

# SUBJECT AND OBJECT, INNER AND OUTER: PHENOMENOLOGY'S OVERCOMING OF THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PICTURE

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**What is the phenomenological movement's place in philosophy? How does it relate to the vastly discussed questions pertaining to modern philosophical thinking? In this essay, I will give a presentation of some important contributions made by Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty to shed light on these and other questions concerning the nature of phenomenology. At the same I hope to exhibit the relevance of this thinking, as well as some main achievements that can inform contemporary discussions.**

Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are usually (and rightly so) portrayed as individual philosophers with quite diverse projects, arguments and philosophical vocabulary. But although there doubtlessly are differences and disagreements in the writings of these three thinkers (additionally in the various interpretations of them), there are also important similarities in themes and arguments that may appear illuminating when viewed in light of each other. My concern in this essay is thus not so much a comparative study of points of difference, but rather how central fields of research are illuminated by their respective phenomenological expositions and analyses. My emphasis will thus be on crucial ideas and insights, and this will hopefully serve as a way of portraying a phenomenological approach (in general) to questions in philosophy and demonstrating its vitality and contemporary relevance. Questions asked in this essay will henceforth not be in the form of "Who was right,

Husserl or Heidegger?" but rather: "How do insights from Husserl and Heidegger help us understand various phenomena?" With this in mind I also hope to show how phenomenology overcomes what Charles Taylor has called "the epistemological picture" – that of mediational epistemology, that sets up a certain distinction between inside and outside, and, roughly portrayed, claims that we only know the world (outside) through (some sort of) inner mediating elements like "ideas" or "beliefs" which provides the (alleged) function of "representations" (Taylor 2005:26). These representations would typically be portrayed as crucial to the assumed "relation" between two separately viewed relata: mind and world, or subject and object.

## I. Intentionality and the inner/outer distinction

A concept of decisive importance in Husserl's phenomenology is that of *intentionality*. In the Second Cartesian Meditation Husserl writes:

intentionality signifies nothing else than this universal fundamental property of consciousness: to be consciousness of something: as a *cogito* [intentional act], to bear within itself its *cogitatum* [intentional object]. (Husserl 1982:33)

Paying attention to this "fundamental property" (*allgemeine Grundeigenschaft*), consciousness is revealed not as an inner self-enclosed sphere with representations of an external world. On the contrary, consciousness is according to its essential structure always together with objects and must thus be defined as a noetic-noematic correlation, that is, in terms of an intrinsic *duality*. As Gurwitsch puts it in contemporary terms, we could say that relatedness

to essentially non-mental entities is the very nature of mental states (Gurwitsch 1984:65). In light of this we see how the Cartesian *dualism* leads astray to insolvable aporias. The great question of traditional epistemology is thence found to be misleading; namely how the subject filled with her inner representations, knows the external world and can be certain of its objective existence.<sup>1</sup>

As a consequence of Husserl's notion of intentionality, consciousness cannot be conceived as a self-sufficient and self-enclosed domain of interiority, a thing related (casually or otherwise) to other external things. According to the intentionality of consciousness, perception always involves us being in direct contact with the perceived world, contrary to representational views where objective reference only succeeds by means of a mediating substitute of reality. (At this point, I regard Husserl as much closer to the existential phenomenology in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty than many commentators have suggested.)<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, experiences are always presentational in the sense that they present the world from a certain perspective and as having certain features (Zahavi 2003:19). However, this characteristic does not entail that consciousness and world are distinct entities that can be viewed in isolation.<sup>3</sup> According to Husserl, they are rather intimately interdependent and simultane-

ously existing. Given Husserl's notion of intentionality the divide between consciousness and world, between subjectivity and objectivity, between interiority and exteriority becomes highly questionable. As Zahavi formulates it, the subjective cannot properly be conceived as inside the mind, just as the objective cannot be conceived as outside (Zahavi 2008:372). Hence, it may be misleading to say that phenomenology is committed to a kind of externalism or internalism – alternatives based on the division of inner and outer (although the discussion so far would point more in direction of a kind of the former than the latter).

The proper work of phenomenological analysis is better understood as antecedent to any divide between interiority and exteriority, in unveiling the pre-theoretical ground

on which such idealizations find their respective basis and justification. It may thus be misleading to say with Sokolowski, that: "Phenomenology shows that the mind is a public thing. ... Everything is outside" (Sokolowski 2008:12)<sup>4</sup>, since the terms "thing" and "outside" do not accurately apply to the mind as disclosed in phenomenology. As Zahavi emphasizes: It is neither a container, nor a special place. Accordingly, the world could neither be said to be inside nor outside the mind (Zahavi 2008:372). These reflections however, bring us to the question: How are we as conscious subjects involved with and dependent on the equally dependent world? This question is the guiding clue in the explorations to which I now turn.

## II. Being-in-the-World and Embodiment

Because of consciousness' basic intentionality and correlation with the world, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the most important lesson from the transcendental reduction - (viewing objects *as* intended, in their signification and manifestation for subjectivity) - is the *impossibility* of a *complete* reduction and disengagement from the world (Merleau-Ponty 2014:xxvii). The same point is especially prominent in Heidegger's philosophical programme, and has vast implications on how he opposes the epistemological picture. Although an extensive exploration of Heidegger's thinking is impossible within the confines



of our inquiry we must not ignore the importance of essential Heideggerian conceptions in understanding both Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology in general. Especially, we may be reminded how his compound expression “Being-in-the-world” already indicates a unified phenomenon that must be seen as a whole, not as an aggregate of separate components. So, as was the case for Husserl, the alleged “problems” of epistemology or “metaphysics of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*)” do not arise when rejecting an inadequately exposed subject-object-relation. Heidegger stresses that when something is grasped, Dasein does not first go “*outside of the inner sphere in which it is initially encapsulated,*” rather, in its primary kind of being, it is always already “outside” (*draußen*). And even in this “being outside” together with objects, Dasein is “inside” (*drinnen*), that is, it exists as the being-in-the-world, which knows. “Knowing (*Erkennen*) is a mode of Dasein which is founded in Being-in-the-world” (Heidegger 1996:49, 55, 58). Here, we clearly see how Heidegger rejects the inner/outer distinction – a step which has tremendous impact on the whole philosophical programme.

Moreover, Heidegger’s notion of “*Zuhandenheit*” –

“the equipment’s (*Zeuge*) kind of being in which it reveals itself by itself” (1996:65, translation modified) as appropriate to certain practical roles – provides a powerful argument against prominent notions belonging to the epistemological picture. In fact, the very idea of an inner zone representing the external is unintelligible to practical activity in handling things, because understanding things as equipment on the background of a familiar relevance context (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) cannot be situated “within” the engaged agent in terms of representations; it is in the interaction or lived capacity itself and cannot be separated from it (Taylor 2005:38) – this engaged agency is our direct contact with the world.<sup>5</sup> As Brandom notes, to grasp an object as ready-to-hand is to achieve practical mastery of its various assignments, to respond appropriately to it according to what it is ready-to-hand for (Brandom 2007:220). And importantly, this understanding is not a derivative phenomenon, but rather the central feature of human experience. Hence, contrary to many philosophers within the tradition subscribing to the epistemological picture, Heidegger stresses the agent as engaged and embedded in a form of life that forms the surrounding world of the agent, that is, experience of the world only makes sense against this background of being-in-the-world as engaged agents with a certain form of life – a sense that others abstaining from the engaged perspective (e.g. dualism and mechanism) have to naïvely presuppose (Taylor 1993). In Heidegger’s words:

The total relevance context itself ... ultimately leads back to a what-for (*Wozu*) which no longer has relevance, which itself is not ... a being of the ready-to-hand, but ... whose being is defined as Being-in-the-world ... The for-the-sake-of-which (*Worum-willen*) always concerns the being of Dasein ... (Heidegger 1996:78 translation modified)

This kind of engaged agency, we may add, is typically *embodied* agency. The phenomenological explication of embodiment, however, is often associated with Merleau-Ponty. Nonetheless we will start by briefly exposing the background for embodiment in Husserl.

According to Husserl, the lived bodily organism (*körperlicher Leib*) plays a central role in the structure of intentionality.<sup>6</sup> Spatial objects are perceptually constituted – that is, they appear with a certain signification - with intentional relatedness to my body as functioning perceptually and as moving in orientation from any “here” to “there”. The role of movement and kinesthetic experience is thus of crucial importance in perceptual constitution, namely the fact that I can convert any “there” to a “here” and occupy

any spatial locus with my organism (Husserl 1982:116). However, I cannot change my perspective with respect to my body as I can with spatial objects. Hence, every point of view is an embodied point of view, and the body is characterized as the perspectival zero point (“here”) from which all perception of spatial objects is oriented. In other words, the body is my perspective on the world, that is, rather than being simply a perspectively given object, the body is precisely that which allows me to perceive objects perspectively. Moreover, every perception is in a way “transcending” in that it co-intends or anticipates more in the perspectival appearance than is actually present from the “actual” bodily point of view (Husserl 1982:122). With these thoughts in mind let us then turn to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of body as inspired from both Husserl and Heidegger.

Quite like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty sees the body as crucial to the notion of intentionality. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is the “*vehicle of being in the world*” – the physical and inter-human world that I am engaged in.<sup>7</sup> “[F]or a living being, having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein” (Merleau-Ponty 2014:84). Thus, as Heidegger emphasized our sense-making in coping with the ready-to-hand, Merleau-Ponty highlights and specifies the significances connected to our embodied existence in the world, e.g. that our perceptual field is shaped in bodily meaningful terms of up and down, near and far, reachable and unattainable etc. It is in this way that the body shapes our being in the world, that the body structures our experience (Taylor 2005:46). Further, echoing Husserl’s description of the body as the perspectival zero point of perception, Merleau-Ponty views the body as “*the pivot of the world*” toward which every object “*turns its face*” and through which I am conscious of the world (Merleau-Ponty 2014:84). The body as intentional and perceptual medium hence yields the necessary interconnection of subject and world. Merleau-Ponty further argues that I know the unity of the object and the fact that it has several sides because of my body’s mobility and bodily experience - the fact that I as embodied subject can move around it and see it from different positions (2014:84, 209). Similar to Husserl’s analysis, Merleau-Ponty thus argues that the body is actually “*the things*’

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*condition of possibility*” (Merleau-Ponty 1964:173).

But how are these thoughts related to the notion of consciousness? Merleau-Ponty suggests, one should follow Husserl in the notion of consciousness as an “I can” (Husserl 1982:97), that consciousness is being toward things “*through the intermediary of the body*” (Merleau-Ponty 2014:140). Consciousness is therefore not defined as a being-for-itself, in essence detachable from the world, but as *being in the world*, and the body in turn as *the vehicle of being in the world*. As embodied being in the world or existence, consciousness ultimately takes form in the body, as perceptual consciousness and the subject of behaviour.

From all this we understand how Merleau-Ponty too dissolves the inner/outer distinction; particularly when he underlines how “*I am my body*” characterized as “*the natural subject*” being “*the subject of perception*” and “*tied to a certain world*” (2014:151, 213). That is, primarily as I am experiencing and acting I am not conscious of my body as an intentional object, I am neither *outside* nor *inside* my body. For as Gallagher puts it, I could not say, as

I can with other spatial objects, that my foot is closer to me than my hand (Gallagher and Zahavi 2010:143). Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty argues that the connection of subject and world is found in the (lived) organic body – which forms a system with the world analogous to how the heart is in the organism

(Merleau-Ponty 2014:209). Hence, the body-subject is not primarily a thing, but an intentional movement directed toward objects and it is this intrinsic intentionality of bodily movement (determined by a biological structure which enables and excludes basic bodily orientation) that confers the primary meaning of things in the world. The lived body is neither pure subject, nor mere object, neither inner, nor outer – such opposed categories can only be understood as derivative from something more basic (Mohanty 2006:75, Gallagher and Zahavi 2010:133, 135).

However, emphasizing the directness and spontaneity of bodily intentionality, Merleau-Ponty argues that when the intentional and unreflective bodily movement directs itself toward objects, it is not preceded by an internal representation of space causing the body to move (Merleau-Ponty 2014:113). For instance in catching a ball, my movements are not themselves given as intentional objects toward which I am consciously oriented, still

they are part of my intentional action in reaching out for the ball (Gallagher and Zahavi 2010:145). This is what Merleau-Ponty calls “motor intentionality,” which provides a manner of reaching the world in an original and direct way; which is not “a servant of consciousness, transporting the body to the point of space we imagine beforehand” (Merleau-Ponty 2014:140-141). What enables this is the “body schema” – the “immediately given invariant by which different motor tasks are instantly transposable”, that is also “an experience of my body in the world” (2014:142). Accordingly, the body schema is twofold: both as the system of processes that regulates posture and movement to serve intentional action and the pre-reflective lived awareness of one’s own body (Gallagher and Zahavi 2010:146). As Gallagher stresses, the body schema reflects a practical attunement of the body to its environment – which may be viewed as a “pre-reflective” function in the sense that it conditions and

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defines the possibilities of intentional consciousness, and that meaningful perceptual structures originate in such bodily performances - anterior to cognitive experience. The latter kind of experience concerns the “body image” – the body as object, or content of intentional consciousness, as representations or beliefs about the body (Gallagher 1995). Similar to Heidegger’s conception of the ready-to-hand, Merleau-Ponty has no need for representations in order that consciousness reaches objects: “My body has its world, or understands its world without having to go through ‘representations’” (Merleau-Ponty 2014:141). Consequently, there cannot be maintained a separation of consciousness and world: As embodied and thus situated consciousness one is intimately bound with “intentional threads” to the perceived world. “[T]here is no inner man”, one is always in and toward the world – it is in the world that one knows oneself (2014:xxiv). From this it becomes clearer to us how body and world

are necessarily interconnected, how subject and world are intelligible only in light of each other: as I exist embodied in the world, and the world only appears to me insofar as I exist embodied and perceiving.

Another important argument against the inner/outer distinction is found in the analysis of language, of the relationship between thought and speech. According to Merleau-Ponty, thought and expression (speech) is constituted simultaneously because speech is a genuine gesture performed by my showing and speaking body.<sup>8</sup> The idea of thoughts as something “inner” is a misconception based on the illusion of an inner life. We may come to think that thought is prior to speech, because we live in a world where speech is already instituted, that is, we can silently intend already available significations, which are the results of previous acts of expression, and recall already expressed thoughts. This alleged inner life is thus rather an “inner language”. Consequently, communication is primarily by means of speaking embodied subjects expressing the linguistic and intersubjective, common (spoken) world, not private representations or thoughts. For instance, when I perceive someone performing an angry gesture, I read the anger in the very gesture; I do not perceive it as somewhat hidden *behind* it, in an interior mental space. In other words, the gesture does not make me think of anger; rather it is the anger itself. Hence, Merleau-Ponty concludes: “Speech is a gesture, and its signification is a world” (Merleau-Ponty 2014:190).<sup>9</sup> As a result, also at this level of advanced linguistic activity, body intentionality takes the primary explanatory place over inner conscious representations, that is, bodily behaviour, expression and action are essential to understanding the phenomenon of consciousness.

### III. Realism, idealism, and Husserl’s transcendental idealism

We have already touched upon the major “problem” in the epistemological picture and how the quest for the existence of - and access to - the “external world,” from a phenomenological standpoint, becomes pseudo-problems based on fundamental misunderstandings such as the sharp divide between interiority and exteriority. But how can these phenomenologists make sense of notions such as objectivity? Was Husserl ultimately just another idealist? Regarding the latter our discussion so far seems to indicate that commentators such as Gadamer are correct in observing that Husserl’s phenomenology (and we may add Heidegger’s and Merleau-Ponty’s as well) does not intend to contribute anything to the traditional controversy

and opposition of realism and idealism, at least not in a straightforward way (Gadamer 1977). In the following I will try to explain why.

When rejecting fundamental elements in the epistemological picture, such as the inner/outer distinction and its subsequent idea of mediating representations, questions about the existence of (external) reality is shown to be incoherent and cannot simply be asked in the same way as in the Descartes-inspired tradition. In addition to rest upon a misconceived distinction between the interior and the exterior, to question the existence of the real world is for Husserl to confuse the natural attitude (in which the existence of reality is undeniable) with the philosophical-transcendental attitude (in which such a question does not make sense). The reason why this is a mistake, Husserl argues, has to do with the nature of the transcendental reduction: It enables one to direct one’s attention to constituents of experience and reality as phenomenon, that is, to reality’s signification and manifestation for subjectivity, not contents of natural reality *as such* (which is “parenthesized”). As Zahavi comments, it is a reflective move to the dimension of appearance and givenness – to its structure and condition of possibility - which, importantly, is also a move away from straightforward metaphysical or empirical investigation of objects (Zahavi 2010:671). Husserl does not mean, however, that what one thinks is a real world in the natural attitude, by means of philosophical reflection turns out to be a “mere” intentional-noematic correlate of consciousness. The transcendental reduction does not alter worldly being as such, nor does it disclose any new entities in some otherworldly mental realm, but it brings (real) phenomena to expression and studies the intentional structure in which worldly being is given in experience. If one should speak of a transformation, we can agree with Hall that this must be located in the phenomenologist’s shift of attention (Hall 1984:174). This I believe, is also the way to make sense of Husserl’s otherwise strange-sounding and rather dubious claim that the object of his “pure egology” as a science is independent of the existence or non-existence of the world (Husserl 1982:30). He is not claiming that the phenomenologically given could remain the same regardless of whether the world ceased to exist, rather it is a way of expressing the transcendental attention of the phenomenologist. Furthermore, this is the reason why it does not make sense either to affirm or to deny the existence of reality in phenomenology, that is, from within the transcendental reduction such a question is incoherent and cannot really be raised. According to Husserl, failing to see this distinction of attitudes made Descartes treat

transcendental subjectivity as a thing casually related to other things in the natural world, which made him the father of transcendental or metaphysical (philosophical) realism – a position Husserl calls absurd (*widersinnig*) (1982:24).

But how could one distinguish Husserl’s transcendental idealism from metaphysical realism and subjective idealism if he takes the intentional object (noema) to be the real object and rejects representations?

The core idea in this context is to be found in the interdependence of consciousness and world, which makes these positions something very far from what we find in Husserl. On the one hand, Husserl underlines the fact that reality (as such with the meaning it has) can only appear because of consciousness. A “view from nowhere” is not just unattainable; the very idea is unintelligible because any *view* is necessarily *perspectival* – i.e. from somewhere (Merleau-Ponty 2014:69). As Zahavi notes, the transcendental primacy of subjectivity is the basis on which to understand Husserl’s idealism. This makes it radically unlike any subjective idealism (e.g. Berkeley) that reduces worldly reality to mental content in taking the intentional object to be part of consciousness. But on the other hand the subject is not unaffected in its constitutive performance – this activity can only be understood adequately as an intersubjective enterprise between embodied agents situated in and experiencing a common and public world – the transcendental framework within which objects can appear (Zahavi 2003:69, 74). In short, in every appearance *something* appears, but it appears for *someone*, one cannot make a distinction between the world “for us” and the world “in itself”. According to Husserl, the “objective world” is essentially the world identical to everyone, in “*communalized intentionality*” - the “*intersubjective world*” as “*the ideal correlate of an intersubjective experience*” (Husserl 1982:107, 91). It is because of this that Merleau-Ponty credits Husserl with the important insight that the notion of objectivity ultimately derives from carnal intersubjectivity – a condition often forgotten (Merleau-Ponty 1964:173).<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, any talk of “real objects” or “mind-independent reality” refers to certain epistemic or conscious connections of validity and meaning – the only ground on

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which “objects” and “reality” acquire their meaning as such. It is in this sense that reality depends on subjectivity: a real object has significance only *qua* appearing, and its existence is connected to (the possibility of) appearance. This

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Heidegger also remarks, to say that reality (*Realität*) is grounded in the being of Dasein does not mean that what is real can only be what it is in itself when and so long as Dasein exists. If Dasein does not exist, there “is” neither “independence” nor “in itself” – such notions are not intelligible, nor unintelligible. *Then*, one can neither say that beings are, nor that they are not, but *now*, as long as there is understanding of being, we could say that *then* beings would continue to be (Heidegger 1996:196).

So philosophically (i.e. transcendently) speaking, Husserl can neither be an idealist nor a realist concerning the existence of reality. The noematic object of his transcendental idealism is in a certain sense “independent” of the existence of the natural (attitude towards the) world. But on the other hand, the background belief in the existence of the real world defines the natural standpoint, and thus makes up the broadest and most basic context of natural experience. It is not simply a belief among others to be objectivated and questioned, on the contrary it is presupposed in every natural examination of beliefs: “*More than anything else the being of the world is obvious*” (Husserl 1982:17). This undeniable fact however, belongs solely to the natural attitude and is thus an (unproblematic) empirical realism, contrary to metaphysical realism.<sup>11</sup> It is not a philosophical “thesis” belonging to a hypothetical “theory”. The aim is not of explaining, but of *describing*, so in the transcendental reduction, one may gain a philosophical *understanding* - not verification - of natural beliefs. The confusion starts when one transfers the natural question of fact (which would be answered affirmatively by anyone from within the natural attitude) to the transcendental domain and asks for a metaphysical (idealist or realist) answer – an illegitimate quest based on philosophical confusion (Hall 1984:186). Thus, Husserl’s transcendental idealism is “anything but metaphysics in the customary sense”, it “excludes all “metaphysical adventure (*metaphysischen*

*Abenteuer*)” all speculative excesses” (Husserl 1982:139).

Before leaving the subject, we should note that Heidegger also has some very instructive comments on the alleged “problem of knowledge” – which he calls the “scandal of philosophy” in *Sein und Zeit*. According to Heidegger, it rests on a fatal misconception in thinking that we are to know things “independent of” and “outside” of what is “in” consciousness, that is, the quest for a “proof” of “the external world” presupposes the ontologically confused distinction of “interior” and “exterior” (Heidegger 1996:190). One main reason why the problem arises is because one fails to appreciate that our primary way of being is that of practical encounter with things as equipment in our engaged form of life, and that being-in-the-world is a fundamental feature of Dasein. As Taylor points out, this includes that our grasp of things is not something that is in us, but lies in the way we are in contact with the world, and consequently that global doubt in the existence of things is in fact incoherent (Taylor 2005:38). Furthermore, Heidegger stresses that the quest for such a proof is illegitimate and Dasein, correctly understood, defies such a proof because it, in its being, already *is* what the proofs take necessary to demonstrate (as metaphysical realists do). Hence, the sceptic cannot be refuted, any more than reality can be “proved,” and insofar as the sceptic *is* one who denies being, he need not be refuted either (Heidegger 1996:190, 210). Heidegger thus views the whole way of asking questions from within the epistemological picture as fundamentally inadequate, which is one of the reasons why he actually rejects the whole vocabulary of “consciousness”, “subject” etc. – a step which Husserl and Merleau-Ponty did not take.

**IV. Conclusion**

Finally, I hope to have shown that there are many similar lines of thought and arguments in Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty that may appear with particular strength when viewed in light of each other. I also hope to have given an account of how phenomenology overcomes “the epistemological picture,” especially how it can criticize and illuminate the opposing conceptions of interiority/exteriority, subject/object and mind/world. Bringing phenomena to expression in descriptive analysis, central fields of research that phenomenology explores are intentionality, being-in-the-world and embodiment. Also, it discloses that consciousness is situated, and Merleau-Ponty in particular, following ideas in Husserl and Heidegger, argues that this entails consciousness’ embodiment. As a result, he exposes the lived body’s primacy in human experience and mea-

ning, and, as Heidegger stressed, our form of life as the essential background to any sense-making. In accentuating embodied subjectivity as correlated with the world, phenomenology understands subjectivity as the condition of possibility for objects to appear. This does not mean however, that we are never in contact with objectivity; rather how things appear is part of their objective being in the common, intersubjective world. There is no “mere appearance” and no reality “behind” the phenomena. The point made by phenomenology however, is that notions such as objectivity and reality are only intelligible in relation to human existence or subjectivity. This, as we considered, is the main reason why phenomenology is neither to be conceived as metaphysical realism, nor subjective idealism, but rather as beyond both. In conclusion then, we should appreciate phenomenologists’ reorientation of philosophy away from the epistemological picture, as dissolving and clarifying confusions and disclosing the often unnoticed background of any philosophical thinking.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We will come back to this alleged problem in section III.

<sup>2</sup> This naturally brings us to the controversy concerning Husserl's notion of noema, a technical and wide-embracing discussion in the commentary literature. Unfortunately, the confinements of this essay would not allow a thorough explication of and participation in that debate. I will therefore refrain from discussing the notion of noema explicitly in the main text; even so my treatment of Husserl does imply an adherence to one direction of interpretation rather than other(s). But although a wholly exhaustive line of argument is beyond the scope of this essay, let me briefly state some main reasons for adopting a view closer to authors as Gurwitsch, Sokolowski and Zahavi, rather than Føllesdal, Dreyfus and Hall: Firstly, my concern is to portray lines of thought in Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty that all overcome what I initially called the epistemological picture. If one takes the noema to be a distinct, mediating entity between us and objective reality (Hall 1984:173 and Føllesdal 1984:75) it seems rather unclear how (if ever) Husserl departed from that Cartesian picture with its underlying conceptions of interiority/exteriority. If one rather interprets the noema as the intentional object under certain aspects precisely *as* intended or meant (in any mode), (Gurwitsch 1984:63) one can maintain that intentionality is a fundamental feature of consciousness, not just a (referential) feature of its representational meanings. Hence, that phenomenology is concerned with worldly objects (as intended), not merely ideal mental representational meanings - the view of the other interpreters (Zahavi 2003:59). Thus noema are better to be understood as the objective correlates of intentionality, viewed from the transcendental attitude, not as a separate-reified epistemic entity in virtue of which consciousness refers to ontologically different real objects. Secondly, as Sokolowski points out (Sokolowski 2008:194), the representational view of the noema may not seem to take into account the autonomous character of the transcendental reduction as "the radical and universal" *Fundamentalmethode* (Husserl 1982:21) which also encompasses reflection on meaning - an activity of the natural attitude. Thirdly, the reduction has a descriptive, not explanatory purpose - carried out by shifting attention to the intentional correlation. However, this does not disclose any new entities, but simply views

the intended object in a new non-natural way (Drummond 2003:74).

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with this, Husserl would also reject any identity theory that identifies the mind with the brain and takes the brain to be a self-contained organ that is understood in isolation from its embodied environment and world.

<sup>4</sup> Although Sokolowski may have pedagogical intentions with these statements, our present discussion advocates that he is not entirely successful.

<sup>5</sup> This is why commentators, such as Charles Taylor, call it a "knowing how" rather than "knowing that".

<sup>6</sup> This way of understanding the body, as itself subject of experiencing and acting, as essential in structuring our experience, and not only experienced and acted upon as a mere object, is a phenomenological distinction suppressed in the epistemological picture whether in Descartes' mind-body dualism or more recent reductive-physicalist theories that take the brain (or functionalists' allegedly right kind of "hardware") to be a self-sufficient experiencing organ (Gallagher and Zahavi 2010:130, 136).

<sup>7</sup> As the translator of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald Landes, also observes, the term "being in the world" obviously bears Heideggerian connotations and must therefore be understood as a technical term in this sense. Since Merleau-Ponty does not use hyphens (as Heidegger does) I have let them out too when discussing Merleau-Ponty.

<sup>8</sup> In the context of the *speaking body*, one may for instance point out how the structure of the jaw along with subtle phonetic muscles enables the important development of vocal language (Gallagher and Zahavi 2010:133).

<sup>9</sup> One can clearly see parallels with Wittgenstein's argument against private language and Merleau-Ponty's above line of reasoning.

However interesting, I cannot pursue that relationship further here.

<sup>10</sup> Obviously I am not attempting to give an exhaustive exposition of Husserl's analysis of the notion of objectivity. The limits of this essay would not allow for that. Even so, these brief remarks may indicate his view as related to our present discussion.

<sup>11</sup> As Sokolowski remarks when commenting on Husserl and Heidegger: "One does not prove realism; how could one do so? One displays it" (Sokolowski 2008:216).



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