

**HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL
REDUCTION REVISITED:
AN ATTEMPT OF A RENEWED ACCOUNT**

SEBASTIAN LUFT

This essay attempts a renewed, critical exposition of Husserl's theory of the phenomenological reduction, incorporating manuscript material that has been published since the defining essays of the first generation of Husserl research. The discussion focuses on points that remain especially crucial, i. e. the concept of the natural attitude, the ways into the reduction, and the question of the "meaning of the reduction". The reading attempted here leads to two, not necessarily related, focal points: a Cartesian and a Life-world tendency. In following these two paths, Husserl was consistent in pursuing two evident leads in his philosophical enterprise; however, he was at the same time unable to systematically unify these two strands. Thus, I am offering an interpretation which might be called a modified "departure from Cartesianism" reading that Landgrebe proposed in his famous essay from the nineteen-fifties (a reading that is still valid in many contemporary expositions of Husserl's thought). This discussion should make apparent that Husserl's theory of the phenomenological reduction deserves a renewed look in light of material that has since appeared in the *Husserliana* and by incorporating the most important results of recent tendencies in Husserl research

INTRODUCTION

An author attempting an account of Husserl's method of the phenomenological reduction finds himself in an ungratified position. This theme is one of the main topics in what is now more than sixty years of Husserl research¹. Furthermore, this theme has

1. Whereas the first generation of Husserl research (E. Fink, R. Boehm, L. Landgrebe, I. Kern) dealt extensively with the problem of the reduction, lately,

been so dominant in Husserl's self-interpretation that talking about it equals discussing Husserl's late phenomenology as a whole. However, a general account of what Husserl "really intended" with his phenomenology risks being superficial by concluding with a generality every traditional philosopher would claim as her or his final telos: to express the truth about the world. Yet, were it true that "all great philosophers think the self-same", we would, on the one hand, end up in trivialities regarding philosophical endeavors as such; on the other hand, we would miss precisely the point which was so important to Husserl, that is precisely the *uniqueness* of his philosophical method, which distinguished him from his predecessors rather than what he had in common with them. This notwithstanding that it was one of his late realizations that he could not simply do away with the tradition of which, he realized, he himself was a part.

While Husserl's self-characterizations especially in his last work, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, seems to put off many readers due to their ceremonious formulations, instead of approaching Husserl from the outside, an approach "from the bottom up" will be more fruitful than a presentation from the perspective of his late position, when he already was "certain of the future"². While this may well have been the case for Husserl, he nevertheless insisted that the reduction as the method to enter phenomenology is not a device that, once performed, is valid for all times. It does not entail that the one who has been "converted"³ would remain so for the rest of his or her life. Rather, the reduction must be practiced repeatedly; the greatest threat for the philosopher being to "fall out" of the mindset of the philosophical attitude. This threat is, however, integral to the performance of the reduction. If the reduction is the only way into phenomenology as transcen-

especially in the French phenomenological scene, the reduction has again been a dominant theme, cfr. the works by M. Henry and J.-L. Marion.

2. Cfr. "Der Zukunft bin ich sicher", in a letter to his friend G. Albrecht, in: *Briefwechsel* 9, pp. 75 f. (from December 29, 1930).

3. The metaphor of a religious conversion is the image Husserl uses in the *Crisis*, cfr. *Krisis*, p. 140; after *Crisis*, p. 141.

dental philosophy then it must be part of this theory to furnish an entrance in a “didactic” fashion.

Every philosophical theory is an answer to a problem on the basis of which the theory receives its meaning, and this also goes for the reduction. The first piece of theory to lead to the reduction is the concept of epoché. This method was intended in the Skeptic tradition to gain an unbiased view away from the misguided theories of the past. Thus, the figure of bracketing is more than just terminologically derived from the Skeptics and comes out of a well-established philosophical problem. To this, Husserl *volens volens* contributes. Thus, although his framing of the reduction is only understandable on the basis of his mature transcendental philosophy, the problem emerges from a certain philosophical context he did not create.

Thus, first we have to explicate the philosophical context to a certain extent, if only to show that Husserl distances himself from it. Husserl attempts to suspend traditional misconceptions in an effort to solve the fundamental philosophical problem of establishing “true and lasting knowledge”. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the problem underlying his philosophical commencement. If this problem is the “starting point” for his project, it is equal to that of finding the true “entrance gate” to philosophy. This starting point is *already* a problem, that of how to begin with philosophy. This presupposes that the act of philosophy is something peculiar compared to the “normal” execution of life. This issue, underpinning his philosophical enterprise, can be termed the *epistemological* problem. From here, Husserl’s philosophical development moves from a descriptive phenomenological psychology to a systematic universal “science” in a transcendental register. As such, the problem of entering this emergent science is not a ladder to be thrown away once climbed. Rather, “the problem of entry” is part of the phenomenological method itself.

Avoidance of a lapsing back into an immanent reconstruction of Husserl’s theory of the reduction necessitates a preliminary sketch of the epistemological problem which led Husserl to perform the

transcendental reduction. The epistemological framing of the problem of introducing phenomenology will lead to an explication of the fundamental form of life, the “natural attitude”. It will become apparent that it is not only a problem of *leaving* this life form in order to make one’s way into phenomenology. It is in itself a problem of thematizing this “primal” attitude, and in doing so one is already performing the first step of the reduction. From there, I shall discuss the different ways into phenomenology. While the epoché deals with overcoming the natural attitude, the methodical problems of making a concrete way into the transcendental “realm” only begin. One can discern three major ways into phenomenology and show a certain systematics in their unfolding. In the third part, I will discuss the meaning the reduction has for Husserl. It has essentially two consequences that stand paradigmatically as the meaning Husserl attributes to transcendental phenomenology. However, I want to assert critically that in these two directions Husserl has failed to show their systematic connection. Ultimately, we are left with two “loose ends” which Husserl wasn’t able to tie together, perhaps because this is ultimately impossible.

1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM: THE RELATIVITY OF TRUTHS AND THE OVERCOMING OF THE NATURAL ATTITUDE

The epistemological problem concerns true knowledge, and the means of attaining it. This issue comes about precisely where it is noticed *as* a problem. Hence, one might ask, is knowledge *eo ipso* true knowledge? This depends not only on the meaning of knowledge, but also on the context in which one employs knowledge. The sciences represent one such field. The achievement and pursuit of true knowledge is vital to scientific practice and to the meaning of science. Whether one speaks of absolute truths (i.e., in mathematics or logic), or adequation to truth (e.g., in meteorology,

where truths can only be approximate) the value of a science depends upon its reaching true knowledge.

The sciences, however, are not the only field in which knowledge is an issue. In opposition to the sciences, there is the “field” of pre-scientific life. The ordinary performance of life is carried out in the *life-world*. Whereas the problem of “absolutely true” knowledge seldom becomes a theme here, the question of truth is more crucial than one at first imagines. Picture e.g., the occurrence of a car accident. Imagine then the different “true stories” heard from different people involved: the drivers, a passer-by on the sidewalk, etc. Especially when some interest is at stake (who assumes the blame for the accident) one will hear entirely different “versions”, all claiming the “truth”. Husserl calls these “situational truths” and it is the task of a judge to “judge the truth” which might lie, as one tends to imply, “in the middle.” Obviously neither the notion of truth nor of knowledge are taken emphatically (thus, absolutely). The task of the judge entails the “distillation” of “the” truth from different stories. The result is only an approximation to what “really happened”, attempting to satisfy both parties. Truth in this sense is an “idea”.

In this example, “truth” is an issue of rhetoric serving certain interests —and maybe even of ideology. There is no “absolute truth” about the event of the car accident, although multiple persons claim to have “true knowledge,” despite contradicting each other. While here the justification for truths is debatable, there are other areas wherein we do talk of truth and true knowledge yet in an unemphatic manner. For example, in the market place on a certain day one speaks of the “true” price of produce without referring to the “absolute price”. The vendors fix the price anew each day. It will be determined by different circumstances. Hence, the daily price of a fruit is its situational “truth” and, as such, it is debatable: one bargains over the individual price every day. This notion of “truth” is relative to the situation. Nevertheless, this “truth” will have its “authority” and “rigidity” that is far off from mathematical rigor. Likewise, knowledge of this truth is fashioned in a similar way. One calls the person experienced in employing

these situational truths a good salesperson or a good bargainer. Husserl also used the example of the house to illustrate that a single object can yield differing opinions without invalidating others. What one perceives depends on who one is: a real estate agent views the house as an object for sale, an artist as a piece of art, etc. Within each perspective, these “interpretations” claim situational truths. However, none of these persons sees their views *as* an interpretation.

Thus, in order for a situational truth to *be* a truth, it must block out other contradicting truths. The truth of the artist is different from that of the real estate agent. However, they have their own “right,” because they do not stand in *competition* with one another. But why not, if there is contradiction between them? The answer lies in the notion of interest. What “constitutes” a certain situation as such, what marks it as relative to other situations, is that the pursuit of a certain interest circumscribes a situation and “constitutes” a self-enclosed domain. The interest determines the truth of the situation. The interest of the real estate agent in selling the house determines his situational truth. The artist, likewise, pursues her own interest.

Life in general is hence a “life of interest”. In this sense, life entails a multiplicity of interests, each creating a specific situation. However, we must not understand the situational “field” of an interest as exactly delineated. Rather, it has the character of an horizon which can expand and narrow, yet never comes to an end. Applying this structure to the situations, we can say that the field of an interest does not end in that there is no principle limit to that which can fall in the field of interest. At the same time, these “fields” are self-enclosed due to the operative interest. Situations are not islands in a sea. Rather, they are horizons extending over a limited stretch or field of being. As such, they are essentially limited (greek *horízein*). In this sense, they also exclude each other. The metaphor of tinted eyeglasses best illustrates the manner in which situations differ and exclude each other. Seeing through red glasses makes green objects invisible, whereas they will become visible when seen with glasses of another color. This can be

compared to the fact that a situational attitude blocks out other situations. Moreover, the image seen currently remains the same despite different colorings of the glasses. The object is in each case the same; it is “raw being” or “hyletic stock,” in Husserl’s words. In the natural attitude, however, we can never see this object in its purity.

Perception of such purity would involve stripping the world of its interest. Yet, due to its intentional character, life always implements a certain interest. There is no un-intentional life, and intentionality always strives toward fulfillment⁴. The world has thus a “face of interest” (*Interessengesicht*) that it always turns to us in one way or another. Since it is essentially a world of interests, one can give another notion to characterize the world. If the execution of life occurs in a multitude of situations, then life becomes the situation of all situations, or the horizon of all horizons⁵. If this is to be more than a *metábasis eis allo génos*, it must have a concrete meaning. How does one conceive of a horizon of all horizons?

Husserl aims at a notion of the life-world that captures the totality of life in its multitudinous facets. The life-world is the field in which life carries itself out; it is normal life in its everydayness. Whether Husserl calls this complex phenomenon life-world or “natural world-life”, he alternately emphasizes either the noematic (the world) or the noetic (the living) aspect. The noetic-noematic

4. This neglects the problems of passivity and self-affectivity. Because the conception of life is considered here from the perspective of the natural attitude, the topics of passivity and self-affectivity are not germane to this discussion. For a reconstruction of this passive, pre-affective life, cfr. D. ZAHAVI, “The Fracture in Self-Awareness”, in: ZAHAVI, ed., *Self-awareness, Temporality, and Alterity*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1998 (Contributions to Phenomenology 34), 21-40, as well as: R. KÜHN, *Husserls Begriff der Passivität. Zur Kritik der passiven Synthesis in der Genetischen Phänomenologie*, Freiburg/Munich 1998 (Phänomenologie, Texte und Kontexte 6).

5. Cfr. *Hua XV*, Text 14, pp. 196-218 (+ appendix XI), cfr. also the critical interpretation by HELD, K.: “Heimwelt, Fremdwelt, die eine Welt”, in: *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 24/25 (1991), pp. 305-337.

structure designates the correlational a priori in its universal form⁶. It signifies the essential relatedness of world and conscious life. The correlate to the life-world is the mode of living in which this life-world is the horizon for any kind of action; as such, the correlate to the life-world is the “natural attitude”⁷.

In attempting to enter the sphere of philosophy and to assume a philosophical point of view, one has to relinquish the natural attitude. However, it is not clear why this would be necessary. Are there compelling reasons for “overcoming” natural life by the philosopher? Furthermore, what do natural and philosophical designate here? Husserl intends an adaptation of the ancient distinction between *dóxa* and *epistéme*⁸. However, he assigns a specific “modern” interpretation to it, localized on a higher level than that of “mere” pre-philosophical naiveté, opposed to “mere” critical reasoning⁹.

Husserl conceives of the natural in opposition to the philosophical attitude. This opposition echoes the distinction between pre-transcendental and transcendental standpoints as the modern version of the *dóxa-epistéme* distinction. The transcendental turn anticipated by Descartes, and taken by Kant, occurs via the realization of the subject-relativity of the world. Further, the turn to the subject, the “reduction” to the ego (*cogito*) becomes the foundation supporting the edifice of science. The world is not an “absolute being” but is relative to the experiencing subject. All

6. Cfr. *Krisis*, § 46, pp. 161 f., and *ibid.*, pp. 169 f., footnote; *Crisis*, pp. 159 f., *ibid.*, 166 f., footnote.

7. Cfr. Husserl’s first account of the natural attitude in *Ideas* I, §§ 27 ff., as well as his later, more elaborate analyses in the manuscript material, published in *Hua* XV, as well as in the *Crisis*, §§ 34-37.

8. Cfr. *Krisis*, § 44, pp. 158 f.; *Crisis*, pp. 155 ff.

9. Whereas Husserl employs *dóxa* and *epistéme* to characterize the fundamental nature of this distinction —and hence the radically new nature of phenomenology—, he speaks of “Neustiftungen” over against the original primal institutings in early Greek thought; cfr. *Hua* XXIX, Text no. 32, pp. 362-420.

experience is worldly, but world is always an experienced world¹⁰. Thus, Husserl interprets Descartes' turn to the subject and Kant's transcendental philosophy as rudimentary forms of his transcendental turn that anticipated his conception of a correlational apriori¹¹. The realization of the essential subject-relatedness of *all* worldliness necessitates this transcendental turn.

Why is this transcendental turn identical with leaving the natural attitude? The natural attitude knows nothing of this correlational apriori. The distinction between world and nature illustrates the meaning of the "naiveté" of the natural attitude. Because the natural attitude knows neither of this subject-relatedness nor of its life as guided by a certain interest, it lives in the belief it can perceive the *world as nature*. As previously shown, however, this is impossible within the natural attitude. It implies the illusion of seeing the world stripped of any interest, whereas any situation within the natural attitude is governed by "interest". However, this is not to say that it is impossible to gain an "uninterested" view. Quite to the contrary, the recognition that all situations in the natural attitude are guided by subjective interests is already the essential step beyond the natural attitude. Yet, the elements that motivate the turn to the subject are already present in the natural attitude.

Understanding the subject-relatedness of all experience leads to the overcoming of the natural attitude, which is immersed in the horizon of special interests. Thus, the epistemological problem consists in being blind to the correlativity of world and experience. The distinction of *dóxa* and *epistéme* "translated" into the modern situation of philosophy means: Philosophy which believes it can

10. However, Husserl insists that this version of transcendental philosophy is not an idealism in the form of, e.g., Berkeley (*Krisis*, pp. 88 f.; *Crisis*, pp. 86 f.), which denies the existence of the external world.

11. He also commends the British Empiricists in their development of a scientific psychology. However, as for the development of a transcendental philosophy the decisive figures of modern philosophy are the ones mentioned above. Cfr. the schema Cairns draws up after a conversation with Husserl, in: D. CAIRNS, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink*, Den Haag, 1976 (*Phaenomenologica* 66), p. 104.

operate on a “realistic” level is bound to the natural attitude. As such, it cannot claim to be critical in the Kantian sense. This is not only Husserl’s critique of pre-transcendental philosophy. It is especially his critique of his pupils who neglected to pursue the transcendental path that Husserl had taken up with *Ideas I* (1913).

This framing of the epistemological problem motivates the way into phenomenology, which is identical with realizing the limits of the natural attitude. As such, phenomenology for Husserl is necessarily transcendental philosophy, which entails adhering to the subject-relatedness of all experience.

2. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE REDUCTION: THE MAIN PATHS INTO THE REDUCTION

Husserl conceived several ways into the reduction. The number of these ways has been subject to debate. Of greater importance, however, is Husserl’s belief in the systematic order of the reductions. Within this systematics, none of these ways devalue, rather, they explicate, clarify and compliment each other. Hence, the reconstruction I propose attempts to adhere to the systematic order Husserl envisioned while disregarding the temporal order in which he discovered them. Legitimization of this disregard owes to Husserl’s assertion that the Cartesian way retains its “right” and “validity”¹² despite the problems Husserl sees with it.

a) *The Cartesian Way*

If the reduction, in leaving the natural attitude, is not an impossible endeavor, then there must be certain “proto-forms” of putting the normal pursuit of life out of action within this primary

12. Cfr. *Hua* XXIX, pp. 425 f. This passage will be discussed subsequently.

state of life. Husserl uses a simple example of such a proto-form: the suspension of judgment two people will practice when in discordance with one another. If both are unsure of the truth of their judgments, they will suspend it, until they have found out the truth¹³. Only when one asserts the truth of the judgment hitherto uncertain, will it again be put into action. In the time between doubt and confirmation the judgment (“it is so”) is “bracketed”.

When Husserl labels this bracketing epoché, it shall suffice to remind that he takes it over from the Skeptic tradition¹⁴. In a similar sense, Descartes’ method in his *Meditations* is likewise to be understood as an epoché in so far as the decision to “once in his life” overthrow all knowledge is equally a radical “step back” from everyday life. The questions of how and why the Cartesian Epoché is the first way Husserl uses to introduce the reduction is of great importance. When he later uses the term “reduction” for this method as a whole, he seems to want to identify both steps of epoché and reduction. This blurs certain nuances that one might want to retain between them for the sake of clarifying the details of this method. In addition, it is only from his later understanding of transcendental subjectivity that the reduction can become more dominant in the development of this method. How does the Epoché come about?

The natural attitude consists in viewing the world as “nature,” hence as existing independent of an experiencing agent. It believes that the world exists whether it is experienced or not. This belief

13. Cfr. CAIRNS, cfr. footnote 19, pp. 11 f., where this example is mentioned.

14. Cfr. HELD, “Husserls Rückgang auf das *phainómenon* und die geschichtliche Stellung der Phänomenologie”, in: *Phänomenologische Forschung* 10 (1980), 89-145.—Mertens has examined Husserl’s relation to the Skeptic tradition and has argued that Husserl takes a position between skepticism (or criticism) on the one hand and a tendency to ultimate foundationalism on the other. At the same time, Mertens shows that Husserl has a very limited view of the historic setting as well systematic potential of Skepticism. Cfr. K. MERTENS, *Zwischen Letztbegründung und Skepsis, Kritische Untersuchungen zum Selbstverständnis der transzendentalen Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls*, Freiburg/Munich, 1996 (Orbis Phaenomenologicus VI/1), esp. pp. 66-142.

Husserl calls the *general thesis* of the natural attitude¹⁵. This “belief” is describable as a constant anonymous “yes-saying.” It is comparable to a constant sound which the ear blocks out. In Husserl’s words: “It is, after all, something that lasts continuously throughout the whole duration of the [natural] attitude, i.e., throughout natural waking life”¹⁶. Thus, the epoché as putting the general thesis out of action, can be seen as making explicit this constant base line “below” the “natural” hearing level. As such, the epoché does in no way devaluate or negate it, but rather puts it out of action momentarily in order to pay attention to that which remains unbracketed.

In *Ideas I*, Husserl insists that this bracketing is a matter of our perfect freedom, i.e., the freedom to inhibit what we want to and to the extent we want to do so¹⁷. He later considered both elements (“how” and “to what extent”) of this “freedom” as problematic. First, where does this freedom come from? If the natural attitude is this self-enclosed field of everyday life, then why should, and how *could* it be left by bracketing it? Secondly, even discussing the possible *extent* of the validity of the general thesis gives rise to an understanding of it as a field with a greater or smaller scope—ultimately that the field of the general thesis is like a continent within an ocean. The very fact of discussing a larger or greater scope misconstrues the radicality of the epoché, which supposedly “with one stroke” puts the general thesis out of action.

The General Thesis of the natural attitude pervades every form of life, since all life is guided by a certain interest and hence affirms being. Putting this life-pulse of continuous asserting out of action can only occur as totalizing act. There is either being *in* or *out of* action. However, whereas this radicality in fact calls for an equally radical motivation, this rigid “either or” neglects the character of the “yes” of the general thesis and the possibility of

15. Cfr. *Ideen I*, § 30, p. 52; *Ideas I*, p. 56. Cfr. also *Hua VIII*, pp. 44-50, where Husserl formulates the “content” of the General Thesis as “the world is” (“*Die Welt ist.*”).

16. *Ideen I*, § 30, p. 53; after *Ideas I*, p. 57.

17. *Ideen I*, p. 54; *Ideas I*, p. 58.

“breaking its spell”. It is a “yes” with respect to the character of the world taken to be “existing”, but this world is to be understood as always existing in a manifold of ways. This refers to the multitude of special worlds as being lived through in the natural attitude. How can it at all be possible to bracket all these modes of living with one single stroke?

Apart from Husserl’s insistence that it is a matter of our perfect freedom, a motivation for this step lies precisely in the relativities of the situational truths. If all of these are merely truths for themselves and if the philosopher’s aim is to reach “absolute” truth, then it will seem plausible to refrain from asserting any of this. This very realization can already be seen as bracketing, since understanding these relativities *as* relativities already overcomes being immersed in them. The situational truths can only consider themselves as truths if they take themselves to be absolutely true, where in fact, they are only relative. The relativity is determined by not knowing about their situational characters; only because they do not know this, they take themselves as “absolute”. Not being bound to the situations means already having left their realm. In this sense, leaving these situations behind and putting the validity of situational truths out of action are the same.

The metaphor of the bracket is yet more complex, involving two sides: that within the bracket and that without. Following the example of a doubtful judgment one does not consent to: the judgment will only be put back into action when one has “evidence” about its truth. Yet, the brackets can only be removed by an I which has evidence and hence asserts (or modifies) the old judgment. The method of bracketing necessarily reverts to the Ego, which is the executor of any act directed at the world. Thus, the “*methodic expedient*”¹⁸ Husserl takes over from Descartes —who carried it out “for an entirely different purpose”¹⁹— does not have

18. *Ideen I*, 54; after *Ideas I*, p. 58.

19. *Ibid.* In fact, Husserl points out, that Descartes overemphasizes an element of this doubt which is not only contrary to Husserl’s thrust but is also ultimately a mislead endeavor: “In Descartes, this part [sc. of doubting as

the function of nullifying or negating the general thesis, but rather of motivating the turn to the subject which is the origin of the acts directed at the world.

This is Husserl's main interest in the process of bracketing: the brackets are set in order to determine what can be left "without". The universal doubt leaves over the doubting agent, hence a pure Ego stripped of any worldly meaning, and it is only this Ego that can claim for itself absolute evidence. What is left over in radical doubt is the transcendental ego. This consciousness is the totality of the field of intentionality, which is the correlate to the world given in intentional acts. As such, this subject cannot be a psychic entity in the world as my "spirituality", but consciousness as such. In this sense, bracketing the totality of the world necessarily entails bracketing my ego as *part* of the world. What is left over is not, as Husserl self-critically puts it in the *Cartesian Meditations* from 1931, a "*tag-end of the world*"²⁰, the mundane ego practicing the Epoché. Rather, the epoché reveals the pure ego, consciousness as such, standing opposed to the world, which I as human being have access to by reflection. In order to characterize this curious "duality" of egos and to distinguish them more clearly, Husserl introduces the doctrine of the splitting of the ego, which I shall discuss in the following section.

The strong emphasis on the ego as the expedient of epoché indicates that there might be several motivations to practice the reduction. The strongest one Husserl takes up from this Cartesian impetus is that of finding a basis from which to found apodictic evidence in the self-evidence of the ego. However, it is not yet clear how one is to reach a new scientific discipline from this basis "outside the world". In fact, is not this claim of a non-worldly subjectivity a metaphysical construction, does not this very step of reverting to an absolute ego lapse back into a Platonism?²¹ Husserl

negating] is so predominant that one can say that his attempt to doubt universally is properly an attempt to negate universally". (*Ideen I*, p. 57, after *Ideas I*, p. 58).

20. *Cartesianische Meditationen*, p. 63; after *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 24.

21. This "idealistic" or "platonistic" interpretation was quite popular in the reaction of Husserl's contemporaries after the publication of *Ideas*. For such

never gave up the claim of having laid the foundation of phenomenology on this Cartesian basis. Yet, it is difficult explaining how a philosophical science could be “derived” from this absolute Ego. In order to show this, Husserl’s later self-interpretation of the Cartesian way intended to show that this way is merely one point of access among others. Ultimately, however, they all point back to this first path into the transcendental sphere.

Viewing Husserl’s philosophical development after *Ideas I*, we can say that the Cartesian way remained dominant before he felt forced to broaden this approach. As we shall see in the following section, his insights into the sphere of transcendental consciousness made it necessary to modify his way into the reduction. However, this modification was in no way an abandoning but rather the extension of this first way.

b) *The Psychological Way*

The Cartesian way was introduced to secure a field of apodictic evidence, and, as such, to create a foundation on which apodictic knowledge could be built. Up until *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), Husserl employs Descartes’ image of the tree of knowledge, whose branches are the positive sciences and whose trunk is the unifying *scientia universalis*. Phenomenology purports to be this unifying science. In this approach, “Cartesianism” means that only evidence of egoic experience can give the ego *apodictic* evidence, whereas experience of worldly entities is doubtful, deceiving, etc. Mundane experience can undergo modalizations. In other words, the epoché as a turn away from the world to the realm of pure consciousness was considered by Husserl in *Ideas I* as a move from trans-

a reading cfr. e.g., Natorp’s review of *Ideas* from 1917/18, published in *Logos* (reprinted in: H. NOACK, ed., *Husserl*, Darmstadt, 1973, pp. 36-60), or more strongly even Heidegger in his Marburg lecture course from 1925/26. Cfr. M. HEIDEGGER, *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (GA 21), ed. by W. Biemel, Frankfurt 1976, pp. 31-125.

cendence to pure immanence²². The argument for this turn to “inwardness”, as a basis for apodictic knowledge is the following. Nobody doubts the evidence of something given directly, in intuition. An external thing, a sensuous object, gives itself as itself, and is to be taken as such. The principle of all principles —to “take everything that gives itself in intuition originally [...] as what it gives itself, but only within the boundaries in which it gives itself”²³— is stated precisely to support this claim. However, looked at closely, what is seen of a perceptual object is merely its front side facing me. The back side will always be hidden; as I turn the object around to see its back side, its front side will again be hidden, etc. An external object always gives itself in adumbrations and therefore the evidence of this object will never be absolute. To be precise: the manifest side gives itself with apodictic evidence, in direct perception there can be no doubt about it. However, other unseen sides can always turn out to be different than anticipated. I will never see the totality of an external thing, the evidence regarding it will always be presumptive. Hence, evidence about transcendent objects will not be apodictic, only presumptive. Since we are searching for an *absolute*, apodictic foundation, the external experience of transcendent objects does not qualify. Immanent experience on the other hand does not adumbrate itself. It is given apodictically *and* adequately —or, there is no difference between both forms of evidence. Only inner experience can be the basis for apodictic knowledge, since there is no uncertainty regarding its evidence. “A *mental process is not adumbrated*. [...] Rather is it evident [...] from the essence of cogitationes, from the essence of mental processes of any kind, that they exclude anything like that [sc. adumbrations]”²⁴.

To be sure, there is no backside to the anger I feel (or the joy I have etc.). If inner experiences do not adumbrate themselves, this means that they cannot have a spatial extension. While the external

22. In this he is consistent with the first presentation of the reduction in the 1907 lectures on the Idea of Phenomenology; cfr. *Hua* II, pp. 4 f.

23. *Ideen* I, 51; after *Ideas* I, pp. 44 f.

24. *Ideen* I, p. 77; after *Ideas* I, p. 90.

REDUCTION AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

object I can only imagine seeing from its front side with its back side unseen, the imagination itself will be given directly and absolutely. In other words, the *lack of spatiality* regarding inner experiences seems to be the criterion for a lack of adumbrating. Whereas adumbrations are linked to spatiality, it will sound trivial to say that experience takes place in time. Following Husserl's analyses of time consciousness one can say that the time "of" these experiences is not external, natural time, but the time "of" the experiences themselves. Experiences are "given" in a temporal now in a "primal impression" within a constant flow of time consciousness. Keeping with the image of this flow, experiences "flow away" from my current living Now. Though retained within a certain halo or "tail" from my present Now, the experience of something recedes until it vanishes out of the periphery of my "mental eyesight" into the stock of my memory. "Periphery" already connotes a certain spatiality, namely a distance from my present Now. This distance becomes apparent when an experience slips out of my retention into memory, when I forget what I had just heard or thought. The very "act" of forgetting questions the apodictic evidence of inner experience. Nevertheless, one need not reach for such strong examples. The "fading out" of experience in retention challenges the claim of apodicticity in inner experience in its totality. Inner experience can even deceive me; memory might be false or incomplete, etc. Having full and total access to all fields of my consciousness would mean that the ego disposes over a divine consciousness.

In terms of adumbrating, time can be seen as a certain analogue of space in the sense that, just as the spatiality of an object prevents us from gaining a fully transparent view of it, so the temporality of lived-experiences prevents us from having the totality of consciousness fully and transparently. Since all actual experience is "had" in the lived present, the temporally extended nature of our mental life evades a complete overview. Because I view my mental life in the reflective turning-back, I cannot "step outside" of it. I will always have experiences, also of reflection, in a living present, and this present will move to an ever-new present from

which previous experiences will recede into recollection. Husserl's own concept of time-consciousness behind his back counters his own claim to apodictic evidence of inner experience.

Accounting for this subtly moves Husserl away from the Cartesian motif of apodictic evidence on the basis of *ego cogito* and leads to the second entry path, psychology. Put otherwise, his insight into the range or extension of this *cogito* forces him to expand the sphere of the ego. At the same time, one cannot do without the ego, for there must be a synthesizing agent which binds the cogitationes together within one stream of consciousness. Thus, the form of *ego cogito cogitatum* is the general invariant form of all conscious life. The questions, then, will have to be a) how to characterize this "field" of cogitationes and, more importantly, b) how to account for it methodically. Husserl has to give answers to two interrelated questions: what kind of analysis can there be of this phenomenal field, *and* how is this possible, if this field structure in its entirety escapes the claim for apodictic evidence? What is the theme of phenomenological research if the ego is more than an empty ego pole and how can one access it appropriately? How can one account for consciousness if consciousness itself has a horizontal structure?

From its inception in the *Logical Investigations*, phenomenology endeavors to analyze consciousness. The "positive" discipline for this is, naturally, psychology. What phenomenology, however, aims at moving from facts about the human mind to essences, an eidetic science. Hence, phenomenological psychology is a veritable discipline performed on the basis of an eidetic description of conscious phenomena. Structuring this discipline has its own problems and difficulties (under the rubric of eidetic variation). Systematically carrying this out would *per se* lead to a science, the envisioned phenomenological psychology. Husserl devoted extensive research of how to carry out this task in a systematic fashion²⁵. What is aimed at is a positive science within

25. This effort can best be seen in the lecture course from 1925, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, Hua IX.

the whole of the spiritual sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in the framework of which psychology would be followed by the science of communal spirit (*Gemeingeist*)²⁶. However, this discipline remains bound to the natural attitude. In other words, psychology entails the thematization of an eidetics of (worldly) consciousness, but not transcendental subjectivity, because psychology as a positive science remains blind to the transcendental dimension. Hence, Husserl has to show how phenomenological psychology can motivate the reduction from worldly to transcendental consciousness. Or, which says the same, he has to explain why a phenomenological psychology must necessarily lead to the transcendental.

This motivation lies in the doctrine of the splitting of the ego, which treats the problems arising from expanding the ego to a field structure. If consciousness is more than an ego pole but a whole sphere of conscious life, then the question of the *agent* carrying out this discipline becomes pressing. The agent Husserl calls the “unparticipating observer”²⁷. An overview of this sphere—which turns out to be a sphere of intersubjective conscious life—harbors the danger of dissolving this very agent which strives to gain an uninhibited view over transcendental life. The life I experience in introspection, however, is nothing but the life of the agent itself. I can only attain it by introspection. Thus, reflecting on one’s own conscious life not only yields access to this consciousness. It also creates the following problem: how can I have access to this conscious life as such if I can never step outside of my individual self? How can I experience this spiritual region, which is not my region only, without losing my individuality? I can inhibit the general thesis of the natural attitude and turn to my conscious inwardness. But how am I to characterize the relationship between

26. On the topic of "Gemeingeist" cfr. *Hua* XIV, pp. 165-232.

27. This notion is introduced in the beginning of the 20s, probably the earliest mentioning is to be found in the *London Lectures* from 1922. Already in the lecture course from 1923/24 (*Erste Philosophie*) the term seems well-established and has its distinct meaning; cfr. *Hua* VIII, pp. 126-131.

myself, the observing agent, and that which I observe if the latter is the whole sphere of consciousness?

Just as in any science there is a region to be observed and the observer, there must be the same structure in the case of phenomenological psychology. Only here we have the curious situation that the observer and observed are of one and the same essence. Hence, an artificial rupture, which splits the ego into an observer and a thematic field, can only attain this difference of the same: its own conscious life. “In my living present I have in coexistence the doubled ego and the doubled ego act; thus the ego, which now continuously observes [e.g.] the house, and the ego, which carries out this act: ‘I am aware that I am continuously observing the house’ [...]”²⁸. In principle this doubling has no limit. I can always again reflect upon that which I have just observed and again reflect upon this reflection *in infinitum*. I can always make the part of the ego, which I reflect upon, patent whereas the reflective ego will remain latent. However, the reflection by a latent ego will render the latent ego patent, etc²⁹. This infinite regress—which to Husserl is “undangerous”—reveals the reflective “I can”. Although the reflection upon yet another ego-pole teaches me nothing new, the possible “iteration” of reflection proves the feasibility of the reflective faculty of consciousness.

Whereas this iteration adds no new insight into the nature of consciousness, the splitting into the observer of conscious life and consciousness itself can only occur as a radical split, a rupture within the originally unitary conscious life. “Naive” life has its breaks and ruptures, but is overall unitary. Hence, the break with the natural attitude in the epoché is to be conceived as precisely this split between the philosophizing ego and that which it observes, consciousness itself. The epoché is nothing but a radical splitting of the ego. Hence, the reflective ego is no longer under the spell of the general thesis, but it reflectively turns its attention to consciousness which is intentionally directed at the world.

28. *Hua VIII*, p. 89, my translation.

29. For the discussion of patent and latent Ego cfr. *Hua VIII*, pp. 90-92.

An alternative formulation of “being directed at the world is “being interested in its affairs”. From here, the term “*uninterested* observer” becomes understandable as taking a position in the particular sense of not being interested in the general thesis of positing the world as existing in different ways. Husserl prefers the term “unparticipating” to describe the “status” of this agent as the term “uninterested” implies a potential indifference towards everything. To be sure, the observer is interested in knowledge about consciousness—he is interested in a way that the natural ego cannot be “interested”. Alternatively, “unparticipating” suggests that the philosophizing ego does not assert the general thesis of the natural attitude.

This splitting enables a view of the totality of conscious life. This is not a “view from nowhere” because I gain access to my life by distancing myself from it through this split. What can this tell us about the discipline of phenomenological psychology insofar as it is a point of access to phenomenology? Is it necessary for it to be a transcendental discipline? Ultimately, it has to be. However, it is possible to practice an eidetic science of consciousness. Here, too, there is the difference between an agent performing this science and the region this science thematizes. Likewise, we would equally have to presuppose a splitting. Nevertheless, as long as this discipline does not inhibit the general thesis, it remains on the ground of the natural attitude as a positive science. Hence, mundane consciousness thematizes itself as part of the world. In the hierarchy of the foundational strata of nature and spirit this discipline thematizes conscious life on the basis of nature. The “personalistic” attitude necessary to access it is an abstraction from the natural attitude which experiences the whole of constituted life.

By contrast, transcendental subjectivity is not part of the world, but it opposes the world as the product of its constitution. Transcendental subjectivity is not *in* the world; it *constitutes* the world. Only the splitting of the ego makes plausible the possibility for the observer to have a transcendental experience while remaining a mundane ego. The ego is at the same time an object in

the world and a subject for the world³⁰. Alternatively, a phenomenological psychology, based in the natural attitude, is possible. The transcendental viewpoint, already accessed in the Cartesian way, clarifies that this discipline, as a positive science, remains incomplete and methodically ambiguous. A true phenomenological psychology necessarily is *forced* to perform the reduction and move from a mundane into a transcendental register. Thus, phenomenological psychology and transcendental phenomenology are “parallel” disciplines. This parallelity, however, vanishes with the realization that this consciousness thematized is nothing but transcendental consciousness once one has inhibited the general thesis. Or, viewed from the side of the world, mundane consciousness is an incomplete “part” or “layer” of consciousness that, seen in its transcendental register, is not part of the world, but opposed to it in terms of the correlational apriori. Hence, a methodical consideration of phenomenological psychology reveals “that the consistent and pure execution of this task of a radical reform of psychology had to lead, of itself and of necessity, to a science of transcendental subjectivity and thus to its transformation into a universal transcendental philosophy”³¹.

Apart from viewing psychology as an entrance gate to transcendental phenomenology or to conceive of psychology as a preliminary discipline before a treatment of “consciousness as such”, another result appears, expanding the Cartesian way into a full-blown transcendental discipline, namely the unparticipating observer. Contrasted with the Cartesian approach, the establishing of this agent as “saving” the philosophizing agent from becoming lost within the vast field of transcendental, the latter turns out to be transcendental intersubjectivity. Establishing this observer retains the radicality of the Cartesian approach as it insists on a philosophizing agent who practices this introspection, but moreover takes over responsibility for its own actions as a philosopher. Not by accident is *Socrates* the archetype of a radical philosopher, who

30. *Krisis*, pp. 182 ff.; *Crisis*, pp. 178 ff.

31. *Krisis*, p. 203; after *Crisis*, p. 207.

has found the foundation of all knowledge in himself³². For Husserl, practicing radical self-introspection equates living up to the ethical ideal of self-responsibility. This explicit establishing of the philosophical observer thus opens the path to “ethical” considerations of the role of the philosopher³³.

The movement from the Cartesian approach to the way via psychology enables Husserl to harmonize the *two* requirements which satisfy his task of radical and rigorous science. The first task is that of founding a scientific discipline which phenomenology claims to be —hence more than a foundation in an ego, rather a discipline of the cogitata of this *cogito*. The second requirement is that of living up to the “epistemologico-ethical” (*erkenntnisethisch*) ideal of fully legitimizing the actions of the philosopher. As such, this science presents an ideal for all other sciences. The idea of science as well as that of the scientist are products of an eidetic variation, and hence apply to all factual appearances of them³⁴.

The way via psychology is and remains, however, the grand path into phenomenology, since such a psychology leads necessarily into transcendental phenomenology. Psychology, as Husserl says in the *Crisis*, is the “field of decision” for a correct framing of transcendental phenomenology. To say it differently, the modern separation into psychology and transcendental philosophy has led to the fateful development in modern philosophy (e.g., psychologism). Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology can be seen as an effort to combine both strands gone astray into one transcendental discipline.

32. Cfr. *Hua* VII, pp. 9 ff.

33. For an account of the role of responsibility in Husserl’s philosophy, cfr. the concise text from HELD, K.: “Evidenz und Verantwortung” in: M. FLEISCHER, ed., *Philosophen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt 1989, pp. 79-94. A more extensive treatment is to be found in Fr. KUSTER, *Wege der Verantwortung. Husserls Phänomenologie als Gang durch die Faktizität*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1996 (Phaenomenologica, 138).

34. This is Husserl’s path into phenomenology in the Cartesian (!) Meditations, cfr. esp. *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §§ 3-5.

c) *The Way via the Life-world*

In his last attempt to present an introduction into phenomenology in the *Crisis*, Husserl proposes yet another way, that via the life-world (the ontological way)³⁵. Although he already pursued this path in his lectures and research notes, it is not until the *Crisis* that it achieves its most mature presentation. Without devaluating his previous attempts, Husserl considered this path the principal one. What are its main lines of thought?

Insight into the nature of transcendental consciousness reveals “the transcendental” to have essentially intersubjective and a genetic dimensions. Schematically, transcendental subjectivity is expanded into these two major dimensions: as a field of consciousness it is not “only” a subjectivity but always already an intersubjectivity. Furthermore, the description of this transcendental field is incomplete if only analyzed in a static register. The static description turns out to be merely a stratum within an encompassing whole of a genetic development³⁶. The combination of both expansions can be termed generative phenomenology³⁷. Phenomenology in this full sense as the theory of constitution accounts for how transcendental consciousness forms the world. That implies that only a full understanding of this consciousness can give the philosopher a concept of the world as *life-world*. Since

35. Cfr. I. KERN, “Die drei Wege zur transzendental-phänomenologischen Reduktion in der Philosophie Edmund Husserls”, in: *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, Bd. 24 (1962), pp. 303-49, here pp. 327 ff. Unlike Kern, I differentiate the way via the life-world proper from that via regional ontologies. Whereas Kern counts this path as belonging to the former, I consider it as belonging to the way via the positive sciences and as such have I treated it as part of B. Kern himself says that the full notion of an ontology of the life-world is “an idea of the late Husserl” (ibid., 327) and it will be treated accordingly as the way Husserl pursues in the *Crisis*.

36. Cfr. the important text on “static and genetic method” in *Hua* XI, pp. 336-45.

37. The development from static to genetic method and from genetic to generative phenomenology is discussed in Steinbock’s *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston, 1995).

transcendental consciousness as world constituting and the life-world as the product of constitution are correlatives, thematizing *either of them* offers a way into phenomenology. The way via psychology and that via the life-world complement each other. Whether I take my point of departure from consciousness in the mundane sense and reduce to its transcendental “counterpart” or if I inquire back from the pre-given life-world, in both cases I arrive at transcendental (inter-) subjectivity as the ultimate, “absolute being” which constitutes the world³⁸.

If inquiring back into transcendental consciousness reveals the world as what it truly is—a product of the transcendental constitution—only then can transcendental phenomenology render a real understanding of what the world is, i.e., a life-world, constituted by a totality of monads. In other words, as long as the world is not analyzed in this way, it has not been fully understood. This is also a critique of the positive sciences. It is not such much that they have given up their ideal to account for the essence of the world (otherwise they would make no sense) as much as they have pursued a wrong path. In so doing they have been blind to the true being of the world in so far as they have abstracted from it and have forgotten its basic character. This is the main theme in the *Crisis*, where Husserl tries to make a statement diagnosing his time and to show how transcendental phenomenology can help solve this crisis. This “missionary” motive of Husserl’s philosophy goes back to the *Kaizo*-Articles from 1922, in which he calls for a “renewal” of the European spirit³⁹. When some 15 years later he diagnosed a “crisis” in modern European culture, he reverts to the same motive. In both cases, one can reduce the solving of the crisis

38. On the question of the “absolute being” of transcendental subjectivity cfr. *Hua* VIII, pp. 497-506, and Landgrebe’s works, esp. “Meditation über Husserls Wort “Die Geschichte ist große Faktum des absoluten Seins”, in: *Faktizität und Individuation*, Hamburg, 1982, pp. 38-57.“

39. Only two of the five *Kaizo* articles were published in the Japanese journal “The Kaizo” (Renewal); they have been published as a whole in *Hua* XXVII, pp. 3-94.

to the formula: the world must be saved through rigorous science, this science ultimately being phenomenology⁴⁰.

What does the crisis of modern European science consist in? In short, it has moved away from the life-world by its method of mathematization. This process is that of an abstraction which has converted the world into a mathematical universe⁴¹. Two correlative results follow: First, science abstracts from the “real” world and lives in its own world, in a world of formulae. Second and as a consequence, it loses sight of the original life-world from which it emerges. In its abstractive move away from the life-world, science not only loses sight of it but it *replaces* it with the scientific world. The life-world has become covered up by a scientific view of this world that, in fact, does not see the world as what it is in its original sense: a world of pre-scientific, pre-philosophical life. However, what notion of life is at stake here? Is not the scientific form of life a very special and “dignified” form? In what sense can the life-world, accordingly, be pre-scientific?

There can be no doubt about Husserl’s unceasingly high regard for science. One must never understand his call back to the life-world as departing from the ideal of a “scientific” mastery of the world. Only a crass misreading of Husserl’s famous quote of the dream of rigorous science “ending” can interpret it as Husserl’s own opinion⁴². The phenomenological approach does thematize the world as a life-world but one of its goals is to bring the sciences back on track. Thus, phenomenology does not devalue the achievements of the positive sciences but wants to embed them in

40. A certain “missionary” impetus can also already be found in his article in *Logos* from 1911, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science”. And in a certain sense already the *Logical Investigations* make the claim for a radical reform of psychology, and from there the totality of sciences.

41. Cfr. the famous Galilei-paragraph in the *Crisis* (§ 9) for a detailed reconstruction of this process.

42. Cfr. *Krisis*, p. 508; *Crisis*, p. 389. The statement “The dream is over” is rather a quote Husserl puts into the mouth of his opponents, in which he ironically formulates the absolute antithesis of his own position. Cfr. also Carr’s interpretation of this quote in his translator’s introduction, *Crisis*, XXX f. as well as the footnote 21 on p. XXXI.

an all-embracing scientific endeavor. Again, what does Husserl mean with life-world?⁴³ When he asserts that the sciences live in a world of abstraction, the crux is that they do not live in the world as it is found in “ordinary” life. They live in the world of science that is opposed to the *pre-scientific* world. The life-world is hence the world of the pre-scientific attitude. It is nothing but the world the natural attitude has as its correlate. It is the subjective-relative world of *dóxa* as opposed to the world of *epistéme*. Not only is this world always already “leaped over” by modern science, it has never precisely *in* its pre-scientific character been the theme of a scientific endeavor. However, the pre-scientific life-world is the basis of all human actions, natural *or* scientific.

Hence, it is the task of phenomenological reflection first of all to thematize this life-world, i.e., to re-cover it by uncovering the abstractive layers that have become laid over it. Husserl calls for a “reduction to the life-world”. One must understand this as a reduction in the specific sense of an “opening up” because the life-world has been forgotten by modern man in striving for a scientific mastery of the world. Strictly speaking, one cannot call this forgetfulness, since it never was thematized in the first place. It has the character of a “primal doxa”.

Paradoxically, one must carry out this reducing to the pre-scientific world as a scientific endeavor aiming at a universal “ontology of the life-world”⁴⁴. As such it would be carried out in the natural attitude. The natural attitude has been understood as a lower form of the transcendental attitude and can only “artificially” be restituted. This could be interpreted as contradicting Husserl’s own intentions in that he seems to neglect the meaning of the

43. The answer which will be given in the following is but one reading of Husserl’s concept of the life-world. As Claesges has shown, several concepts have gone into the forming of this notion. Here, I will focus on the pre-scientific aspect of it. Cfr. U. CLAESGES, “Zweideutigkeiten in Husserls Lebenswelt-Begriffs”, (*op.cit.*); as well as R. BOEHM, “Husserls drei Thesen über die Lebenswelt” in: E. STRÖKER (ed.), *Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft in der Philosophie Edmund Husserls*, Frankfurt, 1979, pp. 23-31.

44 Cfr. *Crisis*, § 51.

reduction. However, one has to insist that first seeing the life-world as such (“stripped” of idealizations) owes to a reduction. This “life-world reduction” reduces to the world before any idealizations and reveals the sphere of basic life that is the “presupposition”⁴⁵ of any activity⁴⁶.

The idea of an ontology of the life-world has been one of the most fruitful ideas in the late Husserl. What this ontology consists of and how it is to be carried out, shall not be discussed here. However, this discipline is important in our context, because it also yields a way into the transcendental once we realize that the life-world is a product of constitution. Indeed, this concrete world of the natural attitude cannot come into view if we do not practice a universal epoché from this natural attitude in order to thematize it.

45 Cfr. *Krisis*, p. 105; *Crisis*, p. 103.

46. Whereas it is known that Husserl in trying to reveal this natural life-world is influenced by Avenarius' notion of the “*natürliche Weltbegriff*”, it is historically interesting to mention that in a treatment of Avenarius' philosophy, the philosopher Leopold ZIEGLER, in his essay “Ueber einige Begriffe der ‘Philosophie der reinen Erfahrung’” (*On some notions of ‘philosophy of pure experience’*), in: *Logos* II, 1911/12, Heft 3, pp. 316-349, uses precisely the term “reduction” to characterize the movement necessary to uncover this “world”: “However, the plan of an intentionally ahistorical comportment to the world is not easily carried through. A brief reflection must teach the philosopher the impossibility to just simply think about the *world*. For what is the world? [...] All of the sudden a task of its own difficulty arises before the thinker. That is, to lead the “world” back [*zurückführen*] to such simplified basic notions, so that it in its totality becomes manageable [*handlich*] to thought, manageable [*handhablich*] for human spirit. On this first reduction, which necessarily has to be carried through in the development of any philosophy, depends not only its further conception [*Durchbildung*], its organization; rather, it remains also guiding [*bestimmend*] for the relationship and the contradiction of schools and directions, which history enumerates. The simplification, violent as well as unavoidable, of the “all and everything” to original, complimenting notions such as infinite and finite, moving and resting, becoming and being, one and many, temporal and eternal, being-for-itself and being-for-us, conscious and unconscious, body and soul, thinking and being, state of affairs [*Zustand*] and object [*Gegenstand*] — this simplification shows to the conaaisseur [*Kenner*] a multitude of systematic accounts and historical philosophemes, which in all parts are governed by the reduction of beginnings. Perhaps no thinker but Avenarius has so much tried to make the effort, as theoretically unsuspectingly as possible, to break reality down into a number of last basic notions” (pp. 316 f., my translation).

We *need* the reduction to uncover the sphere of transcendental subjectivity that constitutes this world as the world of the natural attitude, from which any activity takes its stand. Only by understanding the transcendental as constituting can we have access to the world in its base-function, i.e., as pre-philosophical life-world. In other words, the reduction must even go beyond the philosophical standpoint and the phenomenologist has to make his or her way back into the natural attitude, however without forgetting its transcendental “origin”. Husserl has called this reverse movement “enworlding”.

It is only through a universal epoché that we can attain a full notion of the correlational relationship between world and transcendental subjectivity. As Kern puts it: “only the ontological way hence grasps subjectivity really as transcendental”⁴⁷. Only an ontology of the life-world attains a view of the world in its universal dimensions. After all, also the world of the scientist is a “world,” even though it depends upon its un-thematic basis, the life-world. The world is thus a universal foundation. The relativity of multiple interests and different home-worlds rests upon transcendental life as the absolute ground.

Since transcendental subjectivity and life-world are correlates in the framework of constitution, gaining a full vision of either one *includes* the possibility of understanding the other; one *cannot* go without the other. Only from the standpoint of an ontology of the life-world can one practice the transcendental reduction. Likewise, only through a full analysis of the latter in its broadest dimensions can we understand the world as the product of constitution and thus as what it ultimately is: a *historic* world of *life* with its genesis and, as the region of all regions, a ground on which historic “subjectivities” have developed and can ever develop. Only from this perspective can phenomenology ultimately thematize the *transcendental* problem of history. It then becomes understandable why Husserl insists that the reduction in no way means an impoverishment or a “reducing” of the world to some singular trans-

47. KERN, *op. cit.*, p. 344 (my translation).

cidental ego. In fact, the reduction opens up a view on the world by transcending the naiveté of the natural attitude to a universal standpoint.

Furthermore, the discovery of the genetic dimension of constitution reveals the life-world to be not only historical but also to have its own “laws of genesis”. Tracing back the history of the life-world in its decisive developmental steps —its primal institutings— reveals these as developments on the way to transcendental phenomenology itself. The sketch of phenomenological “archeology” Husserl performs in the first part of the *Crisis* in going back to the first rudimentary forms of mathematization in ancient Greece is nothing but a genetic reconstruction of how science has come about in a certain historical situation. It is a reconstruction of how it has arisen from the pre-philosophical life-world through a radically new idea, the mathematization of nature. But there is also a “progressive” side to historical analysis. Husserl’s reconstruction of the history of philosophy to modernity is also an effort to trace primal institutings by interpreting this history as coming ever closer to the discovery of transcendental subjectivity until it —in this very much like Hegel— reaches its decisive breakthrough in phenomenology. However, history does not stop but rather proceeds from here in a new style. Thus, by interpreting history as a critical history of ideas⁴⁸ having a teleological development, it culminates in the reduction as the way into a transcendental reconstruction of the historic life-world.

To sum up, I have presented the three major ways into phenomenology systematically. Although Husserl never achieved a systematic account of these ways, he was convinced that there in fact was an underlying systematics. In this sense, there is ultimately but one way which may have its different procedures or variations, the way through the life-world. I shall end this section with a self-critical quote, in one of Husserl’s last manuscripts from 1937:

48. This is the title of the first part of the lecture course on *Erste Philosophie*.

I have drafted different introductions into transcendental-phenomenological philosophy ... We shall see that this life-world (taken omni-temporally) is nothing but the historic world. From here, it becomes conceivable that a complete systematic introduction into phenomenology begins and is to be carried through as a universal historic problem. If one introduces the epoché without the historic framing, then the problem of the life-world, i.e., of universal history, still lingers. The introduction in *Ideas* does in fact retain its right, but I now consider the historical way to be more principal and systematic⁴⁹.

3. CONCLUSION AND CRITIQUE: THE REDUCTION BETWEEN EGO AND LIFE-WORLD

In many characterizations and metaphors Husserl tried to determine what he meant by the reduction. His sometimes emphatic or even ceremonious formulations make it clear that he has more in mind than just solving a specific epistemological problem. Or rather, the epistemological problem in its full dimensions is of such importance that solving it is comparable to a full conversion of humankind. However literally these comparisons are to be understood, Husserl makes it clear in many letters in the last decade of his life that he considers the reduction his greatest discovery and he is convinced that it is also the most difficult part of his philosophy, and that “the reduction” is much more than a purely methodical device. At times it becomes a synonym for the essence of his philosophy. Let us look at the consequences to which this method leads.

The discussion of the ways into the reduction has shown that there are *two* focal points the reduction leads to: the life-world as a constitutional product of the full scope of the transcendental, on the

49. *Hua* XXIX, pp. 425 f. (my translation).

one hand, and the ego that, as the unparticipating observer of transcendental life, is the basis for apodictic evidence, on the other. What are Husserl's intentions in focusing on these two phenomena?

Let us start with the ego of the phenomenologist. Establishing the observer of transcendental life in the very process of constituting the world places the philosopher in the position of accounting for this transcendental life. This agency is always and in the last instance "my own" life. Accounting for it is more than an epistemological task. Since the phenomenological scientist has to legitimate her actions, she is guided by a thematic "baseline," responsibility. Accounting for one's own deepest "self" is more than just performing another scientific "job"; it is a task of the highest responsibility. The "dignity" of the philosopher's activity stems from his duty to act responsibly as a researcher. In fact, "acting rightfully" in doing philosophy is so much an ethical issue that one cannot conceive of philosophy as being only a "job." It is rather a "vocation". In this Husserl makes use of the German *Beruf* (job) as derived from *Berufung* (vocation)⁵⁰. Being a "good philosopher" is an ethical ideal. This does not mean that everyone ought to become a philosopher. However, becoming one means not only achieving the highest dignity humanly possible but also living humanness, which consists in rationality, to the fullest. Becoming a philosopher as the one who has performed the reduction and discovered absolute life "within" him- or herself, means fulfilling a "self-forming of the ego through absolute reflection to the absolutely genuine human"⁵¹.

Becoming a philosopher as an ideal task equals that of justifying all of one's actions and taking responsibility for them. This

50. Cfr. *Hua* XXIX, p. 353 (my translation): "Is vocation [*Berufung*] an empty word? Has a philosopher ever [...] been a 'genuine' philosopher without the demonism of vocationness? Is philosophy to the genuine philosopher as a random so-called life-occupation [*Lebensberuf*], is it for him not rather fate, which for him has decided over being and non-being?"

51. "Selbstgestaltung des Ich durch absolute Reflexion zum absolut echten Menschen" (A V 5/16b).

lies within the teleology of human (rational) faculties. If practical rationality is a question of *freedom*, then the philosopher's actions in her "phenomenologizing" activity are a genuine pursuit of freedom. Moreover, she is even more "free" since she has become aware of this freedom as being a full instantiation of rationality discovered in leaving the boundaries of the natural attitude.

Yet, the transcendental life I discover within myself through the reduction is more than *my own* life. The reduction teaches precisely that transcendental achievements never belong only to me; the world is never a product of my activity alone but of a transcendental intersubjectivity. Subjectivity becomes formed only in terms of others, the ones before me and after me, the ones I have never encountered and never will encounter, etc. Thus, the reduction gives access to transcendental life as such, breaking the spell of solipsism in opening a path to the other. In and through transcendental intersubjectivity we are bound together in one spiritual totality. As such, Husserl called the philosophers in the *Crisis* the "functionaries of mankind". They can assume this function insofar as taking over responsibility for myself directly leads to all the others as united in the transcendental totality of monads. The philosopher has thus the *double* task. On the one hand he or she interprets the life of humankind in an "absolute" view. The philosopher in his activity of discovering the truth has to give account (*lógon didónai*) for the actions of mankind in their relative ways of life and in the multitude of worlds lived in. Giving a description of this life in this world is the first step to judging human actions. Thus, Husserl states programmatically in *Cartesian Meditations*, "phenomenological explication does nothing but explicate the sense this world has for us all, prior to any philosophizing, and obviously gets solely from our experience—a sense which philosophy can uncover but never alter..."⁵².

On the other hand, the philosopher's role is that of calling mankind back to its teleological path. This is the role that the philosopher and citizen Husserl took up in the *Crisis* at a time in

52. *Cartesianische Meditationen*, p. 177; after *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 151.

which not only science had deviated from the path designated but a whole nation had gone astray, being caught up in a frenzy of nationalism and racism. Husserl's calling for a reform of science in the light of the political upheaval in Nazi-Germany might seem very naive. However, one must bear in mind what the role of science was to Husserl. Scientific and ultimately philosophical activity are the highest realizations of human life. In this "emphatic" sense the philosopher's role might well be described with Nietzsche as a "doctor of culture". A "crisis" can also be understood in medical terms as the crest of a sickness. Thus, the philosopher cannot directly intervene in the course of history —the sense of the world is one she can "never" alter. Rather, she can only react to a disease that has already taken its course; i.e., she has the duty to point out where and why, from which motives, this deviation from the "good" path has occurred and show possible ways out of the crisis.

However, despite the emphasis on the philosopher's role of standing for humanity, Husserl insists on the "uniqueness" and "personal indeclinability"⁵³ of the philosophizing ego. For all of his emphasis upon intersubjectivity, the agent can never be "reduced" to an irrelevant mode within an inter-monadic totality:

"The "I" that I attain in the epoché, which would be the same as the "ego" within a critical reinterpretation and correction of the Cartesian conception, is actually called "I" only by equivocation —though it is an essential equivocation since, when I name it in reflection, I can say nothing other than: it is I who practice the epoché, I who interrogate, as phenomenon, the world which is now valid for me according to its being and being-such, with all its human beings, of whom I am so fully conscious; it is I who stand above all natural existence that has meaning for me, who am the ego-pole of this transcendental life, in which, at first, the

53. *Krisis*, p. 188; after *Crisis*, pp. 184 f.

world has meaning for me purely as world; it is I who, taken in full concreteness, encompass all that”⁵⁴.

Husserl’s philosophy remains a critical transcendental philosophy that can never do without an absolute ego as foundation and starting point of all reflection. Even in a critical reinterpretation of the Cartesian conception it is precisely this “Cartesianistic” motif that must never be given up. It is connected to the idea that there is an apodictic foundation, an “Archimedean point” that provides a final foundation in the evidence of the *ego’s cogito*⁵⁵. The consequence of the reduction pursued thus far leads to a limited validation of the “Cartesian” Husserl. It is from this approach only that he can interpret the role of the philosopher in the whole of cultural activity of mankind. In order to secure this “cultural-philosophical” implication and in order to enable the philosopher to be more than a citizen of an ivory tower, Husserl “needs” Cartesianism.

Yet, on the other side of the balances, there is the issue of the life-world, which becomes increasingly important to Husserl. Critics have interpreted Husserl’s turning to the pre-scientific world as a “departure from Cartesianism”⁵⁶. One can summarize the arguments for this interpretation essentially in that Husserl realized that he could not lay an apodictic foundation in the Ego. Therefore, he (more or less consciously) abandoned this project and instead turned to the life-world as the actual working field of phenomenology. Performing an “ontology of the life-world” is the true task for phenomenology. In order to do this, one does not need a Cartesian reduction to a transcendental consciousness. Thus, the

54. *Krisis*, p. 188; after *Crisis*, p. 184.

55. Mertens has devoted the second half of his above mentioned study to showing that Husserl in his last years has essentially given up this ideal of an ultimate founding and merges both skeptic and foundational motifs in his concept of verification (*Bewährung*). However, it seems to me problematic to apply this concept, which has its systematic locus in the phenomenon of horizons (and their presumtivity), to that of foundationalism.

56. Cfr. LANDGREBE, “Departure from Cartesianism”, in L. LANDGREBE, *The Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl*, ed. with an introduction by D. Welton, Ithaca / London, 1981, pp. 66-121.

departure has already occurred, as it were behind Husserl's back, the moment he turned to the life-world as his primary field of interest. This reading of Husserl's late philosophy has been very dominant in the first decades after Husserl's death and has clearly been influenced by Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity. Moreover, it has been insinuated that Heidegger influenced Husserl in his sketch of a life-world ontology. The fact that this ontology was never worked out in detail and only hinted at in the *Crisis* was taken as an implicit proof that the problem of the life-world was almost an afterthought. It was an idea hinted at rather than clearly seen in view of its consequences, namely, that it would lead to an abandoning of his transcendental project.

However, in the past three decades a good deal of manuscript material from Husserl's *Nachlass* has been published showing that a "theory of world apperception"⁵⁷, is in fact not only worked out in great detail; it has also become clear that Husserl had been working on a life-world interpretation already going back to the second decade of the 20th century. Since this material has become available, the "departure"-thesis has become highly problematic and there is consensus among scholars that Husserl ultimately was not able to "achieve" this last step. More importantly it could never have been his intention to leave Cartesianism behind.

As has been shown, transcendental and ontological analysis compliment each other. Therefore, the reduction is needed in order to access this life-world, since in all "normal" pursuit of life it is un-thematic. It *remains* all the more un-thematized in modern science, which by abstracting from the life-world is nevertheless bound to it unknowingly. Thematizing the life-world, as that which is always un-thematized in the natural attitude, means already having left the natural attitude. Nevertheless, this does not mean *doing away* with it. To the contrary, it remains the basic form of life (the philosopher *remains* a citizen, a father, a mother etc.).

57. This is the title of section A VII of the *Nachlass* in the Husserl-Archives in Leuven. It contains 31 convolutes of manuscripts mainly from the 20ies and 30ies.

From the transcendental standpoint one understands the natural attitude as a “lower” attitude, or which says the same, the natural attitude is already transcendental, yet without knowing it.

For an ontology of the life-world, this entails: If Husserl speaks of “restituting”⁵⁸ the natural attitude in order to gain a standpoint to analyze the life-world, this cannot mean that we, the analyzing philosophers, are to “forget” the standpoint gained in the reduction. Going back into the old attitude, resuscitating the old naïveté, is impossible. Rather, this step is to be understood as a quasi-imaginary move: I pretend to go back into the “old” attitude and from the description of life-world can proceed in describing how life in the natural attitude was like before I even became aware of it. We can understand “restitution” in this context as “reconstruction” of something that has been “un-built” in transcendental analysis. This is why performing the reduction in no way stands in contradiction with the task of a life-world ontology.

Yet, although this discipline is only “enabled” by the transcendental turn, this ontology soon takes on its own character. Describing the world from its most primitive elements over first formations of communal life to higher-order personalities and ending up finally in cultures, home-worlds, alien-worlds is a gigantic field of research. The rich methodical instruments Husserl has developed in his development of the genetic method give him the tools needed to pursue this task. In fact, this method takes on the character of a hermeneutics of the life-world. It is a description of how the world we live in has come to be and how it functions. The term “hermeneutics” —which Husserl would not have used in *this* context— is designated to mean precisely this. It is rather a descriptive than a normative discipline. In his analyses of Greek culture and philosophy, the “genetic” is oftentimes undistinguishable from factual-historical analyses⁵⁹. It is thus not sur-

58 Cfr. *Krisis*, p. 176.

59. Which has caused Husserl to be charged with “Eurocentrism”. This discussion cannot be reiterated here, but what can “save” Husserl from these charges to a certain extent is his methodic approach in which he explicitly does not want to give a factual-historical account but rather one of “laws of genesis”. In

prising that sociology, political theory, history, and pedagogy have taken up Husserl's ideas on the life-world. Furthermore, it cannot be accidental that the term "*Lebenswelt*" has become a very common notion that nowadays has little to do with its origin. The very "mundaneity" of the problem of the world of life explains its remoteness from transcendental questions.

Thus, the interpretation presented here attempts to overcome the common assertion that there is a "contradiction" between Husserl's Cartesian position and his account of the life-world. I have tried to show that a philosophical thematization of the life-world is not possible without the former. At the same time, I have insisted that Husserl's Cartesian account of the subject and his life-world ontology present *two distinct* and in a sense *separate programs*. They are projects Husserl pursues with different aims. Whereas the "Cartesian Husserl" pursues a path of scientific grounding and foundationalism, the "life-world Husserl" is interested in what can be called a hermeneutics of the world of everyday life. Both projects are set squarely against each other *not* in the sense that they contradict or even "annul" each other, but in that they pursue two different agendas. In fact, one can pursue one while completely neglecting the other. One *can* pursue a "theory" of the life-world without at all being interested in constitutional problems. Likewise, one can immerse oneself in transcendental matters in the tradition of transcendental philosophy since Kant and German Idealism, and fruitfully utilize Husserl's contributions to transcendental theories.⁶⁰ Due to the fundamental criticisms of reason and rationality in this century in the wake of critics of enlighten-

his late text on "Teleology in the History of Philosophy" he even calls this reconstructive reading an "interpretation": "But more importantly we have to counter the objection that the position put forth here does not confirm [*feststellen*] purely historical facts, but that it is an interpretation, i.e., a sort of substruction of facts for which all testimonies are lacking" (*Hua* XXIX, p. 396, my translation).

60. One example of this is to be found in K. DÜSING, *Selbstbewußtseinsmodelle. Moderne Kritiken und systematische Entwürfe zur konkreten Subjektivität*, Munich, 1997, where he takes up Husserl as one systematic voice in a theory of a transcendental theory of self-consciousness. Cfr. esp. 113-16.

ment, it is understandable why this path has been of less interest. This, however, can not be a reason to disregard this aspect of Husserl. In fact, neglecting the Cartesian Husserl leads to misunderstandings. These disregard the fact that Husserl never even came close to considering transcendental phenomenology and the idea(l) of rigorous science a dream, let alone a dream that could come to an end.

This leads, however, to the critique I would like to formulate in conclusion. Husserl *failed to combine* these two major aspects of his philosophical endeavor. There is *neither* just the Cartesian or the life-world Husserl. There is of systematic necessity both. However, there cannot be a *systematic principle* uniting both, since formulating such a principle would make the problematic step of considering one of the two projects as absolute. The result of valorizing one is a devaluation of the other. This consequence is due to the Janus head of the phenomenological reduction.

The reduction thus has the *double* meaning of calling humanity to its utmost possibilities of reason, to the “true” and “genuine” human being in one’s self, on the one hand. On the other, it is to open up a full and all-embracing understanding of the world we live in, including ourselves as dwellers in this world of interests and distinct activities. However, there remains the conflict of *absolute* humanity and *relative* life pursuit, or, to say it in Husserl’s famous formulation, we are left with the *paradox of human subjectivity*, the resolving of which nobody else can decide but history itself in which reason unfolds teleologically—or where there is always the threat that it disperses and even becomes lost. However, performing the phenomenological reduction to Husserl is nothing but the constant attempt to “come to reason,” although there might be factual hindrances on the way to this ideal. One can say that with the reduction Husserl has touched upon the fundamental issue of freedom, the freedom to be oneself, or which is to say the same, the freedom to open oneself to reason as the true meaning of humanness. The possibility of performing the pheno-

SEBASTIAN LUFT

menological reduction would thus be identical with the extent to which freedom is possible⁶¹.

Sebastian Luft
Department of Philosophy
Marquette University
Milwaukee WI 53201-1881
USA
shluft@emory.edu

61. Cfr. H.-L. VAN BREDA: "Seine Freiheit wiederzugewinnen heißt also, sich von der Welt frei machen oder wenigstens ihre autonome Quelle, das transzendente Ego, wiederfinden. Diese Entdeckung ist bekanntlich nach Husserl nur durch die transzendente Reduktion möglich" ("Husserl und das Problem der Freiheit", in: H. NOACK, ed., *Husserl*, Darmstadt, 1973, pp. 277-281, here 281).