

INTRODUCTION: PHENOMENOLOGY AS THE INSPIRATIONAL FORCE OF OUR TIMES

1. ITS SEMINAL INTUITIONS AND DYNAMIC

1.1. *Tracing the Roots*

“Phenomenology” is a term that has acquired varied meaning over the course of the last century, beyond those meanings already put into circulation by Lambert and Hegel. A multiplicity of theories, concepts, ideas are held to legitimately bear the name phenomenology. Those who advance them all claim that they are in some or other fashion, more or less directly, true adherents of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Certainly the schools of thought that Husserl inspired came to powerfully influence twentieth-century learning and culture.

As it unfolded over the course of the last hundred years, Husserlian-inspired phenomenology has thrown light on ignored corners of reality and experience, reformulated the great philosophical questions, and penetrated thought in almost all philosophy and all the fields of scholarship. It has changed our ways of seeing the world, interacting with each other, envisaging life. The very cultural climate of the Occident has been changed, and this way of thinking has made inroads in the rest of the world as well.

But at the same time there has occurred a cross-fertilization of phenomenology and numerous other philosophical approaches with the result that ideas of Husserlian inspiration have been transformed just as they transformed thought. They have even been exchanged for other insights. Together, but hardly in conjunction, Husserl’s followers have managed to obscure just what phenomenology proper is and just what is marginal or tangential to its informing insights.

The very foundational principles laid down by Husserl himself came to differ over his lifetime so that phenomenology may be said to have two fonts, one in Göttingen and another at Freiburg im Breisgau. The early followers and adherents, most prominently Scheler, continued in their own direction even as their master developed a new line of thought. The major thinkers who quaffed directly from the Husserlian stream—Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty—all reinterpreted or even questioned this or that aspect of his thought. The developers of still further lines of thought of Husserlian cast—Ricoeur, Gadamer, Derrida, Levinas—along with all the numerous interpreters and partial adherents have made it quite difficult to divine what phenomenology is and what it is not. And while the many avenues of research in which phenomenology has

been applied have enriched the field, this too has had the effect of confusing the picture we have of it. The borderlines are blurred.

What are the criteria for deciding what thought is phenomenological? What identifies phenomenology even in its avatars? We attempt in this volume to cover the worldwide spread of phenomenology, its adaptations, transformations, fields of investigation, as much as the format of a one-volume encyclopedia of learning will allow. But what is phenomenology? The present book, composed of contributions from numerous scholars from around the world aims at answering that and other questions.

1.2. *The Parameters of Phenomenology as Aimed at a Universal Science*

If we ask ourselves what phenomenology is, as a philosophical discipline, doctrine, point of view, “method,” we first ask after its foundational ideas and the direction of its research. At its core the project of phenomenology is an attempt to reach reality in a way that neither subsumes it within general concepts nor reduces it to elements. It is an attempt to make reality foundational and thought immediate, the better to focus and raise sites, to see reality in the round. Thus may the entire horizon of human interrogation and reflection on the world, life, and the human place and role in it find legitimate ground and be linked.

Husserl’s project emerged in a certain cultural area in which such foundations appeared to him to be of paramount significance. Husserl repudiated psychology’s claim to have brought all inquiry into its domain. And he rejected the naturalistic bent of the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle. Neither the world nor its comprehension are captured by these points of view, he protested.

Such a concept of philosophy as was his was not new. Leibniz had dreamed of a philosophical foundation for all knowledge, a *mathesis universalis*. This project also corresponds to Aristotle’s “*philosophia prima*,” which stands prior to all the sectors of philosophical investigation.

Husserl’s itinerary sets us on a historical path. In this encyclopedia of phenomenological learning we take up first the sources of his inspiration, in particular the crystallizing effect the thought of Franz Brentano had on him. By beginning with his initial mathematical investigations and proceeding to his challenge to the psychologism, neo-positivism, and materialism that then dominated thought, and following the publication of his major works, and covering the explorations of his posthumously published

manuscripts, we can retrospectively delineate phenomenology's unfolding and search out its intrinsic dynamisms.

The phenomenological method layed down by Husserl involves a certain unique attitude of mind, namely, the avoidance of inductive reasoning from facts, speculative spinning of reasons and causes. Phenomenological inquiry is properly "descriptive," sticking as closely as possible and solely to what is *given* to intuition in a manifestation. This descriptive principle has been of great import in the scholarship of the twentieth century from the humanities to the hard natural and laboratory sciences. A qualification must be insisted on, however. Not every description of a datum would qualify as phenomenology under examination. A key insight of original and foundational Husserlian thought is that in our inquiry we have to differentiate clearly the level of intuition with which we are dealing and we have as well to suspend all preconceived ideas and explanations of data, of givenness, adhering as closely as possible to them as they are in themselves. These are the criteria by which Husserlian phenomenology seeks to legitimate the results obtained by an inquiry. Here is the crucial and most difficult point for the researcher.

As Husserl proceeded he sought to found the given at deeper and deeper levels, establishing novel frameworks of legitimation as he went: eidetic, transcendental, the lifeworld, intersubjectivity, bodily participation in the constitutive process, etc.

We may situate cadres of his followers in accord with these stages. Reinach, Pfänder, Geiger, disciples of his Göttingen years, and Scheler, an adherent of his Munich years, could only be perplexed when, after his moving to Freiburg, their teacher turned from upholding the absolute objectivity of the essential structure of things to an exclusive focus on their constitution in subjectivity.

The death of Husserl in 1938 and the cogency that his capital work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (brought to the reading public only in 1954) acquired with the staggering questions raised by World War II ushered in what was arguably phenomenology's most vigorous period. The setting up of the Husserl Archives at Louvain by Herman Leo Van Breda, and the program of publishing critical editions of his work provided all with better access to the master's thought at a time when they especially sought it. This was a period of reception, assimilation, and interpretation, which went in a wave across the globe as Husserl's works were translated into other languages.

The progress of the main stream of phenomenological thought from that time can be followed in the *Phaenomenologica* book series and other dispersed publications.

We can see how the attention of Husserl's followers and interpreters shifted sharply from the eidetic analysis of regional ontologies to constitutive analysis of the structure of consciousness. To this period we devote careful attention in this volume for it was transcendental phenomenology that was received around the world. This is the era of the major interpreters/innovators, of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Paci, etc.

In all this there is to be discerned a kernel of what I would call "authentic phenomenology" or "phenomenology proper" which sustains the diverse range of work now being undertaken in the field, which kernel allows divergent thinkers to remain conversant and allows work at the margins to identify with the source. What constitutes this kernel of intuition, this touchstone that makes scholarly—and not merely philosophical—explorations phenomenological?

But attempting to follow a historical line in phenomenology is almost impossible. Too many different undertakings occurred at the same time. Yet a tentative attempt at a coherent history must be made, if only to bring out the most original developments of this thought. A particular focus here will be on those contributions that are significant for this philosophy's engagement with life.

As it happens, phenomenology's first platform, that of the eidetic investigation of objects, realities, as undertaken by Husserl's Göttingen students, already opened the field of the world and life commitments. The last platform, that of the lifeworld allowed phenomenology to embrace all fields of scholarship.

This is seen in his Prague lecture on the crisis of European culture and the manuscripts deposited at Louvain that expand on it. With the publication of that treatise, a deliberate plunge was made into the intersubjectivity of the lifeworld. This theme brought to Husserl a new wave of followers.

This new focus of Husserl's thought, the genetic analysis of the lifeworld, was still not the final phase of his thought. The posthumous piecemeal processing and publishing of the final reflections of his inedita, in which we see a last breakthrough to empiria, sparked yet new interest. Therein he took up the themes of intersubjectivity and the body, which broke into the realm of the natural sciences and physiology.

Observations of the late Husserl support the phenomenology of life that has emerged and blossomed in the last quarter century into a full phenomenology of life "integral and scientific."

Likely we now have a picture of what I call the integral Husserl. Still any totalizing attempt to bring together the various phases of his reflection in an articulated

schema is counterindicated by its own probing nature. And yet there runs through the various phases the thread of the iron necessity of the logos. Each stage of his thought seems to have been for him a springboard for inquiry in a more profound direction. Here is not that kind of speculative thinker who seeks to unify his various insights. Husserl follows an analysis to an obvious end and then takes up deeper questions. Any picture of the integral Husserl will necessarily trace this developmental sequence without providing apparent links between its phases. But the planes of the human reality are intrinsically legitimated in that sequence, for Husserl adjusted his assumptions as he went without dismissing any set of them. He might call the regional ontologies “naive” as they stand alone, but he never disclaimed the eidetic insight through which we distinguish objects. He tacitly included it in the ascending noetic steps in the process of originating and forming the ideal structures of beings as they are constituted in the subjective, transcendental processes of the intellect. And then he immersed the singular mind with its set of constitutive procedures within the intersubjective lifeworld. The concatenations of the lifeworld open yet another field of investigation, but the nature of the constitutive process in the singular individual mind remains valid, however much apprehension of the reality of the lifeworld modifies appreciation of it.

It is not only the validity of each phase of phenomenology that is preserved but also the promise each offers. This inquiry into reality, the human being, the world effectively retains its assumptions as it proceeds even as it stepwise supersedes them. It rejects earlier work only in the sense that it digs deeper furrows into reality as successive layers of that reality become intuitively visible.

Here Husserl’s followers have to consider that phenomenology presents a vast field of investigation that, depending on the point taken as a starting point, takes different approaches to givenness, reality, the human being, and the procedures of thought. It embraces all of the traditionally distinguished branches of philosophy and contemporary schools of thought. Above all, this project advances beyond a fixation on inner subjectivity and engages the societal and ethical.

Even though the pursuit of a *mathesis universalis* so pronounced in the work of the Göttingen School became attenuated with the shift in Husserl’s attention to consciousness and vanishes from sight, its germ was not extinguished. It set the inquiry on a course that was self-prompting in its further stages, and as we will see, at a certain point this course came full-fledgedly into its own.

Following its stages we discover the rational framework of a philosophy that ever expands its horizon. The

searchlight of this quest for the originary—if not absolute—foundational reality leads one along a progressive line of logicoic necessity.

1.3. *Intuitive Insight and its Spheres: Its Intrinsic Dual Dynamism*

In seeking to define the nature of phenomenology, we must begin by stating the primordial role of intuition. In wending through the maze of intuitions at play in phenomenological praxis in search of authentic phenomenology, we bring out what Husserl so forcefully insisted on, namely, the *primordial givenness* of the objective correlates of our intuitions, which givenness owes nothing to theory, viewpoint, tendency, or any sort of preconception and is to be relied upon in itself, in its “bodily selfhood.”

What indeed distinguishes phenomenology from any other field of investigation is above all its autonomy. Owing to this independence from preconceptions, phenomenology stands on its own turf at all the levels of its inquiry. What then comes to fore is a plurality of intuitions, each sustaining a level of “intuitive visibility.” Evident in all the phases of Husserl’s philosophical reflection is an absolute faith in intuition, that is, in every type of intuition in which the givenness of objects in the essential objective realm and in their intricacies are thematized within a specific network and so establish themselves on a new platform of investigation.

Thus, “thematization” occurs as the spontaneous moment of intuition of evidence and the object’s final presencing of itself are identical. Then a proper conceptual sense is sought. The given is then received. The system of consciousness that Husserl, in accord with the nature of subjective acts, calls “intentional” and “transcendental” refers to its essential correlates intuitively. The objective correlates are now given in intentional garb, without objective forms being altogether abandoned.

The subjective intentional perspective of this investigation radically changes the horizon of the initial eidetic phenomenological search after the basis of reality: from the great spread of reality at the level of its objective, already made up structures, we plunge into the vast field of consciousness, for these structures appear within subjective acts in which they are first objectified in their being apprehended by the mind.

To thematize this insight of intentional objectification a new system had to be devised. In asking after the origin of the “objective” level of reality, we enter the whole realm of the intentional constitutive nature of consciousness in which objects are originally brought to us. There

their presence is sustained for us in a unique but universal subjective fashion, a presence that is meant to correspond to the actual reality. Such a platform of a rational intuitive nature is the very life of conscious being. The multilevel basic intuitive insight of the constitutive procedure of consciousness is characterized by its subjective intentional nature. That involves a dynamic prompting of its own that advances forward as the various moments of its making hook, intertwine, fuse, intergenerate, moving toward completion. An intrinsic concatenation of constitutive moments is revealed at different intuitive levels to complete the singular images. From one fragment of intentional inquiry we are drawn to its adjacent intrinsically indicated or motivated step. Thus, intentional inquiry, or inquiry into the intentional laws of constitution, is a dual “objective/subjective” (noematic-noetic), phenomenon on a dual dynamic stream.

Two channels of self-generating forces—objective and subjective—roll forward, one proceeding from the concatenations of constitution on the objective side and the other proceeding from the nature of the subjective intentionality at work in that constitution; as two sides of the same coin their dynamic prompts the process to its rational limits. Let us emphasize the *sui generis* nature of these dynamisms. Husserl devoted voluminous investigations to pursuing the dynamism proper to consciousness and its life itself. According to him, consciousness consists of a flow, a stream of acts. Its natural dynamism is also identical with temporality: the internal time of consciousness in its flow. But here we are talking about the specific dynamism of the constructive logos of the real as it deploys itself. I am pointing out the state of affairs that in this natural onward flow of consciousness, its constructive acts bring forth their very own inner dynamisms and forces. Reason/logos is not a mere structuring line of construction, it is simultaneously its prompting force.

We see two driving forces at work. There is the “horizontal logos” of the interconnected structuring of the process of discriminating individual objects, on the one hand. And there are the dynamisms of the “vertical logos” of the fluctuating compossible interstructural, intergenerative links of the subjective line, on the other. Together these make up intentional acts, propensities, and constructive processes. The objectifying and subjectifying lines indispensably complement each other and as interlocking dual engines power a unified intentional constructive system of the logos of the manifestation of objectivity.

Yet the intentional platform falls short of clarifying the background of this interlocking horizontal/vertical

constitutive schema, however. Thus, Husserl sought further for its origination. He plunged then into the lifeworld, for the grounding of conceptualizing in the intentional network manifests a whirl of change, transformation, interaction, in brief, a fluctuating, exchanging, crisscrossing, transfusing, and transforming becoming. Its objectifying layers point to the dimension of the lifeworld, to the course of society.

This new dimension of the lifeworld seems to be an essential though pluridimensional correlate of the first platform of essential structures in that it offers a field in which to investigate the entire universe of reality in its becoming as the world. This vastly enlarged horizon stretches to the limits of the lifeworld. Indeed, the lifeworld is a correlate of the regional ontologies, though with some crucial differences. First, it opens the field of interactive transformation; second, it introduces the intersubjective, transactional dimension of societal living; third, it brings forth the empirical, “natural” underpinnings of psychic and social events and modes of becoming.

The multisphere platform of the lifeworld presents innumerable dynamisms and forces that fulgurate, spring forth spontaneously from its intrinsic and ever in flux entanglements. The lifeworld is primarily intergenerative, always sprouting new dynamisms. Here the dynamic interlinkage of subjective and objective perspectives is projected on an infinite play of forces.

The lifeworld goes in all world-significant—objective and subjective—directions. Its horizontality consists of a never ending game of tendencies, intentions, desires, ends, strivings; its verticality consists of all the productive/destructive forces that surge and generate drives. All these intermingle and press on, it seems in tandem, into infinite horizons. Hence, phenomenology of the lifeworld platform presents itself to our mind naturally.

Here we reach Husserl’s new intuitive platform, that of the genetic perspective. These are levels of intuition other than those in which ideal structures—*eidoi*—are given and other than those in which the acts and structure, static and dynamic, of human consciousness preparatory to constitutive genesis and the synthesizing acts of fulfillment are given, and even other than those of a particular horizontal level of intuitive awareness of the multiplicity of lifeworld interactions, intersubjective entanglements, and the vast intertwined network of levels of singular constitutive processes. These yet other intuitions are of the intentions of a genesis that proceeds, so to speak, “upwards” through different spheres of unfolding and in extending “outwards” forms bodily, kinesthetic feeling, etc. and informs the functioning of the various degrees of

objectification. These are the genetic intentions operative in the constitution of the lifeworld.

In order to thematize this novel field, Husserl again made attunements of phenomenological intuition, this time going deep. In dealing with the multifarious sectors of the lifeworld, it will not do to seek rigid essential structures or consequently have recourse to either eidetic or intentional structurizing consciousness devices. And yet these cannot be dismissed, nor are they to be relegated to a dormant inventory. An innermost intentional reference to them is the condition *sine qua non* of distinctiveness.

Further, with the new anthropological conception of the human being that has been introduced into phenomenology in the last quarter of a century, which brings out the centrality of the creative experience to the human condition, we are witnessing a new flourishing of intuitive modalities that go beyond Husserl's horizons but correspond to them. This brings about an essential transformation of the classical schema sketched above. It leads, in fact, to the opening of one more sphere for the intuition of the real.

Creative experience reveals indeed the vertiginous play of innumerable intuitions of virtual and possible constitutive elements within the creative act of the human being. The creative act reveals itself as the fulcrum that life has come to have in human becoming. Properly analyzed, the creative act is the royal pathway to seeing our intuitive human powers, leading to the proper apprehension of the cultural phenomena that fashion the specifically human world, "the specifically human significance of life." This apprehension opens a specific level of *ontopoietic* becoming, because it unveils how living beingness emerges within the networks of constitutive dynamisms of the system of life in a *linea entis* (ontically) as well as in the self-individualizing singularity of living beings (their very own poiesis). Last but not least, this new sphere of the logos of the real reveals the intuitive genesis of the sacral interpretation of the human-being-in-existence. This widened horizon of intuitions then constitutes the horizon of life.

This proliferating spread of intuition is obvious within the manifold diversification of phenomenological inquiries. All this corresponds to the first and foremost principle of phenomenology enunciated by Husserl, that is, to the principle of all principles: our concern is with "whatever presents itself in a self-given fashion."

Do this diversity of rationalities and the levels of givenness manifesting reality corresponding to them make the so-called "phenomenological method" obsolete? Already in Husserl's thinking, the expansion of horizons just described highlighted the need to ever

reexamine the so abused and misinterpreted question of the phenomenological method.

This quick overview of the phenomenological horizon in terms of this wealth of intuitions to be distinguished in the analytic work of phenomenology at large, along with their dynamisms, makes the situation of phenomenology's identity even more doubtful. What is phenomenology? On what grounds may research be claimed to be phenomenological? Is there still a current of thought that may legitimately be called "phenomenological"? Are the dynamisms and forces of authentic phenomenology already spent, and are we dealing merely with its elaborations, interpretations, vaguely related applications, and historical questions?

2. THE FOUNDATIONAL PROJECT OF ORIGINS

2.1. *The Beacon of Origins and the Phenomenological Method*

I have traced above the line leading onward from phenomenology's setting out on a twofold quest, a quest to both uncover ultimate reality and examine the uncovering of it in conscious cognitive acts. This quest is set up along the line of reality's *originary* appearance, that is, its appearance in constitutive consciousness. It is, indeed, a quest for the progressive levels of this originating appearance.

It has also been pointed out how the program of phenomenological investigation thus outlined by Husserl at the initial stage was relentlessly projected onward by its very own dynamic.

Now let us review its stages in the perspective of the so-called "phenomenological method."

Husserl ceaselessly added refinements, twists, and new dimensions to his method of investigation, with each shift of focus devising a new signifying apparatus for thematizing. All this has been so very much discussed for the sake of learning how to proceed with phenomenological research of varied subject matter as well as in order to obtain a better understanding of Husserl's work, that the subject would not be worth treating were it not for the fact that doing so will provide essential roadmarkers for the line of thought by which we hope to retrieve the authentic kernel of phenomenology and sketch its features. Then we will be able to recognize what is of phenomenological inspiration in peripheral philosophical projects. To put it sharply, the phenomenological method is nothing other than the innermost core of the phenomenological enterprise.

Unpacking the inspirational stages of the ever advancing work of Husserl, we discovered the rational network

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