

Comment on Abe Stone's Paper (HC 2005)

Christian Lotz (University of Kansas)

Introduction

In what follows, I will first briefly summarize Stone's main claims, after which I will restrict my comments to two selected aspects of his paper, in which I shall especially focus on his reflections on Husserl, before I will finally end with a request for clarification, and an outline of two brief remarks regarding the concept of a system and Levinas.

Overview

In his paper, Stone attempts to reconstruct a central topic within phenomenology and Neo-Kantianism at the beginning of the 20th century, namely, the concept of the "object" as the indeterminable 'X,' seen in relation to Natorp's and Husserl's appropriation of Kant's A and B deductions, which are presented in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. He further claims that the development of the beginning of the 20th century can only be understood if we explain and understand the introduction of "open-ended, stepwise hierarchical systems" (1) in Neo-Kantianism and in Husserl. As he explains, one reason for this might be found in "Hegel's method" while the other can be discovered in the revival of metaphysical thoughts in Brentano. Both, Stone finally declares, were combined with two different interpretations of Kant's concept of "synthesis," namely, Natorp's preference for the B-deduction and Husserl's preference for the A deduction, which finally lead to two very different conceptions of the relation between consciousness and object. Whereas in Natorp's transcendental appropriation of Kant, as Stone claims, synthetic consciousness guarantees the objectivity of knowledge, in Husserl's

phenomenological appropriation, synthetic consciousness guarantees and generates objects of new, higher objects. Stone then goes on to show [1] that Natorp's interpretation of Kant's deduction and the synthetic process should be understood as a logical process, within which categories become determinations of *the* object in a transcendental sense, even if Natorp gives up Hegel's claim that the system of categories can be satisfactorily reconstructed in a closed absolute system, as is done by Hegel in his *Science of Logic*. According to Stone, Natorp rejects Kant's A deduction because he rejects Kant's attempt to differentiate an inner sense from the experience of objects, insofar as this leads to two types of synthesis – a psychological and an “objective” – that should be rejected on transcendental grounds. According to Stone, Husserl shares this basic intuition with Natorp, since on phenomenological grounds it is untenable to claim that we operate with two realms, the inner objects and the outer objects of experience. However, according to Stone, Husserl thinks that Kant's A deduction paved the way for a proper understanding of the relation between consciousness and its objects, even though it misconstrued the way in which things are given in experience.

Critical Remarks

[A] I am not sure whether Stone's identification of the indeterminable 'X' with the “idea in the Kantian sense” is convincing, since Husserl applies the language of regulative ideas in a rather loose manner, namely [1] to the constitution of perceptual objects (the level Stone is dealing with), [2] to the unity of the *Erlebnisstrom* (Hua III/1, #84), [3] to the world as such (Hua VII, 276), [4] to essences (Hua III/1, #74), and, finally, in a certain sense, [5] to his own philosophy and the infinity of the phenomenological task. Given this, I think that the relation that Stone tries to open up between Kant and Husserl is not as obvious as it first seems.

[B] I am not sure if the introduction of what Stone calls “hierarchical” systems– at least in regard to Husserl – can be satisfactorily explained with a reference to Hegel, given that Husserl’s thought is neither dialectic nor metaphysical. In addition, it is questionable whether Hegel’s thought can be characterized in the way that Stone presents it, for Hegel’s concept of the infinite has a special place within the *Daseinslogik* and the determination of “etwas” in his *Science of Logic*. Consequently, given the metaphysical and ontological assumptions of Hegel *Logic*, I find it confusing to refer to dialectic as a “step-wise” system and to relate Hegel’s system to either Natorp or Husserl. Perhaps Abe can say something about his global historical claims in this regard at the end of my response.

[C] Finally, I am wondering why Stone did not deal with Husserl’s transformation of the concept of synthesis into [1] a temporal notion, and [2] the rather Non-Kantian idea of “passive syntheses.” As we know, the temporal synthesis for Husserl is an absolutely passive occurrence, whereas in Kant synthesis has an active sense.

In the remainder of my remarks, I want to outline a few aspects of the latter point, that is to say, a few aspects of [1] the relation between noema and object, as well as [2] the problem of time. As I will claim, it is the problem of *time* that leads Husserl in particular, but phenomenology in general, to Kant’s A deduction, and not, as Stone claims, the relation between consciousness and object, or the structure of philosophical “systems.”

Remark 1: Noema and Transcendent Object

I shall first clarify the “double sense” in which Husserl deals with the relation between the object as a part of the noema – i.e., the ‘X’ or substrate – and the ideal, “real” object as the *possible* and *harmonious* fulfillment of all experiences that we could have of such an object. It is my suspicion that Stone misses this important distinction, and hence does not see that Husserl’s

conception of the relation between consciousness and object is rather unique, and that as such, it cannot be compared to Kant's conception, which will lead us to the aforementioned problem of time. As we know, commentators have been puzzled by Husserl's concept of the noema and object for the last 30 years. It remains especially unclear whether the noema and the object should be interpreted within an *epistemological* framework or within an *ontological* framework. I will argue, however, that if we follow Husserl, we should adopt a position that is beyond and can incorporate both. I believe that Husserl's position attempts to be merely descriptive, which is to say, that various epistemological and ontological levels are blended into each other. In order to understand Husserl's conception of the noema, we must first grasp his definition of the "object-that-is-intended" *in* the noema. As Drummond has already shown, the "object-that-is-intended" is itself a fundamental part of the noema, and yet it should not be understood as an ontologically different entity. In other words, the noema is not to be conceptualized as a "mediator" between an inner representational world and an outer real world. Terms, such as "immanence," "transcendence," "object," or even "noema," are above all *descriptive* and *eidetic* concepts. Second, we must attempt to grasp Husserl's concept of the object. Here, it is important that we take into account that, according to Husserl, the noemata constitute themselves in the form of an identity, they are intended *as* an identity. While I am perceiving, imagining, or remembering, the same something constitutes the object of my acts *as* identical. In other words, the 'X' of the noema is the way in which something, a "theme," is as something conscious. Identity and the 'X' belongs to the *mode of experience* itself.

This should lead us immediately to acknowledge that for Husserl, terms such as identity and unity before they are idealized on the logical level are *temporal* concepts. For instance, I can now perceive parts of Dublin that up until now I always only imagined when reading some of

Joyce's literature. "Dublin" as "the" thematic 'X' remains, throughout my different, now remembered-imagined and perceived acts, always the same, but – and this is important to note – "it" ("Dublin") is indeed constituted *as* the same. Hence, though it seems as if the determinable 'X' and the noematic sense are different, the 'X' is just another descriptive moment of the noema. However, Dublin as an identical, intentional object and the *temporal* fulfillment of all *possible* experiences that we could have of it, should be differentiated from the "real" or "actual" object "Dublin," since, according to Husserl, this requires further investigations of modalisations, evidence and motivated positing (*Ideas I*, #136-#145), which leads to the "reality" of the 'X' as being itself a phenomenon that can be investigated. If we follow Husserl's own advice to take those concepts as *descriptions* and, if we take into account what he himself says in #131, namely that "the determinable, which is part of every core, is conscious as identical" ["das Bestimmbare, das in jedem Kerne liegt, als identisches bewusst ist"] (Hua III/1, 302)], then we must conceive of the proposed identity of the determinable 'X' as the possibility of *harmonious* [*einstimmig*] fulfillment, and not, as Stone claims, as something totally different from the determination (13); for this thought would indeed transform the 'X' into, as Stone claims, a "third." Quite importantly, however, phenomenologically conceived there is no third, given that ontological distinctions are bracketed out at that point of Husserl's considerations.

At this juncture in our reflections we should note that Husserl's concept of an object and of *Gegenstaende* (in general) is absolutely different from Kant's concept of objects, since [1] Husserl's position is based on a conception of objects given in their *fullness*, such as values, purposes, perspective, lived Body, distance, nearness, the position of the eyes, reaching out, empathy, "more-consciousness," etc., the topic(s) of which remains unconsidered in Kant's transcendental philosophy, [2] what Kant attempted to reconstruct as pure categories, turn in

Husserl's theory, into phenomena in their own right, that is to say, they are turned into *objects of study* and analysis. For example, for Husserl, causality does not – as it does in Kant's approach – become a determination of *the* object; rather, causality becomes a phenomenon that is another word for the constitution of the material object, as explained and described by Husserl in *Ideas II*. Put simply, it is not, as in Kant, a rule that rationality prescribes and guarantees objective knowledge. Hence, it is not true, as Stone claims, that the indeterminable 'X' is a "consequence of the object's materiality" (13). Indeed, materiality is a very specific mode within which the correlation between *noesis* and *noema* must be eidetically described in a response to its specific givenness, but the infinity is not the *consequence* of its materiality. In addition, if we take Husserl's genetic phenomenology into account, which attempts to show how logical categories emerge *out of* the sensible or aesthetical realm and become idealized, we immediately see that the phenomenological conception of what "object," "thing" or "Gegenstand" means, is far removed from any Kantian or metaphysical account of the relation between consciousness and object. The question of the objective validity of the categories, is, seen from Husserl's point of view, misconstrued, for phenomenologically we deal with categories in modes of experiences, within which those categories are given.

Consequently, I cannot see how Husserl's conception of the *thing* can (even remotely) be connected to Kant. It seems, rather, to have its origins in anti-idealist and anti-metaphysical movements at the end of the 19th century. However, as I pointed out, Husserl's conception of the object as indeterminable 'X' and the identity of the object, has to do with harmonious fulfillment and, hence, requires a *temporal* interpretation and synthesis. Consequently, I think that we should modify Stone's claim that Husserl prefers the A edition of Kant's deduction because of the special relation between consciousness and object into the claim that the phenomenon of *time*

is the deeper reason for Husserl's preference of the A-edition, especially if we take into account that Husserl himself speaks (in his Kant speech from 1924, which is really a speech about his own philosophy...) of the "mythology of the transcendental apperception" (Hua VII, 235). I shall further elaborate on this point in the following section, which deals with the unity of consciousness.

Remark 2: Pure Reflection, Ego, Unity of Consciousness

Given what I have now claimed, namely, that it is *time* and subsequently Kant's investigation of the three syntheses of reproduction, apprehension, and recognition that determines Husserl's preference for the A edition, and that the whole task of the transcendental deduction for phenomenology is a construction, we should now be able to more clearly see that from a Husserlian standpoint we should reject Kant's theory of the transcendental apperception altogether. In Husserl, the question of the ego becomes transformed into a question of temporal unity, and, as we know, it is at all not clear whether Husserl's position leads to a first-person approach, i.e., whether it should be understood as an egological or non-egological conception of self-consciousness.

My own take on this matter is the following: [1] in *Ideas I* the pure ego is introduced, though Husserl sometimes seems to indicate something different, namely a *descriptive component* of *act-intentionality* that does not apply to the unity of consciousness as such; accordingly. [2] I do not think that we find in Husserl an explanation of how all experiences that I have are *mine*; rather, I think that he only shows how all experiences *belong to* a unity, which in his early writing he calls "Erlebnisstrom," and which, ultimately, in his later writings he calls, more appropriately, "life" or "monad." [2.1.] This unity is a *temporal* and not a *thought* unity, which [2.2.] makes phenomenological (=absolute) reflection, as a reflection within the living

present, possible, and which in turn [2.3.] must be *given*. [3] The question of the unity of consciousness in Husserl is a *purely* passive constitution and is not – at least at its foundational level – conceived as an activity, the consequence of which is that we find in Husserl the most radical anti-Kantianism and anti-Fichteanism that we can imagine. Finally, [4] the question of the *individuality* of the *Erlebnisstrom* is for Husserl a question that can only be solved in his phenomenology of intersubjectivity and otherness. I can, of course, not cover all of these aforementioned points in my comments. Accordingly, I will restrict my final remarks to the problem of the unity of consciousness, since I do not believe that Stone’s claim (which was much stronger in the first version of the submission) that the unity of the *Erlebnisstrom* “emanates” (13) from the absolute unity of consciousness can be justified. On the contrary, in Husserl, the “ego,” if conceived as something analyzable, is only an abstraction from the concrete whole, that is to say, from consciousness, the unity of which does not emerge from a synthetical activity and an “I think,” as it is the case in Kant; rather, the temporal unity *constitutes itself in its unity*. The pure ego, as it is conceived in the *Ideas I*, only belongs to the *actual* attentive cogito, but *not* to the field of potentiality that this actual act- and cogito-intentionality presupposes, that is to say, monadic life. In order to speak of an *actual* and *current* I-Intentionality *in* a present we already presuppose the temporal unity to which the concrete intentional act belongs (Hua III/1, #80, #81). It is, hence, time, or, put differently, the *temporal unity of the lived presence*, that is the real problem for Husserl; for, as long as he is not able to show that and how present experience is in a *passive* synthesis temporally unified, and how all explicitly preformed acts go back to this absolute unity, the Kantian constructivism is not overcome. Moreover, it can – from a Kantian perspective – always be claimed that Husserl’s temporal constitution of the unity of consciousness presupposes an (“logical”) *activity* of

synthesizing the elements of this consciousness. Indeed, Kant's transcendental apperception is not thought in a temporal way, inasmuch it is the *condition of the possibility* of anything that can "be" at all. Consequently, rather than being layed out *as* a synthesis, in Kant the transcendental apperception is not only *an a-temporal* act of the human spirit, it is also not conceived as a synthesis of an "immanent" hyletic field, out of which otherness and temporal transcendence emerge.

Consequently, if we would take this fact into account, it would also (probably) be easier to see why Natorp and Husserl differ from each other, and why Husserl, if such a claim makes sense at all, prefers the A edition of the *CpR*.

Final Remarks

Let me finish with two very brief concluding remarks

[1] Acknowledging the centrality of the phenomenon of time would also lead to a reconsideration of what Stone calls hierarchical and non-hierarchical systems, the introduction of which left me somewhat confused. Accordingly, I would like to ask Abe to clarify the concept of "system" that he uses in his paper, especially since it seems to me that what Kant called the "architectonic of reason" in his *CpR*, and what became so central for Fichte and Hegel, has nothing whatsoever to do with Husserl's phenomenology.

[2] Finally, Stone's interpretation of Levinas left me uneasy, too. Rather than offering a path from the 'indeterminable X,' as outlined by Husserl in his *Ideas I* and in his *Analysis*, it seems to me more promising, as numerous Husserl and Levinas scholars have shown, to see the problem of otherness and the infinite as a [1] temporal, [2] a hyletic, and, finally, [3] an ethical problem, and not, as Abe claims, as a problem of the infinitely indeterminable 'X.'