

HUSSERL'S TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

Our aim in this paper is to propose a way of dissolving the mind-body problem in the frame of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. The mind-body problem can be stated as the problem of elucidating the nature, especially the ontological status, of so-called *mental processes* (Husserl's *Erlebnisse*) and their relationship with a person's body to which they are supposed to belong.

Mental processes can be defined only by an enumeration of paradigmatic examples such as feelings, sensations, perceptions, memory images, imaginations, thoughts, believes, desires, volitions, etc., which are generally conscious. There are also subconscious or unconscious mental processes, but these are still potentially conscious in the sense that they can become actually conscious as a result of the person's turning his attention to them. Hence, all mental processes are actually or potentially conscious. Consciousness is then the actual or potential characteristic of mental processes. On the other hand, the consciousness *of* a person means the totality of the mental processes pertaining to that person, called also a *stream of consciousness*. Thus, distinct streams of consciousness correspond to different persons.

All mental processes, conscious or not, are characterized by their being subject-dependent (egocentric, indexical). Hence, they presuppose, at first sight, the existence of a *subject*, which we shall also call *mind*. From a logical point of view, the types of ontological status of the mind can be classified as follows. The mind can be reduced to a substance or not, where the former can be either physical or spiritual. The mind as a physical substance consists in an intelligently behaving living body, or even as any arbitrary physical system whose functions are identical to those of such a living body. In this case there is no problem of relating the mind to the body since the former is identified with the latter. The mind as a spiritual substance can take of the following two forms. First, it can be a disembodied soul coexisting with the body like in Cartesian dualism – called generally *substance dualism*.¹ Second, it can be identical to a human person endowed with mental properties besides physical

ones, called *property dualism* in the contemporary philosophy of mind.² In the first case, the problem concerns the relation between two substances, viz. the soul and the body, whereas in the second between two types of properties, viz. mental and physical. On the other hand, the mind irreducible to a substance consists of pure consciousness with or without an underlying ego. Ego is understood to be a non-substantial entity such as Kant's "transcendental I" or Husserl's "pure Ego." Mind as pure consciousness without an ego is exemplified, for example, by Hume's, Lichtenberg's, Nietzsche's, early Husserl's, and Sartre's conceptions of the mind.

The last conception of the mind, viz., non-egologic pure consciousness, is the most radically immanent form of subjectivity, and thus can only be described from an *impersonal* standpoint, which we shall henceforth call, for easy reference, *the Mind-1*. At the other extreme, as mentioned above, there are minds as intelligently behaving bodies. We call such a mind *a Mind-2*, which is fully objective, plural, and described from the *third-person* point of view. A mind *qua* embodied egologic consciousness including property dualism on the one hand, and substance dualism on the other, will be called a *Mind-3*. Such a mind is the mind of ordinary man as well as of most philosophers with a view that is in agreement with commonsense.³

Our main point is that, in a sense, Mind-1, Mind-2, and a mind of sort Mind-3 coexist, but each from a different perspective: Mind-1 from *impersonal*, Mind-2 from *naturalistic-scientific*, and Mind-3 from *commonsense*, or to borrow an expression from Husserl, *world-life* perspective (or attitude). The first two are merely *theoretical* perspectives whereas the third is also *practical*. We defend the following theses: First, the notions Mind-1 and Mind-2 are internally consistent and indispensable from the point of their perspectives. Second, Mind-1 is adequate with respect to Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological attitude. Third, Mind-2 is satisfactory with respect to the naturalistic-scientific attitude, and thus for naturalistic psychology. Fourth, neither Mind-1 nor Mind-2 gives rise to the mind-body problem; furthermore, neither gives rise to the problem of the relation between consciousness and an underlying (spiritual) soul. It follows that the problem of how mind is related to body, and consciousness to soul, is dissolved, simply because there are no such relations at all. Fifth, the problem of the nature of the mind has a quite satisfactory solution in case of both Mind-1 and Mind-2. Indeed, the nature of Mind-1 is directly grasped by means of phenomenological reflection, since any content of consciousness is immediately given; and, on the other hand, the nature of Mind-2 is explained more and more as the result of neurophysiologic researches and artificial intelligence studies.