

INTRODUCTION TO

PHENOMENOLOGY

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Phenomenology as a way of seeing and as a movement

Phenomenology may be characterised initially in a broad sense as the unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to consciousness, precisely in the manner in which it so appears. Phenomenology as thus understood emerged as an original philosophical approach at the end of the nineteenth century in the school of Franz Brentano, and was developed by Edmund Husserl and his successors to become a major tradition of philosophising throughout the world during the twentieth century. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, it continues to offer a vibrant and challenging alternative to contemporary naturalistic accounts of consciousness and meaning.

Phenomenology is usually characterised as a *way of seeing* rather than a set of doctrines. In a typical formulation, the founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), in his late work *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936 – hereafter *Crisis*), presents *phenomenology* as approaching ‘whatever appears as such’, including everything meant or thought, in the *manner* of its appearing, in the ‘how’ (*Wie*) of its manifestation.¹ Similarly, Husserl’s colleague and protégé Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) could proclaim in his methodological discussion of phenomenology at the beginning of his *Being and Time* (1927), section 7: “The expression ‘phenomenology’ signifies primarily a *methodological conception*. This expression does not characterize the what of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter, but rather the *how* of that research” (SZ § 7, 27; 50).² This approach involves the practice of taking a fresh *unprejudiced* look – i.e. untainted by scientific, metaphysical, religious or cultural presuppositions or attitudes – at the fundamental and essential features of human experience in and of the world.

According to Husserl’s own slogan, phenomenology aimed to return to ‘the things themselves’, avoiding constructivist system-building so prevalent in traditional philosophy, or reasoning on the basis of some preconceived and uninterrogated starting-point (as traditional rationalisms and empiricisms were wont to do). Instead, fundamental philosophical issues are examined through attention to the manner in which things and meanings show themselves, come to self-evidence, or come to be ‘constituted’ for us, as Husserl put it, invoking a concept from the Kantian tradition. The phenomenological approach is primarily *descriptive*, seeking to *illuminate* issues in a radical, unprejudiced manner, paying close attention to the evidence that presents itself to our grasp or intuition. Husserl frequently speaks of phenomenological *description* (*Beschreibung, Deskription*) as *clarification* (*Klärung*), *illumination*

(*Erhellung*), enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), even as conceptual analysis (*Begriffsanalyse*), whatever assists in elucidating the meaning of the phenomenon in question without resorting to purely causal or 'genetic' explanation (*Erklären*). Due to its concern to treat the phenomenon concretely in all its fullness, phenomenology stands opposed to naturalism, scientism and reductionism, and to all forms of explanation that draw attention away from the manner of the appearance of the phenomena in question. Or, as the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) put it, phenomenology seeks to restore the richness of the world as experienced; it wants to be present at the birth of the world for us.

It is important to grasp the difference between the phenomenological approach and other kinds of scientific approach, for example, the psychological, physiological or causal-explanatory approaches prevalent in the natural sciences. Husserl insisted on this point, but it still gives rise to endless confusion. First of all, Husserl is emphatically not challenging the importance, necessity or validity of explanatory scientific accounts. Investigations into the physical and chemical nature of the brain and its processing are a necessary part of science. But that is not the function of a phenomenological description, which is a mode of approach that can be used in all areas of science, but which specifically focuses on the manner objects are constituted in and for subjects. It focuses on the structure and qualities of objects and situations as they are experienced *by the subject*. What Husserl calls the *paradox* or *mystery of subjectivity* – as the *site of appearance of objectivity* – is its theme.

Phenomenology aims to describe in all its complexity the manifold layers of the experience of objectivity as it emerges at the heart of *subjectivity*. It is critical of all forms of *objectivism* that attend only to what appears and not to the relation of the appearing to the subject. Put in another and perhaps less satisfactory way, phenomenology describes, in its own terms, the essential and irreducible nature of the experience of *consciousness* in the world – less satisfactory, because the appeal to consciousness can hardly avoid invoking the spectre of Cartesianism, with its ghostly isolated subject and its problematic dualism (and for this reason Heidegger tended to avoid the term 'consciousness' altogether). In fact, however, in their attempt to do justice to the essential and irreducible relations between human comportment and the world, phenomenologists seek to overcome the traditional dichotomies of modern philosophy, especially the subject–object distinction of traditional epistemology, with its attendant account of knowledge as a representation of the object immanent in the subject.

Husserl insisted that phenomenology as the fundamental science of all sciences had to be *presuppositionlessness*, i.e. its descriptions had to avoid the presumptions both of the modern philosophical and the scientific traditions. Of course, this claim to a presuppositionless starting-point is itself highly problematic and soon came under scrutiny within the phenomenological movement. Given the historically rooted nature of human knowledge, the total absence of all presupposition would be impossible in a science, and thus what is aimed at is, at best, as Gadamer has suggested, freedom from *undisclosed* prejudices. In fact, the manner in which phenomenological description had to come to terms with the recognition that some presuppositions are necessary for any form of understanding led to the fusion of phenomenology with the older discipline of hermeneutics, the art or practice of interpretation, beginning with Heidegger, who, as we shall discuss below, drew on the hermeneutical tradition of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Wilhelm

Dilthey (1833–1911), and continuing with the explicitly hermeneutical orientations of, for instance, the contemporary German thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer (b. 1900) and the contemporary French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (b. 1913).

Husserl cherished his own role as founder of a new science, even characterising himself as a Moses leading his people to new land of what he came to call – invoking the language of German Idealism – *transcendental subjectivity*, i.e. the a priori structure and content of object-constituting subjectivity. Husserl also liked to see himself as a radical follower of the French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650), who sought to provide the sciences with a secure epistemological foundation, immune from all sceptical doubt, by starting with the unshakable truth of one’s self-presence in each act of one’s own thinking, expressed in his *cogito ergo sum*. Husserl sometimes portrayed his own efforts as a revival of the Cartesian project of founding the sciences on strict certainty, an attempt to explore the essence of the *cogito* without falling prey to naïve metaphysical assumptions involving substance, as he believed Descartes had. Thus he characterised phenomenology as “the secret nostalgia of all modern philosophy” in his programmatic 1913 work *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie (Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book – hereafter Ideas I)*.³ In other words, phenomenology actually provided the secure science sought by Descartes and by Kant (whom Husserl also criticised for getting lost in a purely speculative faculty psychology). Husserl’s best-known formulation of his transcendental idealist analysis of the structures of consciousness came in his *Cartesian Meditations*. First published in French translation in 1931, it remains the most popular introduction to his work.⁴ But, over the course of his long career, and in various universities in which he worked, Husserl characterised the essence of phenomenology in many different ways. While his official theoretical allegiance was to a radicalised form of transcendental idealism, his research manuscripts suggest other ways of developing phenomenological themes, often with more attention to corporeality, intersubjectivity and the experience of otherness or alterity. Thus, in *Crisis*, Husserl was drawn to analyse the ‘life-world’ (*Lebenswelt*), which is indissolubly linked with and grounds human experience, the analysis of which offered a corrective to the reductive scientism which Husserl felt had become enmeshed in the modern scientific outlook and practice. As more of Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts finally see the light of day, new dimensions of phenomenology are being uncovered, which are attracting renewed attentions from philosophers worldwide.

For Husserl, phenomenology unfolded as a living, endlessly expanding field of ‘infinite tasks’, which could be carried forward only by inquirers philosophising together (*symphilosophiein*), co-workers concerned about the future of humanity itself, a humanity conceived of as a rational community of knowledge, where science fulfils rather than dehumanises the human world. In laying out these ‘infinite tasks’, he assigned regions to be explored by the many gifted disciples gathered around him. Thus, his Göttingen assistant Adolf Reinach (1883–1917) would undertake the phenomenology of law, and his Freiburg assistant Martin Heidegger would develop the phenomenology of religion.⁵ But Husserl was rarely satisfied with their efforts, which he tended to see as misinterpretations or distortions of his own work, leading him to feel unappreciated and even betrayed. Husserl, too, was rather unfortunate in his choice of would-be successors. His most controversial choice of successor was Martin Heidegger, whom he had warmly embraced since their first meeting in

Freiburg in 1916 and whom he supported for appointment to his own Chair in Freiburg on his retirement in 1928. Heidegger, however, went on to promote a rather different vision of phenomenology in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*, 1927), as we shall see, which inspired many philosophers to abandon Husserl and his transcendental idealism for an existential analysis of Dasein.

Late in his career, and also due to his official exclusion from university activities by the Nazi anti-Semitic laws, Husserl felt particularly isolated, characterising himself as a 'leader without followers'. In 1935, he bitterly acknowledged the impossibility of achieving the ideal of philosophy as a science, when he proclaimed: "Philosophy as science, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous science – *the dream is over*" (*der Traum ist ausgeträumt*, *Crisis*, p. 389; Hua VI 508). But even here, in this poignant farewell, Husserl is not renouncing the ideal as an ideal; he is simply acknowledging the bitter truth that philosophers have not understood this ideal and have been tempted away into irrational substitutes for scientific philosophy. It is not Husserl who has ended the dream but those supposed followers who have been seduced by historicism and an irrational philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*), and indeed have been drawn into anthropology of the life-world, as he understood Heidegger's account of human existence (*Dasein*) to be. As he himself put it, 'the phenomenological movement! I now count myself as its greatest enemy.' Nevertheless, post-Husserlian phenomenology tended to lead off from various starting-points, most of which were – at least tentatively – first explored by Husserl. Thus, the first fifty years of phenomenology can be seen correctly, as Paul Ricoeur has put it, as a series of *heresies* devolving from Husserl. For this reason, we have included selections from different phases of Husserl's career.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the originally German phenomenological movement spread through Europe, North and South America, and to Asia, especially Japan and Korea but increasingly in China. It broadened into a loosely defined collection of original thinkers committed to a certain orientation in thinking. In understanding the development of phenomenology, it is useful to invoke the categories of the American phenomenologist Lester Embree who has identified four "successively dominant and sometimes overlapping tendencies": *realistic phenomenology* (early Husserl, Adolf Reinach, Scheler); *constitutive phenomenology* (the mature Husserl, Gurwitsch, Becker); *existential phenomenology* (Heidegger, Arendt, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry); and *hermeneutic phenomenology* (Gadamer, Ricoeur, *et al*).⁶ In this introduction, we shall have something to say about these four tendencies within phenomenology, although we shall not attempt to keep them distinct. Heidegger, for example, had both an existential and a hermeneutic orientation, whereas Scheler is both a realistic and a constitutive phenomenologist. We should also note that phenomenology in the contemporary setting has incorporated postmodern, gender and even environmental elements in its efforts to understand the nature of living in the age of global technology and interculturalism. We can offer merely an outline sketch of some of these developments here.

The 'phenomena' of phenomenology and the science of essences

As we have seen, *phenomenology* means literally the *science of phenomena*, the science which studies appearances, and specifically the *structure* of appearing – the

how of appearing – giving the *phenomena* or manifest appearances their due, remaining loyal to the modes of appearance of things in the world, whether they belong to the physical, mathematical, cultural, aesthetic, religious, or other domains. The *phenomena* of phenomenology are to be understood in a deliberately broad sense as including all forms of appearing, showing, manifesting, making evident or ‘evidencing’, bearing witness, truth-claiming, checking and verifying, including all forms of seeming, dissembling, occluding, obscuring, denying and falsifying. In short, phenomenology studies, in the words of the contemporary French phenomenologist Michel Henry (b. 1922), *the essence of manifestation*, or, as the American phenomenologist Lester Embree puts it, the varieties of *evidencing*.

In examining the nature of manifestation and disclosure, phenomenology also comes to recognise that many things are not disclosed or can only be approached through a detour, specifically the conditions which enable disclosure, which allow manifestation to take place, for example, the background of the ‘world’ itself. In its focus on meaning, phenomenology paid particular attention to *the living experience of meaning*, or intending to mean (Ricoeur’s *vouloir-dire*), and hence to the peculiar nature of the human encounter with the ‘surrounding world’ (*Umwelt*) and the kind of objectivities normally encountered there. Indeed, phenomenology was the first movement to focus on the specific conditions of human embeddedness in an environment, and to make visible the phenomenon of the environment itself. In his mature work Husserl focused on the structure of our everyday manner of human being in the world, the structure of what Husserl termed ‘the natural attitude’ (*die natürliche Einstellung*), first publicly discussed in *Ideas I*, which at once both revealed the world in a certain way while itself remaining concealed. In other words, the very ‘naturalness’ of the natural world acts to conceal the manner in which this ‘normal’ world is constituted by the activities of the conscious subjects who inhabit that world. The phenomenological attitude, then, is not the normal engaged or absorbed attitude, but requires, as we shall see, a change of orientation, a detachment or disengagement – what Husserl called *epoché* and *reduction* – to bring the nature of the experience more to light.

It is crucial to emphasise at this point that phenomenology does not subscribe to the assumption that the phenomena are somehow to be distinguished from *things in themselves*. To say that phenomenology is interested in appearances does not mean that it is committed to *phenomenalism*, the doctrine that claims that all that exists is the appearances to the senses, or, on the other hand, to a Kantian bifurcation between *phenomena* and *things in themselves* or *noumena*. Phenomenology neither wishes to claim that all that exists can simply be reduced to appearances, nor to affirm an unknown and unknowable reality behind appearances. Both claims distort the essence of the phenomenological point of view, which begins from the experience of things appearing to the subject, to consciousness. Since all showing or manifesting or evidencing is precisely *of something to someone*, it is fundamental to phenomenology to attempt to think through the nature of the essential *correlation* between mind and world, rather than beginning with one or other as given, as traditional idealisms and realisms have done. Phenomenology begins with the *essential correlation* between objectivity and subjectivity, between the thing that appears and the conscious subject to which it appears, what Husserl calls in *Ideas I* the *noetic-noematic correlation* uncovered by reflection on the nature of intentional acts and their objects.

The phenomena, then, are *the things themselves*, as they show themselves to be, in other words, what is self-given, and not something that is a representation of an outer world. Thus, for example, in the phenomenology of religion, the focus is on the manner in which the sacred is experienced by the religious practitioner – or indeed as denied by the atheist – rather than on the attempt to ascertain if there really is or is not a domain of the sacred as it were ‘behind’ the belief. Phenomenology seeks a direct intuition of the essence of the object or situation. According to the phenomenologist Max Scheler, it attempts to achieve full self-givenness in realms currently approached only through the mediation through symbols. Thus Scheler writes:

Phenomenology has reached its goal when every symbol and half-symbol is completely fulfilled through the “self-given,” including everything which functions in the natural world-view and in science as a *form* of understanding (everything “categorical”); when everything transcendent and only “meant” has become *immanent* to a lived experience and intuition. It has reached its goal at the point where there is no longer any transcendence or symbol. Everything which elsewhere is still formal becomes, for phenomenology, a material for intuition. And the attitude phenomenological philosophy has toward a religious object or an ethical value is exactly the same as the one it has toward the color *red*.

That which constitutes the unity of phenomenology is not a particular region of facts, such as, for example, mental or ideal objects, nature, etc., but only *self-givenness* in *all* possible regions.⁸

Phenomenology then does not stop with the appearance but seeks the essence of the appearance. It aims to be a *science of essences*, a science that makes the essences of things that appear visible to the enquirer, similar to the manner in which geometry, another eidetic science, studies the essential relations that hold in space. The claim of phenomenology is that the facts of the matter as disclosed to consciousness may be described in such a way that the *essences* of those facts and their intertwined laws can be exhibited, as well as the modes of our access thereto. As Husserl puts it in the 1913 Second Edition of the *Logical Investigations*:

This phenomenology, like the more inclusive *pure phenomenology of experiences in general*, has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts, as experiences of human or animal experiences in the phenomenal world that we posit as an empirical fact. This phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must *describe* in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement of essence is an *a priori* statement in the highest sense of the word.⁹

Phenomenology then is to be an *a priori* science of the essences of all possible objects and experiences. It aims to arrive at a pure essential intuition of ‘pure

experiences' (*reine Erlebnisse*) in their essential natures as perceptions, willings, acts of imagining, and so on. Phenomenology is a kind of specialised reflection on the nature of consciousness, not as a factually occurring set of psychological acts, but understood in its object-constituting role, as that which makes cognition in the widest sense possible at all. Thus Husserl inserts a clear definition of phenomenology (echoing *Ideas* I § 75) in the revised Appendix to the Sixth Investigation (note the repeated stress on the word 'pure'):

Phenomenology is accordingly the theory of experiences in general, inclusive of all matters, whether real (*reellen*) or intentional, given in experiences, and evidently discoverable in them. Pure phenomenology is accordingly the theory of the essences of 'pure phenomena', the phenomena of 'pure consciousness' or of a 'pure ego': it does not build on the ground, given by transcendent apperception, of physical and animal, and so of psychophysical nature, it makes no empirical assertions, it propounds no judgments which relate to objects transcending consciousness: it establishes no truths concerning natural realities, whether physical or psychic – no psychological truths, therefore, in the historical sense – and borrows no such truths as assumed premises. It rather takes all apperceptions and judgmental assertions which point beyond what is given in adequate, purely immanent intuition, which point beyond the pure stream of consciousness, and treats them purely as the experiences they are in themselves: it subjects them to a purely immanent, purely descriptive examination into essence.

(LI VI Appendix, II, p. 343; Hua XIX/2 765)

Phenomenology must study and bring to clarification the nature of the essence of subjective acts of cognition in their most general, ideal sense, *Erkenntnis überhaupt*. This is to be an investigation of the pure possibility of cognition in its non-natural essence, disregarding all empirical instantiation in humans, animals, angels or extraterrestrial beings.

Intuition and givenness

The chief characteristic of Husserlian and indeed all phenomenology, then, is that it is oriented entirely towards what is given immediately in *intuition* (*Anschauung*). Intuition, immediacy, givenness, are Husserl's key interlinked terms; or, as Heidegger put it in one of his lecture courses, 'givenness' (*Gegebenheit*) is the 'magic word' (*Zauberwort*) of phenomenologists and a stumbling-block to others. Givenness and intuition are correlative terms; the character of the intuiting corresponds to the character of the givenness or manifestation. *Givenness* is to provide the measure of all comprehension. Phenomenology does not speculate about essences or make inferences, it is supposed to grasp them directly in immediate 'intuition'. As Husserl wrote in 1930 in his Author's Preface to the English Edition of *Ideas* I:

But in the transcendental sphere we have an infinitude of knowledge previous to all deduction, knowledge whose mediated connexions (those of intentional implication) have nothing to do with deduction, and being entirely

intuitive prove refractory to every methodically devised scheme of constructive symbolism.¹⁰

Intuition has played a major role in philosophy from Plato onwards, but especially in modern philosophy, for example, in both Descartes and Kant. For Descartes, deductions must be grounded in intuitions that are immediately and self-evidently given. For Kant, intuition (*Anschauung*) is one of the two key components of knowledge – the other being the concept (*Begriff*). Kant distinguished sharply between two separate faculties – the faculty of intuition or *sensibility* (*Sinnlichkeit*) and the faculty of concepts or rules, *understanding* (*Verstand*).¹¹ These two faculties provide two distinct ‘sources of knowledge’ (*Erkenntnisquellen*), as he says in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A260/B316). Kant, however, understood intuition rather narrowly as the purely passive, sensuous material for knowledge, whereas Husserl wanted to attend to the kind of self-evidence manifest in various kinds of intuition and thus required a much broader notion of intuition. In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl presents his own phenomenological breakthrough in terms of a clarification of the precise ways that intuition and perception – understood in a broadened sense – could play a role in philosophy. In the Sixth Logical Investigation he broadened his key concepts of *intuition* (*Anschauung*) and *perception* (*Wahrnehmung*), beyond the purely sensuous, so that one can speak of intuiting a conflict or a synthesis (LI VI §37, II p. 262; Hua XIX/2 649).

Husserl’s phenomenological descriptions began with acts of simple sensuous perception and he used the kind of fulfilment achieved in these acts as his exemplar of acts of meaning fulfilment in general. But he did not want to give the impression that all our intuitive knowledge consisted of such sensuous acts. In the Sixth Logical Investigation he introduced a new notion of *categorial intuition* to rectify what he thought of as a falsification of the experience of consciousness being purveyed by empiricism, positivism and indeed neo-Kantianism. Husserl maintains that we must be allowed to speak of the possibility of intuition of complex situations or states of affairs such as the intuition of unity, or of synthesis, or the intuition of other categorial situations. These were a genuine and non-sensuous form of intuiting, hitherto neglected by the empiricist tradition.

Emphasising his commitment to a philosophy which based itself solely on what is validly given in intuition, Husserl – in his next major work after the *Investigations* – *Ideas I* (1913), § 24, lays down his fundamental principle, which he calls his *principle of all principles* (*das Prinzip aller Prinzipien*):

that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source (*Rechtsquelle*) of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak in its “personal” actuality) offered to us in “intuition” is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.

(*Ideas I*, §24, p. 44; Hua III/1 44)

Every act of knowledge is to be legitimised by ‘originary presentive intuition’ (*originär gebende Anschauung*). This conception of originary presentive intuition is at the core of all Husserl’s philosophy. Indeed, he criticises traditional empiricism for naïvely dictating that all judgements be legitimised by experience, instead of realising that

many different forms of intuition underlie our judgements and our reasoning processes (*Ideas I*, §19, p. 36; Hua III/I 36).

Intuitions, for Husserl, or what the American phenomenologist Robert Sokolowski calls 'registrings' or 'registrations',¹² occur in all experiences of understanding; but in cases of genuine certain knowledge, we have intuition with the highest form of fulfilment (*Erfüllung*) or evidence (*Evidenz*), or 'self-evidence'. When I see with insight that $2 + 2 = 4$ in the sense of grasping the state of affairs itself rather than simply manipulating the symbols, I have as clear an intuition as I can have. Husserl believed that similar intuitive fulfilments occurred in many types of experience, and were not just restricted to the truths of mathematics. When I see a blackbird in the tree outside my window, I also have an intuition fulfilled with all the certainty of the sensuously given 'bodily presence' (*Leibhaftigkeit*) of the blackbird presenting itself to me. Husserl distinguished between these kinds of experience and other experiences where the object is not immediately present, for instance, in acts of memory or expectation. In general Husserl was fascinated by the contrast between intuitive self-givenness and various forms of symbolic representation. He was led by reflection on these kinds of experience to want to develop in the Sixth Investigation a classification of all conscious experiences, with an eye to considering their essential natures and the kinds of intuitive fulfilment proper to them.

The origins and forerunners of phenomenology in the philosophical tradition

Although Martin Heidegger maintained in *Being and Time* (1927) that a genuinely phenomenological approach to being and truth, untainted by the subjectivism of modern philosophy, could be found in its most authentic form in ancient Greek philosophy, in fact, as a distinctive philosophical method, phenomenology emerged gradually only in the context of post-Cartesian modern philosophy, and specifically in post-Kantian German philosophy which focused mainly on psychological and epistemological problems, often confusing these domains in a manner which inhibited the successful progress of scientific knowledge. Heidegger himself, in *Being and Time*, acknowledged that the term 'phenomenology' could be traced back to the late Scholastic tradition, and specifically to the school of Wolff (SZ § 7, 28; 51). In fact, the first specific reference to 'phenomenology' may be traced to Johann Heinrich Lambert (1728–1777); the fourth section of whose *Novus Organon* bears the title 'Phenomenology of transcendental Optics' (*Phaenomenologia oder optica transcendentalis*).¹³ By this Lambert meant a 'science of appearance' that would proceed from the appearances to truth in itself, just as optics studies perspective in order to deduce true features of the object seen. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who greatly admired Lambert, employs the term 'phenomenology' in several places in his writings, ranging from his early letters to his mature treatises. Thus, in a letter to Lambert of 2 September 1770, Kant states, 'metaphysics must be preceded by a quite distinct, but merely negative science (*Phaenomenologica generalis*)'.¹⁴ Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, 1786) has an entire section entitled 'Phenomenology', dealing with the area of motion or rest in relation to its appearances to our external senses. Phenomenology, on this account, is that branch of science which deals with things in their manner of appearing to us, for example, relative motion, or properties – such as

colour – are dependent on the human observer. Indeed, Kant's whole enquiry into the conditions for the possibility of objectivity – as seen from the subjective side – may also be understood as phenomenology, and was so understood by Hegel and later by Heidegger, but it is unlikely to have influenced Husserl at least in terms of his terminological decisions.¹⁵

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) also made use of the term 'phenomenology' in his *Wissenschaftslehre* lectures of 1804 to refer to the manner of deriving the world of appearance, which illusorily appears to be independent of consciousness from consciousness itself.¹⁶ Although Fichte was a philosopher to whom Husserl turned in his later Freiburg years – indeed he lectured on him in 1917 – it is unlikely that Fichte influenced Husserl's early choice of the term. Similarly, Husserl, at least when he was formulating his conception of phenomenology, knew next to nothing about G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), where the term 'phenomenology' is used in a sense closer to the twentieth-century meaning, as that discipline which describes the unfolding or coming to consciousness of truth. Hegel himself seems to have borrowed the term from Karl Reinhold who employed it in the title of his *Elementen der Phänomenologie oder Erläuterung des rationalen Realismus durch seine Anwendung auf die Erscheinungen* (1802). Hegel envisaged phenomenology as only a certain preparatory part of systematic philosophy, and indeed he proclaimed: "The Kantian philosophy may be most accurately described as having viewed the mind as consciousness, and as containing the propositions only of a *phenomenology* (not of a *philosophy*) of mind."¹⁷

Although it has become usual to trace the origins of phenomenology back to Hegel, in fact the Hegelian version of phenomenology only came to be recognised by Husserl's followers after the important lectures of Alexandre Kojève on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* given in Paris in the 1930s.¹⁸

After Hegel, the term 'phenomenology' continued to have some isolated occurrences during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Sir William Hamilton (1791– 1856), the Scottish philosopher who influenced Brentano, refers, in his *Lectures on Metaphysics*,¹⁹ to the 'Phenomenology of Mind' or 'Philosophy of Mind'. In 1894, the physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach (1838–1916) proposed a 'general physical phenomenology' describing all our experiences of physics as a basis for general physical theories. Evidently, Husserl was familiar with Mach's use of the term and acknowledged Mach as a forerunner of phenomenology in his Amsterdam lectures, where he characterises himself as involved in "a certain radicalizing of an already existing phenomenological method".²⁰ But the true origins of phenomenology in the sense it is discussed by the authors in the *Reader* may be located in the descriptive psychology practised by Franz Brentano (1838–1917), and by his students, notably Carl Stumpf (1848–1936).

Franz Brentano attempted to found a descriptive science of consciousness. He was an admirer of the scientific empiricism of Aristotle and indeed of David Hume, of the exact descriptive psychological projects of George Berkeley, John Stuart Mill and William Hamilton, of the positivism of Comte and Mach, and of German psychologists such as Friedrich Lange. He aimed to establish philosophy on a strictly scientific basis, in deliberate opposition to what he regarded as the obscurantism and mystification of the traditions that dominated German philosophy at the time, namely neo-Kantianism and Hegelianism.

In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874),²¹ now recognised as one of the

foundational texts of modern experimental psychology, Brentano proposed to specify the subject matter of the science of psychology, in the course of which he sought the defining characteristics of the domain of mental phenomena. He proposed the intentional relatedness of the mental act to its object as an essential positive characteristic of the mental. Brentano's 1889 lectures on "Descriptive Psychology",²² of which Husserl possessed a transcript, significantly, are subtitled "Descriptive Phenomenology", and here he laid down the basis for his descriptive science of the a priori laws of consciousness. Brentano's *descriptive psychology*, or *phenomenology*, then, is an a priori science of the acts, contents and objects of consciousness, described in the manner in which they appear to consciousness.

In 1900, the term 'phenomenology' featured in the title of Alexander Pfänder's (1870–1941) *Phänomenologie des Willens (Phenomenology of Willing. A Psychological Analysis, 1900)*, his prize-winning *Habilitation* thesis, written under Theodor Lipps at Munich.²³ Pfänder's work related indirectly to Brentano. Pfänder wants to examine the nature of willing itself, exhibiting what he calls a 'piety' (*Pietät*) towards the phenomena.²⁴ The observation of conscious experiences of willing must proceed using what he calls "the subjective method" by examining *retrospectively* what goes on when we orient ourselves towards something in willing it. Furthermore, the essence of willing has to be cleared up before we can correlate bodily processes with it.²⁵ The procedure involves identifying the proper parts of a psychic act by bringing them to intuition. As Pfänder writes: "To analyze a fact of consciousness means to divide it into its parts or elements and specifically both into its separable parts and those which are distinguishable only in abstracto."²⁶

The aim of this close description of the facts of consciousness is to find essential laws of consciousness, to achieve essential insights. This is indeed a good description of phenomenological practice, but the precise moment of inauguration of phenomenology as a distinct method, however, must be credited to Edmund Husserl in his breakthrough work *Logische Untersuchungen (Logical Investigations, 1900–1901)*.

Edmund Husserl, a mathematician who had studied in Berlin with world-famous mathematicians such as Carl Weierstrass and Leopold Kronecker, and completed a doctorate in mathematics in Vienna with a student of Weierstrass, studied philosophy in Vienna from 1884 to 1886 with Franz Brentano from whom he absorbed a deep suspicion of what he regarded as an unscientific, mythical, speculative philosophy (Hegelianism), and a deep appreciation for the tradition of empiricism, especially David Hume. Indeed, Hume's attempt to explain all the sciences in terms of the 'science of man' and, specifically, psychology, or the study of human understanding, struck a chord with both Brentano and Husserl. Thus, much later, in his 1930 Foreword to the first English translation of *Ideas I* made by Boyce-Gibson, Husserl claimed that Hume's *Treatise* was "the first systematic sketch of a pure, although not yet eidetic phenomenology".²⁷ Husserl – in line with the analysis of his student Adolf Reinach – read Hume as a *transcendental phenomenologist*, since Hume realised that causation is not something occurring externally in the world so much as a set of connections imposed on the world, constituted in consciousness out of our experience of temporal relations (succession, contiguity and so on), that is, that objectivity had a subjective genesis.²⁸ Hume, for Husserl, had the essentially phenomenological insight that the life of consciousness is 'a life of achievement' or 'performance' (*leistendes Leben, Crisis* § 26, p. 90; Hua VI 93), that is, the result of

an act of sense-giving constitution. As Husserl says, Hume was the first to take Descartes seriously and focus on the inside of consciousness as a clue to the constitution of the outside world. Similarly, much earlier in his *Logical Investigations* Husserl explicitly praises Berkeley for carrying out a 'phenomenology of inner experience' (LI III § 2, II, p. 5; Hua XIX/1 232). In other words, the empiricist tradition was in effect a proto-phenomenology.

The *Logical Investigations* focused specifically on the clarification of logical and formal knowledge and the rejection of psychologism; nevertheless, the work suggested promising ways of investigating consciousness in all its forms. Here Husserl announced his plan for a phenomenology of the acts of logical cognition, acts of thinking and knowing generally. In the Introduction to Volume II of that work, in discussing the need for a wide-ranging theory of knowledge, Husserl speaks of "the phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing" (LI, Intro. § 1, I, p. 166; Hua XIX/1 6). Brentano's discussion of *intentionality* inspired Husserl, who saw in it the possibility of a *science of pure consciousness*, removed from naturalistic and causal misconstruals. Husserl initially characterised phenomenology as a *method* for approaching epistemological problems, ancillary to psychology, but he soon came to believe that phenomenology provided a unique approach to meaning, and hence could provide both the foundation for philosophy itself and also for the other sciences. Phenomenology could be an overall 'science of science'. Specifically, as Husserl would later put it, it could discover "the ABC of consciousness".²⁹

The *Logical Investigations* was quickly adopted as the foundational text for the phenomenological movement as it developed in Germany. Gradually, however, especially in his lectures at Göttingen, Husserl himself extended the reach of phenomenology until it took on for him the role of *first philosophy*, borrowing from Aristotle's conception of *prote philosophia*. He came to conceive of phenomenology as co-extensive with philosophy itself, and with the specifically philosophical attitude (a point on which Scheler too would insist). After 1905, he began to conceive of phenomenology as a kind of *transcendental idealism*, a radicalisation of Kant's project, which recognised that all meaning had its source in the transcendental ego. In later years, he also began to recognise two aspects to transcendental phenomenology – a static and a genetic side. Husserl's own radical reflections and corrections of his earlier work, his changes of direction and intensification of efforts in particular problematic, set the pace for the evolution of phenomenology, as Husserl gradually distanced himself from the form descriptive phenomenology had taken among the first set of admirers of the *Logical Investigations*. But let us first look more closely at the emergence and development of the conception of phenomenology in Husserl's own work.

Husserl's *Logical Investigations* as a breakthrough work

Husserl's *Logical Investigations* does not purport to offer a 'systematic presentation' (*eine systematische Darstellung*) of formal logic, but rather an 'epistemological clarification' (*eine erkenntniskritische Klärung*, LI III, II, p. 3; Hua XIX/1 228) of the fundamental concepts required in the elucidation of the nature of thought and knowledge. Husserl was actually trying to address the foundational problems affecting formal mathematics, logic and the formal sciences, leading him to raise "questions of the essence of the form of knowledge itself" (LI, Foreword to First Edition, I, p. 2;

Hua XVIII 6), and specifically to seek to clarify the key concepts such as consciousness, mental act, content, meaning intention, meaning fulfilment, judgement and so on.

This conception of phenomenology, as a way of approaching and clarifying concepts, emerges only tentatively in the course of the Investigations themselves, especially in the First, Fifth and Sixth, though it is clear Husserl was formulating his approach gradually through the 1890s especially in his critical studies of the existing logical literature. The Fifth Investigation focuses specifically on the elucidation of the intentional structure of consciousness, in order to give a deeper characterisation of the different features involved in any expressive act of meaning. The Sixth Investigation looked at the manner in which acts of meaning intention are correlated to acts of fulfilment, leading to a discussion of the experience of truth in judgement.

In his Introduction to the First Edition of the *Logical Investigations*, phenomenology was presented as essentially descriptive psychology of the Brentanian kind: "Phenomenology is descriptive psychology. Epistemological criticism is therefore in essence psychology, or at least capable of being built on a psychological foundation" (LI, Introduction, I, p. 176; Hua XIX/1 24).

While phenomenology was to support psychology, it was opposed to psychologism. In the First Edition, he does not clearly differentiate phenomenology from what he himself refers to as *Erkenntnistheorie*, 'epistemology' or 'theory of knowledge' (LI, Introduction, I, p. 166; Hua XIX/1 7), understood in the neo-Kantian manner as the investigation of the conditions, especially the concepts and laws, which make objective knowledge possible, rather than as an attempt to refute scepticism concerning the possibility of genuine knowledge.

Husserl also initially characterised phenomenology as a kind of radical 'conceptual analysis' (*Begriffsanalyse*), offering a clarification of *concepts*. The Introduction even speaks of 'analytical phenomenology' (LI, Introduction, § 4, I, p. 172; Hua XIX/1 17). Husserl speaks of 'fixing' – he uses the term '*fixieren*' – concepts by defining their boundaries and stabilising their shifting senses by differentiating and disambiguating them into their specific essential meanings. Husserl, in this sense, proceeds in the manner of Aristotle, defining terms, then noting new uses and analogous expressions and so on. In the *Investigations*, however, Husserl does not offer an explicit theoretical characterisation of the nature of this clarification; instead he exhibits it in practice in the actual analyses he carried out there. However, in a draft of a later work known as *Ideas III*, he understands it in terms of connecting concepts back to the intuitions that found them and also to the running through in intuition of the various stages or layers of the concept itself.³⁰

In the Second Logical Investigation Husserl also speaks of 'meaning analysis' (*Bedeutungsanalyse*, LI II, § 31, I, p. 287; Hua XIX/1 115), but he did not mean to focus exclusively on linguistic analysis in the manner of his contemporaries G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell. Thus, in his 1913 draft Preface to the Second Edition of the *Investigations*, Husserl explicitly repudiated the interpretation of phenomenology as a kind of 'meaning analysis' or 'semantic analysis' (*Bedeutungsanalyse*), which relied exclusively on the interpretation of language.³¹ For Husserl, phenomenology was not simply the clarification of our linguistic expressions, but a more deep-seated attempt to analyse the very senses or meanings which we constitute through our acts and which receive expression in language. He was suspicious of the stranglehold of grammar on our thinking (a suspicion he passed on to the young

Heidegger), but equally suspicious of purely grammatical analyses that did not focus on the essential acts involved. As Husserl says in the Sixth Investigation (LI VI § 40), grammatical distinctions offer a clue to meaning distinctions, but they are not the whole of the meaning distinction and do not simply mirror it. For Husserl, meanings are clarified through phenomenological reflection secured in intuition.

Husserl's development of transcendental phenomenology

Gradually, Husserl realised that the true import of phenomenology could not be accommodated within psychology or even epistemology. The focus on the essential structures of acts and objects of consciousness needed to be articulated in a manner that removed all assumptions driven by scientific or indeed everyday *naturalism*. After his discovery of the reduction in 1905, he gradually distanced himself from his initial characterisation of phenomenology as a direct eidetic seeing driven by realist sympathies. He came to see the phenomenological reduction as the very essence of phenomenology, involving a liberation of the essence of thought acts and contents from their psychological consideration as facts of nature, and the similar exclusion of the ordinary psychological ego as the locus of these acts (see Husserl's Foreword to the Second Edition). Husserl referred to this orientation towards the eidetic in terms of a breakthrough to 'pure' consciousness understood in terms of transcendental subjectivity. Thus, in the Foreword to Second Edition of the *Logical Investigations*, he speaks of his book as a 'breakthrough work' (*ein Werk des Durchbruchs*, LI I, p. 3; Hua XVIII 8),³² that is, his breakthrough into phenomenology as an eidetic science.

Husserl himself portrays phenomenology as slowly dawning on him between the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* (1913) and tended to emphasise the importance of carrying out systematic removal of the natural attitude in order to gain a new orientation on the phenomena of consciousness, thought not as bits of the world, psychic occurrences, but as essential structures which have meanings entirely independent of the world. Phenomenology is now portrayed as a parallel science to psychology, and not necessarily exclusively as a clarification of logical terms and concepts. The phenomenological domain comes into view as that set of a priori conditions (not just formal conditions but material conditions, conditions which belong to the essence of consciousness itself) which determine the relation between what occurs as natural psychical acts in the world, and the purely ideal senses or thoughts which these psychical acts grasp and instantiate.

The exclusion of the natural attitude and the reduction

Husserl came to see phenomenology as facing down misleading conceptions of science, specifically the distortions latent in *naturalism* and *psychologism*, at least in the guise that these tendencies presented themselves at the end of the nineteenth century, and especially to oppose 'the naturalisation of consciousness' (*die Naturalisierung des Bewusstseins* – a phrase Husserl himself employs in his 1910–1911 essay, "Philosophie als Strenge Wissenschaft" ("Philosophy as a rigorous science")) being carried out by various versions of psychology and positivism.³³ As late as his Amsterdam lectures of 1929, Husserl was opposing this 'prevailing naturalization of the mental' as an enduring prejudice, originating in Descartes, Hobbes and

Locke, and which continued to haunt even Brentano's attempts at descriptive psychology.³⁴ Husserl saw phenomenology as a corrective to naturalism and continued to uphold the aim of scientific philosophy, which he acknowledged was present in distorted fashion in positivism.

Husserl announced his change of direction in *Ideas I*, published in his newly founded *Jahrbuch* in 1913. He now maintained that phenomenology excludes all psychical acts understood as natural performances in a natural world (i.e. as events in time captured within the nomological net of the natural world), and must be the science of *pure* or even *absolute* consciousness. At the basis of all acts of meaning lay the domain of transcendental subjectivity, which could not be accessed in normal reflection because all consciousness has an inbuilt world-affirming, 'positing' or 'thetic' character. This 'position taking' (*Stellungnahme*) is so deep-rooted that it distorts any attempt to study the structures which might be involved in the constitution of the world itself. Therefore Husserl proposed a kind of detour, or reduction, a series of methodological attempts to neutralise or suspend or put out of court the thetic character of our intentional acts to focus attention on the modes of consciousness in which objects appear. Since they cannot actually or literally be 'unplugged', they can be neutralised only by a kind of 'bracketing' or 'suspension' of the thesis of the natural attitude. This stepping back is different from the normal critical or reflective standpoint, which belongs to the natural attitude and is coloured with its prejudices, and remains, as Husserl says, within the *horizon* of the world (*Crisis* § 40). The proposed reduction is to uncover the structures involved in the original constitution.

Ideas I offered Husserl's first published account of one of his greatest achievements, namely his identification of *the natural attitude* (*die natürliche Einstellung*) in which we live first of all and most of the time: in a world spread out in space and located at a moment in the flow of time which also spreads out before us, surrounded by objects, both natural and cultural, and by other living organisms, plants, animals and people. All other attitudes, including the scientific attitude, take their origin from the natural attitude and usually refer back to it. The *natural attitude* is actually a complex constellation of attitudes, attitudes which underlie our sense of a world itself with its aspects of familiarity and strangeness. Thus the notion of the natural attitude has as its correlative the notion of world, 'surrounding world' or 'environment' (*Umwelt*). In fact, it was Husserl who first developed the concept of *world* that became so central to Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. Our sense of the world is actually conveyed through a certain orientation or mood; traditional ontology, as Heidegger declares, was done in the mood of everydayness.

In order to gain access to the constituting nature of consciousness, Husserl proposes a radical disruption or suspension of the natural attitude, a transcendental turn, according to which the whole of nature is to be treated as nothing but a correlate of consciousness, a point missed by naturalism. The essence of the correlation between consciousness and its object is masked and systematically distorted unless we make efforts to separate out the normal, world-positing or 'thetic' character of the acts. The phenomenologist must operate the bracketing and reduction in order to focus only on the meaning-constituting character of the act, its act character, its nature as a noetic act embedded in a network of such acts which have essential interconnections with each other. Intrinsically correlated to the noetic act is the *noema* or the 'meant' now taken not as an ideal entity free of the world nor as

a piece of the world but as pure condition for meaning, that which makes meaning possible. The same perceptual noema can 'found' or 'motivate' different judgements. Husserl's account of the noema has been compared favourably with Frege's notion of *Sinn*, however, the noema is the correlate of an act and hence is the act plus the manner in which the act objectivates its content. The 'logical sense', as Husserl calls it, is only one abstracted part of the more complex noema. We cannot discuss this complex issue further here, but we have included a reading from *Ideas I* which discusses the noema in some detail.

Husserl's late work all takes place within the reduction, although the reduction is construed in different ways beginning with Cartesian scepticism or with a consideration of the life-world. In whatever form, the reduction is essentially a transcendental reflection on the manner in which objectivity is constituted. Increasingly in his late writings Husserl paid more attention to the role of time in this transcendental genesis, and his work develops both static and genetic approaches. On the 'genetic' side, Husserl's late work shows a marked affinity with that of Hegel. In the *Crisis*, for example, Husserl engages in an intellectual reconstruction of some of the moments of primary founding (*Urstiftung*) in Western culture, for example, the discovery of the Pythagorean theorem, which, once discovered, becomes an enduring possession of humankind.

Phenomenology after Husserl

Husserl's *Logical Investigations* was first given serious notice by philosophers and psychologists gathered around Theodor Lipps at the University of Munich. This so-called 'old phenomenology' (*Altphänomenologie*) of the Munich School, which included Johannes Daubert, Alexander Pfänder, Moritz Geiger, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Adolf Reinach and Max Scheler, understood phenomenology as eidetic description, the attempt to accurately distinguish the essential natures of the acts of consciousness and so on. Johannes Daubert is credited with being the first of the Munich students to travel to Göttingen to study with Husserl, and returned to set up a circle for the study of Husserl's philosophy. Soon afterwards, Adolf Reinach, a trained lawyer, became Husserl's assistant and was considered the great hope for the future of phenomenology until he was killed in action in the First World War in 1917. Max Scheler (1874–1928) was an inspirational philosopher who had an extraordinary influence in Germany during the second decade of the twentieth century. He taught in Munich with Lipps, and was deeply impressed by the *Logical Investigations* and especially its account of categorial intuition in the Sixth Investigation, but he was not drawn to Husserl's complex theorising about the nature of the phenomenological method. Scheler drew on the strong tradition of German sociological thinking (Max Weber) as well as on the philosophy of life of Eucken, Simmel and others, to develop a realistic philosophy of the experience of embodied emotions in Munich, Göttingen and later in Berlin. He was enthusiastic in his defence of the necessity of essential viewing, and was particularly drawn to the phenomenology of value and of the emotions. Scheler also argued for the experience of being as central to all experience, and on this issue, Heidegger was a huge admirer of Scheler. Scheler was especially critical of Kant's account of ethical value. His *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Werkethik* (1913–1916) opposed Kantian ethical formalism on the basis of his phenomenology of the experience of value.

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