

An Examination and Reflection on Husserl's 'Intersubjectivity' Based on the Same Objective World: From the Fifth Meditation of the Cartesian Meditations

Hong Jiang*

South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China

*Corresponding author: 20200333016@m.scnu.edu.cn

Abstract. In the Fifth Meditation of the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl argues for 'intersubjectivity' from the perspective of solving the fundamental problem of the 'same objective world'. By examining the constitution of the 'same objective world' in the text of the Fifth Meditation, it is found that both the 'same objective world' itself and the "world horizon" on which it is based is problematic. Husserl's argument for 'intersubjectivity' is therefore also questionable, and 'intersubjectivity', 'same objective world', and their related concepts remain open questions.

Keywords: The same objective world, intersubjectivity, reciprocal validation, world perspective.

1. Introduction

The question of intersubjectivity is a matter of great concern to Husserl and subsequent phenomenologists and philosophers. For Husserl, it was the key to responding to the criticism of phenomenological solipsism, the theoretical foundation that allowed transcendental phenomenology to become a true science. As the originator of intersubjectivity, Husserl's most complete reflection and exposition of "intersubjectivity is now recognized in his book, Meditation V in Cartesian Meditations. On the question of intersubjectivity, Professor Dermot Moran argues that intersubjectivity is about "the world", reflecting Husserl's desire to overcome the problem of "solipsism" [1]. According to the phenomenologist Dan Zahavi, Husserl's intersubjectivity is "an intersubjective transformation of transcendental philosophy" and it is only through the analysis of intersubjectivity that Husserl's transcendental idealism can be properly understood [2]. Ni Liangkang argues that "intersubjectivity" runs through the whole of Husserl's phenomenology and occupies a central place in many of its constructs [3]. In Zhu Gang's view, Husserl's argument for "intersubjectivity" is based on the "same objective world", which is a kind of "Copernican revolution" [4]. From the above-mentioned scholars' views and research results, it can be seen that "intersubjectivity" is a very important issue in Husserl's phenomenology, and it is very much related to the "same objective world". It is from the perspective of the "same objective world" that this article draws on the relationship between these two notions to investigate Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity with some examinations on Husserl's theory through these two important notions.

2. The History of the Problem and the Breakthrough

As a German term, "Intersubjektivität" first appeared in 1885 in a work by Johannes Volkelt and was first used in English in 1896. The concept was initially used to describe something with universal validity and later found its way into philosophy. It was first systematically and extensively discussed and treated as a concept of philosophy in the work of Husserl [5]. Husserl explores this concept in the greatest depth in Cartesian Meditations. "This constitution, arising based on the "pure" others (the other Egos who as yet have no worldly sense), is essentially such that the "others"-for-me do not remain isolated; on the contrary, an Ego-community, which includes me, becomes constituted (in my sphere of ownness, naturally) as a community of Egos existing with each other and for each other" [6]. In Husserl's phenomenology, "intersubjectivity" is used to describe the relationship between different subjects, which is expressed as a form of interaction between me and the other as the "other-

self". To understand Husserl's concept, it is necessary to use as a central text the Cartesian Meditations, where he first focuses on the concept.

Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity as articulated in Meditation V of the Cartesian Meditation (henceforth "Meditation V") has been criticized by many later philosophers and scholars, while most of these critiques have focused on the specific ways in which intersubjectivity is constructed. It seems quite possible that most of the critics have paid less attention to the fact that in the Fifth Meditation, Husserl's intersubjectivity is based on the concept of the "same objective world". In the Fifth Meditation, Husserl's argument for the possibility of intersubjectivity begins with and is grounded in the "same objective world". The specific way in which intersubjectivity is constructed, which is the focus of most critics, addresses the question of "how" intersubjectivity is "possible". The discussion of the question of "how is possible", however, should come after the proof that intersubjectivity is "possible". The author believes that the examination and reflection on Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity cannot be conducted without first going back to the concept of the "same objective world" and the proof of Husserl's concept of "same objective world" and its relation to intersubjectivity.

3. The Mutual Evidence of the "Same Objective World" and "Intersubjectivity": A "Copernican Revolution" of Argumentation

Husserl begins his discussion of intersubjectivity in the fifth meditation of the Cartesian Meditations, "The Revealing of the Transcendental Domain of Being as a Monadic Subjectivity". In the previous four meditations, Husserl first discusses "The transcendental ego", "The field of transcendental experience", the "constitutional problems", and the "The constitutional problems pertaining to the transcendental ego himself". In the last meditation, Husserl turns to a discussion of intersubjectivity [6].

In the fifth meditation, Husserl discusses intersubjectivity from the perspective of the "same objective world" and shows that the primary aim of the formulation and argument for intersubjectivity is not to engage in the subjectivity of others. The aim is not to provide a "phenomenological account" of others, but to demonstrate the "same objective world". The question of the "same objective world" is the fundamental question to be addressed in Husserl's fifth meditation. For it is only on the basis of the "same objective world" that transcendental phenomenology can escape the accusation of "solipsism", "solve the problems of Objective being", and actually become philosophy [6]. As Husserl states at the beginning of the Fifth Meditation, "the objection concerns nothing less than the claim of transcendental phenomenology to be itself transcendental philosophy and therefore its claim

that, in the form of a constitutional problematic and theory moving within the limits of the transcendently reduced ego, it can solve the transcendental problems pertaining to the Objective world" [6]. Solving the problem of the "same objective world" is the fundamental task of Husserl's phenomenology.

In the argument of Husserl's "Fifth Meditation", the "same objective world" and intersubjectivity are mutually evident. In order to prove the "same objective world", Husserl proposes intersubjectivity and develops a step-by-step account of how intersubjectivity is constructed. Firstly, the "same objective world" is based on intersubjectivity, "the essential rootedness of any Objective world in transcendental subjectivity" [6]. Husserl draws on Leibniz's "monad theory" to illustrate intersubjectivity and its foundational role in the "same objective world": each subject is seen as a "monad", and these subjects are considered to be a "monad". The "monads" form a "community of monads". "By virtue of the mentioned communalization <of constitutive intentionality >, the transcendental intersubjectivity has an intersubjective sphere of ownness, in which it constitutes the Objective world" [6]. In short, the "same objective world" implies a world that is the same for different subjects, whereas it is intersubjectivity (the interacting sameness of different subjects) that makes the "same objective world" is possible. Secondly, the possibility of intersubjectivity also derives from the "same objective world". According to Husserl, if different subjects can experience

the "same objective world", then these different subjects must also be the same, interactive subjects – "In that the objective world of experience shows itself consistently, other monads show themselves consistently to be existent" [6]. This mutually evident way of arguing is, as Zhu Gang points out, "a path similar to Kant's Copernican revolution" [4]. Kant, in order to solve the problem of how "knowledge is possible", overturns the traditional view of "knowledge as conforming to objects" by interpreting objects as constitutions of subjects; while Husserl, in order to solve the problem of how "the same objective world" is possible for different subjects, subverts the traditional view of "knowledge as conforming to objects" by interpreting objects as constitutions of subjects. Husserl, in order to solve the problem of how it is possible for different subjects to be "one objective world", transforms the different subjects of the natural attitude into the same subjects of the transcendental attitude" [6]. If I can show that the transcendental experience that constructs the world is originally a transcendental horizon of the existence of interacting subjectivity, and thus that the world it constructs is originally a world of interacting subjectivity, then I can also transcendently guarantee that this world must be a universally valid objective world of itself for all subjects. valid for all subjects" [4].

It is worth noting that to properly understand the relationship between the "same objective world" and intersubjectivity, the concept of "objectivity" in the former should first be properly understood. The notion of "objectivity" is easily misunderstood, and in the usual context, it is easily understood as a kind of "objectivity" in which the subject is completely uninvolved. What Husserl meant by "objectivity" is not a completely subject-free "objectivity". Here is where the most important debate about Husserl's phenomenology comes into play - whether Husserl's phenomenology is idealistic or realistic. Husserl's thought has gone through pre-, mid-, and late-period development, and has undergone a transition from "descriptive phenomenology" to "transcendental phenomenology", so it is difficult to grasp the totality of Husserl's phenomenology. Some scholars argue that "phenomenology can be considered a discipline between realism and metaphysics", that is, a discipline between idealism and realism [7]. It will be found out that, irrespective of the general attitude of Husserl's phenomenology, in the Fifth Meditation, although the "same objective world" has a realistic dimension, the treatment of the "same objective world" can be said to be fundamentally idealistic. As some scholars have argued, this is an "idealistic existentialism", a defense of the reality of the "same objective world" [8, 9]. There are two important bases for this view: firstly, the Cartesian Meditations is a late stage of Husserl's "transcendental phenomenology", which can be seen as the stage when Husserl's philosophy turned to idealism. The second is that Husserl's discussion of the "same objective world" in the Cartesian Meditations itself reflects an idealistic approach. Husserl explicitly proposes that the "objective world" is the ideal correlate; moreover, by proposing a theory of "intersubjectivity" to prove the "same objective world", Husserl has already explicitly challenged Husserl's theory of "intersubjectivity" in order to prove a "same objective world" has explicitly expressed a rejection of the completely subject-free (i.e. realistic) "objective". On the whole, the "objectivity" of total subject-independence is what Husserl's phenomenology seeks to suspend, whereas the "objectivity" meant by the "same objective world" is rather the phenomenological "transcendence". First, what is meant by the "same objective world" is the subject's "transcendence" of the real content of perception and the construction of a "world". It implies the "transcendence" of the subject who does not complete the experience of each object in the "world" but still constructs the "world". Second, it is an "objectivity" that "transcends" the individual subject and is shared by intersubjectivity, rather than an "objectivity" in which the subject is completely uninvolved.

In Husserl's argument, there still seems to be a certain implicit problem. The possibility of a "same objective world" and the possibility of intersubjectivity are mutually evident, but this does not mean that the "same objective world" itself and intersubjectivity are themselves possible. Kant's argument for a "Copernican revolution" - "making objects conform to knowledge" - is based on the conclusive knowledge brought about by mathematics and the natural sciences, on the unquestionable (at least for Kant) proposition that 'knowledge is possible'. In the same way, is Husserl's proof of intersubjectivity based on a solid foundation? In other words, is the "same objective world", which is the starting point

and foundation of intersubjectivity, possible? And if it is possible, how is it possible and how is it constituted? This is a question worth examining and reflecting upon.

4. An Examination and Reflection on the Same Objective World

Husserl's "same objective world" and the possibility of intersubjectivity are mutually evident, but the problem lies in the possibility of the "same objective world" itself as the starting point and foundation of intersubjectivity. The "same objective world" implies a world that is the same for different subjects (me and others), through which different subjects (me and others) are connected, and by means of which Husserl completes his understanding of intersubjectivity (the relationship between me as a subject and others as subjects). Through this connection, Husserl completes his construction of intersubjectivity (the relationship between me as a subject and the other as a subject). It can be seen that Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity includes the question of the relationship between the I as a subject and the other as a subject and that the relationship between the "same objective world" and intersubjectivity needs to be further developed. The relationship between the "same objective world" and intersubjectivity needs to be further interpreted as a relationship between the "same objective world", me and others, which can then be divided into three levels relationship, between the "same objective world" and me, and between the "same objective world" and others. The relationship between the "same objective world" and others, and the relationship between me and others. Therefore, to examine the possibility of the "same objective world", these three relations need to be examined. This requires further clarifying the concept of the "same objective world" and to examine Husserl's articulation of the possibility of the "same objective world" and his discussion of what constitutes the "same objective world" and the levels of its constitution.

For Husserl, the "same objective world" is associated with two levels of constitution: the first level is the "world horizon" as a "collective horizon", while the "same objective world" itself is the second level on which the first is based – "the world we regard as objectively self-contained is essentially based on our subjective world horizon" [3]. Here it is necessary to examine the first level of "world horizon" first. "The "horizon" generally refers to the scope of the subject's ability to "see", which includes not only the physical "seeing" but also the mental "seeing". For Husserl, objects are not perceived in isolation, but always in a background or context, which is the "horizon" [10]. The "world horizon" refers to the fact that all existing objects always appear in the context of the "world" for the subject. What exists in the first place is the "world horizon" of the individual subject, that is, the "world horizon" of the "I" – "As Ego in the transcendental attitude I attempt first of all to delimit, within my horizon of transcendental experience (transzendente Erfahrungshorizont), what is peculiarly my own (Mir-Eigene)" [6]. The "world horizon" as the "collective horizon" is the "world horizon" of the "interacting subject", that is, the "horizon" formed by the fusion of my "horizon" with that of others. It is also known as the "life-world", a non-thematic world with a "natural attitude" [11]. Husserl argues for the identity of the "world horizon" as a "collective horizon" in two ways: first, the "life-world" as a "collective horizon" is itself formed in a community of different subjects, for which the "collective horizon" is the same. Secondly, Husserl believes that the appearance-system of different subjects is the same, and that even the appearance-system of "abnormalities" (disabled people and animals) is only a perversion of the same appearance-system, not fundamentally different from "an identity of appearance-system" [6]. The same "collective horizon" can be formed by different subjects.

Husserl's argument for the identity of the "world horizon" as a "collective horizon" is somehow problematic. Firstly, the fact that the "collective horizon" is formed in a community does not prove that the "collective horizon" is the same for the different subjects in the community. For even within a community, there may be differences between subjects. Secondly, it is difficult to prove that different subjects have the "same appearance-system". In fact, different subjects may have different systems of presentation, so that the "horizon" of different subjects may be different and cannot be integrated into the same "collective horizon". According to the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, the

"horizon" is not only related to the mind and consciousness, as Husserl believed, but is also related to the body and cannot be separated from it - the body is "my point of view upon the world" [12]. Each subject has a different body, and therefore a different appearance-system, and each subject's "horizon" is different, and the identity of the "collective horizon" cannot be guaranteed.

With the examination of the "world horizon" (the "collective horizon") concluded, which is the foundation level, it is now able to turn to the "same objective world". The "same objective world" is based on the non-thematic "world horizon", a thematic world that exists as an object constructed by the (transcendental) subject. It is a collection of objects in the world, a whole being [13]. When examined in terms of the relationship between the "same objective world" and me, the "same objective world" and others, and the relationship between me and others, Husserl's account of the "same objective world" is also problematic, and the problem is highlighted in the relationship between the "same objective world" and me, and the "same objective world" and others. In Husserl's case, the "same objective world" is first of all a world for me: it is my object, a world that is externally independent of me and includes all objects that are opposed to me as a subject. Based on the relation of the primary "same objective world" to me, Husserl proposes a first way of experiencing the other, that is, through the relation of the "same objective world" to the other. The other is seen as an object in the world, the other is included in the world that is external to me; at the same time, the other cannot be seen as a natural thing (Naturdinge), but as "governing psychically in their respective natural organisms (Naturleibern)", as "psychophysical" [6]. In the second way of experiencing others (i.e., experiencing others through my relationship with them), I am aware that others are also subjects of the world and can also experience the world and me. In the first way of experiencing others, I exist as a subject, the world is the world for me, as an object, and others are included in the world as my objects rather than as subjects. In this case, the world does not contain me as an object but contains others as objects. In the latter way of experiencing the other, both I and the other exist as subjects, and the world is a world of objects common to both I as subject and the other as subject. In this case, the world includes me as an object and does not include the other as objects.

In these two ways of experiencing the other, the world of objects confronting me as subject and the other as subject contains different objects is a collection of different objects and is therefore itself a different object. Where then is the "same objective world" that Husserl meant? The "same objective world" for every subject seems to be a world that excludes all possible beings as subjects (I and others) and contains only natural objects. Such a world would contain neither I as object nor others as objects and would be the common object of both I as subject and others as subjects. How else could this world be "accessible in respect of its objects to everyone"? However, it is clear that such a world is not an "objective world", for the "objective world" is first of all a world for me, and it cannot be ignored that others are also "objects" in my world of objects. Husserl himself does not recognize such a world as an "objective world", and his definition of an "objective world" is one "to which all other Egos and I myself belong". Husserl's solution to this problem is to divide the subject into a transcendental subject, in the sense of a transcendental phenomenological subject, and an empirical psychological subject, a "subject" constructed and independent of the world of objects, and an object contained within the world of objects, a subject suspended by phenomenology, and a purely conscious subject reduced from the latter. The former is the subject of pure consciousness reduced from the latter through phenomenological suspension. This solution makes it possible for the world of objects, which confronts me and others as subjects (transcendental subjects), to contain me and others as objects (empirical subjects), and for the "same objective world" to be established for me and others. According to this solution, a new question arises: can the transcendental subject, reduced from the empirical subject through phenomenological suspension, in turn, take the empirical subject as a conceptual object of its own construction? Husserl does not explain this point very well. This leads to the fact that the world of objects confronting me as a subject and the other as a subject remain different objects, unable to achieve sameness.

In defense of this unresolved problem, Dawn Wilton's view may be that Husserl "views the world not as a collection of individuals with features reducible to the combinatory properties of its extension

but as an existing totality, as an 'idea' necessary to account for the being of facts and/or objects" [13]. If the world is an idea of wholeness without having the sense of being a collection of objects, then in the sense of being a collection of objects, the fact that the world of objects confronting me as a subject and others as subjects contains different objects cannot affect the sameness of the world. It is true that this rebuttal interpretation of the "same objective world" is in line with Husserl's "idealistic-realism" treatment and is a kind of phenomenological "transcendence". But when it interprets the "same objective world" as "an 'idea' necessary to account for the being of facts and/or objects", it has allowed the "objective world" to slip back into the level of the "world horizon" on which it was founded and is therefore not fully valid.

As a result of the above examination, the possibility of a "same objective world", on which Husserl builds his theory of intersubjectivity in the Fifth Meditation, is itself problematic, or at least less clear. This leaves a great deal of room for criticism and development of the phenomenological theory of intersubjectivity. "Intersubjectivity" is still questionable and remains an open and unanswered question. Therefore, it will continue to be a problem that phenomenologists will have to overcome when constructing their own phenomenological systems. The "same objective world" and its related concepts have been taken up and discussed by many subsequent phenomenologists. Levinas also discusses the "objective world", but as some scholars have pointed out, "for Levinas, it is not the harmony between subjects that makes the objective world possible, but precisely the limits between them" [14]. In other words, faced with the same question of what constitutes the "same objective world", Levinas proposes a different approach from Husserl's intersubjectivity. In addition, the "life-world" on which the "objective world" is based became a very important concept in the development of phenomenology after Husserl, and Schutz used the concept of the "life-world" as the basis for the development of a phenomenological sociology. Schutz used the concept of the "life-world" as the basis for the development of phenomenological sociology. All this shows that the "same objective world" and its related concepts are still open concepts in phenomenology, which are of great value for reflection.

5. Conclusion

In the fifth meditation of the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl argues for intersubjectivity from the fundamental question of the "same objective world". In his argument, the possibility of a "same objective world" and the possibility of intersubjectivity are mutually evident. The idea of Husserl's argument is similar to Kant's "making objects conform to knowledge", i.e., making different subjects the same interactive subject in the face of the "same objective world". By examining what constitutes the "same objective world" in the Fifth Meditation text, we find that both the "same objective world" itself and the "world horizon" on which it is based is problematic. Husserl's argument for intersubjectivity is therefore also questionable, and "intersubjectivity" is still an open question. Moreover, the notion of the "same objective world" and its successors remain open-ended and highly thought-provoking concepts in phenomenology, which have been discussed and developed by many subsequent phenomenologists.

References

- [1] Dermot Moran. Introduction to Phenomenology. London: Routledge, 2000.
- [2] Dan Zahavi. Husserl's Phenomenology. Trans. Li Zhongwei. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Press, 2007.
- [3] Ni Liangkang. Husserl's Phenomenological Concepts. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2022.
- [4] Zhu Gang. Interacting Subjectivity and the Other: The Meaning and Limits of Husserl's Phenomenology of Interacting Subjectivity. Philosophical Dynamics, 2008, vol. 04: 85-90.
- [5] Dan Zahavi. Self and Other: exploring subjectivity, empathy and shame. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- [6] Edmund Husserl. Cartesian Meditations: an introduction to Phenomenology. Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982.

- [7] Ni Liangkang. Facing Reality Itself. Beijing: Oriental Press, 2000.
- [8] Wang Haoning. The Theory of Conceptual Existence: A Meditative Reading of Husserl's Cartesian. Beijing: People 's Publishing House, 2012.
- [9] Zhao Meng. Husserl's idealism and positivism. Philosophical Dynamics,2018, 11: 63-70.
- [10] Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen. The Husserl Dictionary. India: Continuum, 2012, 147.
- [11] Klaus Held. Phenomenology of the world. Sun Zhouxing, ed. Translated by Ni Liangkang, et al. Beijing: Life, Reading, New Knowledge, 2003.
- [12] Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenology of Perception. Translated by Donald A. Landes. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012.
- [13] Donn Welton. The Other Husserl: The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology [M]. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- [14] Cai Wenjing. Transcendence and the Other - Husserl and Levinas on how the objective world is possible. Philosophical Dynamics, 2019, vol. 6: 81-88.