

EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING
THE IN-DEPTH BODY AND THE COMING ABOUT
OF THE EGO

1. INTRODUCTION: IN-DEPTH DIMENSIONS
OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND BODY

In section 81 of *Ideas I*, Husserl points to a dimension of transcendental life hitherto not discussed.

The transcendently 'absolute' which we have brought about by the reductions is, in truth, not what is ultimate; it is something which constitutes itself in a certain profound and completely peculiar sense of its own and which has its primal source in what is ultimately and truly absolute. (Husserl, 1998, p. 193)

Pure or transcendental consciousness, the foundation hitherto discovered by means of the reductions, is not the *ultimate* ground of consciousness. Underneath, there is a *delimited sphere of problems* (Husserl, 1998, p. 193), which is, according to Husserl, one of exceptional difficulty. It is the sphere of internal time-consciousness and the constitution of time, which makes up the truly basic level of conscious life. The reader of the texts on the consciousness of internal time is indeed immersed in a well-defined domain of consciousness in which the constitution of immanent time and immanent time-objects is thoroughly investigated in several diverging models.

If phenomenological reflection peers deep enough into the structures of consciousness, the *wonder of time-consciousness* discloses itself (Husserl, 1991, p. 290). The phenomenologist is confronted with what underlies the intentional activity of the transcendental ego. It is neither the structure of intentionality itself nor the constitution of transcendent objectivity that is at issue here. Rather, it is that which both structurally and logically precedes the egoic activity of consciousness and that which withdraws itself from the 'ordinary' domain of transcendental reflection. In other words, it is the in-depth dimension of consciousness and the conditions of possibility of consciousness itself that are at stake. In this in-depth dimension of consciousness, the contingent, subjective material is prepared such as to

enable the intentional activity that constitutes the objective world. We are on the fringe of phenomenology's solid ground upon which the numerous analyses of intentional consciousness are erected.

It is in the domain of the intentional activity of the transcendental ego that Husserlian phenomenology has played a pioneering role. This is not only due to its detailed study of the intentional activity of consciousness, but also to its resistance against approaching the body as a merely objective body, studied in anatomy and physiology. Phenomenology has argued in favour of the body as a living or ensouled body, and it is precisely from this perspective that the importance of the body for intentionality could and can be studied. In doing so, the body – supporting and co-enabling the intentional activity of consciousness – is primarily studied from a *sensorimotor* perspective. The sensorimotor aspects of the living and lived body nicely tie in with the analyses of the intentional activity of the ego. The bodily level of sensorimotor activity and the level of consciousness or egoic intentionality are on a par, and form together a description of the intentionality of the embodied, mundane ego.

However, in a way similar to the one in which egoic intentionality is founded upon the deeper dimensions of inner time-consciousness, the bodily sensorimotor activity may be founded on a deeper bodily dimension, hitherto often ignored.

The aim of this article is to give a minimal account of what such a deeper bodily dimension consists of, and what the consequences of taking this dimension into consideration are. In this, both Husserlian phenomenology of inner time-consciousness and recent neuroscientific research into the in-depth body are involved.

2. A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STRATIFICATION OF THE BODY: UNDERNEATH BODY IMAGE AND BODY SCHEMA

In this section, a stratification of the living and lived body is sketched from a phenomenological point of view. Well in line with Husserl's (and Merleau-Ponty's) phenomenological approach of the body, recent (neuro-)phenomenological research has mainly focused on the sensorimotor dimension of the body. This means that the body is studied principally to the extent that it is a motor and a perceiving organ. As such, this line of research has lead to exciting and productive phenomenological (and other) research concerning *body image* and *body schema*. Body image and body schema are concepts with a long and intricate history in neuroscience, phenomenology and psychoanalysis (H. De Preester and V. Knockaert, 2005). More recently, neurophenomenological research into body image and body schema has lead