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Understanding Yun Dong-ju through Husserl's Phenomenology: *Toward Hope in a Pandemic Situation*

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Abstract

This study analyzes how the Korean poet Yun Dong-ju presents self-reflection and renewal in way similar to philosopher Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Both Yun and Husserl commonly emphasized hope at a time of despair, during and amid periods of war. Despite adversity, they centered on self-fulfillment through self-reflection and practical renewal in hope. According to this perspective, this study examines the ego-understanding of Yun and shows that it is similar with Husserl's phenomenological egology. In particular, Husserl's phenomenological ego has seven characteristics, which also appear in Yun's poetry. By examining the seven characteristics of the phenomenological ego as revealed by Yun, this study argues for the similarity between Husserl and Yun and reveals that both authors espoused a similar direction to life: Husserl's attitude toward the authentic life resonates with Yun's ideal. This discovery of the phenomenological ego in Yun's poetry provides an opportunity to introduce his poetry abroad, as a poet who sings universal love for humanity. Understanding Yun Dong-ju's poetry phenomenologically will also show that self-renewal on the path toward hope is a universal value that transcends place, time, and culture and that this result is realized through love.

Keywords: Husserl, Yun Dong-ju, ego, reflection, hope

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Introduction

The poet Yun Dong-ju (1814–1945) is one of the most popular and well-known poets in Korea, Japan, and China (J. Kim 2012, 204). Yun was born on December 30, 1917, in Mingdong (Myeongdong in Korean) Village in northern Jiando (Gando in Korean) of Manchuria (currently, Longjing, Jilin province in China), where many Korean emigrants fled to China to escape Japanese colonial oppression. He was an avid reader who was especially fond of the works of Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Valery, Baudelaire, and Rilke (Yun 2003, xiv). He liked literature from childhood, particularly poetry, and from adolescence, he demonstrated his literary talent by writing and presenting poems. When he was 21 years old, he studied language and literature at Yonhee College (now Yonsei University in Seoul) and two years later, in 1941, he compiled a collection of nineteen poems under the title *Haneul-gwa baram-gwa byeol-gwa si* (Sky, Wind, Stars, and Poetry). Yun's intention was to publish his poems, but his project was postponed as there was concern that his poems might not pass the censorship of the Japanese authorities. In March 1942, he went to Japan and enrolled in Rikkyo University, in Tokyo, to study English literature before transferring, that summer, to Doshisha University in Kyoto.

On July 14, 1943, Yun was arrested with his cousin Song Mong-gyu for "participation in the resistance movement." During his stay in Japan, all of his writings were confiscated by the police. On March 31, 1944, he was convicted for participation in the "independence movement" and despite no evident charges, he was incarcerated. He died on February 16, 1945, in Fukuoka Prison, months before the liberation of his country.

Yun lived his whole life under Japanese colonial oppression. Unfortunately, due to his death in prison, he did not live to see his poems officially published during his lifetime. It was not until 1948 that his poems were published for the first time by his best friend Jeong Byung-wook, who collected 31 of Yun's posthumous works; these poems by Yun are the most studied in Korea today. Although his oeuvre is small, several of his works continue to be widely read and loved by both Koreans and Japanese and his posthumous collection, published under the title *Sky, Wind, Stars, and Poetry*

as above, is one of Korea's all-time favorites (J. Kim 2012, 204). His poems sing of hope and longing for his pure self that transcends time and space. As will be seen below, Yun's literature also resonates with Husserl's philosophy.

Today, Yun is generally regarded as a poet of "inner reflection" or "self-reflection" (Ryu 2009, 382). He faced his shame by looking inside and sang of "self-renewal" and "hope." Yun reflected on the inner life throughout his own work and faced his shameful self-portrait. Along with this self-reflection, Yun promoted self-renewal, and even today his voice has the power to appeal to us. As I will argue here, Yun's work can be considered to share a similar pattern to the self-reflection of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the well-known founder of phenomenology whose disciples include renowned philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995). This is the first attempt in academia to understand Yun through Husserl's phenomenology. It is significant in that the fact that Yun's works can be comprehended phenomenologically. Considering that the major Western philosophers of the 20th century mentioned earlier, and others, emerged from Husserl's phenomenology, it can be seen as one of the main starting points for Western contemporary philosophy—which is used and explored worldwide in the present day. When it comes to this status of phenomenology, the fact that Yun's works have a similar aspect to Husserl's suggests the possibility that Yun's works can be understood in ways that transcend his spatiotemporal context. In this sense, section two of this article will examine the commonalities between the poet and philosopher in a large framework. Section three will reveal the characteristics of Husserl's self-understanding to confirm Yun's self-understanding phenomenologically. Specifically, it attempts to present Husserl's seven ego characteristics and uses these characteristics as a lens, in section four, through which to analyze Yun's two most representative poems, "Jahwasang" (Self-portrait) and "Gobaengnok" (Confession). Then, in the conclusion, we identify the importance of the universal spirit of "purity of heart" (Hart 1992, 27), which is phenomenologically understood by Yun's ego understanding. The universal spirit we should pursue is self-reflection, renewal, and positive hope for the future.

Similar Backgrounds

This article first contemplates the common denominators that exist between Husserl and Yun, before exploring how the characteristics of Husserl's phenomenological ego are expressed in Yun's works. On the surface, the German philosopher and the Korean poet do not seem to bear any relation; however, there are common aspects that appear to have influenced the emotions displayed and ideas developed by both. We explore these commonalities to confirm the fundamental life direction pursued by Husserl and Yun.

First, for both Husserl and Yun, their experience of war seems to have had an important effect. Husserl underwent the despair of losing his son to war in 1916 and said that it was difficult to continue his philosophical work in the circumstances of World War I (1914–1918) (Ni 2014, 243). It is well known that, as a Jew, Husserl in his final years was unable to properly conduct his academic activities due to the oppression of the Nazis. According to Husserl, the experience of war "hindered the quicker acceptance of Ideas'" (Ni 2014, 242). In several of his letters to colleagues, "he reflects upon his inability to focus on his philosophical projects" (Donohoe 2004, 15). For example, "he writes to Paul Natorp in April of 1916, six week after the death of his son Wolfgang: "I was therefore less able to overcome the deep agitation, and was occasionally unable to do productive work. Thus all my efforts come to a halt" (Donohoe 2004, 15). In parallel, Yun's final years were played out miserably in a Fukuoka prison, his death (on February 16, 1945) coming just a few months short of Korea's national liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Yun directly experienced the tragedies of war and portrayed the pain of his times in his poems. As shown below, for instance, Yun's poem "Irunnal" (On a Day Like This, 1936), directly reveals Yun's dark experience in the colonial era (Claremont 2017, 135–136). In short, both the poet and the philosopher of personal experience were politically persecuted by fascists/militarists, and they shared in common the abyss of tragedy spread through war.

Despite such harsh frustrations, neither man discussed philosophy or literature with a sense of helplessness or pessimistic worldview, and herein

lies a second commonality. Both Yun and Husserl were typically oriented, in their works, toward an "optimistic life of hope," and they find hope even in despair. If we first examine Husserl, he stated that we may face a dilemma that "life is meaningless," or "my life is treated as a toy of the dark forces," or a "fantasy," and that "I can ask myself if there is nothing I can do" (Husserl 1997, 212).[1] Husserl, however, thought that the life of each person held sufficient value; that is, our personal existences have a force capable of fully realizing our values according to freedom, reason, and affirming one's universal will (Husserl 1989, 25). Husserl's ideas basically affirm the possibility of humanity. There are many reasons to affirm this possibility and he addressed the fact that humanity has pursued "a history of growing from a low state to a higher state" in value (Husserl 1997, 214). Naturally, Husserl argued that human history has not completely developed its value, but he was convinced that the pursuit of universal values would continue. As a basis for his assertion, Husserl established a single assumption: "Even if the end of the world is imminent and the world now lost all its meaning, the mother of children will take on the duty of preserving human values by conveying love and comfort to her children" (Husserl 1997, 216). A mother's practice of preserving the value and hope of life for her children in the worst of situations is not limited to an individual decision. Rather, Husserl insisted that this practice is a fundamental characteristic of all beings who share the life-world. Husserl's practice of life is to find an ethical obligation in hope.

If Husserl affirmed the possibility of humanity and emphasized optimism through change and openness, this attitude can also be found in Yun. Similar to Husserl's case, Yun knew that he was living in a "dark" age (Y. Kim 1995, 134). Among his works, such examples as "Ireon nal" (On a Day Like This, 1936), "Kkum-eun kkaeeojigo" (A Dream Shattered, 1936), "Wiiro" (A Consolation, 1940), "Palbok" (Eight Blessings, 1940), and "Museoun sigan" (A Terrifying Hour, 1941) are manifested in helplessness and despair in his era of darkness. For instance, his poem "Eight Blessings," with the expression "they shall grieve forever" (Yun 2003, 66), describes eternal despair, while another poem entitled "A Terrifying Hour" portrays a

1. All translations from German to English are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

disastrous situation with the following lines: "I, / who have never once raised my hand; / I, who do not even have a piece of the sky / to which I can raise my hand and point" (Yun 2003, 69). Yun described his miserable circumstances in various works. The life of Yun, a man who was unjustly imprisoned at a young age and then died as a prisoner, sums up the indescribable indignity he faced. However, life-affirmation is also a feature of Yun's poetry. As his poem "Seosi" (Foreword) well illustrates, Yun loved "all things that are dying" and "singing to the stars" (Yun 2003, 1)—a well-known symbol of hope. Expressions using the "sky," "dawn," "spring," and "light" that appear in Yun's work can also be seen as espousing the rhetoric of hope (N. Kim 1995, 21).

Despite his life's constant frustrations, Yun did not sing of despair but desperately expressed hope. Among his later works, poems such as "Tto dareun gohyang" (Yet Another Home, 1941), "Gil" (The Road, 1941), and "Swipge ssuieojin si" (A Poem That Came Easily, 1942) depict his optimistic hope. The words of these poems, such as "Let me go to yet another beautiful home" (Yun 2003, 80), "the reason I am living is / only because I am looking for what I have lost" (Yun 2003, 81), and "I light the lamp to drive out the darkness a little, / and I, in my last moments, wait for the morning, / which will come like a new era" (Yun 2003, 89) show a determination not to lose hope, despite his gloomy circumstances. Even in situations where violence was inevitable, the poet believed and hoped for a better future.

The humanity of hope found in Yun's works and his open attitude toward a better future can be regarded as stemming from the influence of Christianity. It is the Christian way to crave salvation while suffering despair. Yun was born in a Protestant Christian family and went to mission-based schools, suggesting that Christianity had some influence on his life (J. Kim 2020, 260). Among his works, "Eight Blessings" and "Sipjaga" (The Cross, 1941) are examples of his connection with the Christian tradition. The doctrines of Christianity, which seek out the world of salvation in the face of life's sufferings, correspond to his open attitude toward an optimistic future.

If Yun's manner of desiring hope in suffering and despair was influenced by the spirit of Christianity, the fact that Husserl was also a Protestant Christian is considered yet another point in common between

the two. In 1887, Husserl received a Protestant Evangelical baptism in Wien, despite being a Jew, and married Malvine Steinschneider in an Evangelical church the following year (Schumann 1977, 20). Husserl argued that the attitude of a living being, as emphasized in Christian doctrine, should be optimistic towards a positive future. He confirmed that the lives of individual personalities are ultimately enacted in the realization of the religious Ideal (Husserl 1989, 96). The characteristic of the phenomenological ego is similar to the characteristic of the life of a believer who continues to practice toward a teleological idea, as in Christianity. When the practice of the teleological idea of the phenomenological ego must be "a road" that it is each being's duty to fulfill, this resonates with "the road" expressed in Yun's poem "Foreword": "And I must walk the road / that has been given to me" (Yun 2003, 1). "The road" is also another expression of the cross (via dolorosa) emphasized in Christian doctrine.

As a philosopher and poet, respectively, and as Protestant Christians, Husserl and Yun craved the possibility of hope and maintained a positive attitude. If we have found a positiveness towards life and an openness to the future within these two figures, we should now examine how their stances were conceived. The model of life that Husserl and Yun commonly desired can be uncovered by examining how the characteristics of the phenomenological ego are revealed in Yun's poems. The point is that Yun and Husserl show a similar egology, unique to Yun's works among Korean poetry. Thus, in the next section, Husserl's phenomenological ego will first be explored, and in the following section, the explored content will then be applied to Yun's poems to confirm the significance of his works.

The Features of Husserl's Phenomenological Ego

According to Husserl, the ego is, in principle, the performer of all acts of consciousness. Ego refers not only to the *empirisches ego* (empirical ego), living in everyday experiences of the life-world, but also to the *transzendentales ego* (transcendental ego), which provides unity in intellectually conscious acts (Lee 1993, 208). Husserl's phenomenological ego is

synthesized by both the phases of the experiential concrete ego and the transcendental ego (Husserl 1952, 97–104). It is worth noting here that the empirical and transcendental ego are different aspects of the same ego that guarantees all processes in a subjective intentional act (Husserl 1950, 100). Such an ego simply has a functional division between the experiential specific ego that materially experiences ordinary life and the non-concrete ego that formally maintains the oneness of the ego itself. To state that the phenomenological ego has different aspects means that the ego has *Doppeldeutigkeit* (double-sidedness) (Lee 1993, 209).

Husserl asserted the ego to be inevitably related to the flow of time-consciousness, which is indistinguishable from its contents. Husserl's phenomenological ego is closely associated with the streaming living present. From a phenomenological perspective, time-consciousness is not distinguishable from material content; furthermore, it is understood as the primordial level in a genetic aspect (Donohoe 2004, 63–65). Husserl's time, as a continuous flow of consciousness, is a genetic aspect that allows attention to be paid to history and culture, amongst others, with *Vorgegebenheit* (pre-givenness). In short, Husserl's phenomenological ego consists of material characteristics that can be explicated with intersubjectivity (other people, history, traditions, norms, etc.) (Donohoe 2004, 101). For this reason, we can think of the ego as being constituted within the flow of time but also as a being that constitutes something in the flow of time. This is an important feature of Husserl's phenomenological ego.

Husserl's phenomenological ego, as mentioned above, has time-consciousness at its fundamental level. To Husserl's point, where consciousness has intentions for an object, that object is said to be "constituted" in consciousness (Smith 2007, 228). The key point is not that consciousness creates or constructs something objective that is not related to the ego, but rather that experience holds the structure of meaning through which an object is experienced (Carr 1973, 17). This structure defines the "constitution" of an object as it is intended to be taken in the experience. It should be "constituted" in the streaming time-consciousness of our experience. We can identify two key features in this explanation of time-consciousness in the phenomenological ego: first, in the flow of the living

present, the time-consciousness of the ego is in the flux of constant change. Second, the ego has a general consciousness beyond the constant flow of time (from past to present to future) through a phenomenological reflection of the ego. The phenomenological ego establishes its own unity in the flow of time-consciousness. Husserl's ego, therefore, is present but not present and is anonymous but identical (Donohoe 2000, 223). It is the ego of phenomenology that has a relationship with a specific present but, at the same time, does not have a relationship with a specific present. Husserl calls this ego "psychophysical unity" or "personal ego" (Husserl 1950, 140). In a word, Husserl's ego is characterized by this double-sidedness (Donohoe 2000, 223).

As seen above, Husserl's phenomenological ego takes content experienced in the living present as its own unity (Donohoe 2000, 225). This is possible because the living present, as the primordial level of time-consciousness, is related to both the transcendental ego and the empirical ego. On the one hand, Husserl's phenomenological ego promotes change and creation in its own unity. Meanwhile, Husserl's phenomenological ego is rooted in the formal structure of intentional experience, in particular in the non-temporal form that accounts for the temporalization and continuity of the particular flow of experience. On the other hand, the phenomenological ego is not just an empty, formal, or trans-individual ego, but an individual ego rooted in the content of the particular flow of experience. This can be explained by a simple instance. Let us suppose that when I was 10 years old, I understood my identity. Time passes and I reach 60 years old; again, I think of my identity and I understand that my current identity is not the same as my identity at 10 years old. However, despite this difference in my identity, both the "I" at age 10 and the "I" at age 60 can be regarded as the same "I" (ego). Husserl's phenomenological ego is characterized by accepting many changes in immanent temporal occurrences while simultaneously maintaining oneself (Sokolowski 1964, 162).[2] In fact, this feature necessarily raises the question: "How can the phenomenological ego be regarded as a unified ego within the constant changes in the flow of

2. The examples cited here have been revised.

time?" To answer this question, we should identify important features of Husserl's phenomenological ego.

Husserl's phenomenological ego, as discussed above, has a double-sidedness associated with both an empirical ego inevitably related to change as a physical phase and a pure, transcendental ego that is always related in the sense of a transcendental phase. Given that both features are present in the same ego, we can consider the main characteristics of the phenomenological ego as follows (although the phenomenological ego has various features, I will note just seven features here):

(1) The ego remains identical, despite existing within the constant flow of time.
(2) The ego expands to create itself in the changes and constant flow of time.
(3) The ego is influenced by the Other, such as the environment, history, culture, other personal subjects, and, at the same time, influences the Other.
(4) The ego preserves its own expandability with "*Habitualität*" (habituality).
(5) The ego creates itself, accepting or rejecting some things in affirmation of change; accordingly, the ego is necessary for "*Erneuerung*" (renewal).
(6) The ego is always in some sense an open question—never completely decided—which might be called "openness."
(7) The ego is oriented toward a goal (*telos*). Under such a purposeful idea, the ego lives practically in a specific life-world.

I see these seven characteristics as the main features of the phenomenological ego. This view of Husserl's ego-understanding is commonly accepted by many theorists who have studied his phenomenology.[3] Husserl's understanding of consciousness is the same as that of the ego. Of course, for Husserl, ego and consciousness are separate words, but "consciousness cannot be thought of without the ego and cannot exist, because consciousness is a consciousness of the ego, so they are united inseparably"

3. For a more detailed account of Husserl's phenomenological ego, see Rudolf Bernet, et al. (1993, 195–216).

(Husserl 1956, 106). As is well known, following Husserl, consciousness here is an intentional consciousness. This consciousness of intentionality refers to the consciousness associated with a subject and an object. In this context, we can also consider that the ego looks into the ego itself as an object of inner consciousness in the flow of time. For example, the ego projects itself as an object in inner intentional consciousness and, through this act, can draw a different picture of itself. Even if the ego finds its own self changed through self-reflection, it remains the same ego. For Husserl, that reflection of the ego "presents us with a kind of self-alteration" (Zahavi 2008, 95), which I interpret as follows: the ego is in change (as with feature [1] of the ego) and the ego develops itself within the same ego (as with feature [2]). The ego expands in the flow of time and change.

It is clear that the ego in the flow of time and change is no different from the ego that has time and history. As we will see later, for Yun, the ego is a change in time and history, which resonates with Husserl's ego. Husserl explored ego in terms of temporality and historicity. The ego is posited within the background of its own experiences and is understood to exist within a cultural, traditional, and historical world: "Human beings are in a sedimented history that always has new historical phases" (Husserl 1973, 391). The ego absorbs certain elements from its surrounding world. It develops through relationships with parents, friends, the community, customs, national sentiment, culture, tradition, and so forth. and builds up its own unity by establishing a relationship with these things. In other words, the ego itself is within the Other (as in feature [3]). The ego is part of culture, traditions, and world heritage. Husserl addressed this: "I, with my whole original life, am implied in them; and they are all likewise implied in one another" (Husserl 1976, 262). He also insisted that each soul stands in community with others that are intentionally interrelated (Husserl 1976, 241). To Husserl, the ego already has "you," "he (she)," and "we" (Husserl 1954, 270).

The ego is already intertwined with others in sharing the life-world. This life-world and intersubjectivity is a *transcendental* condition in building the ego because the ego is always set against a concrete background, such as the specific age, culture, situation, and so forth. Thus, the transcendental ego is "not within the world at all, but is subject *for* the world" (Carr 1999, 91).

As we will see below, the background depicted in Yun's work has an important meaning, as it is the environment in which the ego forms relationships with others and creates change and unity. These processes are formed by accumulating habituations in the ego, meaning that there are sedimentations of the ego. According to Husserl, everything merges and blends in sedimented overlaying. The phenomenological ego also merges many things to make itself, preserving its own expandability with these sedimentations. As with feature (4) listed above, "The concrete ego is constituted out of the unity of sedimentations, so the ego has habituations through pure passive synthesis" (Donohoe 2000, 224).

Husserl maintained the ego to have capabilities and convictions that have arisen over time through earlier experiences that developed into habituations. Even in the present, the ego builds habituations by accepting valid experiences formed in the past. In experiencing something, we do not approach it each time as if it were the first time. Husserl understood that experience is not just a repetition but a reactivation; the experience can be handed down continuously, as it is now valid. For instance, if I experienced something in the past and then, on that basis, made a judgment that "S is P" in that same past, it can be predicted that such a judgment will remain the same in the present; furthermore, I will experience the same judgment in the future. The judgment that I believed to be true in the past remains valid to me and can become my habituality as a consistent judgment across inner time-consciousness. Certain experiences and judgments from the past make the ego's personal-identity into sedimented habituations (Husserl 1952, 223–224). That habituations make the personal-identity of the ego is like saying that the actively acquired knowledge or meaning of an object remains in my consciousness and can be reactivated. Moreover, the fact that the obtained knowledge or meanings of an object continue to work means that they can be restored at any time through passive synthesis; namely, an ego's habituations are passively synthesized. The meaning and knowledge of an object formed by an intentional experience are influenced by my habituations, which have a certain familiarity, regulation, and formation related to my intellectual act or to something passively sedimented and formed. In other words, the ego is part of the life-world, so every experience

of the ego is related to something passively formed because the ego is formed in part by accepting a communal tradition that becomes part of its sedimented relationships with the world.

This does not mean that the ego is separated from itself, even if it develops from something heterogeneous or external, such as the Other. From the genetic phenomenological point of view, the habituations that comprise the ego itself are the habituations of the same ego, not the habituations of anything other than the ego. Habituations are sedimented within the same ego, allowing the ego to establish its own personal identity. We can think of this as the result of habitual manifestations from the ego as efforts and the will for unity in the ego itself. Although the ego's life is carried along in the streaming living present, this does not mean that the ego's life will in any way have flow. The ego creates its own unity in some direction in the streaming living present. Although characterized as incomplete because historicity always faces newness, the phenomenological ego has the feature of openness and is oriented toward the Better. As with features (5), (6), and (7) of the phenomenological ego, the openness of the ego is directional, moving toward the Better. Husserl insisted that "life is itself struggling, and it is important to move from passivity to activity, to elevate it to be humanity and to critically contemplate a life of tendency, that is, to move into a life of higher value" (Husserl 1997, 210). According to Husserl, we ought to be oriented toward a direction for "the Better" (Husserl 1997, 210). He believed the phenomenological ego to be the entity that unifies itself in the way of continuous development toward the Better.

In Husserl's words, "the Better is a struggle with tendencies to drag down our life" (Husserl 1989, 43). As such, he considered it the duty of the ego to renew itself and constantly sought this in changing for the Better. Husserl understood that affirming change and leading oneself to higher values is a duty that we must carry out and that this renewal is "the best theme of all ethics" (Husserl 1989, 20). According to Husserl, "the ethical life is, in its striving after complete self-preservation and absolute validation, a life of self-discipline, methodical self-cultivation, radical self-critique, and self-control" (Melle 1991, 126–127). Ego-fulfillment can be achieved by constantly renewing oneself and practicing self-discipline with the aim of

advancing the Better.

To this point, we have examined the seven features of the phenomenological ego. These characteristics, as stated in the introduction of this paper, can be confirmed more specifically through Yun's poetry. Although Husserl and Yun were completely unknown to each other, they pursued the same universal values. This is an example of the fact that the ethical ideals we pursue appeal to us, regardless of the specific time and space. Yun's works are concrete examples manifesting Husserl's thinking in a literary way. I will now use the phenomenological ego as a lens through which to examine Yun's poems. To this end, I will use concrete examples to examine how the phenomenological ego's features are evident in Yun.

The Phenomenological Ego and the Self-Reflection of Yun

Yun was a poet who intensely sought pure self and absolute humanity. He "suffered, even when the wind stirred the leaves" (Yun 2003, 1), and constantly reflected on his lacking self and sought out the realization of universal love for humanity (J. Kim 2012, 211). We can easily find these aspects of trying to complete self-fulfillment in his various works. In particular, we intend to reveal the characteristics of the phenomenological ego through two representative poems of Yun's: "Jawhasang" (Self-Portrait, 1939) and "Gobaengnok" (Confessions, 1942). I argue that the poet's self-exploration in both works sufficiently demonstrates the characteristics of the phenomenological ego. Through these two works, we can confirm the connection between the phenomenological ego and Yun's self-reflection. Let us first examine the work "Self-Portrait," followed by "Confessions."

Self-Portrait

Coming 'round the mountain, I go up alone
to the solitary well at the edge of the rice field
and peer in, quietly.

Inside the well, the moon is bright, the clouds flow by,
the sky spreads out, and a light blue wind blows;
autumn is there.

And a man is there.
I turn away because I hate the man, somehow.

Pondering over him as I set out to leave, I feel sorry for him
and go back and look in: he is still there.

Again, I turn away hating the fellow.
I think of him, again setting out, and begin to miss him.

Inside the well, the moon is bright, the clouds flow by,
the sky spreads out, a light blue wind blows;
autumn is there, and a man, too, like a memory.
(Yun 2003, 64)

In this poem, the environment surrounding the narrator is the starting point for ego-exploration. This work first depicts elements of the surrounding environment, such as the "mountain," the "well," the "bright moon," the "light blue wind," the "autumn," amongst others. The fact that the starting point in the search for the ego in this poem does not begin straight with the self, but rather with the surrounding environment, is similar to the fact that the life-world in phenomenology is a *transcendental* condition that constitutes the ego. The poet's depiction of the background world at the beginning of this poem corresponds to the standpoint that the ego in phenomenology is influenced by the life-world. It is essential to consider the environment, as Husserl's phenomenological ego is the ego experiencing the life-world. Likewise, for Yun, who prioritizes the environmental world, this aspect is found in the majority of his works. In the first stanza of his various poems, the situation of the narrator—or the perception of the situation, as the narrator faces it—is often described. "Ganpan eobneun geoli" (A Street Without Signs) begins with "When I stepped onto the platform of the train station" (Yun 2003, 78), while another poem, "The Cross," begins with the

words, "The sun was following me" (Yun 2003, 74).[4]

Returning to the poem "Self-Portrait," according to Yun, "the blue" means "the journey of self-searching," while "the sky" can be understood as an indication of "the universal value that the self should aim for" (Im 2010, 178). For Yun, the sky provides an answer to how a colonial poet should live and what poetry he should write (J. Kim 2020, 264). The narrator in this poem peers into the well and realizes that he faces a stranger rather than his own reflection. He reflects on himself as he looks at his reflection in the well. Thus, we may consider looking into the well as symbolizing self-reflection. However, contrary to our expectation that the narrator will see himself in the well, instead a stranger appears. As described earlier, for Husserl, the Other is not an object that is constituted from the subject, but rather the subject that is constituted by the Other. I and the Other are not the same but have a relationship and are interrelated phenomenologically. The ego is within the Other and participates in the life-world. In other words, the Other can be simultaneously considered both an ego (I) and a non-ego (non-I), resembling the features of double-sidedness in the phenomenological ego. The ego develops through the Other that it encounters. We can also regard the Other as a person influencing the ego itself. In this sense, the appearance of a stranger in the well in Yun's poetry is what the ego intends; namely, the Other in this poem is an opportunity to realize the ego itself and to look back on oneself and hope for self-fulfillment (S. Kim 2011, 101). In other words, "a man" in "Self-Portrait" can also be understood as a dissatisfied self who is unable to approach the ideals of the narrator looking into the well.

In Yun's other works, we can also easily recognize features resembling "a man" such as a stranger who encounters the narrator's consciousness. For example, in "A Terrifying Hour," the narrator reveals his/her unsatisfied reality by asking "Who is it that's calling me" (Yun 2003, 69)? In "Yet Another Home," the narrator describes the situation as follows: "The night I returned home / my white bones followed me / and lay down in the same

4. Specifically, see the following poems: "Changgong" (Blue Sky), "Tto dareun gohyang" (Yet Another Home), "Museoun sigan" (A Terrifying Hour), "Gil" (The Road), "Bom 2" (Spring 2), "A Poem That Came Easily," "Gan" (My Liver), "Confessions," etc.

room" (Yun 2003, 80). We can also comprehend this reference to "my white bones" as both reflecting a narrator and a stranger. In short, we can see that the Other depicted in Yun's works is closely related to the ego and is encountered directly, affecting the formation of the ego itself. Husserl and Yun can be understood as having a common characteristic here in that they both maintain that the ego is to be effected on the Other.

Another point of comparison with the phenomenological ego in this poem is that "a man" creates a relationship with the narrator in the flow of time. The narrator, "I," in this poem turns away "because I hate the man." Then, "pondering over him as I set out to leave / feels sorry for him." Again, "I turn away hating the fellow. / I think of him, again setting out, and begin to miss him" (Yun 2003, 64). With the terms "hate" and "sorry," then "hate" and "miss," this pattern of change in consciousness shows the state of the ego that changes in the flow of time. This notion resounds in the features (1), (2), and (3) of the phenomenological ego discussed above. If the phenomenological ego is ego-expanding by establishing relationships with others in the flow of time, the self-expanding in this poem reveals itself as a process of consciousness flowing from "hate" to "miss." Poetry seeks self-fulfillment through the process of hating a missing stranger reflected in the well. In the flow of time, the aspects of accepting the Other and seeking unity in the ego, along with its change, are common to both Husserl and Yun. They are discussing unity (feature 1) and extensibility (feature 2) of the self in the environment surrounding the self (feature 3).

We can also discover another feature of the phenomenological ego in this poem. As the phenomenological ego preserves his extensibility with habitualities (feature 4), "a man" as "a memory" in this poem provides the narrator his own expandability. "A memory" provides us something to look back on. The man in this recollection is a person who appeared to the narrator as he recalled events of the past. Therefore, the man in memory is what is now reactivated for the narrator. This man who has been hated, moved, and missed is not lost in the flow of time-consciousness but is reactivated. Stated differently, he remains a memory constituted within the narrator's habituations, or becomes the object to be recalled in the reflection of the narrator and allows the narrator to achieve expansion and unity. In

conclusion, this poem, carrying the name "Self-Portrait," reveals the character of the ego that maintains habitualities and preserves its own extensibility by engaging with the Other in the flow of time. In this poem, the narrator finds himself lacking and hopes to transform into a better state through self-reflection.

We can find a similar understanding in other works by Yun, such as "Ijeok" (The Miracle, 1938), "Sonyeon" (A Youth, 1939), and "Dolawa boneun bam" (The Night I Returned, 1941). In "The Night I Returned," the following excerpt leaps out: "I slowly close my eyes / sounds flow within my heart / my thoughts are now ripening on their own / like an apple" (Yun 2003, 77). This passage can be understood in the same context as discussed above. Obviously, the expressions "sounds flow within my heart" and "my thoughts are now ripening" can be understood by considering the poet Yun, who hoped for self-fulfillment in the flow of change.[5] In other words, it is important for the poet to maintain the hope of improving his lack of self.

Let us now examine another poem, "Confessions," by adding our understanding of "Self-Portrait." This poem goes as follows:

Confessions

There, in the patina-green bronze mirror,
I can still see my face.
What dynastic legacy is it
that leaves me so ashamed?

Let me make my confession concise, in one line:
— What joy has sustained me

5. We can see a similar context in the following expressions in the poems: "The Miracle"—"I keep toying with / love, self-reprimand, jealousy / as if they were gold medals. / But I promise I will wash these all away / among the waves on the water without a lingering thought / I pray You call me out upon the lake!" (Yun 2003, 52). "A Youth"—"A clear river flows along the lines of my hand: a clear river is flowing, and in the water, I see a sorrowful face in love-the beautiful face of Sooni! I close my eyes in reverie. The clear river is still flowing, and still I see the sorrowful face in love-the beautiful face of Sonni!" (Yun 2003, 65).

or twenty-four years and one month?

Tomorrow, or the day after, on some joyous day,
I will have to write another line of confession.
— Why did I make such shameful confessions then,
at such a tender age?

Night after night, let me polish the mirror
with the palm of my hand and the sole of my foot.

Then, in the mirror, someone sad
will appear, walking away alone,
heading out beneath a meteorite.
(Yun 2003, 85)

Yun's constant attempts at self-fulfillment also appear in this poem, as the narrator is confronted with his own scarcity of self and feels ashamed. As in "Self-Portrait," a pattern of self-fulfillment appears in the flow of time. The expressions, "What joy has sustained me / for twenty-four years and one month?" and the decision, "Night after night, let me polish the mirror / with the palm of my hand and the sole of my foot," reveals a determination to make a constant effort at self-reflection. Even in this poem, we can find the narrator preserving his habitualities and extending himself, as revealed through the "patina-green." The green-colored rust is an accumulated substance formed on the surface of metal by oxidation over time. The poem expresses how the bronze mirror, which symbolizes the narrator's self-reflection, has become rusted over. This alludes to self-reflection happening together with sedimentation over time. We can also understand the patina-green bronze mirror as a relic that represents the sediment of a dark situation. To the narrator, the patina green should be removed because it is shameful and dishonorable. When a prideful ego does not appear in a clean mirror, it shows the narrator's dissatisfied self. If Yun's self-reflection is an attempt to shape a better self, the narrator in "Confessions" wants to remove the rust because he hopes to create a better self in a dark situation.

The Better in phenomenology can be understood in a similar context to

what Yun emphasized as not being ashamed of himself. Accordingly, the poem's narrator makes the decision to write a confession. At "twenty-four years and one month," he examines himself but is still ashamed, so he pursues a "Renewal" by writing this confession. In other words, the narrator practices self-renewal (feature 5). This repentant form of writing, symbolized by renewal, is synonymous with Husserl's Erneuerung, depicted in this poem through lines such as, "Night after night, let me polish the mirror," evoking a call for continuous self-transformation. Aspiration for self-renewal and the desire for self-fulfillment are practiced by continuously wiping the mirror and writing out these confessions.

Yun believes that self-reflection can never be negative, even though this practice is much too difficult to ever complete. This poem paradoxically demonstrates that it takes effort to practice self-reflection, but it must be done, as revealed at the end of the poem: "Then, in the mirror, someone sad / will appear, walking away alone, / heading out beneath a meteorite." For Yun, a "meteorite" or "star" can be comprehended as a symbol of hope (H. Kim 2011, 135). In various works of his, stars often represent "hope." For example, in "Foreword," the star is likened to being far away but is seen to contain longing, while in "Byeol heneun bam" (One Night I Count the Stars, 1945), the star symbolizes the narrator's self-determination and the possibility of self-completion. In "Confessions," the narrator suggests that his continuous efforts to keep wiping his mirror will bring him the sight of a star, a symbol of hope. The star depicted here, however, is "a falling star," and the person walking under this star is described in a somber tone. This can be understood as a paradoxical demonstration where the realization of self-fulfillment is no easy task. The practice shown in "Confessions" can be realized in the resolution that we must maintain constant self-transformation for a better future, even if dark reality continues to creep in.

The poet and the philosopher who affirmed hope despite adversity keep us realizing that constant self-reflection and practice are the pathways to pursue in life and provide an answer to how humans, in both the East and West, should live. Like the Christian tradition of seeking salvation from the Fall, both poet and philosopher find it important to direct attention toward hope from despair. Obviously, this self-fulfillment is tearful and sad, with

this poem depicting a somber figure moving along under a falling star. The same context appears in another of Yun's poems, "A Poem That Came Easily," which illuminates self-fulfillment as embodied in "tears" and "condolences" (Yun 2003, 89). In this poem, self-realization through self-reflection is also sad, painful, and shameful, but it reveals the context that can be understood as the starting point that leads to hope (Nam 2013, 165). This is attributed to the fact that the poem concludes with a "handshake," a symbol of reconciliation and completion. As one of the sentences from this poem, "Extending a small hand to myself / I offer myself the very first handshake / tears and condolences" (Yun 2003, 89), reveals, this handshake expresses and ultimately describes an open attitude toward the future and a desire for self-fulfillment. I believe that this corresponds with features (6) and (7) of the phenomenological ego.

Self-fulfillment of the phenomenological ego is established in the duty itself. Such an oath was also a fate for Yun, who revealed this duty in his work, "The Cross," as follows: "If I were permitted my own cross / like the man who suffered / Blessed Jesus Christ / I would hang my head / and quietly bleed blood / that would blossom like a flower / under a darkening sky" (Yun 2003, 74). Even amid the suffering of the cross, even in a darkening sky, Husserl and Yun emphasized the efforts of self-change to realize the true self. The power of self-reflection enables the practice of renewing and keeping oneself open for an ideal purpose. The expression, "I would hang my head / and quietly bleed blood / that would blossom like a flower / under a darkening sky," means a resolution to the authenticity of pure self-realization. In the separation that cannot be easily reconciled with the ideal, the attitude of constantly renewing oneself is a common feature of Yun's self-reflection and Husserl's phenomenological ego. The double-sidedness of the ego, which the philosopher and poet share, is revealed as facing the self-realities separated from the ideal. The struggle that does not lose its purposeful ideal in the double-sidedness of the ego cannot be understood simply as egoistic idealism. Even if self-fulfillment continues to end in frustration, aiming for the ideal is a specific obligation we should realize. In this regard, both the phenomenological ego and Yun's self-reflection act as a practical egology. The assertions of both the philosopher

and poet are universal ideas and a practical spirit that resonates within people's minds. This explains the popularity of Husserl's phenomenology and the love for Yun's poems, despite the fact that their time, space, and culture are completely different.

Conclusion

Yun and Husserl both show how we should live; their understanding of the ego suggests practicing universal love for humanity. As seen above, they ask us not to lose hope in despair, but to look back on our shamefulness and change toward a better ideal. We can understand the word "repent" (μετανοια) as meaning "to reflect on oneself," from the Greek compound word μετα (meta) + νοια (think); thus, we can understand that the poet and philosopher are urging us to repent according to the Christian tradition. The continuing reflection, practice, and renewal toward a better life that is without shame is a common emphasis of both the Eastern poet and Western philosopher.

Renewing oneself to be without shame is the starting point on the way to self-fulfillment that the philosopher and poet have both recognized. Husserl and Yun hoped that we would walk the path they pursued. Understanding Yun's self-reflection with Husserl's phenomenological ego is well summarized in the poem, "Foreword," which demonstrates the contents discussed thus far and, considering the above discussion, allows us to relate its meaning to the features of the phenomenological ego: "Wishing not to have / so much as a speck of shame / toward heaven until the day I die, / I suffered, even when the wind stirred the leaves. / With my heart singing to the stars, / I shall love all things that are dying. / And I must walk the road / that has been given to me. / (Second stanza) Tonight, again, the stars are / brushed by the wind" (Yun 2003, 1). Although everything has an end in death, the starting point of practice toward a better life is "love," as the poem says. Self-reflection and renewal are realized through love and the act of loving ourselves, the other, and all living things enriches our lives. If the most urgent task of our times is to answer the question "What is a human

life?" Yun and Husserl suggest that the practice of love is the answer.

In this study, we examined Yun's poetry through the lens of Husserl's phenomenology and found that the characteristics of the phenomenological self were also present in Yun's work. If phenomenology is a crucial part of Western contemporary continental philosophy, the similarity between Yun and Husserl informs us that Yun's works can create meaning not only for Koreans or Northeast Asians but also for Westerners. Yun's ego-understanding, called "the aesthetics of shame" is not essentially different from Husserl's understanding of the phenomenological ego. Although Yun's various works have been partially examined, we examined his various poems to reveal the features of the phenomenological ego. Yun and Husserl commonly require continuous renewal toward a positive future through self-reflection. The attitude of trying to enrich one's life without losing hope amid hardship makes humans more dignified. The ethical life that Husserl and Yun pursue is a life that continuously looks back on itself and strives toward a better ideal. In such efforts, the two thinkers are convinced that we can find a direction and salvation in life and in such a demand, we can find the direction of life emphasized by the two thinkers. In other words, we are calling for the practice of an ethical life to enrich our own lives, even in the dark realities of today's pandemic situation.

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