The Nachwort

Preliminary Remarks

As we can see, Husserl wrote this essay as an addendum to his *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, newly translated into English in Boyce-Gibson translation (1931). The essay is meant, therefore, to be an introduction into the novelty of phenomenological philosophy to English speaking readers. By 1930, there was just only one other work by Husserl available in English translation: the so-called *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on phenomenology published in 1929. Both were consciously meant by Husserl to provide a way into phenomenology for English speakers. Tangentially, it's worth noting that Herbert Spiegelberg, author of *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, has identified one other such "way into phenomenology for Americans." This he argues is to be found in a brief correspondence between Husserl and E. Parl Welch from the year 1933.

Before turning to the reading at hand, let's pause briefly over Husserl's letter to Welch. Welch, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California working on a thesis on the philosophy of religion, contacted Husserl to ask a few specific questions about the nature of Husserl's philosophy and biography. One of the major themes of Husserl's response, which I want us all to pay attention to and which is highlighted in the "Epilogue" also, is Husserl's assertion that the novelty of his philosophy that its accessibility extraordinarily difficult. "It takes unusual consistency and energy of thought," he tells Welch, "to remain firm and not to fall back into the traditional ways of thinking, to really take hold of the new, without falsifying it by such all too tempting relapses ..."

But more significantly for our purposes, Husserl emphasizes a couple of points in his response to Welch which are at once commensurate with the main themes of the "Epilogue" and stated more simply than there. One the one hand he tells Welch:

> Your topic presupposes the unity of the Phenomenological Movement, hence something like a unified philosophy of this name, whereas I deny just this after having waited long enough for the possibility that as a result of my writings following upon the *Logical Investigations* the eyes of my former students would be opened up for what was and still is in the making as a completely radical philosophy. Thus, for instance, one can speak of the philosophy of religion of Scheler ..., but it has nothing to do with phenomenology in my sense. For by way of the phenomenological reduction this phenomenology opens up a fundamentally novel experience which is not mundane experience and thus puts us directly on absolute ground, that of "transcendental subjectivity." 

Husserl therefore explicitly denies here in the letter but also implicitly in the "Epilogue" that there is a unitary phenomenological movement. This is due precisely, he argues, to the uniqueness of the phenomenological reduction which characterizes his transcendental philosophy. In a very interesting clarification in the letter to Welch, he adds:

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5 Spiegelberg 1973, 177.

May I ask you not to call my philosophy a "system." For it is precisely its objective to make all "systems" impossible once and for all. It wants to be rigorous science, which in an infinite progression systematically works its way toward its problems, methods and theories.\(^7\)

Two points should not be overlooked here. First, phenomenology aims to be not a science among others but rather science in the most rigorous sense of that term. This is, in fact, the overarching theme of the Epilogue that we've read for today: transcendental phenomenology is distinct from all imposters insofar as it alone is capable of realizing the ideal of rigorous science. Second, this idea, the idea of rigorous science, is one that will not be achieved by Husserl alone. It is an idea which motivates the history of rational thinking reaching back to the very origins of science in Ancient Greece. If we could thus characterize Husserl's antipathy for systems philosophy, it is that he remains adamantly opposed to the conception of science or a system of philosophy as the work of any one individual. Husserl understands a system of philosophy to be an ethos and a community of striving toward clarification of endless, open-ended problems. This ethos and this striving have a history and a teleology, and he sees himself a participant in this intra-historical striving. He remains, in other words, "fully conscious that science can never again be the complete creation of an individual, nevertheless <the individual worker> devotes the greatest energies in cooperation with others imbued with the same ethos to helping a scientific philosophy make its breakthrough and develop further step by step."\(^8\)

Now I mention these points in the Welch letter because the letter, itself, highlights the special standing of this essay before us among Husserl's writings. For the essay offers a concise statement of the essence of his philosophy, or, as he says, of that which "is radically new in this phenomenology as to method and field of research." (405)

Husserl begins the "Epilogue" complaining of the general misunderstandings that have "obscured the true sense of <his> transcendental phenomenology." (405) That is, misunderstandings of the meaning of his words even though those who articulate these misunderstandings may very well quote directly from his works. I think it is worthwhile to pause now to get a general sense of Husserl's major writings – especially those published by the time of this essay in 1930. It is an interesting fact that Husserl produced an enormous body of work over his entire life but that he published only a relatively few number of general introduction into his philosophy or special logical studies. Some of these works include his two special studies of logic, his *Logical Investigations* of 1900/01 and the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of 1929. As to "introductions" into phenomenology we can include his essay from 1910 referred to as the *Logos* essay titled "Philosophy as rigorous science," (whose subject matter is reminiscent of Husserl's last published writing "The Crisis of the European Sciences" (1936)), and his most famous introduction into method and theory of phenomenological reduction, *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy, first book*. The *Ideas* takes a Cartesian starting point as is done also in his later *Cartesian Meditations*.

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\(^7\) *Ibid.*, 179.

\(^8\) *Hua* XXV, 53; "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft," 333.

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**Major Writings:**

1. *Logical Investigations* (1900/01)
2. "Philosophy as rigorous science" (1910)
3. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy, first book*. General Introduction into pure phenomenology. (1913)
4. *Lectures on the phenomenology of inner time-consciousness* (1928)
5. "Phenomenology" *EB* article (1929)
7. (Nachwort) 1930
8. *Cartesian Meditations* (1931)

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Though he published relatively little (when compared against his total literary output over his lifetime), the call of his philosophy "to return to the things themselves" is one that became enormously influential in Germany, especially in the region of southwest Germany that had been dominated by neo-Kantian philosophy until about the turn of the twentieth century. Yet Husserl's philosophy had come under sharp attack in the twenties. It was his general policy not to address the criticism of his philosophy instead pressing ahead with his own investigations, and this is indeed why he says in the "Epilogue" that "no account is taken here of the situation in German philosophy ... with the "Philosophy of Life" striving to be predominant in it, with its new anthropology, its philosophy of existence." (405) Yet we should have some sense to whom is Husserl referring as proponents of these philosophies? Of course no names are mentioned, but they are – among others – Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger. We have already seen that Husserl considered Scheler's work antithetical to his own phenomenology. But Husserl's object in this sentence really Martin Heidegger, a younger colleague of Husserl whom Husserl had once hoped would take over the great tasks laid out in his own writings. Heidegger had recently published the epoch making Sein und Zeit or Being and Time (1927), which Husserl – for reasons we will come to see – identified as both an exemplar of life-philosophy as well as a new philosophy of existence. Though not directly responding to these philosophies or the objections posed by these philosophies against Husserl's philosophy, note what Husserl says on page 407 of the text.

I cannot engage here in a close confrontation with the counter-trends of the present, which, in the most extreme contrast to my phenomenological philosophy, want to draw a line between philosophy and rigorous science. I would only like to say expressly that I cannot acknowledge any kind of justification to the objections that have been advanced from those quarters: e.g., my intellectualism, the miring of my methodic procedure in abstract one-sidedness, my failure in general and in principle, to touch upon original-concrete, practical-active subjectivity, and my skirting of the so-called problems of "existence" as well as the metaphysical problems. These objections are all based on misunderstandings and, ultimately, on the fact that my phenomenology is interpreted back to a level, the overcoming of which is precisely its whole sense. (407)

Let's just pause to detail these misunderstandings and consequent objections that Husserl says he cannot adequately acknowledge here in the Epilogue. First, he highlights the distinction between philosophy and rigorous science, the latter of which Husserl acknowledges as phenomenology, itself. Recall simply the name of the Logos essay of 1910, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science." Husserl clearly asserts here in the Epilogue that his phenomenology stands apart from the dominant trends of the day, since transcendental phenomenology is, itself, rigorous science, i.e., "a science based on ultimate self-responsibility, in which, hence, nothing held to be obvious, either predicatively or pre-predicatively, can pass, unquestioned, as a basis for knowledge."(406) This sentence is a reformulation of Husserl's famous "principle of all principles" in §24 of Ideas I.

No conceivable theory can make us err with respect to the principle of all principles: that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originary (so to speak in its actuality in the flesh) 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 therein.⁹

In the "Epilogue," he also acknowledges (but does not attempt to refute) the objection that transcendental phenomenology frames the problem of existence in starkly intellectualist terms. According to this objection, transcendental phenomenology prejudicially interprets consciousness or, perhaps we could say, the cogizing subject qua consciousness solely in the terms of reflective theoretical cognition. There's no blood flowing in the veins of the transcendental ego, to put it in a vulgar way. Such a conception ignores the more fundamental practical and emotive aspect of (human) existence, and hence, entirely skirts the problems of existence and the metaphysical questions that necessarily open up in the investigation into this existential being.

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⁹ Husserl. Ideas I (Kersten translation), 44.
Again, Husserl technically does not address these objections in the "Epilogue." The "Epilogue" is meant to put forward the true sense of phenomenology for English speaking readers. Indeed, such a statement is necessary, Husserl asserts, because current trends in German philosophy have threatened the very possibility of philosophy as rigorous science as a possibility for the subject historically situated in the human community of his day. "The great task of our time," Husserl says on page 406 of the preliminary remarks, is "to carry out a radical meditation, in order to intentionally explicate the genuine sense of this idea of philosophy and to demonstrate the possibility of its realization." (406) This is the vocation of phenomenology as Husserl sees it.

The field of research in phenomenology is "transcendental subjectivity, together with its transcendental lived experiences, faculties, and accomplishments <which> is an absolutely autonomous domain of direct experience." (408) Husserl wants to make clear in early sections of the Epilogue that his readers understand the new science of phenomenology is not a positive science, that is to say, a science founded on the method of inductive generalization of empirically disclosed facts of experience however. Yet neither is it a purely formal deductive science. The phenomenological method is neither inductive nor deductive. Yet it is a science of essences, he argues, that is to say of a science of the invariant structures of regional ontological domains as they present themselves in experience and the structures of consciousness as it intends these objectivities.

Thus Book I of the Ideas <Husserl asserts on page 409> deals with an "apriori" science (an eidetic science directed to the universal that is original-intuitive) which lays claim to the factual field of experience of transcendental subjectivity and its factual lived experience, but which takes them into account merely as pure possibilities, placing them beside pure intuitive possibilities that have be varied <imaginatively> completely ad libitum, and then extrapolating, as their "apriori," their indissoluble essential structure of transcendental subjectivity pervading all the free variations.

Now it is not at all clear what Husserl means by this, but he is laying out the conception here of the methodology by which the essence of a material region, e.g., perceptual consciousness, comes to be disclosed. As phenomenology is a science not of actualities but rather of pure possibilities, it would appear then that the method of disclosing this apriori realm would have to be deductive or discursive in nature. Yet Husserl holds that the ground of this eidetics is intuition. It may be in the course of the disclosure of the essence of perceptual consciousness, let's say, that I take as my starting point my own factual perceptual experiencing of something whatsoever. Hence I take my own experiencing as the subject of my investigation. Yet to restrict my investigation merely to my own singular consciousness would never allow us to transcend the level of the factual (the singular); for my method would remain restricted to mere self-observation. The intuition of cognition as such is not a self-observation. For "the goal is not a factual science of the facts of this sphere of inner intuition but is a science of the essence, i.e., one which investigates the invariant, properly essential structures of a soul or a community of spiritual life, that is, according to its apriori." (412) Hence phenomenology is at root the intuition of essences, an actual seeing of the invariant structures of conscious intentionalities.

Phenomenology is, as Husserl depicts it, an eidetics of cognition. The method of phenomenological reduction signifies the critical means of access not to a de facto consciousness but rather to the essential structural correlation of consciousness and objectivities per se intended therein. Given that the matters at issue in phenomenology are not matters of fact but rather pure possibility, they include the full frame of possible cognitions, most universally understood, and the correlative objectivities intended in these acts as they happen in the living flow of consciousness.

Thus the phenomenological reduction does not signify something like the restriction of investigation to the sphere real <reellen> immanence, to the sphere of that which is really <reell> enclosed in the absolute this of the cogitatio. It does not signify a restriction to the sphere of the cogitatio generally, but rather it signifies the restriction to the sphere of pure self-
givennesses ... not the sphere of that which is perceived but rather of what precisely is given in the sense in which it is meant – self-given in the most rigorous sense such that nothing of what is meant fails to be given.¹⁰

The word "reduction," or the verb "to reduce," in German reduzieren, denotes in many contexts a restriction or elimination of subject matter to something more elemental. By reduction, one usually signifies a decrease of sorts. A reductionist psychology, for instance, takes mental processes to be in some manner dependent upon or epi-phenomenal to physical or actual cognitive functions of a living brain. However, the term "reduction" as Husserl's employs it, here and elsewhere, signifies not a restriction but rather, in affirmation of the etymology of the word, a return or a leading back. This is the original sense of a reductio; in essence it signifies a restoration.¹¹ And Husserl takes great pains to present the phenomenological reduction as a radical return to and restoration of the aims of critical philosophy. This is a return which seeks not to restrict its investigative eye to the immanent mental life of a worldly subject but rather one which focuses its regard to the essence of cognition as such and the objectivities given in cognition generally.

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The original problem <in this critique of knowledge> was the relation between subjective psychological experience and the actuality, in itself, grasped therein, at first a real actuality but then also mathematical and other ideal actualities. The insight <into the phenomenological problematic> requires first that the radical problem rather must proceed to the relation between cognition and object, but in a reduced sense, whereupon discussion is not of human cognition but rather of cognition generally, without any existential co-positing relation to an empirical I or to a real world.¹²

Phenomenology seeks in the purity of its concern to obtain a field of absolute self-givenness, i.e., a field of indubitable data exemplary not merely of my own or any factual psychic life or even of the cognition typical to my kind but rather of cognition as such. "Our focus on a critique of cognition has led us to a beginning, to a secure land of given <Gegebenheiten> which are at our disposal and which above all we appear to require."¹³

Carrying out the phenomenological reduction, our investigative interest is fixed on the two poles of experiencing: on the one hand, on concordant acts of consciousness that intend a transcendent objectivity and, on the other, on the transcendent object in the manner of its appearing to this actual consciousness. The phenomenon obtained by means of the reduction is thus this two sided structuring of intentional consciousness. It is neither the psychological stream of consciousness itself nor the experienced object in abstraction from this consciousness. The phenomenon at issue here ranges over both the intentional act and its objective correlate. And the phenomenological method rests in the description of the essential invariant structures both of consciousness as it intends an objectivity and the modes of being the object exhibits in these acts.

A concrete description of conscious lived experiences, those of perception, memory, predicative judgment, love, action, etc. also requires by necessity the description of the objects "as such," the intentional objects, that one is conscious of in the respective lived experiences, i.e., a description of the objects as they belong inseparably to the lived experience in question as its "objectively meant" (its objective sense). (424)

¹⁰ Hua II, 60-61.
¹² Hua II, 75.
¹³ Hua II, 46.