Philosophical modernity is characterized by a prevalent role of the I, the ego, the subject. In phenomenology, this role is by no means reduced, but the notion of the subject is profoundly transformed. In Husserl’s phenomenology of intersubjectivity, the subject finds itself divided into a multiplicity. Within this multiplicity, oneself is separated by a gap from others. Levinas draws from this an ontological consequence: “Being takes place as manifold and as split into the Same and the Other. This is its utmost structure.”

It is precisely because of this fundamental difference between oneself and another that, for phenomenologists, it becomes crucially important to know how an experience of alterity is possible. This question is at the very center of Husserl’s phenomenology of intersubjectivity. It is an entirely new question; with the possible exception of Fichte’s theory of interpersonality, nothing similar can be found in traditional philosophy. In particular, the phenomenology of intersubjectivity has nothing do with the well-known sceptical problem of other minds, since Husserl takes it for granted that there is an experience of alterity that is capable of perceptual evidence. No follower of the originator of phenomenology will ever deny this capacity of the experience of alterity.

It is in this perspective that the four seminars focus on the relationship between oneself and another from Husserl to Levinas. In the—broadly understood—phenomenological tradition, two different approaches to this encounter can be discerned. The first approach is initiated by Husserl and further elaborated by Sartre and Levinas. These thinkers try to show how an encounter between oneself and another is a condition for the very possibility of a common world as well as of a human community. The second approach, on the contrary, presupposes a certain kind of community in order to account for the possibility of an encounter between oneself and another. This line of interpretation is followed, in different ways, by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Michel Henry. Paul Ricœur tries to synthesize the two approaches.

The exploration of these two approaches is one of the main purposes of the four seminars. However, their objective is by no means limited to an analysis of the relationship between oneself and another. An account of selfhood in the light of this relationship is just as well aimed at. The emphasis put on selfhood will be a special characteristic of my considerations on the relationship between oneself and another. I shall try to give an account of selfhood in this context by drawing upon some of my essays, published and unpublished. Thus, these essays will form the background of the four seminars. They may be read by the students together with the reading texts analyzed in the four seminar sessions.

**Seminar One: Husserl’s Phenomenological Approach to the Other**

In our first seminar we will specify the distinctive features of a phenomenological approach to the Other. We will begin with a brief consideration on the difficult notion of primordial reduction. We shall then outline the main criteria of alterity suggested by Husserl’s phenomenology of intersubjectivity. Finally, the special role assigned by Husserl to interpretation (*Auslegung*) in the experience of alterity will be discussed.
Readings:

a) Text:

b) Essay:

Seminar Two: Being-with-one-another in Heidegger.—The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty on the Dialectical Relationship between Oneself and Another
In our second seminar we shall explore two different topics.—A) First, we will consider Heidegger’s conception of a being-with-one-another in *Being and Time* (1927) and in a lecture course given in 1928. From these considerations, it will be clear how Heidegger bases his account of the encounter between oneself and another on the assumption of a common world and of a truth shared from the outset with others.—B) Secondly, Sartre’s analysis of the dialectical relationship between oneself and another will be discussed. Especially Merleau-Ponty’s debate with Sartre’s dialectical method shows how two different approaches to the encounter between oneself and another are developed in the phenomenological tradition.

Readings:

a) Texts:

b) Essays

Seminar Three: Selfhood and Singularity in Henry and in Levinas
In this seminar we will continue our exploration of the relationship between oneself and another in the work of two French phenomenologists: Michel Henry and Emmanuel Levinas. We shall concentrate on the concept of selfhood elaborated by these two thinkers. A common feature to them is that, in their opinion, selfhood is based on passivity and
affectivity. However, as far as the relationship between selfhood and alterity is concerned, their conceptions are divergent: whereas Henry presupposes an original community founded by Life, Levinas accentuates the significance of the encounter with the Other for the constitution of every possible community.

Readings:

a) Texts

b) Essays

Seminar Four: Ricœur’s Narrative View of Selfhood and Alterity
In this seminar, the narrative view of selfhood will be examined. This view has been developed by as different thinkers as Hannah Arendt, Wilhelm Schapp, Alasdair MacIntyre, Paul Ricœur, Charles Taylor, David Carr and others. Especially the differences between MacIntyre and Ricœur are worth being analyzed. MacIntyre conceives of selfhood as the unity of a life. Ricœur adopts this perspective. However, in the version he gives to this theory, selfhood is not only distinguished from sameness, but it is related to alterity as well. Thereby, a requirement formulated by Levinas is met: it is shown how “the intrigue of the Other within the Same” is possible.

Readings:

a) Texts

b) Essays