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Monad

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MONAD

Andrea Altobrando

25.0. Introduction

The term “monad” has a possibly irreducible metaphysical flavor. More than three-quarters of a century have passed since the first publication of the *Cartesian Meditations* in French. As a result, we have become accustomed to the idea that this term can be associated with phenomenology. However, it is still difficult to understand how and why a discipline that is based on the “principle of all principles” can make use of a word that almost unavoidably leads us to a fundamentally speculative discourse. The principle of all principles certainly does not forbid that we develop the content of our intuitions beyond the limited space of intuitions themselves, but does this mean that we can reach a point where the meaning of our statements is fully out of sight, if not even in contradiction with the intuitions that its meaning is supposedly derived from? And should we really make use of a word which suggests that there are only mirrors and their images? Can we use a word which implies that each subject is eternal, and in her infinite profundities she has traces of the entire infinite universe? Can we make use of a word that, willingly or not, is partially indebted to Cartesian dualism? And can we accept a word that, ultimately, connects with an invocation of an almighty God, in order to make sure that the universe is what we all perceive in all of its glorious harmony?

Husserl, who was certainly not unaware of the metaphysico-speculative burden that the word “monad” carries, thought we should make use of it, although we have to “purify” its meaning.\(^1\) In what follows, we will see if and how this purification can be achieved.

25.1. The (phenomenological) birth of a monad

One can schematically summarize the train of thought that seemingly gives birth to the idea of monad within the phenomenological framework in four steps. These steps roughly mirror the initial effective historical birth of a monadological view in Husserl’s thought, the development of which can approximately be dated between 1908 and 1918.\(^2\) Moreover, they also correspond to four fundamental reasons one can find in the phenomenological reflection for taking the plausibility of a monadological stance into consideration.
25.1.1. The remains of the reduction

Historically, the first appearance of the term “monad” in the writings of a phenomenologist is probably in a manuscript, dated 1908, in which Husserl reflects upon the results of the phenomenologico-transcendental reduction (henceforth simply “reduction”). Husserl writes:

The development of the world is the development of consciousness, and anything physical is itself only a relationship between consciousnesses, the essences of which are of such a kind, that we, in our thinking, have to posit them in the form of physical matters, forces, atoms, etc. In this way, we would fundamentally renew the Leibnizian monadology.\(^3\)

After achieving the reduction, all one is left with is the realm of consciousness, and this looks like a Leibnizian monad, because it somehow encloses everything one can make sense of and nothing else besides this seems to be needed. In brief, the transcendental consciousness one gains by means of the reduction looks like an enclosed, and epistemically self-sufficient, unity. Thus, one could derive that everything, i.e. the world, is nothing more than a system of transcendental consciousnesses. Although, in the above quoted manuscript, Husserl eventually judges that speaking in such a way would mean engaging a metaphysical discourse that exceeds the phenomenological framework, the independence of the transcendental field of consciousness, aka transcendental subjectivity, remains one of the main issues that leads Husserl to plan to construct a phenomenological monadology.

Moreover, here we can already find the idea that transcendental and empirical subjectivity ultimately coincide. We cannot question such an identification here, nor spell it out in all its aspects. Either way, this identification constitutes a fundamental element for the Husserlian understanding of the monad. Therefore, we will provisionally assume it, although, in the end, we will show some of its biases within this very monadological framework. Until we point out such biases, whatever is said about the transcendental subjectivity or the transcendental subject should be considered as referring also to the empirical subjectivity and subject – as well as vice-versa.

25.1.2. The concreteness of the subject

A further motive to adopt the term “monad” to refer to subjectivity is that an understanding of subjectivity as a mere pole of experience, or as a set of more or less transcendental functions and habits, shows itself to be too abstract. The concrete subject is a unity of life, i.e. of lived experience, and it includes both the noeses and the noemata of a subject. In this regard, Husserl really does seem to follow Leibniz in the latter’s revision of the Cartesian ego: once one has gained a dimension of apodictic certainty, if one were to look more carefully into what one is left with, one would find that one does not simply have one’s pure ego. Rather, one is left with the far-reaching whole of which the references to the world are an essential part. One is not merely a set of perceptions, emotions, desires, thoughts, etc., but rather a whole made of such lived experiences and their internal, reciprocal relationships, as well as their relationships to their intentional references. To put the matter in simpler terms, a full account would include memories-of-this-and-that, perceptions-of-this-and-that, emotions-towards-one-or-another, beliefs-in-such-and-such, convictions-that-this-or-that, etc., as well as all the relationships between such experiences and their elements.
25.1.3. One world for many subjects

At the end of the lecture course of 1910/11 on *The fundamental problems of phenomenology*, after having stated and acknowledged the plurality of the experiencing subjects, and the irreducibility of their respective streams of consciousness to one, Husserl poses the question about how to constitute the objective world. In order to deal with this issue, Husserl invokes a monadological framework. A full-fledged account of objectivity should work as a kind of algorithm of a function in which the factors are all the different subjects, with all their “really” (*reell*) immanent as well as all their intentional elements, including the ones which pertain to the relationships between the different subjects, and, finally, all the relationships between all, both immanent and intentional, elements of all subjects.

25.1.4. Dynamism – the temporal, the modal, and the gradual being of the subject

The fourth piece of evidence in favor of a monadological account of subjectivity derives from the dynamic structure of subjectivity. This dynamic structure has three layers: a fundamental temporal structure, on the basis of which we have two modal structures.

25.1.4.1. Following his phenomenological reflections on time-consciousness, Husserl comes to the conclusion that there can be neither a beginning nor an end of time-constitution. Since time-constitution is a fundamental structure of subjectivity, there can neither be a beginning nor an end of subjectivity. This result is evidently problematic. Although, in this chapter, we cannot consider the several issues concerning time-consciousness and the transcendental subject, later on we will see one reason to partially reject the claim concerning the temporal infinity of the subject.

As for now, we can accept the more modest claim that one fundamental structure of subjectivity is temporality, and that any manifestation of both the world and subjectivity itself occurs in a temporal distension. Subjectivity manifests itself to itself according to the structures of temporality. The same applies to the world.

25.1.4.2. The temporal structure of subjectivity also impinges on its synchronic constitution. Indeed, subjectivity must, because of its temporal structure, be understood in terms of “sedimentations” of experiences of various kinds. These sedimentations lie at the basis of habits. Habits constitute the subject as something that can suitably be understood as a system of “I can” (*Ich kann*). One is not simply what one experiences, but also what one can, could, and will be able to experience. This means that to account for concrete subjectivity, one has to consider both its actualities and its potentialities, including not only the present ones, but also the past and the future potentialities.

25.1.4.3. Finally, what is given to consciousness is given with different degrees of clarity and distinctness. The movement between empty, fulfilling, and filled intentions constitutes one of the main features of Husserl’s theory and phenomenology of knowledge, and is strictly related to the temporal structure of subjectivity and manifestation. According to Husserl, after the reduction, although the evidence for what we intend from time to time is given with different degrees of clarity or obscurity, distinctness or confusion, anything that one can know is potentially given – and there is nothing one can absolutely not know. In other words, we cannot know anything that is not, in some at least very obscure way, already there, in the present. At the same time, there is nothing which epistemically counts beyond the sphere of apodictic evidence achieved by means of the reduction. Rather, within the very
field of experience, there are pre-configurations of whatever lies beyond the intuitively clear and distinct given. Moreover, whatever is will endure in the past, and will never fully disappear. Finally, confused and obscure states of mind, which we would normally hardly consider as conscious at all – such as drives and impulses – are now considered to belong to the transcendental sphere of apodictic evidence.

To put it briefly: what appears has always appeared, and will always appear; everything is always given, although mostly in an extreme obscure way.

With these three steps, Husserl manages to extend the jurisdiction of the field of evidence: it now subsumes intentional and non-intentional experiences, as well as their references. Both the experiences and their references can also be situated far away, both in terms of space and time, as well as from a “qualitative” point of view, because they can be distant from the actual core of intuitive clear evidence one has from time to time. Whatever can meaningfully exist for me, internally as well as externally, is in some way implied by my actual sphere of evidence.

25.2. The adolescence of a “phenomenological” monad

The field disclosed by the reduction, and the reflection upon it, lead us to “see” that the field itself, aka transcendental subjectivity, cannot be created or destroyed. Moreover, although with different degrees of clarity and distinctness, it includes everything. The consideration of the dynamism of subjectivity apparently leads us to affirm the scope of subjectivity as spatio-temporally unlimited, as well as modally complete, and as including also the as good as unconscious life of a subject. What term is more apt than the one of monad to express such astounding features?

In order to answer this question, and to take the very term “monad” phenomenologically seriously, we have to more carefully assess its validity within the very phenomenological dimension. Husserl initially uses the term “monad” in a kind of vague, evocative way. The time, however, comes when one must check whether all one has conjured has all the necessary requirements to legally remain inside the phenomenological realm, and, in the positive case, what it can meaningfully do within it.

25.2.1. From subject to substance

Husserl notoriously expressed the epistemic autarchy of consciousness, aka transcendental subjectivity, as quod nulla “re” indiget ad existendum. As is well known, this description derives from Descartes’ definition of substance in the Principles of Philosophy. However, as we have seen, after this first declaration of independence, which seemed somewhat to follow Leibniz’s path, Husserl realized that a merely “subjective” understanding of the transcendental sphere is too abstract. The transcendental sphere of evidence must also include all the references of one’s lived experiences. The concept of monad is here particularly fitting, because it allows Husserl also to express the non-properly objectified life of a subject, without dispelling its reference to something else than itself. At this point, Descartes’ substance seems not to suffice.

Once one becomes independent, one needs a constitution, in order not to define oneself only via negationis. As such, after considering several historical definitions of substance, Husserl finally opts for a Spinozian one: quod in se et per se concipitur. This is, according to Husserl’s interpretation, the definition that best fits the realm of transcendental apodicticity disclosed by the reduction. Within this realm one finds everything that one would need to understand both oneself and the world with which one is in relation. Indeed, one has all empirical materials,
and all the both formal and logical laws one requires to build up an edifice of absolute and all-encompassing science.

That nothing less than such an ambitious science is the main aim of Husserl’s reflections is blatantly shown by the continuous hints at a \textit{mathesis universalis} throughout his writings, from the \textit{Philosophy of Arithmetic} to the \textit{Crisis}.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{25.2.2. The monad and the totality}

Once we have arrived at this point, we have to highlight a feature of the monad that, despite being undoubtedly present in the few published works in which he makes use of the concept, are not explicitly highlighted by Husserl: although the monad is subjectivity concretely understood, the domain of the monad does not correspond to the domain of intuitive evidence one has concretely at one’s disposal at any given time. This is even the case as it relates to oneself. The total domain of what pertains to a monad is not an object of intuition. Put briefly, the monad does not possess a total self-intuition, and, thus, does not have a total and direct self-knowledge. Husserl, in the \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, tries to overcome this impasse by saying that apodictic does not mean adequate.\textsuperscript{11} I am apodictically given to myself, but my self-intuition is not fully clear, distinct, and adequate. As a matter of fact, if I were to accept the aforementioned “monadic” extension of the field of evidence, I would just have a quite clear and distinct epistemic core, surrounded by immense confusion.

To better understand and assess this point, let’s try to schematically portray the train of thought which has led us from a sphere of intuitive clear evidence to a universe of overwhelming obscurity. Next, we will check whether the “lighting” at disposal is working correctly.

\textit{Inference I}

I.i. There is an actual field of apodictic evidence, disclosed by the reduction.
I.ii. The evidences one has at disposal in, and as, the transcendental field come and go. However, one can gain insight into the laws that rule the structures of whatever appears.
I.iii. One can also gain evidence concerning logical laws, i.e. the laws governing the forms of correct thinking, and, more specifically, correct inferring.
I.iv. Following the reduction, whatever claim we find concerning the existence or the specific structure of something that does not intuitively appear within the domain of the reduction has to be evaluated according to the total body of intuitive evidence, and the application of the formal and material laws approved so far within the very domain of the reduction.
I.v. The structures of transcendental subjectivity can also be intuitively grasped.
I.vi. The transcendental subjectivity therewith also shows itself how to validly comprehend itself beyond the sphere of actual, clear, and distinct evidence.
I.vii. By means of the same reduction, one becomes, or rather discloses oneself to oneself as, the constituting transcendental subjectivity.

\textsc{ergo}

I.viii. The transcendental structures are also the structures of the reflecting subject.

\textsc{et}

I.ix. The transcendental structures allow one to rationally infer how one is when not performing the reduction, i.e. beyond the apodictic core of actual, clear, and distinct evidence. In other words, the transcendental structures apply also to the empirical subject.
We cannot consider all the passages of this “inference” in detail. It contains, however, more or less all the elements that support, or which are implied by, a phenomenologico-transcendental understanding of the monad. We must now limit ourselves to the consideration of two main issues related to these conclusions, which are crucial for the monad. In this way, we will also see some parts of Inference I that are possibly unsound.

25.2.2.1. The temporal distension of the monad

Among others, Inference I seemingly allows, and maybe requires, the following further inference.

**Inference II**

II.i. The structure of the constituting time-consciousness is such that it has neither a beginning nor an end.

II. ii. The structure of the constituting time-consciousness is an essential structure of the empirical subject.

_ergo_

II.iii. The empirical subject is innascible and immortal.

This second conclusion follows more or less automatically from that of Inference I. This is why Husserl goes as far as to entertain the idea of the “eternity” of the monad, and he goes back to this topic multiple times. Although Husserl does not explicitly mention it in his published writings, the reason is probably not that he is afraid of attracting the scorn of other philosophers, but rather because he is himself quite unconvinced of its “logical” soundness.

We seem, in any case, to be in front of a dilemma: either we give up the identification between empirical and transcendental subjectivity, or we admit that the empirical subjectivity is immortal. One could perhaps advance a third option, namely that the transcendental subjectivity was born and will die. Now, even in the case that one were ready to maintain that the (meaningful) world begins and ends with subjectivity, the very impossibility to constitute the beginning and end of subjectivity on behalf of the subjectivity itself would necessarily oblige one to give up its epistemic self-sufficiency – and thus its alleged transcendentality _tout-court_. The very project of a universal, apodictical science would thus sink into some kind of more or less moderate empiricism – at least according to (the post-1906) Husserl. It is probably for this reason that, for Husserl, this third option is a _tertium non datur_.

To overcome the impasse, in some manuscripts, Husserl surmises that the temporality of the individual monad is, at least also, an intersubjective matter. Specifically, (at least) one’s beginning and end are constituted by others. More generally, the ultimate constituting time-consciousness is that of a plurality of monads, aka transcendental intersubjectivity. But would this not mean that the immortality of the individual monad is transferred to the community of the monads?

Before answering this question, we must clear up one of the main ways of communication between monads.

25.2.2.2. The monad’s windows

One of the features of Husserl’s monad that has almost always been pointed out in the literature available on the topic, is that Husserl’s monad differs from that of Leibniz, insofar as Husserl’s
monad has windows. However, this is not totally correct. Indeed, in different manuscripts, and sometimes even within the same manuscript, Husserl affirms both that the monads have windows, and that they do not have windows.¹⁴ This could give the impression that Husserl’s account of the concept of monad is not consistent, but this is not the case – at least concerning the window-problem. Indeed, the two apparently contradictory definitions concern two different meanings one can ascribe to the metaphor of the window.

On the one hand, Husserl affirms that the monad does not have windows because he wants to stress that a part of the monad, i.e. one of its lived experiences, cannot really enter, i.e. become part, of another monad, and vice-versa. A possible phenomenological reason for not accepting such a hypothesis is that the very experience which allows me to be aware of “me” and “you” apodictically shows me that we are two different subjects, two different streams of consciousness. This is also true concerning the so-called Einfühlungen, i.e. more or less emotive or cognitive experiences of the others. Even if one can have a deep sympathy for someone else’s pleasure or suffering, one does not have within itself the numerically identical emotive experience the other is going through. Another’s toothache is another’s toothache, and not mine, even if I deeply suffer for and with her. The same goes for her pleasure. For this reason, Husserl affirms that monads have no windows.

This does not rule out, though, that we can see other subjects, and that we can share something with them. Empathy, indeed, is an effective experience, which allows us to see “from within” that other subjects are “outside there” and to both feel and understand them, exactly, as others. What we “share,” following, can only be what is outside both of us, i.e. the references of our experiences. This is why empathy can be considered as a window. It is a window as far as perceptions are windows: they allow one to see something (usually) different from oneself – but they do not enable any mind-reading, or mind-transfusion. The difference between perception and empathy is in the kind of “stuff” I see, not in its position of exteriority with respect to my sphere of immanence.

25.2.2.3. And cellar

Now that we have roughly cleared up the matter of the windows, let’s come back to the problem of the transference of immortality from the individual monad to the monadic community. This issue is fundamental to the monadological project as a whole, because it does not simply concern the ultimate bearer of the perpetual life, but also both the constitution of the objective world and the plurality of the monads itself. These issues are, indeed, strictly related to one another.

After we have acknowledged that the temporal limits of a monad could possibly stretch beyond its epistemic capacities, we should recognize that this is valid also for the individual monadic capacity to account for the alleged pluralism of the monads. By itself, the manifestation of a plurality of subjects does not imply, and does not apparently require, that they are independent entities. The evidential core that one can use to affirm such a pluralism consists in the lived experience of otherness. However, one cannot prejudicially rule out that, beyond such a manifestation, the subjects are reducible to some other, perhaps larger, entity. This does not mean that one has to endorse a form of phenomenalism concerning other subjects. Rather, we can simply observe that a monad is a (relatively) independent entity as long as it is conscious and self-conscious. What becomes of it when consciousness fades away cannot be told solely on the basis of her intuitive evidences. These evidences must certainly not be excluded, but they should not be taken as a basis for an immediate judgment, but rather for sound reasoning, possibly founded also on other information that does not derive from one’s sphere of intuitive evidence. Indeed, now, we finally have other sources of information: the reports concerning the
experiences of other subjects, which do not only concern their inner life, but also their experiences of the world we share, and where they “empathize” with us. Of course, the situation here is particularly tricky, because one cannot have any other direct witnessing of one’s “inner” consciousness besides oneself. We cannot discuss this issue further here. It suffices to remark that, even granting the apodicticity of one’s “inner” self-evidence, and of one difference from the others, this evidence is limited, and it has a quite blurred horizon. Individually, no monad can account even for its own identity – and existence – beyond wakefulness.\(^\text{15}\)

Are we perhaps, in the end, led from Leibniz to Locke? Or, maybe, considering the aforementioned definition of substance endorsed by Husserl, should we rather go further with Spinoza? This question must be left open here.

25.3. The adulthood of the monad

From all that we have seen up to this point, we can surmise that the term “monad” has, in the end, been employed for (at least) two related but distinct issues: one concerns the territory of phenomenological evidences, and of the reflections and analyses founded thereupon, their rules, their epistemic potentialities, etc.; the other regards what we could simply call, for the sake of brevity, personal identity, or the empirical subject as such. The equation between oneself as transcendental thinker and transcendental subjectivity \textit{tout-court} has, however, lead to a conflation of the two issues.

In other words, from a larger perspective, the monad appeared extremely attractive to Husserl, because he hoped it could aid him in unifying all the results of his phenomenological reflections, on the one side, and therewith to attain a kind of “metaphysical” point on the basis of which to systematically project such results onto a large canvas, thus realizing the \textit{mathesis universalis}. However, as we have seen, there are some problems that, so far, block this unification.

25.3.1. The vices of the monad

We have seen that the individual monad does not respond to the requisites for obtaining the title of transcendental subject, for it cannot fully constitute itself. In the end, if we reject \textit{Inference II}, and if we also acknowledge the monad’s incapacity to account for one’s absent-mindedness, we could save the use of the term “monad” for subjectivity only if we endorsed an ontological understanding of the term. This, however, would imply that the subject that carries out the reduction can no longer identify itself with the transcendental, self-constituting, and world-constituting subject. This means that the empirical subject is \textit{not} the transcendental subject. Indeed, in this way, we block the entire path of thought which has taken us here, at the latest at point I.vii. of \textit{Inference I}. The ontological way out, though possible, is moreover, \textit{de jure et de facto}, a full exit from the phenomenological field as such. We have seen, indeed, that one has no evidence in support of such a claim that properly respects the principle of all principles.

We could transfer the burden of transcendental constitution, and thus also justify the ontological claim about the monadic nature of the individual subjects, to the monadological society.\(^\text{16}\) However, this implies quite a big epistemological shift, because it would then be difficult to claim that we are still abiding by the principle of all principles. Indeed, who has ever had an intuitive evidence that the intersubjective community endures beyond oneself, and that it moreover achieves the \textit{universal} constitution we are striving for? Who could have such an intuition? The transcendental community as such? Is it a kind of super-subject, aka super-monad?

Although Husserl mentions some similar views, and he speaks of a “total monad” in some manuscripts,\(^\text{17}\) it is debatable as to whether or not he finally wanted to endorse it. What is
more, it is also questionable as to whether or not it is still compatible with a phenomenological perspective. Is it not rather the case that, in order to not give up the idea of monad, and its substantial characterization as something that constitutes itself in itself by itself (also known as *causa sui*), we invent subjects *ad hoc*?

It seems that, in the end, we are put in front of the decision whether to keep the monad within the realm of phenomenology, but at the price of deeply changing the laws and the principles of the realm, and ultimately even surrendering the government to a super-powerful super-entity, or we have to throw the monad out of the window.

### 25.3.2. The correction of the monad

And yet, this time there could be a *tertium datur*. We “simply” have to accept the monad together with the limits it effectively presents itself with when it first appears in the phenomenological field. This means, first of all, that we must get rid of the constitution of the monad as substance – a constitution which, as a matter of fact, was not properly realized within the phenomenological domain, but rather imported from a decisively ontological domain.

In brief, as regards *Inference I*, we must give up I.vii., as well as the conclusions I.viii. and I.ix.; we must keep I.i., I.ii., I.iii., and I.iv.; we must suspend I.v. and I.vi. These last premises, indeed, should at least be revised, given that the transcendental subjectivity is, in the case it still exists, plural, and, in any case, cannot fully comprehend itself in all its parts. This implies that, if the *mathesis universalis* must be possible, and we still want it to be founded on the phenomenological core of evidence, i.e. if it still relies on the principle of all principles, its realization probably cannot depend on the “existence” of a transcendental subject, neither individual nor collective. Rather, the structures we discover thanks to the reduction are the structures of the references, not of the “constituting” subject. It is, in other words, a matter of what is manifested, and not of the manifestation as such; of the given, and not of its givenness. Whether or not such a perspective can still be called “transcendental” is an issue we cannot develop further here.

For us, what is important is that we have effectively cleansed the monad – as a whole, and not only its windows – as Husserl wished for in his lectures on *First Philosophy*. However, we could ask, how can we use such a weakened concept, which is no longer transcendental, nor, provisionally, ontological? We find, indeed, quite a good use; indeed, a phenomenological one.

### 25.3.3. The virtues of the monad

First of all, the monad has descriptive virtues. It enables a more concrete consideration of subjectivity. More precisely, the concept of monad becomes a device to account for the concrete, let’s plainly say *empirical*, subjects, by considering all of their “stuffing,” summarily listed at 25.1.2 and 25.1.3 above. More than anything, the inclusion in the monad of possibilities and potentialities allows a more fully fledged account not simply of the individual monad, but also of the objective world inter-monomadically considered: some of my impossibilities are the possibilities of another monad; there are possibilities on the side of several monads, the actualization of which are mutually exclusive. There are experiences of the others that also depend on the consciousness one has of their capacities, and possibilities; and so on and so forth. Moreover, the monadic intercourses do not merely speak of “minds” and “mental states,” or “events,” but rather also, and fundamentally, of bodies – both animated and not. One can thus have a rough intuition of how important the monadological understanding of subjectivity is for realizing the *mathesis universalis* Husserl had not simply been dreaming of, but that he had actually held as *really* possible. Only
a monadic account of subjectivity, which in the end in Husserl’s thought kept as the ultimate forum of fundamental evidence, enables the execution of the “universal calculus” of objectivity.

Besides this descriptive-methodological role, we can see that the enlistment of the monad into the phenomenological troops confers upon it a normative role as well. The monadic perspective somehow enforces and strengthens the oft-recalled principle of all principles. The monad prescribes that I can, from the very point of view of phenomenology, claim validity only for ideas supported by a conspicuous amount of intuitive and clear evidence, and their logical, and ontological, developments. These developments, however, are not a properly monadic issue, because they do not happen within the scope of one’s interiority, nor of one’s intuitive domain. They are rather, de jure et de facto, public.

The evidence we achieve by abiding by the principle of all principles tells us – in principle, each of us, and any possible member of our monadological community, which is ultimately the effective bearer of the task of the mathesis universalis – that the evidence one gets within oneself has blurred limits, and allows no enduring result about the ultimate identity of any of us, as well as of the world we share. If we make hypotheses, formulate theories, make judgments of some kind that go beyond the sphere of more or less direct intuition, we clearly enter a domain of thinking and reflecting that cannot receive enlightenment by a simple “look!” Moreover, by also keeping within the sphere of intuitive immanence, we have to acknowledge that, though our intuitions do possibly not require concepts to happen, any statement about them needs them to go through a sort of conceptual bath. Statements are not only a matter of “direct” intuition. Hence, every time one states something also about one’s intuitions, if one also claims some minimal kind of validity for such statement, even only in front of oneself, one has to realize that such statement can, and indeed should, be exposed to a public examination. Otherwise, one should just admit that one does not know what one intuits. And we certainly do not need to recall Wittgenstein’s recommendation here.

25.4. Conclusions: the monadological contract

In the end, the monadological approach to subjectivity, perhaps quite surprisingly, commits us not to keep isolated in an outwardly self-referential, and self-guarded, phenomenological realm, but rather to enter the philosophical agora as such, where everyone is by right a monad with an inner phenomenological domain, regardless of their tribal membership. The domestic economy, however, should not rule public affairs. Fundamentally, as monads, we should abrogate a kingdom with many monarchs, and establish, or join, a monado logical republic.

Notes

1 For Husserl’s knowledge of, and confrontation with, Leibniz, see van Breda 1971; Ehrhardt 1971. Although present, as we will see, at least from 1908 in Husserl’s manuscripts, among the works published during Husserl’s lifetime, the word “monad” appears no earlier than in Formal and Transcendental Logic, although only towards the end of the work and as merely mentioned. However, this appearance is extremely relevant, because it clearly shows the importance of the notion of monad for the very creation of the mathesis universalis.

As for the manuscripts, the ones which specifically deal with the concept of monad, are mainly to be found in: Hua XIII; Hua XIV; Hua XV; Hua IV; Husserl 1989, §§26, 29, 30, 32, 63, 64; Hua XLII; Hua-Mat VIII.

2 I indicatively put 1918 as end of the gestation period because we can quite clearly see through the manuscripts that from ca. 1918/19 onwards Husserl more actively engages in the development of a systematic phenomenological monadology.

3 Hua XIII, 7. My translation.
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6 See e.g. Hua IV, 253.
7 Cf. Hua III/1, 104/110.
8 See René Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, Pars Prima, I.1. Husserl has added the inverted commas to the word *re*, and he has deleted the word *alia* following it.
10 For more on this fundamental goal of Husserl’s philosophy, and on its affinity to that of Leibniz, see Hopkins 2013; Tieszen 2012.
11 Cf. Hua I, 55f.
12 See Hua XI, 377–381; Husserl 2001, 377–381, 466–471; Hua XIII, 399; Hua XIV, 53f., 156f., 244f., 256; Hua-Mat VIII, Texts n. 21, 43, 94–97. See also Ms. B III 10 II, p. 1a, where Husserl even mentions the doctrine of “reminiscence” proposed in Plato’s *Meno*; Hua XXXVIII, 368, where Husserl refers to another Plato’s dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, and to the ideas of the immortality of the soul and of metempsychosis therein exposed.
For an opinion about the agelessness of the monad different from the one proposed here, see MacDonald 2007.
13 Cf. Hua XI, 377–381.
14 For instance, they have windows in Hua XIII, 470f.; Hua XIV, 295. They do not have windows in Hua XIII, 7; Hua XIV, 258f., 357f.
15 This issue is also clearly related to the one of the body. It is clear, indeed, that, if the monad were to survive death, it had, in the end, to be identified either with a bodiless soul, or with some kind of microscopic stuff: Husserl seems to be inclined towards the first direction. That’s why he can, as I will explicate further in the next footnote, claim that monads are eternal, and, at the same time, that universal constitution is not an individual matter. The same can be said about the unconscious moments of one’s life.
16 In this regard, it should be mentioned that, when Husserl envisages the hypotheses concerning the transcendental subjectivity as the ultimate ground of the absolute, eternal temporality, he seems to still maintain that all subjects are unborned and immortal, though when they are in the big sleep, they require the help of other subjects in order to be wakened. See Hua XI, Hua XIV, 166–167, 171, 180, 478; Hua XV, 604. In this last manuscript Husserl writes: “The living ones waken the unliving ones” [*Die Lebendigen wecken die Unlebendigen*].
17 See e.g. Hua XIV, 299f. Another alternative would be to go in the direction of what Husserl discusses under the title of *Ur-Ich*. Leaving aside the extremely speculative, and indeed neo-platonic, taste of such a concept, it is arguable that it can really solve the problem – at least on a phenomenologically legitimate ground. For an attempt to phenomenologically understand and legitimize the concept of *Ur-Ich*, see Taguchi 2006.
18 See Hua VII, 196f.
19 In the well-known lectures of 1907, where Husserl formulates the not unproblematic, and indeed quite misleading, motto “as little understanding as possible, as much pure intuition as possible (*intuitio sine comprehensione,* he also states “Intuitive knowledge is that form of reason that sets itself the task of bringing the discursive understanding to reason” (Hua II, 62–63; Husserl 1999, 46–47). Whatever the “reason” meant here is, it clearly does not deny discursive understanding, but it rather presupposes it in order for such reason to work at all.

References

Monad

Husserl's Manuscripts: Ms. B III 10 II.