

## Article

# The Metaphysical Magnificence of Reduction: The Pure Ego and Its Substrate According to Phenomenology and Vedanta

Olga Louchakova-Schwartz <sup>1,2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Health Sciences, School of Medicine, University of California, Davis, Sacramento, CA 95817, USA; olouch@ucdavis.edu

<sup>2</sup> Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, CA 94709, USA

**Abstract:** This article examines relationships between the absolute being of the universal ego (*Ātman*-self) according to the Indian religious philosophy of Vedanta (V) and the phenomenological, irreal being of the transcendental ego in Husserl's phenomenology (P). Both *Ātman* and the transcendental ego are accessed in the first-person perspective by onto-phenomenological reductions. Such reductions, as stated by Husserl, have absolute freedom of positing and, thus, can reveal or conceal states of being. In contrast with P-reduction, which renders the being of the ego-pole invisible, V-reduction penetrates into the being of the ego-pole and opens a horizon of unique, non-intentional mental states. Following the dialectics in pre- and post-reduction givenness of being, there emerges a picture of connection between the intentional phenomenological being of the transcendental ego and the non-intentional being of the pure ego of Vedanta (*Ātman*-self). The pure ego of Vedanta manifests as a substrate for the transcendental ego of phenomenology. From this, we can conclude that reductions function as the loci of dialectical syntheses of being, whereby the unity of being has a fuller, more complex and multi-sided sense than the one intended in the natural attitude. In their breaking of theoretical habits conditioned by the substance metaphysical tradition, reductions are truly indispensable in the revelation of being that grounds the theory of knowledge.

**Keywords:** intentionality; the transcendental ego; Husserl; Atman-self; Vedanta; drg-drishya viveka; reduction; material substrate essence; dialectics; being



**Citation:** Louchakova-Schwartz, Olga. 2023. The Metaphysical Magnificence of Reduction: The Pure Ego and Its Substrate According to Phenomenology and Vedanta. *Religions* 14: 949. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070949>

Academic Editor: Jeffery D. Long

Received: 25 April 2023

Revised: 11 July 2023

Accepted: 18 July 2023

Published: 24 July 2023



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## 1. Introduction

This article employs two sets of concepts—from dialectics and from phenomenology—to show the relationships between reductions in phenomenology and Vedanta. The concepts from dialectics serve to uncover the continuity and dynamics of being under reductions, and the concepts of phenomenology show the consciousness in which this being appears.

In both phenomenology (hereafter P) and Vedanta (hereafter V), the freedom of ontic positings encouraged reductions revealing the absolute.<sup>1</sup> However, in clarifying the phenomenality of being, P and V came to very different results.<sup>2</sup> At issue here is not their commensurability, for that has been established (Gupta 2009; Louchakova-Schwartz 2012, 2017, Forthcoming),<sup>3</sup> but rather, the directions of their reductions. Husserl (1998, pp. 57–62) maintained that reductions give one access to previously invisible fields of being. Shankara, a Vedantic philosopher who believed that empirical reality has an illusory nature, de facto maintained the same. Both sought the ground of knowledge, but with very different results: the epistemic absolute in P is the transcendental ego and, in V, the universal and fully immanent ego (*Ātman-Brahman*). Does this mean that the absolute freedom of reduction has limits with a certain kind of being? That there is, so to speak, a turtle at the bottom of the world? Or many turtles? By looking at these reductions side by side, I aim to understand the role they play in the self-revelation of being.

If there is an irreducible being, which is a being given absolutely, it should serve as a substrate for everything else. Why, then, do P and V reductions render different epistemic

absolutes? One can suggest that these reductions are predetermined by a difference in metaphysics: the naïvely scientific realism of P and the monistic metaphysics of the self in V. Conceptually, these metaphysics are orthogonal: the notion of reality in P excludes the real being according to V, but the real being according to V would ground the reality of P. If reductions *construct*, not unveil, the new being, this revelation of being is but an artifact of a preconceived metaphysics and not a *sui generis* originary given one can trust. If so, the claim that being is appearing is false, and one cannot make a bridge off phenomenology to metaphysics. However, the juxtaposition in this paper of two independently existing reductions resolves this problem. If two independently obtained epistemic absolutes turn out *to be given* in such a way that one can serve as a substrate for the other, they are truly intuited and not constructed. If, as I show, reduction in V renders the phenomenologically available substrate-being for the epistemic absolute revealed by reduction in P while P does not presuppose the existence of any being (such as in V), this phenomenological connectivity reveals the actual status of being in the phenomenal field. Constructed artifacts of independent reductions would not be able to complement each other in such a way.

In the literature, differences in the ontology of consciousness according to V and P were reduced to mere differences in the models of consciousness. Comparison between reductions was never a part of these discussions. However, if V- and P-reductions disclose actual fields of being and if these fields of being are reciprocal in their appearance or connected in some other way (e.g., via the above notion of a substrate), we can conclude that they form a unity. If they form a unity, this provides additional support to the claim that these are true regions of being and not regions constructed by reductions on ground of pre-given metaphysics.

If reductions indeed reveal being in its originary givenness, then we have at hand a wonderful key to a unitive, phenomenologically grounded metaphysics. Since P-reductions proceed from the naïve metaphysics of objects and follow the structure of the natural *cogito*, this theoretical habit prevents P-reduction from reaching all possible being:<sup>4</sup> “The transcendental ‘absolute’ which we have brought about by the reductions is, in truth, not what is ultimate; it is something which constitutes itself in a certain profound and completely peculiar sense of its own and which has its primal source in what is ultimately and truly absolute” (Husserl 1989, p. 193).<sup>5</sup> The epistemic absolute of the transcendental ego, which P-reduction reaches, is grounded in temporality: “For us temporality is a sufficient mark of reality. . . . Should we wish, however, to keep all metaphysics out, we may simply define ‘reality’ in terms of temporality” (Husserl 2001b, p. 249).<sup>6</sup> But if this is not a true absolute, what is? As I will show, reaching beyond temporality and objectified *hyle*, V-reduction opens access to a possible phenomenological substrate of the transcendental absolute, that is, the primal ground of being and knowledge.

I proceed in the following way. First, I follow the limits of P-reductions by examining the transcendental ego in light of the dialectics of being. Using dialectics allows one to explicate relationships in being before and after P-reductions: the natural being, the being of consciousness, and last, of the transcendental ego. Connections between the transcendental ego and natural being help one to understand Husserl’s repetitive concern about the transcendental ego not having an obvious substrate. I review Husserl’s attempts to find such a substrate and show that this problem has no solution under P-reductions because P-reduction not only reveals being but also conceals it. Then, I describe V-reduction and focus on how it accesses the being which was masked by P-reduction, and I argue this field of being can be considered as the absolute substrate. The same substrate of the ego, which was not found under P-reduction, is disclosed by V-reduction. Thus, V-reduction becomes a complement to P-reduction, giving us a fuller and more logically coherent picture of being. The ego-pole in this scheme of things acts like a switch between the fields of being uncovered by P- and V-reductions. This part of analysis also bears on the phenomenologically grounded metaphysics of the self. I conclude that, even though phenomenological reductions are means of knowledge in that they are free to disclose being, this freedom has constraints. Each reduction has a limit. Within the spectrum of

possibilities of consciousness, reductions can take different directions and, thus, should complement one another in the argument for the epistemic absolute.

## 2. Dialectics Implicit in P-Reduction

“The transition to pure consciousness by the method of transcendental reduction leads necessarily to the question about the ground for the now-emerging factualness of the corresponding constitutive consciousness”.—Edmund Husserl (1998, p. 134)

The dualistic metaphysics of the mind and the world comes to a halt in Husserl’s (2014b, p. 205) analysis of intertwining: “Determining how these two—what is really obtaining constituent of experience and what we are conscious of as not really obtaining in it—are related to one another introduces difficult problems”. Of the synthetic being of this intertwining, Husserl can say only that it is unreal—that is, it shows up after the reduction, which removes the naïve sense of reality and ideality. The structure mediating the intertwining, the transcendental ego, consists of the intentional relationships between two polarities: the ego-pole and the object-pole. On the side of the ego-pole, no being is showing up; the object pole takes all the being. The freedom of the reduction cannot stop belief in objects, but it stops the latter from a realistic obtaining: instead of counting the world outside of experience, one now counts it as given inside the transcendental ego—hence, “transcendence in immanence”. The ego itself is further irreducible: if we count it out, we end up in the void. However, this being of the ego is really strange: it is in the world, but not completely in the world.<sup>7</sup> It is the subject of experience, it is self-luminous, but the problem is that it has no ontological homogeneity whatsoever. Yet, it shows up as the ultimate essence of all essences. Kant says that “nothing can be known of this [transcendental] self, because it is a condition, not object, of knowledge” (“Kant”, *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2016), but Husserl (1960, p. 18, fn. 8; 2014b, pp. 105–6) insists on the contrary: reductions cause tangible shifts in experience, and the resulting ego is experiential and even apodictically given. And with the ego becoming an antecedent to the being of the world, reduction is out of a job: there is nothing further to reduce. But is this really so? In dialectics, each limit of preceding being inaugurates the new being. Such a new being would still be subject to the freedom of reduction, just not the one by which this being was uncovered, e.g., V-reduction instead of P-reduction.

### 2.1. Husserl’s Attitudes toward Dialectics and Rationale for Referencing the Dialectics of Being in the Present Paper

A logician and mathematician, Husserl did not favor the speculative dialectical method (Lauer 1974). However, both Derrida and Suzanne Bachelard point to the inherence of dialectics in P (Edie 1984, p. 4; Moran and Cohen 2012, p. 78). The main thesis of suspending belief in being in order to access a possibility for this belief (cf. Heinämaa et al. 2014, p. 2) is, in itself, normative dialectics, but it is not a formal dialectical method (cf. Findlay 1974, p. 56). Using the method analytically would destabilize the logic of justifications, but it happens nevertheless: periodically, phenomeno-logic exhausts its linear logical options and runs into sublations. It is usual that a famous “zigzag” (Husserl 2001b, p. 175), which follows being in its own dialectical turns, must send the inquiry into a new area. This is not the evolution of idea, but being, *per se*, acting in opposites and syntheses. Here are some examples. When ontic positing is suspended, one cannot discuss consciousness with regard to being, and, against the real being of the world, the being of consciousness is undetermined anyway. But the being of consciousness not only survives reduction but increases in apodicticity. Thus, the concept of immanence steps in from this dialectical impasse of being. Further, since grasping an extra-mental object by an intra-mental process is impossible, a concept of transcendence is born out of the actual situation of the intertwining. Both immanence and transcendence are non sequitur concepts to neutrality modification, but they are dictated by the dialectics of being. In fact, Husserl never denied dialectics to being.<sup>8</sup> In fairness to the given, it would not be possible.

Thus, even after ontic positings are suspended, a reference to being remains pervasive to P. Being (*Sein*) is characterized with regard to its reality (*Realität*) and actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) (cf. De Santis 2021, p. 483). *Realität* refers to being meant as “factually existing” (Husserl 1998, p. 74) or “actual”. The concept of actuality is then relocated from the “being this there” to the “perceived and experienced [*erfahrbar*]” (Husserl 2014b, p. 50), thus turning the empty logical possibility of a fact into a possibility rich in content and “found in immediate intuition” (Husserl 1998, p. 51).<sup>9</sup> The categories, such as essence, universality, individuality, substrate, state of affairs, etc.<sup>10</sup>, continue to operate in post-reduction phenomenological being, not in real being as in Aristotle.<sup>11</sup>

In both transcendental eidetics and dialectics, the concept of absolute subjectivity generated strong correlationism.<sup>12</sup> Both Husserl and Hegel see absolute subjectivity not as a synthesis of preexisting *a priori* but as a special kind of being. Hegel did not complete integrating the concept of transcendental ego into dialectics (Desmond 1995, p. 17). Husserl’s transcendental eidetics fit with this unfinished project if the former is extended into the analysis of being. The transcendental ego is not just the irreal being but has its own specific characteristics. The ego’s irreducible properties (luminosity, transparency, subjectivity, etc.) are the properties of being; they warrant this being’s transcendental structure. This ego is also alive—a metaphysical aspect which remains undetermined in phenomenology, and which, according to Henry and Tymieniecka, is responsible for the transcendental unity of apprehension. Thus, the transcendental ego is different from everything else there is in being. In virtue of what would the being of the ego possess such unique characteristics? Henry, for example, argues in favor of separate, dedicated analysis of the being aspect of *cogito*, because

“transcendence in its true meaning is in no way safeguarded, if it is reduced to a characteristic of consciousness. It serves no purpose to say: that transcendence is an essential, fundamental characteristic of consciousness; that the consciousness is ‘entirely’ this ‘movement toward’, this sketching of the world; that such a project is not a predicate which would be added synthetically to the prior existence of a subjectivity; finally, that it is transcendence which makes the very substance, the subjectivity of the subject. As long as the Being of the subject has not been clarified, we in no way escape the paradox which founds the condition on the thing conditioned. For, from what can the subject draw its substantiality, even if this is nothing more than the pure act of transcending, if it is not from Being itself?” (Henry 1973, p. 21).

Further, Henry cautions against the relocation of the research of being into the context of pure *cogito*:

“Transposing the central themes from the ontology of Being to the interior of the philosophy of the cogito cannot but lead to the deformation. This deformation, so serious that it merits our calling it a falsification and a perversion, has a two-fold consequence: on the one hand, that Nothingness with which one invests the condition of the ‘subject’ actually sheds its nature as essence in order to become a single subjective operation. The transcendental meaning viz. of being a simple subjective operation which one tries to retain seems at times to be no more than a last attempt to escape from psychologism; but how would transcendence be able to avoid indefinitely being confused with a psychological act, since it actually appears as the property of a determined Being?”<sup>13</sup>

In neutralized phenomenology,<sup>14</sup> the analysis of being as being is, de facto, absent. The reference to being appears in Husserl’s material ontology of essences (Husserl 1998, esp. chp. 1). and, of course, in his notes on transcendental idealism (See, e.g., Husserl 2003, esp. circa 70 ff). Henry, however, argues that in regard for the realistic ontology<sup>15</sup> (which is one of governing directions of contemporary phenomenological research), the analysis of being (as being) should appear. If so, one cannot avoid dialectics since it is dialectics that describes the behavior of being, as opposed to beings. Thereby, in this paper,

I refer to dialectics in order to trace the transformations of being in phenomenology into the being uncovered by Vedanta. The observed dialectics also prepares ground for the strictly phenomenological account in Section 3, in which I discuss the substrate of the transcendental ego.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, between Sections 2.2 and 3, there is a transition from descriptive dialectics to phenomenological criticism.

## 2.2. Modifications of Being under P-Reduction

Es ist ja ganz evident: Für mich ist etwas gegeben und zu geben, zu geben nur durch irgendwelche Modi des Bewusstseins (in intentionalen Erlebnissen). Gegeben und zu geben ist aber als seiend für mich nicht nur es selbst und das ihm immanente Eigene, sondern auch ihm Fremdes, ihm Äußeres.

/It is quite evident: for me, something is given, and to be given is to be given only through some mode of consciousness (in intentional experiences). Given, and to be given as being, for me is not only itself and what is immanently its own, but also what is foreign to it, what is external to it.—Edmund Husserl (2002, p. 22)

P-reduction suspends faith in being: “I inhibit precisely the being-accepted-beforehand of ‘this’ world or its antecedent being-for-me which, as a being posted both actually and habitually, carries me continuously in my entire natural living and is thus the foundation of all my practical and theoretical living” (Husserl 1998, p. 61, ft. 30). The “being-accepted-beforehand” of this world and being of the “I” are natural polarities. By immanence of its *cogito*, the being of the “I” survives inhibition: “as our point of departure, we take consciousness in a sense that is concise and initially affords itself, a sense that we designate most simply by means of the Cartesian *cogito*, the ‘I think’” (Husserl 2014b, p. 59).<sup>17</sup> Uncovered by P-reduction, phenomenological being subsumes two preceding opposites of subjective/mental and objectivated/physical being, while at the same time completely transforms their sense.<sup>18</sup> The immanence of the mental being and transcendence in the being of the world become the “transcendence in immanence” of the phenomenological being. This synthesis is not Kantian and is not just an idea: it is the actual transformation in givenness of being as being.

Since the two polarities of being are given in asymmetrical opposition to one another, their modes of givenness can only be dialectically transformed into a single being when they retain the polarity of original modes. The reduced phenomenological being spans the ego-pole and the world, but the relationships between the two are yet unclear. The second step of P-reduction toward the transcendental ego clarifies this peculiar form of relationship by uncovering the synthetic sense of asymmetry within the unified phenomenological being: “In the accomplishment of each act there lies a ray of directedness I cannot describe otherwise than by saying it takes its point of departure in the “Ego”, which evidently thereby remains undivided and numerically identical while it lives in these manifold acts, spontaneously takes an active part in them, and by means of ever new rays goes through these acts toward what is objective in their sense” (Husserl 1998, pp. 75–77).

Thus, on one side, P-reduction functions as a reduction and, on the other, as a locus of dialectical synthesis. The role of reduction is to reveal the new being which subsumes preceding opposites in their being and sense,<sup>19</sup> as in: “Consciousness is a ‘project of the world,’ which transcends itself toward what it is not and will never be, and yet consciousness is, at one and the same time, the “pre-objective” possession of itself in immanence” (Edie 1984, pp. 76–77). The new transcendent-in-immanence phenomenological being not only exists, but even grounds new transcendental judgments: “We set aside all hitherto prevailing habits of thinking, . . . we recognize and tear down the intellectual barrier with which they confine the horizon of our thinking and now, with full freedom of thought, seize upon the genuine philosophical problems to be set completely anew made accessible to us only by the horizon open on all sides” (Husserl 1998, p. xix).

The “complete freedom” (Husserl 1998, p. 61) of the neutralizing P-reduction finds its limit in the being of the transcendental ego: “Has the phenomenological ego (the one



that is doing the investigating from the outset) also become a transcendental nothing by means of the phenomenological reduction?" asks Husserl (1998, p. 105). The answer is "no": this ego, even though transcendental and, thus, including residual connotations of real being, basks in irreducible immanence. This ego *knows* by transcendence but *exists* by immanence. The subject cannot get away from oneself. Transcendence in the being of the ego is called for by objects, but what warrants the possibility for the inherently immanent ego to transcend itself? What makes it possible for immanence to never go away? What gives subjectivity its peculiar property of being a subject of experience? This brings up a question of the substrate of the ego—the question Husserl keeps returning to throughout his work.

### 3. The Problem of Substrate

#### 3.1. Appearance of the Transcendental Ego

Characterizing the being of the transcendental ego as both immanent and sense (i.e., transcendent), Husserl (2014b, pp. 64–65), says, "We cannot be turned toward a thing otherwise than in the manner of apprehending" This ego—the living essence of cognition—operates both in pure thought and in personalistic embodiment: one apprehends ideas or grasps things of the world via the same polarized intentional structure. "Insofar as every *cogito* calls for *cogitatum* and insofar as this latter is related to the pure ego in the accomplishment of an act, we find remarkable polarity in every act: on the one side, the ego-pole; on the other, the object as counter-pole" (Husserl 1989, p. 11). There is, however, a distinction between how this polarity is given in pure thought and how it appears in embodiment. In pure thought, "seeing" has no empirically localizable point of origin, no obvious ego-pole—thus, Descartes could doubt away everything other than acts of thinking, and hence, in the first edition of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl declares the ego-pole empty or non-existent. In contrast, in the body, the ego-pole harbors the felt sense of the embodied "I", which is likely why Husserl later finds it<sup>20</sup> (Jacobs 2022, p. 88). Zahavi (2022) suggested that the shift in Husserl's understanding is induced conceptually. However, it may be observed that the same transition from not finding to finding the ego-pole happens over time in practitioners of self-awareness and, thus, can entail a transition which reconstitutes the embodied sense of the self.

The whole of the transcendental ego becomes visible under reduction as a polarized, self-luminous, transparent continuity of apprehension—a nearly tangible expanse of presence making perfect sense logically. Being sense, having polarity, being perspectival, and being the subject give the transcendental ego its lived actuality. Everything appears in no other way but by this from-the-subject-to-the-object, qualitatively asymmetrical continuity. If for the real being one can separate essence from existence, then for the being of consciousness there is a numerical identity of essence and existence: the self-same being, in the same place, of the same form, present in all cognitions. Even when expressed as a purely formal ideality in contrast with, e.g., the eidetic laws of chemistry, the transcendental ego still remains identical to itself. Never a primary objectivity, this being is possible only as a subject. On occasion, Husserl even considers using the word *quale* to characterize this immanental first-person actuality (Husserl 2003, p. 12, ft. 1).

Transcendental reflection (Beyer 2021) is possible because the original sense of the real being is not just bluntly neutralized by P-reduction but is dialectically incorporated into the transcendental ego. This sense never goes away. Not just the ideality of this ego, but all real mental processes, whether concrete or abstract, show "peculiarity in question" (Husserl 1998, p. 202): "If an intentional experience is currently actual, i.e., implemented in the manner of the *cogito*, the subject of that experience 'is directed' at the intentional object" (Husserl 2014b, p. 64). The real mental processes are, thus, discovered to be intentional; the transcendental ego lives through them. And as soon as the realistic reference in the being of the ego comes into play, metaphysical problems start surfacing like rocks from under melting snow. If intentional relationships operate in the real being, they must be based on something, i.e., have a substrate.

### 3.2. The Search for a Substrate

The concept of substrate goes back to Aristotle's argument with Parmenides, whereby real beings are defined as forms filled with material stuff and exhibiting properties that make individual substances recognizable. In addition to having the connotations of substance, the concept of substrate implies the presence of foundation in virtue of which supervening properties and relationships came to be.<sup>21</sup> "Ancient materialism creates a new one effective motive: material being is a substrate that is presupposed to be present everywhere in the world because of the latter's material properties (especially mechanically and mathematically understood) and material causality", says Husserl (2014b, p. 210). While indifferent toward the material foundations of consciousness (Husserl 1998, pp. 202, 204), Husserl vastly acknowledged the role of material substrate essence in the constitution of networks of validity. This line of thinking—that, if there are properties, there should be substrates of properties—fits remarkably well with Husserl's tendency to seek grounding (logical, syntactical, constitutive, ontological, aprioristic, etc.)<sup>22</sup> through regressive analysis.

Under P-reduction, grounding is always in essences (Mulligan 2020). The constitution of reality is grounded in two essences: "We have contrasted the formless ultimate essence and the This-there. Now we must ascertain the essential connection obtaining between them, which consists of each This-here having its materially-filled essential composition characterized by a substrate-essence that is formed in the sense stated" (Husserl 1998, p. 28). "This-there" constitutively couples with "the formless ultimate essence" and becomes a substrate for recognizable properties or states (Husserl 1989, pp. 46–47, 80). In a similar manner, psychological habitualities build upon the ego: "The subject is now a substrate of properties (personal properties in a determinate, very broad sense), analogous to the way a material thing is a substrate of thingly-real properties" (Husserl 1989, p. 129).

The transcendental ego, which serves as a substrate for psychological properties, is also the epistemic absolute. To be lived, to mediate sense, and to be immanent, the ego must have a substrate. But, if everything is known by this ego, it must have its own substrate within itself: for the eidetic essence of this ego to make sense, we cannot constitute it outside of the epistemic absolute itself. It cannot be constituted on some kind of external substrate, since that substrate would need to have capacities of knowledge of the epistemic absolute, i.e., would have to have the same characteristics as the ego and, thus, regress *ad infinitum*.

To meet the condition of serving as its own substrate, some parts of the ontologically diverse structure of the transcendental ego can, perhaps, be grounded on other parts. The ego is polarized into the ego-pole and the object pole-spanned by intentional relationships. The object-related part of the ego indeed has its own substrate in the "hyletic substrate bound to the body" (Husserl 1989, p. 160). These substrates count "for the life of desire and will" (ibid.) and "theoretical, affective, and practical acts" (ibid., p. 240). But, in apprehension, the objects of intentionality act rather as referential magnets, not as grounds from which an intention can spring forth. As a ground for apprehending intention, the object is logically insufficient: a pencil I am using cannot turn around and look at me. Since my focus may be commanded by the object but still, "springs forth from the ego that thus can never be missing" (Husserl 2014b, p. 64), intentionality should proceed from the ego-pole—from the apprehending "I".<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Husserl assigns *substrate-ness* to the ego-pole:

"Das Ich ist ein Pol, aber nicht ein leerer Punkt. Es ist nicht ein leeres und totes Substrat für Eigenschaften, sondern ein Ich-Zentrum von Aktionen, das selbst seine ichlichen Tiefen hat, und das heißt, tiefer ergriffen und tiefer leistend, immer mehr aussich hergebendes, mit immer größerem ichlichen sich entfaltendes, in der Entfaltung sich an sein Objekt hingebendes Ich-Zentrum ist.

/The I is a pole, but not an empty point. It is not an empty and dead substrate for properties, but an ego center of actions, which itself has its ego depths, and that means, more deeply grasped and more deeply accomplished, more and more yielding with ever greater ego unfolding, in the unfolding is the ego center surrendering to its object". (Husserl 2014a, p. 358)

The “I” in question is the intentional “I”, i.e., the “I think” of *cogito* which, according to Husserl’s analysis in *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960), is identical with the transcendental ego. However, while being the transcendental absolute, this “I” turns to have constituting strata: “the stream of phenomenological being has a stuff-stratum and a noetic stratum,” says Husserl (1998, p. 207). In *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution* (1929–1934), Husserl (2006, p. 53) searches for “the ultimate hyletic ground”. The latter has “nothing pertaining to intentionality” (Husserl 1998, p. 203)<sup>24</sup> and becomes visible only via the intentional constitution of time<sup>25</sup>: “Ich sagte immer: Dieses pure „Ich“ ist abstrakt, konkret ist es nur durch den Gehalt der stromenden Gegenwart./I always said, the pure “I” is abstract. It is only concrete through the content of the flowing present” (Husserl 2006, p. 53). Insofar as “the flowing present” is itself constituted out of passive (hyletic) primal impression by the intentional moments, there emerges a logical loop in which the ego has to rely, as it does, on its substrate—on its own constitutive capabilities.<sup>26</sup> Another problem is this: in virtue of what can ego accomplish “aboutness” in its most primitive form as sentience? What in the ego is alive and, thereby, can sense?

Husserl kept returning to this problem. For example, in Text No. 7, “The formal general proof of transcendental idealism and the unthinkability of real being without bodily subjectivity...”, which was composed in 1914 or 1915, Husserl (2003, p. 139) says the following:

“Nichtexistenz des Erkannten, was ein Widerspruch ist: Es wäre A und zugleich Nicht-A. Die rechtmäßige Erkenntnis schließt ja die Existenz des Erkannten notwendig in sich (natürlich nicht realer Einschluss). Nun ist aber klar, dass die Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis als leere logische Möglichkeit besteht, ob A existiert oder nicht existiert, dass sie m. a. W. Korrelat der bloßen logischen Möglichkeit des Seins, der bloß widerstreitlosen (einstimmigen) Vorstellbarkeit ist. Bloß “logische” Möglichkeit von A ist bloß widerstreitlose Vorstellbarkeit und impliziert logische Ansetzbarkeit. Und demgemäß ist dann auch eine to Erkenntnis des A vorstellbar und in gleichem Sinn ansetzbar. Oder kurz: Die widerstreitlose Vorstellbarkeit von A ist gleichwertig mit der widerstreitlosen Vorstellbarkeit einer Ausweisung der Existenz von A. Das gilt für jedes “logisch mögliche” A, mag es wirklich existieren oder nicht existieren. Aber die Unwirklichkeit eines möglichen A schließt andererseits die Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis aus—währendes andererseits nach dem Gesagten die Möglichkeit im Sinn der logischen Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis (ihrer Vorstellbarkeit) nicht ausschließt. Somit ist die hier ausgeschlossene Möglichkeit, die zur Existenz des A gehört, sicher nicht (die) bloß logische Vorstellbarkeit. Sie ist “reale” Möglichkeit, wie umgekehrt die von der Existenz des A geforderte Erkenntnismöglichkeit eine “reale” ist. Was sagt diese Realität, was fordert sie? Natürlich ein Erkenntnissubjekt. Aber ein bloß logisch mögliches Subjekt ist kein Substrat realer Möglichkeiten.

/Non-existence of what is known is a contradiction: it would be A and not-A at the same time. Lawful knowledge necessarily includes the existence of what is known (of course, not real inclusion). But now, as it is clear that the possibility of cognition exists as an empty logical possibility: whether A exists or not is a correlate of the mere logical possibility of being, of the merely uncontested (unanimously) imaginability. The mere “logical” possibility of A is merely unchallenged imaginability and implies logical presumption. Accordingly, the same knowledge of the A is imaginable and applied, in the same sense. Or, briefly: the uncontested imaginability of A is equivalent to the uncontested imaginability of demonstrating the existence of A. This applies to every “logically possible” A, whether it really exists or doesn’t not exist. Yet, on the other hand, the unreality of a possible A excludes the possibility of knowledge—while according to what has been said, it does not exclude the possibility in the sense of the logical possibility of knowledge (its imaginability). The possibility excluded here belongs to the merely logical imaginability. It is a “real” possibility, just as, conversely, the



possibility of cognition demanded by the existence of A is real. What does this reality say, what does it demand? A subject of knowledge, of course. *But a merely logically possible subject is not a substrate of real possibilities*". (Italics mine, OLS)

In his critique of P-reduction, Henry (2008) clearly demonstrated the masking influence of intentionality on any possible substrate of intentionality. If P-reduction reveals intentionality, it is certain that the same reduction will be masking any possible substrate. If knowledge is intentionality, no substrate can never be known.<sup>27</sup> This explains why Husserl never could see the ego-pole other than as being an abstract entity. Striving to find "an absolute beginning called upon to serve as a foundation, a *principium* in the genuine sense of the world" (Husserl 1989, p. 44), he posits the absolute *a priori* of "pure seeing" (Husserl 1991, p. 364). He then comes to the broader conclusion that Spirit (*Geist*, in a sense of intentional achievements of human reason), by postulating all mental formations, is itself a generator of substrate in the sense of imposing an intentional *morphe* on an amorphous *hyle*: "all substances must be of the nature of our subjectivity, must be spirits" (Husserl 2012, p. 446). However, in reaching this conclusion, Husserl inadvertently duplicates the transcendental psychologies of Leibniz and Kant: a view according to which all *a priori* material ontologies, including the structure of sciences, are carved out at their joints by our mental constitution. Thus, phenomeno-logic comes a full circle, confirming Kantian limitations of knowledge, which P-reduction was supposed to change in the first place. The being of the transcendental ego is given apodictically: "[T]his ego—that I, understood as the ultimately constitutive subjectivity, exists for myself with apodictic necessity" (Husserl 1978, p. 251), yet is lacking conditions of possibility. How is this situation possible? If P-reduction toward the transcendental ego is not sufficient to fully disclose the ego's being, then the synthesis of opposites which give birth to the ego is incomplete, and the ego's immanence remains split off its transcendence. V, furthering the freedom of reduction, offers a solution to this logical impasse.

#### 4. Reduction in Vedanta

Als philosophische sind sie auf das absolute Sein gerichtet, d.i. auf eine Wel-  
terkenntnis,

/As philosophical ones, they are aimed at absolute being. . . —Edmund Husserl  
(2002, p. 13)

Vedantic seers did not rest satisfied with the objective direction of the mind in *cogito* (Gambhīrānanda 1997, p. xxxvii), but looked for knowledge where no one had ever looked before: in the ego-pole. They found this location to be a gateway into the being of the universal epistemic absolute: *Ātman-Brahman*. In contrast with Husserl's slight interest in the individual self (cf. Zahavi 2022), Shankara, the leading authority in V, found the self to be individual and universal at the same time and further irreducible in either logical or intuitional investigations of consciousness. Husserl (2002, p. 21) says, "Jeder von uns sagt und kann sagen: 'Ich bin'. Er spricht damit die absoluteste aller erdenklichen Evidenzen aus./Everyone says of oneself and can say: 'I am'. He is expressing the most absolute of all imaginable evidences," but what is meant by "I am" according to P and V differs vastly.

After acknowledging the absolute apodicticity of "I am," in what would appear to a Vedantin as a contradiction, Husserl (2002, p. 21) identifies "I am" with the intentional transcendental ego:

"Ich bin und bin, indem ich lebe. Mein Leben ist ein unaufhörlicher Strom subjektiven Erlebens und darin beschlossen ein Strom eines (un)aufhörlichen 'Bewusstseins', das in sich selbst Bewusstsein von etwas ist, Bewusstsein, in dem ich irgendetwas bewusst habe, und das in verschiedenen Formen: Ich lebe in Form des 'ich nehme wahr', und wahrnehmend habe ich bewusst einen Wahrnehmungsgegenstand, ich lebe in der Form des Micherinnerns, des Erwartens, des Phantasierens, des Denkens, des Kolligierens, des Beziehens, des universellen und partikulären Präzisierungens usw., worin bewusst wird ein Etwas,

eine Gegenständlichkeit im Modus des Vergangen als Erinnerten, oder Künftigen und Erwarteten, oder Phantasierten, oder eines Subjekts von Prädikaten, oder eines Besonderen einer Allgemeinheit, einer Menge, eines Gesetzes usw”.

/"I am and am by living. My life is an incessant stream of subjective experience and it includes a stream of (in)cessant "consciousness" which is in itself consciousness of something, consciousness in which I am conscious of something, and this in different forms: I live in the form of "I perceive", and perceiving I consciously have an object of perception, I live in the form of me-remembering, of expectation, of phantasy, of thinking, of colligating, of relating, of universal and particular predicating, etc., in which something becomes conscious, an objectivity in the mode of the past as remembered, or future and expected, or fantasized, or a subject of predicates, or a particular of a community, a crowd, a law, etc.”.

In contrast, V focuses not on the fleeting contents of experience, but on the constancy of self-sense: "Always I am, always I shine [I am awareful/I am self-luminous], never am I an object [of dislike to myself]. Therefore, it is established that I am that *Brahman* [the limitless one whose being fills up the whole of the universe] which is of the nature of existence [truth], awareness [consciousness], and fullness [blissfully filled with its own limitless being]".<sup>28</sup> In contrast with P's agenda of sharpening logical distinctions and overcoming dualistic ontologies, V, throughout its many centuries of history, has been quite accommodating of dialectics. V finds no problem with the idea of intuiting the self neither directly (via the senses) nor indirectly (eidetically), but through self's own knowledge of itself by itself (*aparokṣa*) (*Śaṅkarācārya* 1966). Such a view suggests that there can be knowledge which stands in relationships of the incorporating, in a dialectical sense, of all other kinds of knowledges. The ego-pole stands exactly as the phenomenological locus in which such syntheses become possible, in which knowing and being are indistinguishable and in which appearing and being are recognized as the same principle. V qualifies such ego as self-luminous; in contrast with the Western philosophical meaning of the term, luminosity of the ego does not entail self-objectification. The light of the self is akin to the light of the sun in the sense of the latter not needing a candle to be seen, and thus, it entails no objectification. In its being, the Vedantic ego is similar to the ultimate substance of dialectics (*Jordan* 1976, p. 13) and, in its essence, to the ultimate substrate essence in Husserl,<sup>29</sup> except for its not being posited as something material or immaterial, ideal, or eidetic.

#### 4.1. Vedantic Epoché

To access this being, V directs epoché away from all objects. This happens via a mental operation known as *dṛg-dṛśya-viveka*, or 'discrimination between the seer and the seen' (*Śaṅkarācārya* 1964),<sup>30</sup> which also concerns constancy vs. change, limitlessness vs. spatio-temporal character, and indivisibility vs. divisibility. The ego-pole harbors the being of "I am" in its limitlessness, constancy, and indivisibility—apodictic, and exactly that part of experience that can be never reduced out. This *epoché* also suspends the mental mode called *ahaṅkāra*, the "I"-maker, which is responsible for objectivating predications of the "I am". *Ahaṅkāra* makes the changeless ego appear as this or that by superimposition on its own changing cognitions.<sup>31</sup> The two appear as one, just as in the case of mistaking a rope for a snake, whereby the former is really there, but the latter, the illusory one, masks the former. *Ahaṅkāra* has to detach itself from the mind, the body, and the senses and attach itself to the ego-pole.

Through differentiation, one discovers one's constancy, but this is still the constancy of the intending, transcendental, phenomenological "I am". The differentiation has to continue forcefully so that one finds not the intending ego, but "who the seer is"<sup>32</sup>—that is, the source of intention. Beginning with differentiation "I am not the body, nor the sense-organs, nor *prāṇa*, nor the mind, nor the intellect; for these are all embraced by the 'my'-thought in the playground of the 'this'-thought"<sup>33</sup>, one internally turns toward the

phenomenal origin of cognitions, i.e., where one never looked before. *Epoché* toward the ego-pole is not a blunt negation of cognitions, but a step toward suspending the intentional aspect of consciousness. It aims at an intuitive recognition of the substrate of all cognitions, *antaryāmin* ‘indweller’, ‘inner controller’,<sup>34</sup> by unmasking it in the ego-pole, which is free of intentionality. To that end, one first locates the ego-pole perspectively, in “the point of zero orientation” (cf. Husserl 1989, p. 61) and then objectifies and discards spatiality altogether. However, this is not yet full V-reduction, but *epoché*. In itself, it is insufficient for reaching the pure ego of V.

#### 4.2. Neutralization of Temporality

In order to neutralize intentionality, V-reduction suspends the temporalizing consciousness. Then, the networks of validity, which are founded on this consciousness, can be reconstituted, and their teleology is reversed from the world to the ego-pole. For this, Vedanta uses a logic which derives judgements of the real and unreal purely out of the character of presentations. In this aspect, V is even more radically phenomenological than P itself. To demonstrate how this works, we need a brief detour into Husserl’s analyses of the consciousness of internal time. Husserl says (1991, p. 15),

“According to Brentano, the modifying temporal predicates are irreal; only the determination of the now is real. What is remarkable here is that the irreal temporal determinations can belong in a continuous series along with the only actually real determination, to which the irreal determinations attach themselves in infinitesimal differences. The real now then becomes irreal again and again. If one asks how the real is able to turn into the irreal through the supervention of modifying temporal determinations, no answer other than the following can be given: temporal determinations of every sort are attached in a certain way and as a necessary consequence to every coming into being and passing away that occurs in the present. For it is altogether evident and obvious that everything that is, in consequence of the fact that it is, will have been; and that, from the perspective of the future, everything that is”.

The now is deemed real because it belongs to the body whose being is of the world. According to Husserl, the now is filled with *Urimpression*, which is “the core of the living present” (Moran and Cohen 2012, p. 262). *Urimpression* has an inherent lack of seeing or being seen. It becomes “being seen” only in time—and, hence, is referred to as “now”—by added intentional moments of protention and retention. These, however, belong to the transcendental ego. Even though “the pure Ego can be posited as an object by the pure Ego which is identically one with it” (Husserl 1989, p. 107), all it can see in itself is the intentionality which is of its own bestowal:

“Es ist ja ganz evident: Für mich ist etwas gegeben und zu geben, zu geben nur durch irgendwelche Modi des Bewusstseins (in intentionalen Erlebnissen).

/It is quite evident: for me something is given and to be given, to be given only through some mode of consciousness (in intentional experiences)”. (Husserl 2002, p. 22)

This ego cannot see its own substrate, and yet, as the actuality bound to the real, it needs a substrate. Along with Henry (2008), one ends up thinking that we cannot count on the transcendental ego to be the full epistemic absolute. While acting in correlation with the real world, the substrate-less ego does not own sufficient means to become sense: in the real world, a structure needs to have a substrate.

In reference to the reality of the world, there is at least one situation in which a structure counts as preceding its material substrate: the spacelines of Minkowski timespace, which may precede the quantum field, particles, and, by inference, the materiality of the macro-world. But, while the substrate argument does depend on causal or teleological views (Husserl 2012, p. 436), in the background of P, these views are limited to realism. By contrast, V finds its way to the absolute substrate without a background physicalist

or idealist reference by following the leads of pure phenomenality—a move forbidden to Husserl because of the world-related teleology of his epistemic absolute.<sup>35</sup> Distinct from these residual metaphysical ties that bind P, V-reduction is free to go in a direction away from the world. However, this fact alone cannot inhibit intentionality: the transcendental ego is only reversed and directed toward the ego-pole—an attitude for which Vedanta needs the transcendental ego in order to predicate *Ātman* as *Brahman*.<sup>36</sup> Thus, to purge the ego of intentionality, V deplatforms the foundational time-consciousness.

The empty ego-pole of pure thought and the empirical ego-pole of temporalized *Urimpression* in the body are co-extensive, e.g., empirically tracing a thought, e.g., the “I”-thought to the point from which it phenomenally arises (cf. Louchakova-Schwartz 2017), whereby one ends up at the zero point of orientation in the body: cf. “obviously connected with this is the distinction the body acquires as the bearer of the zero point of orientation, the bearer of the here and the now, out of which the pure Ego intuits space and the whole world of the senses” (Husserl 1989, p. 61). Vedantic *epoché* takes the route into this “now” and, *en route*, suspends all temporalities, i.e., all constitutive unities that serve as multiple substrates in the upward constitution (cf. Husserl 1991, pp. 256, 257, 268, 273). Time, for V, is infinitely divisible (which is also Husserl’s view) and consists of a series of moments: the illustration is a pack of rose petals which a needle pierces one by one in a unit of time, whereby piercing each petal takes just a section of this time unit. These moments suspended, the shared ego-pole of pure thought and embodied self becomes further reduced into the phenomenological locus of the pure seeing.

#### 4.3. The “Pure Seeing” under V-Reduction

In Husserl (1991, p. 364), “pure seeing” functions as an *a priori* or as a horizon of appearances. While both are true, instead of regarding “pure seeing” vis-à-vis appearances, V-reduction aims at its unique manner of being and appearance.<sup>37</sup> According to V, “pure seeing” has the appearance of the self (*Ātman*), which is the self that manifests itself when the opposites of the invisible ego-pole of logic and the personalistic ego-pole(s) of the body enter their dialectical synthesis by V-reduction.<sup>38</sup> What comes and goes cannot be real, says V. The real and unreal always appear in the same location, akin to a red-hot iron ball in which two different things, the metal and the fire, appear as one. In the “pure seeing” associated with the ego-pole, the constant and Vedantically real substrate is masked by the transcendental ego, as in “In me . . . rises this celestial city called the world” (Lakshmidhara 1990, p. 13). One is real, the other unreal, and the latter masks the former. By deeming intentionality unreal, V-reduction not only suspends ontic positings, but redirects perceptual faith toward the ego-pole’s pure seeing. This move produces a unique form of evidence.

### 5. Evidence of Being under V-Reduction

Unveiled by V-reduction, *Ātman* ‘the self’ comes to the forefront as *Brahman*: real, time-less, dimensionless, limitless, filling up the universe. Empirically, this is very interesting, because the constancy of the self remains exactly as the self—in its striking difference from non-egological explorations, e.g., in Buddhism—and yet, there is nothing but this self in the whole universe. The *Dakshināmūrti Stotra* (Śaṅkarācārya 1978, p. 8) says the following:

[W]hen, by *śruti* [canonical texts taught in the oral tradition], by the master’s favor, by practice of Yoga, and by the Grace of God, there arises knowledge of one’s own Self, then, as a man regards food he has eaten as one with himself, the Adept Yogin sees the universe as one with his Self, absorbed as the universe is in the Universal ego which he has become.

This “stateless state” (Siddharameshwar 2021) is “hard as a rock”, indivisible “like a crystal of salt”—in other words, totally transparent yet absolutely certain. There is no ideality or physicality to it. By contrast with P-reduction, under which the sense of certainty arises from intentional fulfillment, under V-reduction, the sense of certainty is in *aparokṣa*:

pure intuition independent of intentionality, temporality, and hyletics. In this ego, the polarized opposites of immanence and transcendence are in synthesis. The subject–object polarity is, thus, transformed: paradoxically, the subject rests as the self, but there is no moment or location where it is not. The subject stops being a subject by relationships to objects but becomes a subject by its own disposition: by knowledge of itself by itself or, conversely, by the kind of knowledge which is the substrate of all knowledges. In relationship to this absolute substrate, the transcendental ego appears as a dislocative tension of this absolute immanence similar to the tension in a transparent film of plastic when stretched against a window frame. In such a tension, things acquire being, and the real being of the self appears polarized and transcendental. Like a hall of mirrors, the time-bound intentionality displaces its own source and makes it appear in spatio-temporal extension as if consisting of parts. V calls this effect *māyā* ‘illusion’.

## 6. Conclusions

Back to the turtle at the bottom of the world: both V and P suggest that the epistemic absolute has being of its own—being given through its own unique mode of appearing. In thinking of being, one has two foundational natural options, which are materiality and ideality. In conjuring up its epistemic absolute, P sidesteps this aporia with only tentative success: the transcendental ego is unreal, a structure, and a means of proof rather than being *per se*. In contrast, for V, the epistemic absolute is apodictically given being, neither material nor ideal and, most importantly, never an object. Can one conceive of such a being? In theory, one can—by dialectics. Can the dialectically conceived possibility of this being not just be suggested by empirical reference but logically proved? Yes, Vedanta-*pramāṇa* does exactly that by the logic of reflection on the lived self. But it is V-reduction that leads one to an immediate intuition of this being.

Just as it did for James, Dewey, or Bergson, in stating its legacy task of new metaphysics, P relies on the given. Reductions extend this given by bringing out being, which is ordinarily invisible. Thus, reductions are truly indispensable. In bringing out a fuller picture of being, reductions help us to break theoretical habits conditioned by the substance metaphysical tradition (cf. Seibt 2022). Reality, for V, is accessed via the ego-pole, not in the world. If this reality is altogether possible, it must be considered as part of new metaphysics. In step with P-reduction, Vedanta gives us *adhiṣṭhāna* ‘the first foundation,’ by which, once known, all other things are indeed known (cf. Anrò 2021).

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Since German originals of Husserl may not be available to the readers of this paper, I reference English translations whenever possible. For *Ideas 1*, I reference translations by Kersten (Husserl 1998) and by Dahlstrom (Husserl 2014b). If only a German text exists, I give my translation following the quotation in German.
- <sup>2</sup> For the metaphysical objective of P, see (De Santis 2022; Husserl 2001b, p. 14; Marosan 2022). For metaphysics in Husserl, see (Moran 2001, p. ixv; Trizio 2017). For realism in Husserl, see (Zahavi 2019); for reality as a correlate of the syntheses of verification, see (Doyon 2022).
- <sup>3</sup> Objections to the commensurability of phenomenology with any other theory of knowledge can be made in a sense that experience, according to Husserl, emerges in the shared world: “phenomenological accounts... prefer to talk about meaning-constitution and establishing a sense of a shared world within which objects are encountered. Even to frame the problem as how individual minds reach outside their inner domain to grasp something that is not a part of mind is itself to misstate the problem” (Moran 2013, p. 319). However, this view in phenomenology evolved gradually: the concept of the shared world is mentioned but is not as prevalent in both the highly formal ontology of consciousness in *Logical Investigations* (published by Husserl first in 1902) and the transcendental phenomenology of *Ideas 1* (published first in 1913). It is only in *Cartesian Meditations* (published in 1929) that the concept of intersubjectivity acquires full force. The notion of the shared world becomes fully fleshed out in later Husserl works, such as *Experience and Judgement* (first published in 1948) and the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.



(first published in 1954), both published after Husserl's death. In its early stages, phenomenology is quite commensurable with Vedanta, as both are rational philosophies, both ground reflection in the given, and both function under the reduction of consciousness, as such.

For more on possibilities of being in, e.g., the metaphysics of individuals vs. process metaphysics, see (Seibt 2022).

For contextualism of Husserl's concept of the absolute, see (Marosan 2022).

"Existing world, as substrate of properties, is already in time" (Husserl 2014a, p. 68).

For the positional status of the ego, see (Staiti 2016), who shows consciousness in the natural attitude as unsettled—which corresponds with my argument for the absence of ontological homogeneity in the structure of the transcendental ego.

For more on the dialectics of reality, see (Brenner and Igamberdiev 2021).

For the ambiguities of "fact," see (Fine 2001).

For Husserl's approach to metaphysical categories as the categories of logic, see, e.g., the first chapter in the first section of *Ideas 1* (Husserl 2014b, pp. 9–33).

For more on Aristotelian logic in P, see (Drummond 2007, pp. 15, 17, 38, 75, 129). For the dangerous instability of logical argument under the impact of dialectics, see (Findlay 1974).

For more on correlationism in Husserl, see (Doyon 2022; in Hegel, see Desmond 1995).

Henry (1973, pp. 22–23). There is no direct critique of Husserl in this work of Henry (*The Essence of Manifestation*); the critique comes later when Henry (2008) switches his investigations to the horizon of neutralized phenomenology.

For neutralized and non-neutralized phenomenology, see (Brainard 2002).

For links with realistic ontology, see (Thomasson 2019, 2020). For the role that Husserl's mereology can play in realistic ontology, see (Delamare 2021). For objects as truth-makers, see (Mulligan et al. 1984).

For an extended argument on the masking influence of intentionality on the Vedantic being, see (Louchakova-Schwartz 2017).

For more on directedness, see (Husserl 1989, pp. 103–7).

For the transformation of sense from the Cartesian *cogito* to the transcendental ego, see *First Meditation* in (Husserl 1960, pp. 7–26).

For the being of consciousness, see (Husserl 1998, p. 65).

Formalization of the ego concept takes place in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, where he is "quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary centre of relations" (Husserl 2001b, II/92), as well as in *Ideas 1*; the personalistic account begins with *Ideas 2* and continues in the lectures of *Nature and Geist*. For more on the development of Husserl's concept of the ego, see (Zahavi 2022). Zahavi attributes the dynamics of perception of the ego in Husserl to his scholarly pursuits, but the same happens to people who internally practice Vedantic differentiation.

For more on substrate in Aristotle, see (Cohen 1984). For more on (meta)metaphysics regarding the question "in virtue of what?", see (Raven 2020).

For a similar reasoning in phenomenology, cf. "Phenomenology . . . lays bare the 'sources' from which the basic concepts and ideal laws of pure logic 'flow', and back to which they must once more be traced" (Husserl 2001b, p. 166); the idea of "primary contents" (Husserl 1998, p. 203, fn. 36); or even the idea of *a priori*: "this infinite field of the Apriori of consciousness which, in its peculiar ownness, has never received its due, indeed, has actually never been seen, must be brought under cultivation, then, and made to yield its fullest fruits" (Husserl 1998, p. 147).

For more on substrate in real being, see (Husserl 2019, p. 45): "if I judge that the sun is at the center of our planetary system, then this natural state-of-affairs is the What stated, therefore, something real here, to which the real sun belongs as substrate, but nevertheless surely not an Idea". For syntactic substrate, see (ibid., pp. 72, 102). For contrast between the syntactic and the constituting ground of presentation, see p. 142.

Delimitations of this argument depend on whether the background metaphysics relies on a causal or on a teleological view (Husserl 2012, p. 466).

In lectures on active and passive synthesis (1920–1926), Husserl (2001a) develops the concept of passive intentionality. This intentionality proceeds not from the ego, but from sensibility. Says Steinbock (the translator), "Husserl's analyses of 'passive synthesis' challenge this schism between the sensibility and the understanding by describing intentionality as the interplay of intention and fulfillment as they both pertain to the perceptual and the cognitive spheres of experience. If truth is not alien to the sphere of sensibility (any more than intuition is to judgment), then passive syntheses are not without epistemic import, and a transcendental aesthetic cannot be foreign to the problems of truth, evidence, and their modalizations. Sensibility does make a contribution to the acquisition of knowledge, and an enterprise that wants to determine the limits, powers, and conditions of human cognition. (i.e., critical philosophy) must not only address active syntheses discernible in a transcendental logic, but it must be attentive to the unique and irreducible sphere of passive syntheses peculiar to a transcendental aesthetic" (Steinbock 2001, pp. xi–xii). According to these analyses, intentionality genetically proceeds from sensibility, i.e., from the constitution of objects.

"Sensuous hyle are given only intentionally, as the continuum of these momentary-substrates, extends throughout them and in this way lasts for that extent of time" (Husserl 1991, p. 257).

- 26 For consciousness becoming its own substrate, see (Husserl 1991): “The act of meaning can become immersed in the consciousness, can take the internal consciousness as its substrate” (pp. 131–32). Alternatively, “The concrete unity is the substrate, the principal substrate; it bears in itself the “property”-substrates” (p. 268).
- 27 For criticism of intentionality and a detailed argument in favor of phenomenological materiality as the substrate of appearances (Henry 2008) in Vedānta, see (Louchakova-Schwartz 2017). For a critique of regional ontologies and radicalism of the formal ontology (which is relevant to the present critique of the transcendental ego), see (Henry 1973, p. 10); for an ontological critique of the transcendental ego in Kant, which is relevant to my present critique, see (Henry 2009). For Henrian reading of Husserl, see (Taipale 2014). For limitations of non-intentional phenomenology, see (Henry 1995; Serban 2016).
- 28 Lakshmidhara (1990, p. 13); Husserl (1991, p. 255) also refers to such constancy but does not pursue it.
- 29 Cf. “If we now concentrate on the class of materially filled objectivities, we arrive at ultimate materially filled substrates as the cores of all syntactical formations. . . Substrate and form are referred to one another and are unthinkable “without each other.” Material filling of objectivities is referred to as “ultimate substrate essence” in the constitution of individual objects and syntactic objectivities (Husserl 1998, pp. 24–28). Henry (2008) later posits phenomenological materiality as the ultimate substrate essence of subjectivity and all appearances.
- 30 Śaṅkarācārya’s authorship in this source is contested.
- 31 For superimposition, see, e.g., Nikhilananda, *Vedāntasāra*, Chapter 2, especially pp. 44–47. Related concepts appear earlier in, e.g., the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (see Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, pp. 275–93).
- 32 Lemkin and Goodman, *Call Off the Search*; also, see Śaṅkarācārya (1966).
- 33 Lakshmidhara (1990, p. 19). For the earlier related concept of *neti-neti*, of “not this, not this” (BrU 2.3.6), see (Diwakar 2014).
- 34 The term *antaryāmin* appears in *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1934) and, later, in canonical texts and commentaries (see e.g., Saha 2017). Close to the Aristotelian sense of substrate as a hyletic filler of forms, the sense of *antaryāmin* is an epithet for the self with the connotation of ultimate inner substance filling all forms.
- 35 *Epoché* toward the self can be observed, e.g., in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, dated to the sixth century BCE. For the date, see (Angot 2007, p. 7).
- 36 For *pramāṇa*, or ‘means of knowledge’, and specifically, Vedantic reflective phenomenological as *pramāṇa*, see (Louchakova-Schwartz Forthcoming).
- 37 To be distinguished from “peculiar”, which is the term used by Husserl to characterize the transcendental ego.
- 38 Dialectical syntheses have hierarchical, developmental significance. But development is in itself a metaphysical category; under both P- and V-reductions, it goes into suspension and remains as pure presentation only. Thus, it does not impact our analysis.

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