One of the perpetual problems in Husserl-scholarship concerns the clarification of Husserl's notion of *constitution*, especially its bearing on the realism-idealism controversy. The dominant tendency among Husserl's many critics has been to interpret constitution as a creative activity, thus accusing Husserl of an untenable idealism. Among philosophers more favourably disposed towards Husserlian phenomenology one often finds this critique rebutted in one (or both) of the following ways: Either it is maintained that constitution is in reality merely a matter of epistemic restoration (thus being fully compatible with a realism), or it is argued that the dimension disclosed by the transcendental reduction and constituted by transcendental subjectivity is a dimension of *meaning*; not of *being*.

The following paper will attempt to refute the above mentioned interpretations, presenting an alternative clarification of some of the formal elements in Husserl's transcendental concept of constitution,¹ by way of an explication of the late Husserl's view on the relationship between *world* and *subjectivity*. An explication eventually making it apparent, that Husserl's concept of constitution entails reflections much more in line with the views espoused by later phenomenologists, such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, than is normally assumed by his critics.

In order to situate these reflections my exposé will start by recapitulating some of the main ideas in Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological project – focusing on the notion of *reduction*. This is essential for a precise estimation of Husserl's overall aim, and I believe that a correct comprehension of his *transcendental concept of constitution* will only be possible on this background.

¹

Husserl's phenomenology can be viewed as the attempt to overcome some deficiencies which are inherent in any mundane (positive, objective) science. Ac-
according to Husserl, all mundane sciences (operating within the natural attitude) are characterized by essential inadequacies since they do not thematize their own intentional performance and consequently are unable to grasp the true being-sense \((\text{Seinssinn})\) of their own field of research and ultimately of the world itself \((17/17, 5/160)\). Insofar as the mundane sciences do not raise these questions pertaining to their own foundation or, alternatively, simply presuppose their answers dogmatically, they do not possess the kind of rationality which is the distinguishing mark of true science.\(^3\)

[S]o würde es wohl begreiflich sein, daß allen objektiven Wissenschaften gerade das Wissen des Prinzipiellsten fehlte: nämlich das Wissen von demjenigen, was den theoretischen Gebilden des objektiven Wissens überhaupt Sinn und Geltung, somit erst die Dignität eines Wissens aus dem letzten Grunde verschaffen könnte \((6/121)\).

The task of transcendental phenomenology is exactly to overcome these deficiencies by way of a radical reflection. A reflection which strives to make the universal obviousness of the being of the world – the greatest of all enigmas – intelligible \((6/184, 6/208)\) through an elucidation of the intentional performance of the subject. A task which indirectly questions the major epistemological and ontological presuppositions of mundane science \((8/262, 6/412)\), and which according to Husserl is made possible through the effectuation of the so-called \textit{epoche} and \textit{transcendental reduction}.

Insofar as Husserl’s entire transcendental-phenomenological research must be understood within the framework of the \textit{epoche} and the \textit{reduction}, a correct understanding of their function and performance is paramount if one is to reach a comprehension of the concept of constitution. Likewise, the major part of the disputes concerning the range, pretensions and validity of the phenomenological analyses is based upon different interpretations of the \textit{epoche} and \textit{reduction} and can, accordingly, only be settled by means of a thematic clarification of them.

Our clarification will take place in an explicit confrontation with two dominant misinterpretations of their aim. Thus, it will be demonstrated, that Husserl’s goal (and the subject-matter of transcendental phenomenology) is neither to effectuate a nihilation of the world in order to depict a pure and isolated worldless subjectivity, nor should it be understood as an abstention from ontological commitments, as if phenomenology only had to do with a clarification of the sphere of sense and meaning (as something separate from being).\(^4\)