

"Some Moments of Wonder Emergent within Transcendental Phenomenological Analyses"

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Husserl Circle Meeting 2022, Catholic University,

COMMENTARY by Bob Sandmeyer

I would like to thank the Husserl Circle for giving me this opportunity to engage with the work of James Hart. Jim is of the generation of my own teachers of phenomenology. And though I have known of and known Jim for many years now, I have not had the opportunity to engage with him professionally to this point. So, when I saw that his name was on the roster of presenters, I jumped at the prospect of commenting on his paper.

My commentary centers on the wonder of manifestness, since that is at the heart of Jim's paper. The most important of Husserl's passages on this theme is Husserl's claim "that the most wonderful fact ... is how the world stands in correlation with one's agency of manifestation"(28). Since Jim only partially quotes from this passage by Husserl in this paper but more fully in a 2019 paper titled, "From Metafact to Metaphysics in 'The Heidelberg School'" (*Protosociology*, (2019): 36), I'd like to look turn to this earlier paper briefly. For clarity, I will quote a whole paragraph from Jim's 2019 paper which contains the Husserl quote. To provide the passage by Husserl in its fullness, I'll add just a couple of lines of translation, which I'll point out as I read the whole paragraph. So, this is Jim on phenomenological wonder in his 2019 essay.

For transcendental phenomenology, the wonder *that* things are so or exist at all was subordinate to a "phenomenological wonder" awakened by the correlation between, on the one hand, that things are and are so and, on the other, the manifestation by and through which things come to light, i.e., through one's consciousness or self-present agency. It was the latter that struck Husserl most of all. What is obvious to the point of total hiddenness is how my being-conscious, *Bewusst-sein*, as well as that of my fellow humans, goes in advance of the world already out there now as we describe it to one another in ordinary or

scientific discourse. [Here is where the Husserlian quote really begins, the first sentence of which is translated by me and the second, i.e., "most wonderful fact" sentence, is translated by Jim.] My being, in its immanently temporal universality, in its fully concrete unique essentiality: "If I were not, there would be for me no world," <this> sounds like a tautology. But yet there is here "*the most wonderful fact*," that the world "which is for me in all of its determinateness, is a unity which presents itself in my subjective experiences, and this world which presents itself in the occurring 'presentations' is not to be released from this correlation" (Husserl 1950, 401).

Husserl wrote these lines in the fall of 1929, and they are contained in a supplementary manuscript to the published edition of *Ideas I*. This 1929 manuscript is part of the so-called Gibson-Konvolute or bundle of manuscripts; that is to say, the passage in question was written by Husserl as he was again revisiting *Ideas I* in anticipation of the William Boyce Gibson translation of that text. This particular *Beilage* is included in both the 1950 Biemel edition of *Husserliana 3* as well as the later 1976 edition of *Husserliana 3.2*, edited by Karl Schumann. So, while this supplementary text is not part of *Ideas I* as published by Husserl originally, it is included in the very earliest published edition by the Husserl Archive. This is important, as we all know, because the *Husserliana* editions include important editorial remarks to the source material, which provide something of a window into Husserl's thinking regarding his own formulations of his philosophy in writing.

Looking at the textual remarks in both *Husserliana* editions to this passage specifically quoted by Jim here, I noticed something interesting. The *Hua III* 1950 Biemel edition of *Ideas I*, which Jim is using as his source, does not include any editorial remarks concerning this passage. However, in *Husserliana 3.2*, i.e., the later Schumann edition, one can find an editorial remark specific to the passage cited by Jim. According to the Schumann edition, it appears that Husserl had in the D exemplar of that text stricken out those words after "the most wonderful fact."

This emendation changes the emphatic sense of this phenomenological wonder, I would suggest. With the relevant words stricken, the passage would rather read:

My being, in its immanently temporal universality, in its fully concrete unique essentiality: "If I were not, there would be for me no world," <this> sounds like a tautology. But yet there is here "*the most wonderful fact.*" [Full stop] . (Ideen 3.2, Beilage 45, p. 87)

In the expanded formulation, the "most wonderful fact" seems to refer the correlation of world and transcendental subjectivity, as Jim notes. However, the abbreviated passage mutes this reference. The emphasis now, especially in context of the whole *Beilage* itself, is rather on the priority of my being qua transcendental subjectivity given absolutely in self-reflection. This, rather than the correlation of world and consciousness, is the ultimate subject of phenomenological wonder. Indeed, I want to suggest the self-understanding of phenomenology as an eidetic science in Husserl's writings is marked, first, precisely by a wonder which arises at the moment of disclosure of this new domain of absolute being but then, second, by the patient dissolution of this wonder by means of an eidetic analysis of noetic-noematic correlations which now show themselves in this new phenomenological attitude.

This seems to me more consistent with my own understanding of Husserl's conceptualization of phenomenological wonder. I shall confess straightaway that the passage which Jim quotes is not one that I have not considered in any systematic way before reading his paper. There is, however, another passage by Husserl on the theme of phenomenological wonder of which I am more familiar. This is found in *Husserliana* 5, that is to say, the Third Book of *Ideas* whose theme is *phenomenology and the foundations of the sciences*. The "wonderous" quote that I am about to read is found in the final paragraph of chapter two of that work, titled

"Further clarification on the relationship of rational psychology and phenomenology." I quote at length the final 7 sentences of this chapter now:

Only one thing justifies characterizing – as we did above – the eidetics of the psychic *states* of consciousness as phenomenology: namely, the circumstance already touched upon that the pure experience with its entire essence enters into the psychic state and experiences only an apperception that does not change it but rather apprehends it appurtenantly. It makes of the apriori an aposteriori and itself in turn presupposes the apriori. For it, itself, belongs to a pure Ego as its pure experience, to which, as to everything, belongs the eidetic possibility of being empirically apperceived and so in infinitum. These <now aposteriori states> are connections which, when one has once understood them, possess nothing wonderful. The wonder of all wonders is pure Ego and pure consciousness: and precisely this wonder disappears as soon as the light of phenomenology falls upon it and subjects it to eidetic analysis. The wonder disappears by changing into an entire science with a plethora of difficult scientific problems. Wonder is something inconceivable; the problematical in the form of scientific problems is something conceivable... (*Ideas III*, translated by Ted Klein and William Pohl, 64 *translation modified*)

So, in this passage Husserl most definitely speaks of a phenomenological wonder but it is the wonder over the absolute being of the pure I and transcendental consciousness disclosed by the epoché and phenomenological reduction. The correlation here is the correlation between the being of experience pertinent to empirical consciousness and the being of experience pertinent to transcendental consciousness. Looking again to this chapter in *Ideas III*, Husserl remarks: "Accordingly, it is a fundamental necessity, and of cardinal importance for philosophy, to lift oneself to the recognition that one must differentiate the eidetics of *states* of consciousness, which is a piece of the rational ontology of the psyche, and the eidetics of the *transcendentally purified* consciousness (or being of experience [*Erlebnis-Seins*]), that the latter, the genuine and pure phenomenology, is just as little rational psychology as rational natural theory (Husserl, *Ideas III*, 64). Indeed, the wonder that arises at the disclosure of this absolute

domain of being dissolves under the light of phenomenology, most particularly, under eidetic analysis. Consequently, the transcendental reduction seems to have a function precisely the opposite of that characterized by Jim. Rather than sustain this wonder, that is to say, sustain this quasi-gracious interruption of the familiar, routine, and every day, the reduction makes possible a new habitus, a new scientific attitude whose orientation is directed to a conceptualization of this newly disclosed absolute sphere of being of experience.

At the heart of Husserlian phenomenology lies the principle of all principles. As Husserl says in his Kant Society lectures of June 1931, i.e., the "Phenomenology and Anthropology" lecture, "I must let no previous judgment, no matter how indisputable it may seem to be, go unquestioned and ungrounded." (HuCW VI, 490) Phenomenology is thus in a very real sense to be a presuppositionless autonomous science, justified apodictically, "giving it an ultimate grounding through the activity of raising and answering questions" (HuCW VI, 490). The epoché demands in its universality a bracketing of the being of the world. With the accomplishment of this maneuver, one can thus ask, "Am I now standing face to face with the nothing?" (HuCW VI, 491). Quite the contrary. A bracketed world "continues to appear the way it used to appear; life in the world is not interrupted," as Husserl points out (HuCW VI, 491). "Nevertheless the positing undergoes a modification" (Ideas I – Kersten, 64). Excluding all the sciences related to the natural world, "our purpose is to discover a new scientific domain ... gained by the method of parenthesizing." And this domain is of course the "pure Ego and pure consciousness," i.e., the wonder of all wonders.

I of course agree with Jim when he says, "experience as *Erleben*, living through our agency of manifestation, is having a world" (30). In my own understanding of the Husserlian

project I have always thought of the domain of absolute being, i.e., my being qua pure I, in its immanently temporal universality, in its fully concrete unique essentiality, as wondersome. What is truly wondersome, in other words, is that "every perception of something immanent necessarily guarantees the existence of its object. If reflective seizing-upon is directed to an experience of mine, I have seized upon something absolute itself, the factual being of which is essentially incapable of being negated, i.e., the insight that it is essentially impossible for it not to exist; it would be a countersense to believe it possible that an experience given in that manner does not in truth exist." (*Ideas I* – Kersten, 78) Of course, it is necessary here is to distinguish carefully between the appearance of something transcendent from the givenness of this absolute being. As Husserl notes in *Ideas I*, "We therefore hold fast to the following: Whereas it is essential to givenness by appearances that no appearance presents the affair as something "absolute" instead of in a one-sided presentation, it is essential to the givenness of something immanent precisely to present something absolute which cannot ever be presented with respect to sides or be adumbrated." (*Ideas I* – Kersten trans, 76) So what is truly wondersome is not the manifestness of anything worldly *per se* but rather the manifestness of that which does not, itself, genuinely appear (qua transcendent) yet which is apriori necessary and given absolutely.

My sole concern is that the analysis of wonder laid out in Jim's paper elides over a vital motivation in Husserl's philosophy. For Husserl, phenomenology is a science of essences, which is, by virtue of the epoché and reduction, an apodictic science. Wonder stands at the beginning of the scientific project, but it does not define that scientific activity. The *Logos* essay is pertinent here. So, while we stand in awe at the wonder of all wonders, at this new absolute

domain of scientific investigation disclosed by the phenomenological method, this "wonder disappears by changing into an entire science with a plethora of difficult scientific problems" (*Ideas III*, translated by Ted Klein and William Pohl, 64).

In conclusion, then, I would like to ask Jim to discuss these two wonderful passages by Husserl, i.e., "the wondrous fact" passage in *Ideas I* (or, more precisely, *Husserliana* 3.2) and the "wonder of all wonder" passage from *Ideas III*. Are they consistent with one another? Does the *Ideas III* passage amplify or diminish the analysis of wonder at the heart of your paper? To me, the import of both passages together indicates something quite important about the method of phenomenology that remains undiscussed in this paper. I'll quote from Bob Jordan, my first teacher of Husserl, to clarify what I mean. "The primary methodological function of the phenomenological reduction, be it psychological or transcendental, is to assure the investigation takes *as its point of departure* phenomena that, being given absolutely through immanent experience or *pure* reflection, can be known to be genuine cases of the kind under investigation" (Bob Jordan, "Intro to 'Husserl's Inaugural Lecture'," *Husserl: Shorter Works*, 5 italics mine). The phenomenological method discloses a domain of absolute being, and the phenomenological intuitions that arise as a consequence of this method apodictically grounds phenomenology. But the wonder that we experience at this new disclosure fades away as we proceed in our scientific work of analysis and eidetic description. Phenomenological wonder is thus a distinctly important but inaugurating moment of our scientific activity.

Thank you, Jim.

Phenomenology of Religious Experience IV: Religious Experience and Description

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Some Moments of Wonder Emergent within Transcendental Phenomenological Analyses

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2020-0004>

Received November 06, 2019; accepted December 16, 2019

Abstract: There is a distinctive wonder bordering on and awakening to the philosophy of religion within Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. This is not primarily a wonder directed to how things are or that they are, but rather the wonder connected to the most fundamental principle of transcendental phenomenology. That principle is the ancient principle of the convertibility of being with what is true or the inseparability of being and manifestation. Phenomenological wonder is primarily at the correlation of being as what is true or made manifest with consciousness. And yet there is an even more basic phenomenological wonder which founds this correlation, and that is the manifestness of first-person experience within which all other wonder emerges.

Keywords: transcendental phenomenology, wonder, manifestness, metafact, Edmund Husserl

1 Introduction

This paper is a sketch of some aspects of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology which offer occasions for philosophical wonder bordering on religious wonder. They also verge on fundamental issues in the philosophy of religion. We will not here engage in Husserl's philosophy of religion¹ or a phenomenology of wonder, but assume the noun and verb have prior sufficiently rich meanings for the reader. Suffice it to say that what is meant by wonder here is that quasi-gracious interruption of the familiar, routine, and every day that is more than an unwelcome puzzle or problem which has to be overcome in order to return to the project at hand. And, of course, it itself is an interesting problem bordering on wonder that we may not decide in advance whether the problematic is merely a nuisance to be surmounted, a puzzle to be solved, and not an invitation to a distraction from the mundane opening unto depths of wondrous meanings. Wonder properly is what begins and sustains the life-work of creativity in both theory, foremost philosophy, and art. In this sense much of both theory and art are instigated by facing a limit-situation or confronted with something that is better captured by the term "mystery" rather than a problem. (Parenthetically, it would seem that the increasing and nearly universal understanding of a university as possible without a liberal arts core, i.e., without that which sustains wonder, creates a culture without its most sustaining and nurturing form of consciousness.)

In traditional discussions of wonder we find the distinction between Aristotelian wonder, which also pervades Husserl's phenomenology and which may well border on mysticism, of *how* things are, from the

¹ For a start cf. Hart, "A Précis of a Husserlian Philosophical Theology"; Hart, "I, We, and God: Ingredients of Husserl's Theory of Community"; Hart, "Entelechy in Transcendental Phenomenology"; Hart, "The Truth of Being and God"; Hart, "Husserl and the Theological Question".

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more obviously mystical-theological wonder *that* things are, which are basic for Abrahamic traditions and Wittgenstein.² But the distinctive transcendental-phenomenological wonder is that awakened by considering that the other forms of wonder are possible only if *how* and *that* things are is manifest; this is wonder *that* there is manifestness.

2 The Wonder of Manifestness

A seventeenth century version of this wonder is that of Thomas Hobbes: “Of all the phenomena or appearances which are near to us, the most admirable is apparition itself, *to phainesthai*.” It is this, the manifestation of manifestation or manifestness, the showing of showing, that I want to dwell on. Hobbes’s own wonder focuses on the consideration that some natural bodies (i.e., human beings) have in themselves “the pictures of almost all things, and others none at all.”³ Here we have an acknowledgment of the human “body” somehow as an agent of manifestation⁴ and we have a philosophical wonder by a materialist at manifestness. Hobbes explains phenomenality and manifestness by the capacity of something like a likeness-making device. Here it would seem the wonder at phenomenality is absorbed in a resolute third-person reductionist objectivist account of interacting bodies. We might say that Hobbes is a forerunner of the battle today to have a heterophenomenology of brain events be the proper philosophical dimension which best analyzes and explains an autophenomenology which alleges lived first-person experience is the core and self-authenticating consideration.

In Husserl there are numerous sources of wonder, but he claimed once that *the most wonderful fact, die wunderbarste Tatsache*, is how the world stands in correlation with one’s agency of manifestation.⁵ And perhaps we may say that he comes upon the transcendental reduction as a way to sustain this wonder, i.e., by putting all of life in quotes or parentheses in order that we may not be absorbed first of all with what appears rather than its manifestation to us. On the other hand, precisely because the reduction removes us from the immediacy of the mysteries and surprises of life, and thereby removes us from the quasi-gracious interventions of wonder, one may at least reflect on whether its practice might seem to interfere with the moments of grace, the unconditional demands and depth of wondrous experience of which we are capable and which emerge out of an immediate engagement with life. Again, this paper will not deal explicitly with these questions, but will deal with what for the author are some wondrous aspects and topics of transcendental phenomenology.

Transcendental phenomenology is deeply and classically metaphysical in so far as its foundation is the ancient thesis of the convertibility of being with what is true, which phenomenology renders as the inseparability of being and display or being and manifestation. Getting an initial hold on this requires relinquishing certain empiricist and/or idealist presuppositions in so far as they move us to think of appearances as intervening media from which we must make inferences or which themselves must be overcome or gotten beyond. In which case knowing something would only happen when we have to do with the thing itself quite apart from its appearances. Thus aspects of these traditions have lured us into thinking of appearances as “mere appearances.” Thus the paradigmatic status of the famous straight stick under water appearing as bent. Upon the surfacing of the suspicion that there is a distortion in my perceiving, I might strive to overcome the distortion by getting beyond appearances. I might be moved to surmount the merely apparent insurmountability of mere appearances and embrace the non-manifested immediate thing-in-itself, uncontaminated by being in the relationship of appearing-to-me-or-us, by, e.g., saying “the thing itself is what I know of the thing in its underlying physical reality as described in mathematical formulae.” But Husserlian phenomenology urges us instead to go back to a more basic sense of appearing as manifestation, which is the showing of the thing, the self-givenness of the thing to the honest investigator. There is no

² Cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.44.

³ Hobbes, *De Corpore*, 213.

⁴ This fundamental term for transcendental phenomenology I get from the work of Robert Sokolowski who describes the transcendental I also as an agent of truth and meaning. See, e.g., Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 115-119.

⁵ Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie* Vol. I, 401.

getting beyond manifestation, truthful disclosure. The physicist cannot describe a nature that has not been manifested to her, and the confirmation of her mathematical account of quantum “phenomena” itself will be verified in forms of perceptual appearings. Thus our concern with truth is inseparably concern about the way something shows itself. The concern extends to saying this is so in such a way that it is evident that it is so. There is no truth or error apart from their being manifested as such.

However, in a proper sense every appearing reality is through perception in space and time and this is only perspectival. What appears appears only partially in the obvious sense that only so many aspects, e.g., sides, of something are given at once and to see “the whole thing” one must in the course of time see the sides which at any one moment are hidden. In knowing anything truly and with relative adequacy the work of manifestation must be patiently sustained. This is as much true for ideal objects, like the essence of promising, and for actual objects in space and time, as it is for the meaning of something past for which the avenues of access, e.g., witnesses, documents, etc. might be unknown and needing to be brought to light.

All rendering something evident, all showing or manifesting, is an illumination of it. This is the tradition of the both Plato and Aristotle. In this sense classical Greek philosophy is transcendental. The very sense of the agency of manifestation is that the light of the mind is in play and actuated. If we think of light as what manifests, the light of the mind is not metaphorical, and every other sense of light as manifesting is derivative and metaphorical. Natural light only manifests things if there is a wakeful mind for whom the natural light illuminates. Thus, e.g., the path in the darkness is indicated to me (not to the path, rocks or trees) by the moon’s illuminating. Nevertheless it is also evident that the mind’s illumination of the world in terms of its manifestability and/or intelligibility, e.g., its sounds, colors, natural laws, forms of necessity and contingency, etc. does not *create* these visible, intelligible, manifesting features but shows them forth. In themselves, in their very actuality they have a kind of visibility and/or intelligibility, a kind of luminousness, captured often in our saying, “now I see it,” “now I get it,” awaiting the mind’s actualization. As Aquinas put it “the measure of the reality of something is the measure of its light” and “the actuality of things is itself their light.”⁶ It is our agency of manifestation that brings their inherent intelligible and visible luminosity to light in the world of created minds. Aristotle and Aquinas use the example of how the sun or moon sheds light on things, which before were in the dark, and thereby brings out their features, e.g., colors, shapes, and shadows for us. But these natural bodies do not create these features, i.e., the things already have them, and the light from these bodies (or artificial lights) brings forth what before was only potentially intelligible, e.g., that this prior obscure dark silhouette is a tree. That is, the inherent intelligibility, here visibility, of the colors, shapes, etc., is there already, waiting, so to speak, to come out of the darkness. But nevertheless, in the absence of mind or some sensible presence, there is no manifestation. This is a sense in which, for example, Conrad-Martius can say “light must meet light in order for there to be light.”⁷ The light involved is not merely that of the intrinsic intelligibility of things and, in the case of visual perception, the illuminating ambience of natural or artificial sources of illumination. In the absence of the light of the mind or at least forms of sentience nothing is manifested. Again, the flashlight and moonlight illuminate nothing if there is no mind or at least percipient being for whom, e.g., the path is illuminated. Indeed, for the unsighted person the illumination of the world is utterly independent of the light of natural or artificial lights. Again, if light is taken to be what manifests, only the light of the mind is the proper non-metaphorical sense of light.

Another often overseen point is in order here in regard to the essence of manifestation or appearing. This has to do with the proper phenomenological sense of manifestation as both illuminating agency and luminous medium. Prior to the basic indispensable appearing as the showing or being shown of things, there is the sense of manifestness as the medium in which I am luminous to myself and within which things appear or are luminous, whether or not truly or adequately so.⁸ Husserl makes equivalent the unity of consciousness, the lived life of the I, and the intentional *medium* through which and out of which one lives. Life is lived in a medium of manifestness, the articulation of the kinds of

⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, cited in Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 56.

⁷ Conrad-Martius, *Schriften zur Philosophie*, III, 262.

⁸ Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II*, *Husserliana XIV*, 45-46; 51.

which manifestation is the work of transcendental phenomenology. This manifestness, this appearing medium, is rooted in the I as a unique appearing, a constant being and self-appearing through an absolute appearing wherein what appears must necessarily be.⁹ But this appearing, this manifestness, is not only a self-appearing but always also a manifestness manifesting being, i.e., of what there is to be known or manifested which is not-I.

Experience as *Erleben*, living through our agency of manifestation, is having a world. This is a conscious having of objects within a wider horizon. It is furthermore being-conscious through an ongoing passive synthetic unifying streaming of life. Husserl very often speaks of this unity of experience as a *medium*, a medium of manifestness, in which the I lives out its life actively and passively and whose manifestness irradiates from the self-shining of the I. What we call consciousness, as the life medium of the I, is uniquely egoic/*ichlich*; but this illuminated-illuminating medium enjoys an objectivity and truthfulness through being illuminated by the I's agency of manifestation. As Husserl put it:

But the world, and as well, in accord with its basic structures, nature, is the non-I, which is given for me as a unity of my consistent experience; therefore it is given as an egoic medium, without which for me nothing would be. It is given in a medium, which is not itself nature, but which is purely egoic.¹⁰

3 Transcendental Consciousness as a Metafact

There are many startlingly wondrous aspects to this position, so startling that one might be tempted to see them as “Luciferian.”¹¹ Although there are many more, here I want merely to mention nine. Clearly each is worthy of an extensive separate treatment, the beginnings of which at least are to be found in Husserl's writings.

1. The first is that no form of world-presentation, not even that of the scientific world for which, in its most reductionist forms, there is no place for consciousness and mind, is possible without what we want to call the “metafact” of mind and an I. (What “metafact” means here is the original manifestness of mind; see below.) Indeed, the potential and actual intelligibility of nature and anything else stand in a metaphysically necessary, not merely contingent, correlation to some sense of mind. In this sense we have to do with mind as a necessary consideration without which there are no manifest facts for any scientific narratives, even those about the world and nature prior to mind.
2. The manifestness of the world and other minds is always a manifestness to the transcendental I, and whereas all the other forms of evidence are evident to me, to what I refer to with the first-personal pronoun, “I,” the evidence for this referent is the strongest, the most necessary, and phenomenologically prior. This is not necessarily in the form of reflective evidence of me to myself, but as the pre-reflective, non-intentional lived self-presence.
3. Furthermore this evidence of this transcendental I, both in terms of its non-reflective sense as well as its reflective sense, is apodictic and *absolute* in the sense that its manifestness is not in need of any other consideration for it to be manifest.
4. Further, as my colleague and friend Hector-Neri Castañeda pointed out, even the amnesiac inerrantly self-refers with “I,” even if he does not know who in the world he is.¹²
5. Further this I, as what is meant in the first-personal indexical, even by an amnesiac, is a unique non-sortal essence, thus not an individual individuated by anything else or by any acquired properties. Thus my non-ascriptive reference with “I” is to my non-sortal, non-identifiable unique essence which is not totally coincident with this identifiable person in the world, JGH.

⁹ Husserl, *Erste Philosophie II*, *Husserliana VIII*, 412.

¹⁰ Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, *Husserliana IX*, 52; see also Taguchi, *Das Problem des ‘Ur-Ich*, 194-197; 202-204; 208-210; 245. Husserl moves the medium of light from an Aristotelian environmental medium to the transcendental I.

¹¹ Cf. Hart, “From Moral Annihilation to Luciferism”; also Hart, “Transcendental Pride and Luciferism.”

¹² Castañeda, *The Phenomeno-Logic of the I*, 232; cf. also Hart, *Who One Is*, Vol. I, especially Ch. II.

6. Furthermore, each I as a transcendental I is implicitly before everything else self-aware and aware of itself in a uniquely necessary way: I cannot conceive that the manifest extinction of all manifested facts and manifested necessities necessarily requires the extinction of my manifesting I. It is unthinkable that I, in my entertaining the prospect of the dissolution of me this identifiable person, JGH, and the world I inhabit, not be.
7. And as a corollary: Because, in this transcendental perspective of manifesting the world's coming to be, and in manifesting its annihilation, it is unthinkable that there be no manifesting I, it is thus in general not thinkable by me or for any other I that there be no I.
8. And because I am only in my ineluctable self-awareness in my agency of manifestation, I myself and my agency of manifestation are through me and there is not manifestable a cause of me and my agency of manifestation beyond me. This means at least that if there is such a causality of this phenomenological absolute, and this would seem necessary, given my not being the cause of my existence merely by reason of its necessary dependence on my non- and intentional awareness of it, the otherness or transcendence of this second absolute must be somehow commensurate with me or me with it, both in terms of specific nature or essence as well as my unique essence of being me.¹³
9. And finally: I, as transcendental I, am present to myself as beginningless and endless. This is to say: As I, as transcendental I, cannot make present a cause of me myself outside of myself or make present a cause (or transcendent illuminating light) of the light of my mind transcendent to my agency of illumination, so I cannot make present my beginning or ending.¹⁴

Recall that for Husserl the “most wonderful” wonder of phenomenology is the manifestation of things through our agency of manifestation. The questions we must raise here, but not answer, is whether the manifestness itself might not be dwelled on as prior to its tie to the agency of manifestation and what would be the cause of manifestness, the cause of the light of intelligibility, possibly be? For Husserl it would seem the most captivating wonder is subsequent to this presupposed manifestness. He was struck with a “*most wonderful fact (wunderbarste Tatsache)*” that the world is determinate, i.e., manifest and meaningful, and this determinacy stands in a necessary correlation to my agency of manifestation.¹⁵ But this agency of manifestation itself which so captivated Husserl assumes the actuality of manifestness, both of oneself and the world as the prior condition for this state of astonishment as well as the agency of manifestation. If we think of manifestness as an (albeit problematic) equivalent of “consciousness” we move near Fichte’s claim in the *Science of Knowing*,¹⁶ e.g., 1804 and 1805, that it is not the I which gives rise to consciousness/reason/light but light, as even constitutive of reason, which gives rise to the I. Consciousness as luminous medium

¹³ Husserl had something like this in mind when, in regard to attempts to found the achievements of mind or spirit on mental laws that were indistinguishable from natural physical laws, i.e., the way laws of association may be considered analogous to laws of nature, and how these function as unintelligible forms regulating actual existence, and thus how, “from out of completely soulless elements there is supposed to be built up a soul, an I, who thinks, knows, values, posits goals,” he protested: “This is *pure nonsense*. It is the most absurd *generatio aequivoca* that has ever been conceived. Only from spirit can there be spirit, only out of elementary consciousness can there be higher consciousness, only from sense can there become novel sense.” Husserl, *Einleitung in die Ethik*, 178. Cf. also Hart, *Who One Is*, I, Ch. VI, §4 for a discussion. If one has a unique essence then avoiding an absurd *generatio aequivoca* would require accounting for not merely *what* one is but *who* one is, if this latter itself is *not* a matter of individuation either from one’s freedom or from one’s insertion in nature, culture, etc. For a discussion of the theological metaphysics that emerges out of these considerations, see Hart, “Die Individualität des wahren göttlichen Selbst”; also Hart, *Who One Is*, Book 2, Ch. 7.

¹⁴ Again, for much regarding these nine themes in Husserl see, e.g., Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* II, 151-157; cf. my discussions in n.10 and also Hart, *Who One Is*, Book 2, Ch. VII-VIII, Book 2, Ch. II.

¹⁵ Husserl, *Ideen I*, 401.

¹⁶ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre* (1805), 45. We can note that already in the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1804) Fichte argued that the reason as manifesting is inseparable from a sense of “light” and although the agency of manifestation is egoic when one attends to the light by prescinding from the manifold manifested one sees that light is itself supremely absolute and one and the I can see intuitively how it itself is negated in the light by reason of proceeding completely from the oneness of its manifestness (Lecture 8). In Lecture 28 the “I” is presented as an effect of reason. But this it is a peculiar one because inconceivable in the sense that this insight presupposes the I’s agency of manifestation.

or manifestness may appear to go in advance even though it can be shone subsequently to be ineluctably “*ichlich*” or egoic.

The philosophical disclosure of this would have to reconstruct the (quasi-) I-less field of manifestness. Any claim to experience or manifest it would presuppose the I. This seems to be the case in the reconstruction of the initial development of consciousness in the infant: It seems that it is only in the agency of manifestation and what motivates the child to self-reference that the anonymous tacit presence of the I comes to light. A kind of evidence for this is that the child may initially self-refer with third-personal terms and only eventually come to a mastery of the first-personal pronoun. But even if we grant this belated surfacing of the I, and granted that the beginning mind is not actually anything but potentially everything or all of being, and if this all must be manifest and be manifested through its agency of manifestation, is there not in this first encounter with manifestness an initiating sense of the light of being which might to be said to have infinite extension and null intension or comprehension?¹⁷ Here the proposal is not to regress to infancy or childhood, but rather that we, as adults, should pause long enough to find wondrous the originating original manifestness as that which is anterior to everything else and upon which everything else is dependent.

J.V. Valberg nicely captured this wonder occasioned by the original manifestness with the term “metafact.” Clearly for Valberg the manifestness is not to be separated from my first-personal consciousness, i.e., awareness of the manifestness of my existing within a factual horizon of consciousness. In our day, Dieter Henrich, Manfred Frank, and Michel Henry have shown with elegance and precision how the reduction of manifestness to intentional (reflective) consciousness makes self-consciousness impossible. And, as analogous reflections in both Fichte and Schelling compelled them both to observe, this metafact of ineluctable self-manifestation and manifestness thwarts any explanatory regressive reflection. That is, in reflecting on this original intellectual light or manifestness one does not come up with an objectively present grounding truth or consideration which transcends the manifestness or manifestation itself. Or, as Valberg puts it: “Manifestness like truth, does not give rise to a hierarchical series of referentially linked elements or acts. The manifestness of the manifestness that p, like the truth of the truth that p, is just the manifestness (truth) that p.” This metafactual manifestness is the first truth which all others presuppose and the one than which none other is more basic.

Valberg formulates the original wondrous metafact or first truth as: There is SOMETHING, not NOTHING, i.e., it is necessary that whatever is there (SOMETHING/BEING), is within the luminous clearing, and this is inseparable from my being-conscious. This clearing or horizon is inseparably one’s self-manifestation, and this prior luminous field in which everything becomes manifest, whether objectively or non-objectively, cannot itself be something manifested, for it cannot but be always already manifest.¹⁸

Again we must note, with Husserl’s help, that this fact, *wunderbarsste Tatsache*, is a not a contingent fact that we experience but a necessary fact. And it is a puzzling fact because assigning it a cause among what we may make present to our minds phenomenologically does not seem to be possible without presupposing it. And as a metafact it is only factual in the sense that we are ignorant of it only because of our transcendental naivety.

4 Metafact as Both Being-Conscious (*Bewusst-sein*) and Being-Consciousness

As a conclusion I want to submit a promissory note in the form of a proposition: At the heart of what here is named “metafact” is an understanding of consciousness as at once being-conscious, *Bewusst-sein* and being-consciousness. Consciousness is always already consciousness of being; *Bewusstsein ist immer schon Seinsbewusstsein*.

¹⁷ With this we draw near to the metaphysics of nineteenth century philosopher and theologian, Antonio Rosmini. In the twentieth century there are numerous excellent disciples and creative presentations of his thought, none better than those of Michele Sciacca. An especially helpful introduction to Rosmini’s basic ideas is Manfredini, *Essere e Verità in Rosmini*.

¹⁸ For all this see Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self*, 192-195. On “metafact,” cf. also Hart “From Metafact to Metaphysics in the ‘Heidelberg School.’”

The proper elucidation of the *cogito* illustrates this well. In being aware or saying “I am!,” there is a sense of being antecedent to all thinking and presenting.¹⁹ The epistemic *cogito ergo sum* must also be appreciated ontologically as a *sum ergo cogitor* (I am therefore I am thought), because a sense of manifest being goes in advance in the uniquely indubitable manifestness of me to myself. And this self-being is not such as to enable me to say being is myself, but rather my self-presence is within the larger field of what is manifest and to be manifested.

That is, co-extensive with manifestness there is a sense of already a universally present medium. In a sense the aboriginal wonder and metafact is the originally present SOMETHING, not NOTHING which goes in advance of all the agency of the mind in its manifesting the world but it also is ineluctably a factor in this life, e.g., in the central role of reference, inference, assent, judgment and predication. Of all the facts with which each deals and must deal, it is being’s prior manifestness which subsequently is tied to oneself as illuminating agent of manifestation. Again being-conscious, *Bewusst-sein* is always already being-consciousness: *Bewusstsein ist immer schon Seinsbewusstsein*. It is this fact which is the one not admitting question and all the others of necessity are referred to this “metafact” and not it to them.

We have in St. Bonaventure an adumbration of the transcendental “most wonderful fact.” For this truly to be Husserlian we must be able to make the case that Husserl’s transcendental consciousness too is essentially constituted by the light of being, i.e., an ineluctable awareness of a most general sense of being. Here is how Bonaventure once put his wonder at what we are calling the most wonderful transcendental metafact: “the blindness of the mind is amazing (*mira igitur est caecitas intellectus*): [the eye of the mind], “intent on particular and universal beings,” does not see that light before which and by which it sees everything, and for Bonaventures this is equivalent to not intellectually grasping (he says “notice/*advertit*”) being itself which is outside of every genus which “comes to our mind before all other things which come to our mind through it... Thus we can truly say that the eye of our mind relative to the most obvious things of nature is like the eye of a bat relative to light.” He concludes: “This very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind, just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems to be seeing nothing.”²⁰

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¹⁹ This is *not* a thesis one finds explicitly in Husserl, but it seems correct. I think, however, Husserl could be nudged into an agreement with the thesis we are proposing on the “metafact” and thus with the assertion: “I am! My I contains a Being (*Seyn*), that goes in advance of all thinking and presenting.” It is in as much as it is thought and it is thought because it is...[*in dem es gedacht wird, and es wird gedacht, weil es ist...*]; therefore, because it only is and only in so far is thought as it *thinks itself*. It is therefore because it *itself* only thinks its thoughts, and it itself only thinks its thoughts, and in this respect thinks itself, because it is. It brings itself forth through its thinking itself, and this from an absolute causality,” i.e., one not absolutely transcendent to absolute transcendent to itself. See Schelling, *Vom Ich al Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedinge im menschlichen Wissen* (1795), in *Schriften* (1794-1800), 57. This claim for an absolute causality is one with the question of how what the human person refers to with “I” is related to the absolute divine I. But later Schelling will make the case for an absolutely antecedent pre- and trans-conceptual presence of Being prior to any explicit agency of manifestation which is the beginning of all conscious agency or thinking. See Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1841-42), 160 ff. The view of the metafact merely indicated here draws close to the later Schelling on condition that his view of what is anterior to everything else may be construed as inseparably in some sense non- and pre-reflective consciousness. The “metafact” position holds that the originary consciousness (what early Schelling may be taken to mean with “my I contains Being that goes in advance of all thinking and presenting”) is always constituted by being-conscious (*Bewusst-sein*) as consciousness of being. *Bewusstsein ist immer schon Seinsbewusstsein*. Again, this is terrain impressively explored by Antonio Rosmini, for whom intellectual consciousness is constituted by the “divine” intuition of the idea of being which is absolutely anterior to all other acts of consciousness. St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas were formative influences for Rosmini’s reaching this position.

²⁰ St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, 82-83.

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