

EDMUND HUSSERL "PHENOMENOLOGY" (Written 1927; Pub. 1929)

The page references are to the PDF version available at <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/relstud/faculty/sheehan.bak/EHtrans/8-eb.pdf>.

Husserl argues that the term 'phenomenology' designates two things: "a new kind of descriptive method which made a breakthrough at the turn of the century" (1) and an "a priori science derived from it . . . which is intended to supply the basic instrument [organon] for a rigorously scientific philosophy and its consequent application" (1). This, he believes, will serve as the foundation for a "methodical reform of all the sciences" (1). Parallel to this there arose an "new psychological discipline" (1), what Husserl terms an "a priori pure or 'phenomenological' psychology" (1), an outline of which will "serve as a preliminary step" (1) in the direction of an "understanding of philosophical phenomenology" (1).

I: Pure Psychology: its Field of Experience, its Method and its Function

1. Pure Natural Science and Pure Psychology: here, Husserl contends that modern psychology is the "science dealing with the 'psychical'" (1), that is, "psychical processes like "experiencing, thinking, feeling, willing" (1). Psychology, he argues, is a subset of anthropology and even zoology. This raises the question: to what degree is psychology an "objective science of nature" (1) in the same way that physics or chemistry may be said to be.

2. The Purely Psychical in Self-Experience and Community Experience: the Universal Description of Intentional Experiences: to explore this issue, Husserl argues that it is necessary to clarify "what is peculiar to experience, and especially to the pure experience of the psychical" (1). To turn our gaze inward on "our own psychical life" (2) (a "glance which had previously been directed elsewhere" [2], that is, outwardly) is to engage in what he terms "reflection" (2):

Every experience can be subject to such reflection, as can indeed every manner in which we occupy ourselves with any real or ideal objects – for instance, thinking, or in the modes of feeling and will, valuing and striving. So when we are fully engaged in conscious activity, we focus exclusively on the specific thing, thoughts, values, goals, or means involved, but not on the psychical experience as such, in which these things are known as such. Only reflection reveals this to us. Through reflection, instead of grasping simply the matter straight out – the values, goals and instrumentalities – we grasp the corresponding the subjective experiences in which we become 'conscious' of them, in which (in the broadest sense) they appear. (2)

This is why they are called "phenomena" (2), their "most general essential character" (2) being "to exist as the 'consciousness-of' or 'appearance-of' the specific things, thoughts (judged state of affairs, grounds, conclusions), plans, decisions, hopes and so forth" (2). This "relatedness 'of the appearing to the object of appearance" (2) is the "meaning of all expressions in the vernacular languages which relate to psychical process – for instance, perception of something, recalling of something, thinking of something, hoping for something, fearing something, striving for something, deciding on something, and so on" (2). These 'phenomena' ought to be the objects of a pure psychology, hence the designation 'phenomenological psychology.' Husserl points out that the Medieval Scholastics have bequeathed a useful term "for designating the basic character of being as

consciousness, as consciousness of something" (2): "intentionality" (2): in "unreflective holding of some object or other in consciousness, we are turned or directed towards it: our 'intentio' goes out towards it" (2). (Later he alludes to his own teacher, Franz Brentano, one of the founders of modern psychology who was one of the first to discuss the 'intentional' nature of consciousness, the view that consciousness is always necessarily 'consciousness of or intended towards something.')

This "'being directed'" (2) is an "immanent essential feature" (2) of all reflective experience, Husserl argues, which are consequently all "'intentional' experiences" (2). "Consciousness of something is not an empty holding of something" (2). Rather, "every phenomenon has its own total form of intention" (2) as well as a "structure" (2) which "leads always again to components which are themselves also intentional" (2). In the perception of anything,

phenomenological reflection leads to a multiple and yet synthetically unified intentionality. There are continually varying differences in the modes of appearing of objects, which are caused by the changing of 'orientation' – of right and left, nearness and farness, with the consequent differences in perspective involved. There are further differences in appearance between the 'actually seen front' and the 'unseeable' and relatively 'undetermined' reverse side, which is nevertheless 'meant along with it.' Observing the flux of modes of appearing and the manner of their 'synthesis,' one finds that every phase and portion 'of the flux' is already in itself 'consciousness of' but in such a manner that there is formed within the constant emerging of new phases the synthetically unified awareness that this is one and the same object. (2)

The "intentional structure of any process of perception has its fixed essential type, which must necessarily be realised in all its extraordinary complexity just in order for a physical body simply to be perceived" (2). If "this same thing is intuited in other modes" (2), for example through "recollection, fantasy or pictorial representation" (2), the "whole intentional content of the perception" (2) but "transformed to correspond to that mode" (2).

All this applies to the various psychical processes: the "judging, valuing, striving consciousness, is not an empty having knowledge of the specific judgments, values, goals, and means. Rather, these constitute themselves with fixed essential forms corresponding to each process, in a flowing intentionality" (2). Psychology must concern itself with investigating the "elementary intentionalities, and from out of these 'unfold' the typical forms of intentional processes, their possible variants, their syntheses to new forms, their structural composition, and from this advance towards a descriptive knowledge of the totality of psychical process, towards a comprehensive type of a life of the psyche" (2-3). This has implications "far beyond the psychologist's own particular psychic existence" (3). Last but not least, Husserl asserts that psychical life "is accessible to us not only through self experience but also through the experience of others" (3), "not only what matches our self-experience but also that which is new" (3). There also arises, therefore, the "task of . . . making the psychical life of the community, with all the intentionalities available to it, phenomenologically understandable" (3).

3. The Self-Contained Field of the Purely Psychical: Phenomenological Reduction and Genuine Experience of Something Internal: Husserl sums up his argument to this point by saying that a *pure* phenomenological psychology "encompasses the whole range of tasks arising out of the experience of the self and the experience of the other founded on it" (3). However, he points out, that these goals are complicated by certain

"difficulties" (3) that obstruct the "construction of a really pure self-experience" (3) and, thus, a "really pure psychological dictum" (3). These difficulties are bound up with the 'way that already the self-experience of the psychologist everywhere intertwined with external experience, with that of extra-psychical real things" (3). To put this another way, Husserl is of the view that the world, as they say, is too much with us and must be escaped from because the "experienced 'exterior' does not belong to one's intentional interiority, although certainly the experience itself belongs to it as experience-of the exterior" (3). They necessitate as such a "particular method of access" (3), what he calls the "method of 'phenomenological' reduction" (3) which will serve as the "foundational method of pure psychology and the presupposition of all its specifically theoretical methods" (3). In a nutshell, if consciousness is necessarily 'consciousness of something,' it is imperative to 'bracket' the 'something' in question in order to gain some insight into the intentional structures of consciousness, consciousness purified, as it were, of the world.

This is true, Husserl argues of "every kind of awareness directed at something out there in the world: a

consistent *epoché* of the phenomenologist is required, if he wishes to break through to his own consciousness as pure phenomenon or as the totality of his purely psychological processes. . . . [He] must inhibit every co-accomplishment of objective positing produced in unreflective consciousness, and therewith 'inhibit' every judgmental drawing-in of the world as it exists. The specific experience of this house, this body, of a world as such, is and remains, however, according to its own essential content and thus inseparably, experience 'of this house,' this body, this world; this is so for every mode of consciousness which is directed towards an object. It is after all quite impossible to describe an intentional experience – even if illusory, an invalid judgment, or the like – without at the same time describing the object of that consciousness as such. The universal *epoché* of the world as it becomes known in consciousness (the 'putting it in parentheses') shuts out from the phenomenological field the world as it exists for the subject in simple absoluteness; its place, however, is taken by the world as given in consciousness (perceived, remembered, judged, thought, valued, etc.) – the world as such, the 'world in parentheses,' or in other words, the world, or rather individual things in the world as absolute, are replaced by the respective meaning of each in consciousness in its various modes (perceptual meaning, recollected meaning, and so on). (3).

In so doing we retreat from the "unities posited in the natural attitude" (3) (Husserl's term for the empirical or positivist approach to science) towards the "manifold of modes of consciousness in which they appear" (3-4).

Husserl points out that these empirical unities are "inseparable from these multiplicities" (4) but are "parenthesised" (4) temporarily. They cannot ultimately be ignored for they are to be "reckoned among what is purely psychological" (4) but "always specifically in the appearance-character in which they present themselves" (4). The method of phenomenological reduction (to the pure 'phenomenon,' the purely psychological) accordingly consists (1) in the methodical and rigorously consistent *epoché* of every objective positing in the psychological sphere, both of the individual phenomenon and of the whole psychological field in general; and (2) in the methodically practiced seizing and describing of the multiple 'appearances' as appearances of their objective units and these units of component meaning accruing to them each time in their appearances. (4) Husserl gives to these two operations comprising the method of phenomenological

reduction (which consequently has a "two-fold direction" [4]) the terms *noetic* (adjective) / *noema* (noun) (concerned with 'how' a phenomenon appears to consciousness) and *noematic* (adjective) / *noema* (noun) (concerned with 'what' appears to consciousness). In this way, that is, through phenomenological reduction, one attains to the "only genuine 'inner experience' in the sense meant by any well-grounded science of psychology" (4). In this way, "purity" (4) is preserved. What the foregoing reveals, Husserl asserts, is that there belongs to each "mind" (4) not only the "unity of its multiple intentional life process with all its inseparable unities of sense directed towards the 'object'" (4) but an "experiencing ego-subject as the identical ego-pole giving a centre for all specific intentionalities, as as the carrier of all v=habitualities growing out of this life-process" (4).

The phenomenological method of reduction can also be "transferred from self-experience to the experience of others insofar as there can be applied to the envisaged psychological life of the Other the corresponding parenthesis and description according to the subjective 'how' of its appearance and what is appearing ('noesis' and 'noema')" (4). By extension, the "community that is experienced in community experience is reduced not only in to the psychically particularised intentional fields but also to the unity of the community life that connects them all together, the community psychological life in its phenomenological purity (intersubjective reduction)" (4). In this way is accomplished the "perfect expansion of the genuinely psychological concept of 'inner experience'" (4). Just as there is a central ego-subject at the core of the individual's mind, so too is the "reduced intersubjectivity, in pure form and concretely grasped, is a community of pure 'persons' acting in the intersubjective realm of the pure life of consciousness" (4).

4. Eidetic Reduction and Phenomenological Psychology as an Eidetic Science: here, Husserl argues that phenomenological reduction leads in turn to what he terms "eidetic reduction" (4), that is, a "transition from the factual to the essential form, the *eidos*" (4). This he defines elsewhere as the "eidetically necessary typical form" (4) or the "invariant essential forms" (4), not so much of the thing(s) per se but as these present themselves to consciousness. Phenomenological reduction provides a "means of access to the phenomenon of real and also potential inner experience" (5). Eidetic reduction, on the other hand, provides the "means of access to the invariant essential structures of the total sphere of purer psychical process" (5). For example, the "phenomenology of perception of bodies will not be (simply) a report on the factually occurring perceptions or those to be expected; rather it will be the presentation of invariant structural systems without which perception of a body and a synthetically concordant multiplicity of perceptions of one and the same body as such would be unthinkable" (4).

III: Transcendental Phenomenology and Philosophy as Universal Science with Absolute Foundations