

# Cognitivism and Practical Intentionality: A Critique of Dreyfus's Critique of Husserl

***Christian Lotz***

**ABSTRACT:** Hubert L. Dreyfus has worked out a critique of what he calls “representationalism” and “cognitivism,” one proponent of which, according to Dreyfus, is Husserl. But I think that Dreyfus misunderstands the Husserlian conception of practical intentionality and that his characterization of Husserl as a “representationalist” or as a “cognitivist” is thereby wrongheaded. In this paper I examine Dreyfus’s interpretation by offering a Husserlian critique of Dreyfus’s objections to Husserl, and then by outlining Husserl’s account of practical intentionality and the practical lived Body. I sketch the critique and the approach of Dreyfus in three steps. First, I deal with his objections against Husserl’s theory by arguing that Dreyfus understands neither the role of the reduction nor the function of background-awareness in Husserl’s phenomenology. Second, I elucidate the central role that the “practical lived Body” plays in practical intentionality for Husserl, and, third, I highlight the consequences that follow from the analyses offered in the previous sections.

## INTRODUCTION

MANY COMMENTATORS IN phenomenology have painted a dualistic picture of the relationship between Husserl and Heidegger. On the one side we find the so-called cognitivism of Husserl and on the other side Heidegger’s pragmatism (Dreyfus, Tugendhat, Gethmann, Sandbothe, Rorty, Okrent).<sup>1</sup> Within the context of this discussion Hubert L. Dreyfus has worked out an interpretation of the early philosophy of Heidegger that has been used for his attacks against what he calls “representationalism” and “cognitivism.” First, I would like to underline that in some respects I agree with Dreyfus’s project, and particularly with its emphasis on the practical view of our surrounding world, of our relationship to others, and of our life. I am impressed with Dreyfus’s claim that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty not only developed a demanding concept of everyday action but that they also revealed, contrary to Husserl and Searle, an alternative concept of consciousness and action that is fundamentally practical in nature.

<sup>1</sup>For a convincing approach to this problematic, based on interpreting the temporal structure, see William D. Blattner, “Existential Temporality in Being and Time (Why Heidegger is not a Pragmatist)” in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (Cambridge UK: Blackwell, 1992), p. 112. Special thanks goes to David Carr, Burt Hopkins, and especially to my wife, Corinne Painter, for her corrections and helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. All translations, except volume III/1 and volume XI of Husserl’s *Collected Works*, are my own. All Husserl citations refer to the following edition: Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana: Gesammelte Werke* (Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer/Martinus Nijhoff/Springer, 1952ff.), hereafter cited as Hua followed by volume and page.

But I think that Dreyfus (as do most of the interpreters of Husserl's phenomenology) misunderstands the Husserlian conception of practical intentionality. Therefore, in this paper I will examine Dreyfus's well-known interpretation, first by offering a Husserlian critique of Dreyfus's objections to Husserl and, second, by outlining Husserl's account of practical intentionality and the practical lived Body. Curiously, as far as I know, no commentator, with the exception of Dagfinn Føllesdal, has dealt with these topics in Husserl's phenomenology. This consideration is timely,<sup>2</sup> especially since Føllesdal did not fully develop an alternative, but simply outlined some basic ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, there have been three main attempts to criticize Dreyfus's approach to Heidegger,<sup>4</sup> his account of Husserl's phenomenology,<sup>5</sup> and his interpretation of intentionality as representational.<sup>6</sup> After reviewing these approaches, I will show *concretely* that Husserl's phenomenology must be understood as a much more complex project than its opponents admit. For this reason, I shall argue that Dreyfus's critique of Husserl should be taken as a kind of "shadow-boxing," since, contra Dreyfus, Husserl's phenomenology should be conceived neither as representationalist nor as cognitivist. The task of offering a phenomenology of background awareness (which plays a central role in Searle's account of intentionality as well) seems to be central if we are to be successful in tying these objections together. In more detail, I will deal with the following points:

(1) Dreyfus claims that Husserl's core thoughts should be taken to be a variant of modern cognitivism, for, as he maintains, Husserl's phenomenology is based on a disembodied, mental subject, which is disconnected from non-intentional content. It can easily be shown that this objection to Husserl's phenomenology is a misconstrual of some of Husserl's central thoughts as presented in his *Ideas I*, *Ideas II* and *Analysis of Passive Synthesis*. In contradistinction, Husserl claims that every consciousness has two parts: one that is explicitly intentional, while the other is a "potential" form of explicit content. The latter form of consciousness is practical, embodied, and non-representational.

(2) Dreyfus maintains first that Husserl's phenomenology is unable to deal with the everyday dimension of human actions, habits, social customs, and body schemas because of its assumption of the priority of representational states. A representational account of human action, according to Dreyfus, is unable to render actions and behaviors intelligible that are not ruled by representations, but rather, are habitualized in a non-representational way. Accordingly, mentalism, according to Dreyfus, cannot

<sup>2</sup>An abstract overview without concrete analysis can be found in Nam-In Lee, "Practical Intentionality and Transcendental Phenomenology as a Practical Philosophy," *Husserl-Studies* 1 (2000), pp. 49–63. For an overview of Husserl's phenomenology of the body see Donn Welton, *The Body: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 38–56.

<sup>3</sup>For this approach, see Dagfinn Føllesdal, "Absorbed Coping, Husserl, and Heidegger in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Volume I, ed. Mark A. Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 251–57.

<sup>4</sup>See Carleton B. Christensen, "Getting Heidegger Off the West Coast," *Inquiry* 41/1 (2000), pp. 65–87.

<sup>5</sup>See Kristina Arp, "Husserlian Intentionality and Everyday Coping" in *Issues in Husserl's Ideas II*, ed. Lester Embree and Thomas Nenon (Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer, 1999), pp. 161–71.

<sup>6</sup>See Beth Preston, "Husserl's Non-Representational Theory of Mind," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 32 (1994), pp. 209–32.

explain practical aspects of our experience and the non-representational “background” consciousness, which is prior to mental representations. As I will show, against Dreyfus, Husserl has a rather sophisticated theory and phenomenology of background consciousness and intentionality, which leads Husserl to claim that practical intentionality is *prior* to representational content. In order to show evidence for this claim, I will first analyze Husserl's concept of the ego (which Dreyfus misunderstands), on the basis of which I will maintain that the embodied and practical intentionality, for Husserl, has priority over any explicit representational and mental content.

I shall sketch the critique and the approach of Dreyfus in three steps. First, I shall deal with his objections against Husserl's supposed cognitivism, second, I will examine his supposed representationalism, and, third, I shall briefly elucidate the central role of that what I call the “practical lived Body” has in Husserl's theory. I will, finally, conclude that Dreyfus's objections paint a distorted and wrongheaded picture of Husserl's phenomenology.<sup>7</sup>

### DREYFUS'S FIRST OBJECTION: COGNITIVISM

One of the most prevalent objections that Dreyfus's interpretation raises against Husserl is that his phenomenology is supposed to be understood as a form of “cognitivism.”<sup>8</sup> Dreyfus defines this term as a theory that presupposes that everyday practice and the habitualization of skills, as well as bodily and social practices, are caused by representational (mental) elements. Dreyfus writes: “skillful action cannot be understood in terms of an immanent subject sphere containing representations which refer, successfully or unsuccessfully, to a transcendent object.”<sup>9</sup> However, Dreyfus is of the opinion—illustrated in particular by taking up examples of driving a car and playing chess, as well as, more generally, by interpreting Heidegger's analysis of the surrounding world—that intentional content is not needed for an analysis of social actions or for bodily movements. In this connection, Dreyfus insists that Husserl assumes that in our consciousness we are directed through the mental object (*noema*) to a transcendent object. According to Dreyfus, it was Heidegger who showed that not all forms of consciousness, in particular “everyday practice,” are directed through mental content and that all “direct activity presupposes a transcendent horizon or background that cannot be accounted for in terms of intentional content.”<sup>10</sup>

Dreyfus tries to exemplify this initial claim by referring to the situation of car drivers and chess players. According to Dreyfus, it is impossible to reconstruct those situations within a cognitive and, hence, Husserlian paradigm. Dreyfus claims that cognitivism implies the following assumptions: (1) that the chess player and car driver must intentionally represent all of his or her actions while playing or driving in order to be able to perform them, and (2) that we must presuppose unconscious

<sup>7</sup>I use the translation found in the English edition of Husserl's *Ideas II*, which translates *Leib* with Body and *Körper* with body. Sometimes, as others usually do, I say *lived Body*. Instead of using “embodied,” I prefer to use “bodily” especially since the first term implies a Cartesian ontology.

<sup>8</sup>Hubert L. Dreyfus, “Husserl's Epiphenomenology” in *Perspectives on Mind*, ed. Herbert R. Otto and James A. Tuedio (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel, 1988), p. 85.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

(intentional) content while driving or playing.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Dreyfus claims that the practiced car driver as well as the practiced chess player are able to act in those situations without having *explicit* consciousness of any of these combinations. Instead, playing chess and driving cars is dependent on activities that are not cognitively and intentionally represented, but are rather, habitualized forms of orientation. Indeed, Dreyfus's examples hit the nail on the head. However, there is a catch, namely, that they do not apply to *Husserl's* theory.

Here it is important to note that Husserl differentiates between two possibilities of encountering objects. The first possibility is *to become* acquainted with something new (*Kennenlernen, Kenntnisnahme*), the second possibility is *to be* acquainted with something already known (*Bekanntheit*). In the latter case, the object has already been understood within a framework of familiarity and knowledge *before* one encounters the object. Put simply, in the first case we have new experiences of an unfamiliar object, while in the second case we are so familiar with it that we do not have to perform explicit operations in order to interpret the object in its identity. In this vein, Husserl writes: "In a peculiar way, every perceptual givenness is a constant mixture of familiarity and unfamiliarity, a givenness that points to new possible perceptions that would issue in familiarity" (Hua XI, p. 11/48). We can call this difference the difference between *learning* and *action*, and apparently we must take into account that this difference should be conceived as an ideal separation. Indeed, learning is always performed through action and every action is *per se* learning, because in every case the activities run across new aspects, new perspectives, new sides, or new general information of the experienced. According to the very act of perceiving, in any present process of perceiving both possibilities of the object to be experienced are interwoven. In every case, the object is a synthesis of well known, familiar and typical possibilities as well as open and unfamiliar possibilities. Every object of experiencing, so to speak, has a concealed side of not yet fulfilled possibilities and an unveiled side of fulfilled possibilities. It is in this way that Husserl sometimes speaks of a "determinable indeterminacy (*bestimmbare Unbestimmtheit*)" (Hua XI, p. 12/48). A passage from a manuscript of the *Phenomenological Psychology* (1925) illustrates well what has been stated, for in it Husserl speaks about the everyday perception of things:

the familiar character, in which we encounter an object in its immediacy, neither contains a reproductive consciousness [*Wiedererinnerung*] nor an identification of the presently perceived object with the formerly perceived and remembered object. . . . We immediately perceive [*erfassen*] such objects as grass, as corn, as doors, as houses, as violines, etc. These . . . type characters [*Typencharaktere*], are not the result of an act of comparison or an abstractive identification of common features. (Hua IX, p. 405)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>The assumption of unconscious contents is raised by Searle, but not by Husserl. See John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (New York NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), p. 151.

<sup>12</sup>The full German quote reads as follows: "Der Bekanntheitscharakter, in dem ein Objekt uns sofort im Hinblicken entgegentritt, enthält nichts von einer aktuellen Wiedererinnerung und einer identifizierenden Ineinsetzung des jetzt wahrgenommenen Objekts mit dem früher wahrgenommenen bzw. erinnerten. . . . Unmittelbar erfassen wir solche Objekte als Gras, als Getreide, als Türen, als Häuser, als Geigen usw. Diese Artcharaktere, wir könnten vielleicht besser sagen Typencharaktere, erwachsen nicht etwa ursprünglich aus einer Aktivität der Vergleichung und abstraktiven Heraushebung des Gemeinsamen."

Husserl claims that within the lived present all experiences are *potentially* available in pure passivity *without performing any explicit operations*. Since Husserl does not project a psychological consciousness that is opposed to its transcendent objects (as Dreyfus believes) transcendental phenomenology on the contrary implies that in every lived present the *whole of life*, which is to say, all experience, is potentially present. Even when the chess player actualizes only one move in his or her game, all intentional references of the actualized possibility are actualized as well (see Hua XI, p. 122/167). Accordingly, Dreyfus's objection that Husserl's phenomenology does not deal with habitualized forms of experience, should be rejected, given that every experience partly depends on familiarities, i.e., on non-cognitive elements.

But since the lived Body represents *one* possibility and *one* moment within this transcendental field instead of being something that is opposed to consciousness, all bodily possibilities that are connected to the actualized possibility are (re)called and awakened (*geweckt*) as well. This implies that the professional chess player is able to have immediate access to all of his possibilites within an infinite approximation. With every move, the chess player actualizes a whole field of possibilities, which make up the familiarity of the situation.

Another problem is to be found in Dreyfus's interpretation of the transcendental reduction. Based on his interpretation, Dreyfus thinks that Husserl's theory of the phenomenological reduction and his access to intentional content is not tenable.<sup>13</sup> Dreyfus interprets the reduction as a way to reveal something like a psychological ego, that is, an ego that posits itself in opposition to the world and its Body. In this connection, he writes:

Husserl defined phenomenology as the study of the intentional content remaining in the mind after the bracketing of the world, i.e., after the phenomenological reduction . . . performs a reduction that separates the mind and its content from the world.<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, the texts from *Ideas I* are somewhat unclear because of Husserl's reference to Descartes, but even if we read the *Ideas I* in a "Cartesian way," Dreyfus's interpretation of the reduction remains a mere caricature of what Husserl actually presents in this text.<sup>15</sup> Later, by changing his concept of person and ego and by introducing the concept of monadic being, Husserl showed that the interpretation of what he called in *Ideas I* "absolute consciousness" should not be understood in the sense of a regional field. This is precisely contrary to what Dreyfus claims, inasmuch as a

<sup>13</sup>Dreyfus, "Husserl's Epiphenomenology," p. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality," *Social Research* 60/1 (1993), p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>For instance, Dreyfus writes that what Husserl's phenomenology describes is something "that can be prised off from the world by a transcendental reduction" (Dreyfus, "Husserl's Epiphenomenology," p. 96). Husserl himself points out that the world remains the same after bracketing existence. "Bracketing" means to shift the interpreter into a neutral attitude, which implies that we are not interested in the existence of something. However, Dreyfus interprets the reduction as an ontological operation that is unequivocally untenable. This is similar to the account of Husserl developed by McIntyre, to whom Dreyfus also refers. For McIntyre's interpretation, see Ronald McIntyre, "Husserl and the Representational Theory of Mind" in Otto/Tuedio, pp. 57–76.

regional field is defined in its separation from other regional fields.<sup>16</sup> For example, the regional field of the “psyche” or the “mind” is separated from the regional field of the “body,” both of which can become objects of ontologies and sciences.

Alternatively, performing the epoché, according to Husserl, does not mean reducing the world to its mental content and ontological region, but rather permits us to open up a dimension in which the difference between mind and body can appear, by revealing every being as sense. In this connection, Husserl writes: “All real unities are ‘unities of sense’” (Hua III/1, p. 120), including consciousness itself. Therefore, it makes no sense to posit a transcendent object “behind” the sense. In this way, all that transcendental phenomenology can do is reveal the intentional meaning of what are posited as ontological regions within the natural attitude. We might call this attitude—following David Carr—*metaphysical neutrality*.

The epoché implies a consciousness or, using Heidegger’s terms, an *Offenbarkeitsdimension*, to which it makes no sense to introduce the difference of mind and body, of consciousness and outer world. Instead, all ontological parts are transformed into *moments of a whole*, which Husserl later calls “transcendental experience.” At this level, all moments constitute themselves through experience. For instance, the difference between mind and body has to be *experienced*, which he deals with in *Ideas II*. Seen from the point *before* the epoché is performed, this field reveals itself as a presupposition of natural consciousness, that is, as the differentiation between mind and body. However, seen from the point *after* the performance of the epoché, transcendental experience opens up the entire field of experiencing subjectivity. Husserl calls this “concrete subjectivity” (Hua XIV, p. 380).<sup>17</sup> Here we can see that the absoluteness of what Husserl calls “absolute consciousness” is neither an epistemological nor an ontological, but a functional differentiation.

However, if one misunderstands—as does Dreyfus and the analytical reception of Husserl’s phenomenology—the epoché as a psychological or cognitive operation, then it seems easy to claim that Husserl presupposes a “disembodied”<sup>18</sup> consciousness and therefore supposedly does not consider the situatedness of consciousness in social practices. I shall later show that this claim is untenable, and that, on the contrary, the situatedness of subjectivity is thought by Husserl as a central moment of sense within the transcendental field, so that the lived Body must be described as a moment of the transcendental ego itself, instead of being posited as an opposed object.

### DREYFUS’S SECOND OBJECTION: BACKGROUND AWARENESS, NON-POSITIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

The second objection that Dreyfus brings up seems to be more fundamental, since it touches not only upon the phenomenological theory and its method but also

<sup>16</sup>Dreyfus is dealing with Heidegger’s critique of Husserl in Dreyfus, “Husserl’s Epiphenomenology,” p. 95.

<sup>17</sup>See Hua IX, 216: “What we can call the concrete, pure subjectivity or the monad” (*was wir die konkrete reine Subjektivität oder die Monade nennen können*).

<sup>18</sup>Hubert L. Dreyfus, “Husserl’s Perceptual Noema” in Husserl, *Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982), p. 122.

upon a broadly systematical dimension of phenomenology, namely, the question of the *cogito* and what Dreyfus calls “everyday coping.” However, we will see that Dreyfus’s position, which is taken over from Heidegger, remains ambiguous, as he is of the opinion that because of its mentalistic roots, the theory of intentionality presented by Searle and Husserl amounts to a conception of a pure “belief system entertained by a subject.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, according to Dreyfus, Husserl and Searle reduce the world to a pure semantic content that is characterized by a propositional structure.<sup>20</sup> In this way, in Dreyfus’s view, Husserl and Searle misconstrue the background of learned skills and social practices because they try to derive it from intentionality. For, according to Dreyfus’s interpretation of Searle and Husserl, intentionality is characterized by a content that is posited through beliefs.<sup>21</sup> Against this, Dreyfus tries to clear up the assumption that the background of our everyday skills should be understood without including this type of intentionality, since the background of everyday practice cannot be defined as representational. Thus we are unable to fully transform it into a logical or semantic structure: “There is nothing to make explicit or spell out. We can only give an interpretation of the interpretation already in the practices.”<sup>22</sup> Beside this, we can never reach transparency regarding the whole background, because we *live* (in) it.

In more detail, Dreyfus claims that Husserl and Searle define the background as a kind of knowledge instead of a kind of know-how. Husserl also remains tied to the subject-object-distinction, according to Dreyfus, who, against this, tries to show the “absence of the subject/object distinction in the experience of everyday coping.”<sup>23</sup> Dreyfus furthermore points out that in contrast to Heidegger, Husserl does not reveal the background conditions “of any intentional state” “as a network of intentional states.”<sup>24</sup> Put simply, because of his representational roots, Husserl’s theory misses the description of everyday coping. As Dreyfus writes, Husserl’s “account of action” is mentalistic and therefore has to be rejected. To sum up Dreyfus’s main assertion by quoting him in his own words: “All cognitivists, when faced with this problem, resort to the same strategy. They claim that the background can be pulled into transcendental subjectivity and thus under the reduction.”<sup>25</sup> By keeping Heidegger’s attacks against a theory of reflection in the back of one’s mind, we can see that Dreyfus’s critique implies that Husserl’s theory of intentionality is a theory of reflective consciousness. Such a consciousness or awareness as structured by reflection would imply that every intentional stance

<sup>19</sup>Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world. A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 6, 19.

<sup>20</sup>Even Searle thinks—although he remains equivocal—that the background can be neither intentional nor a belief (Searle, p. 155).

<sup>21</sup>I have to omit a detailed discussion of Dreyfus’s thesis that Husserl understands intentionality in the sense of propositional attitudes.

<sup>22</sup>Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>Dreyfus, “Husserl’s Epiphenomenology,” p. 85.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 96–97.

has to be understood not only as a system of propositional beliefs but also as an *explicit* awareness of itself.<sup>26</sup>

In what follows, I shall attempt to explain Husserl's approach to conceiving of self-awareness as a relation of explicit act intentionality and implicit horizontal awareness, the distinction between which will help us see that Dreyfus's objections should be rejected, especially since Husserl not only has a theory of background awareness, but even claims that this background awareness has priority over explicit intentional content. In order to avoid understanding the background problem as a differentiation between conscious and unconscious, or as a differentiation between explicit and preconditioned structures, I shall point out that this relation should be considered as a problem of time instead of as a problem of "layers." Dreyfus's claim that consciousness never wholly possesses itself in an explicit way is certainly convincing, but, nevertheless, we must reject Dreyfus's assumption that we are ever able to be *fully* absorbed in our non-positional awareness, that is, to be fully absorbed within our surrounding world. For, at least one moment of consciousness must be analyzed as explicit awareness in the sense of act-intentionality. This "core" or center of awareness is tied together with what we can call "the I" and its attention, as Husserl puts it in *Ideas I*. However, the center of awareness that Husserl later calls the "center I" (*Zentrum Ich*) as an explicit act consciousness (Hua XIV, p. 46), is "suspended" by a *practical* non-positional self-awareness that should be described as the *ability* of intentional consciousness, which is characterized by Husserl as the "I can." In this way, "knowing how" and "knowing that" are definitely inseparable. In the next part of my paper, I shall show that this practical background awareness must be conceived as being bodily structured, which in turn should compel us to reject Dreyfus's critique of a Husserlian "disembodied" consciousness. This also means, that Husserl—*contra* Dreyfus—did *not* develop a conception of an ontological difference between a mental content and a non-mental background.<sup>27</sup>

But first, we shall continue with our discussion of the relation between I-intentionality as the center of awareness and *horizontal* background awareness. Attentional, "I-like" (*ichlich*) consciousness, is necessarily implied in every awakened awareness, according to Husserl. The I, which can only be found and described as a function within the attentional, that is, within *performed* acts, has (at least) to be affected in order to *perform* something, for instance, to imagine or to perceive something. However, the attentional acts are held by a horizontal awareness that can neither be called reflective nor "I-like" but should be conceived in Sartrean terms as *non-positional* or *non-thethical* consciousness. I shall illustrate this thesis, which Husserl had already introduced in *Ideas I*, by referring to the example of driving a car, which is the example that Dreyfus himself uses (as we have seen above).

<sup>26</sup>In this connection, Dan Zahavi has already shown that Husserl developed a highly demanding concept of non-positional self-awareness; see Dan Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation* (Evanston IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1999). He has described Husserl's approach in a way that is similar to my own view, although I intend to shift my attention to the practical problematic. For his analysis of non-positional background-awareness, see pp. 98–99.

<sup>27</sup>See Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, p. 15.

Depending on the habitualization and the situation, it is correctly stated that the practiced car driver is able to blindly solve nearly 50,000 different driving situations without performing even one explicit representation.<sup>28</sup> However, in my view we should reject the second part of Dreyfus's thesis, namely that we would be able to solve the situations without *any* explicit, intentional act awareness. Unfortunately, Dreyfus takes over Heidegger's pragmatic thesis, which valorizes the inhibitiveness of our everyday coping and which shifts us into a reflective subject-object awareness. However, in my opinion, we must critically re-examine this thesis by taking into account the Husserlian viewpoint, for the following easily demonstrable reason. Even when I am fully absorbed in the surrounding world and in my everyday action, at least *one* main performed and intentional act remains; for instance, while I am driving a car, I may think about the next day; I may imagine something; I may remember what I did at work; or I may talk with my front passenger about something. When we vary the situation in our imagination, we see immediately that it is impossible to be in the driving situation without being *aware of at least one thing*. In short, a consciousness that is without *any* form of intentional act is either a dead consciousness or a sleeping consciousness, since in this case it would have to be understood as consciousness without *any* attention. However, the object of the center act and the center I need not be an object of perceiving. To emphasize this again, the claim is not that we have to be aware of the driving of the car or of the road. Instead, the object of awareness may appear in speech, in imagination or in remembering, and it may have nothing, explicitly, to do with driving. Nonetheless, without at least *one* of these forms of activity, consciousness would not be an awakened consciousness. For *only* affected consciousness is I-consciousness, as Husserl puts it in *Analysis of Passive Synthesis*: "The wakeful life of the ego is such that the ego is explicitly affected, affected by special units that are, precisely through this affection, given to, graspable or grasped by the ego" (Hua XI, p. 160/208). In short, a sleeping consciousness, that is, a consciousness without at least one I-intentionality, would not find the way from Berkeley to East Lansing. However, when we follow Dreyfus (and Heidegger), we must draw the conclusion that everyday coping is rather similar to sleeping consciousness. Nevertheless, we can be assured that without affection there is no awakened consciousness, and that without awakened consciousness, that is, without I-consciousness, there is no surrounding world, even as background.<sup>29</sup>

The important point is that everything that affects the intentional cogito has been within the non-positional horizontal background awareness "in" which the I-center is directed to something that Husserl also calls "glance" (Hua III/1, p. 257). To become aware of something or to be intentionally directed towards something presupposes a horizon that the object has entered before. This means that explicit I-intentionality is only a *function* within this horizon and, moreover, that it can only become affected by what has already been there. In Husserl we also find

<sup>28</sup>See Dreyfus, "Husserl's Epiphenomenology," p. 91.

<sup>29</sup>See also Hua IX, pp. 209–10.

the idea that intentionality, in the sense in which Dreyfus wants to understand it, is derived and secondary to the horizontal consciousness. This horizontal consciousness, which Husserl calls in *Ideas I* “potentiality consciousness,” is prior to explicit intentionality. Thus, horizontal awareness is *per se* pre-reflective awareness and is what ties non-egological and non-positional awareness to egological and positional consciousness. From this it follows that *every* object that was intended in the attentional mode had already been there in the pre-reflective mode.<sup>30</sup> Along with Husserl, concerning the propositional attitude, we can call this horizontal background “*potential* positional acts” (*potentielle Setzungen*) towards which the I-center can turn or from which it can turn away (Hua III/1, p. 257; italics C. L.). The “turns” of the cogito presuppose that we have been already acquainted with what can become an object of position taking acts. However, quite unfortunately Dreyfus tries to reduce Husserl’s theory to a theory of position-taking acts, when in fact the same is true for *every* act of intentionality:

Under certain conditions likewise movements of pleasure or displeasure, desires, even resolves, are already lively before we “live” “in” them, before we carry out the cogito proper, before the Ego “gets busy” judging, pleasing, desiring, willing. (Hua III/1, p. 263)<sup>31</sup>

It follows that we are unable to conceive the background as a “layer” that is buried *under* the level of intentional consciousness, as Searle assumes. Instead, we should conceive it as one moment of the living present itself. Therefore, Dreyfus’s claim “that we sometimes know directly and without observation what we are doing,”<sup>32</sup> should be modified in the following way. It is not only sometimes, but we *always* know without reflection what we are doing, because of the pre-reflective temporal horizon within which the attentional and explicit intentional act is only *one* moment, namely the center moment. Thus, it is absolutely wrong, as Dreyfus puts it, to place Husserl on the level of Searle. For Searle believes, unlike Husserl, that the background should be considered in the sense of a hidden system of conditions and causalities. “It is,” Searle writes, “a precondition or set of preconditions of intentionality.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, seen from a phenomenological point of view, Searle’s thesis is not convincing, since he interprets the background of intentionality as a masked net of presuppositions that has a causal connection to the present. In particular, not only does his inclusion of biological presuppositions into the system of conditions show this, so does his hypothesis that in everyday

<sup>30</sup>See Arp, p. 166; see Hua IV, p. 277.

<sup>31</sup>It seems to me that “performing,” because of its acting character, is a better translation for “vollziehen.” Hopkins translates it as “actional.” See Burt C. Hopkins, *Intentionality in Husserl and Heidegger: The Problem of Original Method and Phenomenon of Phenomenology* (Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer, 1993), p. 38. “Ebenso sind unter Umständen Gefallens—oder Mißfallenssetzungen, Begehrungen, auch Entschlüsse bereits lebendig, ehe wir, in’ ihnen, leben’, ehe wir das eigentliche cogito vollziehen, ehe das Ich urteilend, gefallend, begehrend, wollend, sich bestätigt” (Hua III/1, p. 263).

<sup>32</sup>Hubert L. Dreyfus and Jerome Wakefield, “Intentionality and the Phenomenology of Action” in *John Searle and his Critics*, ed. Ernest Lepore and Robert Van Gulick (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1991), p. 259.

<sup>33</sup>Searle, p. 143.

practice “some of this intentionality is unconscious.”<sup>34</sup> However, the reason for rejecting Searle’s analysis is not the danger of interpreting the background as a form of causality.<sup>35</sup> Rather, we can characterize the difficulty that arises by questioning the way in which we think about and describe the presence of practical skills, actions and bodily intentionality. Seen from a Husserlian point of view, the background is neither logical nor able to be constructed through causality *since it is one moment of the lived present itself*. In other words, the background or the horizon is a temporal problem and not a problem of conditions. The background of practical skills cannot be considered as something that transcends the lived present, for instance, as something to be recollected. Instead, it has to be understood as the central functional moment of the lived present itself, for the central assumption is that the background subconsciously or causally “function” *during* an experience.

### SOME REMARKS ON THE PRACTICAL BODY IN HUSSERL

In the last part of this essay, I will turn to Husserl’s further analysis of the potential background awareness of the “I can” and its potentialities. It turns out that Husserl further identifies the priority of implicit potentialities as the lived Body in its practical determinations. Hence, Dreyfus’s claim that Husserl has a disembodied subject in mind when he analyzes consciousness can be dismissed.

When one tries to grasp the lived Body phenomenologically *only* as a sensational structure or as the self-reflectivity of touch, which is central for Merleau-Ponty, one misses the point regarding what Husserl calls bodily “movement,” which is constituted within the horizons of kinesthetically conceived sensations. Movement is a *moment* of sensational consciousness and should not be understood as a naturally defined movement, but rather, as a self-movement of the subject that cannot be fully objectified. In other words, the analytic of sensation, affection and touch is only one side of the picture; the other side must be complemented by a phenomenology of action.<sup>36</sup> In this vein, Husserl writes: “All changing activity [*Veränderungsaktivität*] . . . is mediated by an activity of movement and primordially by bodily movement”

<sup>34</sup>Searle, p. 151. For the rejection of this thesis, see also Zahavi, p. 98, where he deals with the concept of body schema. For the latter, see Shaun Gallagher, “Body Schema and Intentionality” in *The Body and the Self*, ed. Jose Luis Bermudez, Anthony Marcel, and Eilan Naomi (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 225–44.

<sup>35</sup>Searle writes: “The background is a set of nonrepresentational mental capacities that enable all representings to take place” (Searle, p. 143). What is striking in Dreyfus’s interpretation is the fact that he tries to connect his analysis to neuroscientific research as well. This attempt to naturalize the background and the motor-intentionality by means of the brain is inadmissible when seen from a Heideggerian viewpoint. For this account, see Hubert L. Dreyfus, “A Merleau-Pontyan Critique of Husserl’s and Searle’s Representationalist Accounts of Action,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 100/3 (2000), p. 295.

<sup>36</sup>See Zahavi, pp. 93–97, which (in my view) is the best contemporary study on Husserl in this field today. Nevertheless, to claim that perceiving and action have to be seen as intertwined moments, one has to *expand* the concept of movement to the concept of action. Pure movement cannot be defined as action; for the affection and sensation approach to the Body, see also Elizabeth Behnke, “Edmund Husserl’s Contribution to Phenomenology of the Body in Ideas II” in *Issues in Husserl’s Ideas II*, ed. Lester Embree and Thomas Nenon (Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer, 1996), pp. 135–60.

(Hua XV, p. 328).<sup>37</sup> To be in movement does not mean to conceive an abstract movement between two objectively defined points; rather, it is a teleological structure. The lived Body always *reaches* point B, which implies action, purpose, desiring, instincts and/or willing. Without taking into account these implications one would transform the movement of the lived Body into an intersubjective, observed natural movement. It seems to me that Dreyfus does not see this point in his critique of Husserl. The lived Body is not only the non-positional conscious *possibility* of being pre-reflectively aware of the horizon, but it is also the non-positional awareness of being (in) it, that is, it is living (in) them. We don't intend the horizons, we "stage" (*inszenieren*) them, as Husserl puts it (Hua IX, p. 14). In other words, my bodily possibilities are acquainted in every case, that is, they are *already* in play when activity sets in.<sup>38</sup> Put differently, every appearance, which is fulfilled through my lived Body, i.e., *every* movement, is given as *repeatable*. When I move my head from the left to the right, I do not have to consider whether I also have the possibility to move it back to the left. I *have* it. The styles of moving, their "rhetoric," are formed by acquainted "routes" and possibilities (Hua XV, p. 430-32). How I move my head from the right to the left and back again depends on the "style" in which I am bodily constituted through continuous repetition.<sup>39</sup> Only when inhibitions, disorders or disturbances appear within this immediate structure of fulfillment is the center-I forced to turn to them by attention, and, sometimes, reflectively change its Body schema. When my arm is amputated, I experience this "lacking" at first in my practical horizons as *unacquainted* occurrences. In this way, my practical background is a "system of unanimity" (*System der Einstimmigkeit*) because it is always fulfilled when no inhibition occurs.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, I experience an "I cannot," which primarily has happened "before" the center I is able to turn to it.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, to use the word "before" here is somewhat risky, because in the lived present nothing can happen before or after something that happens.<sup>42</sup>

These Husserlian thoughts not only refer forward to Merleau-Ponty but also refer to anthropological thinkers, such as Gehlen and von Weizsäcker, who described bodily learning and the constitution of empirical "systems of can" as repetitive circle processes.<sup>43</sup> For example, before being able to walk, the child neither has any "representation" or "imagination" of what "walking" means or is, nor is there some "knowing" or abstract potentiality in the mind of the child. When the child moves her legs and hands in her cradle, the action is the very constitution of the possibility of this action. In this vein, one does not understand the "real" (practical) meaning of "shooting the ball in the basket" when one has never done it before, nor

<sup>37</sup>The original text reads as follows: "Alle Veränderungsaktivität . . . ist durch die Aktivität der Bewegung, und urpraktisch der Leibesbewegung, vermittelt."

<sup>38</sup>See Hua IX, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup>We have to include a moment of freedom here. See Hua XI, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup>See Hua XV, p. 128; Hua XV, p. 143.

<sup>41</sup>See also Behnke, p. 145.

<sup>42</sup>See Hua XIV, pp. 69, 104, 519; Hua XV, pp. 143, 495.

<sup>43</sup>For a first introduction into "practical possibility," see the excellent study Antonio Aguirre, "Zum Verhältnis von modaler und praktischer Möglichkeit," *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 24/25 (1991), pp. 150–82.

does one have a “real” imagination of what “dancing” means when one has only heard stories about it. Maybe one has heard *about* dancing, but in this case one does not have what was referred to above as “non-positional background awareness” of it. The practical horizon is constituted only by praxis, because—as we have seen before—it has already been there when the center I is directed to any “content.” In other words, *practical intentionality is the presupposition of every experience*.

Now, after having pointed out the praxis of the Body in general, we are able to sketch out a phenomenology of the *concrete* practical lived Body, although I will only make brief comments in this regard. Husserl writes: “Every lived Body is immediately effective in its environment, as a subjective center, a practical center of all external practical possibilities” (Hua IX, p. 489).<sup>44</sup> Bodily praxis always happens in an *oriented* surrounding world. To put it in Husserl’s words, it happens within a “practical surrounding world or life world” (*praktischen Umwelt oder Lebenswelt*) (Hua XV, p. 141),<sup>45</sup> and “action is performed in the oriented surrounding world” (*Handeln vollzieht sich in der orientierten Umwelt*) (Hua XIV, p. 506). By bodily actions and practical movements I “work hard with hands” (*mit den Händen zupackend*) (Hua XIV, p. 507), I push things away, I go, I touch, and cause effects in the natural world.<sup>46</sup> The oriented space is characterized in contrast to abstract space as an (intersubjective) system of spots, locations and places to which one can move. Husserl’s thoughts about imagining oneself to be at other places could be included here,<sup>47</sup> but these imaginations must not be understood as abstract thoughts, for even when one imagines being *elsewhere*, one has to implicate within the imagination itself the consciousness of my practical possibilities.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, *every* object, that is, every observed movement of a thing in the world, phenomenologically conceived, should be understood as a possible practical possibility of oneself. Or, to put it in other words, we experience every movement of objects as a possible “action” of our lived Body. Husserl states: “Every external movement that I experience externally, is synonymous with a possible subjective movement of myself” (Hua XIV, p. 545).<sup>49</sup> For instance, one is only able to jump away when one sees a car that could possibly hit one because one does not understand the movement of the car primarily as “objective movement,” but rather, as a variation and as a moment of one’s own practical skill. Even when something falls off of the table in front of a person and the person—like a flash—reaches out her hands to catch it, she is only able to do this because the thing moves through the same space as she does, that is, it moves primarily within *her own* practical space, which is constituted through bodily movements and through the teleological structure connected to them.

<sup>44</sup>In German: “Jedes [sic] Leib ist unmittelbar Wirkungsorgan in die Umwelt, auch als das subjektive Zentrum—praktisches Zentrum für alle praktisch-äußerlichen Möglichkeiten.”

<sup>45</sup>See also Hua XIV, p. 215.

<sup>46</sup>See Hua XV, p. 268: “Das Handeln ist fundiert im erfahrenen, letztlich in meinem leiblichen Tun, wo oder soweit mein Handeln unmittelbar ist”; see also Hua XIV, p. 449f.

<sup>47</sup>See Hua I, p. 147, Hua XIV, p. 507.

<sup>48</sup>See Hua XV, p. 238.

<sup>49</sup>In German: “Jede aussenkörperliche Bewegung, die ich äusserlich erfahre, ist gleichbedeutend mit einer möglichen subjektiven Bewegung meiner selbst.”

## CONCLUSION

From what I presented above, we should draw the conclusion that Dreyfus's critique of Husserl is unjustified. In sum, Husserl develops the following dimensions of the problem: (1) He articulates a complex concept of non-positional awareness within which we must differentiate between I-Intentionality and "background awareness." (2) He understands the background as a horizon of practical skills that are *present* in experience. (3) The practical background and horizon are rooted in the practical lived Body of action and its practical intentionality.