

Chapter 7

Transcendental Phenomenology?

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Husserl's characterization of phenomenology as a transcendental philosophy has been criticized and rejected from the very beginning. Although the first generation of post-Husserlian phenomenologists, such as the members of the Göttingen School, Scheler, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, had different reasons for questioning the transcendental character of phenomenology, they all rejected the idea of a transcendental constituting egoic consciousness that is disclosed by means of the phenomenological reduction and questioned the related phenomenological idealism. With some notable exceptions, the next generation of phenomenologists mostly avoided the issue in an effort to defend the significance of Husserl's philosophy. As a consequence, no critical appraisal of the validity of these earlier critiques of Husserl's transcendental philosophy has been developed and there has been little attempt to gauge the relevance of Husserl's phenomenology of transcendental consciousness for future phenomenological thought. This double neglect threatens the continuation of Husserlian phenomenology. One cannot claim to work within the tradition of Husserl's philosophy if one has not engaged with the central ideas of the eidetic reduction, the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, constituting intentional consciousness, the transcendental subject, and the status of a phenomenological eidetic science. However, such an engagement is only critical if one does not presuppose that phenomenology should necessarily commit to being a transcendental philosophy and that a contemporary transcendental philosophy is only possible in the form of phenomenology.

On the one hand, the Marburg Neo-Kantians developed a new, un-phenomenological transcendental philosophy according to which the egoic-subjective accomplishments of knowledge are necessary and *logical* conditions of knowledge, though not phenomena that can be *intuitively* investigated. According to this account, the conditions of experience are the conditions of objects of experience, but these

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conditions themselves are not objects of experience. Consequently, the challenge for a *phenomenological* transcendental philosophy consists in showing that subjective and constituting consciousness is intuitively accessible and can be evidently given. This is the task of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, which turns away from a pure logical determination of transcendental cognitive accomplishments.

On the other hand, a phenomenology without transcendental philosophy first took shape as a pure descriptive phenomenological psychology and also as an existential phenomenology, which replaces the subjectivity of pure constituting consciousness by the facticity of world-experiencing and self-experiencing bodily life. In order to counter these currents in phenomenology, which were already present during Husserl's lifetime, Husserl again appeals to the phenomenological-transcendental reduction. This time, the reduction is meant to prevent transcendental philosophy from sliding into a phenomenological *empiricism*, that is, an "anthropologism" or "naturalism." Whether Husserl correctly estimated the danger of such a phenomenological empiricism and whether the philosophy of the early Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty can be rightfully characterized as phenomenology turning its back on transcendental phenomenology and as phenomenology's fall into empiricism is not discussed here. In any case, as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty already saw, the confrontation between transcendental phenomenology and the so-called philosophy of existence concerns the characterization and necessity of the eidetic and transcendental-phenomenological reductions. As usual, it is important to select carefully the criticisms one addresses. For example, the accentuation of the bodily nature of consciousness and its anonymous passivity or facticity as well as the insistence on the pragmatic character of lived experience would challenge Husserl, the transcendental phenomenologist, far less than the insistence on the necessary world-relatedness of the transcendental-constituting subject or on the constitutive accomplishments of the horizon of the world.

The Phenomena of Phenomenology

What *all* phenomenologists have in common is a certain style of doing philosophy in which the unprejudiced engagement with "the things themselves" or with the intuitive "experience" of the things themselves carries more weight than conceptual constructions and logically consistent argumentation. That is, for phenomenology, the real criterion of truth lies in the proper access to the phenomena, the phenomenological relevance of these phenomena, and their pertinent linguistic expression. This implies a phenomenological intuitionism that succumbs neither to the myth of immediate givenness (cf. Bernet 2003, pp. 153–166), nor to dialectics in its consideration of the historical, linguistic, and social mediation of the access to the phenomena.

What is a phenomenological phenomenon? A first helpful indication can be taken from the observation that there are no natural scientific phenomena and that, strictly speaking, there cannot be any. The objective facts and real states of affairs

that are experimentally observed by the physicist and that serve as the basis on which natural scientific laws are formulated are not phenomena. One can only speak of a true phenomenon when something shows itself as what it is and how it is according to its own way of being. What shows itself as a phenomenon does not only have to show itself from itself, it also has to be given to somebody *hic et nunc* – both belong together. The question of whether we should understand the self-givenness of what appears primarily from the side of the thing rather than from the side of the human conduct that first enables this self-givenness is secondary. There is no original phenomenon without something objective that gives itself and without a dative of this givenness. With Husserl, we can characterize this interrelation as the *subject-relativity* of objective self-givenness without therefore having to commit to a specific notion of this subject. Further, one must also point to the fact that there are phenomena in which something shows itself by means of something else as well as phenomena in which what shows itself shows itself in a disguised manner or differently than how it truly is.

Before phenomenology can take on the task of more precisely characterizing the appearing of the phenomena, the presuppositions of this appearing, and the method of its scientific investigation, it first has to be shown that such phenomena even exist. But why is this necessary? It is because scientific objectivism pervades our way of thinking and our natural life at large. Consequently, the first step towards phenomenology necessarily consists in questioning the universal validity of the ontology of scientific objectivism by means of pointing to the subject-relative phenomena that already surface within the practice of natural science itself. This is the way that Husserl took in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* and it is this way that today more than ever appears as the only appropriate one for a beginning phenomenology. That is, in the current philosophical context, a phenomenology that starts from the apodictic self-givenness of intentional consciousness and that indicates its transcendental-constitutive accomplishments and the implied idealism is hardly convincing. Thus, even before one ventures into phenomenology, one should already have parted with Cartesianism.

Although phenomenology is only concerned with the subject-relative way things are given, there is no reason to think that only phenomenology can disclose such phenomena. That is, one does not need to be a phenomenologist to discern the subject-relative meaning of the personal pronoun “I,” the occasional expressions “here” and “now,” or color-predicates and other so-called “secondary qualities.” Even if there are no objective phenomena, there are plenty of *pre-phenomenological* phenomena that relate to how things show themselves to us and how they, in their appearance, depend on one’s *subjective point of view* (cf. McGinn 1983). Consequently, one can only speak of a phenomenological philosophy when *all* things, states of affairs, and cultural accomplishments or institutions are investigated with respect to their subject-relative way of being given. To contemplate the way that *all* objects we deal with are given to us is an unnatural and reflective undertaking that requires a specific effort or “phenomenological attitude.” Thus, truly *phenomenological* phenomena only appear once I decide to investigate each

and every real or possible object in its way of being given to me and other subjects. This is the ultimate meaning of the “phenomenological reduction,” without which it does not make sense to speak of phenomenological phenomena or phenomenology.

Before one can say something about phenomenology as a science of phenomenological phenomena, these phenomena must be further described. More particularly, the subject as the dative of givenness, the mode and circumstances of different forms of givenness, and what precedes and follows a certain givenness deserve further clarification. These different issues are so intricately connected that they cannot be treated separately without doing injustice to the essence of the phenomenological phenomena. That is, whether one conceives of the subject or dative of phenomenological givenness as a pure Ego (Husserl), as Dasein (Heidegger), as subjective lived-body (Merleau-Ponty), or as the one who is questioned by and affirms oneself in answering to the event of an alien appeal or overabundant gift (Levinas, Waldenfels, and Marion), depends on how one understands the mode and circumstances of the givenness of the phenomena.

On a pre-transcendental level, none of the later developed accounts of the subject of givenness are incompatible with Husserl’s phenomenology. That is, Husserl himself was already well acquainted with the phenomenon of directing oneself to and grasping an anterior or pre-given meaningfulness as well as with the experience of a loss of meaning that one passively undergoes. Further, Husserl was also familiar with the fact that the meaning of a “spiritual” (i.e. cultural) object only discloses itself in an effective and practical handling of it. Furthermore, Husserl explicitly characterizes the referential nexus of these objects as a “spiritual world” with which subjective life is so intricately interwoven that this world is designated as its “life-world.” Similarly, Husserl’s analyses of the sensuous field of appearance in its relation to a bodily subject of perception with its “here,” its bodily capabilities of sensing, and the free kinesthetic capability to move are already developed in the most subtle detail.

Basing oneself on Husserl’s manuscripts, one could endlessly enumerate the riches of Husserl’s phenomenological descriptions of different subjective forms of conduct and of the different ways that phenomena of various kinds are given without thereby encountering any points of disagreement with the analyses of other phenomenologists. Consequently, if there is disagreement, then it must be attributed to Husserl not having addressed certain more specific phenomenological phenomena or to his method of doing phenomenology and its presuppositions. As will appear in the following, these disagreements are all related to Husserl’s characterization of the transcendental egoic subject as both constituting and phenomenologizing subject.

Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology and Its Opponents

How Husserl understands the transcendental subject is primarily and essentially determined by his understanding of transcendental constitution (*and not the other way around*). Consequently, the concept of *constitution* is fundamental for

Husserl's idea of transcendental phenomenology. Most minimally understood, transcendental constitution means that whatever appears to me, appears to me *as* something. This "as" can be further differentiated into a "what" and a "how" or "that" – to speak with Husserl, into the meaning (*Sinn*) and the mode of being (*Seinsweise*) or ontological validity (*Seinsgeltung*) of the intentional object. The *meaning* of something that appears bears witness to a process of sense-formation (*Sinnbildung*); its ontological validity can be presumptive or demonstrated, depending on the way in which the (empty or intuitively fulfilled) process of constitution is accomplished. Sense-formation and the justification of validity are mostly incremental processes, which are preferably realized in the form of a proper and pertinent as well as intuitive and coherent synthetic experience of the "as" determinations of the appearing unitary objectivity.

Thus, a minimal understanding of transcendental constitution emphasizes the interlocking or *correlation* of subjective experience, on the one hand, and the determination of the object's meaning and mode of being, on the other. With regard to both sides of the correlation, the phenomenologist asks how unity is formed on the basis of multiplicities. In this first account of transcendental constitution, all questions concerning the essence of the appearing objectivity, the experiencing subject, or the active and passive course of the synthetic processes of sense-formation and of the justification of its validity are left open. This first and widest understanding of the constitutional process in terms of the *function* of sense-formation and of justification of objective modes of being entails, for any phenomenologist, an inclination towards transcendental phenomenology. In addition, one cannot contest that the phenomenological understanding of this constitutional process directs us, on the one hand, towards a single kind of objectivity and, on the other, to a subject of conduct that either accomplishes or undergoes, that creates, receives, or answers some kind of givenness (regardless of how one further determines this subject).

It seems that in their refutation of the very idea of a transcendental process of constitution, Husserl's successors were all too focused on the question of the nature of the *transcendental subject* and consequently either neglected the other characterizations of constitution or linked the idea of constitution too closely to a certain idea of the subject. In any case, it is certain that most of Husserl's successors either underestimated or simply misunderstood the plasticity and vitality of Husserl's understanding of the subject and the way in which it is taken up in the process of constitution. According to Husserl, the subject is a subject of an experience that can be actively accomplished or passively undergone, that can originally instate meaning or assume the meaning instated by tradition, that is rooted in a bodily motility or captivated by spiritual insights, and that can be aware of itself or live in self-forgetfulness. In all these different modes of experience, a kind of intentional consciousness is operative. This intentional consciousness extends far beyond the act of instating meaning and the act of positing ontological validity. That is, besides the active syntheses, there are also passive and, in a certain sense, "unconscious" syntheses of constitution or sense-formation. Moreover, the active syntheses rest upon various appearances that were not produced by these syntheses themselves and that might even contradict active anticipations and objectives. To state that

Husserl equates transcendental constituting consciousness with the self-affirmation of a self-secure subject and that, consequently, he would not be able to account for the experience of the unforeseeable and the new appears to the reader of Husserl's writings as some kind of biased prejudice rather than a simple misunderstanding.

No phenomenological analysis of sense-formation and of the appearing of objective modes of being can do without some kind of consciousness or experience and without some kind of experiencing subject. Like Husserl's understanding of the experiencing subject is by no means exhausted by the Cartesian idea of the *ego cogito*, the constituted *objectivity* is also not a mere *cogitatum* or object of thought. Without a sensuous support, ideal objectivities can barely be thought; likewise, what appears to the senses captivates the experiencing subject in such a way that what appears rarely stands before one as an object that is merely present at hand (*vorhanden*). For example, when experiencing a value-feeling, the appearing objectivity is suffused with this subjective feeling to such an extent that an all-embracing mood might arise in which the sky is experienced as happy and my state of mind as clouded.

Husserl discerns a similar form of reciprocity in the conscious experience of one's own willing and acting. When the subject willingly issues its "*fiat*" and initiates an action, it does so on the basis of its valuation of the anticipated result of this action and not in a merely arbitrary or impulsive way. Thus, for Husserl, there are all kinds of objects and objective modes of being. Husserl was never concerned with merely "staring at" (*Begaffen*) and trivially describing what is present at hand and detached from its context (Heidegger 1996, p. 57). On the contrary, what appears and how it appears depends on a network of intentional implications that connects what appears in the foreground with what co-appears in the background or remains concealed. Further, what appears and how it appears depends on the behavior of the one to whom it reveals itself in appearing. Just as there are as many kinds of subjectivity as there are kinds of experience, there are, for Husserl, as many kinds of objectivity as there are kinds of objects experienced. Due to their correlation, kinds of experience and kinds of the experienced are tied up with one another in such a way that one cannot have one without the other.

Nevertheless, according to post-Husserlian phenomenologists, there is a three-fold limitation to the very idea of *intentional correlation* and the related idea of transcendental constitution. A *first* limitation is that not all phenomena *require* a subjective-constitutive sense-bestowal in order to appear meaningfully. The key example of such an a-subjective meaningfulness is the way in which something that is perceived organizes itself into a meaningful, coherent "*gestalt*." Other phenomenologists, inspired by Heidegger, have pointed to phenomena such as "*events*," which do not require a subjective sense-bestowal and are even *inaccessible* to such a bestowal. In contrast to gestalt-like configurations, events are not experienced objectivities. Moreover, their meaningfulness or lack thereof cannot be traced back to a subjective constitutive accomplishment, not even a passive one. A *second* limitation of Husserl's concept of constitution is that it does not fully capture the *reciprocity* between the constituting and the constituted. As long as one, like Husserl, insists that transcendental consciousness is not of this world and can be without a world, one cannot understand how what is experienced prescribes to this

consciousness the possibility and modes of its experiencing just as much as consciousness does with regard to the experienced. A *third* limitation of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is implied in his characterization of the point of view from which the phenomenologist observes the ongoing process of the constitution of the world. In this respect, Husserl is reproached for not having accounted for the phenomenologist being taken up in the factual course of the experience of the world and for the limitation of the phenomenologist's insight into the essence of the phenomenal world.

(A) Husserl's phenomenology is not defenseless against the *first objection*. The insights of Gestalt Psychology that were taken up by Gurwitsch and Merleau-Ponty are only in conflict with a rather specific egological interpretation of the process of constitution. Only an idealist that confuses appearances for unrelated impressions in which meaning can only arise by means of the application of subjective concepts of the understanding could be thrown off by the insight that perceptual appearances have a meaning and that the constitution of their meaning is co-determined by the empirical relations between shape and background and by the perceptual circumstances determined by illumination, spatial distance, etc. Husserl's concept of intentionality, which leads him to think of what appears and its subjective experience in terms of an original and insoluble unity, already prevents him from being such an idealist.

Of course, there are sense-formations in which the subject gives sense to an incomprehensible givenness. Similarly, there are sense-formations that arise out of a current empirical nexus of appearances and belong to the phenomena themselves. Finally, there are transcendental conditions for the formation of sense that are not subjective and that Cassirer terms "symbolic forms" (cf. Bernet 2010, pp. 41–58). Such symbolic forms of a possible meaningfulness precede each and every subjective conduct and understanding. These forms allow what appears to be meaningful in different ways and to be understood subjectively in different ways. What does not and cannot occur is either a givenness of sense without subjective experience or a subjective sense-formation that can refrain from directing itself towards pre-given phenomena since both would be in conflict with the thought of correlation implied in the transcendental concept of constitution.

In its first formulation, the objection against an exclusively subjective sense-bestowal still refers to the meaningful formation of *objective* phenomena, such as *gestalts*. In its second formulation, however, the objection calls upon *events* that are no longer objectivities. Even though events are indeed not objects, one should reply to this objection that Husserl's transcendental consideration of the correlation is not concerned with objective entities, but with phenomena; that is, Husserl's analyses are concerned with what is experienced in the way in which it gives itself experientially to the one that experiences. In the case of the experiential givenness of a *meaningful* event, it may indeed often be difficult to differentiate between the meaning created by the event in how it reveals itself, on the one hand, and the meaning that the experiencing subject contributes, on the other. Husserl tries to account for this by distinguishing subjective and intersubjective, passive and active processes of constitution that can be accomplished in the form of original

institutions (*Urstiftung*) and re-institutions (*Nachstiftung*) or that can be motivated by the referential horizon of experience and the horizon of the experienced. Only the extreme and opposite phenomena in which an event, a state of affairs, or a cultural object are either too full of sense or devoid of any sense challenge the correctly understood constitutive accomplishment of sense-bestowal.

Phenomena of the first kind are (religious) revelations, evocative references to unsurveyable contexts, and works of art. In all these phenomena, more meaning appears and is given to the subject than it can grasp, let alone constitute by itself. Phenomena of the second kind are events devoid of sense. In the extreme case, such an experience of a meaningless event can lead to a psychic trauma for the subject. Such traumatic events, in their meaningless givenness, certainly do not refer to an already accomplished subjective sense-bestowal. The meaning that is lacking in such events and that is unavailable to the subject can at best be bestowed after the event. As Freud already pointed out, in the cases in which a bestowal of meaning succeeds, it is hard to distinguish between the contribution of the subsequent association of the traumatic event with other events, on the one hand, and the always limited subjective understanding of the traumatic event, on the other (cf. Bernet 2000, pp. 160–179).

However, such a neat distinction is neither fruitful nor necessary. For Husserl, constitution as sense-formation means that something in its appearing makes sense for an experiencing subject and not that the subject would independently create this sense. For as long as one does not loosen the bond that connects the transcendental concept of constitution with the concept of intentional correlation, every sense-formation is the result of a *reciprocity* between experiential understanding and the organized coherence of what appears. However, this does not imply that all phenomena and events are open for such a reciprocal sense-bestowal. Indeed, there are phenomenological phenomena that withstand such a transcendental constitutive accomplishment. Consequently, there exists a phenomenological access to such phenomena that cannot be integrated into the framework of a transcendental phenomenology. In other words, a phenomenology *before* and *beyond* a transcendental philosophy is possible. Contrary to the phenomenological reduction, the concept of a transcendental constitutional accomplishment cannot claim phenomenological universality. The fact that there are such senseless phenomena or events characterized by an overabundance of sense is, however, not only due to the nature of the transcendental subject, but also due to the phenomena themselves, and most often to both the phenomena and the subject.

(B) According to more recent phenomenologists, a *second limitation* of Husserl's phenomenology becomes apparent when one takes seriously the *reciprocity* that is implied in the concept of a transcendental constitution. Reciprocity would then mean the essential belonging (or dependency) not only of the constituted to the constituting, but also of the constituting to the constituted. Applied to intersubjectivity, for example, this would mean that I am constituted in my subjectivity by the other as much as I constitute the other's meaning-for-me. When one generally designates the realm of the constituted as "world," then the nature of a world-experiencing subject would be determined by the world as much as the sense of the world is determined by the transcendental subject that constitutes this world.

Such a back and forth of the correlative relation of constitution entails that transcendental constituting consciousness has to be understood in terms of the subject's being-in-the-world. However, on the basis of his theory of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, Husserl firmly rejects this possibility and discredits it as a lapse into anthropologism. Husserl's conception of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction seems to rest upon the conviction that the consciousness of the givenness of mundane things cannot itself be a mundane thing. In truth, no phenomenologist would seriously want to make this claim.

Rather, the point that *Heidegger* makes against Husserl is that even though the consciousness of givenness is not a thing, it is nevertheless essentially world-related. Heidegger's objection is made on the basis of the consideration that subjective consciousness, understood as the dative of givenness or subjective point of view, is not different from the things of the objective world because of its wordlessness. Rather, Dasein is characterized by another, non-thingly-objective form of worldliness. Heidegger's consideration is supported by the double insight that, on the one hand, the world is not an objective entity and that, on the other, the point of view for which mundane things and events make sense is not to be located outside the world. It is not a worldless subject, but rather a subject that roams in the world that can acquire a sense for mundane appearances. For a subject that remains beyond the world, mundane concerns must in principle remain unintelligible.

Merleau-Ponty incessantly attempted to retranslate the early Heidegger's insightful consideration of the being-in-the-world of Dasein into the language of Husserl's transcendental philosophy. Of course, this attempt amounts to a *transformation* of phenomenological transcendental philosophy. That is, Merleau-Ponty does much more than refer to the worldliness of constituting consciousness, its bodily behavior, speaking, etc. Merleau-Ponty makes the further claim that the mundane appearances or the "flesh" of the world acquires a sense-constituting function. This claim still amounts to a transformation of *transcendental* phenomenology, however, since Husserl also increasingly became open to the thought that the transcendental subject should understand itself in light of its world-relatedness. Specifically, the given that a bodily consciousness of one's own point of view results from the way in which mundane things present themselves to us (in clarity or occultation, nearness or distance) was already clear to the young Husserl.

Consequently, the second limitation of Husserl's conception of a transcendental sense-bestowal does not have much to do with a supposedly Cartesian understanding of consciousness or a Kantian conception of the subject. Rather, it concerns Husserl's thesis that constituting consciousness is (at least) in principle independent from the world that it constitutes. The second question that Husserl's successors raised against his transcendental philosophy thus ultimately concerns the meaning of the phenomenological reduction, which opens up the (worldly or otherworldly?) point of view from and for which everything turns into a phenomenological phenomenon.

(C) For Husserl, the reduction is "transcendental-phenomenological" because this reduction aims to make the transcendental processes of constitution accessible for phenomenological analysis. Transcendental phenomenology's phenomenon is not just the subject-relative givenness of mundane objectivities. In the end, its

phenomenon is the constitutive process of sense-formation and the revelation of the mode of being of all objectivity as partaking in the correlation between the event of appearance and what appears. Moreover, transcendental phenomenology does not stop at the *description* of this correlative constitutive relation since it investigates this correlation epistemologically as to its *truth value* or *truth making*. Transcendental phenomenology examines how one understands the meaning and the mode of being of an objectivity and, more precisely, whether this understanding accords to the way in which the objectivity gives itself and whether this understanding does justice to its givenness or not. That is, a transcendental phenomenology is careful not to measure the truth of the meaning and being of a phenomenon with a standard that does not comply to the nature of the appearing objectivities in question. So, for example, while transcendental phenomenology strives towards apodictically valid expressions about transcendental constitutional connections, it refrains from making apodictic statements about the existence of perspectively given mundane things.

However, Husserl still believes that the grounds of merely provisional or inadequate truth claims can be adequately grasped and can be formulated scientifically in an apodictic manner. It is here that we encounter the *third limitation* that divides Husserl from his phenomenological successors. Specifically, Husserl's critics do not only inquire into the (outerwordly or wordly) point of view out of which phenomena make sense, but also into the point of view of the phenomenologist who assesses the nature and justification of their ontological sense. Their critical question amounts to whether the phenomenologist can claim an absolute point of view that enables him to formulate apodictic scientific propositions even about forms of partial and presumptive experience. In other words, Husserl's successors question whether the transcendental phenomenologizing phenomenologist can detach himself from the finitude characteristic of the experiences that he analyses and totally rid himself of the muteness characteristic of the experiences he brings to expression. If the phenomenologist cannot distance himself in this manner and if the very idea of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction is to legitimize such an ability, then, according to the opinion of the more recent phenomenologists, the extent of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction should be limited. This is indeed what Merleau-Ponty has in mind when he claims in *Phenomenology of Perception*: "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (Merleau-Ponty 2003, p. xv).

The Questioning, Intuiting, and World Acquainted Phenomenologist

In order to give a closer treatment of the third critique of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, we must first eliminate some misunderstandings and ambiguities. One must be cautious since the third limitation concerns the kernel of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology: the nature of a reduction of all phenomena to the

point of view of a subject that no longer experiences the world after having become the phenomenologizing phenomenologist. What is questioned in this third critique is not only Husserl's characterization of the relation between the transcendental subject and the subject of natural life, but also his characterization of the relation between the world-constituting transcendental subject and the phenomenologizing transcendental subject. In addition, this critique inquires more closely into Husserl's characterization of doing phenomenology and the resulting science of the laws of possible appearance, that is, the science of the relation between consciousness and world.

Like any other genuine philosopher, the Husserlian phenomenologist distances himself from natural life by an attitude of systematic *questioning*. The one who questions, necessarily practices a kind of *epoché* with regard to what is questioned. The epoché thus does not simply consist in a general attitude of reservation or abstinence; rather, the epoché must constantly be accomplished anew and this active accomplishment is essential to the deliberate activity of questioning. When performing the *phenomenological* reduction, one asks how and the way in which all kinds of objectivities are given. The radicality of this questioning is measured by the extent to which the one questioning can free himself from prejudices about what these intentional objectivities are beyond how they give themselves. Under the *transcendental*-phenomenological reduction that follows this epoché, one further questions how such phenomenal objectivities can acquire a unitary sense and confirmed mode of being in the interplay between subjective intention and mundane appearing. The one asking in this way asks into the void or without being guided by preconceived logical and ontological categories of objective sense and being. Only in doing so can it be guaranteed that the objects become phenomena and that the world becomes the universal horizon of all phenomena.

However one characterizes life in the natural attitude, like, for example, in its relation to scientific objectivism, it is certain that this life is engaged with mundane things, tied up in mundane situations, and grounded in the belief in the existence of the world. Only the shift to the phenomenological-transcendental attitude makes one attentive to the fact that what is meaningfully and validly pre-given and taken for granted in natural life is essentially co-determined by active and passive modes of subjective behavior. To speak with Heidegger, only the phenomenological reduction opens one to the transcendence and disclosedness of Dasein as the fundament of natural life and concern. This new, phenomenological insight into the hidden fundamental structures of natural life and the insight into the transcendental processes of constitution implicit in this life lead to another insight, namely into the one-sidedness and ungrounded presuppositions of natural life. Phenomenological reflection does not only light up a hidden dimension of experience; it also leads to a critique of the ungrounded prejudices of natural life. However, the question immediately arises whether this means that the new phenomenological life distances itself from natural life to such an extent that it, in a certain sense, turns away from this natural life. Further, the question has to be raised of how the phenomenological investigation of the *essence* of the transcendental correlation of constituting and constituted relates to the actual *enactment* of these constitutional accomplishments.

The clearest answer to these questions is given by Fink and not by Husserl or Heidegger. According to Fink, the task of the phenomenologist consists in reflectively thematizing the transcendental processes of constitution that are implicitly operative in and that govern natural life. The transcendental subject that implicitly reigns over this natural life constitutes the world. As a *world-constituting* subject, this subject is essentially world-related. However, as a *transcendental* constituting subject, it cannot itself be something mundane, that is, something belonging to the constituted world. While the transcendental subject as world-constituting subject is unworldly though still related to the world, for Fink, this is not the case for the phenomenologizing subject. The phenomenologist, as observer of the process of the constitution of the world by the transcendental subject, is only interested in the accomplishments of this subject and in the way in which it constitutes the world. According to Fink, this means that the phenomenologizing subject has lost all interest in the world. Consequently, the phenomenologist as impartial onlooker of the constitution of the world practices a double epoché. On the one hand, the phenomenologist does not partake in the belief in the world that characterizes natural life and, on the other hand, he does not partake in the constitution of the world accomplished by the transcendental subject that he observes (Fink 1995).

While Fink's proposal stands out for its clarity, it lacks the complexity of both Husserl and Heidegger's account. One has the impression that Fink wants to give both Heidegger and Husserl their due and consequently does not do justice to either one of them. On the one hand, Heidegger's fundamental ontology of being-in-the-world is far more than a description of the implicit fundamental structures of natural life. On the other hand, Husserl's phenomenological onlooker is far too involved with the process of world-constitution to be able to give up any interest in the world.

Heidegger's fundamental ontology is, indeed, by no means limited to a phenomenological description of being-in-the-world. On the contrary, his ontology aims to reach the attitude in which the meaning of all being is made phenomenologically accessible out of the experience of the meaning of one's own human Da-sein. Even if it is true that the status of the *phenomenologizing* Dasein received too little attention in *Being and Time*, it is nevertheless clear that, according to Heidegger, the practice of phenomenology is grounded in a specific, world-related and self-related mode of existence of Dasein. According to Heidegger, the phenomenological attitude is different from the attitude of natural life not because of the inhibition of all world-directedness, but because the phenomenologist attempts to disclose phenomenologically and from an extreme point of view the being-in-the-world of Dasein in its totality and fundamental dimensions. The phenomenological insight into the fundamental structure of Dasein as care is arrived at through the phenomenon of temporalization; further, the phenomenological insight into the wholeness of Dasein is arrived at through its being-towards-death.

Thus, according to Heidegger, in determining the being of Dasein, the phenomenologist builds upon *existentiell* experiences, which he does not leave behind when entering into his far-reaching *existential*-ontological investigations. Heidegger's phenomenologist is, of course, more interested in man's authentic way of living his own life than in his concern for mundane things. Nevertheless, this new attitude

or existentially accomplished way of living by no means implies a breaking away from the world or a victory over the finitude and mortality of the phenomenologist. Because of the world-relatedness of the phenomenological insight into the being of Dasein and because of the phenomenologist experiencing his own being-towards-death, for Heidegger, phenomenological knowledge of the being of human life is modeled after Aristotelean *phronesis* rather than *sophia*.

Fink's characterization of the impartial phenomenological onlooker also does not do full justice to *Husserl's* intentions. If one takes a closer look at what a specifically phenomenological observation of the constitution of the world could mean, then both the distanced impartiality of the phenomenologist as well as his mere observing become problematic. That is, phenomenological reflection on the life that constitutes the world is a reflection of a peculiar kind. When performing such reflection, one does not only reflect on consciousness, but also on the various forms of the correlation between consciousness and world. Thus, phenomenological reflection explicates or thematizes transcendental processes of constitution, that is, the processes of sense-bestowal and ontological determination arising out of the interplay between subjective openness and phenomenal givenness. The phenomenologist opens a window that sees out upon the previously hidden processes of constitution as they factually unfold. Of course, the phenomenologist does not constitute a (new) world; nevertheless, the new insight into the hidden processes of the constitution of the world absorbs the phenomenologist to such an extent that he leans far out of his window in order to see the meaningfulness of the world in a new way.

That is, the phenomenological onlooker is not located in an absolute and remote observation post. Rather, he is affected by what he sees, for example, the failure of a process of constitution. His insight into the factually unfolding transcendental processes of constitution is also limited. More precisely, there is even more that escapes the grasp of the phenomenologist than the grasp of the naturally experiencing subject. There is, indeed, much that makes perfect sense within our natural lives for which the phenomenologist cannot provide a clarification. There are several kinds of transcendental constitutional accomplishments or sense-formations that unfold passively and are possibly unconscious. These accomplishments do not allow for a complete thematization and, consequently, they even remain invisible to the attentive phenomenologist. What and to what extent the phenomenological observer manages to see intuitively and make understandable in phenomenological reflection does not only depend on his vigilance and strength of vision, but is also determined by the extent to which the phenomena themselves reveal their nature. The liberation of the phenomenologist from the blindness of natural life does not imply that he would be able to completely and finally see through all the processes of constitution that remain hidden to this natural life. While the shift from the natural to the phenomenological life that the epoché and the phenomenological reduction enable, in a certain sense, occurs in one movement, the elucidation of natural life and its life-world poses an infinite task for the phenomenologist.

With respect to the intuitive character of phenomenological reflection, one should consequently distinguish between the opening up of a new form of

visibility and that which effectively becomes visible when entering this new dimension. The opening up of a new dimension of phenomenal givenness is unquestionably the accomplishment of the phenomenological reduction. This reduction, however, by no means implies a phenomenological translucency or the possibility of a total phenomenological reflection. Rather, the intuitive character of phenomenological reflection entails that this reflection cannot precede the factual course of transcendental-constituting life and by necessity always trails behind this life. His a priori knowledge about the presuppositions or essential structures of a process of transcendental sense-formation does not prevent the phenomenologist from being surprised by unexpected and even largely unintelligible events of sense. Phenomenological insight into transcendental processes of constitution is itself a factual occurrence that is not to be construed after the fact as a *necessary* consequence of the accomplishment of the phenomenological reduction. It is by keeping this in mind that one can avoid that the lively thematization of the dynamics of constitutional processes solidifies into a distanced and impartial objectivation or fixation of rigid structures.

Phenomenology as an Eidetic Science of Transcendental Consciousness

The seeing of the phenomenologist does not only depend on the factual course of the processes of his world-experience; it also depends on the specificity and potentiality of the mundane objectivities and their horizons of reference. Remaining interested in the complexity of mundane phenomena, the phenomenologist will also always try to influence the world-constituting life and initiate processes of new sense-formation. Even if, according to Husserl, the pure theoretical practice of phenomenology cannot be a constituting being-in-the-world, it is nevertheless still a temporally situated and factual philosophical mode of existence that gives new impulses to the course of natural life. The phenomenologist returning from the philosophical attitude to the natural attitude will, for example, become suspicious of the presuppositions of natural scientific objectivism. Conversely, in his philosophizing, the phenomenologist will take objective scientific facts and theories into account in order to investigate transcendental nexuses of constitution that were thus far overlooked. On the basis of his insight into the constitutional nexuses, the phenomenologist will subsequently subject scientific claims to a critical philosophical scrutiny.

Thus, when Fink denies the phenomenologist any interest in worldly matters, one should disagree. As both Husserl and Heidegger concede, the interest in the transcendental *constitution* of the world is not to be severed from the interest in this *world*. However, Fink was not entirely on the wrong track since a certain ambiguity indeed characterizes the attitude of the Husserlian phenomenologist. This ambiguity does not arise out of the radical difference between the disinterested phenomenological onlooker and the world-constituting transcendental subject. The

ambiguity that one encounters time and again in Husserl's work concerns the characterization of phenomenology as both a science of experience and a science of essence.

As a science of experience, phenomenology applies itself to the reflective elucidation of factual, hidden transcendental processes of constitution. However, as a universal phenomenological science, its interest is exclusively directed at the general essence of these constitutional processes. While the characterization of the phenomenologist as disinterested onlooker goes against the phenomenologist's interest in the world, it accurately applies to the phenomenologist that is only interested in formulating a general theory of the essence of the constitution of the world as such. While the phenomenologist that engages in the factual course of world-constituting life is after the hidden *phronesis* of natural life and the renewal of this *phronesis*, a phenomenological eidetic science dwells in an attitude of pure theoretical contemplation. As a science of principles or first philosophy, phenomenology is a *sophia* concerned with the general determination of its object, with the systematic order of its eidetic insights, and with the question of the truth of its own knowledge-acquisitions.

Nevertheless, the eidetic laws of a phenomenological science of principles are laws concerning the general forms of transcendental correlative connections between intentional subjective experiences and their corresponding objective phenomena. For example, the eidetic law that a spatial thing necessarily appears in adumbrations does not in the first place express an ontological feature of the thing. Rather, this law concerns the phenomenological mode of givenness of an object to an embodied experiencing subject. Conversely, the eidetic law that consciousness is by necessity temporal also says something about the temporality or omnitemporality of the consciously intended objectivities. Phenomenological eidetic laws both concern a priori forms of the appearance of objectivities for a subject and a priori forms of the intentional subjective directedness at objectivities. Specific transcendental phenomenological eidetic laws concern the necessary condition for the constitution of a unitary object in the stream of its appearances as well as the necessary conditions for the unitary coherence of subjective experiences.

It is undeniable that the a priori necessary validity of such formal eidetic laws goes hand in hand with a loss of phenomenal experiential content. Both the empirical facticity of psycho-physical human consciousness and the objective facticity of natural scientific matters of fact that are valid in themselves were already sacrificed in the *phenomenological* reduction. The facticity that an *eidetic* reduction and a phenomenological eidetic science leave behind is the *phenomenological* facticity of factually accomplished experience or factually unfolding processes of constitution. The phenomenologist who is interested in the development of an absolutely valid and universal phenomenological science no longer follows the course of his experiences. Rather, he devotes himself to the study of different forms of experience and their epistemological advantages and disadvantages. He becomes an impartial observer of his own transcendental experiences to such an extent that his factual experience is nothing more than a mode of possible experience for him. In this way, the phenomenologist also becomes the impartial

observer of himself since his own individuality only amounts to an instantiation of the general essence of a phenomenologizing ego. Thus, the phenomenologist as author of scientific affirmations about phenomenological eidetic laws becomes an absolute subject that ascertains the essence of experiences that no longer personally concern him.

Obviously, Husserl is aware that this absolute, transcendental-phenomenological eidetic science and this interchangeable phenomenologist cannot exist in pure form. First, it should be underlined that in addition to an *absolute* phenomenological science there also exists something like a *descriptive* phenomenological science that is also *eidetic*. The essence of transcendental consciousness as such in its relation to the essence of the world as such that an absolute phenomenology targets is not the same as the essential states of affairs that a descriptive phenomenology investigates. Second, even an absolute phenomenology might not possibly succeed in finally determining every relevant state of affairs in the form of apodictically valid eidetic laws. Third, the impartial phenomenological onlooker still has to rely on his own, individual and factual experiences in order to formulate phenomenological eidetic laws. That is, even though an experience of the general is possible, there are no general experiences.

Even as a remote and unattainable ideal, the very idea of an *absolute* phenomenological eidetic science weighs heavily on the conscience of a phenomenological researcher. Of course, he might give credit to the ideal of appropriateness in addition to the ideal of apodicticity like he might allow for objective types and subjective styles of experience in addition to exact essences. He might also be aware that phenomenological eidetic laws are related to the possibility of factual courses of experience and that the impartial onlooker is always still an actual individual subject. Nevertheless, the honest phenomenologist cannot but acknowledge that the aim of formulating apodictically necessary eidetic laws possibly covers up the phenomenological relevance of many unique phenomena and subjects all phenomena to an objectivation that possibly constrains their phenomenality.

Even a *descriptive* phenomenological eidetic science reaches a limit when the meaning of the factual experience it investigates does not allow for a generalization. The best example of this is certainly the phenomenon of history. However, Husserl's tentative statements concerning the philosophy of history are not to be found in his genetic phenomenology. Genetic phenomenology is solely concerned with the history of transcendental consciousness, with the passive motivation of its sense-bestowing accomplishments, with their habitualization by means of the development of a personal style of experiencing, and with a genealogical elucidation of pre-given sense-formations by means of retracing the original sense-bestowal, which allows for the possibility of reiterated sense-bestowals.

While an eidetic analysis of these dynamic processes inevitably goes hand in hand with a loss of material facticity and personal individuality, this genetic analysis by no means breaks the mold of a phenomenological eidetic science. On the contrary, a *genetic eidetic* phenomenology overcomes the logic of a pure static essential characterization of phenomena and opens phenomenological eidetics to the complex structures of, for example, a transcendental person and the processes of

its socialization. Contrary to such a genetic phenomenology that pursues the aims of an eidetic science to its limits, and in this way contributes to its fundamental renewal, a philosophy of history forces the phenomenologist time and again to transcend these limits. Of course, something like an essence of historical phenomena can be discerned. Nevertheless, the philosophical meaning of specific historical facts and of their historical consequences cannot be elucidated by solely relying on the essential lawfulness of a subjective consciousness. Even someone who believes that the history of the world has a meaning – not a contingent meaning, but a necessary one – has to resort to the belief in a teleologically determined *ideal* that cannot be recuperated by any phenomenological eidetics.

The phenomenological science of the essence of pure consciousness and its necessary eidetic laws does not only neglect phenomena *beyond* its domain of competence, but also phenomena that *precede* this domain. More precisely, a phenomenological eidetic science neglects the phenomena that belong to a facticity that is misleadingly called “naturalistic.” Specifically, the eidetic phenomenologist neglects the fact that the phenomena he deals with are not merely relative to a subject but also relative to a species. The subjective point of view of the phenomenologist is always a human one and not an animal or ghostlike perspective. A naturalism that attempts to ground the essence of transcendental consciousness in evolutionary events of adaptation and selection, in the nature and functioning of the human brain, or in the psychological laws of an “economy of thought” is by all means misguided. In this respect, Husserl’s arguments are still valid. Nevertheless, this need not entail that there are no natural conditions of doing phenomenology or that such conditions are irrelevant for the self-understanding of the phenomenologist.

As is well known, Husserl himself was concerned with the difference between transcendental consciousness and animal consciousness, as well as with the refutation of psycho-physical parallelism. His elaborations on this topic often result in the finding that phenomenological laws concerning the essence of transcendental consciousness can claim absolute validity while the natural scientific laws that apply to dogs and brain-functions can only claim provisional validity. In addition, from the point of view of a transcendental-phenomenological science, one can only say that the dog “co-constitutes” the world of the hunter (Husserl 1973, p. 167) and that the scientific determination of the connection between brain processes and conscious processes is not the task of the phenomenologist, but rather of the natural scientist (Bernet 2009, pp. 80–111).

Husserl is of course correct in presuming that animal consciousness is inaccessible to us and consequently cannot become a phenomenological phenomenon. However, once one widens one’s understanding of phenomenological phenomena to include the givenness of a meaningful connection between a goal directed behavior and a certain environmental situation, the expressive behavior of our fellow human beings as well as the expressive behavior of animals acquires the validity of a genuine phenomenon. In this way, the difference between human and animal behavior also becomes phenomenologically accessible and enables insight into certain natural conditions of transcendental consciousness. Nevertheless, Husserl remains correct when he writes: “The lobes of my brain do not appear to

me” (1990, p. 164). However, he does err when he thinks that the natural scientific investigation of human brain-functions would for this reason be phenomenologically irrelevant. The investigation into the difference between the functions of my living organism that can appear to me and the ones that can in principle not appear to me is a legitimate task of phenomenology. It is important to notice that what falls beyond the domain of phenomenological evidence is not therefore necessarily phenomenologically irrelevant. In this way, the question of which phenomena of human conscious are accessible to a neuro-physiological analysis and which are not cannot leave the phenomenologist indifferent. Actually, this question can only be answered by a philosophy that is acquainted with the knowledge acquisitions of empirical research. To merely call upon the a priori necessary validity of phenomenological laws of essence no longer suffices. Conversely, it is also conceivable that the phenomenological investigation of human consciousness and its bodily behavior would give new impulses to neurophysiology and could dissuade it from its atomistic presuppositions. As is well known, in his early work *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty paved the way for such a mutual enrichment (cf. Merleau-Ponty 2006; Bernet 2008).

Thus, we are able to conclude that there can be a phenomenology that does not understand itself as a phenomenology of a transcendental constituting conscious subject. Likewise, there can be a transcendental phenomenology that is not an eidetic science of the apodictically necessary structures of pure consciousness. In other words, within phenomenology there are also limits to sense-formation and limits to the general essential characterization of transcendental consciousness. In both cases, one should respect these limits rather than attempt to transcend them since the ultimate ground of all phenomenology lies in nothing else than the facticity of our experience. This does not, however, mean that the phenomenologist should be constrained by this facticity and be satisfied with simply narrating the history of his own experiences. In the end, the experienced phenomena themselves determine which science of them is possible and to what extent a scientific elaboration of its descriptive findings is congenial to phenomenological research.

Translated from German by Hanne Jacobs and Trevor Perri.

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