'if-then' relation is important in the investigation of perceptual experience. It clearly shows us how the body is actively participating in

the constitution of perceptual experience, and the active participation of body makes body plays a special role in the structure of intentionality. I will further develop this view point in the following discussion.

To summarize, in these two sections, we have discussed the nature of ‘sensation’. We find that ‘sensations’ are immanent contents that appear in our perceptual experience. And ‘sensations’ is a kind of dependent objects, the presentation of sensations contain necessary connection with our own body. At the same time, we find that our own body is the origin of sensations, and sensations are generated in the encountering of our own body and physical object. In this situation, Husserl points out that body can be apprehended from two aspects: being ‘Körper’ and being ‘Leib’. These two aspects of body co-determine the constitution of perceptual experience. In the following paragraphs, I will further clarify how all those elements can facilitate our understanding of the structure of intentionality within the realm of perceptual experience.

Sensations and the intentional objects– Adumbration and Transcendence

In the previous sections, I have clarified the idea of ‘sensation’ and our bodily experience. In this section, I am going to discuss how clarifying these two concepts facilitate our understanding of perception. Actually, Husserl’s theory of perception can

be explained through two pairs of concepts. They are 'adumbration and transcendence' and 'presence and absence'.

In Husserl's theory of perception, the conceptual distinction between 'transcendence' and 'adumbration' is very crucial. Here, the meaning of 'transcendence' is different from the meaning of the term 'transcendence' in the expression 'the riddle of transcendence'. For the latter locution of 'transcendence', its meaning is based on emphasizing the separation of the real object and the perceptual experience. In this context, the physical object is transcendent to the perceiving mental consciousness because it is unreachable. By contrast, the meaning of the former term 'transcendence' is a relative concept; it is relative to the concept of 'adumbration'. According to Husserl, the physical object is transcendent because it is given in perceptual experience through its adumbration. That means the intentional object never appears as a whole and completed object 'in' our consciousness, but is disclosed to the conscious subject in a constitutive process, and the features of this object are apprehended by the perceiving subject gradually.

For example, when we perceive a table, this table appears as a transcendent object in our perceptual experience. All features of this table are not given to us in a single moment of perceptual experience. In each single moment of experience, we can only experience an adumbration of this table. From the visual perspective, we can

only observe the table from one visual perspective in each moment. In every single moment, adumbrations of this table are given to us in different forms of sensations. In the stream of consciousness, our continuous perceptual experience is composed by all these moments of perception. In this process, a profile of adumbrations is given to us and our apprehension of this table is based on this profile of adumbrations.

In this context, the idea of sensation (Data of sensation or hyletic moments) is very crucial, because Husserl claims that transcendent objects are given to us through different forms of sensations and sensations are the real adumbrations of perceived objects. He states this clearly in the *'Ideas I'*:

“It must be borne clearly in mind that the Data of sensation which exercise the function of adumbrations of color, of smoothness, of shape, etc. (the function of “presentation”) are, of essential necessity, entirely different from color simpliciter, smoothness simpliciter, shape simpliciter, and, in short, from all kinds of moments belonging to physical things. The adumbration, though called by the same name, of essential necessity is not of the same genus as the one to which the adumbrated belongs. The adumbrating is a mental process. But a mental process is possible only as a mental process, and not as something spatial.”⁴⁸

According to Husserl's discussion, he agrees that the appearances of intentional objects are founded on sensations, in the sense that 'sensations' exercise the function of adumbrations of certain kinds of quality of the intended object. With reference to the quote above, we should notice that Husserl claims that 'the adumbrating is a

⁴⁸*Ideas I*, p.88

mental process', that means 'sensations' can be considered as some kinds of mental entities. At the same time, Husserl states that these adumbrations 'belong' to the physical things but 'sensation' itself is not identical to the intentional objects. And the reasons are as follow:

"These so-called immanent contents are therefore merely intended or intentional, while truly immanent contents, which belong to the real make-up (reelen Bestande) of the intentional experiences, are not intentional: they constitute the act, provide necessary points d' appui which render possible an intention, but are not themselves intended, not the objects presented in the act. I do not see color-sensations but colored things, I do not hear tone-sensations but the singer's song, etc."⁴⁹

About sensations, Husserl comments that they are the real make-up of intentional experience, but they are not intentional and only the intended objects are intentional. Husserl clearly states that 'I do not see color-sensations but colored things'. To make sense of this statement, we need to understand the structure of intentionality that is revealed in perceptual experience. Through the investigation of this structure, we can clarify how our consciousness can be directed to objectivities through sensations. But before that, we need to discuss another pair of concepts first.

Body and intentional objects – Presence and Absence

The second pair of concept that we need to explain is 'presence' and 'absence'. I

⁴⁹Ibid., p.99

have just discussed the distinction between ‘transcendence’ and ‘adumbration’, but it is not enough. ‘Adumbration’ always refers to some kinds of content given in perceptual experience and these contents are something ‘present’. If we admit that the physical object is given to the perceiving subject adumbratively, that means we also admit that some adumbrations are not given at the same time, and those adumbrations can be considered as something ‘absent’. According to Husserl, not just the ‘present’, but both ‘present’ and ‘absent’ contribute to our constitution of perceived object. As Robert Sokolowski concluded that “Things are given in a mixture of presences and absences, just as they are given in a manifold of presentations. We should also notice that it is this identity, this invariant in presence and absence, to which we refer when we use words to name a thing.”⁵⁰

These two pairs of concepts, ‘transcendence – adumbration’ and ‘presence – absence’, are very important here. They can help us to further clarify how the body is involved in perceptual experience. When I perceive a physical object, we always find that the following situation may happen: “As I see those sides, I also intend, I cointended, the sides that are hidden. I see more than what strikes the eye. The presently visible sides are surrounded by a halo of potentially visible but actually

⁵⁰Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to phenomenology*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p.36

absent sides.⁵¹ In this situation, the absent sides are potentially visible because the perceiving subject is a bodily being. As I have mentioned before, the Body can be apprehended from two aspects: being 'Körper' and being 'Leib'. To be 'Leib' means that the conscious subject is animated amount those perceived objects, and make the absent sides become present through adjusting the position. For example, the back side of the wall in front of me is 'absent' at the beginning, but I can walk around it and make the absent sides presented to me. Here, the 'presence' is the adumbrations of the object that are given to us, and the 'absence' should be considered as the adumbrations that are potentially given to us. Through the alteration between 'present' and 'absent', the perceived object is constituted in perceptual experience. That means, the object itself is transcendence, because it is the unity of adumbrations (both presence and absence), and the involvement of our own Body is an indispensable condition of the constitution of perceptual object.

Structure of consciousness and the Idea of 'noema'

In the previous paragraphs, I have discussed the significant elements that are involved in the constitution of perceptual experience, and based on these discussions, we figure out the structure of consciousness that is revealed in acts of perception.

⁵¹Ibid., p.17

Based on the above discussion, the first thing I would like to clarify is the concept of consciousness. As I have already mentioned, Husserl does not consider consciousness as abstract mental entity, but try to explain consciousness in terms of conscious acts. In acts of perception, the perceiving conscious subject does not appear as mental being, but a psychophysical unity, Husserl says:

“Nevertheless consciousness and physicalness are a combined whole, combined into the single psychophysical unities which we call animalia and, at the highest level, combined into real unity of the whole world.⁵²”

As a constituting subject within perceptual experience, our consciousness and its physicalness, which is our body, are a combined whole. The validity of this claim is based on three facts. The first one is that all sensations appearing in consciousness are localized in the Body or essentially presented to us from an embodied point of view. The second one is that we experience our own Body in a more intimate way; we can apprehend and control our own body internally through kinaesthetic sensations and will. The third one is that the Body appears to be our sense organ, and the presentation of sensation is determined by the physical relation between Body and perceived physical objects. Based on this three facts, we find that ‘Body’ is a necessary condition of perception and the conscious subject is essentially appears to be a psychophysical unity in acts of perception. This phenomenon can be known as the

⁵²*Ideas I*, p.82

embodiment of subjectivity.

The second thing I would like to clarify is the concept of 'noesis'. 'Noesis' refers to the subjective contents or conditions provided by the constituting subject within perceptual experience. 'Noesis' is closely related to our understanding of 'noema', because the givenness of perceived object is determined by how it is perceived by the perceiving subject. Scholar, Dan Zahavi, points out that "[In case of perception], there is no pure point of view and there is no view from nowhere, there is only an embodied point of view."⁵³ Based on our previous discussion, we find that constitution of the perceived object is determined by several factors which are directly or indirectly related to our own body. Firstly, the givenness of the perceived objects must conform to different forms of sensation. The perceived objects are given in tactual field, visual field, etc, through different kinds of sensations. About form of sensation, Husserl claims that "The form of intuition, the lawful character of the adumbrations, and, therewith, the form of the order of orientation around a center, all this is necessarily preserved."⁵⁴ Referring to the quote, we further notice that sensations are not disorderly given in perceptual experience. Sensation is always localized in the parts of the Body (sense organ) which 'meet' the perceived object. As Husserl points out that "The Body then has, for its particular Ego, the unique distinction of bearing in itself

⁵³ Zahavi, Dan, *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford University Press, 2003. p.98

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.166

the zero point of all these orientations. [...] It is thus that all things of the surrounding world possess an orientation to the Body, just as, accordingly, all expressions of orientation imply this relation.”⁵⁵ So, the givenness of sensation is also determined by the relation between the perceiving ‘Body’ and the perceived objects, and the relation between is real relation. We should keep in mind that the Body can be considered as ‘Körper’ or ‘Leib’. To be Körper means that the embodied subjectivity is integrated into the material nature, and the encountering of perceiving subject and perceived object are determined by natural law. At the same time, to be ‘Leib’ means that the embodied subjectivity appears to be an animated being in the nature, and the encountering of perceived subject and perceived object are determined by will/motivation of the perceiving subject. As I have mentioned, the appearance of physical object is given in a mixture of presences and absences, then, the situation of presentation is determined by the encountering of subject and object, which is affected by both subjective factors (will/motivation) and objective factors (natural law). The concept of ‘noesis’ refers to the subjective conditions involved in the constitution of conscious experience. In case of perception, ‘the forms of sensation’ and ‘the involvement of Body’ are the two most significance conditions, and our understanding of perceptual noema is founded on these two condition.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp.166

'Noema' refers to the objectivities that appear in our conscious experience. The conception of 'noema' within perceptual experience becomes a problem to us, because we always question whether the perceptual objectivity is physical or mental in nature. In some sense, it should be 'physical' because it is supposed to be real object in the world. In some other sense, it should be 'mental' because it is something which exists 'in' consciousness. However, based on the above discussions, we find that both of these two statements are problematic, and the mistake they made is over-simplifying acts of perception. The problems of considering the perceived object as something purely 'mental' is that it treats perceived "real world" as if it is a merely subjective projection and overlooks the physical nature does also affect our perception. To consider the perceived object as something purely 'physical' is also problematic because it neglects the mentally subjective conditions, e.g. forms of sensibility, which determine the appearance of perceived objects. Actually, an act of perception is a complicated constituting process, and the objects constituted in it are determined by both external physical and internal mental factors, because the involvement of 'sensation' and 'Body' are the two necessary conditions to make perception possible. Based on the discussions above, we can further understand an important question mentioned in Husserl's theory of perception, i.e. the meaning of the concept of "in consciousness". We always find it difficult to explain the meaning of "in

consciousness". In "Logical Investigations", Husserl emphasizes that the meaning of "in consciousness" is not alike "in a box", but he fail to provide further explanation of the meaning of 'in' in the same paragraph. But based on the discussions above, we can understand that the analogy of 'in a box' does not fit to explain the situation of "in consciousness" in the context of perception in certain aspects. Firstly, a box is an enclosed area and there is a barrier between 'inside a box' and 'outside a box'. On the contrary, we never experience consciousness as a self-enclosed mental being, but only as conscious being revealed in conscious acts. In case of perception, my consciousness is essentially embodied in a Body and I am an animate bodily being in the material world. In this sense, consciousness is not a private and self-enclosed mental being but something 'public' and has interaction with the perceived real objects. The perceived objects are given to us through 'sensations' and sensations are essentially localized in Body or presented to us from an embodied point of view; and determined by the encountering of Body and perceived objects. Indeed, according to Husserl, perceiving an object does not equal to putting an object in consciousness, perception is a complicated constituting process. Hardy has the following comment: "Consciousness is not like an empty container into which ready-made objects of knowledge, or its representatives, are simply inserted. Rather, it is a highly complex temporal system of mental processes by which the givenness of the known object is

“constituted.”⁵⁶ In the first chapter of this thesis, I have mentioned the table proposed by Dagfinn Føllesdal. Referring to the table, Føllesdal claims that ‘hyle’ or ‘sense date’ is just the material phases of experience. The interactions between Body and perceived objects also determine the presentation of the adumbrations of the perceived objects. In this context, the perceived object itself is transcendent and given to us through absence and presence. So, it is correct to say that our perception is mediated by sensation, and it is also true that we have inappropriate sensations sometimes, as Husserl also confirms that “The Objective world has existence by virtue of a harmonious confirmation of the apperceptive constitution, once this has succeeded: a confirmation thereof by the continuance of experiencing life with a consistent harmoniousness, which always becomes re-established as extending through any “corrections” that may be required to that end.”⁵⁷ But we cannot say that we intend to sensations rather than the real object itself.

A Response to the Riddle of Transcendence

Up till now, we have discussed the nature of act of perception and understand the constitution of the physical object. Also, in the previous section, we have clarified the

⁵⁶*The Idea of Phenomenology*, pp.8-9

⁵⁷Husserl, Edmund, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Dorion Cairns, trans., The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1966 (c1964). p.126 (*Cartesian Meditation*)

relation between intentional object and actual object. At this stage, we can say that we have enough resources to settle the 'riddle of transcendence' and the 'problem of correspondence', which are the two most important problems we face in the investigation of perception.

From the phenomenological point of view, the riddle of transcendence is actually not a well-founded question. The riddle of transcendence is based a specific viewpoint about 'consciousness' and 'physical world'. The riddle of transcendence doubts that consciousness can go beyond itself and reach the 'transcendent object'. However, we may agree that this claim is quite counter-intuitive, and we always strongly feel that we can apprehend the 'actual world' through experience. For example, we never believe the friends I am greeting or the food I am eating is just an 'idea' in our mental process. We have a strong sense that they are real existents. I think this sense of reality is not irrational or groundless, and this can be explained through investigating our own perceptual experience.

Based on our previous analysis about perceptual experience, we should notice that the main problem included in the riddle of transcendence is the conception of consciousness as a pure mental entity. But the truth is that consciousness and body appear to be a combined whole, a psychophysical unity, in perceptual experience. In this sense, the perceiving subject and the perceived object are homogeneous.

Perception does not mean that a mental being goes beyond itself and try to reach to a transcendent object. In this picture, consciousness may appear as if it is a self-sufficient mental being. The real case is that consciousness is necessarily combined with body and embedded in the material nature. This is because the physical object is apprehended by the perceiving subject through sensation in a constituting process, and this constituting process is conditioned by both physical and psychological factors.

In Husserl's discussion, it is true that he also makes use of the word 'transcendence', but its meaning is totally different from the transcendence used in 'the riddle of transcendence'. Transcendence in the latter sense is a synonym of 'unreachable', because the physical object is unreachable to consciousness. On the contrary, transcendence in the former sense is a concept which is founded on adumbrations. Therefore, being transcendent means that this object is a totality of all actual and potential adumbrations of it. In this sense, the object is reachable through its adumbrations.

About the problem of correspondence, we can also claim that it is not a justifiable problem from the phenomenological point of view. When we raise this question, we have already presupposed that there is a mind-independent world existing and the objects in it contain certain features, and 'knowledge' refers to the

apprehension of those features. If we accept that 'the riddle of transcendence' and the conceptual framework behind (our perception of the object and the object itself belong to two separate realms) are justified, then we should admit that the correspondence between our perception and the object itself is doubtful. However, I have already pointed out the conceptual framework behind 'the riddle of transcendence' is problematic. From the phenomenological point of view, constitutive consciousness is the source of all meaning. The appropriate description is not how our perception conformed to the features of the mind-independent object. On the contrary, the features of 'actual object' is founded our form of sensation, because those objects are adumbrated through sensations. For example, it is given that this apple is red in color, this means the redness of this apple is its feature. Here, it has no reason to doubt whether our sensation of this redness correspond to the redness of this apple, because the feature, redness, of this apple is founded on our visual form of sensation. We should be careful that it is reasonable to doubt whether a moment of sensation corresponds to the object's feature; but there is unjustified to doubt that sensation as a whole does not correspond to the object's feature. I think some perspectives mentioned in the passage 'What is it like to be a bat', which is written by Thomas Nagel, can help us to understand those point of view. In this passage, Nagel claims that bat is a kind of mammal and its physiological structure is close to human being,

we are quite sure that bat perceives the external world from certain perspective and has its own kind of perceptual experience. But the phenomenological features of this kind of experience are quite unique, since bats have sensory apparatus that is so different from ours. Nagel says ‘now we know that most bats (the microchiroptera, to be precise) perceive the external world primarily by sonar, or echolocation, detecting the reflections, from objects within range, of their own rapid, subtly modulated, high-frequency shrieks.’⁵⁸ Their brains are designed to correlate the outgoing impulses with the subsequent echoes, and the information thus acquired enables bats to make precise discriminations of distance, size, shape, motion, and texture comparable to those we make by vision. In this context, Nagel proposes the question: “What it is like for a bat to be a bat?” In this thesis, we are not talking about issues in philosophy of mind, but through this thought experiment, we find that it is quite reasonable to affirm that the species of bat has its own kind of perceptual experience which is different from human being. The features of physical objects may appear differently in bat’s perceptual experience. But, can we say that bat could never apprehend the ‘real’ properties of physical objects? The answer should be negative. It is more proper to say that bats can perceive the actual world from the bat’s point of view, because they experience the actual world through its own form of perception.

⁵⁸Nagel, Thomas, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”, in *Philosophy of mind classic and contemporary reading*, ed. by David J. Chalmers. Oxford University Press, 2002. p.220

So, the problem of correspondence is not a real problem. We should not doubt whether the appearance of perceived object which appears in perceptual experience corresponds to the features of real object. The distinction between these two concepts is problematic. The idea of 'real object' is always subjective-relative. An object that does not relate to a conscious subject in any aspect is meaningless; it must somehow be related to the constituting subject, because the constituting consciousness is the origin of all meaning. Based on this understanding, we can consider that the problem of correspondence is a false problem.

Summary

In this chapter, I try to discuss the process of the constitution of physical objects and we can understand what perception is through this discussion. Finally, we understand that the involvement of our own body and sensations are two main factors that determine the appearance of physical objects. To apprehend a physical object is a complicated process, and we intend to the physical object through sensation. Based on our understanding of perception, I have explained how Husserl's discussion helps us to settle the riddle of transcendent and the problem of correspondence. In the next chapter, I am going to clarify whether Husserl is a realist or an idealist.

Chapter 3: Transcendental Idealism vs. Perceptual Realism

In the previous chapter, I have discussed what perception is and explained that the ideal structure of acts of perception can be clarified through the relations among Body, sensation and intended object. According to Husserl's discussion, we should admit that the perception of a physical object is founded on or mediated by sensations. However, we do not intend to sensations, but intend to intentional objects through sensations. Sensation is just one of the elements that are involved in the constitution of physical objects. That means the idea of 'sensation' and 'intentional object' are two different concepts.

Based on the above discussion, in this chapter, I am going to discuss whether Husserl is a realist or an idealist. Actually, Husserl is neither a realist nor an idealist in the traditional sense. Rather, his position is known as the transcendental idealism and perceptual realism. In the following paragraphs, I will firstly explain that how Husserl's phenomenology shows us that both realism and idealism in the traditional sense is problematic. Then, I will try to clarify Husserl's conception of 'transcendental idealism' by comparing Husserl's transcendental idealism with Kant's. In the last section, I am going to argue that Husserl is more likely to be a realist, but his realism can be known as perceptual realism. In this section, I will also discuss Harrison Hall's

article: “Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?”⁵⁹In this article, Hall concludes that ‘His [Husserl’s] realism is pre-philosophical; his ‘idealism’ [transcendental idealism] non-metaphysical. And his radical neutrality consists not of the philosophical refusal or inability to answer a metaphysical question.’⁶⁰ His conclusion is somehow problematic; I am going to explain why.

Is Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?

Generally speaking, ‘realism’ and ‘idealism’ represent two different perspectives towards the existence of the external world. According to Hall, “the realism/idealism issue can be specified in terms of the following question: Is there a world of material objects which exists external to and independent of consciousness? Realism consists in an affirmative, idealism in a negative, answer to this question.”⁶¹ Actually, the standpoint of realism is similar to our common sensual belief. In our daily life without any philosophical reflection, we generally accept that those things we encounter exist in the real world, no matter if they are perceived by the conscious subject or not. Furthermore, the natural scientists will simply accept that the objective material nature, which is their research object, exists. All those people can be considered as

⁵⁹Hall, Harrison, “Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?” in *Husserl, intentionality and cognitive science*, ed. by Dreyfus, Hubert L. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982. (Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?)

⁶⁰Ibid., p.186

⁶¹Ibid., p.169

realist or naïve realist because they simply accept that the external world exists. Idealism is a position that is antithetic to realism. The idealist claims that realism is problematic because it ignores the involvement of the knowing subject which ‘stands behind’ the external world. When we talk about the ‘external world’, it is never the world in itself but the external world perceived by the conscious subject. As involvement of the knowing subject is a necessary condition of ‘talking’ about the external world, the idealist claims that the ‘external world’ is nothing but something which exists in the mental activities of the conscious subject. Based on this claim, the idealist further contends that the ‘real’ external world is unknown to us, as what the knowing subject can really reach is just the ‘ideas’ in our own mind. To idealism, both realism and natural scientific theory are problematic and groundless, because they are proposed by the knowing subject in order to explain something the knowing subject could never know.

Based on our discussions in the previous chapters, it is reasonable to conclude that Husserl neither supports idealism nor realism in the traditional sense.

Firstly, Husserl does not support the standpoint of realism in the traditional sense, and he considers it as ‘naïve realism’. It is ‘naïve’ because it unconditionally affirms the existence of the external world, but this affirming attitude is groundless. According to Husserl, only the givenness in conscious experience is absolute,

everything that we can 'talk about' or whose existence we can affirm must be directly or indirectly given in subjective conscious experience. Husserl always emphasizes that the constituting subject is the foundation of the 'meaning' of all kinds of 'being', including the material nature, and the involvement of that conscious subject is an element that could not be ignored. According to Hall's definition of realism, it is a position which affirms that 'there is a world of material objects which exists external to and independent of consciousness.' Here, Husserl agrees that 'there is a world which exists external to consciousness,' because the external world is given to us in perceptual experience. Indeed, phenomenological research helps us to clarify how a world of material objects which is external to consciousness is constituted in perceptual experience. But Husserl rejects the viewpoint that 'there is a world which exists independently of consciousness.' According to Husserl, the object that is totally independent of consciousness is unthinkable and meaningless to us. All kinds of object must be directly or indirectly given in conscious experience so that they can be apprehended by the subject. To claim that there is existence of a world of material objects which is independent of consciousness is non-sense. So Husserl rejects naïve realism and he is surely not a realist in the traditional sense.

In the first glance, Husserl seems to be an idealist because Husserl's phenomenology is a research of conscious experience and Husserl always remarks on

the absoluteness of transcendental consciousness. We are always tempted to conclude that Husserl only admits the existence of mental conscious experience and says nothing about the existence of the physical real world. Indeed, Husserl's discussion shares some similarities with traditional idealist, and many scholars do support the idealistic interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology for different reasons. In my point of view, it is wrong to say that Husserl is an idealist in traditional sense, because Husserl's discussion of perception lets understand that idealism in the traditional sense misconceives the nature of perception. Idealism in the traditional sense is problematic not because it takes the involvement of consciousness seriously, but because it overemphasizes the separation of the mental realm and the physical realm, and considers the perceiving consciousness as a self-contained entity and further concludes that the real external world is unreachable. The representative theory of perception is a representative of classical idealism. It claims that perception is a process that the perceiving subject apprehends some kinds of mental entities which represent 'real objects' outside.

Based on our discussion of Husserl's theory of perception in the previous chapters, it is obvious that Husserl disagrees with classical idealism in certain aspects. Firstly, it is true that Husserl claims that only conscious experience is absolute, but he doesn't claim that it is a pure mental entity. In the case of perception, the perceiving

consciousness doesn't appear as a private self-contained mental being which has no relation to the real world, rather, it is embodied in the 'Body' and embedded in the causal nexus of material nature. Furthermore, it is true that our perception of physical object is mediated by sensations. It doesn't mean that the perceiving consciousness creates some kinds of mental entity to 'represent' the actual objects or the perceived objects are just subjective projection of the perceiving consciousness. Rather, in acts of perception, the perceiving consciousness is directed to the real object through the adumbrations (sensations) of this object, and the presentations of adumbrations are determined by both psychological and physical factors. Husserl tries to make this point clear in the following quote:

"Now, this color, put into parenthesis, belongs to the noema. But it does not belong to the mental process of perception as a really inherent component piece, although we can also find in to "something like color:" namely, the "sensed color," that hyletic moment of the concrete mental process by which the noematic, or "objective," color is "adumbrated."⁶²

In this quote, we find that Husserl distinguishes between 'the color [which] belongs to the noema' and 'the sensed color'. According to Husserl, the sensed color is the concrete mental process in which the actual object's color is adumbrated. In this expression, it is quite clear that 'actual object' in the intuitive sense is identical to 'intentional object' in act of perception. To be more precise, we can say that an apple

⁶²*Ideas I*, pp.237

is a real object that is red in color. But here, the redness of the apple is just an ideal concept, because the redness is confirmed to us through the hyletic moment or the sensed color in the mental process. In different circumstances, the sensed red color undergoes changes accordingly. And our apprehension of the actual object's color is founded on this process. In this context, the relation between 'intentional object' and 'actual object' can be explained. 'Intentional object' and 'actual object' are not two different kinds of entities. It is more appropriate to say that 'intentional object' is the aspects of the 'actual object' that are apprehended by the conscious subject, and the 'actual object' itself is transcendent which means it is the totality of all possible aspects that can be apprehended by the conscious subject. In case of perception, we should understand that perception is a complicated constituting process in which both physical elements and psychological elements penetrate into each other and co-determine the givenness of the perceptual contents. The 'intentional object' in perceptual experience refers to the different aspects of the actual object which is apprehended by the subject through the perceptual way. And those aspects are co-determined by certain mental factors and physical factors that can be explained through the structure of intentionality.

One remark should be added here to facilitate our understanding of the difference between Husserl's phenomenology and traditional idealism. Those who support the

idealistic interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology always quote Husserl's discussion in §49 of *Ideas I* to justify the idealistic interpretation of Husserl's theory of perception. The sub-topic of this section is: "Absolute consciousness as the residuum after the annihilation of the world." In this section, he introduces the notion of a hypothetical annihilation of the physical world. Husserl says:

"let us recall the possibility of non-being of everything physically transcendent: it then becomes evident that while the being of consciousness, of any stream of mental processes whatever, would indeed be necessarily modified by an annihilation of the world of physical things, its own existence would not be touched."⁶³

If we just focus on this sentence, it seems that Husserl is really a classical idealist because he claims that the existence of consciousness would not be touched even if the annihilation of the physical world happens. But actually, if we understand this sentence in this way, we do mistakenly over-interpret this sentence. The traditional idealist contends that (1) mental consciousness and physical world are two independent entities and (2) mental consciousness intends to mental objects in consciousness rather than physical objects in the real world. If we just refer to this sentence, we do not have sufficient evidence to say that Husserl agrees with these two claims.

Firstly, about (1), Husserl never claims that consciousness and physical object are two independent entities; rather, he always emphasizes that the presentation of the

⁶³*Ideas I*, p.110

latter one is founded on the former one. With reference to the quote above, we shouldn't consider the term 'consciousness' as an independent mental entity; rather, it refers to the subjective conditions involved in conscious experience. To say that 'the annihilation of the physical world is possible' aims at showing us that the objective components of conscious experience are 'contingent', while the subjective components of conscious experience is, on the contrary, absolute and essential. Secondly, it is obvious that the quote mentioned above does not imply (2). According to the quote, Husserl just ambiguously claims that 'the being of consciousness would not be touched', but he never says that this remaining consciousness can still be considered as a 'perceiving subject', and perceptual experience is still possible. Indeed, based on our discussion in the two previous chapters, if all transcendent physical objects, including our own 'Body' and all intended physical objects, really disappear at once, the contents remaining in our conscious experience (if any) are far from qualified as perceptual experience.

Therefore, I don't think that the discussion in §49 of *Ideas I* can justify the idealistic interpretation in the traditional sense of Husserl's phenomenology.

Husserl's transcendental idealism

Based on the above discussion, Husserl is surely not an idealist in the traditional

sense. In fact, Husserl always emphasizes that his standpoint is known as ‘transcendental idealism’. However, we should keep in mind that ‘transcendental idealism’ is not identical to classic idealism. It is true that ‘transcendental idealism’ is an ambiguous concept, and many misunderstandings are led from this concept. It is obvious that Husserl inherits this concept from Kant, but even Kant’s idea of transcendental idealism is also not crystal clear, and many scholars of Kant’s philosophy have proposed different interpretations of this concept. One of these interpretations claims that ‘transcendental idealism’ is not a metaphysical claim, but an epistemological claim. In my point of view, this interpretation is more convincing and it can help us to understand the relation between Kant and Husserl. Through some concise discussion of Kant’s transcendental idealism, we can understand Husserl’s position more clearly.

Kant’s idea of transcendental idealism is founded on his conception of ‘space’ and ‘time’ (I will mainly focus on his discussion on ‘space’). According to Kant’s discussion in the “*Critique of Pure Reason*” (“*First Critique*”), the experiential space is not an objective space, but our ‘form of intuition’. He tries to explain ‘space’ in the following ways:

“Space is not an empirical concept that has been abstracted from outer experiences.”⁶⁴

“Space is a necessary a priori presentation that underlies all outer intuitions. We can never have a presentation of there being no objects encountered in it.”⁶⁵

“Hence we assert that space is empirically real (as regards all possible outer experience), despite asserting that space is transcendently ideal, ie., that it is nothing as soon as we omit [that space is] the condition of the possibility of all experience and suppose space to be something underlying things in themselves.”⁶⁶

In the *First Critique*, Kant emphasizes that ‘space’ is ‘transcendentally ideal’. It is not a kind of entity that is similar to physical object, but our pure form of intuition. Based on his conception of ‘space’ (also ‘time’), he distinguishes between “appearance” and “things in themselves”. He claims that our apprehensions of objects have a boundary, we can only apprehend those objects which conform to our forms of sensibility, and they are known as “appearance”, and those we can never apprehend are called “things in themselves”.

However, to say that ‘space’ is our ‘form of sensibility’ and to distinguish between ‘appearance’ and ‘things in themselves’ are vague expressions, and they lead to several interpretations. There are two major interpretations of Kant’s transcendental idealism, known as the ‘two-world view’ and the ‘two-aspect view’. The major representative of the ‘two-aspect view’ interpretation is Henry Allison. In Allison’s

⁶⁴Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Werner S. Pluhar trans, with an Introduction by Patricia W. Kitcher, Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996. p.77 (*Critique of Pure Reason*)

⁶⁵*Critique of Pure Reason*, p.78

⁶⁶*Critique of Pure Reason*, p.82

work, "*Kant's Transcendental Idealism*"⁶⁷, he claims that the traditional "two-world" view interpretation of Kant only leads to a summary dismissal of transcendental idealism as a viable philosophical position,⁶⁸ but the two-aspect view try to show that Kant's transcendental idealism is "still worthy of serious consideration."⁶⁹ Here, I think the 'two-aspect view' is more convincing and the 'two-aspect view' interpretation of transcendental idealism can facilitate our understanding of Husserl's transcendental idealism.

Actually, the 'two-world view' interpretation claims that 'appearance' and 'things in themselves' refer to two different kinds of entity. As Kant claims that 'space' and 'time' are our pure forms of sensibility, it implies that the spatial-temporal objects that we experience are something which exist in our mind, and they are known as 'appearance'. Those entities that exist out of our mind are known as 'things in themselves' and they are something unknown to us. Allison thinks that this "two world" view interpretation "leads to a summary dismissal of transcendental idealism

⁶⁷Allison, Henry E., *Kant's Transcendental Idealism (rev. and enl. ed.)*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. (*Kant's transcendental idealism*)

⁶⁸ "To be sure, there has arisen a lively dispute concerning the interpretation of this idealism [transcendental idealism], with some, myself included, arguing for a version of what is usually called a "two-aspect" view (to be discussed below). Nevertheless, many interpreters continue to attribute to Kant the traditional "two-object" or "two-world" view or some close facsimile thereof, and in most (though not all) cases this reading is combined with a summary dismissal of transcendental idealism as a viable philosophical position." from *Kant's transcendental idealism*, p.3

⁶⁹*Kant's transcendental idealism*, p.4

as a viable philosophical position.”⁷⁰ So, he proposes the “two-aspect” view interpretation of Kant. I agree that the “two world” view interpretation makes Kant’s transcendental idealism a viable philosophical position, because it may lead to serious problem, i.e. the problem of affection, the puzzle of the relation of ‘appearance’ and ‘thing in itself’, etc. To overcome those problems, Allison tries to make sense of Kant’s transcendental idealism in the following ways:

“It argues that this idealism [transcendental idealism] is more properly seen as epistemological or perhaps “meta-epistemological” than as metaphysical in nature, since it is grounded in an analysis of the discursive nature of human cognition.”⁷¹

“By an epistemic condition is here understood a necessary condition for the representation of objects, [...]”⁷²

“Epistemic conditions share with the former the property of being “subjective,” that is, they reflect the structure and operations of the human mind.”⁷³

According to the above quotes, Allison claims that “transcendental idealism” does not aim at explaining metaphysical issues; rather, it aims at explaining “epistemic conditions”, which refer to the necessary condition of apprehension of objects. Therefore, Allison further claims that “things as they appear” (appearance) and “things as they are in themselves” (things in themselves) are not “two ontologically

⁷⁰*Kant's transcendental idealism*, p.4

⁷¹*Kant's transcendental idealism*, p.4

⁷²*Kant's transcendental idealism*, p.11

⁷³*Kant's transcendental idealism*, p.11

distinct sets of entities.”⁷⁴ Rather, they should “be understood as holding between two ways of considering things.”⁷⁵ To be precise, ‘space’ and ‘time’ as ‘forms of sensibility’ shouldn’t be considered as something like containers in our mind. They shouldn’t be considered as a ‘noun’, rather, they are more likely to be an adverb. That means the experiential “space and time as forms of sensibility” means that the objects must be presented to us ‘spatially’ and ‘temporally’. Only these aspects of the objects that can be presented to us spatially and temporally are known to us as appearance of objects, and those aspects that cannot be known to us are aspects of ‘things in themselves’. And our apprehensions of objects are limited by the epistemic conditions which are ‘space’ and ‘time’.

In my point of view, Husserl’s idea of transcendental idealism is similar to the ‘two-aspects’ view interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism. In Husserl’s phenomenological investigation, his pure description and analysis of perceptual experience let us understand how the ‘external world’ is constituted. Through the former discussions, we understand that the ‘Body’ and the related ‘hyletic moments’ are the subjective conditions involved in the constitution of the external world. Here, Husserl claims that his research is also known as ‘transcendental idealism’, because

⁷⁴*Kant’s transcendental idealism*, p.16

⁷⁵*Kant’s transcendental idealism*, p.16

he wants to point out that phenomenological research does not only aim at describing some facts about perceptual experience, it also contains epistemological implications. Here, the logic is simple: if we agree that ‘Body’ and ‘hyletic moments’ are two essential elements that make possible perception, we should also admit that the appearance of the external world (or real world) is conditioned by those subjective conditions (or epistemic conditions). The real world must conform to the subjective conditions of the perceiving subject, so that it can be given to the conscious subject. From this point of view, Husserl’s philosophical project shares some similarities with Kant’s. For example, Kant argues that ‘space’ is our ‘form of sensibility’ and the appearance of objects must be spatially presented to us. However, Husserl argues that our perceptual experience is conditioned by our own ‘Body’, and the physical objects are presented to us from an embodied point of view. Here, I am not going to discuss the differences between Kant’s conception of space and Husserl’s.⁷⁶ I just want to show that both Kant and Husserl agree that our knowledge or our apprehensions of objects are limited by the subjective conditions, and this is the core theme of ‘transcendental idealism’.

⁷⁶Indeed, to compare Kant’s conception of space and Husserl’s is a topic that warrants further investigation. Actually, Kant’s conception of the relation between ‘body’ and ‘space’ are quite different from Husserl’s. For example, Kant always considers ‘Body’ as just an object presented in ‘space’ (in the First Critique, Kant says that “If from your experiential concept of a body [Körper] you gradually omit everything that is empirical in a body—the color, the hardness or softness, the weight, even the impenetrability—there yet remains the space that was occupied by the body (which has now entirely vanished), and this space you cannot omit [from the concept].” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, pp.47)), but Husserl always wants to show us that the experiential space is founded on our bodily experience.

Therefore, Husserl's 'transcendental idealism' is not a metaphysical claim but an epistemological one. Actually, his transcendental idealism is also founded on the phenomenological method. As I have discussed in Chapter One, exercising 'epoché' and 'reduction' let us recognize that involvement of consciousness is a necessary condition of the possibility of the apprehension of different kinds of objectivity. And the subjective consciousness can be considered as transcendental because it takes the constitutive roles in the constitution of all kinds of objectivities. So, in the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl clearly states that "If transcendental subjectivity is the universe of possible sense, then an outside is precisely—nonsense."⁷⁷ In this context, we can say that transcendental idealism is an inevitable consequence of exercising phenomenological method.

According to Husserl, Phenomenology is transcendental idealism because it is a research of this constituting subjective consciousness. Now, we agree that transcendental idealism refers to certain epistemological claims which points out the subjective conditions of the possibility of the apprehensions of objectivities. But actually, those epistemological claims can help us to formulate a response to traditional metaphysical question. The research of perceptual experience above let us understand that this constituting conscious subject is an embodied subject and

⁷⁷Cartesian Meditations, p.84

perceive the world through sensation, and based on these claims, we can understand the nature of 'real world' which is constituted by this subject. And this notion of 'real world' is known as Husserl's perceptual realism.

Husserl's perceptual realism

In the previous two chapters, I have discussed how Husserl's phenomenology shows us that both traditional realism and idealism are problematic and explained Husserl's conception of transcendental idealism. A scholar of Husserl's phenomenology, Hall Harrison, in his article, "Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?", concludes Husserl's position in the following way:

'His realism is pre-philosophical; his 'idealism' [transcendental idealism] non-metaphysical. And his radical neutrality consists not of the philosophical refusal or inability to answer a metaphysical question, but is, rather, the dismissal of any question that could call for the metaphysical response of the traditional realist or idealist as illegitimate.'⁷⁸

Based on the above discussions, I agree that Husserl's phenomenology does show us that traditional realism and idealism are illegitimate. I also agree that Husserl's transcendental idealism is non-metaphysical, because it should be 'epistemological'. However, to say that Husserl dismisses the metaphysical problem and says nothing about it is not appropriate. In my point of view, Husserl is more

⁷⁸*Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?*, p.186

likely to be a realist, and his realistic position is known as ‘perceptual realism’ and his perceptual realism is founded on his transcendental idealism, i.e. the epistemic conditions of subject. The reason is simple: if someone clearly knows how bread is made in the kitchen, it is reasonable to say that he knows what bread is. Now, the situation is the same. If I know how the real world is constituted in perceptual experience, it is also reasonable to say that I know what the real world is. The objectives of Husserl’s radical neutrality is to investigate (describe and analyze) conscious experience without being affected by any ‘theoretical judgment’. The investigation can help us to understand how the conscious subject is related to physical objects. And finally, the ‘real world’ that is given in perceptual experience is disclosed to us. In order to make my point more clearly, I will explain Husserl’s conception of the real world in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, in the above quote, Hall says that “his [Husserl’s] realism is pre-philosophical.” We notice that it is quite weird to say that ‘his realism is pre-philosophical’, because nobody will claim that the external world does not exist without any philosophical reflection, and it is reasonable to say that everybody is a realist in their daily life. Actually, Hall’s judgment is based on Husserl’s discussion in ‘*Ideas I*’. In ‘*Ideas I*’, Husserl tries to describe the world given to us in the ‘natural attitude’ and he claims that this is the ‘real world’ given to us in our daily life.

Husserl's description is as follow:

“this world is there for me not only as a world of mere things, but also with the same immediacy as a world of objects with values, a world of goods, a practical world.”⁷⁹

Here, Husserl is not talking about something which is commonsensical. Rather, he wants to disclose the world which appears to us in our pre-reflective experience and tries to point out that such world which is ‘on hand’ for me can be considered as ‘real’ in the primary sense. However, this description is not a justification of realism. It is just the ‘starting point’ of Husserl’s phenomenological investigation. To be a ‘starting point’ means that the phenomenon described in this quote is something pending further investigation and explanation. Through describing the world in this way, Husserl tries to disclose to us the meaning of the ‘real’ world in the original sense to us. To be ‘real’ doesn’t mean that it should be mind-independent or it can only be apprehended through scientific theories; rather, it is a world that we live through and it is a practical world with values and goods. The description of the world given to us in the natural attitude is not an evidence to justify Husserl’s realism. It is more appropriate to say that Husserl is trying to reformulate our idea of the ‘real world’. We should notice that this idea of ‘real world’ is much more complicated than the idea of ‘real world’ in traditional realism and this makes Husserl’s perceptual realism differs

⁷⁹*Ideas I*, p.53

from traditional realism. This is the beginning stage of developing his theory of perception.

Practicing ‘epoché’ and ‘phenomenological reduction’ is the second stage of the investigation. At this stage, Husserl parenthesizes all ‘judgments’ about being and claims that only the givenness in our conscious experience is absolute. I think Hall’s comments about Husserl’s metaphysical neutrality is based on his understanding of the phenomenological research method. As Hall claims that “his [Husserl] radical neutrality consists not of the philosophical refusal or inability to answer a metaphysical question, but is, rather, the dismissal of any question that could call for the metaphysical response of the traditional realist or idealist as illegitimate.⁸⁰” But this comment is not quite accurate. I agree that the practice of ‘epoché’ and ‘phenomenological reduction’ make phenomenological investigation becomes presupposition-less, and it is also true that Husserl tries to maintain his metaphysical neutrality in order to avoid being misled by any metaphysical judgment. We can say that maintaining a metaphysical neutral position is to mean nothing other than to disclose the true meaning of the ‘real world’. The meaning of this ‘real’ can be explained from several aspects, and Husserl’s perceptual realism is founded on this notion of ‘real’.

⁸⁰Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?, p. 186

Firstly, this 'real' should be 'real' in the intuitive sense, but not real in the theoretical sense. When we use the term of 'real', it always contains two different meanings in different context. The first one is 'real' in the intuitive sense and the second one is 'real' in the theoretical sense. In some context, we use the concept of 'real object' to refer to the object that is directly given in perceptual experience. For example, we say that this is a real pizza that we can eat. But in some other context, we use the concept of 'real object' to refer to the theoretical scientific objects. Those objects are not given to us through sensation, and they can only be apprehended through scientific theories. The natural scientist always claims that the 'actual object' is different from what it looks like. For example, chemists claim that a physical object is a bundle of atoms. In this sense, the 'real world' can only be apprehended by scientific theories. From Husserl's phenomenological point of view, 'real objects' in the intuitive sense can be considered as 'real' in primary sense, because those 'real objects' are given to us directly in perceptual experience. By contrast, 'real objects' in the theoretical sense can only be considered as 'real' in the derivative sense. Because they are not given to us directly in our conscious experience; what we really apprehend is just scientific judgments or theories.

Husserl's conception of 'real object' is 'real' in the intuitive sense. We can understand Husserl's position from the following quote:

“The tree simpliciter, the physical thing belonging to Nature, is nothing less than this perceived tree as perceived which, as perceptual sense, inseparably belongs to the perception. The tree simpliciter can burn up, be resolved into its chemical elements, etc. But the sense –the sense of this perception, something belonging necessarily to its essence—cannot burn up; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties.”⁸¹

In this quote, Husserl uses the perception of a tree as an example. On the one hand, he agrees that ‘the tree simpliciter can burn up, be resolved into its chemical elements’.

On the other hand, he emphasize that ‘the sense of this perception [is] something [...] that cannot burn up; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties.’ In the

first glance, it seems that these two claims are contradictory to each other, but actually

they do not. In this quote, we can understand that Husserl is trying to say that the tree,

which is supposed to be an actual object’, can be apprehended from different

perspectives. On the one hand, it can ‘be resolved into its chemical elements’, on the

other hand, it can be perceived through perceptual sense. These two perspectives are

irreducible to each other, and both these two perspectives help us to apprehend the

‘actual object’. The actual objects perceived through perceptual sense are considered

as ‘real’ in the primary sense, because it is directly given in perceptual experience.

And the givenness of this real world is conditioned by a series of subjective

conditions (or epistemic conditions), such as the involvement of ‘Body’, different

⁸¹*Ideas I*, p.216

‘forms of sensations’, etc.

According to Husserl, this ‘real world’ in the intuitive sense is not just a world of material objects, but also a world of objects with values, good. According to Husserl, the ‘real’ world can be distinguished into different layers of objective sense. As he says “There are different levels of apperception, corresponding to different layers of objective sense.”⁸² The basic layer of objective sense is the material nature. In this layer of objective sense, the ‘real world’ is composed by material physical objects, all these objects are directly given in our perceptual experience, e.g. an apple, an orange, a table. These objects are embedded in the nexus of causal relations which is governed by physical laws and appear as something external to us. These objects shouldn’t be considered as consciousness independent; rather, this real world is subject related, and the related subject is an embodied subject. About the constitution of this material nature, I have already explained it in chapter Two, so I am not going to repeat it here again.

This material nature is just the basic layer of objective sense. According to Husserl’s perceptual realism, he further points out that the ‘real world’ is indeed a cultural world. Husserl says:

“Everyone, as a matter of a priori necessity, lives in the same Nature, a Nature moreover that, with the necessary communalization of his life and the lives of others,

⁸²*Cartesian Meditations*, p. 111

he has fashioned into a cultural world in his individual and communalized living and doing – a world having human significances, even if it belongs to an extremely low cultural level.’⁸³

It is true that the word ‘culture’ is a vague term. Here, the notion of ‘culture’ is a collective term for certain abstract ideas, such as ‘value’, ‘practical aims’, etc.

Referring to the quote, ‘real world’ does not only refer to the material nature, but ‘a world having human significances.’ This is a very important point in Husserl’s perceptual realism. To have human significances means that the physical objects given in perceptual experience possess cultural meanings imposed on them by the subject.

We should notice that only a bodily being can impose cultural meanings on the perceived object. To be precise, within the realm of perceptual experience, when I say that ‘this is an apple,’ I do not only mean that this is a physical object, I also presuppose that ‘this is an apple that can be eaten;’ or ‘this is a tasty apple.’ This object is meaningful to me because I am a bodily being, and I can carry out different actions in the world. To live in the cultural world, the subject, I, is not just a pure observer; rather, I am a bodily being that is ‘living’ in this real world. Only because I am a bodily being and I perceive the world from an embodied point of view, the world with values, goods, and practical aims are meaningful to me. Furthermore, within my perceptual experience, I also experience other bodily subjects as conscious subjects

⁸³*Cartesian meditations*, pp. 133

like me, and the values, goods, practical aims are inter-subjectively confirmed.

Throughout Husserl's discussion of the constitution of the real world, the conception

of 'Body' plays an essential role in it.

Conclusion

Let's go back to the question: "Was Husserl Realist or Idealist?" Based on the discussion above, we find that Husserl is neither a realist nor an idealist in the tradition sense. He tries to defend a new position, and his position is known as perceptual realism.

The discussion in this thesis helps us to clarify Husserl's position.

Firstly, in Chapter One, I have discussed Husserl's phenomenological method. We understand that Husserl's phenomenology discloses the nature of perception to us by describing and analyzing the content of perceptual experience.

Secondly, in Chapter Two, I have discussed the nature of 'sensation' ('hyle'). Referring to Husserl's 'Part and Whole Theory', we understand that 'sensation' is a kind of dependent entity that involves necessary connection with our own Body. Furthermore, I have discussed that our Body should be considered as an animated being or psycho-somatic unity which is a necessary condition for the possibility of perception. And the perceiving subject does not appear as a purely mental conscious being; rather, the subject is embodied and appears as a conscious Bodily being. Based on our discussion, we understand how the perceiving subject and the perceived objects meet, and both the riddle of transcendence and problem of correspondence are settled.

Finally, in the last chapter, I have discussed Husserl's transcendental idealism and perceptual realism. Based on Husserl's discussion, we understand that both realism and idealism in the traditional sense are problematic. Traditional idealist claims that the external and mind-independent world does not exist, and the 'real world' that we can experience is possibly our subjective projection. The riddle of transcendence also forces us to accept this position. But Husserl's phenomenology shows us that traditional idealism is problematic and the riddle of transcendence can be overcome. Husserl's claims can be considered as valid because his claims are based on pure description and analysis of absolute perceptual experience. When Husserl reflects on perceptual experience, he affirms firstly that our perception is mediated by 'sensation'. But he clarifies that 'sensation' is not an entity that is freely flowing in our consciousness; rather, its appearance is localized and limited by our own body. Then, he further finds that 'Body' plays a special role in perceptual experience; it is not just a normal transcendent physical object, but appears as the embodied subject. So, traditional idealism cannot stand because the 'real world' is surely not subjective projection, but co-conditioned by both inner mental and external physical factors.

Traditional realism tries to justify the existence of the external and mind-independent world. However, Husserl points out that the 'world' in this sense

cannot be considered as 'real' to us, because a totally mind-independent world is meaningless to us, the 'real world' is essentially subject related. Based on his analysis of perceptual experience, Husserl points out that 'forms of sensation' and 'Body' are two major subjective conditions or epistemic conditions of our apprehension of the real world. That means that the real world must conform to our forms of sensation and presented to us from an embodied point of view. Under this condition, we do experience an external world as a world composed by material objects, values, goods and practical aims. In conclusion, Husserl redefines the meaning of 'real' and he is a perceptual realist.

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