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## **The many lives and deaths of phenomenology: a history of the phenomenological movement<sup>1</sup>**

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Since its official and self-proclaimed birth in Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, published at the very beginning of the 20th Century, phenomenology has been following such different paths and has undergone so many transformations that one would hardly be able to provide a harmoniously unified account of its history. Born from an original attempt to combine the resources of Brentano's psychology with the logical expectations inherited from Bolzano's philosophy, phenomenology has taken many faces and endorsed substantially different philosophical claims all throughout the 20th century. As Hans-Georg Gadamer came to reflect on his relation with the other members of the phenomenological tradition he met since he was Martin Heidegger's student, Gadamer relates that "each phenomenologist had their own understanding of what phenomenology was really about"<sup>2</sup>.

But Gadamer also adds an important remark, as he immediately notes: "Only one thing remained clear, which is that the phenomenological method could not be learnt from books".

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<sup>1</sup> Published in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Daniele De Santis, Burt C. Hopkins, Claudio Majolino (éds.), New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 11-36.

<sup>2</sup> Gadamer, « Die phänomenologische Bewegung », GW, III, 1987, p. 116

Indeed, the most basic and least controversial conception of phenomenology that can be provided is that it consists in a *radical* way of dealing with philosophical questions, which takes philosophy as a descriptive *practice* rather than a systematic approach to knowledge. While philosophical systems can be suspected to rely on interpretations unable to critically interrogate the validity of the concepts they project onto reality, phenomenology as a practical description of the specific ways in which phenomena appear or manifest themselves seeks to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance. This practical aspect of phenomenological description is characteristic of its own original philosophical ‘style’, and constitutes a fundamental aspect of phenomenology throughout the historical development of this philosophical tradition, pointed out by Heidegger as he declares that phenomenology cannot be learnt « through the reading of phenomenological literature »<sup>3</sup>. The most compelling evidence of this practical dimension of phenomenological philosophy is perhaps the strong disinterest in publication manifested by Edmund Husserl himself, the undisputed founding father of phenomenological philosophy, who proved to be particularly reluctant to publish the results of his ongoing research, while he considered his lectures and his daily writing activity as quintessential to the new kind of philosophy he gave rise to.

Husserl himself first considered phenomenology as a wide philosophical project that would not only require his absolute dedication, but also the continuing efforts of his community of students, extending phenomenology in directions that a single and isolated philosopher would not be able to explore. However, Husserl soon realized that the paths followed by his best students (in particular Martin Heidegger and Max Scheler) were leading them to philosophical positions in which Husserl would not readily recognize the results of his own methodology, and he came subsequently - though not without experiencing some bitter disappointment - to see himself more and more as a lone and secluded “leader without followers”<sup>4</sup>, eventually considering himself ironically “the greatest enemy [*Feind*] to the famous ‘Husserlian phenomenological movement’”<sup>5</sup>. Such considerations allowed French phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur to declare that the history of phenomenology broadly construed must include, in addition to Husserl’s works, the long and complex history of Husserlian heresies<sup>6</sup>.

However, insofar as phenomenology, whether ‘orthodox’ or ‘heretic’, is based on a descriptive practice that aims at displaying the structures of experience, constantly attempting

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<sup>3</sup> GA 19, 9 (Cours de 24 sur le Sophiste)

<sup>4</sup> Briefwechsel II, 182, letter to A. Pfänder (1931)

<sup>5</sup> Briefwechsel IX, 79, letter to Albrecht (1931)

<sup>6</sup> Ricoeur (1986), 9

to define its own rules and to extend its scope, one should not underestimate the strength and depth of the philosophical commitments shared by the members of the phenomenological tradition, in spite of the variety of their methods and goals. As Emmanuel Levinas notes in his remarks on the phenomenological ‘technique’, “*phenomenology unites philosophers*” and does not do so because of a certain number of fundamental theses that phenomenologists would be committed to and would need to uncritically accept, but only because of “a way of proceeding that [phenomenologists] have in common”. Instead of being bound to the main theses and principles formulated by Husserl, phenomenologists “agree on approaching questions in a certain way”<sup>7</sup>. The philosophical commitment towards experience that they share unites the members of the phenomenological movement in a way loose enough to let them spread their wings and to embrace Husserl’s famous claim to bring philosophy “back to the things themselves” without being prevented from opening new paths and discovering new ways of accounting for the richness of lived experience.

Consequently, rather than a school of thought, phenomenology needs to be understood as a broader philosophical movement<sup>8</sup>, whose nature essentially involves its transformations and constant redefinitions. Comparing the phenomenological movement to a river giving rise to various different streams, Spiegelberg emphasizes several characteristic features of the phenomenological tradition, which sprung from a common source but gave birth to several parallel currents that do not necessarily join in their final destination, and which is fundamentally characterized by its intrinsic dynamics and its moving and exploratory dimension<sup>9</sup>. Spiegelberg’s metaphor stresses that, far from jeopardizing the unity and coherence of the movement, the plurality of these currents demonstrates the vitality of the phenomenological tradition, as long as the different currents do not annihilate but complement each other. The purpose of this chapter is to draw a cartography of the phenomenological movement that presents the dynamic specific to each of its main currents as well as their systematic and historical relation to each other.

In order to provide a general overview of the phenomenological tradition, this chapter will stress the constitutive role of the successive shifts that contributed to transforming the methods and redefining the scope of phenomenology throughout its historical development, manifesting an ever-reiterated attempt to recast the limits of phenomenological description

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<sup>7</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, tr. R. Cohen and M. Smith, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1998, p. 91

<sup>8</sup> Françoise Dastur, *La phénoménologie en questions*, Paris, Vrin, 2004, p.208.

<sup>9</sup> Spiegelberg, Herbert, *The Phenomenological Movement*, vol. 2, Second Edition, M. Nijhoff, The Hague, 1965, p.2.

(either by narrowing down or extending its boundaries) and overcome its shortcomings. Not only did these shifts take a significant part in the development of the phenomenological movement, but they mostly established phenomenology as a philosophical tradition of its own by constantly interrogating its legitimacy as a method and questioning its intellectual heritage. Accordingly, the two main assignments of this overview and the outline of this chapter will be the following: first, presenting the philosophical framework within which the “breakthrough of a newly grounded philosophy”<sup>10</sup>, namely phenomenology, was made possible, and analysing the fundamental features that characterize this philosophical breakthrough (part A) ; second, examining the different shifts that contributed to renewing the meaning and scope of phenomenology and constituted it as the tradition of thought that became the cornerstone of continental philosophy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (part B).

## **A. The birth of phenomenology and its foundation as a philosophical method**

### **1. *Phenomenology and descriptive psychology (from Brentano to Husserl)***

The word « phenomenology » has a long history, which goes back through Hegel and Kant to the philosophy of Lambert<sup>11</sup>. However, it was used in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in an intellectual context that was particularly far from the roots of German idealism, and in the wake of an attempt to bring the empirical psychology inherited from the British tradition to a higher form of completion and to give psychology its autonomy and significance with respect to other sciences. The word “phenomenology”, in this context, became associated with the work and school of Franz Brentano, who published his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* in 1874 and who appeared as the leading figure of this renewal of psychology as he attempted to provide it with its own criteria of scientific legitimacy. If it is not directly from Brentano that Edmund Husserl borrowed the word “phenomenology”, it is nevertheless in Brentano’s descriptive psychology that the term must find its conceptual origin.

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<sup>10</sup> Husserl, Edmund, « A draft of a preface to the *Logical Investigations* » (1913), tr. P. Bossert and C. Peters, M. Nijhoff, The Hague, 1975, p.32.

<sup>11</sup> The word appeared for the first time in 1736 in an unpublished essay from Christoph Friedrich Oetinger, *Philosophie der Alten* (« Phänomenologie », in J. Ritter and K. Gründer, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Basel, Schwabe, 1989, p. 486).

The originality and novelty of Brentano's psychology arises from the unexpected marriage between on the one hand his strong Aristotelian and neo-scholastic influence and on the other hand his original attempt to define a form of scientific inquiry especially suited for the description of psychological phenomena. In his 1874 *Psychology*, Brentano establishes a strong division between psychological or 'mental' phenomena (*Psychische Phänomene*) on the one hand and physical phenomena on the other, arguing that physiological explanations cannot account satisfyingly for the ontological specificity of the former. The famous "intentionality thesis", widely regarded as Brentano's most substantial contribution to philosophy, addresses this need to keep physical and mental phenomena strictly separated by providing a *criterium* of the latter that the former are unable to match. Mental phenomena, Brentano writes, are directed toward an object in a specific way that cannot be described as a physical relation between two different things. The object towards which a mental phenomenon is oriented is not a transcendent but an immanent object, an object that exists first and foremost *within* this mental phenomenon rather than an external object whose existence would be logically independent of any kind of mental activity. Being irreducible to a physical relation, this form of inclusion of the object within the mental phenomenon that is directed toward it is to be characterised as 'intentional', according to the scholastic terminology.

"Every mental phenomenon, Brentano famously writes, is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity".<sup>12</sup>

This intentional property of mental phenomena allows Brentano to stress their irreducibility, insofar as the intentional in-existence constitutes an *exclusive* characteristic of mental phenomena, making intentionality the key to the definition of psychology's scientific autonomy: the intentional relation between the act of perceiving and the object perceived is of a totally different kind than the causal relation between the physical object external to the mental phenomenon and the eyeball. This exclusive intentional character justifies Brentano's claim that mental phenomena require their own scientific treatment, grounded in a methodological approach that acknowledges their irreducibility to physical phenomena. While causal explanations of physical phenomena constitute the scientific framework of

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<sup>12</sup> Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, F. Meiner Verlag, 1924, p.124 ; English translation Rancurello, Terrell and McAlister, Routledge, 1973, p.68.

physiological approaches to the mental falling under the jurisdiction of genetic psychology, the study of the intentional character of mental phenomena demands a specific method, which would a few years later be labelled ‘psychognosie’ in Brentano’s lectures in Vienna. Drawing on Lotze’s distinction between ‘genetic’ and ‘descriptive’ science<sup>13</sup>, Brentano stresses the strictly descriptive and analytic character of this new sort of psychology: whereas genetic psychology studies the development of mental phenomena and their causal relations on the basis of inductive generalizations, ‘psychognosie’ describes the components the articulation of which is constitutive of the unity of mental phenomena and establishes on that ground the exact laws showing the necessary relations between different phenomena.

This ‘descriptive psychology’ provides the methodological framework for the development of the so-called ‘Brentano school’, which gathered Brentano’s best students such as Kazimierz Twardowski, Anton Marty, Carl Stumpf, Christian Von Ehrenfels, Alexius Meinong, and of course Edmund Husserl. In the context of the intense discussions that arose between Brentano’s former students throughout their attempts to apply descriptive psychology to various domains of knowledge, the word ‘phenomenology’ acquired a technical meaning, culminating in the publication of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* and their ‘phenomenological breakthrough’. The term ‘phenomenology’ was rather commonly and loosely used at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, both in philosophical and scientific discourses. Ludwig Boltzmann, for instance, used it profusely in reference to the interpretation of sensation and observation in thermodynamics, and Ernst Mach coined the phrase ‘general physical phenomenology’ to describe his attempt to purge physics of all metaphysical elements<sup>14</sup>. After Brentano started to use the term around 1889, it became associated with descriptive psychology, and was applied in particular to psychological studies focusing on the qualitative aspects of conscious experience, such as Stumpf and Von Ehrenfels’ investigations on ‘Gestalt qualities’, which Husserl knew well. When Husserl first published his *Logical investigations* in 1900-01, it seemed consequently quite natural and uncontroversial to define phenomenology as a kind of descriptive psychology<sup>15</sup>, focusing specifically upon cognitive activities and designed to account for the experiences through which knowledge is performed. At this stage of development of his philosophical ideas,

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<sup>13</sup> Nicolay Milkov, « Hermann Lotze and Franz Brentano », in *Philosophical Readings* 10 (2):115-122 (2018)

<sup>14</sup> See Berg, Adam, *Phenomenology, Phenomenalism and the question of time*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen, Zweiter und Dritter Band. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, in *Husserliana XIX/1*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1984, p.24: « Phänomenologie ist deskriptive Psychologie ».

Husserl still conceived phenomenology as strongly connected both to psychology understood as an empirical science and to pure logic, describing his overall philosophical project as based on a “purely descriptive phenomenology of the lived experiences concerned with thinking and knowing”<sup>16</sup>.

## **2. De-psychologising psychology (Husserl’s Logical Investigations)**

However, while Husserl did not coin the term ‘phenomenology’ but borrowed it from the scientific and psychological studies of his time, his understanding of the relation between phenomenology and psychology diverges from his predecessors on a fundamental point. Indeed, claiming that phenomenology is a kind of descriptive psychology does not mean that they are strictly equivalent, and that phenomenology is, in its turn, tantamount to some kind of psychology. Phenomenology, in the sentence quoted above, is not merely said to be descriptive, but *purely* descriptive, which makes a significant difference between them according to Husserl, since the purity that characterizes phenomenological description is intended to grant phenomenology some methodological primacy over psychology. Phenomenology and psychology share a descriptive purpose that make them akin to each other in some respect: they both take conscious experiences (*Erlebnisse*) as their starting point and as the ultimate ground of their descriptions. However, the kind of description involved in descriptive psychology is not *purely* descriptive insofar as it presupposes the empirical nature of the conscious experiences that express mental phenomena. The phenomena described are *already* determined as psychological and interpreted on the basis of an ontological distinction between mental and physical phenomena that phenomenological description does not need to presuppose: “pure description, Husserl writes, is only a preliminary step to theory, and is not itself a theory”<sup>17</sup>. Phenomenological description, insofar as it is pure, must be metaphysically neutral and faithful to the absence of presupposition that Husserl introduces in 1901 as the fundamental principle of phenomenology<sup>18</sup>. Unlike psychology, which focuses exclusively upon mental phenomena, phenomenology is not a ‘regional’ science, whose specific domain of objects or phenomena can be *a priori* delimited: it consists in the description of phenomena in general, without presupposing any ontological region to which phenomenology would be essentially bounded and committed as a science.

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<sup>16</sup> « Einer rein deskriptiven Phänomenologie der Denk- und Erkenntniserlebnisse », Hua XIX/1, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> Hua XIX/1, p. 24 (the text quoted is from the 1st edition)

<sup>18</sup> see section 7 of the Introduction to the *Logical Investigations*.



This fundamental distinction allows Husserl to understand phenomenology as a brand new and original philosophical method that does not need to rely on any kind of psychological presuppositions. Husserl's analysis of the relation between phenomenology and descriptive psychology is consequently particularly ambiguous and sensitive, paving the way to so many potential misinterpretations and misunderstandings that Husserl decided to completely rewrite this paragraph in the second edition of the *Logical Investigations*, in 1913. Claiming that phenomenology is descriptive psychology would be quite paradoxical if it meant that they could simply be held to be synonymous. Indeed, the *Prolegomena to Pure Logic*, which constitute the first volume of the *Logical Investigations* as well as the pathway to phenomenology, were devoted to the criticism and rejection of the various forms of psychologism, in response to Frege's harsh criticisms against the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, which Husserl published in 1891 and in which he defended an approach to mathematical thinking based on a descriptive psychology directly inspired by Brentano. Taking into account Frege's highly influential critique, the first volume of the *Logical Investigations* rejects under the label "psychologism" the varieties of theories that attempt to reduce logical truths to psychological laws by showing that the former rely on the activity of thinking and must consequently be grounded in psychological mechanisms. Against such psychologistic theories, Husserl's phenomenological project is built upon the demonstration that logical and psychological laws are strictly independent from each other. The very purpose of phenomenology is to provide a description of cognitive experiences that constitutes the basic ground for any theoretical research, whether psychological or logical:

"One and the same sphere of description can accordingly serve to prepare for very different theoretical sciences. It is not the full science of psychology that serves as a foundation for pure logic, but certain classes of descriptions which, insofar as they constitute the step preparatory to the theoretical researches of psychology [...] also form the substrate (*Unterlage*) for those fundamental abstractions in which logicians seize the essence of their ideal objects and connections with evidence"<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, if phenomenology and descriptive psychology are strongly connected to each other, the methodology of the former entails a radicalization of the descriptive approach of the latter that maintains a fundamental difference between them. Phenomenology and descriptive psychology are still strongly related for Husserl, insofar as they both consist in the description of lived-experiences. But saying this does not mean that they are strictly identical,

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<sup>19</sup> Hua XIX/1, p. 24 (text from the 1st edition) ; tr. Findlay (modified) in *Logical Investigations*, London, Routledge, 1970/2001, p.176.

and this is why, in response to the difficulties raised by the introduction of the 1901 edition of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl strikingly takes in 1913 the exact opposite stance to his previous statement, as he decides to rewrite this paragraph for the second edition:

“If psychology is given its old meaning, phenomenology is precisely not descriptive psychology, its peculiar ‘*pure*’ description, its contemplation of pure essences on the basis of exemplary individual intuitions of experiences [...] and its descriptive fixation of the contemplated essences into pure concepts, is no empirical description (as in natural sciences)”<sup>20</sup>.

These two opposite statements are not as opposed as they seem; they only require that we understand phenomenology as a critical deepening of Brentano’s psychology, inspired by Brentano’s description of intentional consciousness, but radical enough to reject the ontological division between mental (*psychische*) and physical phenomena that constituted the main goal of Brentano’s intentionality thesis. If phenomenology is descriptive psychology, as Husserl claimed in 1901, it consists first and foremost in a philosophical attempt to ‘depsychologise psychology’<sup>21</sup> and to describe the structures of lived-experiences without being committed to any kind of presupposition regarding the ontological status of mental phenomena<sup>22</sup>.

### **3. The phenomenological transformation of intentionality**

This critical relation to Brentano’s descriptive psychology entails an in-depth reinterpretation and reassessment of the intentionality thesis that is crucial to the definition of phenomenology. By refusing that the intentionality of conscious acts be intrinsically contingent on the delimitation of the sphere of mental (or psychic) phenomena, Husserl deeply modifies the meaning of the main concept he inherited from Brentano. Husserl retains his master’s fundamental idea that the intentionality of conscious experiences characterizes their orientation towards an object and that each mental act is directed toward its intentional object in its own specific way<sup>23</sup>. However, if the phenomenological (and metaphysically neutral) description of intentional lived-experiences is insensitive to the ontological distinction between physical and mental phenomena, then the object of an intentional act can

<sup>20</sup> Hua XIX/1, p. 23, trad. (slightly modified) p.175

<sup>21</sup> The expression is borrowed from Stanley Cavell, who comments on Wittgenstein’s attempt to « undo the psychologizing of psychology » (Cavell, 1969, p.91), and was more recently applied to Husserl’s phenomenology by J. Benoist (See Benoist, 2006, p.422).

<sup>22</sup> As will be seen further, Husserl radicalized even further this aspect of his phenomenology later in his career, by stressing its relation to a transcendental psychology that leaves aside the ontological naivety of psychological studies.

<sup>23</sup> See §10 of the 5th *Logical Investigation*, Hua XIX/2 pp.379-380, translation p. 95-96

no longer be treated in terms of “mental in-existence” or “immanent objectivity”, and intentionality cannot be understood as a form of mental “‘containment’ of objects in acts”<sup>24</sup>. Instead of treating intentionality as an immanent characteristic of psychological phenomena that encloses objects within consciousness as if mental contents were to be understood as a “sort of box-within-box structure”<sup>25</sup>, Husserl understands intentionality as a relation that expresses the fundamental openness of lived-experiences to the different domains of objectivity (existing, fictional, ideal objects...).

In order to understand the depth of this reinterpretation of intentionality, one needs to stress the radical specificity of the intentional *relation* as Husserl describes it: it is not and cannot be a relation in the usual sense of the word, i.e. an external relation that logically presupposes two things that enter into relation with each other. As Husserl makes it immediately clear, the intentional relation is *not* a relation between a conscious experience on the one hand, and an object on the other hand, which would be connected together in virtue of the intentional relation:

“There are not two things present in experience, we do not experience the object and beside it the intentional experience directed upon it, there are not even two things present in the sense of a part and a whole which contains it: only one thing is present, the intentional experience, whose essential descriptive character is the intention in question”<sup>26</sup>.

This is the reason why, rather than a mere relation, intentionality needs to be understood as a form of ‘correlation’ (*Korrelation*) that ties together in a much deeper sense the lived-experience and the object it is intrinsically oriented towards, as Husserl stresses much later, at the other end of his philosophical career, in the *Crisis of European Sciences* – the last philosophical text Husserl wrote. Emphasizing the unity of his philosophical project since the publication of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl then claims that “the correlation between world (the world of which we always spoke) and its subjective manners of givenness [*Gegebenheitsweisen*]” constitutes the main discovery and the fundamental ground of the phenomenological breakthrough, which was able to identify for the first time the intentional correlation as a ‘philosophical wonder’ and to recognize that everything stands in correlation

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<sup>24</sup> A detailed criticism and rejection of these phrases is presented in §11 of the fifth *Logical Investigation*, Hua XIX/2 pp. 384-388, Eng. trans. p.98-100

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, p.98

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, Hua XIX/2 p.386, trans. P.98.

with its own manners of givenness<sup>27</sup>. Phenomenology is born from the careful examination of “the *how* of the appearance of a thing in its actual and possible alteration” and the description of “the correlation it involves between *appearance* and *that which appears as such*”. Consequently, instead of a psychological description consisting in an analysis of the actual contents and empirical *elements* that constitute mental phenomena, phenomenological description examines the *structures* of consciousness, i.e. the various manners in which objects are experienced by us and given to us in a way that constitutes our world and defines the horizon of human life.

This task – accounting for the *how* of the appearance of the things that constitute the coordinates of our world – does not only establish the specific aim of Husserl’s philosophy. It constitutes the overarching goal of a wider philosophical purpose, giving rise to a movement rather than a school of thought: it defines the main direction of the phenomenological movement, and sets the difficulties that the later proponents of the phenomenological tradition inherit from Husserl. Consequently, the history of the phenomenological movement can be understood and described as the history of the various ways philosophers have attempted to address the difficulties and insufficiencies of Husserl’s early breakthrough, bringing significant shifts in the phenomenological method while nevertheless maintaining the necessity of fulfilling the original philosophical task identified by Husserl.

## **B. The shifts**

### ***1. The transcendental shift (Husserl, Fink)***

Even before his inheritors would contemplate the possibility of bringing phenomenological descriptions beyond the scope that phenomenology was assigned by its founding father, Husserl himself pointed out the necessity of a radical transformation of the phenomenological method that provoked its first fundamental shift. One of the main questions that the *Logical Investigations* left unanswered, and that Husserl came to consider as highly

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<sup>27</sup> *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie.* In *Husserliana VI*, Ed. Biemel. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976, p.168 (tr. Carr, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenology.* Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, p. 165-166).

problematic a couple of years only after the publication of his ground-breaking work, was the question of the relation between the phenomenological method and the empirical ground upon which descriptions are based. The strong connexions between Husserl's descriptive analysis of lived experiences and Brentano's own method in psychology cast a doubt on the *Logical Investigations*' claim to metaphysical neutrality. In *Formal and transcendental logic*, published much later in 1929, Husserl stresses the issues that the psychological ground upon which phenomenological descriptions are built entails: many enthusiastic readers of the *Logical Investigations* felt that the phenomenological analyses of the second volume, which includes the six investigations that introduce and apply for the first time the proper method that Husserl specifically called phenomenology, betrayed the anti-psychologist commitments of the *Prolegomena to pure logic* and signified "a relapse into psychologism"<sup>28</sup>. By that stage, Husserl was indeed considering that the *Logical Investigations* are located at the crossroads between a sophisticated form of psychologism he had not yet entirely managed to overcome, and a properly transcendental phenomenology that required moving one step further away from psychology in order to avoid the threat of such "transcendental psychologism"<sup>29</sup>.

In order to radicalize the opposition between psychology and phenomenology, Husserl needed consequently a method that would guarantee the purity of phenomenological descriptions and seal their irreducibility to psychological analyses. Around 1902-03, Husserl began to make a sharp distinction between phenomenology as an eidetic science of "pure" consciousness studied in "immanence," and psychology as an empirical, factual science of mental states. He soon came to consider that the descriptive method set up in this second volume of the *Logical Investigations* was not radical enough to purify phenomenology from the ontological presuppositions inherent to psychological sciences in general and to Brentano's empirical psychology in particular. Husserl had made a major discovery by putting forward an intuitive and nevertheless rigorous method allowing him to describe lived-experiences in a way that displays the essential structures of consciousness, i.e. in terms of intentional acts, their contents and intentional objects. However, this method seemed to presuppose some kind of naïve commitment to the reality of the mental phenomena described: the psychological background of Husserl's method in the 1901 opus is unable to stress the radicalness of the phenomenological analysis of lived experiences, and the intentional structures of consciousness are only described in the *Logical Investigations* under the

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<sup>28</sup> *Formale and transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*, §56. In Husserliana XVII, Ed. Janssen, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1974 (tr. Cairns, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, p.152)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

presupposition of a world within which and in relation to which such consciousness must find its meaning.

As he was trying to strengthen the analyses developed in the LI and struggling with such difficulties, Husserl realized that a “pure” phenomenology would require a method that clarifies and emphasizes the opposition between the phenomenological and psychological approaches to intentional consciousness. In a manuscript from 1905, Husserl famously labelled this original method, specifically designed to avoid the kind of difficulties that makes psychological descriptions dependant on the presupposition of a world within which consciousness is taken to be empirically encountered, as the “phenomenological reduction”. Putting aside all scientific, philosophical, cultural, and everyday assumptions that jeopardize our purely intuitive access to lived experiences, reduction operates a deactivation of the “natural” attitude that constantly presupposes the world as the ultimate horizon of every intentional act of consciousness. Insofar as this bracketing of the natural attitude is expected to free phenomenological descriptions of lived experiences from the empirical background upon which psychological analyses drew, it lays the ground for a *transcendental* phenomenology that no longer carries the ontological implications of psychological descriptions. Suspending our naïve commitments to reality and excluding every position of transcendent existence, the method of reduction allows description to focus on the purely immanent structures and components of lived experiences, attending only to phenomena’s specific modes of givenness. This is the reason why, after introducing reduction as the key to phenomenological methodology in the lectures he gave at Göttingen University around 1906-07<sup>30</sup>, Husserl came to characterize phenomenology exclusively in transcendental terms, claiming ultimately that the essential structures of consciousness previously described thanks to eidetic intuition in the *Logical Investigations* can only find their proper – transcendental – meaning once they come to be uncovered by transcendental reduction.

This transcendental turn in Husserl’s trajectory contributed to considerably extending the scope of phenomenological analyses, allowing Husserl to address wider philosophical questions that were left aside in his previous works, where the phenomenological method was exclusively devoted to epistemological investigations regarding the essential features of our

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<sup>30</sup> E. Husserl, *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie. Vorlesungen 1906/07*. In *Husserliana XXIV*, Ed. Melle, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1985 (tr. Willard, *Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics*, The Hague, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994) ; E. Husserl, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Fünf Vorlesungen*. In *Husserliana II*, Ed. Biemel, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1973 (tr. Alston and G. Nakhnikian, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

acts of knowing. The transcendental radicalization of the phenomenological method made legitimate its application to any kind of lived-experiences once the bracketing of every transcendence has uncovered their purely immanent components and structures. Amongst the original new perspectives that this transcendental shift opened up, the most significant are related to the analysis of the temporal, spatial, embodied, normative, subjective and intersubjective structures of consciousness.

Although Husserl's move towards a transcendental form of phenomenology was harshly criticized by an important number of his students, the broadening of the phenomenological themes that it made possible was greatly instrumental in demonstrating phenomenology's ability to apply to any field of philosophical knowledge, including ethical, social, historical, aesthetic and kinaesthetic domains. The possibility to widen the scope of phenomenological inquiry contributed greatly in making phenomenology much more than a mere theory of consciousness exclusively focused on the structures of knowledge, and in initiating a philosophical movement bound to spread way beyond the ambitions of its founding father. However, one fundamental aspect of this reinterpretation of phenomenological analysis in transcendental terms that Husserl's students were most critical of is its strong emphasis on the egological structure of intentional consciousness and the particular kind of transcendental idealism that Husserl eventually recognized as a necessary consequence of his phenomenology. Both features contravened the realist and non-subjective orientation of the analyses Husserl had developed in the *Logical Investigations*, and entailed a radical transformation of the kind of phenomenology he first introduced in his 1901 masterpiece. Instead of understanding phenomenology as a mere development of Brentano's psychology which originality consisted mostly in extending the boundaries of his master's school, the transcendental dimension of phenomenological analyses allowed Husserl to place phenomenology within a much wider philosophical tradition, in which Descartes and Kant constitute the most important figures.

Discarding the criticisms of Natorp's neo-Kantian emphasis on the ego initially expressed in the 5<sup>th</sup> *Logical Investigation*<sup>31</sup>, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology goes hand in hand with a reinterpretation of Descartes' cogito, which stresses both the subjective character of conscious experience and the limits of Descartes' substantial interpretation of the Ego, leading to "transcendental realism"<sup>32</sup>. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl was still

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<sup>31</sup> See §8

<sup>32</sup> Hua I, §11, p. 63, tr. Cairns, *Cartesian Meditations*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960, p. 24

following the Humean tradition that inspired Brentano's empirical psychology and he considered that the description of the intentional structure of the acts of consciousness and the analysis of their real and ideal contents required bracketing the ego as the source of psychic acts. However, Husserl soon came to realize that the ego played a crucial role not only as the source of the syntheses that perform the unification of intentional acts, but as the "pure" and "transcendental" origin that constitutes the meaning of conscious experience. After the transcendental turn, Husserl constantly stresses the subjective dimension of intentional experience, interpreting intentionality as a *constitutive* relation thanks to which the object receives its meaning from its relation to the transcendental ego.

Taking the opposite stance to that defended in 1901, Husserl takes up Kant's famous conception of the transcendental ego as accompanying every representation in the general introduction to transcendental phenomenology he publishes in 1913 to clarify his position under the title *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*<sup>33</sup>. For Husserl as for Kant, a 'transcendental' philosophy is expected to demonstrate the necessity of asking for the conditions of possibility of objectivity and of recognizing the essential correlation between the objective world and constituting subjectivity. Drawing on this fundamental idea, Husserl proposes from 1913 on a new kind of transcendental constitutive phenomenology that studies how objects are constituted in pure consciousness, setting aside thanks to transcendental reduction any questions regarding the natural world. This characterization of the philosophical purpose phenomenology is to achieve allowed Eugen Fink, Husserl's faithful and trustworthy secretary at the end of his life, to propose in his own sixth *Meditation* to understand Husserl's phenomenology as a continuation of Kant's transcendental philosophy<sup>34</sup>. Later, in the *Crisis of European Sciences*, the last book Husserl intended for publication as he was nearing his death, Husserl goes as far as to claim that phenomenology is the *only* philosophical way of uncovering the subjective meaning of the relation between man and world, using transcendental reduction in order to reveal the "functioning subjectivity" (*leistende Subjektivität*)<sup>35</sup> that operates everywhere 'in hiddenness', a subjectivity that is no longer to be understood as enclosed within the boundaries of the psychological ego.

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<sup>33</sup> Hua III/1, §57, p.123 ; tr. Kersten, *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology*, vol. 1, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983, p.133.

<sup>34</sup> Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation : The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*, tr. R. Bruzina, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*. In *Husserliana VI*, Ed. Biemel. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976 p.68 (tr. Carr, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental*



## 2. *The realist shift (Reinach, Daubert, Scheler, Stein, Ingarden...)*

For a number of reasons, not many of the students Husserl managed to gather around him in Göttingen were at first convinced by the transformations that phenomenology underwent after Husserl gave a transcendental orientation to his research. Husserl's most gifted students had come to Göttingen from Munich, where they had initially been studying philosophy and psychology with Theodor Lipps, whose theory was criticized by Husserl in the *Prolegomena* as a form of psychologism. Confronted with the lack of academic interest in the phenomenological considerations developed in the second volume of his *Logical Investigations* and in search of a wider audience, Husserl started soon after their publication to look for students who would be sufficiently open-minded to follow him, while having a solid and rigorous training in psychology. Under the impulsion of Johannes Daubert, a group of students of Lipps (later known as the 'Munich Circle') including Adolf Reinach, Moritz Geiger, and Alexander Pfänder, decided to align themselves with Husserl's phenomenological method against the psychology of their former teacher, and left Munich for Göttingen around 1905 to study directly with Husserl. The circle expanded as they were soon joined by new prominent members such as Max Scheler, then Edith Stein and Roman Ingarden, giving rise to the 'Göttingen Circle'.

It is mainly within this circle that the idea of phenomenology as a 'movement' first started to make sense, as phenomenology appeared for the first time as a methodology able to gather philosophers and psychologists belonging to diverse horizons and heading towards different directions. Indeed, the differences regarding the orientation phenomenology was to follow appeared immediately as the circle was growing. Most of the members of the circle, whose strong interest in the descriptive phenomenology sketched in the *Logical Investigations* had urged them to join Husserl at the university of Göttingen, could only be reluctant to align with the transcendental turn officialised by their master only a couple of years after their arrival. Paradoxically, the move towards transcendental phenomenology that Husserl expected to strengthen and improve the position he advocated in 1901 ended up provoking sharp dissent between Husserl and his best students, who became quite critical of the idealist reassessment of phenomenology that Husserl's transcendental claims committed him to.

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*Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenology.* Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, p.67).

In spite of their diverging ways of practicing phenomenology, all the scholars belonging to the Göttingen circle shared a strong scepticism regarding the method of transcendental reduction and rejected the idealistic turn phenomenology was beginning to undergo. Consequently, this disagreement with their master contributed to the reinforcement of the Circle's philosophical unity, based on an attempt to maintain the realist (versus idealist) orientation of phenomenological research and to prioritize the objective (rather than subjective) orientation of phenomenological description expressed in its original *motto*, "to the things themselves". Against the pervasive kind of psychologism that most members of the group had been acquainted with while studying with Lipps in Munich, phenomenology represented the opportunity to develop a logical and nevertheless rigorously *descriptive* analysis of the objective structures of reality, through a universal philosophy of essences. It is Husserl himself who described the phenomenological investigations of his students as 'realist'. If the kind of realism to which the members of the Circle subscribed was the result of their anti-idealism, it is first and foremost a phenomenological realism of essences, which draws on Husserl's eidetic method. Under the growing influence of Reinach, the only one of his students for whom Husserl always and only expressed his admiration until his premature death on the front in 1917, the group sought to use phenomenological descriptions in order to extend the domain of our *a priori* knowledge. Reinach stressed in his work the ontological significance of the discovery Husserl had made in his ground-breaking 1901 masterpiece when he uncovered the existence of a material form of *a priori*. One of the most philosophically significant achievements that phenomenology deserves to be granted is its ability to reveal the essential and necessary connections that occur not only in the formal structures of logic but also in the structures of concrete material phenomena, such as the connection between the coloration of a surface and its spatial extension. Radicalizing an insight borrowed from the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Logical Investigation*, Reinach showed that such essential connections (*Wesenszusammenhänge*) are *a priori* properties carried by states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), which in turn constitute the objects of our intentional acts.

This phenomenological conception of the *a priori* was deeply original insofar as it allowed an ontological (rather than epistemological) interpretation of a concept that was traditionally tied, since Kant, to the *subjective* conditions of knowledge. If anything, realist phenomenology understands *a priori* knowledge as a non-inductive knowledge of the *objective* connections between the elements of the states of affairs judged about, so that the *a priori* determines the ontological properties of the *object* (rather than the *subject*) of knowledge, or of any act of consciousness. This realist claim goes hand in hand with a

reassessment of Brentano's intentionality thesis, interpreted in the spirit of the *Logical Investigations* less as a correlation than as a relation to an object in which consciousness, so to say, absorbs and exhausts itself. Daubert dedicated a lot of effort to the analysis of this entanglement of intentional consciousness with reality, describing it in a way that makes transcendental reduction appear to be an artificial and detrimental attempt to withdraw consciousness from reality in order to substantivize the ego.

The members of the Munich and Göttingen circles extended this realist analysis of our *a priori* knowledge to various kinds of entities and domains, applying it in particular to the psychology of willing and motivation (Pfänder<sup>36</sup>), the analysis of 'social acts' such as speech acts (Reinach<sup>37</sup>), the ontology of communities (Stein<sup>38</sup>), the works of art and aesthetic phenomena (Ingarden<sup>39</sup>), or to ethical values (Scheler<sup>40</sup>). Even though their investigations were broadly critical of the transcendental reassessment that phenomenology was undergoing at that time, they contributed to demonstrating the vitality and in widening the scope of phenomenological studies. As evidence of this vitality, it must be recalled how influential this anti-idealist interpretation of phenomenology was on later generations of phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Sartre, or Merleau-Ponty, who shared these realist concerns with respect to the transcendental radicalization of phenomenology, as well as contemporary philosophers such as Roderick Chisholm, J.N. Findlay, R. Sokolowski, B. Smith, P. Simons, or K. Mulligan amongst others, who drew on the realist tradition in order to build some interesting bridges between phenomenology and certain tendencies in Anglo-American analytic philosophy.

One might argue that this realist approach to phenomenology consisted less in a transformative shift than in a conservative backwards move, returning to the early conception

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<sup>36</sup> A. Pfänder, *Phänomenologie des Wollens: Eine psychologische Analyse*, Leipzig, Barth, 1900

<sup>37</sup> A. Reinach, *Sämtliche Werke. Textkritische Ausgabe*. Ed. K. Schuhmann and B. Smith, Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1989 (in particular 'Die apriorischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechtes' and 'Wesen und Systematik des Urteils')

<sup>38</sup> E. Stein, 'Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften,' *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung* 5, 1922 ; Eng. tr. by M. C. Baseheart, M. Sawicki, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities. The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, Vol. 7, Washington, ICS, 2000

<sup>39</sup> R. Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft*, Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931 ; Eng. by Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973

<sup>40</sup> M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, 1980, Bern: Francke Verlag ; Eng. Tr. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1973

of phenomenology Husserl presented in the *Logical Investigations*. However, the works of the Göttingen Circle contributed to the raising of a fundamental question about the nature of phenomenology that was certainly not absent from the *Logical Investigations* but was left problematically unanswered. Husserl's transcendental turn urged phenomenologists to choose between idealism and realism for the first time, giving rise to an alternative that would define the philosophical spectrum of phenomenological thought for the generations to come. The realist reaction against their master that most of Husserl's early students shared contributed to making phenomenology less of a doctrine, or even a methodology, than a broader philosophical movement encompassing different trends, and involving some unavoidable but fruitful disagreements about the metaphysical stakes and significance of phenomenology.

### 3. *The hermeneutic shift (Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricœur)*

Like the members of the Munich Circle, though independently from them, Martin Heidegger's attention was first drawn to phenomenology when he discovered Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. And like the proponents of phenomenological realism, the originality of Heidegger's personal contribution to phenomenology derives from his criticism of the transcendental method developed by Husserl from 1905 on. However, Heidegger cannot be counted as one of Husserl's students strictly speaking. Indeed, he and Husserl never met before Husserl moved in 1916 from Göttingen to Freiburg, where Heidegger was already lecturing as a *Privatdozent*, and consequently his interest in Husserl's phenomenology grew on a very different ground than the students Husserl had gathered around him prior to his new appointment.

Heidegger came to read the *Logical Investigations* while he was studying Catholic theology in Freiburg, where he soon switched to philosophy in the prospect of writing his dissertation with Heinrich Rickert, who had become by that stage a major figure of the neo-Kantian tradition in Germany. Not only was Heidegger's philosophical thought framed within a philosophical context strongly determined by neo-Kantianism, it must be noted that his particular interest in Husserl's phenomenology arose through the reading of another important neo-Kantian philosopher Heidegger was under the influence of during these years, Emil Lask. Lask was the only one amongst the neo-Kantians who took Husserl's 1901 groundwork seriously enough to propose a theory of categories that acknowledges explicitly the decisive breakthrough accomplished in the *Logical Investigation*. Although they belong to the horizon of neo-Kantianism, Lask's works integrate some of Husserl's fundamental insights in an

attempt to renew the neo-Kantian's theory of knowledge and interpretation of logic<sup>41</sup>. Lask's positive appraisal of Husserl impressed Heidegger enough to convince him that phenomenology was able to address the questions left unanswered by his neo-Kantian training. In particular, Lask brought Heidegger's attention to the novelty of the theory of categorial intuition developed in the 6<sup>th</sup> *Logical Investigation*, which eventually provided, according to Heidegger's own word, the ground (*Boden*) upon which his philosophical investigation could only be established<sup>42</sup>.

From this moment on, phenomenology played a fundamental role in the development of Heidegger's philosophical thought, even though Heidegger had already completed his philosophical training under the direction of Rickert and established himself as a respected scholar by the time Husserl arrived in Freiburg. Even if Heidegger was initially rather critical of Husserl's appointment in the University where he was lecturing<sup>43</sup>, Lask's reading of Husserl convinced him that an in-depth appropriation of the phenomenological method would provide him with the tools he needed in order to overcome the philosophical shortcomings of the neo-Kantian framework in which his thought had emerged<sup>44</sup>. In the years following Husserl's arrival in Freiburg, Heidegger engaged with him in an intense philosophical relationship, leading him to become Husserl's assistant after the end of the war, in 1919. Heidegger's brilliant and unique ability to mould his own powerful thinking and way of questioning into the phenomenological cast fascinated Husserl to such an extent that he would eventually consider him the best candidate to succeed him as a Full Professor at Freiburg University in 1928. Only a few years after he started to work as Husserl's assistant, Heidegger had gained such recognition in the German philosophical landscape that he obviously needed to be counted as one of the leading figures of the phenomenological movement, bringing

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<sup>41</sup> See Schuhmann K. and Smith B., « Two idealisms : Lask and Husserl », in *Kant-Studien*, 84 (1993), 454, and Heidegger's own analysis in *SZ* §44b, note 1 (219). Lask often refers to the *Logical Investigations* and acknowledges his influence in a note of *Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre*, in E. Lask, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, 1923, Mohr, Tübingen, p. 37. On Lask's decisive influence on Heidegger, see Th. Kisiel: "Why students of Heidegger will have to read Emil Lask", in D.G. Chaffin (éd.), *Emil Lask and the Search for Concreteness*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1993

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *GA* 15, p. 378.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Ernst Lasowski, January 1916. Quoted in Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, transl. by A. Blunden, New York: Basic, 1993, p. 90

<sup>44</sup> Martin Heidegger, "A Recollection (1957)" trans. Hans Seigfried in Sheehan, *Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker*, pp. 21-22 (German text in Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 56) ; See also Heidegger, « My way into phenomenology », in *On Time and Being*, p. 76, and Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse and Authenticity in Being and Time*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 65.

Husserl himself to declare in the early twenties: “phenomenology is me and Heidegger”<sup>45</sup>. However significant the differences in their philosophical perspectives were, Husserl trusted that their commitment to phenomenology made them close enough to embrace a common philosophical objective, and he consequently offered to publish *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), Heidegger’s main philosophical manifesto, in his *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* in 1927.

The publication of *Being and Time* made manifest the substantial and significant differences that opposed the philosophical views of Husserl and Heidegger since the beginning, and which were responsible for Heidegger’s ambivalent attitude towards his old master. To be sure, from the dedication of *Being and Time*<sup>46</sup> to his last seminars<sup>47</sup>, Heidegger always recognized and even claimed explicitly the decisive influence that the “phenomenological seeing” (*phänomenologische Sehen*) he learnt from Husserl when he was his assistant exerted upon his own approach to philosophy<sup>48</sup>. Yet Heidegger, who remained widely sceptical about the philosophical depth of his master’s doctrine<sup>49</sup> and was not afraid to be at odds with the old-fashioned metaphysical framework of “the old man” (*der Alte*)<sup>50</sup>, was an “entirely original personality [...] labouring to forge his own solidly grounded approach”, as Husserl himself claimed in the letter of recommendation he wrote to Paul Natorp on Heidegger’s behalf<sup>51</sup>. Heidegger was bound to become a phenomenologist of his own kind – one whose deeply original insights opened a new and prolific trend within the phenomenological movement.

Amongst the substantial differences that separate Husserl and Heidegger’s philosophical conceptions, three main points of disagreement need to be highlighted, as they proved to be particularly instrumental in renewing the phenomenological movement from within.

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Gadamer, *Heidegger’s way*, tr. J. W. Stanley, State University of New York, 1994, p. 18

<sup>46</sup> See also the footnote Heidegger added to *Being and Time*’s introduction (SZ 38n)

<sup>47</sup> See Heidegger’s 1973 Seminar in Zähringen, in *Four Seminars*, Indiana University Press, 2003

<sup>48</sup> *Zur Sache des Denkens*, GA 14, p.98 ; tr. J. Stambaugh, « My way to phenomenology », in *On Time and Being*, New York, Harper and Row, 1972, p.78

<sup>49</sup> Letter to Löwith, 20 February 1923, quoted by Sheehan, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 17 : « Looking back from this vantage point to the *Logical Investigations*, I am now convinced that Husserl was never a philosopher, not even for one second in his life. He becomes ever more ludicrous ».

<sup>50</sup> Letter to Löwith, 8 May 1923 ; see Heidegger’s letter to Jaspers, 26/12/1926: “If the treatise written ‘against’ anyone, it’s against Husserl”

<sup>51</sup> Husserl, Letter to Natorp, 1 Feb 1922, *Briefwechsel* 5, 150, quoted in Kisiel, Sheehan (eds.), *Becoming Heidegger*, Northwestern University Press, 2007 p.369.

1/It must first be stressed that Heidegger's questioning was, from the start, foreign to Husserl's phenomenological perspective. True, both Heidegger and Husserl underwent the decisive influence of Franz Brentano's pioneering investigations. However, the Brentano in which Heidegger discovered the philosophical question that would become the most fundamental for him – namely, the question of being – was not the charismatic professor who taught Husserl in Vienna and convinced him to switch from mathematics to philosophy. Heidegger's interest in the multiple meanings of being arose from his reading of the dissertation on Aristotle that Brentano published in 1862<sup>52</sup>, at a time when he had not yet begun to develop his psychological analysis of intentionality. The discovery of Brentano's renewed approach to the Aristotelian question about the equivocality of being set the ultimate goal of Heidegger's philosophical thought, and he came to consider from this moment on that the ultimate task of philosophy was to elucidate “the wonder of all wonders: *that there is being (daß Seiendes ist)*”<sup>53</sup>. It is in this context that Heidegger first read Husserl – mistakenly, by his own account – hoping that the *Logical Investigations* would help him solve his question about the meanings of being<sup>54</sup>.

Heidegger's subsequent interest in the phenomenological call to “the thing itself” is entirely determined by and reoriented towards his focus on a question that was never Husserl's but his own – a question that Heidegger credits himself with being the first to raise explicitly, and that presupposes a philosophical sensitivity to the general forgetfulness of being that Heidegger claims to be the only thinker to account for.

« Whence and how is it determined what is to be experienced as “the thing itself” (*die Sache selbst*) in accordance with the principle of phenomenology? Is it consciousness and its objectivity or is it the being of entities in its unconcealedness and concealment? »<sup>55</sup>

According to Heidegger, the fundamental breakthrough operated by Husserl's phenomenology consists less in the description of the essential structures of intentional consciousness than in the discovery of the preconceptual understanding of being, which Husserl's analysis of categorial intuition made possible but failed to recognize as the main achievement of his phenomenology. Consequently, far from turning him against phenomenology, Heidegger's critical reading of Husserl brought him to reinterpret

<sup>52</sup> Franz Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*, Freiburg, Herder, 1862; tr. Rolf George, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975

<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, postscript to *Was ist Metaphysik ?*, GA 9 p.307

<sup>54</sup> « My way to phenomenology », p.75

<sup>55</sup> ZSD 87, « My way to phenomenology » P. 79

phenomenology within the horizon of his own problematic. While Husserl's transcendental turn made him vulnerable to the shortcomings of the idealist tradition that includes Descartes, Kant and Fichte, Heidegger claims that "the question of being developed in *Being and Time* set itself against this philosophical position" and grew on the basis of "a more faithful adherence to the principle of phenomenology"<sup>56</sup>.

2/The philosophical investigation into the question of being that motivates the writing of *Being and Time* is consequently to be described as intrinsically phenomenological, although in an original sense. Committed to the practice of the "phenomenological seeing", Heidegger reaffirms the need for an intuitive method, which guarantees according to him the philosophical "radicality" of the phenomenological approach and demonstrates subsequently its superiority over non-phenomenological methodologies, such as dialectics<sup>57</sup>. However, Heidegger rejects the theoretical approach to intuition that Husserl was never able to overcome, and emphasizes in *Being and Time* the temporal presuppositions at work in the famous "principle of all principles" thanks to which Husserl identifies intuition as the ultimate source of indubitable evidence and legitimacy for scientific knowledge<sup>58</sup>. As Heidegger notes, "the thesis that all cognition has its goal in "intuition" has the temporal meaning that all cognition is a making present (*Gegenwartigen*)", leading Husserl to grant absolute (but phenomenologically unjustified according to Heidegger) priority to the present over the other temporal modes in the characterization of phenomena<sup>59</sup>. Against the metaphysical presuppositions upon which this conception of intuition draws, Heidegger claims that intentionality of "consciousness" is grounded in a temporal orientation towards the future that is fundamental, and which Heidegger calls "the ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*"<sup>60</sup>. Instead of understanding intuition as a privileged mode of presentation of objects to a subject in a *theoretical* framework, Heidegger's philosophical project consists in showing that such intuition is always derived from a *practical* and more originary relation to the world that guides and orients an agent's activity. This primordial orientation towards the world, more fundamental than any other intentional mode of consciousness, is identified by Heidegger as

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<sup>56</sup> Letter to Richardson, Preface to *Heidegger: Through phenomenology to thought*, XIV

<sup>57</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)*, GA 63, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1988, p. 45-46; trans. J. Van Buren, *Ontology, the Hermeneutics of Facticity*, Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> Husserl, *Hua III/1*, §24

<sup>59</sup> *Sein und Zeit* 363n, tr. p.498

<sup>60</sup> *Sein und Zeit* 363n, tr. p.498



*Verstehen*, i.e. the act of understanding (*Verständnis*), and is described as a future-directed projection into practical possibilities<sup>61</sup>.

3/ This temporal reorientation of phenomenological analysis for the sake of the prioritization of the question about being is bound to overthrow the privilege granted to pure intuition in Husserl's phenomenology, so as to highlight the concrete existential ground and hermeneutic conditions of any act of intuiting:

“By showing how all sight is primarily grounded in understanding [...] we have robbed pure intuition of its privilege, which corresponds noetically to the privileging of objective presence in traditional ontology. “Intuition” (*Anschauung*) and “thought” are both already remote derivatives of understanding. Even the phenomenological “intuition of essences” (*Wesensschau*) is grounded in existential understanding (*existenzialen Verstehen*).”<sup>62</sup>

Heidegger here draws the consequences of his careful reading of the 6<sup>th</sup> *Logical Investigation* in the light of his own interrogation of the meaning of being and his reinterpretation of categorial intuition in hermeneutic terms. This decisive shift was operated as early as 1919, when Heidegger first coined the phrase ‘hermeneutical intuition’<sup>63</sup> to express the experiential and pre-theoretical access to being that categorial intuition makes possible, and to encapsulate what he considered the most fundamental insight of Husserl's analysis. Heidegger goes as far as to speak of ‘understanding intuition’ (*verstehende Intuition*)<sup>64</sup> so as to stress the fundamental permeability between these two concepts, arguing that intuition always presuppose a hermeneutic situation only on the basis of which it can take place. This articulation between intuition and understanding brings Heidegger to propose a renewed conception of the phenomenological method, now understood as a hermeneutic practice in which description is not merely grounded on intuition but is first and foremost guided “by the understanding intention” (*durch die Absicht des Verstehens*)<sup>65</sup>. This transformation of the phenomenological method can thus be described as a hermeneutic shift, insofar as it allows Heidegger to emphasize the hermeneutic conditions of phenomenological inquiry. Indeed, the description of lived experiences presupposes their essential permeability to our understanding:

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<sup>61</sup> See Carman, p. 67

<sup>62</sup> SZ 147, tr. (modified) p. 187

<sup>63</sup> *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, GA 56/57, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1987, p. 117; *Towards the definition of philosophy*, p.98-99

<sup>64</sup> GA 56/57, p.117 ; tr. p. 99

<sup>65</sup> M. Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie [1919/1920]*, GA 58, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1993, p. 240.

“Lived experiences in the broadest sense are through and through *expressed* experiences; even if they are not uttered in words, they are nonetheless expressed in a definite articulation by an *understanding* I have of them as I simply live in them without regarding them thematically”<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, far from the purely descriptive discipline Husserl envisioned, Heidegger contends that phenomenology is irreducibly interpretive and hermeneutic<sup>67</sup>, going as far as to claim that the phenomenological inquiry itself belongs to a particular hermeneutic context that needs to be accounted for. The phenomenological description of lived-experiences is now to be understood as the self-interpreting process through which a factic existence comes to describe *from within* its own movement<sup>68</sup>. This ‘hermeneutics of facticity’ that replaces phenomenological description in Heidegger’s analysis is less the job of a meditating ego taking an external stance on its own existence and functioning as the ‘impartial spectator’ of itself<sup>69</sup> than the fundamental task taken on by a being whose relation to its very being is constitutive of its definition – a being which Heidegger from now on calls *Dasein*. *Dasein*, i.e. the being that is in its being “concerned *about* its very being”<sup>70</sup>, is such that it is always already related to *what is sought* in the question regarding the meaning of being, and must be consequently characterized by its “pre-ontological understanding of being”<sup>71</sup>. The ultimate task of Heidegger’s hermeneutical phenomenology is to propose a systematic analysis of the existential modes of *Dasein* that characterize its “being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-Sein*). Opening the way to Heidegger’s ‘fundamental ontology’, the ‘existential analysis’ of *Dasein* is substituted in *Being and Time* to phenomenological description and lays the ground for the ‘turn’ (*die Kehre*) that will bring Heidegger to abandon promptly the term phenomenology, after he obtained Husserl’s Professorship in Freiburg in 1929<sup>72</sup>.

The hermeneutic shift initiated by Heidegger gave rise to a new and original conception of hermeneutics developed by phenomenologists such as Hans-Georg Gadamer in

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<sup>66</sup> Prolegomena GA 20, 65; tr. 48

<sup>67</sup> See the 1919 lecture-course on « phenomenology and transcendental philosophy of value », where Heidegger speaks of « phenomenological hermeneutics » (*Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie, op. cit.*, p. 131; *Towards the definition of philosophy* p.112).

<sup>68</sup> See F. Dastur, « Phénoménologie herméneutique versus phénoménologie hylétique : Heidegger et la question de la matière », in P.-J. Renaudie, V. Spaak (eds.), *Phénoménologies de la matière*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Husserl famously used this phrase in the *Paris Lectures*, Hua 1, p. 30

<sup>70</sup> SZ p.12.

<sup>71</sup> SZ p.14.

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed analysis of the specific meaning of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, see Daniel Dahlstrom’s contributions to this volume.

Germany and Paul Ricœur in France. As Ricœur notes, hermeneutics became with Heidegger fundamentally oriented towards the ontological problem of the relation to being insofar as it is intrinsically related to the experience of understanding<sup>73</sup>. Deeply influenced by Heidegger's analysis of the *Verstehen*, Gadamer tried to provide a systematic structure to such philosophical hermeneutics, stressing that the phenomenon of understanding must be described as a structural feature of human experience rather than a local practice exclusively focused on the interpretation of texts. Instead of dealing with the formulation of the right principles for interpretation, hermeneutics seeks to bring the phenomenon of understanding itself to light. The purpose of *philosophical* hermeneutics is consequently less to establish a scientific method for investigating the meaning of texts than to account for "human experience of the world in general"<sup>74</sup>. This renewal of hermeneutics constitutes the leading thread of Gadamer's interpretation of history and aesthetics, and of Ricœur's analysis of "symbols" in religion, in psychoanalysis, and in literature.

#### **4. *The existential shift (Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty)***

The impact of Heidegger's hermeneutic shift on the phenomenological movement was strong enough to deeply modify the meaning, the scope and the goals of phenomenology. Phenomenology, after Heidegger, would never look the same. However, the aspect of this renewal that influenced the most the next generations of phenomenologists is maybe less the original articulation between phenomenology and hermeneutics that *Being and Time* brought forth than the specific focus on human existence that Heidegger's phenomenology had made possible. The shift accomplished by Heidegger's subtle but powerful critique of the "neglect of the being of man", which is according to him pervasive in Husserl's phenomenology, contributed strongly to opening up new expectations for phenomenological practice, allowing phenomenology to move back from the 'abstract' study of the structures of intentional consciousness to a concrete description of human existence<sup>75</sup>. The existential analytics of *Dasein* gave phenomenology, so to say, a second birth by shifting its epicentre so as to make existence the ultimate ground of phenomenological description.

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<sup>73</sup> SZ, p.10, quoted by Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'action, essais d'herméneutique II*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, 90.

<sup>74</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. Glen-Doepel revised by J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. XX

<sup>75</sup> See the criticism of Husserl's abstraction in Heidegger's 1925 lectures, *History of the concept of time*, sections 12 and 13, tr. Kisiel, Indiana University Press, p.108-142.

This is the reason why the renewal of the phenomenological style of analysis that Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity made possible opened up the space for subsequent articulations of 'existential phenomenology'<sup>76</sup>, for which it became the central inspiration, even though Heidegger always vehemently resisted the label of existentialism. Indeed, not only did his approach seem to offer a greater flexibility and plasticity than Husserl's rigorous method for grasping the meaning of our belonging to the world, it also provided a phenomenological basis for a renewed understanding of the philosophical stakes of human existence. Describing *Dasein* as 'the being who is in its being concerned about its very being' fundamentally means that the whatness (*essentia*) of this being must first and foremost be understood in relation to its modes of existing (*existentia*)<sup>77</sup>. *Dasein*, Heidegger writes, "always understands itself in terms of existence"<sup>78</sup>; its essence "lies in its existence"<sup>79</sup>. The priority granted by Heidegger to existence over essence as well as the corollary emphasis on the ontological horizon of phenomenological description constituted the framework within which some major French philosophical figures of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty developed a phenomenological approach to human finitude and freedom, bringing phenomenology to an existential shift<sup>80</sup>.

Overtly describing themselves as phenomenologists, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty stressed the decisive influence of Husserl's works over their own approach to philosophical inquiry. "I was 'Husserlian' and long to remain so", Sartre writes, describing the context of maturation of his own thought<sup>81</sup>. Indeed, Sartre's discovery of phenomenology and his first phenomenological essays were written under the influence of Husserl a few years before Sartre would complete his reading of *Being and Time*, at Easter 1939. The reason was, according to Sartre himself, that he could only come to Heidegger after he had "exhausted"

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<sup>76</sup> P. Ricœur, « Phénoménologie existentielle », *Encyclopédie française. XIX. Philosophie et religion*, Paris, Larousse, 1957.

<sup>77</sup> SZ p.42

<sup>78</sup> SZ p.12

<sup>79</sup> SZ p.42

<sup>80</sup> The pertinence and legitimacy of the label « existential phenomenology » can be critically discussed, insofar as the attempt to describe our actual involvement with existing reality arguably constitutes an intrinsic feature of phenomenology that was already part of Husserl's project (see for instance Dan Zahavi, « Phenomenology and Metaphysics », in D. Zahavi, S. Heinämaa & H. Ruin (eds.), *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation. Contributions to Phenomenology*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht-Boston, 2003, p. 18). Notwithstanding this discussion about the nature of the « turn » operated by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty with respect to Husserl's phenomenology, it seems uncontroversial to claim that the specific emphasis on human finitude and freedom that characterizes their philosophical thought was responsible for a 'shift' of orientation of phenomenological inquiry.

<sup>81</sup> Sartre, *War Diaries, Notebook from a Phoney War*, tr. Q. Hoare, Verso, 1984, p. 183

Husserl, which took him four years, during which he wrote *La transcendance de l'Ego*<sup>82</sup>, *L'imaginaire*<sup>83</sup> and his never published book *La Psyché*, where Sartre developed his own realist interpretation of the concept of intentionality. However, the impossibility of providing a 'realist solution' to the difficulties raised by Husserl's transcendental philosophy and to solve the impasses of his idealism turned Sartre towards Heidegger, whose influence he described as 'providential', "since it supervened to teach [him] authenticity and historicity just at the very moment when war was about to make these notions indispensable to [him]"<sup>84</sup>.

In this context, Sartre's early hope that phenomenology would bring philosophy closer to life as it is commonly experienced<sup>85</sup> and his anti-idealistic orientation towards reality combined into a phenomenological description of human finitude deeply influenced by Heidegger's conceptuality, which led to the publication of Sartre's "essay on phenomenological ontology", *Being and Nothingness*, in 1943<sup>86</sup>. Stressing the tension between the fundamental and categorical freedom that characterizes human existence and the limiting conditions that determine its necessary situation, Sartre's account of human finitude led him famously to endorse a few years later an atheistic form of existentialism, whose key principle states that "man is nothing other than what he makes of himself"<sup>87</sup>.

Merleau-Ponty, who shared Sartre's main claims regarding the contingency of human existence and its fundamentally situated freedom, developed over the same years a phenomenological perspective on perception and embodiment grounded in a similarly ambiguous relationship to Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophical heritage. Stressing the importance of Husserl's last writings, the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) proposes an ontologically oriented account of the lifeworld (the *Lebenswelt* introduced by Husserl in *The Crisis of European Sciences*) that Merleau-Ponty interprets in the horizon of a constant dialogue with Heidegger's description of our Being-in-the-world. Just as much as for Sartre, the surge of interest that brought Merleau-Ponty to phenomenology resulted from the feeling of the obsolescence of French philosophy (its "perte de substance", as J.-T. Desanti put it)<sup>88</sup> and a need to rejuvenate it with concrete descriptions inspired by the reading of Jean Wahl's

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<sup>82</sup> « La Transcendance de l'Ego : Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique », in *Les Recherches philosophiques*, 1936

<sup>83</sup> *L'Imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*, Paris, Gallimard, 1940

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* p.182

<sup>85</sup> See the text Sartre wrote in 1933-34 as he was studying in Berlin, « Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl : l'intentionnalité », *La Nouvelle Revue française*, no. 304, janvier 1939

<sup>86</sup> J.-P. Sartre, *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1943.

<sup>87</sup> J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a humanism*, tr. Macomber, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 22.

<sup>88</sup> J.-T. Desanti, "Sartre et Husserl ou les trois culs-de-sac de la phénoménologie transcendantale", *Les temps modernes*, 2005/4, p.572

book *Vers le concret*<sup>89</sup>. For Merleau-Ponty as for Sartre, the ultimately ontological horizon of phenomenological description entails that the analysis of the eidetic structures of consciousness can only be accomplished through a phenomenological description of existence in its contingency. However, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes more specifically the intrinsic connection between this contingent character attached to the experience of human finitude and our necessarily *incarnate* existence. Refusing to separate intentional consciousness from the bodily processes that constitute our pre-objective orientation towards the world, Merleau-Ponty describes the situation of human existence as ‘being-toward-the-world’ through the body, and develops a phenomenology of perception that constantly stresses the embodied dimension of intentionality and the essential articulation between subjectivity and the body. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

« If I find, while reflecting upon the essence of subjectivity, that it is tied with the essence of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is identical with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because, ultimately, the subject that I am, understood concretely, is inseparable from this particular body and this particular world »<sup>90</sup>

This phenomenological reassessment of the relation between subjectivity and the body goes hand in hand with a sharp critique of the intellectualist versions of the *cogito*, and brings an original contribution to the critical arguments against idealism developed in Heidegger and Sartre’s analyses of existence:

« The true cogito does not define the existence of the subject through the thought that the subject has of existing, does not convert the certainty of the world into a certainty of the thought about the world, and finally, does not replace the world itself with the signification « world ». Rather, it recognizes my thought as an inalienable fact and it eliminates all forms of idealism by revealing me as « being in the world »<sup>91</sup>

This embodied approach to the *cogito* entails an anti-idealist and rather critical reinterpretation of Husserl’s transcendental method, which accounts for reduction in existential terms and claims its solubility in the horizon of Heidegger’s *In-der-Welt-Sein*<sup>92</sup>. On behalf of a greater fidelity to experience, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology refuses to presuppose that lived-experiences are fully transparent to reflection and contends that a

<sup>89</sup> J. Wahl, *Vers le concret*, Paris, Vrin, 1932 ; See J.-P. Sartre, *Questions de méthode*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, p. 23.

<sup>90</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 2005 (quoted *PhP*), 467, tr. D. Landes, Routledge, New York, 2012, p.431 (translation modified)

<sup>91</sup> *PhP* VIII (tr. XXVII)

<sup>92</sup> « Heidegger’s “*In-der-Welt-Sein*” [being-in-the-world] only appears against the background of the phenomenological reduction », *PhP* IX (tr. XXVIII)

faithful description of human existence demonstrates the “impossibility of a complete reduction”<sup>93</sup>. Our existence “is too tightly caught in the world in order to know itself as such at the moment when it is thrown into the world”. On this basis, Merleau-Ponty attempts to reconcile the eidetic orientation of Husserl’s phenomenology with the existential commitments of Heidegger’s hermeneutics:

« We cannot bring our perception of the world before the philosophical gaze without ceasing to be identical with that thesis about the world or with that interest for the world that defines us, without stepping back to this side of our commitment in order to make it itself appear as a spectacle, or without passing over from the fact of our existence to the nature of our existence, that is from *Dasein* [existence] to *Wesen* [essence]. [...] The necessity of passing through essences does not signify that philosophy takes them as an object, but rather [...] that our existence needs the field of ideality in order to know and do conquer its facticity »<sup>94</sup>.

This analysis of the relations between essence and existence allows Merleau-Ponty to combine Husserl and Heidegger’s insights into a description of the originary embodied forms of intentionality that lays the ground for a phenomenological analysis of the pre-cognitive connection to the world that perception establishes.

### ***5. The counter-intentional shift (Levinas, Henry, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Marion...)***

The inner transformations of the phenomenological movement and the shifts that resulted from the anti-idealist critiques of Husserl’s transcendental method developed successively by the Munich Circle, by Heidegger and by the French existential phenomenologists, paved the way for a thorough redefinition of the limits and extent of phenomenological inquiry. Pushing this critical reconfiguration of phenomenology one step further, a new approach to the phenomenological practice inherited from Husserl and Heidegger emerged in France in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, giving rise to what has been described as a “French moment of phenomenology”<sup>95</sup>, less characterized by its specifically French (as opposed to German) philosophical style than by the fertile intellectual context in which it developed<sup>96</sup>. Although this French reappropriation of phenomenology may

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<sup>93</sup> *PhP* VIII

<sup>94</sup> *PhP* IX (tr. XXVIII)

<sup>95</sup> Marion, J.-L. 2002. « Un moment Français de la phénoménologie », *Rue Descartes* 35, 2002.

<sup>96</sup> This is the reason why, rather than speaking of ‘French phenomenology’, Bernard Wahlenfels prefers to understand this phase of the history of the phenomenological movement as a moment of

have started as early as 1930, with the publication of Emmanuel Levinas' thesis<sup>97</sup>, followed one year later by his translation of the *Cartesian Meditations*<sup>98</sup>, drew some significant attention to Husserl's phenomenology and introduced it to a wider philosophical audience in France, this 'moment' of phenomenology must nevertheless be distinguished from the rise of existential phenomenology that was due to the works of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Even though these two trends of the phenomenological movement overlap temporally, geographically and sometimes even conceptually, they fundamentally differ with respect to their relation to the phenomenological tradition. Even when Sartre and the early Merleau-Ponty (until the publication of his *Phenomenology of perception*) discuss the legitimacy of the phenomenological analyses of Husserl and Heidegger, their critical relation to their predecessors remains inside the framework and within the boundaries of the phenomenological description of intentionality they owe to Husserl and Heidegger. If anything, such criticisms belong less to a negative assessment than to a *positive* diagnosis expected to strengthen and reinforce phenomenology. The ultimate horizon of Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's analyses is to provide a 'phenomenological ontology' of existence that expands the phenomenological approaches of Husserl and Heidegger and combines them so as to overcome their shortcomings<sup>99</sup>.

On the contrary, the 'French moment of phenomenology' initiated by Levinas and carried on successively by the later Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Marion (to quote a few main figures only) takes its point of departure from a much more radical critique of Husserl and Heidegger's main philosophical concepts, leading eventually to their dismantling, their abandonment or their complete redefinition<sup>100</sup>. The originality and the unity of this 'French moment' may precisely arise from the aforementioned philosophers' ability to base their somewhat paradoxical use of the phenomenological method on an in-depth critique and transformation of its concepts. Already in 1935, Emmanuel Levinas' first

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« phenomenology in France » (Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie in Frankreich*, Francfort, Suhrkamp, 1983).

<sup>97</sup> Levinas, E., *Théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*, Paris, Vrin, 1930 ; tr. Andre Orianne, *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1995

<sup>98</sup> Husserl, *Méditations Cartésiennes*, French translation E. Levinas, G. PEiffer, Paris, Armand Colin, 1931

<sup>99</sup> In an introductory article from 1934, Levinas identifies Martin Heidegger's philosophy as a « phenomenology of existence », which in retrospect appears much closer to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological investigations than to his own philosophical thought (« Phenomenology », published in *Discovering existence with Husserl and Heidegger*, p. 39).

<sup>100</sup> See for instance Raoul Moati's contribution in this volume on Levinas' « de-formalization » of phenomenology.



thematic essay “De l’évasion” (*On escape*)<sup>101</sup> interrogates the possibility of transcending the horizon of Being that dominates Heidegger’s phenomenology, as well as initiating Levinas’ criticism of “the primacy of theory in Husserl’s philosophy”<sup>102</sup>. On this ground, Levinas started to develop a very personal approach to phenomenological description that proceeds from a powerful critique of *both* Husserl and Heidegger, bringing phenomenology to a significant new shift, which deeply impacted the practice of phenomenology in France for the following decades. For the first time, Heidegger’s thought was no longer seen as a legitimate way to overcome the difficulties raised by the shortcomings of Husserl’s phenomenology. Moving away from existential phenomenology, Levinas proclaims the need to think beyond ontology that reverses the orientation of Heidegger’s hermeneutics so as to bring phenomenological description back “from existence to the existent”<sup>103</sup>, and eventually from ontology to ethics understood as first philosophy.

Although Levinas’ both extremely careful and deeply critical reading of Heidegger and Husserl attracted relatively little attention prior to the publication of his ‘thèse d’état’ (*Totalité et infini*, published in 1961)<sup>104</sup>, the shift that his reassessment of their phenomenology operated had a decisive impact on the young generations of French phenomenologists as soon as the influence of existential phenomenology decreased. The unprecedented sharpness of Levinas’ critique had paved the way for a renewed approach to phenomenology, engaging it in a confrontation with certain phenomena that put up a resistance to the application of the methods and techniques of description inherited from Husserl and Heidegger. Not that Levinas attempted to abandon the phenomenological concepts and methods forged by his masters purely and simply, but his critical analyses made it possible to confront them – somewhat paradoxically – with experiences that exceed the boundaries of phenomenological description and seem to contradict its scope. This original gesture, characteristic of Levinas’ « unfaithful fidelity » to phenomenology accurately described by Derrida in his tribute to Levinas as a way of being “unfaithful out of [his] fidelity to intentional analysis”<sup>105</sup>, contributed to initiating a new style of phenomenological investigations that widened the scope and extent of phenomenological description far beyond

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<sup>101</sup> Levinas, E., *De l’évasion*, 1935, in *Recherches Philosophiques*, tr. B. Bergo, *On Escape*, Stanford University Press, 2003.

<sup>102</sup> *On Escape*, p.72 ; *Discovering existence with Husserl and Heidegger*, p. 61 ; *Theory of intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, p. 53

<sup>103</sup> *De l’existence à l’existant*, Paris, Vrin, 1986, first published in 1947.

<sup>104</sup> *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l’Extériorité*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1961

<sup>105</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Adieu, To Emmanuel Levinas*, tr. P.-A. Brault and M. Naas, Stanford University Press, 1999, p.52.

a strict and narrow understanding of phenomenality. Following the direction opened by Levinas from the beginning of the sixties, French phenomenologists, while working in deferent directions, engaged in an effort to push back the limits of phenomenological description and to redefine the concept of phenomenon on new grounds.

Moving away from the existential orientation of his earlier phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty led the way with the analysis of modern painting he first published in 1961, and through his attempt to describe in *The Visible and the Invisible* the “flesh” of the world in its interrelation with the embodied self<sup>106</sup>. The same year, Levinas devoted a significant part of *Totality and Infinity* to a lengthy analysis of the appearing of the ‘face’ (*visage*) of the other, which Levinas describes as an ethical form of manifestation of the other that cannot be accounted for in objective or ontological terms and demonstrates the primacy of ethics. Michel Henry, whose masterpiece *The Essence of Manifestation* was published only a couple of years later, in 1963, considers how self-affectivity constitutes the principle of the revelation of ‘life’ through the experience of the flesh<sup>107</sup>. Finally, rejecting the metaphysical primacy of presence in Husserl’s phenomenology, Jacques Derrida published three major books in 1967, in which he critically interrogates the notion of phenomenality through an analysis of writing that puts forward the almost absent visibility of the ‘trace’ (*Speech and Phenomena, Writing and Difference, Of Grammatology*)<sup>108</sup>.

In spite of their differences, these publications, which constituted decisive milestones in the field of phenomenology, share a specific focus on phenomena that substantially challenge the potentialities of phenomenological description. The face of the other, the trace, the experience of the flesh or the self-revelation of life, are not simply new phenomena likely to meet the expectancies and comply with the methods of Husserl and Heidegger’s phenomenology without entailing some major transformations. They are hardly phenomena at all in the Husserlian sense of the word, insofar as they refuse to be constituted by intentional consciousness and prove to be *essentially* indescribable, ‘inapparent’ and deprived of phenomenalization. If even possible, their description is *intrinsically* problematic, and *necessarily* negative (as in negative theology), since it is first and foremost the indescribable character of such quasi-phenomena, located at the margins of phenomenality, that constitute

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<sup>106</sup> *Eye and mind* was published in January 1961 as an article in the journal *Art de France*, then reprinted as a book (*L’œil et l’esprit*, Paris, Gallimard, 1964) ; *The visible and the invisible* was posthumously published in 1964 (*Le visible et l’invisible*, Paris, Gallimard, 1964).

<sup>107</sup> Michel Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation*, Paris, PUF, 1963.

<sup>108</sup> Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène*, Paris, PUF, 1967 ; *L’écriture et la différence*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1967 ; *De la grammatologie*, Paris, Minuit, 1967.

their essence. Levinas' analyses of the 'face' are symptomatic of this negative use of phenomenological method, as they constantly draw on the limits of the intentional framework of phenomenological description in order to account for the paradoxical modes in which the human other is revealed to me, transcending all phenomenality and beingness. However, it must be noted that this operation needs quite ironically to maintain the intentional framework *in order to reverse it*, and to exhibit the specificity of phenomena that do not fit into the framework of phenomenological description and that cannot be accounted for in terms of their intentional or ontological constitution.

In order to describe the paradigmatic reversal of the intentional analysis operated by Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion coined the term 'counter-intentionality'<sup>109</sup>, which he later appropriated as a keystone of his own phenomenology of givenness. This phrase seems rightly to encapsulate the philosophical gesture that motivated the significant shift from which arose the so-called French 'moment' of phenomenology, insofar as this shift made possible a new kind of relation with the phenomenological tradition, both radically critical and nevertheless somehow faithful to the 'spirit' (in Montesquieu's sense of the word) of phenomenology: the counter-intentional shift initiated by Levinas allowed the new generations of phenomenologists to focus on phenomena (or 'quasi phenomena'<sup>110</sup>) such as the face, the flesh of the world, the trace, life's self-affection..., which only come to appear in experiences that reverse the intentional correlation.

Such a radical reorientation of phenomenology entails a new definition of phenomenality that acknowledges its irreducibility to the objective horizon of intentional constitution (Husserl) as well as to the ontological horizon of being (Heidegger) and problematizes the intentional relation. This 'quasi-phenomenology' oriented towards the non-objective and non-ontological dimension of phenomenality and situated at the extreme margins of visibility engages, according to Marion, a "third reduction", beyond Husserl's transcendental reduction to objectivity and Heidegger's ontological reduction to being<sup>111</sup>. In order to denounce the transformations that resulted from this counter-intentional shift and the detrimental consequences of this expansion of phenomenological inquiry beyond the domain of visibility, Dominique Janicaud famously characterised this shift as the "theological turn of

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<sup>109</sup> Marion, Jean-Luc, *In Excess, Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, tr. R. Horner and V. Berraud, New York, Fordham University Press, 2002, p. 78.

<sup>110</sup> Marion, Jean-Luc, *Being given, Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, tr. J. Kosky, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 53.

<sup>111</sup> See the conclusion of Jean-luc Marion's *Reduction and Givenness, Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*, tr. T. Carlson, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1998, p.204.

French phenomenology”<sup>112</sup>. For Janicaud, the reorientation of phenomenological studies that followed the publication of *Totality and Infinity* draws heavily on metaphysical and dogmatic forms of transcendence<sup>113</sup>, leading French phenomenology to embrace, whether implicitly or explicitly, a theological (rather than phenomenological) discourse.

However, this normative and strongly polemical characterization, designed to assess the legitimacy of the phenomenological shift that motivated French phenomenologists, hardly encapsulates the variety of their approaches and seems to do justice neither to their philosophical originality nor to their singular relation to the phenomenological tradition. As Jean-François Courtine notes, the origins of the phenomenological orientation towards the ‘inapparent’ that Janicaud castigates can be traced back to the decisive section of *Being and Time* in which Heidegger describes the scope of phenomenological inquiry<sup>114</sup>. The French ‘moment’ of phenomenology that arose from Levinas’ reassessment of the limits of the intentional framework maintains a strong – though complex and sometimes almost paradoxical – connection with the phenomenological tradition (as well as with the development of Heidegger’s thought of the *Ereignis* after the *Kehre*, even though Heidegger refrained from characterizing his thought as phenomenological over that period).

In a discerning attempt to capture the specificity of the phenomenological studies produced in France in the wake of Levinas’ counter-intentional shift, Jocelyn Benoist insists that their originality consists first and foremost in their emphasis on the ‘event-character’ (*caractère événementiel*) of phenomena and their decision to focus on the *event* of appearing itself rather than the horizontal structure of phenomenality<sup>115</sup>. From Levinas’ ethical account of the face to Marion’s phenomenology of self-giveness and beyond, French phenomenology drew the consequences of this redefinition of the phenomenon as “an event of spontaneous phenomenalization, which makes its irruption by itself into the intentional consciousness”<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> Janicaud, Dominique, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française*, Paris, L’Éclat, 1992 ; tr. B. Prusak in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn, The French Debate*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2000.

<sup>113</sup> Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn, The French Debate*, p.46.

<sup>114</sup> Jean-François Courtine, « French phenomenology in historical context », in T. Dika and W. Hackett, *Quiet Powers of the Possible, Interviews in Contemporary French Phenomenology*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2016, p.30 ; see Heidegger’s analysis of the « covering up » character of phenomena, in *Being and Time*, §7, GA 2, p.39

<sup>115</sup> Benoist, Jocelyn, « Sur l’état présent de la phénoménologie » (1995), in *L’idée de phénoménologie*, Paris, Beauchesne, 2001, 123-159

<sup>116</sup> Tengelyi, Lázló, « New phenomenology in France », in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 50 (2), 2012, p. 302. In their review of the recent transformations in French phenomenology, Tengelyi and Gondek widely draw on Benoist’s analysis to stress the philosophical significance of this original emphasis on the ‘event-character’ of phenomenality (Hans-Dieter Gondek, Lázló Tengelyi, *Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2011)

Interestingly, this characterization of phenomenality echoes the terms in which Levinas interpreted Husserl's theory of categorial intuition in a presentation published in 1940, as he came to examine the aspect of Husserl's phenomenology that Heidegger considered fundamental for the development of his own interrogation of being. According to Levinas, Husserl's analysis of categorial intuition entails that « the presence of being to thought *is not an event* that breaks in upon the play of thought. It is rational, that is, it has meaning »<sup>117</sup>. It is precisely this very aspect of Husserl's phenomenology that Levinas and the French phenomenologists after him came to reject, stressing on the contrary, on behalf of the event-character of appearing, that the sense or meaning of a phenomenon cannot be reduced to a sense-bestowal by intentional consciousness (Husserl), nor be interpreted in the horizon of the ontological difference (Heidegger).

### ***6. Contemporary developments of the phenomenological tradition***

Inevitably, the expansion of the scope of phenomenological studies that resulted from the successive shifts of the phenomenological movement gave rise to a split between the two main tendencies or directions that they gradually revealed. These two opposite ways of understanding the goals of phenomenology were implicitly already at play in the tensions inherent to Husserl's rigorous definition of the phenomenological method and the difficulties that arose from its criticisms. The first direction consists in a radicalization of the distance that separates phenomenological inquiry on the one hand, and on the other hand the rational ideal of a rigorous science that constituted its original frame according to Husserl, opening up the space for a discussion between phenomenology and post-modern philosophy<sup>118</sup>. The other orientation of phenomenological studies stresses on the contrary the logico-scientific roots of phenomenology, and emphasizes its relation with formal and empirical sciences, giving rise to interesting confrontations between phenomenology and analytic philosophy in a broad sense<sup>119</sup>.

These two tendencies of recent phenomenologically oriented research constitute the opposite extremes of a spectrum that covers a very wide range and variety of phenomenological approaches, which occupy different strategic positions between these two

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<sup>117</sup> Levinas, *Discovering existence with Husserl and Heidegger*, p. 62 (my emphasis)

<sup>118</sup> Some of the works of Jacques Derrida, John Caputo, and Jean-Yves Lacoste – as different as their perspective may be – can for instance be seen as representative of this approach.

<sup>119</sup> See for instance the works of Dan Zahavi and Shaun Gallagher, Jean Petitot, Francisco Varela, or Alva Noë...

ends of the spectrum. The tension between these two dimensions justifies the use to which phenomenology has been put in different contexts and applied to radically opposed domains of investigation, such as theology, cognitive sciences, social psychology or analytic philosophy of mind. Interestingly, the so-called ‘continental divide’, in the name of which phenomenology used to be labelled as strictly continental and was kept separate from analytic philosophy for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>120</sup>, now operates *within* the phenomenological movement, as a divergence between different tendencies inherent to phenomenology.

The constant reassessment of the extent of phenomenological inquiry and the great variety of its uses and applications do not only illustrate its plasticity, but demonstrate its vitality as a philosophical tradition giving rise to the kind of reactions, inner transformations and external criticisms that only a strong and fertile philosophical movement is likely to provoke. If phenomenology deserves this title, it is first and foremost because the philosophical tradition it gave rise to does not rely on the repeated and uncritical application of a narrowly defined method, but on the creative perpetuation and ever-changing reiteration of an impulse to ground philosophy in the description of experience and to maintain this phenomenological heritage. For this reason, in order to complete and refine Spiegelberg’s analogy between the phenomenological movement and a stream of water, the phenomenological tradition can be compared to a plant, the wilting of which does not necessarily prevent its growing back under a new and rejuvenated shape. Likewise, far from threatening the coherence and signifying ultimately the death of the phenomenological tradition, the many different shifts that constitute its history, though always critical and sometimes radically non-orthodox, have contributed to providing the phenomenological movement with a flexibility that has prevented its exhaustion and made possible its rebirth under new forms.

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<sup>120</sup> See for instance the proceedings of the Colloque de Royaumont in 1958, which gathered philosophical personalities as diametrically opposed as Willard Van Orman Quine and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*Cahiers de Royaumont. La philosophie analytique*, Paris, Minuit, 1962)



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