Ontology and Phenomenology

Abstract

The aim is to offer to those who are interested a clear and compact description of the way in which ontology was intended by the classical phenomenology, starting with the founder of the phenomenological movement, Edmund Husserl as far as o his first disciples: Adolf Reinach, Jean Hering, Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Edith Stein. Phenomenology was a philosophical movement that was engendered by the development of modern logic and the natural and human sciences as elaborated in the first half of the twentieth century. Phenomenologists’ purpose was to establish a dialogue between sciences and philosophy in a new way and ontology was the proper tool to perform such a dialogue.

The phenomenological school, which counts as one of the most important movements of the twentieth century, is most famous for the methodological ‘turn’ it promoted. This, the so-called ‘phenomenological turn’, is characterized by the following two core aspects:

1a) The first one consists in the way in which phenomenology considered the philosopher’s task, who, according to Edmund Husserl, the founder of the school, has to perform his investigation starting from what is given to him without throwing his own ideas or theories on reality, on the contrary trying to grasp the sense of it through a complete absence of prejudices and openness of mind.

It is not only possible, but also necessary to do so, because each aspect of the reality or field of research that manifests itself to us – and for this reason becomes a “phenomenon” - reveals in direct or indirect way its proper sense or, using a word well known in the philosophical tradition, its “essence”. The search of essence is possible because the thing itself and then the things themselves (Sachen selbst) show to have a main property and that property is not just contingently, but necessarily. Every individual has something as its own quid. We can quote what Husserl writes regarding the meaning of ‘essence’: “At first ‘essence’ designated what is to be found in the very own being of an individuum as the What of an individuum. Any such What can, however, be ‘put into an idea’. Experiencing, or intuition of something individual can become transmuted into eidetic seeing (ideation) – a possibility which is itself to be understood not as empirical, but as eidetic” ([Husserl 1977] § 3, p. 8). (Eidetic comes from eidos, that is the Greek word for essence).

This is the first step of the phenomenological method, that is the “essential reduction”, that means that it is possible to put apart what is not necessary in order to pinpoint the What, which is necessary to it to be what it is. The acknowledgement of the essences lets it possible to discover the complexity and the stratifications of “phenomena”, may they be nature, human being, society, sciences and so on; they can be understood according their What in an essential way.
This is the common feature of the phenomenological school. When the phenomenologists speak of ‘essence’, they mean what Husserl meant.

1b) According to Husserl a second step is necessary, it consists in a change of perspective: what is factually given must be put into parentheses in order to grasp the sense of what exists and it become possible to underscore the presence of a residue; in fact it is necessary to wonder who performs the reduction, who discovers the essence. Here we have a new territory, that one of our subjectivity to be understood as the ‘transcendental’ region of the pure lived experiences (Erlebnisse), that intentionally carries within it the ‘real’ and the ‘possible’ universe and that can be analysed in an essential way.

1c) Husserl paid particular attention to the clarification of the meaning of the sciences, both human sciences and natural sciences, in order to understand how they were built as intellectual products and what is their capacity to know their objects. The main task in this project was to clarify from a philosophical point of view the meaning of ontology, in order to understand the foundations of scientific knowledge. The term “ontology” refers to the set of things whose existence is acknowledged by a particular theory or system of thought. It can be referred to material genera or to formal categories. This kind of analysis permits us to pinpoint the ‘ontology’ of the different spheres of reality. The understanding of ontology as category theory has become the standard view in present-day analytical ontology, as witnessed in the following definition given by Roberto Poli: «Ontology deals with what, at least in principle, can be categorized (objectified, i.e. subsumed under distinguishable categories)». It is possible to notice that it was Husserl one of them who proposed to intend it in such a way. According to Husserl, inside the process of objectivation there is a distinction between formal and material ontology and formal ontology can be considered, at last, an absolute ontology that delineates, in its proper sense, as soon as one discovers “Something in general” or the “Object in general”, that can be expressed through categories.

2) I deal not only with Husserl, but also with the other phenomenologists who were in direct contact with him: Adolf Reinach, Jean Hering, Hedwig Conrad Martius and Edith Stein. In their works we can find what ontology is in the phenomenological perspective at the beginning of the school and how they contributed to its application in different fields of research. The reconstruction of Husserl’s approach to ontology makes it possible to understand why his followers went along two different directions, that is ‘realistic’ and ‘transcendental’ path, corresponding to the first step and to the second one of the phenomenological method. Indeed, after his transcendental turn, Husserl was left almost alone; only Edith Stein followed him for a long while, turning at last to metaphysics, but never forgetting what she learned from him. The others remained linked up with the essential description of reality, which is, in any case, the mark of the school.

In both lines of research we find an analysis of ontology, to be understood as category theory. In Reinach it is possible to find a general and categorical ontology, very important from
two points of view: from a theoretical perspective it deals with the structure of the ‘state of affair’ and from a practical point of view, that in connection with actions, it is at the basis of law and social philosophy.

Hering with his analysis of ‘essence’, ‘essentiality’ and idea, offers an ontological interpretation of the levels of reality.

Conrad-Martius’ contribution is directed toward ontology of nature. In a wider perspective particularly interesting is Conrad-Martius’ analysis regarding the complex systems according the quantum theory. She opened a way along which we can find nowadays many applications in the field of the living systems and anticipatory systems.

Edith Stein’s analysis are extremely important to understand the difference between ‘ontology’ as the description of Being according to the metaphysical tradition, and ontology as category theory. In this way we can grasp the main features of the contemporary ontology in comparison with the ones proposed in the past.

Hedwig Conrad Martius and Edith Stein, at last, were able to underscore the complexity of the human being as an entity that reveals a stratification of levels: body and soul are analysed in order to show that under these titles it is possible to find many aspects, that can be pinpointed. At a first approach we can notice that, if corporeity is a very fundamental level, it is necessary to admit that psychic and mental-spiritual dimensions cannot be denied.

1. Edmund Husserl’s Ontology: Between Logic and Science

Edmund Husserl’s view of ontology can be contextualized within the framework of his interests in logic and the distinctions of types of knowledge that find their origin in modernity. These distinctions are organized in a series of disciplines that examine diverse fields of the real in their material and formal aspects. In particular, I refer to the four major moments of Husserl’s philosophical career, which correspond to a progressive expansion and deepening of his research. It is necessary to follow the development of Husserl’s phenomenological analyses to understand the meaning of ontology according to him, because, if the main idea of ontology as category theory remain the same along his researches, it can be meant in different ways according to different perspectives.

a) Formal and material ontology. Whole and parts

In his book *Logical Investigations* one can trace the path that leads Husserl to his elaboration of ontology. He declares to make an ontological turn, in the sense that he realizes that the “thinking of evidence” (*Evidenzgedanken*) in a logical sense is not only a subjective necessity but that the subjective incapacity-to-represent-things-otherwise corresponds to the objectively ideal necessity of an inability-to-be-otherwise. This, by its essence, is given to our consciousness as an *apodictic self-evidence*, so that we are obliged to assert that such an objective necessity is correlated with a ‘pure law’. In this way we can speak of an essential legality (*Wesensgestzlichkeit*), that is, of an ideal necessity that comes to consciousness in apodictic evidence and is constituted by laws (law is nothing concrete and perceptible). This evidence presents itself as completely
different from empirical necessity. That means that there are two levels of reality, the empirical one and the essential one and that it is possible to discover the laws according to which what is essential constitutes itself, that is the process of categorization.

In order to explain what ontology is and whether there are different ontological levels, it is worthwhile, starting from that preliminary distinction between empirical and essential, to approach a theoretical question of great importance, namely, that of the essential relation between whole and parts or even the essential relation between parts coordinated within a whole (The Third Logical Investigation). The description of whole and parts are extremely important to understand the structure that we gain when we submit a field of inquiry to an ontological analysis.

The relation between whole and parts is founded apriori on the idea of the ‘object’ that is to be understood not as real or real, empirical, but as reell, that is, as possible content of a presentation. Even though the presentation is a subjective moment and can be expressed with the word ‘think’, Husserl insists on the ‘ideal objective necessity of not-being-able-to-be-otherwise’, affirming that a pure legality belongs to the essence of this objective necessity, where ‘pure’ means that we are in front of a necessity, which is established in itself, it is valid in any case, and it does not depend from what is empirical. The legality, which belongs to non-independent objects, consists in establishing that they are objects of a pure species, existing as parts of more comprehensive wholes. This is the case when one affirms that the parts cannot be thought as existing in themselves, and all of this operates within the distinction between independent ideas and dependent ones and, therefore, between a pure genus of the highest order and the hierarchy of species ([Husserl 1984] § 7).

There exists a multiplicity of laws that concern the diverse modes of non-independence. An important distinction can be made between ‘material’ and ‘formal’ laws. Attaching themselves to materiality, concepts like house, tree, and color are quite different than those of something, object, and quality. The former are ordered within the highest material genera, material categories; material ontologies are based on these. The latter, however, are articulated in formal ontological categories in such a manner that the two spheres are distinguished. One sphere is materially essential and the other is formally essential. These lead back to laws and, therefore, to disciplines that are both synthetically apriori and analytically apriori. Laws related to the diverse modes of non-independence are all synthetically apriori. Examples of pure analytic generalities are: “a whole cannot be without parts” insofar the correlative elements are reciprocally postulated, whereas “a color cannot be without a certain extension that is covered by this same color” is a synthetic generality because the existence of a colored object is not founded analytically on the concept of color.” ([Husserl 1984] § 11.

The independence or non-independence of content has a character of relativity that is dependent on the relationship with the whole. Husserl gives the example of the dependence within the flow of consciousness of every “now” that passes into a having been; it is possible that a fraction within a momentary visual intuition be independent, but the color that is related to it is not independent. ([Husserl 1984] § 13).
In order to justify this Husserl introduces the concept of ‘foundation’ ([Husserl 1984] § 22), maintaining that the unity of independent objects is realized only through the foundation insofar as one is founded upon the other, and they, in turn, found other contents.

In the *Third Investigation*, the term foundation is introduced with regard to the description of regions, that is, those areas that are headed by the sciences of givens of fact or empirical sciences. Each region has theoretical, essential foundations in regional ontologies. Husserl clarifies what he means by giving the following example: if we consider all the disciplines that are central in natural sciences, an eidetic science of general physical nature corresponds to these because an essence corresponds to factual nature, an *eidos* (this is the Greek word that means essence) that is intuitively graspable in its purity, that is, the essence of nature. ([Husserl 1984] § 25. That means that the general ‘ontology ‘of nature is given going beyond all the ideas of a nature that we can grasp empirically. In other words there is a distinction between two levels of knowledge: empirical knowledge, which gives us some ideas linked to our experience and an ‘ideal’ knowledge, that is the idea of nature ‘in general’ with its own ideas of what is an ‘empirical whole in general’ or what is ‘indipendent in general’. If we put all these last ideas together, we obtain ontology of nature. We are here in front of two kinds of ideas, those, which are directly connected with our empirical experience, and those of what is ‘general’, even what is empirical ‘in general’, the connection of which is the ontology of nature.

To resume Husserl’ s position is the following. We have seen that there are two levels: the empirical and the essential, but the last one can be further divided, so that we can say that there are three levels: firstly, our empirical and factual experience of nature, which gives us some ideas, secondly, ideas that are connected with a general ontology of nature and thirdly, a formal ontology, based on a law, that, for example in the case of whole and part, is the unity of foundation, which is a categorical predicate. That means that a Founded Whole is a categorical notion whose content is determined by a material specificity. §23. At this point it is necessary to analyze what kind of links there are among these levels.

b) *The constitution of the sciences: from the objectivity in general to the individual*

Husserl in his Ideas takes up this theme, and radicalizes it with reference to “natural” knowledge upon which the sciences dealing with experience linked to givens of fact are founded; they can be called sciences of the world. They can be those sciences that deal with “matter”, understood as that which is inorganic, and they can be those that concern themselves with the psycho-spiritual nature, including physiology, psychology, but also human sciences like history, and sciences of culture like sociology ([Husserl 1977] I. The radicalization proposed by Husserl consists in reinforcing the insufficiency of pure factuality in order to construct a science. An eidetic necessity must be seen as concomitant to factuality because to every factual given belongs an essence that is ascertainable intuitively through the vision of essence (*Wesenserschauung*), which
constitutes the ‘object’ of a new species, that is non empirical. As we have already seen in the Introduction, the reduction to essence consists of this and is the first step of the phenomenological method.

Judgments about essences, eidetic propositions and eidetic truths are connected to the operation of making evident the evidence of essence. (We can remember that the term ‘eidetic’ is the Greek word that stays for essential). Husserl insists once again saying that it is possible to establish in such a fashion a difference between sciences of factual givens and sciences of essence, the latter being autonomous with respect to the former, but the opposite is not true. In fact it can be observed that every fully developed science enters into a ‘relation’ with formal ontological disciplines, which include in addition to formal logic the disciplines of mathesis universalis, that is arithmetic, pure analysis and the doctrine of multiplicity. ([Husserl 1977] I, §8).

The eidetic ‘regional’ ontologies, which construct the foundation of every empirical science, are delineated in such a fashion. Husserl gives the same example that he gave in the Third Logical Investigation, the one related to the ontology of nature. He does so because “factual” nature corresponds to a graspable purity, that is, the essence of nature. The making-real of a completely rational science of nature is founded on a formal mathesis that concerns all sciences, including ontological material disciplines. If one examines the birth of physics, one notes that geometry, understood as a pure science since Plato, is involved in the methodology of physics. Geometry as an ontological discipline, therefore, concerns itself with the essential moment of the thing, understood as res extensa, that is, its spatial form. ([Husserl 1977] § 9).

Husserl proceeds to the distinction between formal and material regions, calling attention to the fact that all material regions come under a formal region, which is empty and prescribes a communal formal legality to material regions. Recalling the distinction between the analytic and synthetic already indicated in Third Logical Investigation, Husserl maintains that formal ontology, understood as pure logic, and logic being the eidetic science of the object in general, contains immediate and fundamental truths, logical categories that function as “axioms” in the disciplines of pure logic. The fundamental concepts of pure logic are defined as logical categories and are considered analytic concepts as opposed to synthetic ones. Examples of logical categories can include those of properties, characteristic determinations, states of affairs, relations, identity, similarity, togetherness, number, whole and parts, genus and species. The last two pairs, already investigated in the Third Logical Investigation, are analyzed here again. He argues that every essence, be it material or empty, inserts itself in a hierarchy of genera and species. For example, number in general is the highest genus with respect to single numbers just as the thing is the highest with respect to contents or material singularities. ([Husserl 1977] I, § 10).

The formal region “objectivity in general” is divided into syntactical categories and ultimate substrates. If material objectivities are taken into consideration, one reaches the ultimate substrates and the tode ti of Aristotle— the Organon of Aristotle is present in all that has been treated thus far. It is true that the Greek expression tode ti can be translated as ‘individual’. Husserl prefers to preserve the tode ti, ‘this here’, however, in order to
avoid the sense of indivisibility that the term “individual” possesses. ([Husserl 1977] I, §14.

The concept “individual” is further determined in reference to independent and non-independent objects, already investigated in the Third Logical Investigation. In this case, however, he introduces formal categorial concepts of individuum that is ‘concrete and abstract’ that respectively refer to absolute independence, self-sufficient individuum, and non-independence, non-self-sufficient individuum. The individuum is located in the “this-here”, whose essence is fulfilled in a concrete material fashion. ([Husserl 1977] I, §15.

Eidetic singularities derive from this and are divided into abstract and concrete, as we have seen. These, in turn, are systematized in terms of genera and species and, therefore, are divided according to separate highest genera with respect to ultimate differences. For example, in a thing, the figure leads to the highest genus, namely, spatial figure but also to that of a seeable quality in general. All of this is fundamental for the formation of material regions. The domain of the ‘region’ comprehends the ideal totality of the highest genera, whereas the domain of the individual comprises all the possible individuals that fall under those concrete essences. This is the key point of analysis. Here is where the distinction of synthetic and analytic, already elaborated in the Third Logical Investigation, becomes valid. In fact, every essential region contains essential synthetic truths, which are founded upon each regional essence. It is possible to find a link between regional ontology and formal ontology, but they are also independent. The link is due to the fact that formal ontology contains the general concept of a regional object, but is quite apart from the regional ontologies ([Husserl 1977] I § 16. In this sense formal ontology is the third level, which we spoke about before.

Pure logic, then, serves to determine all individuals according to objects or laws under the rule of synthetic apriori principles. All empirical sciences, therefore, must be founded on respective regional ontologies. From the viewpoint of a theory of knowledge, the task is to determine, on the basis of the intuition of individuals, the regions of being upon which the single eidetic and empirical sciences may be founded. Some of these empirical sciences require a connection that justifies the classification of the sciences themselves. ([Husserl 1977] I § 17).

c) Absolute ontology as the basis for a formal and real ontology

Husserl’s analyses are amplified and deepened in his Formal and Transcendental Logic, which coincides with the mature phase of his phenomenological research. Firstly, the logical dimension is no longer accepted as a factual given, it is necessary to understand how it is constituted. Secondly, there appears the problem of an absolute ontology that may serve as the basis for a formal and real ontology. The novelty consists in the acknowledgment of the importance of mathematics in order to understand what ontology is.
Husserl maintains that it was not clear for the ancients ([Husserl 1974] § 26a) that the concept “cardinal number” could have been emptied of any concrete content in such a way as to enter into the territory of the “Something” in general and that the apophantics, (that is the sphere of the judgments, according to the traditional logic) could have been formalized. Aristotle remained very much in the domain of ontology of reality and he considered it as “first philosophy”. It is only with modernity, and specifically through the algebra of Viète and, above all, Leibniz, that a *mathesis universalis* is delineated, albeit an imperfect one. Only when the internal connection between mathematics and logics was discovered could the meaning of logic-formal formations be cultivated. ([Husserl 1974] § 26b. Even Bolzano, who started on this path and who indicated an apriori general ontology, did not distinguish material ontology from the formal ontology of the “Something” in general. It was the discovery of the new non-apophantic mathematics – mathematics of the wholes, of the cardinal and ordinal numbers etc.- which does not use judgments in the sense of the traditional logic as fundamental concepts, that let to individuate the empty universe of the ‘Object in general’, or ‘Something in general’. In this way it is possible to elaborate a new formal ontology ([Husserl 1974] § 24. Regarding the distinction between the second and the third level of ontology, of which we have already spoken, we can say that goes more deeply into the third one, trying to explicate more and more what ‘formal’ consists of.

The third level, the level of formal ontology, is better delineated in the first part of *Formal and transcendental Logic*. Husserl maintains to have brought to evidence the idea of a pure logic in his *Logical Investigations*, even if he did not yet call it a formal ontology. *It is only in Formal and Transcendental Logic that he declares to have accomplished the full idea of the formal logic, which can be called formal ontology of ‘Something in general’*

At this point Husserl’s problem it that of connecting the ontological-formal apriori with the apophantic priori, namely, propositional meanings. This connection, however, entails a distinction between objective formal categories (object, state of affairs, unity, plurality, cardinal number, relation, connection, etc.) and the categories of signification (that is all the concepts that concern the formation of judgments). The laws of such domains are divided according to these two groups of categories: *objective categories (formal ontology) and categories of signification (formal apophantic)* ([Husserl 1974] § 27b).

If the formation of the sciences is examined, one notes that the categorial objectivities in relation to the pure form are the theme of analytic logic as formal doctrine of science. The analytic as formal doctrine of science is formal ontology, because it says what is valuable for the objects in them selves. ([Husserl 1974] § 43.

If analytic is formal ontology this cannot exclude that analytic is formal apophantic, because it is necessary to express them through judgments. In fact all of the objectivities are nothing other than judgments. It is necessary, therefore, to proceed to an analysis of judgments. The person who makes judgments not only turns to objects that she or he wishes to determine but also to their determinations. This turning involves a reflection of a secondary nature that individuates an intended substrate insofar as it is intended ([Husserl 1974] § 46). Judgments are objects of a particular region, which is a field of objects closed in itself. So it is possible to establish a difference between simple and direct judgments and judgments of second degree, in which we find what is judged in
itself, that is intended objectivities. The latter constitute a new region, which is the region of meaning or sense.

On this point, Husserl connects his phenomenological investigations of consciousness, already developed in the Ideas. Here, we refer to the second stage of his method, namely, the transcendental reduction. In the Ideas, his logical analyses demonstrate how every lived-experience (Erlebnis) is intentionally linked to something perceived, every “I remember” is connected to something remembered, every valuing act is linked to something valued. Reflection upon ‘perceived’, ‘remembered’, ‘valued’ is also possible, that is, upon intentional objectivity as such. This type of reflection is called doxic and gives the intended object as such. It gives the perceiving sense, the meaning of the value, and so forth. Also, insofar as every kind of position has its own evidence, one can speak of doxic evidence.

Every positional sphere has its proper syntactic categories and its proper modalities of Something and, therefore, its proper formal and analytic logic ([Husserl 1974] § 50. The pure formal analytic has these senses as its thematic sphere. It refers to the morphology of the pure senses and to non-contradiction. In this way we can understand how it is possible to perform a matheesis universalis, of which Husserl has already spoken: it is the analytic of the possible categorial elements and it has nothing to do with concrete reality. One concludes, therefore, that judgments, understood as senses or meanings, have a formal legality that is contained within them, and they say nothing about a possible being of their objectivities. It is a pure formal logic. The idea of a pure formal mathematics that is interested solely in non-contradiction and analytic consequences or inconsequence is founded on this.

If one speaks, however, of a concrete possible truth ([Husserl 1974] § 54a) as an adequation of the same possible things, one lapses into formal ontology. In fact, formal ontology is the apriori science of the possible objects in general and if a logic orients itself epistemologically, that is, it wishes to be a science of possible formal categorials, it is not a pure formal apophantic logic. Rather, it is a formal ontology, in which the substrate objectivities must be able to be in a veridical sense. If the objectivity has received a categorial confirmation, we do not find ourselves facing apophantics, rather we face ontology. What is the epistemological meaning of the new ontology?

A double sense of evidence, a double sense of judgment and double orientation of formal logic correspond to the above-mentioned doubleness, that is matheesis universalis on one hand (A) and concrete possible truth on the other hand (B). (A) This involves apophantic logic, if it orients itself towards judgments and, if it extends to the categorial forms of sense, it configures itself as a matheesis universalis. (B) We are in the formal-formal camp, if it orients itself towards possible categorial objectivities; even if it instrumentally employs the meanings of its judgments as its objects, it has its “objects” as its final intention ([Husserl 1974] § 54b).

The first part of Formal and transcendental Logic dedicated to formal logic concludes with these last clarifications, but Husserl at this point proposes once again a general
observation that he programmatically made at the beginning of the book. This involves the fact that logic has a bilateral character. In fact, if, on one hand, we are in front of an objective sphere that has its proper objective validity, then, on the other hand, we can ask what the origin is of these objective formations and in this way one is constrained to return into the subjective sphere. The basic point consists in the fact that objectivity, as a subjective operation, has never been investigated adequately. This concerns the problem of the transcendental sphere that Husserl intended to analyze through his phenomenological research. This is, in fact, a gnoseological turn, that is it deals with the problem of our way of knowing and tackles the theme of the origin of the logical formations.

d) The epistemological turn: from the knowledge of objectivity to subjectivity

In the wake of Kant, but with a radicalism unbeknownst to him and with different results, Husserl tackles the theme of transcendental logic. In the first place, removing the field of prejudice, according to which the theme of confronting subjectivity means falling into logical psychologism, here we confront the question that is fundamentally connected to the peculiarity of phenomenology.

This question focuses a new terrain of research that is the distinction between psychic acts and conscious lived-experiences. The former are psychic realities, whereas the latter possess their own ideality concomitant with their own evidence. The general ideality of all intentional unities with respect to the multiplicities that constitute them is delineated, be it relative to external or internal experience ([Husserl 1974] § 62). Particularly interesting is section 62 where a long analytic discussion concerning the distinction between immanence and transcendence is synthesized. Not only external objects are transcendent, but there also exists an internal transcendence between the real psychic dimension and the conscious lived-experience of these. The sphere of the conscious lived experiences is a medium between external reality internal psychic reality. The conscious lived experiences refer both to external objects and the internal psychic dimension and they configure the immanent sphere of the multiplicity of consciousness.

The transcendence of the real constitutes itself in the immanent sphere in the particular form of ideality. In this sense, we can understand how logical formations occur in consciousness. In this case, there is a sort of acting that produces irreal objects that are given in real psychic processes, but which are distinguished from them. This involves an originary act of production of ideal objectivities that possess their own evidence and which constitute themselves intentionally in judgment ([Husserl 1974] §63). The systematic examination of the connections between reality and irreality, the real and the possible, configures itself as a universal, absolute ontology that serves as the basis for both formal and real ontology ([Husserl 1974] § 64).

At this point, it is possible to begin a lengthy investigation of subjectivity in order to make evident the apriori nature of subjective structures as a correlate of objective apriori structures. Husserl proceeds with a very detailed description of the subjective genesis of
all objectivities that he worked on from a formal point of view in the first part of his research. This focuses on the theme of the constitution of ideality, on the analytic principle of contradiction, of formal ontology as truth, and so on.

For example, from the subjective perspective, the fundamental formal law of the pure analytic involves the apriori structure of evidence insofar as subjective essential situations correspond to objective ones. One discovers that subjective structures have an apriori function that must be investigated ([Husserl 1974] § 75). With regard to the logic of truth and, therefore, formal ontology, one runs across idealized presuppositions that are at the basis of the principle of contradiction and the law of the excluded middle. In the final analysis, one realizes that through the operation of ‘variation’ it is possible, starting from a concrete fact, to go as far as an ideally possible fact. This is the process of idealization ([Husserl 1974] § 80). On the other hand it is possible to descend from what is ideally made through a process that is like a digging to understand the way in which something ideal has been produced. In the case of judgments every real and possible judgment leads back to ultimate nuclei that have greater syntactic value, hence, one regresses back to the ultimate substrates, ultimate subjects and not nominal predicates, to ultimate predicates and not to predicates of predicates, to ultimate relations.

All of this does not concern the mathesis universalis, as we have already seen, and, therefore, formal mathematics. Rather, this relates to the logic of truth because the ultimate substrate objects to which one regresses are individuals. Every truth relates to these, and it is necessary to lead back every analytic proposition to the ultimate individual nuclei until each proposition is understood ([Husserl 1974] § 82). Then it is possible to establish apriori that every judgment leads back to something individual that has a relation to a real universal and to a world in which it has value ([Husserl 1974] § 83).

One realizes that one can and that one must regress into the series of evidence whose judgments are the finished products of the genesis of sense, which has its own history ([Husserl 1974] § 86). In this regressive process one digs until one reaches the antepredicative level and, therefore, until one reaches the non-predicative evidences that constitute true and proper experience ([Husserl 1974] § 86). The result consists in becoming aware that logic postulates a theory of experience that requires logic itself because it has to be maintained in its formality. But, all of this indicates that preparatory work on our way of knowing is necessary. Evidence is the key point of this analysis, because evidence is the universal modality of intentionality, linked to the totality of consciousness that is why the category of Object as such is in correlation with evidence. If we want understand how the ontology of the Object in general can be achieved we have to explore the meaning of evidence.

The subjective foundation of logic as a transcendental problem is configured in such a way.

The transcendental terrain develops, according to Husserl, into the new terrain of formal ontology that is no longer about a possible world, but concerns every being in every sense ([Husserl 1974] § 102). It involves leading the two formal sciences, that is, formal ontology as the analytic of new generalities and the new ontology that configures itself as the form of totality of reality, to transcendental subjectivity, the place of the originary
foundation of all sciences that is analyzable through the unique authentic science that is phenomenology insofar as it is philosophy ([Husserl 1974] § 103).

Through phenomenological analysis, it is possible, therefore, to go from top to bottom and bottom to top in order to reach from the antepredicative dimension the objectivity of the formal analytic; the understanding of all that is entrusted to a theory of knowledge, which in turn is connected to a transcendental logic. Together they can clarify the meaning of a constituting subjectivity.

Transcendental logic is not a secondary (second in the sense of a different logic that flanks the first) logic; it is the traditional logic radically understood as the absolute logic of science and, therefore, as absolute ontology. All the disciplines of mundane ontology fall under its rule and they find their justification in it. The most radical point reached is that of transcendental aesthetics, understood as the analysis of the sphere of pure experience; starting with it makes it possible to justify in progression exact theories like geometry, then physics as the exact natural science, which operates through ideality, and, lastly, the very human sciences that require normative concepts that move beyond them.

In such a way, one can understand the genesis of various themes successively developed in the Crisis, including the birth of geometry ([Husserl 1976] Beilage 9a) and the ontology of the life-world. Mundane ontology, which includes all cultural formations, needs, as it was previously seen, an apriori universal ontology in order to be understood. This involves leading back the apriori life-world, through the transcendental epoché, to the transcendental correlation of world and consciousness of the world, of subject and object, which means that our world acquires sense through our intentional life ([Husserl 1976] § 51). Intentionality and evidence refer back to one another reciprocally, as we have already seen. In fact, evidence is a universal mode of intentionality. They reveal the universal teleological structure of consciousness, to which one must regress in order to collect the apriori universal of the life-world in the transcendental correlation of subject-object, understood as the ultimate terrain upon which all objective sciences found themselves.

Apriori universal and absolute ontology is justified through the essential description of the transcendental subjectivity and it is ontology in the sense that it is possible to subsume all under distinguishable categories, which are the categories of Something in general, Object in general, as Being in general.

It is possible to conclude that the new way in which Husserl deals with ontology consists in the recognition of an absolute, universal, apriori ontology that is linked up with Something in general, Object in general, intended also as Being in general. He reached the following results:
1. He starts from the distinction between empirical and essential,
2. By means of what is essential it is possible to describe a field of inquiry and to perform ontology;
3. Ontology can be distinguished in material ontology and formal ontology;
4. At the basis of them there is an absolute and apriori formal ontology;
5. The absolute apriori ontology is justified through the essential description of the transcendental subjectivity characterized by intensionality and evidence;

6. Transcendental subjectivity is the basis to understand the main structures of the life-world, the ontology of the life-world.

Life-world is the terrain of our cultural products, in particular natural sciences and human sciences. We can accept it in a naïve and natural attitude, as usually sciences do, or we can start from the distinction between empirical and essential (1) to go through all the process that we already described, from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top (2, 3, 4, 5). This is the task of phenomenology as far as it assumes an epistemological attitude.

Logic is involved in this process and it shows itself under two aspects: formal logic, as support of formal ontology and logic of truth if it deals with the essential description of the transcendental subjectivity, necessary to understand the meaning of the life-world (6).
2. Adolf Reinach’s apriori essential Connections

The text I should like to consider, at first, is Reinach’s Über Phänomenologie (On Phenomenology) (1914), in which he first confirms his adherence to the phenomenological method, for this reason he expressly declares that his aim was not to deal with the problem of existence, but rather with the problem of essence, and then continues by accepting also that this essential analysis should have as its terrain consciousness with its lived experiences, according to Husserl’s position. Also for Reinach Wesenserschauung, that is ‘seeing of an essence’ is essential, if one wants to grasp the significance of other disciplines, especially mathematics. Husserl proposed the ‘seeing of an essence’ when he wrote “…essence designated what is to be found in the very own being of an individuum as the What of an individuum. (…) Experiencing, or intuition of something individual can become transmuted into eidetic seeing (ideation)” ([Husserl 1977] § 3).

According to Reinach, nevertheless, essential analysis is not the end, but only a means, a means for arriving at laws that are valid for all the facts and for all the interconnections of which we are made aware by sense perception, and the validity of these laws is due to their having to be thus, to the impossibility of their being different. The task of philosophy is precisely that of highlighting these essential connections that are given a priori and are not connections of thought, but connections of being, independent of the human subject, who could also not be there ([Reinach 1989a] 545), indeed, they are Seinsverhältnisse, relationship in being. This is the meaning of ontology according to Reinach.

The question therefore is how can we come to know them? There is an immediate evidence of the a priori in contrast with the non-evidence of the empirical. Reinach agree that there is no evidence of the existence of things, but, seeing that empirical judgments are involved, their validity cannot be called into question; for example, the judgment “I see a house” cannot be doubted, while “a house exists there” can be called into question ([Reinach 1989a] 546). For Reinach Sein (being) and Existenz (existence) are not really connected, when one speaks of Sein, one is referring to a “state of affairs” in essential rather than existential terms.

The validity of a priori legality, which is linked to the discovery of essential level, enables Reinach to obtain two results: to continue to keep existence between parentheses – a Husserlian theme – and to hold that the essential connections are not the work of thought, but rather of intuiting the essential structure of being – a motive that in his opinion leads away from Husserl’s position, since he seems to hold that the a priori for Husserl is a necessity of thought and not a necessity of being. Whether it is a good interpretation of Husserl’s position cannot be discussed at this point; it could be noticed that also for Husserl the essential sphere does not depend from subjectivity, but according to him it is necessary to examine subjectivity to understand better in which way the human being grasp what is essential. At any rate, it is precisely this critique, which Reinach put forward above all with reference to the analysis of consciousness proposed by Husserl in Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology as place for essential analysis, that led to the school being split into two currents that were referred to as, respectively, ‘realist’ and ‘idealist’, that is those who accepted only the ‘essential reduction’ proposed
by Husserl and those who accepted also the ‘transcendental reduction, the reduction to subjectivity.

The theory of phenomenological a priori, obtained through the ‘seeing of essence’, is the main result of Reinach’s analysis. *A priori* is the field of the essential connections, but it is not only linked up with propositions and acts of judgment, that is with something that is linked to the subject but also and primarily with states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), which are judged and recognized. States of affairs are what is correlative to judgments.

When we conclude: “The three blooms”, we can examine this proposition in such a way: a) the proposition, that is the meaning of these group of words, that is what we mean with them and that is out of time; b) the act of the judgment, which is in time; c) the act of judgement in general; d) the state of affair, in the case of “the three blooms” the state of affairs is in time, in the case of 2+2 = 4 the state of affairs are out of time; f) the object of the judgment that can be real or ideal, it exits or not. Because judgements constituted themselves in time and states of affair are out of time, the concept of necessity independent from experience belongs only to the states of affairs, which, therefore, are apriori ([Reinach 1989b] 351). To be in time can be meant in two ways: it is possible to be in time without constituting oneself in time, this is for example the case of the state of affair “the three blooms” or to constitutes oneself in time and this is the case of the judgment “ the three blooms”.

Reinach, describes the relationship between the level of judgment and that of states of affair, that is between the epistemological and ontological levels, in his essay entitled *Zur Theorie des negativen Urteils* (*On the Theory of negative Judgment*) (1911). While propositions can be true or false, states of affairs can be (*bestehen*) or not ([Reinach 1989c] 116).

To grasp the meaning of the state of affair it is necessary not only to examine the positive judgments, but particularly the negative ones, because they are more problematic to a logical inquiry. Reinach argues that the latter ones refer themselves to the positive ones, in fact they cannot exist alone, but need the connection between positive judgment and state of affair and they due their existence to some peculiar operations such as questioning or doubting ([Reinach 1989b] 123). He offers an example: to say that 3 is not less than 2, it is necessary to know that 3 is more than 2 ([Reinach 1989c] 124). This is the case of ideal objects, but it is possible to examine particular concrete experiences. Positive state of affairs can be “grasped” starting from perception of a thing and determine a positive conviction (*Überzeugung*). If a rose is red, the state of affair is positive and evident; if we say that it is not yellow, we understand that there is a contrast with which we grasped, then a negative evidence comes to the fore and we cannot believe in the new state of affair. That means that the negative conviction is based on a contrast and that it comes from a negative state of affair because at the bottom there is a positive state of affair ([Reinach 1989b]). In this way we can obtain a priori essential connection (*apriorische Wesenzusammenhang*) that can be stated in this way: every conviction of positive or negative state of affair presupposes positive evidence ([Reinach 1989c] 125).

Deepening the meaning of negation, Reinach investigates whether we remain on the terrain of the pure subjectivity, when we speak of questioning or doubting. According to him, it is not so, because, if it is true that conviction and assertion (*Behauptung*), which is
linked up to conviction, belong to subjectivity, we find at the bottom of negative unbelieving a positive believing of the negative, that is a negative state of affair ([Reinach 1989c] 137). That means that negativity is on the objective side of judgment. The result is that the apriori is primarily an ontological category and then an epistemological one.

The field in which Reinach applied his method was among others — ethic, psychology, logic — that of “law”. In his work Die apriorischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechts (Apriori Foundations of Civil Law) (1913) he described the root of law starting from some “social acts” as claim, connection and promise, considering the last one as the source of the first two others ([Reinach 1989d] chap. I). On these bases, according to him, one can establish the doctrine of law as a apriori level (die apriorische Rechtslehre), different from the laws and statutes which are laid down by the legislator and which can be not only according the a priori law, but also beyond it and against it ([Reinach 1989d] chap. II). The a priori level of law can be considered as pure ontological field quite different also from the nature laws, that we can find as roots of the laws provided by the legislator ([Reinach 1989d] chap. III). So he was in fact a forerunner of deontological logic or ontology of normative domains.
3. Jean Hering’s early phenomenological Ontology

In order to understand the analysis that both Conrad-Martius and later Edith Stein bear in mind is necessary to know the one performed by Jean Hering in Bemerkungen über das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee (1921) (Observations on Essence, Essentiality and Idea) where he keeps his eyes fixed not so much on the scholastic tradition, but rather on Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle, as they were the first who pinpointed the importance of the discovery of the What in an individuum. What Hering obtains from his inquiry can be summarized in this way. In the first chapter, he sustains that every object has just one – and no more than one – essence (Wesen) that is the fullness of the Eigenart, i.e. the distinctive character that constitutes it; that means that the essence of something is non independent. Essence is individual in the sense that two individual objects can have similar but not identical essences; consequently, though it is legitimate to speak of an essence of all similar things, and therefore in terms of universality (the essence of all the ‘a’s), this always presupposes an individual essence. Using an Aristotelian expression, one might say, according to Hering, that the essence is the to ti en einai. To pinpoint the meaning of the Greek phrase to ti en einai it is necessary then to have in mind a house that can be painted successively with different colors, but always remains the same. It responds to the question regarding the poion einai, the “being thus” of an object (das Sosein eines Gegenstandes) ([Hering 1921] 496). In a note added to § 1, Hering specifies that “being thus” has to be distinguished from poion, the way in which a thing is, for example its particular color, and from the “state of affair” (Sachverhalt) “S is p”, that can be affirmed or denied, while p, from the point of view of poion einai, belongs essentially to S ([Hering 1921] 497). Dealing with the theme of constitution and affection, Hering distinguishes “being thus” from “doing” (poiein) and “suffering”(paschein). To explain the difference he gives an example: the German poet Konrad Gessner used for the first time the hexametron in his poems. From this use we cannot gain the Sosein of the hexametron, because it was completely accidental, totally different from the “being thus” of the hexametron which does not depend from the circumstances in which it is used, on the contrary from the hexametron there depends that it is fit for epic poetry and not for lyric poetry ([Hering 1921] 499). In order to go deeper in the “being thus” we have to seek the “essential nucleus” (Wesenkern), which is the immanent foundation of the essence ([Hering 1921] 503).

In the second chapter, it is legitimate to pose the question – as Aristotle had already done – regarding the ‘whatness’, the ti, the was, and in this case Hering speaks of Washeit or Washaftigkeit, which is different from “being thus”. To be red is different from “red” as a color in itself: the first is “what”, the second “being thus”. The first therefore identifies a form, morphe, of a particular object ([Hering 1921] 509). It is necessary then to separate “being thus” of a thing, and its “whatness”, or immediate morfe. When this was is considered for its own sake, as not as being horse in relation to a horse, but as being horse as such, one is in a sphere quite apart from an object, so one can speak of essentiality (Wesenheit) or of eidos, which – again according to Hering, - constitutes the prote ousia, the primary substance (511).
To know an individual object it is necessary therefore to know its ideal quality (τι) and its “being thus”. That is why “whatness” can be considered as primary substance. This identification was later contested by Edith Stein, who declared that the Aristotelian meaning of “substance” is totally different, because it is something in itself that contains and develops its own essence within it and not just an ideal quality.

In any case prote ousia, that is “ideal quality”, must not be confused with the sphere of ideal objects, which has to be considered as second substance, deuter a ousia: red as ideal object is determined according to its τι εἶναι through its essentiality.

When primary substance and second substance are referred to the empirical object, the result of the analysis can be grasped even better; in fact, in both cases one can speak of a singularization (Vereinzelung), but, though the singularization of an ideal object is the object itself, the same cannot be said in the case of essentiality, because its realization is the Whatness of the object; the real object is therefore only a ‘realizer’ of essentiality, whereas an ideal object cannot be indicated as a realizer or, better, as a concretizer, because the empirical object is itself reality ([Hering 1921] 514).

Hering continues his research on eidos, showing that there are immediate and non immediate eidoi. “Redness” is immediately grasped in itself, while it has a mediate relationship with a rose that is red. There are also simple and complex forms, so it is possible to distinguish “originary morphe” (Ur-morphe) and complex ones and their relationship can be studied in comparison with Husserl’s On the Theorie of Whole and Parts, contained in Logical Investigations ([Hering 1921] 515). Different forms can belong to the same object, so that they constitute a teleological unity ([Hering 1921] 516).

It is possible that there is a “fusion” (Verschmelzung) of forms; they can be separated one another, but also internally connected, as it happens in the case of “colorness” and “redness”, in this case they create a new morphe, “a red”. (518).

After having made the distinction between essence (Wesen), essentiality (Wesenheit) and object (Gegenstand), Hering does not deem his inquiry to be concluded, but turns to the analysis of the sphere of ideas. Ideas do not represent a class of what is by the side of objects or essentialities, but participate in the various spheres of what is, because there are ideas of object, of eidos, and so on, and can be identified and studied as a particular sphere of objects ([Hering 1921] 526). In this connection it is right to insist on the very wide significance attributed to the term ‘object’, so much so that it has to be specified on each occasion: real or empirical object, for example, ideal object, and so on.

At this place the difference between Hering and Husserl becomes most noticeable, even though Hering offers his critique merely as addition to and elaboration on what Husserl had maintained in Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology.

He affirms that already for many years past Husserl’s lectures had distinguished a double nature of ideas, namely a nature they have in things and a nature they have in themselves. The thing in idea already has a hic et nunc, that is to say, the idea of this lamp is something like a space-time representation, even though the idea itself, the idea as such, exists neither here nor now ([Hering 1921] 530).

It is precisely this indeterminacy characteristic of the idea as a generality that distinguishes it from essentiality, which latter, according to Hering, is wholly determinate, so that Husserl’s eidetic intuition had gone no further than the identification of the idea (ideational act or ideation) ([Hering 1921] 527), without grasping the
distinction between essentiality, as a class of what is, and the idea, as an instrument for identifying the classes of what is.

At this point one has to make a terminological distinction that is not merely formal, but serves to further clarify the question: in *Ideas pertaining to a pure Phenomenology*, indeed, Husserl uses the expression *eidos* to signify the essential moment and no longer uses the word idea – as he had done in the *Logical Investigation* – because this word tends to have, not least for Husserl himself, a regulative function in the Kantian sense. Hering admits that Husserl has identified the particular act by means of which the idea presents itself to us, indicating it as the ideative act or ideation ([Hering 1921] 527), but in his opinion does not develop the distinction between essence, particular and universal, essentiality, as a class of what is, and idea, as an instrument for identifying the classes of what is – a distinction that, as we have already seen, Hering deems to be important, so that he does not consider the terms *eidos* and *Wesen* to be equivalent, as Husserl had done ([Hering 1921] 533).

The discussion with Husserl is important in order to understand the realistic point of view maintained by Hering. Together with Adolf Reinach and before Hedwig Conrad Martius, he intended the phenomenological description to pertain exclusively essence intuition, and recognized that reality shows itself in a complex way so that he is compelled to distinguish the various levels in which “essence” (*Wesen*) can be given and always in relationship with the existence of things. At the end of his long essay he begins again from a singular thing that is a lamp or an animal, in particular a lion and a wolf, and discovers a new series of starting points, necessary to understand the ways in which a thing can be approached. This series is made by five couples of opposites (*Gegensatzpaare*): exemplar and idea, particular and universal, individual and genus, singularity and universality, real and ideal. Exemplar, particular, individual, singularity, real belongs to what is individual; on the other side we find what belongs to universal (idea, universal, genus, universality, ideal). All this is said and done in order to show how it is possible to go up and down in the essential description of the levels of reality.
4. Hedwig Conrad-Martius’ Interpretation of Reality and the Constitution of Nature

4.1. Realontologie

The position of Conrad-Martius is rather different from that of Husserl’s own investigations; nevertheless, one should note that her moving away from the maestro was a gradual process.

Notwithstanding her protest of fidelity to Husserl, in actual fact her analysis was conducted in such manner as to move away from his assumptions at several points, even though the results – at least in broad principle – are compatible with those obtained by Husserl.

She accepted the first step of Husserl’s method, that is the reduction to essence. Also for her essence is what can be grasped through intuition, showing the property or the *quid* of a thing in a wide sense, that is physical thing, fact, event, cultural phenomenon and so on.

The differences concern first and foremost her insistence on essence, which she investigates in a manner such as to obtain graduality and aspects far more complex than those indicated by Husserl. Second, she differs from Husserl for the attention she pays to the regaining of existence and therefore, in the last resort, recognition of the centrality of the metaphysical question: “Why there is something rather than nothing?”, a question that Husserl had never posed himself in such a direct and radical manner. Certainly, the development of this metaphysical question cannot be likened to that of many philosophies of the past; the analysis that Conrad-Martius offered for it maintained the phenomenological approach.

The novelty of such a phenomenological approach in comparison with the metaphysical speculation of the past consists in the peculiar attitude of ‘paying attention’ to aspects and dimensions of reality that are grasped just as they present themselves, but it is not their presence in the factual sense that is of interest, quite the contrary, it is the essential aspect that has to be sought. In the case of Conrad-Martius it becomes possible for tracks of a never fully exhaustible totality to be recomposed by means of analyses of partial ambits of being, i.e. by means of the description of their peculiar ‘ontology’.

The ‘realism’ of this position springs precisely from the desire of following the manner in which ‘things’ give themselves rather than forcing them into conceptual categories that frame and determine them; here we have the phenomenological attitude, rendered concretely operative by means of an inquiry that proceeds by successive gaining of greater insight. Conrad-Martius does not accept the transcendental turn proposed by Husserl and the role plaid by subjectivity according to him.

This is the novelty and originality of the perspective that is being inquired into. It is therefore worthwhile to follow in greater detail some fundamental passage of the search that can clarify the nature of this novelty.

If we examine Conrad-Martius’ long essay published in 1923, we note that its very title, *Realontologie*, (Real Ontology) is already indicative of the object of the inquiry and the point of view assumed by the author. It is a question of coming to grips with a problematic of the cognitive type, that is to say, asking oneself in what manner and up to
what point one may be sure that this or that givenness is or is not real. If one asks oneself what consciousness is, Conrad-Martius notes that the solipsist philosopher identifies it with his own I, his positivist counterpart with a complex of sensations, and the idealist metaphysician with God or the Absolute. Nevertheless, the question regarding the reality of every partial ambit implies the significance of the whole of reality; in fact, if one wants to pinpoint the ambit of being subjected to inquiry in order to grasp the sense of this ambit - for this is the way in which one can understand, at least as a first approach, the term ‘ontology’ – this ambit is not partial, but rather coincides with reality; the question thus becomes immediately radical: what is reality itself? And therefore why being rather than nothingness? Examining the matter in essential terms, we have to analyze the relationship between Essenz (essence) or Washeit (whatness) and the existence or the forms of existence that are different from essence ([Conrad-Martius 1923] 162).

Here there becomes delineated a consideration that indicates the inquiry’s orientation towards a realistic unfolding. ([Conrad-Martius 1923] § 8). Coming back to the theory of knowledge, in fact, Conrad-Martius asks herself what distinguishes a hallucination from real existence. A hallucination is given ‘in flesh and blood’ (leibhaft) for the person who has it, even though it is not factually given; it is therefore necessary to distinguish what one understands by ‘givenness in flesh and blood’ and the ‘being in flesh and blood of real existence’: thus, the chair in the next room is not leibhaftig ‘given’ to me, but exists as such and must therefore be considered to be leibhaft ([Conrad-Martius 1923] § 9). What, then, does being ‘in flesh and blood’ consist of?

Here Conrad-Martius puts forward the theory that what characterizes reality is the existence of a ‘substrate’ (Träger) that is ‘laden’ with a whatness, so that a real entity is the totality of the two moments ([Conrad-Martius 1923] § 11).

This substrate may be indicated by the Greek term hypokeimenon but must not be understood as something that underlies, because the substrate and the whatness constitute a unit. Since existence is distinguished into ideal and real, on can say that the number three is the formal substrate of a whatness that determines the number three as number three ([Conrad-Martius 1923] § 12). The ideal substrate is constituted in such a way as to show that it is contentually determined by its whatness, while the real substrate factually takes over whatever essentially determines it; consequently, even those that are not factually configured are real entities.

In general, one may sustain that reality is given when an essentially determined substrate and something that determines in an essential manner behave like a true substrate and a ‘laden’ whatness ([Conrad-Martius 1923] § 14).

Though here only summarily outlined, the results of this analysis bring out the general intention of Conrad-Martius’ ontology. According to her point of view, the task of ontology is to discover the fundamental constitution of what is determinant for the world of the real in all its configurations, with which and in which this world becomes possible in the first place; this ontology is therefore different from the Kantian position, a fact explicitly indicated by Conrad-Martius, who contraposes the pure objectivity of this approach to Kant’s subjective point of view. In this sense, therefore, one may speak of a ‘real’ ontology that discovers the constitution of real being in all its configurations.
The detachment from Kant implies coming closer to Scholasticism, especially as regards the effectuality of what is real; since what is real (das Reale) is the ‘realizer’ in a positive and personal manner of its whatness, one speak of reality as effectuality (Wirklichkeit) or actuality (Aktualität), just like scholasticism. Nevertheless, Conrad-Martius wants to extend her conception of reality, gain greater insight, for she considers the scholastic concept of reality (Wirklichkeit) to be connected to natural real entities, whereas she deems it to be ontologically important to distinguish natural real entities from real entities tout court, among which she includes, for example, the state, the home, etc. On the other hand, what distinguishes the scholastic approach even more thoroughly from the one here assumed is the methodical use of intuition; in other words, the type of vision employed, the type of analysis that tends towards the primary, originary phenomenon (Urphänomen) of reality, without concerning oneself with its factual realization in the given world ([Conrad-Martius 1923] 174 note 1).

One may wonder what coordinates are needed for arriving at such a position and understanding it. Her position does not consist of re-assuming an ingenuous realistic way of thinking, nor does it – by means of the analysis of subjectivity – develop the transcendental dimension that Husserl was increasingly to concern himself with. But it is precisely this nucleus, for the moment identified only by the exclusion of other positions that we have to identify if we want to understand the significance of her realistic phenomenology. And that is not an easy task. From Husserl’s phenomenological analysis she accepts the descriptive, intuitive method, which essentially tends to highlight the significance of the questions, the facts, in other words, of the Sache, that is the ‘object’ of the analysis, and this Sache is reality: and at this point she begins to move away from Husserl.

The various texts of Conrad-Martius here mentioned are supported by a significance of phenomenology that goes back to the Logical Investigation and which Husserl already revised and perfected in his Ideas of 1913; one may therefore wonder how it comes that in 1923, ten years later, our author can still refer to Husserl without taking account of his turn in a transcendental direction. In fact, one has to remember that, at the very beginning of her study of Realontologie, Conrad-Martius delimits the reference to her teacher by indicating that she intends to carry out an essential analysis in Husserl’s eidetic sense; in other words, as regards the two moments of the reduction, the eidetic and the transcendental, she says that she accepts only the former.

This conscious and autonomous delineation of realistic phenomenology can be noted also in the analyses that Conrad-Martius made in the course of more than thirty years of research. There thus comes to the fore the ever more explicit theoretical contraposition with respect to Husserl’s phenomenology, but also her insistence on the fact that it was a family quarrel or, rather, a quarrel that concerned the best way of carrying out an analysis that can be called truly phenomenological.

4. 2.  *Science and philosophy in the inquiry into nature*
Nevertheless, what characterizes her position is not only her interest or love for nature, but also the attempt of establishing a profound accord between contemporary scientific research and philosophical inquiry. The guiding thread is represented by her ‘realism’, which consists of recognizing a reality configured ‘substantially’ in a plurality of modes that can all be traced back to some fundamental ‘principles’.

A considerable part of her reflection connected with her first major research about Realontologie had already been dedicated to nature, beginning in the phenomenological sense from the analysis of what appears, shows itself as instrument of knowledge that furnishes something that is real and not connected with dreams or hallucinations; in actual fact, the entire analysis seeks to trace materiality understood as what is ‘in flesh and blood’ or substantial. Certainly, even ‘what appears’ has a lifelike quality and a substance, but the problem that Conrad-Martius sets herself concerns the fact that something can be ‘real’ not only in the sense that it appears, but also in the sense that it is ‘material’. The entity or material unity is in itself, reposes, is to be found in ‘existence’ and all this is demonstrated by sense experience, which cannot indicate something that does not exist, so that whatever announces itself in it does exist. One therefore has to turn upside down the relationship that the phenomenologist – and here I would add phenomenologist of the Husserlian school, even though this is not said explicitly – postulates between what appears and what is factual: the former is not more certain than the latter, but – quite the contrary – is of itself empty, of the mode of being of pure fluctuation and possesses an inferior degree of reality. Nevertheless, - and here there comes to the fore the originality of her proposal, an originality that, as we shall see in some other positions taken by her, seems disconcerting on first sight, but become less marked when inserted in the general context of her inquiry – one has to recognize the existence of a continuity that ranges from matter to light, so that the formations that appear are light formations, i.e. they have a substantiality that consists of light, their matter is light.

The profound reason underlying this interpretation is to be found in the fact that through the examination of light, gaseous formations, matter with its ‘heaviest’ concretizations – an examination carried out with the help of the physical and chemical sciences, which for the moment are in the background – one arrives at a surprising ascertainment: everything is material, but there are different degrees of materiality, so that it is possible to establish a profound correlation between what is solid, fluid and gaseous in nature and the constitution of the essential components the human being, which had already been highlighted by Husserl, namely corporeity understood as living corporeity, psychicity and spirituality. We are here concerned with symbols and analogies: gas and light are symbols of the spirit and correspond to the fact that the spirit is free, but the resemblance is not only external, for in actual fact some constitutive forms of matter and some fundamental movements ontologically characterize the whole of reality.

If the task of ontology is to discover the essential constitution of real being, in connection one may wonder what contribution scientific research makes to knowledge of nature.

The most interesting of Conrad-Martius’ texts regarding her position vis-à-vis the history of science is represented by Naturwissenschaftlich-metaphysische Perspektiven (Natural scientific and metaphysical Perspectives) ([Conrad-Martius 1949] 6), which contains
three lectures she gave in Heidelberg in 1946; these lectures bear witness to her profound knowledge of scientific thought in its contemporary development and achievement in the fields of physics and biology.

4. 3. The constitution of living nature

These lectures published constitute a clear taking of position in the epistemological debate of the day and propose an interpretation of nature that, taking the selfsame sciences as its starting point, calls for a philosophical examination. As already noted, Conrad-Martius is not seeking to establish the insufficiency of scientific research, but – quite the contrary – deems it to be a source of precious information, without for this reason assuming a positivist position, according to which scientific knowledge should be taken as the final word. According to Conrad-Martius, rather, contemporary scientists are beginning to doubt of the certainty that the physicists in the modern age demonstrated vis-à-vis the results of their research. Contemporary scientists are beginning to doubt of the certainty that physicists in the modern age demonstrated vis-à-vis the results of their research. In contemporary age they cannot but forego the claim of possessing the essential and real explanation of the world.

The comments here reported are contained in our Author’s most taxing work dedicated to the study of nature: Der Selbstaufbau der Natur - Entelechien und Energien, (The Auto-constitution of Nature – Entelechies and Energies) published in an enlarged second edition in 1961 ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 339). This book, truly very complex, is a synthesis of the long research road covered by Conrad-Martius not only as regards the study of nature, but – on account of the profound connection between philosophy and science – also as regards the metaphysical investigation of reality.

Conrad-Martius holds that hers is an ontological inquiry that preserves its fundamental links with the phenomenological method, the only one that can arrive at an essential analysis; and, further, that everything valid to be found in experimental science can be efficacious grasped only by means of an intuitive attitude, and it seems to her that the proposal of Hans Driesch regarding the presence of an entelechy in organisms is, in fact, supported by intuition ([Conrad-Martius 1961 55, footnote 43].

We have already referred to Conrad-Martius’ interest in biology and, as we may here add, more specifically in embryology. In this book she bases herself on the work of Wilhelm Roux, who made a start with physiological research regarding organisms in 1881, and Hans Driesch, who in 1891 studied the embryo of the sea urchin¹. Starting from this research work, Conrad-Martius, just as she had done for the physical theories, draws generally valid consequences on a wider metaphysical level, trying to come to the grips with the question of the origin and development of life.

¹ Hans Driesch (1867-1941), a German biologist and philosopher, following research work on sea urchins, sustained the theory of dynamic vitalism against deterministic conceptions of the Darwinist type. From the philosophical point of view he affirmed the presence of an entelechy in organic development that he conceived as having a finalistic orientation.
In the 1930s, following his research work, Driesch had insistently spoken of an entelechy of organisms that represents a typical plan or project, capable also of intervening to correct the organism in the course of its development, a kind of artificer that could not be traced to either a psychic (seeliche) or a spiritual (geistige) activity, and he had therefore introduced a new concept: ‘psychoid’ ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 58). Taking her cue from this proposal, Conrad-Martius adds that the entelechy is not only the causal factor that conserves the typical identity of a living organism, but also the one that constructs the organic body in accordance with a typical essential mode and always regenerates it, so that in this sense entelechy is this selfsame typical modality ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 63). One can thus understand also the presence of the development plan suggested by Driesch, because entelechy does not need an ideal plan to follow, but is itself that ideal plan; it is clear, however, that in this way we have passed to a metaphysical consideration of the essence.

But there remains the question as to how an essence can be received in a physico-material compound and one therefore has to distinguish two different types of entelechy, an entelechy that controls the formation and development of the organism, Bildungsentelechie, and an entelechy that characterizes in an actual manner the typical individual identity, the true essence, Wesensoreneleche. The former may be defined transphysical and is a model that guides the organism, accompanying it in its various development grades and presenting itself as an instrument for realizing the latter, which constitutes the ultimate causal factor of a metaphysical type ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 77).

As regards the origin of life, Conrad-Martius takes herself to have resolved the question of morphogenesis by means of her proposal of the two forms of entelechy and the discovery of two powers within the formation entelechy, defined respectively as imaginoid and spermatoid, whose synthesis gives rise to the capacity of orientating the vital development of the organism; the first is connected with the gene constellation of the embryo, while the second is the one that furnishes the type of organization that will guide the actualization of the body from within ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 239). All this is supported by the result of experimental research carried out – in particular – on amphibians, which Conrad-Martius considers in some detail.

When morphogenesis is examined from an ontological point of view, one has to sustain that the essential entelechy depends on the material conditions, this in the sense that every material constellation possesses a mechanism that controls the possibility of union of a particular essential entelechy identified by means of this passage with a particular ‘part’ of living matter in such a manner that the latter can become configured as an ovule capable of developing ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 276-277).

The dependence of the entelechial essence on the structural conditions of matter does not indicate a materialist solution, because in the last resort it is precisely the entelechial essence that constitutes the foundation of the entire organization. Conrad-Martius proposes a parallel to clarify the relationship between the material conditions and the entelechy: the material conditions could be regarded as the provisional construction of the first floor of a house that needs new foundations before a more complex structure can be completed ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 280). But if there were no control, an obligatory passage for the entry of the entelechy, there would be a struggle of all the entelechies against each other, chaos rather than a cosmos ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 281).
Quantum theory makes an extraordinary contribution in support of this connection between essence and matter, because it shows that it is possible for matter to change in such a way as to render possible the encounter with different essences precisely because the idea of a space-time continuum governed solely by mechanical laws has been thrown into crisis; according to this new approach, chemical processes are likewise due to factors that can no longer be traced by means of the interpretation that classical physics gave of energy, processes that now reveal themselves as transpatial and transtemporal or, to use a new terminology, as pre-physical ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 287).

The criterion of discontinuity thus becomes fundamental in many directions, representing a last important instrument of knowledge of the real. Starting from the phenomenon of electromagnetism and the analysis of light, the quantum theory – by means of which space-time discontinuity could be pinpointed - makes it possible to highlight the transphysical factors, the ether for example, thus not only enlarging the vision of the cosmos, but also justifying (explaining) the phenomena of life in such a way as to go beyond a narrow materialism.

However, contrary to what one might expect from has been said up to now, it is not even a question of accepting vitalism. In actual fact Conrad-Martius holds that one can understand the hostility that the scientists lined up on the side of an ‘exact’ science show vis-à-vis vitalism, though not for the reasons they adduce. When one speaks of entelechy, as is the case of Driesch, who is deemed to be a vitalist, one has to delve somewhat deeper and anchor this intuition by assigning it a place in the plan of being and this giving it sense, otherwise it will effectively remain ‘in the air’, i.e. will not be justified; it is not therefore a question of asserting insufficiency with respect to certain scientific criteria of the mathematical type, but of delineating an ontological setting, which is what the very concept of entelechy calls for ([Conrad-Martius 1961] 441).

In this way Conrad-Martius takes position both with respect to a substantially positivist conception and with respect to an anti-positivist organicism or vitalism that limits itself to opposing the former, remaining always on an exclusively scientific level.

Notwithstanding the bold originality of Conrad Martius’ position, it should be kept in mind that her work was developed before the dawn of chaos and complexity theory. The latter in particular shows how the bewildering variety of living forms can be understood in terms of emergent, self-organizing phenomena (Goodwin 2001). Furthermore, the seminal Rosen 2007 (1st ed 1985) opened the way for higher-order complexity theory coordinating not only the emergence of life but also the higher-order emergence of brain, mind and behavior, each with own specific kinds of dependency and autonomy from supporting lower levels (Baianu 2006, Baianu and Poli 2007). In this regard, Conrad-Martius was able to foresee that living and higher-order complex systems present quantum features. Details apart, the deep value of her work lies in making us aware that all scientific developments need ontological scrutiny and more generally in calling for an ontological interpretation all aspects and forms of reality.
5. Edith Stein’s Ontology: Between Phenomenology and Metaphysics

Edith Stein addresses the theme of ontology when she proceeds to bring mediaeval philosophy into dialogue with phenomenology. She considers ontology important and her approach difficult because the word “ontology” refers to different things. Focusing her attention on Thomas Aquinas and Husserl, she underlines the fact that phenomenologists distinguish between ontology and metaphysics. The former has essences as its domain, whereas the latter concentrates on existence. For Thomas, however, ontology refers to this latter sense of existence. Also, Husserl refers to material and formal possibilities, but not in a specific way as related to existential realities ([Stein 1974]).

This theme is taken up particularly in her book Potency and Act, where the two modes of understanding ontology are interwoven. Edith Stein refers to Husserl’s most significant research on this matter. Examining Formal and Transcendental Logic, which maintains that formal ontology is to be understood from a logical viewpoint that refers to “something in general”, to empty generality—a viewpoint that draws inspiration from the intuition of then-contemporary mathematics. Thomas, on the contrary, moves in the direction of the fullness of being, which is given in our experience. Stein adopts a middle way, which draws inspiration from both positions. She wishes to examine the concepts of potency and act, studying them with reference to formal and material ontology. Following this course, material ontology is the doctrine of being in its fullness and the doctrine of the existent in its different genera ([Stein 2005] c.3 § 3). In order to achieve this result Stein investigates the two great regions, that is, the material and formal, already studied by Husserl. She takes up once again anthropological themes from a phenomenological perspective, including I, subject, soul and person. She adds to these, in a complementary fashion and not in any oppositional way, the Thomistic concept of spiritual substance. ([Stein 2005] c.5 § 2).

It is best to proceed in an organic fashion in order to understand the connections, which at times seems so disparate, between the various themes introduced by Stein. The first theme to be investigated, and the starting point of her research, is the simple factual given of being. She discovers this in the first instance as the fact of my existence. Resting on the shoulders of thinkers like Augustine, Descartes and Husserl, she maintains that this point of departure open a series of paths that lead beyond this fact.

Because the fact of being is linked to the subject, it would seem to be inescapable to start from an observing philosophic-transcendental modality like the one advanced by Husserl, describing the structures of consciousness that permit one to pass from immanence to transcendence. The development of this position precisely concerns the value of this transcendence: whether it is strictly linked to a constituting consciousness (and this seems to be the position taken by Husserl according to his students, including Reinach and Conrad-Martius) or whether there is an autonomous world. Edith Stein does not want to put apart consciousness, which is, in any case, necessary to know the world, but the world has its own consistency (this is Edith Stein’s position. If the indispensable subjective point of departure is the quoad nos, just having obtained
access to the other spheres, its value is relativized in itself. It cedes, in the first place, to a formal ontology, understood as an all-embracing investigation of being form which one can opportunely begin a concrete analysis ([Stein 2005] c.1 § 3).

The echoes of Husserl and Thomas’ positions, which manifest themselves in the individuation of a territory “of something that is”, become clearer. From a formal point of view, this territory cleaves into “something”, or “object” and “in being”, understood as a fullness of the object itself. For this reason, the fundamental ontological forms are: aliquid, quod quid est, esse, to which is necessary to attach quale that is inseparably connected to quid ([Stein 2005] c.2, § 1). Logical forms correspond to these ontological structures, which Husserl interested himself in. Grades of universality that advance from the object in general to the individual are distinguished within ontological forms. The individual is also an empty form, passing between differentiation and specification. If the empty forms are filled by content, we are on the slope of being and, in this case, the individual is a concrete being, something singular, a unique thing, a being that does not refer back to an other, a primary object ([Stein 2005] c.2 § 2).

It is possible to distinguish three types of being: that of concrete individuals, that of empty forms, and that of material ideas. Working on the basis of “fulfillment”, understood in the phenomenological sense, Stein maintains that an “individual” is wholly fulfilled; empty forms are fulfilled through the individuals to which they refer, and the material ideas remain in need of fulfillment. Here one finds examples of colors, sounds, and geometric forms. They are, on the one hand, related to more universal forms and, on the other hand, related to individuals and, therefore, can be called “ideal objects” ([Stein 2005] c. 2 § 2).

At this point, Stein tackles the question of independence and non-independence, turning her attention to themes present in Husserl’s Logical Investigations. Moving from the observation that universality and formality are not the same thing, she underlines that in the formal domain one moves from something to the individual, passing through the forms of genus and species. But, if we focus on the other empty forms like being and that which is, we note that even these are ordered according to grades of universality, under which fall a new subdivision, namely, that of independence and non-independence. If we examine being, only being that has no relation is independent, whereas the being of all empty forms is non-independent. Concrete objects alone are independent, and their forms prepare independence. Also, at this point, one can introduce the opposites of whole and part, and simple and composite. Only the whole can be independent. Universal forms are simple, but non-independent because they depend upon a possible whole. More specific forms are composites and all individuals are independent and simple. In the extreme case, this is true for God, who is a non-dependent simple individual ([Stein 2005] c.2 § 3).

In order to collect the object of material ontology it is necessary to analyze first the necessary cognitive modality, that is, the intuition that can be formal or material. In the case of the latter, there has to be a sensory collection that permits one to grasp the “some thing” that fills the empty forms. Intuition is fundamental because only on this basis is it
possible to proceed to the activity of judgment, passing through abstracting intuition, which can be ideating or generalizing. If I pay attention to the color of a thing through an ideating abstraction, I grasp the color in its species, but from the determined shade one can grasp red in general and color in general. One reaches, in such a way, ultimate ideas, ideas of sound or color, which make possible objects of science like the doctrine of pure color or sound. This involves partial fields of material ontology. If I, then, take into consideration individuals, I reach the essentia rerum, that is, the structure of things or quidditas, that is, the full and concrete “whatness” of the thing.

In establishing the relation between formal and material ontology Stein asks herself whether it would be possible to think a mathesis universalis, that is, a formal ontology that could include as a closed system all forms of material ontology. Her response is negative, because no possibility of fulfillment is foreseeable, and neither is it possible to proceed reciprocally from the bottom to the top. The proof of this lies in the fact that neither experience nor science is closed in on itself. That which can be indicated, given the system opened by various forms of knowledge, consists in the fact that human beings advance on the path of knowledge by moving from experience of the concrete individual through ideation to variation and generalization. It is possible to carry out formalization at each of these levels. An example of an ontology that can clarify the relationship between the formal and the material proceeding is the Euclidean geometry that moves from a few principles and permits a closed axiology. The same thing has not been done for colors - notwithstanding Goethe’s doctrine of colors. The same thing has not been done for colors - notwithstanding Goethe’s doctrine of colors - and sounds.

The material idea or the fundamental category that governs the domain of the material thing is not, in fact, material. It is only comprehensible from the vantage point of the spirit (Geist). It is, therefore, necessary to determine what the ‘spirit’ might be.

The spirit is divided into objective and subjective spirit. Here, the centrality of the anthropological theme is taken up once again with respect to the advancement of Stein’s research, which is always carried out by human beings. The difference between subject and object is not only logical, but also ontological; it is not only, hypokeimenon but also hypostasis. Subjectivity is the objective form of the spiritual, and the subject is the bearer of the spiritual life and in this sense is a substance. In this way, Stein passes in a non-traumatic way from phenomenological analysis to metaphysical determination. The subject is not only the pure I, but also a spiritual substance. Its status of being-separated is grasppable from consciousness and is different than any other thing; it alone can call the I itself an I ([Stein 2005] c.5 § 2).

Remaining on the phenomenological plane, Edith Stein takes up once again the themes of intentionality, temporality, the spiritual life as the intellectual life, the cognitive process that founds itself on the relation noesis-noema, and the play of alternating between exteriority and interiority ([Stein 2005] c. 5 § 4,5,6).

The Geist reveals more and more the seat of the operations of will and intellect within the double domain of cognition and morality, in this sense we can understand Geist, as something ‘mental and spiritual’.
It is necessary to return from the ontology of the spirit to a material ontology, because the analysis requires it to be so. The movement is double, from material ontology to what is spiritual-mental and from this to the material again. And, this is so because material things carry within themselves something that is objectively spiritual. The encounter, however, is complex; it is articulated throughout different levels of reality, including plants, animals, human beings, angels, and demons. Stein seeks the aid of Conrad-Martius in order to help her map out these levels. Stein discusses them by examining in which way, always understood as a sense-bearing way, the world of living beings and the inorganic matter that belongs to them could be understood in its levels of existence.
6. The Ontology of the human Being

I. Hedwig Conrad-Martius

I. 1. The origin of the human being

In order to delineate the structure of the human being according to Conrad-Martius it is necessary to begin with her standpoint on evolutionism. Using her considerable knowledge regarding classical Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism, Conrad-Martius addresses with the question of the origin of the human being, discussing the thesis of the so-called missing link in the evolution of man from the monkeys. In some lectures given between 1949 and 1950 she concentrates her attention on two significant aspects: the discovery of the Australopithecus, held to represent this particular link, and the way in which one can justify, starting from this link, the behavior changes characteristic of an attitude that could be defined as eminently human, for example, the overcoming of the fear of fire ([Conrad-Martius 1965]).

This behavior reveals itself as certainly not secondary in the distinction between animal and man, but is it possible to accept the Neo-Darwinian interpretation that attributes the overcoming of this fear to a mutation? Furthermore, could one regard as plausible a ‘compromise’ position according to which the human body was prepared by evolution in such a manner as to accept the psychological capacities we consider human?

According to Conrad-Martius, it is precisely the most recent scientific discoveries that throw into crisis the principle of continuity in nature, something that was noted in connection with the quantum theory. And it is this theory that constitutes the guiding thread of analysis also in the case of the origin of man. It is therefore pointless to look for the missing link, and this for the simple reason that such a link does not exist. And, what is more, cannot exist; indeed, it is precisely reflecting about the fear of fire that one has to admit that, if Australopithecus does not fear fire and makes use of it, he is no longer an animal, but if he has this fear, he remains at the animal level and one cannot consider the fact that ‘he is not yet’ man, but could become so, as if he were half man and half monkey.

Undoubtedly, when man appeared, there was a change or, better, a mutation (to use a scientific term), but it would not be proper to invoke a ‘chance’ genetic mutation to justify the qualitative difference, such a mutation would not be coherent with the continuous development that is sustained by evolutionism, and therefore cannot be interpreted in a purely biological sense. It is precisely scientific observation that tells us that we are here face to face with something different, that invites us to pass to a new level, because it is faced with a fact that it cannot resolve, that is to say, a mystery as far as its viewpoint is concerned.

All this leads to considering the human being as a living totality (Lebenstotalität) that cannot be examined from just a single point of view, neither morphological, nor physiological, nor psychological, and not even ethological or theological. These perspectives are interwoven and complementary and furnish a false image when considered in isolation; their complementary nature is demonstrated by the fact that each
one of them reveals an insufficiency that requires one to pass to a different sphere of inquiry.

Since Conrad-Martius does not want either to deny a transformation of the human being in the course of natural history or admit that the soul must have been infused at a certain point of evolution, retaining valid the unity of the spiritual and the corporeal moment, she puts forward a suggestive interpretation of the development process of humanity. How should one judge the erect Sinanthropus or Peking man? How is it possible for them to have a human and an animal nature at one and the same time? Undoubtedly, if that is so, they are already men, but how can one explain their nearness to apes, the paradoxical fact that they have both human and monkey traits?

It is here that she reflects on the meaning of the “original sin”. It is possible to discover an accordance with the Holy Bible and this can be considered as a mutual validation of science and religion. If man has fallen, his body must likewise have undergone a regressive process, so that his soul and body bear the signs of a fall into a quasi-animal condition. It is difficult to say how this regression occurred in concrete terms, whether there already existed hominid forms ready to gather the human being or whether they were formed specifically for this purpose, but these questions are not fantastic when one bears in mind that mammals appeared in the Tertiary, when Sauria still predominated, and wonders how one can explain this seemingly sudden appearance. Did they come from the Sauria by means of a new entelechy and a total transformation of these latter, or did they come into being in some other manner? If these questions are legitimate in reference to animals, why not also for human beings?

Man’s animal origin is excluded also by another consideration of a strictly scientific order. His embryo demonstrates that the human being has ‘virtually’ always been such also; this embryo is characterized by the fact that the organs are not specialized and this prevents its configuration in a clearly determinate animal species. One may speak of a kind of ‘primitivism’ that – as Arnold Gehlen underscores – is not a sign of inferiority with respect to animals, but simply of non-specialization, so that the relationship with animals could even be inverted: in fact, monkeys do better – as it were – than the human embryonic stage with their specific formation ([Conrad-Martius 1965] 447).

In the human embryo it is already possible to trace the erect posture, the relationship between the upper and the lower limbs, the configuration of the feet, all characteristics that distinguish it from the other primates and determine the ‘open’ attitude vis-à-vis the surrounding world, as Joseph Kaelin, a Swiss paleontologist puts it. This evolutionism, which Conrad-Martius calls creative, differs from the classical one, which she considers ‘banal’, because it succeeds in demonstrating the reason for the ‘regenerative’ phenomena that characterize the development of organisms, tracing them back not to a purely physical transformation, but to powers that, as we have already noted, are defined as transphysical ([Conrad-Martius 1948]); the use of this term is justified by the fact that these powers are not beyond nature and therefore meta-physical, but rather internal conditions of nature that, nevertheless, cannot be reduced to a purely physical level. In order to understand this kind of interpretation it is necessary to have in mind what Conrad-Martius writes on “entelechy”([Conrad-Martius 1961] p.77).
According to her it true that inside an organism one can find a plan of development that can be called “entelechy”, but there two kinds of entelechy, one is the *Wesensentelechie*, that is the true essence of the thing, which needs to be active another entelechy, a second one that can be defined *Bildungsentelechie*. The last one can be called trans-physical, because it a model which informs all the organism through all the degrees of its development and shows itself as an instrument of realization of the first one.

### I. 2. The constitution of the human being

All this is fundamental for understanding a particular problem, namely the constitution of the human being. Two components are traditionally distinguished, the soul and the body; it is precisely the inquiry into nature that serves as the necessary condition for the comprehension and valuation of this ancient idea, always contested, but continuously reborn. It is not be chance that the question body-soul relationship should be treated, for example, in the book *Bios und Psyche* ([Conrad-Martius 1948]) after the question of the constitution of nature and the discussion of evolutionism.

Indeed, the background against which Conrad-Martius is moving is the one already proposed by Husserl, and this even as regards the use of terms. Particularly in the second volume of *Ideas pertaining to a pure Phenomenology*, but also in all the other writings in which he faces up to this theme, Husserl distinguishes three moments or aspects of the human being: the *Leib*, which we could traduce with the expression ‘living body’ to distinguish from the simple *Körper*, i.e. body in the general sense, the *Seele*, psychic activity, and the *Geist*, spiritual activity; the distinction of these three components therefore makes it possible to grasp the complexity of the constitution of the human being, the different aspects of our reality. By means of subtle analyses and descriptions the methodical approach theorized in the first volume of *Ideas*, Husserl had not only recuperated the traditional partition of soul and body, but had delved rather deeper to identify the functions and moments that remained unexplicated in it. Thus the definition of the corporeity as ‘living’ corporeity referred to profound bond with psychic activity, *Seele*, which must not be confused with the strictly spiritual moment.

By virtue of their souls, all living beings, plants included, show a form that is corporeal; but precisely the comparison of the various vegetal and animal realities makes it possible to underscore that, in the case of plants, we are not concerned with an affective soul that has sentiments, and even less so with a spiritual soul. Here we have a clear reference, which becomes also explicit in the case of Conrad-Martius, to entelechy in the Aristotelian sense as making possible the formation and the development of the living being, the harmonic agreement of the structures and the functions in a totality in accordance with a principle that is superordinated with respect to matter ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 83-84).

When one proceeds to consider animals, one notes that already in the ameba there can be found bodily movements and sensations, for example in the attempts of finding a prey or escaping from an enemy, just as in an organized animal; all this demonstrates that animals have experiences and can learn²; nevertheless, we have to be cautious in making
these distinctions, in other words, it is essential to separate a capacity of having purely corporeal (leibliche) sensations, and therefore also corporeal sensations, from sentiments and sensations that suggest an affective life of the psychic (seeliche) type. This capacity appears in fish and manifests its progressively also in reptiles, birds and mammals: we are here concerned with a bifurcation that determines the distinction between body, understood as ‘living body’ (Leib), and soul (Seele); and this, in turn, in human beings divides into three moments, the psychic-corporeal moment, which is concerned with corporeity, the affective moment, which turns to itself, and the spiritual moment, which issues from within itself to return to itself ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 92-93).

One may therefore say that the entelechial soul has a fourfold organization: corporeal, corporeal-psychic, affective and spiritual. As far as the human being is concerned, we have five fundamental principles grouped in a manner such that what is defined as soul (Seelegrund) is in its turn differentiated into two further ambiits, the affective and the spiritual, and, as far as the body is concerned, by the side of corporeity (Leib) one can trace a corporeal souls (Leibseele) that could be defined as psychic ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 93-94).

The entelechial soul, this fundamental principle, the essential entelechy, is like the artificer of the entire living organism, the logos or the plan of the species. It constructs its body, becomes incarnated in it; naturally, this entelechial soul remains profoundly and organically bound to its body, rather, all the functions, even the vegetative ones, have their roots in the soul, it is not a question of introducing a dynamic principle on a ready-made physical nature, the physiological processes can take place precisely thanks to this entelechial factor that is the profound, constitutive root, but of a pre-physical (vorphysische) order ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 98-99).

As always, the justification of these results of the inquiries are furnished by the studies of physiology concerning, in particular, the nervous system; the distinction between ‘cortical’ and ‘basal’ within the brain indicates in the first case control of the entire periphery of the body is exercised through the cerebro-spinal nervous system, while the second case refers to the vegetative nervous system; it is thus clear that the capacity of animals to have sensations and to move has its foundation in the cortical region, and that everything that is performed “unconsciously” has its roots in the profound vegetative sphere present also in plants. And this makes it possible the previously proposed distinction between the Leib-seeliche (psychic-corporeal) region characteristic of animals and the leibliche (corporeal) region peculiar of plants. Through the nervous vegetative system there is founded a level of being (Seinsschicht) that is more profound than the one constituted by the animal nervous system; in fact, while the latter commands a mechanically controllable materiality, the former grafts the vegetative stimuli into the innermost and constitutive regions of the body ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 101-102).

The profound unity of these parts of the organism is borne out by the fact that that what can be controlled is not just what depends on the cortical region – as one would conclude after a merely superficial consideration – but also the vegetative function and this is further strengthened by the experiences that spring from different historical and cultural contexts that range from magical practices to yoga and, lastly, the therapeutic methods of autogenous training.
By means of these analyses, Conrad-Martius attains substantially two ends, one of which is more strictly philosophical and provides a meditated answer to the question theorized in the modern age by Cartesianism concerning the soul-body relationship, while the other, more substantially cultural and regarding the convergence of explanations seemingly far removed from each other, is rendered possible by a certain manner of understanding the unity of the organism notwithstanding the complexity of its constitution.

What distinguishes Conrad-Martius is her ability of reading inside scientific proposals and also in proposals that would seem to be wholly alternative to them, the yoga practice for example, in such a manner as to obtain elements that stimulate her description from one side and elements that confirm it from the other side; indeed, everything that physiology tells us about the nervous system can find correspondence in what concretely happens in autogenous training, which is inspired by these yoga practices, and makes it possible to come to grips also with a problem that travailed philosophical thought for a long time, namely the role of the will as a control instrument of corporeity. These very techniques support the thesis of the quadruple nature of the vital ambits present in the totality of the human being; in fact, if the voluntary act is what permits the beginning of these practices, it is equally true that the subsequent control of the members and the internal organs of the body is due to verbal or imaginative self-suggestion phenomena, a concentration that is not active, but rather passive as in dreams and therefore reveals regions and dimensions that can be brought to light thanks to the ‘placing within parentheses’ (ausschalten) of both consciousness and conscience ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 104-105).

II. 3. The ontological Levels of the Human Being

By means of her analysis Conrad-Martius has enlarged the traditional concept of soul. We have noted that the quadruple nature characteristic of the human being consists of the vegetative dimension (leiblich), the corporeal-psychic dimension (leib-seelisch), the affective dimension (affektiv-seelisch) and the spiritual dimension (geistig). In practice, however, we have to note an insufficiency of the English language to find terms corresponding to those proposed in German; in fact, the word Seele cannot be generically translated by soul, because the term Geist refers more properly to the traditional concept of the spirit, and this would justify the use of psychic to convey seelisch and of spiritual-mental to convey geistig, thereby separating two aspects of the soul that characterizes both men and animals.

In this way one clarifies the further distinction that Conrad-Martius proposes between an affective dimension and a spiritual dimension; it is here, in her opinion, that there comes to the fore the dualism that was proposed by tradition, because it is precisely in the life of affections and feelings that one grasps a distinction between interiority and exteriority and notes an absolutely internal moment. This does not mean, however, that there is no connection between the two aspects, rather, it seems clear that joy, fear and worry concern the soul and the body, and this possible because they find themselves in 'polar

In fact, we here have to postulate that in an ontological sense there exists a psychic ‘space’ and also a ‘psychic’ matter that cannot be understood in the sense of ‘extensive’ physical matter and, in contrast with this latter, could be defined as ‘intensive’ matter and this involves the difficulty of any kind of location of the feelings (sentiments), which yet to a certain extent exists – fear, love, joy are felt at the centre of the body, while understanding is to be found in the head, but is bound up with the spiritual moment we shall discuss further on ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 111).

In Conrad-Martius the dualism is thus configured as polarity between a visible exterior body and an interior soul that possesses the same characteristics as corporeity, but in a peculiar manner, so that one can speak of a self-contained internal analogue of the external body; in any case, unity is preserved, because it manifests itself in the fact that the whole of affective life stands in need of corporeity to express itself ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 116). One may speak of a psychic energy that, as underscored by C. G. Jung, commands and directs physical energy and, according to Conrad-Martius, one also has to recognize that it is possible for corporeity to block the sentiments and the affects, as is demonstrated by autogenous training, and one may therefore conclude that “The body is the field of manifestation of the soul” ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 119).

The question of the duality or unity of the human being returns with even greater insistence in the case of the relationship between corporeity and spirituality. The sign of the presence of the spiritual soul (Geistseele) is given by the fact that we discover a double interiority within ourselves, one in relation to the body and the other in relation to ourselves; in other words, we transcend ourselves from within in two modes, thus demonstrating that we possess the freedom of placing ourselves ‘in front of’ our body and ‘in front of’ ourselves ([Conrad-Martius ] 124).

But the strong objection that has to be overcome at this point concerns the constatation of the close relationship between spirit and brain, because, notwithstanding all the distinctions that can be theorized, we see that the spirit seems to depend on the integrity of the brain ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 126), but it is here that the concepts of potency and act can be usefully reproposed.

Undoubtedly the spiritual acts, inasmuch as they are acts, stand in need of being exercised through an instrument – we have already noted this in the psychophysical processes – nevertheless, we find ourselves face to face with problems that are difficult to understand, indeed, we are here concerned with justifying, the spiritual syntheses, the categorical thought, the memory, the capacity of intellectual reproduction: how does it happen that all this depends on the cerebral circuits? It is at this point that the problem of the distinction between res extensa and res cogitans become justified and one can understand the dualist proposal made by Descartes.

But it is possible to go further in gaining insight into this relationship and underscoring that the connection between the spiritual ego and the brain is similar to that between the and his instrument. Nevertheless, there are two distinctions that have to be made: the first concerns the quality of the products in the two cases, the second the difference between the virtuoso and the artist. The sounds emitted by a musical instrument, even though not
material in the strict sense, have a sensitive quality, while the thoughts, the spiritual acts do not possess this characteristic, in the second case one has to distinguish who simply sounds an instrument trying to utilize all its potentials and who – on the other hand – creates something new and then uses the instrument only as a means, as a vehicle of manifesting his interior world ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 128-129).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to find the point of organic connection between spirit and body, because one may also play the instrument as a virtuoso and not just as an artist, in any case, we are here concerned with an instrument to which we are bound without any possibility of subtracting ourselves, but which in other respects can be considered as provisional and which we can therefore do without. Here, as at other points already indicated, there comes into play the theological reflection, in this case it is a question of inquiring into the significance of death, indeed, on the basis of the analyses carried out one concludes that death is not generically a separation of soul and body, but more precisely that of the body and the psyche, this in the sense that there occur changes of a physical order that can be studied from a scientific point of view and no longer permit the soul to exert mastery over the body. All this, however, cannot be understood as a natural fact, it is ‘a fact’, but not a natural fact, because from a natural point of view there is a body that belongs to the psyche, so that one can conclude that we ‘deprive’ ourselves of one body in order to assume another ([Conrad-Martius 1948] 132-137).

In conclusion, one may observe that in her interpretation of the human being in connection with the soul-body relationship, Conrad-Martius does not exclude the support provided by any inquiry or any discipline. One the one hand, she strongly associates the genesis and constitution of man with nature, but this not in the sense of a reduction of man to nature, that is to say, in the sense of banal naturalism, but – on the contrary – demonstrating that comprehension of this nature and its most profound processes cannot be entrusted only to a superficial scientific reading, because such a reading, coming up against questions that it is incapable of resolving, indicates also, often without realizing it, the road to be followed for the purposes of a trans-physical analysis. On the other hand, precisely the consideration just made makes it possible to overcome, remaining on a strictly philosophical terrain, the traditional contrast between science and theology; in fact, the acceptance on the part of the philosopher of the results of inquiries and proposals deriving from different sources is determined by the coherence of these results as brought out when these selfsame phenomena are appropriately investigated: indeed, these phenomena indicate the possibility of agreement between the different perspectives.

One may note that the analysis of the soul is carried out by Conrad-Martius with meticulous care by delving into its internal articulations and potentialities and, further, that comprehension of this specific phenomenon is possible only by inserting it in the whole; the emergence of the human being from nature becomes prolonged to a trans-physical dimension. There re-emerges the idea of a microcosm profoundly bound to all parts of the cosmos and connected with levels that cannot be physically perceived and yet are very real.

In Conrad-Martius’ analysis on human being as a living system, we can find the main lines of the “anticipatory systems” as proposed by Roberto Poli. According to him
“anticipation concerns the capacity exhibited by some systems to tune their behavior according a model of the future evolution of the environment in which they are embedded” ([Poli ?] 1). But what distinguishes anticipation theory from the other theories of the future is that anticipation is a property of the system and can work below the threshold of consciousness, that why it is the principal feature of a living system, not only biological, but also psychological and sociological. The difference between the non-living natural systems and the living natural system is linked up with two layers of organization, which are able to govern the interactions and to modify the rules of interactions, so that the systems can be adaptive. A complex system requires the bottom-up type and the top-down type of composition, autopoiesis and autonomy. To be super-complex it must be provided by the theories of levels of reality, by its own patio-temporal and causal structure, by interactions and anticipation, but what is important is that anticipation is the main feature of a living system, understood as a whole with a multiplicity of levels of organizations. If we compare the structure of the living systems as described by Conrad-Martius, we can discover that her analysis contained the presupposition for such a development. Another aspect of the description is important. According to Poli all these characteristics are in the system itself and do not depend from the observer; this is a point of view that we can define “realistic”, as that one sustained by Conrad-Martius.

II. Edith Stein

II. 1. The identity of the human subject

In the attempt to delineate the map of the human being and the complexity of its constitutive moments it is necessary to start with the new region of being, which Husserl has spoken of, that is pure consciousness with its lived experiences. Continuing in the wake of Husserl, Edith Stein writes as follows in her Einführung in die Philosophie (Introduction to Philosophy), “consciousness is not a box that collects the lived experiences within it, but rather these experiences, continuously merging with each other, do themselves constitute the flow of consciousness”([Stein 1991] 111). To be conscious must not be understood as an act of reflection, inasmuch as this latter is itself a lived experience, but rather as “an interior light that illuminates the flow of experiencing and by this very flowing clarifies it for the experiencing Ego without being directed onto it” ([Stein 1991] 128).

One should note that the fundamental thing for both Husserl and Edith Stein is evidently the correlation between consciousness and the Ego and in this connection there are three aspects of the Ego to be considered. First of all, the pure Ego, the Ego regardless of somatic features, an Ego grasped in the correlation with such lived acts as perceiving, remembering, judging, feeling, willing, etc., and with reference to the objects in various ways depending on the acts it performs, an Ego that can be self-grasped, self-perceived. The flowing of consciousness constitutes the last moment of immanent temporality and that is the road to be followed if one wants to grasp the significance of identity. “Its identity is an identity throughout this immanent time”, writes Husserl in connection with
the pure Ego, meaning that the Ego remains in this or that act of consciousness even though it is not a real moment or a constitutive part thereof ([Husserl 1989] 109). The difference between reality and pure Ego is strongly stressed by Husserl and is what makes it possible to grasp the identity of the Ego, its non-dispersion, because the Ego or the pure subject is neither generated nor does it pass away, because otherwise we would stumble into the absurdity for the essential possibility of being generated or passing away would have to be grasped by pure intuition. On the contrary, therefore, the pure Ego enters and leaves the scene, but “the only way that it is possible for the pure Ego not to encounter itself is for it not to reflect about itself” ([Husserl 1989] 110).

Nevertheless, the theme of reality is not neglected; one may say that the pure Ego and consciousness are the mirror on which there are reflected the lived experiences that come from the reality of the psyche and the mental-spiritual. Edith Stein examines this with great acuity in the analysis contained in Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und Geisteswissenschaften (Contributions to the philosophical Foundation of Psychology and Human Sciences). Husserl, too, speaks of these realities, because if the research gets under way from the part of the region of being of consciousness and pure Ego inasmuch as these are the dimensions of awareness that make a transcendent inquiry possible, the real structure of the human being has real dimensions that have to be recognized as such.

II. 2. The Ego and the person

Developing the analysis of the ‘real’ structure of the human being, what is already enucleated in Ideen II is the relationship between the pure Ego and the personal Ego; the personal Ego is the one that becomes delineated on the basis of corporeity, with a pre-given base that can be said to be psychic, but configures itself as a really unitary person in a superior sense inasmuch as it is subject to the positions assumed by the will, actions and thought, in short, as a free Ego. The pure Ego is therefore the mirror and thus the access way to a bodily, psychic and spiritual reality that constitutes the personal Ego. Edith Stein resumes this analysis in her Contributions, where she takes it further and arrives at identifying a core of the personality in which there resides the immutable consistency of its being that is not the result of a development, but rather imposes a certain tend upon this development. Since it is the unitary moment of the human being, this core has both a psychic and a mental-spiritual connotation, this in keeping with the two fundamental dimensions of which the human being is constituted. Edith Stein says that the spiritual life of an individual is determined by the singularity of this core, and yet this core is something new with respect to this spiritual life and not even a complete knowledge of the spiritual or the psychic life would be sufficient for grasping it in its entirety.

The core would rather seem to coincide with the soul, because neither the core of the personality nor the being of the soul determined by this core displays any development capacity, whereas both the psychic and the spiritual capacities are capable of development.
The treatment of the soul is one of the most complex matters with which the author concerns herself, and this for several reasons. Firstly, because the term \textit{Seele} is used by Edith Stein with a multiplicity of meanings, sometimes indicating the psyche and sometimes the combination of psyche and spirit; and there are also times when \textit{Seele} connotes a wholly autonomous dimension, as we saw above. The analysis attains such a subtlety and is expressed in terms that at times become as lyrical as to astonish and conquer the reader. The pages dealing with this topic in \textit{Contributions}, Part II, 2.3 c, which is dedicated to \textit{the specific character qualities, “soul” and “core of the person”}, should be read with particular care.

Let me draw attention to a passage that may be considered, if not a summary, at least a conclusion drawn from a series of analyses, according to which the human personality, observed as a whole, presents itself to us as a unity of qualitative characteristics formed by a core, a formative principle. It is made up of soul, body and spirit, but it is only in the soul that the individuality impresses itself in a wholly pure manner, free of all admixtures. Neither the material living body nor the psyche understood a substantial unity of every sensitive and psycho-spiritual human being nor the life of the individual are wholly determined by the core ([Stein 1970] 215).

The core is supremely important for gaining access to the world of values, but account must also be taken of other forces or capacities, the capacities peculiar to the psyche, the senses, the memory, the intellect and the will, and of course the external conditions also contribute greatly to the formation of the personality.

\textit{II. 3. The Ego and the self}

\textit{Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person (The Constitution of the human Person)}, which brings together the lectures Edith Stein gave at the Münster Institute of Scientific Psychology in 1932, represents the work in which she explicitly begins to compare the results of phenomenological analysis with the philosophical reflections of Thomas Aquinas on the anthropological theme.

However, the author also confronts herself with contemporary positions, especially a reading of the \textit{Dasein} proposed by Heidegger and the psychology of the profound, presumably that of Jung, even though the name is never cited. She carefully sifts these interpretations and does not reject them prejudicially. Heidegger’s analyses do not convince her, because his existential ones remain on the surface of ‘human being’ phenomenon without ever penetrating to a sufficient depth, and as regards the contribution of the analysis of the profound – and in this direction she includes among the precursors both the Romantic and the Russian writers Tolstoy and Dostojevski – she recognizes them the merit of having inquired into the ‘interior’ dimension ignored by German idealism, by Lessing, by Herder, by Schiller, and by Goethe.

Particularly interesting is the relationship she established between the Ego and the self, thus coming to grips with a question that is still of considerable importance in our own day, because Jung’s interpretation of the human being represents a rather common cultural model. In his opinion the self is to be identified with the bodily and psychic capacities of the human being that are given, but have to be formed. It is precisely the spiritual activity that has to intervene in the formation process and therefore the Ego
manifests itself as a mental-spiritual and free person. Edith Stein’s analysis proceeds in a predominantly phenomenological manner. The question that attracts her attention is that of the relationship between the Ego and the self: they are and are not the same thing; they are the same thing in view of the unity of the human being with which Edith Stein finds herself faced when examining the human reality, they are not the same thing because this unity reveals itself – as already indicated – of such a complexity as to make it impossible for one element to be reduced to the other. And therefore in what relationship does the Ego that forms the self stand in relation to corporeity? It is situated in the body, but cannot be identified with it: “Attempts have been made to do this in the past: but, even though the cerebral anatomy could also indicate a particular part of the brain of which the destruction could comport a diminution of the ‘consciousness of the Ego” and of the entire personal-spiritual structure, we could not affirm that the Ego is situated in this part” ([Stein 2004 a] 130). The proof of all this consists of the fact that the Ego is bound up with the lived experiences: “I can go to any part of my living body and be present in it, even though some parts, the head and the heart for example, are closer to me than others” ([Stein 2004 a] 130).

II. 4. The levels of the human being

Ego, soul, spiritual life, person – these terms are evidently closely related in Ewiges und endliches Sein (Eternal and finite Being) ([Stein 2006]). Here the author proposes a final and definitive delineation of the map of human interiority, and the different levels that constitute it are further specified and inserted in a unitary framework. As far as the methodological aspects are concerned, one may note that – ever since her earliest works – the inquiry has been pushed ahead in a concentric fashion, with circles that tend to become ever wider and reach greater profundities.

The centrality of the Ego is underscored; she arrives at the following definition: the Ego is the entity whose being is life. It dwells in the body and in the soul and is present in every part of the body and the soul, but, not forgetting the phenomenological lesson, Edith Stein seems to share the proposal made by A. Pfänder, according to which the Ego resides specifically behind the eyes at the center of the head – one might even compare it with the third eye present in the oriental tradition – and this is brought out by the fact that not only the looks of human beings are directed towards this point, but also those of some animals. This Ego that, conscious of itself, pervades the soul from surface to profundity and manifests itself as living, personal and spiritual.

“Surface” and “profundity” are the guiding thread of the inquiry that takes account of the contributions made by the psychology of the profound, the results of phenomenological analysis, which converge in delineating the map of human interiority, each contributing and adding a piece, a detail. Also in this case we gain an essential description of the various levels of which the human being is constituted.

The human being is not alone. Through the lived-experience of ‘empathy’ we can establish a link with other human beings, whom we recognize ‘like’ us. With them it is possible to live at different intersubjective levels, corresponding to our psychic attitude or mental-spiritual attitude, in this way we can live just as ‘mass’ or develop as
‘community’. The description of community is one of the original aspects of Edith Stein’s analysis. She believes that every human association that is well organized must be based on community; this is the case of family, society, people and even State. Her ideas could clarify what is the meaning of community, with which many contemporary philosophers of politics and sociologists deal.

Conrad-Martius’ and Edith Stein’s anthropological ontology could be very useful for them, who are interested in human sciences. In particular Edith Stein’s purpose was to give a theoretical basis for the research in the field of psychology, psychopathology, regarding the human subject, sociology, history, political sciences and all the human sciences in general regarding the intersubjective links.
Bibliography


