

P R E F A C E

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My objective in this book is to reexamine the attachment to an egocentric tradition in classical phenomenology and to propose an alternative polycentric view, supported by renewed phenomenological reflection as well as relevant contributions from cognate empirical disciplines and the dialogic tradition in philosophy. I contend that phenomenological approaches, however diverse they might be, have neglected to explore in sufficient depth the communicative structure of experience, in particular the phenomenological importance of the addressee, the inseparability of *I* and *You*, and the nature of the alternation between them. I propose to rectify this neglect by disclosing the primacy of *I-you connectedness* in meaning and experience. *I-you connectedness* is best thematized within living speech, which is invariably oriented toward an interlocutor, and animated by mutual address. Yet *I-you connectedness* extends beyond living speech to other modalities of meaning, notably thinking and writing. It also extends beyond discursive experience, and captures the deep dialogic dimension of meaning in prelinguistic and extralinguistic life. The objective of this book is to prepare the ground for thematizing this dialogic dimension in the rich and multidisciplinary manner that is afforded by the multidiscipline of dialogical phenomenology introduced here.

The book is divided into two parts, which strategically contrast classical and dialogical approaches to the social world. This contrast is used partly as a rhetorical device to make the urgency of a deliberately dialogic approach apparent. Needless to say, this project is itself influenced and enabled by classical phenomenology it critically examines; dialogical phenomenology extends some of the directions in which canonical phenomenological authors were heading regarding the inescapable embodiment of experience, embedded in the shared natural and social world. At the same time, I argue that classical phenomenology may be subject to an individualist bias that privileges first-person subjectivity over against communal relationality and leads

to the neglect of I–you connectedness. This neglect is most clearly apparent within the transcendental phenomenology of subjectivity, discussed in part 1, chapter 1. A similar oversight of I–you interdependency could be noted within post-Husserlian phenomenology, but is not discussed here at length.

Chapter 1 is devoted therefore to the critical task of challenging the exclusively first-person stance occupied by transcendental subjectivity, and the correlated notion of the social world as an additive plurality of transcendental subjects. I employ notably an original grammatical analysis of pronominal discourse to demonstrate the tension between the usages of the pronoun “I” in ordinary language and in *transcendentalese*. Whereas the former use indicates a social role of the speaker, the latter turns the pronoun into a label for an epistemically construed subject of thought. The former stands in relation to an addressee, the latter loosens these relational ties. The former is caught in a web of I–you reversals, the latter fixed in an irreversible I-stance. As a consequence, the former captures the socially relevant dynamics of spoken discourse, whereas the latter glosses these over.

Part 2 proposes to examine this social dynamics in detail. It provides a relatively wide cross-disciplinary focus on the central question of interpersonal connectedness. In chapter 2, I draw on relevant contributions from sociolinguistics in order to deepen the analysis of pronominal discourse, particularly the pragmatics of personal pronouns, with an eye to articulating the basic thesis of primary I–you connectedness in terms of reversibility, asymmetry, and complementarity. I discuss the interrelated notions of person and spatial deixis, that is, the speech context dependency of “I”–“you” pronouns and “here”–“there” demonstratives, to make a strong case for a polycentric perspectival configuration of experience situated within the shared world. This discussion enables me to put pressure on the egocentric stance of classical phenomenology, and the interrelated transcendental notions of an egological subject and the absolute *here* point of spatial orientation. I propose the alternative dialogical notion of a situated viewpoint for spatial orientation and self-reference in discourse, which reverses into a *you* and a *there* within the social and spatial context construed in first-to-second person terms.

In chapter 3, I turn to relevant contributions from developmental psychology, notably the research on protoconversational or dialogic relations between infants and their caregivers. This empirical research helps to develop an account of the temporal aspects of first-to-second person interaction, such as the turn-taking pattern of dialogue. I hypothesize that these temporally and rhythmically patterned interactions provide the scaffolding for acquir-

ing pronominal markers of personhood. Young children are typically well primed for the acquisition of first- and second-person reference in language since they have been immersed in its prelinguistic pragmatics and dialogical rhythms from the earliest face-to-face interactions with their caregiver. This empirical material provides support for the view that we are steeped in I–you relations long before “I” and “you” markers are fully mastered in complex and varied conversational contexts.

In chapters 4 and 5 I turn to contributions from the dialogic tradition in philosophy. In chapter 4, I provide additional theoretical grounding to the notion of I–you connectedness in terms of primordial duality. The notion of primordial duality is an intrinsically relational category, irreducible to the usual metaphysical categories such as the singularity of the one and an impartial multiplicity of the many. Instead, it captures the first-to-second person relatedness binding the dialogic partners in a nonfusional as well as nonexternal-additive manner, emphasizing that the partners in relation are both connected and distinct, and that they are bound in a way irreducible to the adding together of external enclosed objects. The notion of primary duality finds support both in the grammatical/philosophical category of the dual number, captured by the I–you word-pair, and the mythical accounts of original twin-hood of the human form. This philosophical/grammatical category is therefore especially useful to discussions of social relatedness, and the interdependency and reciprocal engagement binding the partners in relation. It captures the unique dialogic relationality of the two who are not one, and provides a robust alternative theoretical framework to the received configurations of the one and the many.

Chapter 5 has an apologetic tone. It examines the overwhelmingly critical reception of the dialogic tradition within contemporary Continental philosophy, and makes a case for revising this dominant trend. I argue that the validity of the dominant criticism against the ethics of fellowship, issued from the perspectives of ethical responsibility to the face of the other, misconstrues and needs to be reexamined in light of the primary texts belonging to the notoriously underrepresented yet immensely valuable dialogic tradition in philosophy. Finally, I raise some methodological considerations relative to practicing the multidiscipline of dialogical phenomenology and draw some implications of my argument for feminist and political concerns in the epilogue.