

other from self. Guillaume cites the Scandinavian author Finnbogason, who in 1913 published a book on imitative intelligence.<sup>37</sup> The principal idea is that *accommodation* allows for real imitation. When we partially imitate the other's behavior, we are obliged, by a kind of induction, to take the total corresponding attitude to that behavior. (For example, we automatically take on the voice of the person whose gestures we are imitating.) When one adopts an aspect of the other's behavior, the totality of consciousness takes on the "style" of the imitated person. In other words, true imitation carries on beyond the limited consciousness and becomes global: once it has been *accommodated*, imitation surpasses itself. It is this kind of surpassing that permits the appropriation of new structures, for example, language acquisition.

In this thesis on imitation, Guillaume makes use of two very important notions, but he refuses to analyze them further. (1) The notion of a pre-self, a latent ego that remains in ignorance of itself, because it has not yet encountered in others a limit to the self. This notion remains inaccessible due to the indistinction occurring at this stage of development. (2) The movement which takes the child toward others and that makes him pass from act imitation to person imitation. Guillaume only explains this passage with the idea of "transfer" (an associationist notion and one that makes this displacement an illusion).

We cannot avoid the analysis of these notions which implicate the entire problem of the other. The relation with others, as Guillaume conceives of it in imitation, presupposes a quasi-magical relationship with our own bodies; others' actions are perceived as melodic totalities by us insofar as we have the same capacities. *These are the notions that Husserl and Scheler's phenomenology possesses in trying to present a philosophical elucidation.*

#### IV. The Problem of Others' Existence

According to Husserl

##### A. Posing the Problem: The Apparent Impossibility of Conceiving of the Other

The Cartesian "cogito" poses the problem of self and other in terms that seem to render a solution impossible.<sup>38</sup> In effect, if the mind or self is defined by its contact with itself, how can a representation of the other be possible? The self only has significance insofar as it is this self-consciousness. All can be doubted except for the fact that it sees, and so forth. All experience presupposes the self's contact with itself, all knowl-

edge is only possible because of this first knowledge. Others would be a self that appears from outside of me—a contradictory idea.

It is repugnant to the other to only be the consciousness I have of him, since the other is for himself as I am for myself. For this reason, I cannot have access to him. Since others are not for me what I am for myself, I have no experience of them. Even if I wanted, by a kind of spiritual sacrifice, to renounce my "cogito" to pose as an other, this would still be me who would hold this existence, and therefore it would still be *my* phenomenon. The relationship of self and others appears to thus be a relationship of reciprocal exclusion and the problem seems to be insoluble.

### B. Existence of the Phenomenon of Others

However, the phenomenon of others is incontestable and a number of our attitudes are only understandable as contingent upon others. We have the experience of others, even though it is uncertain if the form of that experience is the same as the experience of ourselves (a certain solipsism is insurmountable, Husserl says). The problem is thus that we must posit others, something that seems logically impossible, since for all practical purposes others do exist.

The solution: transform this relationship of exclusion into a living relationship. The problem's givens are that we must admit a certain presence of others as an indirect presence, since the only indubitable presence is of myself (the "cogito's" demand). Husserl looks for several ways to access the perception of others.

(1) *Lateral perception*. Others never exist in front of me, as objects do, but are always implicated in a certain "orientation," a reference in relationship to me. It is the "alter ego," a kind of reflection for me. This is about conceiving not a series of "for-itselfs," but a community of alter egos, existing for each other. Others take their existence, in a certain sense, from me.

(2) *Perception of a lacuna*. We perceive others as reflections and at the same time as lacunae in relation to ourselves. In effect, it is like a forbidden zone in our experience. It is precisely a question of a real *perception* of others (in the sense of an incontestable experience, others are present "in person"), but this is not a perception in the genre of object perception. For objects, what is not actually given to me could always exist as such virtually (from another point of view, from a microscope, etc.). With others, it will always be impossible to perceive them in their totalities—that is, to perceive them as they perceive themselves.

The "flesh and bones" presence has a limit: we are never in the exact place as others; by definition, if we were in their place, we would be

them (distinction between our position "*hic*" and theirs "*illic*"). But all this—lateral perception, perception of lacunae—does not really posit others. We must go beyond; we must truly penetrate into the other's field, if we want to fully affirm the other's existence.

(3) *Perception of the other's behavior.* Here Husserl's analysis is completely parallel to Guillaume's. When I originally witness the other's behavior, my body becomes the way of understanding it; my corporality becomes the power of understanding the other's corporality. I regain the final sense (the "*Zwecksinn*") of the other's behavior because my body is capable of the same goals. Hence, the notion of style intervenes: because the style of my gestures and the other's gestures is the same, it amounts to the fact that what is true for me is also true for others. "Style" is not a concept or an idea: it is a "manner" that I apprehend and then imitate, when I am unable to *define* it.

(4) *Intentional transfer.* But the operation of conceiving of the other's existence is more than a perception of his style. It must also be a pairing ("*Paarung*"): a body encounters in another body its own counterpart that realizes its own intentions and that suggests to me its new intentions. The perception of others is the assumption of one organism by another. Husserl gives us many names for this vital operation which gives us the experience of others while transcending our own selves. He calls it "intentional transfer" or "apperceptive transfer," always insisting at face value that it is not a logical operation ("*kein Schluss, kein Denkakt*") but rather a vital one.<sup>39</sup> The other's behavior confirms my own intentions to such an extent and designates a behavior which has so much meaning for me that I assume it myself.

#### [C.] Husserl's Position

To what degree does Husserl find a solution to the problem of the existence of others in the context of an intuitive philosophy? As we have already said, there is a fundamental contradiction. The experience of others is given to us, but we cannot posit it logically. It is about making the experience of others *explicit*, seemingly impossible given the primordial condition that Husserl does not intend to abandon. Each time we believe he is close to a solution, he recalls this contradiction. This condition is the Cartesian conception of "*cogito*": consciousness is essentially self-consciousness. The experience of others also must be understood as another self. Without an alter ego, Husserl says, there is no other organism.

In such a way, Husserl denies the pseudo-solution that consists of concluding that the existence of consciousness of the other comes from my own consciousness and is constituted by noticing similarities in our behaviors. We encounter a disaccord here with the dichotomy of under-

standing and thought posed by Descartes. How can we pass from one to the other? It is the difficulty of the passage from the order of the in-itself to the order of the *for-itself*. The other is a for-itself that appears to me in things, through a body, thus, through the in-itself. In order to conceive of this passage, we should have to elaborate upon a mixed notion, something unthinkable for Descartes. Husserl himself refused to overcome the constitutive contradiction of the perception of others. I cannot allow myself to reduce myself to the image the other has of me. Thus, since I cannot succeed in positing myself in the other's perspective, I cannot pretend to posit the existence of the other.

Having shown the impossibility of surmounting this contradiction and the impossibility of a synthesis, Husserl adds that this synthesis is not possible and that the problem is poorly posed. The difference between my point of view and others' point of view only exists after we have experienced other people: it is a consequence. We must not, Husserl says, pose this distinction from the beginning and then oppose all thought of an experience of others. But with this remark, Husserl seems to want to renounce the idea that one attains the experience of others starting with self-consciousness. He seems to bring us in another direction. Thus, there are two tendencies in his work. One is the attempt to gain access to others from the "cogito," from the "sphere of ownness" [*sphère de appartenance*]. The other is to refuse the problem and have an orientation toward "intersubjectivity," that is to say, the possibility of starting without posing the primordial "cogito," starting with the consciousness that is neither self nor other.

But while envisioning this second possibility, Husserl effectively shows that although it would be more satisfying, it only masks the difficulties of the problem which remain, for Husserl, intact. Thus, on the verge of an intersubjective conception, at the end, Husserl maintains an integral transcendental intersubjectivity.

Later, Husserl was more conscious of the problem and came to affirm simultaneously the two requirements. For example, he says in his unpublished writings that transcendental subjectivity is intersubjectivity (the experience that the other has of me validly teaches me what I am), but he does not achieve a reconciliation.

## V. Max Scheler's Conception

Scheler, a student of Husserl, tried to find a solution to the problem and to secure the perception of others in completely renouncing the "cogito" as the starting point (i.e., abandoning this Cartesian postulate that con-

sciousness is primarily self-consciousness).<sup>40</sup> He explicitly begins with the total indifferentiation between self and other.

Scheler generalizes the notion of "internal perception" (the perception of sentiments, for example) that applies as much to others as to myself because, on the one hand, the perception of my own body or my own behavior is exterior to the perception of objects and not more immediate; and, on the other hand, we see, we perceive the other's sentiments (not only their expressions) with the same certitude that we perceive our own. The differences between the diverse sentiments are furnished by perception itself (it is impossible, for example, to confound in the other the blush of shame with that of being angry or upset). Perception takes us a long way into the understanding of others (for instance, in Proust, the discernment of Albertine's life).<sup>41</sup> Equally, there is the perception of the other's will; we perceive it as our own will, and so forth. We should speak of a "current of undifferentiated psychic experience," a mixture of self and other, primitive consciousness in a kind of generality, a permanent "hysterical" state (in the sense of indistinction between what is lived and what is only imagined to be between self and other).

How does self-consciousness emerge from this undifferentiated state? Scheler says that one only has self-consciousness through expression (acts, reactions, etc.). One takes self-consciousness as what one understands as consciousness of others. Similarly, intentions are only known once they are realized.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, self-consciousness cannot be privileged. It is impossible without consciousness of others; it is of the same kind. As in all experience, self-experience only exists as a figure upon a ground (perception of others is like the ground from which self-perception separates itself). One perceives oneself through the intermediary of the others.

But a problem remains. For Husserl, the problem is to move from self-consciousness to consciousness of others. In Scheler's conceptions, it is about understanding how self-consciousness can surge forth from this ground of a primitive undifferentiated state.

#### A. Discussion of Scheler

For Scheler, *consciousness is inseparable from its expression* (consequently, also from the cultural whole of its environment) *and there is no radical difference between self-consciousness and consciousness of others*. But does this make it clear how the subject comes to posit others? How does both isolation exist and plurality of consciousnesses exist?

Scheler responds to this by saying that consciousnesses are only separated by their corporalities, by the collection of instruments that

serve them. "Corporality" is to some degree the sensible matter that assists in the apprehension of self or others. But the purely sensible aspect of a feeling constitutes only a minor portion of it. All the rest, its content, its *intention*, can be shared with others. Thus, in a fire, only the burnt subject can feel the sensible sharpness of pain. But everything else the burn represents, danger of fire, danger to the body's integrity, *the meaning of pain*, can be communicated to others and is felt by them. Thus, it is the same form, the same content of the sentiment that is lived in another manner. The signification, the sentiment's intention (what constitutes its essentials) is parallel for two consciousnesses. There is an isolation of the sensed, but not of consciousnesses.

Scheler introduces the notion of "emotional evidence," we cannot *really* become others, but we can intentionally become them. We can reach others through all kinds of expressive manifestations that they give to us. There is no bipartition in our consciousness of others (the perception of manifestations of others entails a hypothesis about their consciousnesses which by analogy produces similar manifestations in our own consciousnesses). In the other as in us, consciousness and its manifestations are one. Husserl had posed this problem in terms of consciousness; hence it was made unsolvable. Scheler tries to pose the problem in terms of *individuality*.

Scheler's essential contribution is the notion of expression; there is no consciousness *behind* manifestations; they are inherent to consciousness; they *are* consciousness. Because others are completely whole in their manifestations, I can posit them through their own existence and not by analogical reasoning.

To make consciousness of others possible, Scheler minimizes self-consciousness, reducing it to a simple contact with the self, contact that little by little is realized through experience and that is never achieved; it never becomes a full self-possession. In this conception, the "cogito" takes on a general importance, applicable to others as well as to the self. The cogito in a Cartesian sense is undeniably a cultural conquest. Since it gives rise to a coming to consciousness, it is not primordial. Since it was subordinated to a series of cultural conditions that have permitted this conscious grasp of self, it is *expression* in the same way that all consciousness is.

With Husserl, there was already a tendency to revise the notion of cogito (incarnation of ego in its expressions), but this tendency clashed with the same definition of a pure consciousness. With Scheler, consciousness is opaque, completely invested in its expression. But does this method not make consciousness's grasp of itself and the other as alter ego impossible? Does he not level down self-consciousness and conscious-

ness of others to a neutral psychic level that ends up being neither one? Even with the introduction of "emotional evidence" we only grasp the behaviors, not the persons. In pain, for example, we do not perceive others, as long as we do not represent our sensible and material pain. The intentional element of sentiment is only generalized in relation to the true sentiment. We do not have real experience of others as long as we have not linked the significations of a feeling to the very fact of *living these significations*. Scheler's conception rubs elbows with a kind of panpsychism; at the heart of his conception there is not individuation of consciousnesses. How could a subject who doesn't have self-consciousness (in the Husserlian sense) emerge as a subject from this common current?

### B. Conclusions

In minimizing self-consciousness, Scheler equally compromises consciousness of others. Husserl, on the contrary, wants to maintain the originality of the ego and can only introduce others as destructors of that ego. With Husserl, as well as with Scheler, ego and others are tied by the same dialectical relationship: while they seem to exclude each other, they are also bizarrely related. It turns out that it is impossible to save one at the expense of another; both vary in the same sense (cf. the relationships of master to slave in Hegel's dialectic).

Thus, in order to resolve the problem, we must not suppress the initial opposition. Theoretically, it is insurmountable. But, as it is not about a logical relationship, but an existential relationship, the self could rejoin the other in rendering *lived experience* more profoundly. We must render the self as interdependent in certain *situations*. We must tie even the notion of ipseity to that of situations; the ego would be defined as identical to the act in which it projects itself. Self and other—we are conscious of one and the other in a common situation. It is this sense that we must make more precise in Scheler's conceptions and in Husserl's notion of "pairing." It is about encountering the same orientation. But, at the same time, there is only a possibility of comprehension in the *present* (a kind of geometrical place of self and other) and in an *assignable reality*. When Malraux says, "One dies alone, therefore one lives alone," he is making a false deduction. Life in fact radically surpasses individualities, and it is impossible to judge it in relationship to death, which is an individual failure.

The conception of consciousness in the perspective of Scheler, and even in certain passages in Husserl, brings us, as we have seen, to *expression*. Expression is considered to be the act through which consciousness realizes itself. It seems that we have therefore accomplished a kind of circle: *in order to understand language acquisition we have studied imitation*

*only to discover, following Guillaume, that imitation is not preceded by the conscious grasp of other and identification with the other. On the contrary, it is the act by which identification with others is produced. This brings us to inquire what consciousness of self and other accomplishes with this act; then we find ourselves brought back to the notion of expression.*

But, in fact, this notion is no longer exactly the one we started with; it is enriched. From the beginning, we had considered language as an intellectual operation of deciphering the other's thought, as an intermediary between the speaker and the listener. But in this conception, the subject who learns to speak only finds in language the concepts he already has; language can add nothing new, since it presupposes thought. However, experience shows that language affects thought as much as the inverse—the classical notion of language cannot thus make sense of learning language.

On the contrary, in the light of Husserl's and Scheler's conceptions, we can no longer consider language acquisition as the intellectual operation of reconstituting meaning, we are no longer in the presence of two entities (expression and sense) of which the second is hidden behind the first. Language, as an expressive phenomenon, is constitutive of consciousness. In this perspective, to learn to speak is to increasingly coexist with the environment. To live in an environment is, for the child, the incentive to recapture language and thought to make them his own. Thus, acquisition no longer resembles deciphering a text for which one would possess the code and key; rather, it is "deciphering" (deciphering without knowing the code). The decipherer is aided by two converging means. One is an internal critique of the text (frequency of certain signs, their arrangement, structure, and words). Another is an external critique (place and time of its emission, situation of the emitter, etc.). Experience shows that all types of texts have been deciphered. Yet there is always an intervention in this operation of an intuitive element, since the problem's givens never suffice for a logical determination. It is a creative operation, comparable to the child learning language in the sense that, in a given moment, the decipherer, like the child, ought to surpass the given elements in order to grasp the entire meaning. It is the movement where the collection of signs, the style of the text no longer only means one single thing, where, as Jakobson has said about a phonemic system, it "tends toward" signification.

Between the period where the child does not understand and the moment where he understands, a discontinuity that is impossible to mask exists. Classical psychology, in affirming that thought precedes expression, tries to cover up this hiatus, but at the same time raises its meaning to a language phenomenon. In fact, as the child learns to know himself

through the other, he learns to know others through himself. The child also learns to speak because the ambient language *calls* to his thought; he is enticed by its styles, until only one meaning emerges from the whole. This is why Ombredane could call language a "semiological gesticulation," which is to say that meaning is immanent to the living speech as it is immanent to the gestures through which we point out objects.<sup>43</sup>

We must compare this process to Wolff's research concerning the apprehension of the individual's style.<sup>44</sup> Wolff shows photographs of different people to subjects with no scientific background. He also presents them with the same people's signatures, silhouettes, and their recorded voices and asks them to match all these materials. The proportion of correct matches (about 70 percent) is *remarkable without the subjects being able to say what guided them in their decisions*. We must admit that perception grasps in the other a unique structure that participates in the other's expressions, voice, writing, and so forth. Wolff hence gives evidence for the existence of a nonthematic, fluent signification. It is a kind of signification where language is pregnant for the child when he hears it being spoken around him. Hazy at first, the signification articulates itself and becomes clearer and clearer. Thus, it is not about a phenomenon of the order of pure thought or understanding. It is the *value of use* that defines language: instrumental use precedes signification per se. The same even holds for language that is more elaborate, for example, the introduction of a new concept in philosophical language. It is according to its own usage that the author forces the acceptance of the sense for which he uses a new term. The signification of what the author proposes is therefore an *open* signification, without which there would be no acquisition on the level of thought. A language entirely defined (an algorithm like that of "logical positivism") would be sterile.<sup>45</sup>

Until now, we have considered language acquisition concerning the infant's first words; the infant has acquired the means to designate objects in their absence. But only objects that can be given in sensible experience have been considered.

The same problem is given again on the level of "thoughts," when it has been resolved at the level of the sensible. This is what Piaget calls the "lag" [*décalage*]. That is to say, all acquisition made at a certain level must be begun again at a higher level. Regarding infantile egocentrism, it will have been surpassed long ago on the level of perception when the child must surpass it on the intellectual and logical plane. Moreover, even for the adult, expression of what is most his own in his experience will always have to be perfected. In such a sense, Malraux says, "How many years must an artist need to find his own voice?"<sup>46</sup> Hence, far from being

limited to the first years, language acquisition is coextensive with the very exercise of language.

## VI. The Evolution of Language to Seven Years

We now return to the study of language from the point where the child has learned to designate objects in the sensible world. In order to follow the further evolution of language, we will refer to Piaget's work.<sup>47</sup> Until around seven years of age, language is for the child more a means of self-expression than of communication with others. It is an *egocentric language*. Its manifestations are the following.

### A. The Phenomenon of Echolalia

This is the indefinite repetition of the same word, properly characterized by Piaget as a play activity. The child amuses himself by showing or verifying the word's significance in repeating it. Like games that generally consist in adopting different roles, language as play allows the child to access increasingly numerous situations. By repeating the word, the child extends his behavior. He has fun exercising language as a manifestation of his imaginary life.

We can ask here, as with all games, to what extent does the child believe in the reality of imaginary situations? (Take, for instance, Diderot in his book *The Paradox of Acting*—does the actor believe he is the character he represents or does he lie?)<sup>48</sup> But Sartre in *The Imaginary* shows that this is a false problem.<sup>49</sup> The child, like the actor, is neither feigning nor is he in an illusion. He has left the plane of habitual life for an oneiric life that he really lives. He renders himself unreal [*s'irréaliser*] in the role.

### B. The Monologue

Another aspect of "egocentric language" is the monologue and, in the presence of others, the "collective monologue" where two or more children, seemingly giving replies to one another, are only really following their own monologues without taking into account the other's reactions.

We are posed the following question: is the monologue preceded by speech with others or is it the inverse? Piaget responds: for the child, there is no difference between self and other (it is precisely his "egocen-