

Introduction to Phenomenology

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An Initial Statement of What Phenomenology Is

In order to understand what phenomenology is, we must make a distinction between two attitudes or perspectives that we can adopt. We must distinguish between the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude. The *natural attitude* is the focus we have when we are involved in our original, world-directed stance, when we intend things, situations, facts, and any other kinds of objects. The natural attitude is, we might say, the default perspective, the one we start off from, the one we are in originally. We do not move into it from anything more basic. The *phenomenological attitude*, on the other hand, is the focus we have when we reflect upon the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it. It is within the phenomenological attitude that we carry out philosophical analyses. The phenomenological attitude is also sometimes called the *transcendental attitude*. Let us examine both attitudes or focuses, the natural and the phenomenological. We can understand each precisely in its contrast with the other.

THE NATURAL ATTITUDE

In our ordinary living, we are directly caught up with the various things in the world. As we sit conversing with others at the dinner table, as we walk to work, or as we fill out an application for a passport or for a driver's license, we have material objects presented to us, we identify them through the sides, aspects, and profiles through which they are given, we speak about and articulate them, we have emotional responses to things that are attractive or repellent, we find some things pleasant to look at or hear and others unpleasant and disruptive, and so on. Some things are present to us and other things are absent, we overcome some of the absences and bring things to presence, but we also let other things go out of

presence into absences another: the chairs are outside, the car going by the trees. Furthermore, the world also contains mathematical things, squares, closed and open, still present themselves exist in a manner different political constitutions, elections, acts of generosity and cowardice. All such which we live; all such our intendings.

Moreover, our world have directly experienced we take to be real even have never been to China its mountains and rivers economic condition. The land. If I were to visit intentions, some in sum world we live in expanded beyond our possible earth heavens that we could or some of the planets farthest parts of the universe but much of it will appear rather than fulfillment.

So there are many manners of presentation in still a different way. sum of the things that is not like a sphere floating objects. The world is or a horizon for all things intended and given to with them. It is the whole it is given to us as a whole.

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presence into absences. We identify and recognize one thing after another: the chairs and pictures in our room, the birds singing outside, the car going by down the street, the wind blowing through the trees. Furthermore, in addition to such substantial things, the world also contains mathematical entities such as triangles and squares, closed and open sets, rational and irrational numbers. Such mathematical things require a special kind of intentionality, but they still present themselves as nested within the world, even though they exist in a manner different from trees and trucks. There are also political constitutions, laws, contracts, international agreements, elections, acts of generosity and courage, as well as acts of hatred and cowardice. All such things can be identified within the world in which we live; all such things in their identities are correlated with our intendings.

Moreover, our world does not contain only the things that we have directly experienced. We also intend, emptily, many things that we take to be real even though we have never experienced them. I have never been to China, but from time to time I do intend China, its mountains and rivers, its foreign and domestic policy, its economic condition. The same is true of Brazil, Antarctica, and Greenland. If I were to visit Antarctica I would fulfill many of my empty intentions, some in surprising and others in unsurprising ways. The world we live in expands beyond our immediate experience and beyond our possible experience: we also perceive a domain in the heavens that we could never reach bodily. We might get to the moon or some of the planets, but it is impossible for us to reach to the farthest parts of the universe. We can learn a lot about those places, but much of it will always remain the target of empty intentions rather than fulfillments or perceptions.

So there are many things in the world, all given in different manners of presentation. There is also *the world* itself, which is given in still a different way. The world is not a large "thing," nor is it the sum of the things that have been or can be experienced. The world is not like a sphere floating in space, nor is it a collection of moving objects. The world is more like a context, a setting, a background, or a horizon for all the things there are, all the things that can be intended and given to us; the world is not another thing competing with them. It is the whole for them all, not the sum of them all, and it is given to us as a special kind of identity. We could never have

the world given to us as one item among many, nor even as a single item: it is given only as encompassing all the items. It contains everything, but not like any worldly container. The term "world" is a *singulare tantum*; there could only be one of them. There may be many galaxies, there may be many home planets for conscious beings (although there is only one for us), but there is only one world. "The world" is not an astronomical concept; it is a concept related to our immediate experience. The world is the ultimate setting for ourselves and for all the things we experience. The world is the concrete and actual whole for experience.

Another important singularity in our spontaneous experience is the *self*, the *ego*, the *I*. If the world is the widest whole and the most encompassing context, the *I* is the center around which this widest whole, with all the things in it, is arranged. Paradoxically, the *I* is a thing in the world, but it is a thing like no other: it is a thing in the world that also cognitively *has* the world, the thing to whom the world as a whole, with all the things in it, manifests itself. The *I* is the dative of manifestation. It is the entity to whom the world and all the things in it can be given, the one who can receive the world in knowledge. Of course, there are many *I*'s, many egos, many selves, but even among all of them one stands out as the preeminent center, namely me (that is, you, as you read these words and think them through for yourself). These strange facts about the self or the ego are not just tricks of language, not just peculiarities of the first and second person singular; they belong to the kind of being a rational creature is, a creature that can think, that can say "*I*," and that can have the world even while being a part of the world. The rational soul, as Aristotle says, is somehow all things. The world as a whole and the *I* as the center are the two singularities between which all other things can be placed. The world and the *I* are correlated with one another in a way different from the manner in which a particular intentionality is correlated with the thing that it intends. The world and the ego provide an ultimate dual, elliptical context for everything.

All these structural elements belong to the natural attitude in which we find ourselves from the start and always. There is still one more item in the natural attitude that we must examine before we move on to discuss the phenomenological attitude. We must examine the kind of conviction that pervades the natural attitude.

The manner in which the world itself, is one of buildings, cats, stones being there, as true, of our acceptance of to use the Greek term of things, which first time goes on and we modalities into our instances, we gradual deception, or "mere things are not always seeming comes into sodically, and it take find that this "cat" deceptive, or that th we seemed to see w do not cause us to ence and everything of belief. However, with a whole array tion, probability, p doxic modalities tha

Prominent among as a whole. This be *Ur-doxa* (if we may c belief but the basic *World belief* is not s particular belief is. belief is there unde cise. We never real might achieve our San Juan River in tantly when we ex when we come to a which it is given to could never learn state prior to lear encapsulated solip

The manner in which we accept the things in the world, and the world itself, is one of *belief*. As we experience other people, trees, buildings, cats, stones, and the sun and stars, we experience them as being there, as true, as real. The basic character, the default mode of our acceptance of the world and things in it, is one of belief or, to use the Greek term, *doxa*. Our belief is correlated with the being of things, which first and foremost is simply accepted as such. As time goes on and we become older and more clever, we introduce modalities into our belief; after finding we were mistaken in some instances, we gradually introduce the dimensions of illusion, error, deception, or "mere" appearance. We gradually come to know that things are not always as they seem; a distinction between being and seeming comes into play, but this distinction is exercised only episodically, and it takes great sophistication to bring it about. We may find that this "cat" is only a toy, or that this person's speech was deceptive, or that that "man" was only a shadow, or that the "glass" we seemed to see was really ice; such occasional mistakes, however, do not cause us to become suspicious about everything we experience and everything that is said. The default condition remains one of belief. However, this belief, as fundamental, is now contrasted with a whole array of possible alternatives: suspicion, doubt, rejection, probability, possibility, negation, refutation, all the possible doxic modalities that our intentionality can take on.

Prominent among all our beliefs is the belief we have in the world as a whole. This belief, which we could call not just a *doxa* but the *Ur-doxa* (if we may combine a German and a Greek term), not just a belief but the basic belief, underlies all the specific beliefs we have. *World belief* is not subject to correction or refutation the way any particular belief is. If we are alive at all as conscious beings, world belief is there undergirding any particular conviction we may exercise. We never really learn or acquire our world belief, the way we might achieve our belief in, say, the Empire State Building or the San Juan River in Utah. All such particular beliefs arise concomitantly when we experience or hear about the thing in question, when we come to acknowledge its identity through the manifolds in which it is given to us, whether in presence or in absence. But we could never learn or acquire our world belief. What would be our state prior to learning it? We would have to be in a mute and encapsulated solipsism, a sheer awareness that was not aware of

anything. Such a state is inconceivable; it would require that the ego think of itself as both the center of things and the sum of things, a hub without a radius. And even if we were to grant its possibility, what on earth (or even outside the earth) could jar us out of such a state? How could the very idea of something "outside" ever arise if it were not there from the beginning?

We cannot start off in the egocentric predicament; our world belief is there from the start, even before we are born, as far back as we go. Even our most rudimentary sense of self could not arise except on the basis of world belief. Similarly, even if we discover that we were wrong about very many things, our world belief remains untouched and the world is still there, no matter how ragged and tattered, unless perhaps we lost our sense of self entirely and fell into a kind of autistic isolation; but even there, some sense of what there is would surely remain, if there is awareness at all. The suffering that must exist in autism is there precisely because the world belief is still at work; if it were not, there would be no awareness at all and no sense of self.

Since we live in the paradoxical condition of both having the world and yet being part of it, we know that when we die the world will still go on, since we are only a part of the world, but in another sense the world that is there for me, behind all the things I know, will be extinguished when I am no longer part of it. Such an extinction is part of the loss we suffer when a close friend dies; it is not just that he is no longer there, but the way the world was for him has also been lost for us. The world has lost a way of being given, one that had been built up over a lifetime.

Both the world and the self invoke the idea of a whole. The paradoxes of set theory, the problem of whether the ultimate set includes itself or not, are less difficult than the problems of the logic of the world and the self: How do these wholes, the world and the self, include or exclude one another, and how are their totalities related to the sum of the things that exist? It may be the case that the paradoxes of set theory are only formalized versions of the problems of how the world contains everything, including the self, and how the self can intend all things, including the world and also itself.

In conclusion, then, in the spontaneous, natural attitude we are directed toward all sorts of things, but we are also directed toward

the world as the horizon given, and correlative to the natural attitude. We are given, who is both possession of it.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

The reader must have here about the natural attitude. Within the natural attitude to it, we have been concerned with the phenomenological attitude several pages and, indeed, with the exception of from within the natural attitude in Chapter 1, and perhaps these subjects from the

There are many different natural attitudes. There is the viewpoint of the mathematician, the physicist, the politician, and the kinds of reflective attitudes. The natural attitude is not like the scientific attitude. All the other attitudes are defined by our underlying assumptions and all the shifts defined into another among the phenomenological attitudes of move that disengage focuses, in a reflective attitude including the underlying phenomenological attitude we move into the philosophical specialist in one form or another. From the philosopher's point of view, to describe, analytically, relates, and world be

If we are to give

the world as the horizon or context for all the things that can be given, and correlative to the world is the self or the ego, the agent of the natural attitude, the one to whom the world and its things are given, who is both part of the world and yet in intentional possession of it.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

The reader must have noticed that everything that has been said here about the natural attitude could not have been stated from within the natural attitude. That is, without having drawn attention to it, we have been considering these matters all along from within the phenomenological attitude; we have been doing so in the past several pages and, indeed, practically throughout this entire book, with the exception of the introduction, which had to be written from within the natural attitude. When we considered intentionality in Chapter 1, and perceiving a cube in Chapter 2, we considered these subjects from the phenomenological viewpoint.

There are many different viewpoints and attitudes even within the natural attitude. There is the viewpoint of ordinary life, there is the viewpoint of the mathematician, that of the medical specialist, the physicist, the politician, and so on, and there are even several special kinds of reflective attitudes, as we shall see. But the phenomenological attitude is not like any of these. It is more radical and comprehensive. All the other shifts in viewpoint and focus remain cushioned by our underlying world belief, which always remains in force, and all the shifts define themselves as moving from one viewpoint into another among the many that are open to us. The shift into the phenomenological attitude, however, is an "all or nothing" kind of move that disengages completely from the natural attitude and focuses, in a reflective way, on everything in the natural attitude, including the underlying world belief. In moving into the phenomenological attitude we get "nudged upstairs" in a way that is unique. To move into the phenomenological attitude is not to become a specialist in one form of knowledge or another, but to become a philosopher. From the phenomenological viewpoint we look at and describe, analytically, all the particular intentionalities and their correlates, and world belief as well, with the world as its correlative.

If we are to give a descriptive analysis of any and all of the

intentionalities in the natural attitude, we cannot share in any of them. We must take a distance to, reflect upon, and make thematic any and all of them. This means that while we are in the phenomenological attitude, we suspend all the intentionalities that we are examining. We neutralize them. This change of focus most emphatically does not mean, however, that we begin to doubt these intentionalities and the objects they have; we do not change them from, say, doxic assurance to doubt. We do not change our intentionalities, we keep them as they are, but we contemplate them. If we contemplate them, we do not exercise them at that moment. However, we would not be able to contemplate them for what they are if we were to change them from one modality to another; if our move into philosophical reflection meant that we changed, say, our conviction into doubt, or our certainty into suspicion, then we could not contemplate conviction or certainty. Changes from one modality to another take place within the natural attitude. They have to be motivated. We have to have reasons to move from conviction to doubt, from certainty to suspicion; without such reasons, the change in our modality would be irrational and arbitrary.

When we move into the phenomenological attitude, we become something like detached observers of the passing scene or like spectators at a game. We become onlookers. We contemplate the involvements we have with the world and with things in it, and we contemplate the world in its human involvement. We are no longer simply participants in the world; we contemplate what it is to be a participant in the world and in manifestations. But the intentionalities that we contemplate – the convictions, doubts, suspicions, certainties, and perceptions that we examine and describe – are still our intentions. We have not lost them; we only contemplate them. They remain exactly as they were, and their objects remain exactly as they were, with the same correlations between intentions and objects still in force. In a very curious way, we suspend them all just as they are, we “freeze” them in place. And we who become philosophical are also the same selves who exercise natural intentionalities. A kind of enhancement of the self occurs, in which the same self that lived in the natural attitude begins to live explicitly in the phenomenological attitude and begins to carry on the philosophical life.

All human beings, all selves, do this sort of reflective philosophi-

cal analysis from time to time. They live a kind of life they usually call philosophy. They think they are just stating truths, some sort of law, and they call it philosophy as one more name for the truth. They do not see how different their way of thinking is from phenomenological attitude. Phenomenology explicitly and implicitly makes a difference between the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude. There is a definite distinction, and it goes on and forth across the border.

The turn to the phenomenological reduction, a turn to the natural targets of our restricted viewpoint, to themselves. Reduction back, a withholding of viewpoint, we *suspend* suspension, this neutralizes the *epochē*, a term taking the restraint the Skeptics about things; they say evidence is clear. Against Greek skepticism, the The *epochē* in phenomenological intentions that must

Finally, to complete the discussion of the term *bracket*, we must speak of the term *bracketing*. In a technical attitude, we suspend or "bracket" all the things in the world that are not "into brackets" or "bracketed" from the world or some part of the world. In appearance, an illusion, a subjective impression, an impression intended by an intention, as correlated with a perceived object, we perceive an object, we now examine the object, we now examine the entity, we consider

cal analysis from time to time, but when most people enter into this kind of life they usually are very confused about what they are doing. They think they are just getting glimpses of some sort of general truths, some sort of laws of nature. They tend to take the move into philosophy as one more adjustment in the natural attitude; they do not see how different it is. The point of our discussion about the phenomenological attitude is to help us to make the shift into philosophy explicitly and clearly, with a fuller appreciation of the difference between the natural and the philosophical attitudes. We make a definite distinction, whereas most people wander unclearly back and forth across the border.

The turn to the phenomenological attitude is called the *phenomenological reduction*, a term that signifies the "leading away" from the natural targets of our concern, "back" to what seems to be a more restricted viewpoint, one that simply targets the intentionalities themselves. Reduction, with the Latin root *re-ducere*, is a leading back, a withholding or a withdrawal. When we enter into this new viewpoint, we *suspend* the intentionalities we now contemplate. This suspension, this neutralization of our doxic modalities, is also called the *epochē*, a term taken from Greek skepticism, where it signifies the restraint the Skeptics said we should have toward our judgments about things; they said we should refrain from judging until the evidence is clear. Although phenomenology takes this term from Greek skepticism, the skeptical overtone of the term is not kept. The *epochē* in phenomenology is simply the neutralizing of natural intentions that must occur when we contemplate those intentions.

Finally, to complete this brief treatment of terminology, let us speak of the term *bracketing*. When we enter into the phenomenological attitude, we suspend our beliefs, and we *bracket* the world and all the things in the world. We put the world and the things in it "into brackets" or "into parentheses." When we so bracket the world or some particular object, we do not turn it into a mere appearance, an illusion, a mere idea, or any other sort of merely subjective impression. Rather, we now consider it precisely as it is intended by an intentionality in the natural attitude. We consider it as correlated with whatever intentionality targets it. If it is a perceived object, we examine it as perceived; if it is a remembered object, we now examine it as remembered; if it is a mathematical entity, we consider it as correlated with a mathematical intention; if

it is a merely possible object, or a verified one, we consider it as the object for an intentionality that intends something only possible, or an intentionality that intends something verified. Bracketing retains exactly the modality and the mode of manifestation that the object has for the subject in the natural attitude.

Thus, when we enter into phenomenological reflection, we do not restrict our focus just to the subjective side of consciousness; we do not focus only on the intentionalities. We also focus on the objects that are given to us, but we focus on them as appearing to us in our natural attitude. In the natural attitude we head directly toward the object; we go right through the object's appearances to the object itself. From the philosophically reflective stance, we make the appearances thematic. We look *at* what we normally look *through*. We focus, for example, on the sides, aspects, and profiles through which the cube presents itself as an identity. We focus on the manifold of appearances through which the object is given to us. When we do so, however, we do not turn the identity of the object into one of the "mere" appearances; quite on the contrary, we are better able to distinguish the object from its appearances, we are better able to preserve the reality of the thing itself. We are also better able to provide an appropriate description of the nature of "the world." If we were to try to speak about the world from the natural attitude, we would tend to take it as a large entity or as the sum of all entities. Only from the phenomenological perspective can we get the right terminology to speak about the world as the context for the manifestation of things.

To use a somewhat crude spatial metaphor, when we enter into the phenomenological attitude, we crawl out of the natural attitude, rise above it, theorize it, and distinguish and describe both the subjective and the objective correlates that make it up. From our philosophical perch, we describe the various intentionalities and their various objects, as well as the self and the world. We distinguish between a thing and its appearances, a distinction that has been called by Heidegger the "ontological difference," the difference between a thing and the presencing (or absencing) of the thing. This distinction can be properly made only from the phenomenological perspective. If we try to make the distinction between thing and appearance from within the natural standpoint, either we will tend to substantialize appearances, because in that standpoint we

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tend to take everything we focus on as a substantial thing, or we will tend to reduce the thing just to its appearances, to being the sum of its appearances. We will be likely either to posit appearances as barriers between us and things, or to make things into mere ideas. We will not get the phenomenological attitude right, and we will not properly understand the natural attitude either.

ARE THERE ARGUMENTS THAT CAN LEAD US INTO THE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE?

Now that we have some sense of the difference between the natural and the phenomenological attitude, we can raise the question of whether there is some way to explain and justify, to other people, the shift between the first and the second. This question amounts to asking whether there is some sort of argument that can persuade someone else to become philosophical, or prove to him that he should do so. The question is not trivial; it asks whether philosophy can introduce itself, explain what it is, and legitimate itself before those who are not philosophers. It also asks whether philosophy can justify itself to itself, whether it can clarify its own origins and thus attempt to be a science without presuppositions.

The issue of the beginning of philosophy is raised in phenomenology under the rubric of the various *ways to reduction*. We are given various "ways" or arguments to help us attain the phenomenological "reduction." As we have seen, the phenomenological reduction is the move from the natural attitude to the phenomenological; it is the restriction of our intentionality from its expansive natural attitude, which targets any and all things in the world, to the apparently more confined phenomenological attitude, which targets our own intentional life, with its correlated objects and world.

We must be careful not to make our task more difficult than it needs to be. We might be tempted to think that the natural attitude is purely natural, purely nonphilosophical, without a shred of philosophy in it, and that the turn to phenomenology is a move into something totally unheard of in the natural focus. If this were the case, it would seem almost impossible for us to convey an idea of what philosophy is to those who have not yet entered it. But in fact, there are anticipations of the philosophical attitude within the natural. There are pseudopods toward philosophy in the natural atti-

tude. Simply as rational beings, we already have a sense of the whole, a sense of self, a sense of intentionality and appearance. However, the trouble is that we try to handle all these things with categories that belong to the natural attitude. We mythologize, psychologize, phenomenalyze, or substantialize them; we make the world a thing, appearances become barriers, the self is substantialized, intentions are psychologized. We do not get the terms and distinctions right. The ways to reduction do not try to open up an absolutely new and unanticipated dimension; rather, they try to clarify a distinction that we already possess, between the natural and the philosophical, and they try to explain the transition between the two attitudes. They help us to get the philosophical stance right by showing the change in perspective that occurs when we move into philosophy, and the shift in the meanings of our terms that must follow. We will consider two ways to reduction, the ontological and the Cartesian. These are two approaches that were developed by Husserl.

The *ontological way to reduction* is the less frightening of the two. (The Cartesian seems to plunge us into the most radical doubt and phenomenalism.) The ontological way appeals to the human desire to be truly and fully scientific. It points out that when we scientifically explore a domain of being, we acquire a treasure of knowledge, a system of judgments, about the things in question. Let us say that we have achieved a rather thorough understanding of a field, such as molecular biology or solid state physics. No matter how complete our knowledge of the things in question may be, we still will not have explored the subjective correlatives of the truths that have been achieved. The objective side may be quite completely known, but the subjective accomplishments that are correlated with the objective will have been neglected: the kind of intentions that present the things being studied, the manner of verification proper to the objects, the methods followed, the forms of intersubjective correction and confirmation, and so on.

So long as a science is merely objective, it is lost in positivity. We have truth about things, but we have no truth about our possession of these things. We forget ourselves and lose ourselves even as we are fascinated by the things we know. The scientific truths are left floating and unpossessed. They seem to be nobody's truth. To round out the science, to be fully scientific, we would need to investigate the subjective structural activities at work in the science, and to do

so is not simply to continue doing physics. It is to turn from such a reflective stance, the phenomenological intentionalities that we exercise in prior scientific endeavors. Once we turn to biology and solid state physics, we turn to phenomenology just for these two. Our effort to cover intentionality (as the objective correlate of intentionalities in any partial science cannot be completed by wider aspects of intentionality) recognizing the identities in method about recognizing identities as such.

By a gradual expansion, therefore, the science of economics helps us to complete the partial sciences in their narrower and wider contexts, until we are provided by the phenomenological expansion with the fullness. The expansion is the desire to be full in a dimension that is relevant to the science. In a sense, this is a kind of partial completeness. In biology or solid state physics, but not in economics, the comprehensive will ultimately have been achieved. The science, into the intentional context, is left out, the science is left out of the proper context. The ontological expansion is the science of Aristotle's remark in *Metaphysics* that the partial sciences are incomplete to the science of being (and not being simply as economic).

It should be clear from these remarks that the move from the concrete to reduction that phenomenologists make is not a self-conscious enterprise. It is more than any of the partial inquiries of the natural sciences. Phenomenological biology is the most concrete of the sciences. It deals with the most material things right there before us. It does not look at the activity by which we abstract. They leave out an essential part of themselves. The science of life completes these partial sciences.

so is not simply to continue doing molecular biology or solid state physics. It is to turn from such sciences and to enter into a new, reflective stance, the phenomenological, which does justice to the intentionalities that we exercise but do not make thematic in our prior scientific endeavors. Once we make this turn for molecular biology and solid state physics, we come to see that we cannot do phenomenology just for these two disciplines; we have to expand our effort to cover intentionality as such and even the world as such (as the objective correlate of intentionality), because the intentionalities in any partial science cannot be understood except as completed by wider aspects of intentionality. We could not speak about recognizing the identities in molecular biology without speaking about recognizing identities as such.

By a gradual expansion, therefore, the ontological way to reduction helps us to complete the partial sciences. We move out to wider and wider contexts, until we come to the kind of widest context provided by the phenomenological attitude. The motivation to our expansion is the desire to be fully scientific, to avoid leaving out any dimension that is relevant to the inquiry in question. There may be a kind of partial completeness in a positive science, in molecular biology or solid state physics, but any science that wants to be comprehensive will ultimately have to inquire into the very achieving of the science, into the intentionalities that establish it. So long as these are left out, the science is left dangling and incomplete, lacking its proper context. The ontological way to reduction reminds us of Aristotle's remark in *Metaphysics* IV.1 about the need to go beyond partial sciences to the science of the whole, the science of being as being (and not being simply as material, or quantified, or living, or economic).

It should be clear from these remarks about the ontological way to reduction that phenomenology as a science, as a rigorous, explicit, self-conscious enterprise, is in fact a more concrete science than any of the partial inquiries. We might think that physics or biology is the most concrete of all sciences because it studies the material things right there before us, but so long as such sciences do not look at the activity by which they are achieved, they are really abstract. They leave out an essential part not only of the world but of themselves. The science of phenomenology complements and completes these partial sciences, while retaining them and their

validities, so that, paradoxically enough, phenomenology is the most concrete of the sciences. It recovers the wider whole, the greater context. It overcomes the self-forgetfulness of the partial sciences. It considers dimensions the other sciences abstract from, the dimensions of intentionality and appearance. It shows how science itself is a kind of display, and hence it shows the naiveté of objectivism, the belief that being is indifferent to display. The reduction, therefore, really is not a confinement, not a "leading away" from anything. It preserves the natural attitude and everything in it, even as it distances us from it. It amplifies and does not deprive.

We get a very different impression from the *Cartesian way to reduction*. This approach to phenomenology is modeled on Descartes' attempt to initiate philosophy by making a "once in a lifetime" decision to doubt all the judgments he holds as true. Descartes introduces this methodic doubt because he thinks that the judgments he has absorbed from others are contaminated by prejudices. After adopting this universal doubt, he will go on to accept as true only those judgments that he himself can justify, according to the method he has developed.

The problem with Descartes' attempt to begin philosophy is that it changes all our natural doxic modalities into doubted ones. He moves from several natural modalities – certainty, suspicion, verified acceptance, possibility, probability – into another natural modality: doubtfulness. His doubt may only be methodical, but it still is doubt. Descartes tries to lift himself into philosophy, but he succeeds only in sliding over into another one of the natural attitudes, and a radically skeptical one at that. His attempt to put philosophy on the road to being a rigorous science misfires. He veers off to the side, with disastrous consequences for philosophy and science.

The Cartesian way to reduction in phenomenology is an attempt to take up what Descartes was trying to get at and to do it properly. It does not propose that we initiate a universal doubt. Rather, it suggests that we adopt the attitude of *attempting* to doubt our various intentions. This may look like a small difference, but it is crucial. The attempt to doubt is very different from doubt. What happens when we attempt to doubt one of our beliefs is that we adopt a neutral stance toward that conviction; we do not yet doubt it, we only suspend our belief. We stop to see whether we should doubt it. This attempt, this stop, however, is not doubt, but it is something

like the neutralization we initiate. This neutral stance then suspends the doubt, so that we can get a sense of what the natural attitude is. The attitude in which we neutralize is the natural attitude.

Another important feature of the neutralization is that it is not a final decision. We cannot truly doubt anything. We cannot truly doubt that we are not doubting it. Suppose I know that the door is open. I see the cat walking into the room. I doubt that the door is closed. I see the threshold unless I have reason to doubt it. I may suddenly realize that the door is brighter than normal. I suddenly realize that there really are seeing only a room. As one of the modalities to be motivated by reasons.

The *attempt* to doubt, however, can attempt to doubt anything. It is the most established of modalities to initiate the neutralization of the natural attitude. From the phenomenological perspective, the neutralization of our intentionality, the things are in our power and we can decide that we want to carry out the attempt. We can be forced into it by reason or suspicion. So, whereas doubt is a suspension into the phenomenological attitude, the attempt to doubt gives us a genuine neutralization of our intentionality. The Cartesian way to reduction is a neutralization of the natural attitude.

Descartes introduced a method that continues to plague philosophy. It is useful to adopt the Cartesian way to reduction of phenomenology, as we can see the natural attitude to the phenomenon as a relapse into Cartesianism. Phenomenology cannot go

like the neutralization we achieve when we enter into philosophy. This neutral stance then serves as a kind of keyhole through which we can get a sense of what the phenomenological attitude is, the attitude in which we neutralize and contemplate all our intentionalities.

Another important feature of the attempt to doubt is the following. We cannot truly doubt anything unless we have reasons to doubt it. Suppose I know that the door to this room is white, and suppose I see the cat walking into the room. I cannot go on to say that I doubt that the door is white or that the cat is walking across the threshold unless I have reasons to doubt that these apparent things are true: I may suddenly realize that it is the light that makes the door brighter than normal, and that it may be a shade of gray; I may suddenly realize that there is a mirror near the door, and that I may really be seeing only a reflection of the cat walking into another room. As one of the modalities in the natural attitude, doubt needs to be motivated by reasons. I cannot just say I doubt things.

The *attempt* to doubt, however, is subject to our free choice. We can attempt to doubt anything, even the most obvious fact before us or the most established opinion. In a similar way, we are free to initiate the neutralization that occurs when we turn to the phenomenological perspective, the suspension or "putting out of action" of our intentionalities, the bracketing of things and the world; these things are in our power and subject to our free choice. We can decide that we want to carry out this kind of life. We do not need to be forced into it by reasons like those that force us into doubt or suspicion. So, whereas doubt is not a good model to use to help us into the phenomenological turn, the attempt to doubt is. The attempt to doubt gives us a good glimpse of what the phenomenological neutralization of our intentions is like. In this manner, the Cartesian way to reduction tries to "kick" us into the philosophical attitude.

Descartes introduced a radical skepticism into the intellectual life that continues to plague the thought that he inspires. Still, it is useful to adopt the Cartesian theme and to modify it in the service of phenomenology, as we have done, because the turn from the natural attitude to the phenomenological is mistakenly seen by many as a relapse into Cartesianism. Even some prominent interpreters of phenomenology cannot get this straight. It is important, therefore,

for us to make the distinction between what Descartes does and what phenomenology achieves.

One of the seriously pernicious effects of Descartes' error is that he discredits the intentionalities of the natural attitude. He undermines our natural and valid belief in the reality of the things we experience, the identities we recognize. He introduces the habit of skepticism that makes us tend to believe nothing until it has been proved to us. But this desire for a proof for everything is unreasonable. Proof is only possible on the basis of some truths that are not provable, truths that have their evidence within themselves and do not need proof. We cannot prove everything; we know many things that do not need to be proved. Phenomenology restores the validity of the convictions we have in the natural attitude. It acknowledges that our intentions do, in their various ways, reach the things themselves. It distinguishes and describes how the various intentions are fulfilled and confirmed. It also realizes that we often go beyond the evidence, that we often are vague in what we intend, and that errors are common; but the presence of error does not discredit everything. It only shows that we must be careful. By clarifying the various intentionalities and distinguishing them from one another, phenomenology helps us to be careful.

Finally, we should note the difference between the ontological and the Cartesian ways to reduction. The ontological way proceeds incrementally. It begins with scientific achievements and adds dimensions to them step-by-step, nudging us all the way along, until it arrives at the phenomenological attitude. The Cartesian way tries to do it all in a hurry, in one step. It suspends all the intentionalities at once. It does highlight a little better than the ontological way the new kind of modality, the neutralization, that comes into play in philosophy, but like anything else done in a hurry it can seriously mislead us. It can make us think of phenomenology as skeptical and phenomenalist, and as depriving us of the real world and the things in it. It even seems to lead to solipsism. The ontological way is slow but sure; the Cartesian way is quick but risky. The best approach is to use both of them, correcting the weaknesses of each by the strengths of the other. In both approaches, however, the key thing is to get a feeling for the difference between the natural attitude and the phenomenological, between our natural involvements and philosophical detachment.

There are a number of other phenomenological attitudes that will be essentially an explanation of the phenomenological vocabulary.

Our experience and analysis of the world from a new viewpoint yields assertions that statements express things that are necessary truths. Moreover, these are truths. We see that what the philosophical necessity in the phenomenological attitude. Consider a material, spatial object like a circle, profiles, aspects, and sides, such appearances. Consider the world given to us in a blend of past and future. These statements cannot be given in any other way but always involves the past.

Someone might object that they are so obvious, so trivial, that they are not the point. Phenomenologists generally, state the obvious, what we already know. That they do not tell us anything new, illuminating, because we are so familiar with trivialities and necessities. We understand memory (as the world is poorly many philosophers), the intake of impressions (the brain), then the importance of the world itself. Phenomenological analysis is so basic and so universal that it does not stem from the world, it enjoys some special revelation that has never heard about.

SOME SPECIAL TERMS RELATING TO THE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

There are a number of other issues that can help us define the phenomenological attitude more precisely. The treatment of them will be essentially an explanation of several terms in the phenomenological vocabulary.

Our experience and analysis from within the phenomenological viewpoint yields assertions that are, in principle, *apodictic*. Apodictic statements express things that could not be otherwise; they express necessary truths. Moreover, they are *seen* to express such necessary truths. We see that what they say could not be otherwise. There is philosophical necessity in the evidences presented to the phenomenological attitude. Consider, for example, the statement that a material, spatial object like a cube can only be given in a manifold of profiles, aspects, and sides, and that the cube is the identity given in such appearances. Consider also the statement that an identity is given to us in a blend of presences and absences, or the statement that we can only have a temporal present played off against a past and future. These statements are apodictic. We see that a cube could not be given in any other way, and that the present is never specious but always involves the past and future.

Someone might object that such statements are apodictic because they are so obvious, so trivial, almost so gratuitous; but that is exactly the point. Phenomenological statements, like philosophical statements generally, state the obvious and the necessary. They tell us what we already know. They are not new information, but even if they do not tell us anything new, they can still be important and illuminating, because we often are very confused about just such trivialities and necessities. When we think of how most people understand memory (as the viewing of internal pictures), or how poorly many philosophers have described perception (as, for example, the intake of impressions on some sort of internal screen in the brain), then the importance of stating the obvious becomes obvious itself. Phenomenological assertions claim to be apodictic because they are so basic and so unavoidable, so ineluctable. Their apodicticity does not stem from the fact that the people who make them enjoy some special revelation of exotic truths that other people have never heard about.

Furthermore, the fact that phenomenological statements and evidences are apodictic does not mean that we can never improve on them or deepen our understanding of them. A philosophical statement can be apodictic and yet fail in *adequacy*. Adequacy means that all vagueness has been purged from the statement. All the dimensions of the thing have been brought out, all the implications have been drawn. Practically nothing can be so fully presented to us, even in philosophy. The result is that phenomenological statements can be seen to be necessary (we can see that they could not be otherwise), but they can also call for further clarification. It is perfectly possible to know, for example, that the present necessarily involves the past and future but to be unclear about the full meaning of present, past, and future. We can know apodictically that an object is identified in blends of presence and absence, but we can still be vague about the full import of what it is to be present and what it is to be absent.

The phenomenological reduction and the phenomenological attitude are often called *transcendental*. We speak of the transcendental reduction and the transcendental attitude. One even encounters the rather clumsy phrases, "the transcendental-phenomenological reduction" and "the transcendental-phenomenological viewpoint." What does the term "transcendental" mean?

The word means "going beyond," based on its Latin root, *transcendere*, to climb over or go beyond, from *trans* and *scando*. Consciousness, even in the natural attitude, is transcendental because it reaches beyond itself to the identities and things that are given to it. The ego can be called transcendental insofar as it is involved, in cognition, in reaching out to things. The transcendental ego is the ego or the self as the agent of truth. The transcendental reduction is the turn toward the ego as the agent of truth, and the transcendental attitude is the stance we take up when we make this ego and its intentionalities thematic.

When we enter into the phenomenological or transcendental attitude, we have to make appropriate modifications in the words that we use. The new context, since it is so unique, requires adjustments in our natural language. Let us call the new language that results from these changes *transcendentalese*, and let us call the language we speak in the natural attitude *mundanese*. The two attitudes are constituted by the kind of intentionalities proper to each, and

the languages spoken. The study of the intertense and mundanese between philosophy and

Some of the words in *transcendentalese*, words such as "presence," and "ego," based on a subtle shift in meaning in philosophical language, have a sense different from the sense in which philosophy is a rigorous science. Phenomenology is a science of the natural sciences of the natural sciences with the transcendental attitude. The new sense is.

There are also some words in *transcendentalese*, words that are not in *mundanese*. Two of them are "noema" and "intentionality." The term "noema" refers to the object of the natural attitude: a mental object, another person, an objective correlates of the transcendental attitude. It is a transcendental-phenomenological term. It can be used adjectivally in noematic analysis, and in this sense, we can consider these words as used in philosophical phrases. The phrase "intentionality proper to philosophy" signals the difference between the discourse, and that of the natural attitude from a philosophical attitude within the natural attitude.

These points need to be easily be misunderstood of some sort, some of the object of consciousness.

the languages spoken in each reflect the differences in perspective. The study of the interplay between the two languages, transcendentalese and mundanese, is a good way of teasing out the differences between philosophy and natural experience.

Some of the words in transcendentalese are drawn from mundanese, words such as "identity," "appearance," "presence and absence," and "ego," but we need to remember that the terms take on a subtle shift in meaning when they are absorbed into the new, philosophical language. The word "science," for example, takes on a sense different from that of physics and biology when it is said that philosophy is a rigorous science. A new kind of exactness is introduced. Phenomenology is a science in a way different from the sciences of the natural attitude, and the whole argument associated with the transcendental reduction is supposed to help us see what the new sense is.

There are also some words that are coined especially for transcendentalese, words that have no basis in the natural attitude or in mundanese. Two of these are *noema* and its correlative, *noesis*. The term "noema" refers to the objective correlates of intentionalities; it refers to whatever is intended by the intentions of our natural attitude: a material object, a picture, a word, a mathematical entity, another person. But more specifically, it refers to such objective correlates precisely as being looked at from the transcendental attitude. It refers to them as having been bracketed by the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. Sometimes the term can be used adjectivally and adverbially: we can be said to provide a noematic analysis, we can study the noematic structure of some thing, we can consider objects noematically. Any phrases in which these words are used are uttered in transcendentalese. They are philosophical phrases. They presume that the neutrality modification proper to philosophy has been introduced. The use of the term "noema" signals that we are in phenomenology, in philosophical discourse, and that the things being talked about are being discussed from a philosophical viewpoint, not from one of the viewpoints within the natural attitude.

These points need to be emphasized because the noema can easily be misunderstood. The noema is often taken to be an entity of some sort, something like a concept or a "sense" distinct from the object of consciousness, something that serves as the vehicle by

which consciousness becomes referred to a particular thing. The noema is thought to be that by which intentionality is bestowed on consciousness, as though awareness would be self-enclosed if noemas were not added to it. The noema is also thought to be the entity through which consciousness targets this or that particular object, that by which our consciousness is referred to some specific item in the world outside: the noema is taken as a kind of bombsight for intentionality. This understanding of the noema as a mediating entity is, I believe, incorrect. Later, in Chapter 13, we will see in greater detail why it is problematic and misleading. At present it is sufficient if I introduce the term and give an initial explanation of what it means. The noema is any object of intentionality, any objective correlate, but considered from the phenomenological attitude, considered just as experienced. It is not a copy of any object, not a substitute for any object, not a sense that refers us to the object; it is the object itself, but considered from the philosophical standpoint.

The term "noesis" is less misleading, but it also assumes that we have entered into phenomenology. "Noesis" refers to the intentional acts by which we intend things: perceptions, signifying acts, empty intentions, filled intentions, judgments, rememberings. But it refers to them precisely as looked at from the phenomenological standpoint. It assumes that we have carried out the transcendental reduction. It considers those acts of consciousness after they have been suspended or put out of action by the phenomenological *epochē*. Noeses are less controversial than noemas because we are not tempted by the term to posit another shadow act parallel to the original one, as we are tempted by the term "noema" to posit a shadow "object" or a "sense" parallel to the real object. The reason we are less tempted to posit "a noesis" between ourselves and our psychological acts is that we, living in the Cartesian tradition, have become habituated to accept our introspections as realistic, as putting us in direct touch with our own mental life. This same tradition makes us inclined to deny that we have a direct exposure to things in the world; it makes us demand an intermediary, a representation (the "noema"), to connect us to the things outside.

We might also mention the fact that "noesis" and "noema," both of which were coined in phenomenology, have the same Greek root, the verb *noein*, which means "to think," "to consider," "to perceive." The Greek term *noēsis* means an act of thinking, and the

term *noēma* means that added to a verb stem : expressed in the verb. T sizing, *politeuma* means the effect of seeing (the vi the effect of mixing (the thing being thought or

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term *noēma* means that which is thought. In Greek the suffix *-ma* added to a verb stem signifies the result or effect of the action expressed in the verb. Thus, *phantasma* signifies the object of fantasizing, *politeuma* means the effect of politicizing (the political entity), *rhēma* signifies the effect of speaking (the word), *horama* means the object of seeing (the view, as in "panorama"), and *migma* means the effect of mixing (the mixture). The term *noēma* then means the thing being thought or the thing we are aware of.

The adaptation of the Greek term to phenomenology is appropriate. The noema is any object of thought, but considered precisely as such, as being thought about or intended, as the correlate of an intentionality. The viewpoint from which we look at it in that way is the phenomenological attitude. The word "noema" is therefore uttered only from within that attitude. What happens, unfortunately, is that people often take "noema" in a psychological, epistemological, or semantic sense. They miss the difference of focus between the transcendental attitude and the natural, and they take the noema naturalistically, epistemologically, or semantically. They posit the noema as an intermediary between the self and things in the world, when it should be seen as the things in the world viewed from a phenomenological perspective. Instead of seeing it as a "moment" (an abstract part) in the manifestation of things, they reify it and make it serve as the link between the mind and things.

The remarks in this section about various terms relating to the phenomenological reduction are not a matter of mere verbal convention. They bring out important aspects of the new attitude that defines phenomenology. Also, the definition of the terms will make it easier to express certain doctrines in phenomenology. Mastery of an appropriate vocabulary is not an incidental matter in a domain of knowledge; the things in question cannot be properly brought to light without the words that name them.

WHY IS THE TRANSCENDENTAL REDUCTION IMPORTANT?

At first glance, we might be tempted to think that phenomenology is essentially an exercise in the theory of knowledge, a study in epistemology, but it is far more than that. It does not just try to deal with "the problem of knowledge," with trying to establish whether or not there is any truth, and with whether or not we can get to the

"real world" or the "extramental" world. Phenomenology did arise in the historical period during which epistemology was the major philosophical concern, and some of its vocabulary and argument sound very epistemological, but it succeeded in breaking out of this restrictive context. It surpasses its origins. It comes to terms with modern philosophy and learns from it, but it also overcomes some of its limitations and reestablishes a link with ancient thought. Most of the misunderstandings of phenomenology come from interpretations that are still so caught up in the problems and positions of modern thinking, still so trapped by the Cartesian and Lockean tradition, that they fail to grasp what is new in phenomenology. Phenomenology calls for a major readjustment in the understanding of what philosophy is, and many people cannot make this change, because they cannot free themselves from their background and their cultural context. Phenomenology restores the possibilities of ancient philosophy, even while accounting for new dimensions such as the presence of modern science. Phenomenology provides one of the best examples of how a tradition can be reappropriated and brought to life again in a new context.

The doctrine of the transcendental reduction is especially important because it gives a new definition of how philosophy can be related to prephilosophical life and experience. One of the dangers to philosophy is that it may think that it can replace the prephilosophical life. It is true that philosophy reaches the summit of reason. It encompasses other exercises of reason, such as those found in the particular sciences and in practical life. It studies how all such partial exercises are related to one another and how they fit into a final context. Because philosophy complements prephilosophical reason, it may be tempted to think that it can substitute for such exercises of reason. It may begin to think that it can do better what the more specialized kinds of thinking accomplish. Philosophy may begin to think that it can carry out political life better than the statesmen, better than those who are involved in the perpetual discussion about how our life in community should be led. It may begin to think that it can do a better job than religious persons do in spelling out what the sacred and the ultimate are. It may begin to think that it can replace special sciences such as chemistry or biology or linguistics, because none of them has a sense of the whole. If philosophy tries to substitute for prephilosophical thinking, the result is rationalism,

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The most important contribution phenomenology has made to culture and the intellectual life is to have validated the truth of prephilosophical life, experience, and thinking. It insists that the exercises of reason that are carried out in the natural attitude are valid and true. Truth is achieved before philosophy comes on the scene. The natural intentionalities do reach fulfillment and evidence, and philosophy can never substitute for what they do. Phenomenology is parasitic on the natural attitude and all the achievements thereof. Phenomenology has no access to the things and disclosures of the world except through the natural attitude and its intentionalities. Phenomenology comes only later. It has to be modest; it must recognize the true and valid achievements of the natural attitude, in both its practical and theoretic exercise. It then contemplates these achievements and their correlative subjective activities, but if the achievements were not there, there would be nothing for philosophy to think about. There must be true opinion, there must be prior *doxa*, if there is to be philosophy. Phenomenology may help the natural intentionalities clarify what they are after, but it never replaces them.

When phenomenology "neutralizes" the intentionalities at work in the natural attitude, it does not dilute, destroy, upset, or ridicule them. It merely adopts a contemplative stance toward them, a stance from which it can theorize them. Phenomenology complements the natural attitude; philosophy complements true opinion and science. Phenomenology may also point out the limitations of the truth and evidences achieved in the natural attitude, but the various arts and sciences already are aware of the fact that they are each partial and limited, although they may not be able to formulate their limitations very exactly. And sometimes the particular arts and sciences may want to become imperialistic themselves and dominate over all the others: physics may try to say that it explains the whole and everything in it, or linguistics may try to do so, or psychology, or history. When such partial arts and sciences try to master the whole and the other arts and sciences, they become pseudo philosophies, but philosophy can also falsify itself when it tries to lord it over the prephilosophical forms of knowledge, when it tries to substitute for them.

Phenomenology provides a major cultural restoration by recognizing the validity of the arts and sciences in the natural attitude, and also the validity of common sense, of prudence in the practical order. There is a rationalist tendency in modern thought that wants to make philosophy the perfect substitute for all prephilosophical forms of reason, and phenomenology counteracts this tendency. The modern rationalist trend has, in recent years, broken down into postmodernism, which recoils to the other extreme and denies any center to reason at all. Phenomenology avoids this negative extreme as well, because it never adopted the rationalist position in the first place.

Classical Greek and medieval thought understood that prephilosophical reason achieves truth and evidence, and that philosophical reflection comes afterward and does not disturb what goes before it. Aristotle did not tamper with the political life or with mathematics; he only tried to understand what they were and perhaps to clarify them to themselves. Phenomenology joins this classical understanding, but what it can add to it is the explicit discussion of the change of focus that is required to enter into the philosophical life. The doctrine about the *epoché*, the distinction between the natural and the phenomenological attitude, the idea of neutralizing the intentions in the natural attitude, the role of the world and world belief, are all clarifications of what it means to adopt philosophical detachment and to enter into philosophical thinking. These doctrines associated with the reduction are not mind-bending conundrums that try to make us obsessively introspective, or puzzles about whether we can get out of ourselves into the "extramental" world; they are clarifications of the nature of philosophy. They are useful in showing how philosophical discourse, transcendental, differs from the discourse of human practice and the arts and sciences, mundanese, the language of the natural attitude. When properly understood they can illuminate both the prephilosophical and the philosophical life.

Finally, the transcendental reduction should not be seen as an escape from the question of being or the study of being as being; quite the contrary. When we shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological, we raise the question of being, because we begin to look at things precisely as they are given to us, precisely as they are manifested, precisely as they are determined by "form," which

is the principle of disclosure of their truth and evidence. We also begin to look at what is disclosed: we look at things to look at it in *its* being, into the being of things, which involves disclosure of things primarily under its nature, being as the place in which things are. Cartesian-sounding reduction is able to recognize new.

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