

INTRODUCTION TO

PHENOMENOLOGY

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**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

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London and New York

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology and twentieth-century European philosophy

Phenomenology, as the movement inaugurated by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), is now a century old. It was one of several strong currents in philosophy prominent at the outset of the twentieth century, alongside, for example, *Neo-Kantianism* in its various schools (e.g. Rickert, Natorp, Cassirer, Windelband, Lotze), *idealism* (Green, Bradley, McTaggart), *logicism* (Frege, Russell), *hermeneutics* (Dilthey, Bultmann), *pragmatism* (Dewey, Peirce, James), *Lebensphilosophie* (Bergson, Simmel), *Existenz* philosophy (Kierkegaard and Nietzsche), as well as the *empiricism* of Hume’s followers (e.g. J.S.Mill), and *the positivism* and *empirio-criticism* of Comte, Mach, Avinarius, and, somewhat later, of the Vienna Circle. In one form or another, phenomenology engaged with all these philosophical currents.

Though important precursors of phenomenology can be found in the work of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Ernst Mach, phenomenology, as a new way of doing philosophy, was first formally announced by Edmund Husserl in the Introduction to the Second Volume of the First Edition of his *Logische Untersuchungen* (*Logical Investigations*, 1900–1901), when, in discussing the need for a wide-ranging theory of knowledge, he speaks of “the phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing”.¹ After these words, in the 1913 Second Edition of the same work, Husserl immediately adds:

This phenomenology, like the more inclusive pure phenomenology of experiences in general, has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts, as experiences of human or animal experients in the phenomenal world that we posit as an empirical fact. This phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must describe in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly

make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement of essence is an *a priori* statement in the highest sense of the word.

(LI, Intro. § 1, p. 249; Hua XIX/1 6)

This added paragraph neatly illustrates how Husserl's earlier project of 1900, concerned with the clarification of epistemological concepts, had grown, by 1913, into an *a priori* transcendental science of pure consciousness as such. As Husserl's conception of phenomenology deepened and broadened, he came to see himself as the founder of a new movement, and through his subsequent efforts and those of his students, phenomenology gradually developed to become the most important current of European thought throughout the century as a whole.

Husserl saw himself as founder of an entirely new discipline, a self-styled 'radical beginner', engaged in the constant act of radical founding (*Letztbegründung*). He frequently cast himself in the role of pioneer, an explorer in the new domain of consciousness, a Moses leading his people to the new land of transcendental subjectivity. He gathered students, planned ambitious research projects, and sought to promote the phenomenology of the various sub-divisions of the field of consciousness, aware always that phenomenology was a 'set of infinite tasks'. But above all else, in his mature years, Husserl thought phenomenological practice required a radical shift in viewpoint, a *suspension* or *bracketing* of the everyday natural attitude and all 'world-positing' intentional acts which assumed the existence of the world, until the practitioner is led back into the domain of pure transcendental subjectivity. Without this leading back, this *reduction*, genuine phenomenological insight would be impossible in Husserl's eyes; at best it would be no more than a naturalistic psychology of consciousness, which treated consciousness as just "a little tag-end of the world" (*ein kleines Endchen der Welt*).² Few of Husserl's students, however, were convinced of the value of this reduction, or indeed of the possibility of carrying it out; many felt that Husserl had lapsed back into the very Neo-Kantian idealism from which phenomenology had originally struggled to free philosophy.

As his former colleagues struck out on their own independent paths of investigation, Husserl, in later years, saw himself more and more as a 'leader without followers' (*als beruferer Führer ohne Gefolge*, *Briefwechsel* II 182), and in 1931 declared himself the greatest enemy of the so-called 'phenomenological movement' (*Briefwechsel* IX 79). As a result, the phenomenological movement understood in its broadest terms includes not just the work of Husserl, but also the work of many original practitioners of phenomenology, who did not feel bound to Husserl's methodology, the most prominent of whom were Max Scheler (1874–1928) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). Indeed, the French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, has justly remarked that phenomenology is the story of the deviations from Husserl;

the history of phenomenology is the history of Husserlian heresies.³ After the publication of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), phenomenology came to be understood almost exclusively in terms of the *combined* contribution of both Husserl and Heidegger, and so it appeared to Levinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida.

It is important not to exaggerate, as some interpreters have done, the extent to which phenomenology coheres into an agreed *method*, or accepts one theoretical outlook, or one set of philosophical theses about consciousness, knowledge, and the world. Indeed, as we shall see, the philosophers who in some sense identified with the practice of phenomenology are extraordinarily diverse in their interests, in their interpretation of the central issues of phenomenology, in their application of what they understood to be the phenomenological method, and in their development of what they took to be the phenomenological programme for the future of philosophy. Thus, Martin Heidegger, who fully acknowledged the importance of phenomenological seeing for philosophy, at the same time declared, in his 1927 lecture course on *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, "there is no such thing as *the one* phenomenology" ("Die *Phänomenologie* gibt es nicht").⁴ True philosophy, following phenomenology's inspiration, followed the matters themselves, and therefore, for Heidegger, phenomenology simply became identified with the essence of philosophy as such and its ways were as diverse as the matters themselves. Heidegger's way of attending to the things themselves was explicitly followed by Hans-Georg Gadamer who located the manifestation of the matters themselves in living dialogue, in speech.

Perhaps because of this very diversity, phenomenology, despite its pervasive influence in European philosophy, is, both as a method and a general movement, now little understood outside a narrow circle of specialists, eclipsed on the European mainland and in North America by various subsequent movements, including structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and more recently, concerns with multi-culturalism and postmodernism generally, as well as by analytic philosophy, which has developed into the main way of doing academic philosophy in English-speaking countries and, increasingly, elsewhere. The purpose of this book, then, is to provide both an understanding of phenomenology as a way of doing philosophy and also an introduction to the philosophies of some of its most able practitioners. I have chosen to introduce the themes of phenomenology through an account of the work of a number of philosophers who are, in my opinion, the key figures in European thought.

I have portrayed phenomenology as a thoroughly *modernist outlook* which has its beginnings in the efforts of Franz Brentano (1838–1917) to supply a philosophical foundation for the newly emerged science of psychology and to tie it to the Cartesian discovery of consciousness as the domain of apodictic self-evidence. Having considered Brentano's contribution, namely his rediscovery of the intentional structure of

consciousness and his project of scientific description of consciousness, the central focus of the first half of the book will be on Husserl and Heidegger as, respectively, founder and transformer of phenomenology. Unfortunately, for reasons of space, I have been forced to exclude many of Husserl's and Heidegger's students and followers, for example Edith Stein, Roman Ingarden, Aron Gurwitsch, Alfred Schütz, Eugen Fink, and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), to name but a few.⁵ Furthermore, I have, reluctantly, omitted consideration of Max Scheler (1874–1928) from this study, though a case could be made for him as one of the earliest practitioners of phenomenology. However, he was always something of a philosophical rival to Husserl, and after 1911 had moved away from phenomenology generally. Moreover, when he died in 1928, Heidegger's *Being and Time* was just on the point of transforming phenomenology for good, and thus Scheler was quickly eclipsed in its future development. After Husserl and Heidegger, the phenomenologists included in this book—Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Derrida—all became familiar with a phenomenological movement in which the different philosophical perspectives of Husserl and Heidegger were already inextricably interwoven. This book, then, is not strictly speaking a history of Husserlian phenomenology *tout court*, but is rather an exploration of the intellectual climate and philosophical significance of phenomenology as an enterprise *begun* and *elaborated* by Husserl and then radically *transformed* by Heidegger. The further metamorphoses of phenomenology in the work of French philosophers constitutes the second half of this book. Again, for reasons of space, I have had to leave to one side discussion of some French phenomenologists who deserve consideration in their own right, for example, Paul Ricoeur, Mikel Dufrenne, Michel Henry, and others.

What is phenomenology?

Though there are a number of themes which characterise phenomenology, in general it never developed a set of dogmas or sedimented into a system. It claims, first and foremost, to be a *radical* way of doing philosophy, a *practice* rather than a system. Phenomenology is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experienter. As such, phenomenology's first step is to seek to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense, or, indeed, from science itself. Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within.

INTRODUCTION

Freedom from prejudice means overcoming the strait-jacket of encrusted traditions, and this also means rejecting the domination of enquiry by externally imposed methods. Most of the founding figures of phenomenology emphasised the need for a renewal of philosophy as radical enquiry not bound to any historical tradition; and they advocated a rejection of all dogmatisms, a suspicion of a priori metaphysical premises and earlier accounts of the nature of knowledge, especially as found in Neo-Hegelianism and in positivism, and a steady directing of attention to the things themselves. Phenomenology was seen as reviving our living contact with reality, and as being remote from the arid and academic discussion of philosophical problems found in nineteenth-century philosophy, for example in the Neo-Kantian tradition.

In particular, the programme of phenomenology sought to reinvigorate philosophy by returning it to the life of the living human subject. Thus, the readers of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* reported that it approached traditional logical and epistemological problems in a new, fresh, and exciting manner. Similarly, Heidegger's students of the 1920s claimed the experience of thinking came to life in their classes, as both Arendt and Gadamer have confirmed. This call to renew philosophy went hand in hand with an appeal to return to *concrete*, lived human experience in all its richness. In the 1930s, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty saw phenomenology as a means of going beyond narrow empiricist, psychological assumptions about human existence, broadening the scope of philosophy to be about everything, to capture life as it is lived. Thus, Sartre's encounter with phenomenology through Raymond Aron allowed one to philosophise about a wineglass.⁶ Sartre sees phenomenology as allowing one to delineate carefully one's own affective, emotional, and imaginative life, not in a set of static objective studies such as one finds in psychology, but understood in the manner in which it is meaningfully lived. Sartre's account of experiences of shame and self-deception are classics of phenomenological description. Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas's phenomenology is closely attentive to the way in which other human beings inhabit the horizons of my experience and present themselves as a *demand* to me, a call on me to get outside the sphere of my own self-satisfaction, my own preoccupations.

Phenomenology also claimed to have overcome the impasse reached in the treatment of many traditional philosophical problems. Thus both Husserl and Heidegger believed that the real philosophical issue in the traditional sceptical worry about the existence of the external world was not the need to find rational grounds to justify our natural belief in this world, but rather to explain how this kind of worry could have arisen in the first place. Both Husserl and Heidegger rejected the traditional representationalist account on knowledge, the Lockean way of ideas, which explained knowledge in terms of an inner mental representation or copy of what exists outside the mind. Phenomenology rejects this entire representationalist account of

knowledge as absurd. Our experience properly described must acknowledge that it presents itself as the experience of engaging directly with the world. Any philosophical account of knowledge has to remain faithful to the deepest experiential evidence. Above all else, phenomenology must pay close attention to the nature of consciousness as actually experienced, not as is pictured by common sense or by the philosophical tradition. Thus, for instance, we must not think that experiences in consciousness are like objects in a box. As Husserl objects in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*:

But experience is not an opening through which a world, existing prior to all experience, shines into a room of consciousness; it is not a mere taking of something alien to consciousness into consciousness... Experience is the performance in which for me, the experiencer, experienced being “is there”, and is there *as what* it is, with the whole content and the mode of being that experience itself, by the performance going on in its intentionality, attributes to it.⁷

Phenomenology must carefully describe things as they *appear* to consciousness. In other words, the way problems, things, and events are approached must involve *taking their manner of appearance to consciousness into consideration.*

The origins of the term ‘phenomenology’

Husserl was not the first to employ the term ‘phenomenology’; in fact it first began to appear in philosophy texts in the eighteenth century, in Lambert, Herder, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.⁸ Johann Heinrich Lambert, a follower of Wolff, employed the term ‘phenomenology’ in the title of the fourth section in his *Novus Organon* to signify a *science of appearance* (*Schein*) which allows us to proceed from appearances to truth, just as optics studies perspective in order to deduce true features of the object seen. Lambert inspired Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who infrequently used the term ‘phenomenology’ in several early letters. For instance, in a letter to Lambert of 2 September 1770, Kant says that “metaphysics must be preceded by a quite distinct, but merely negative science (*Phaenomenologica generalis*)”.⁹ Similarly, in his letter to Marcus Herz of 21 February 1772, Kant spoke of “phenomenology in general” (*die Phänomenologie überhaupt*), which eventually developed into the Transcendental Aesthetic section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant used the term in his mature treatises also. Thus, in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), he has an entire section labelled “Phenomenology”, dealing with the area of motion or rest in relation to their appearances to our external senses. *Phenomenology*,

for Kant, then, is that branch of science which deals with things in their manner of appearing to us, for example, relative motion, or colour, properties which are dependent on the human observer. Kant's enquiry into the conditions for the possibility of objectivity—as seen from the subjective side—was criticised by G.W.F.Hegel (1770–1831) for failing to develop a conception of mind other than as consciousness. For this reason, Hegel said that Kantian philosophy remained “only a *phenomenology* (not a *philosophy*) of mind”.¹⁰ Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) also made use of the term ‘phenomenology’ in his *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1804 to refer to the manner of deriving the world of appearance, which illusorily appears to be independent of consciousness, from consciousness itself.¹¹

Hegel himself made the most prominent use of the term ‘phenomenology’ when it featured in the title of his 1807 *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*),¹² but this work was largely eclipsed during the nineteenth century and had little influence. It was only in the 1920s and 1930s, after Husserl's inauguration of phenomenology, that, especially in France, Alexandre Kojève, Jean Hyppolite, Jean Wahl, Merleau-Ponty, and others began to look to Hegel as the true progenitor of the phenomenological method.

Despite these prior occurrences of the term ‘phenomenology’, the immediate inspiration for Edmund Husserl's use of the term was neither Kant nor Hegel, but Franz Brentano, who first employed the term in 1889. Soon after, in 1894, Brentano's friend, the physicist Ernst Mach, proposed a “general physical phenomenology” which would describe our experiences of physics as a basis for a more general physical theory. Mach, for example, wanted to describe electricity in terms of the sum of experiences we have of it. Husserl was familiar with Mach's use of the term ‘phenomenology’ even at the beginning of his career, but later on, in his Amsterdam lectures of 1929, he explicitly acknowledged Mach as a forerunner of phenomenology, and he characterised himself as involved in “a certain radicalizing of an already existing phenomenological method”.¹³

Phenomenology in Brentano

Phenomenology as initially understood by Edmund Husserl in the First Edition of the *Logical Investigations* meant *descriptive psychology* and had its origins in the project of Brentano. From Brentano, Husserl took over the conviction that philosophy is a rigorous science, as well as the view that philosophy consists in *description* and not causal explanation. Husserl also adopted from Brentano a general appreciation of the British tradition of empiricism, especially Hume and Mill, along with an antipathy towards Kantian and Hegelian idealism. In a manner not dissimilar to the positivists, Husserl went on to reject Neo-Kantian and Hegelian problematics as ‘pseudo-problems’ (*Scheinprobleme*) and pseudo-philosophy. For Husserl, as for

Brentano, philosophy is the description of what is given in direct ‘self-evidence’ (*Evidenz*).

Husserl’s phenomenology has its first anticipation in Brentano’s attempt to rethink the nature of psychology as a *science*. Brentano had proposed a form of descriptive psychology which would concentrate on illuminating the nature of inner self-aware acts of cognition without appealing to causal or genetic explanation. In other words, Brentano was proposing a kind of philosophical psychology, or philosophy of mind. In his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), Brentano sets out to do ‘empirical psychology’ by descriptively identifying the domain of the mental in terms of intentionality.¹⁴ Brentano contrasts empirical psychology with ‘genetic psychology’. *Genetic psychology* studies the material substrate of psychic acts—the nature of the sense organs, the patterns of the nerves, and so on—and is essentially committed to causal explanation. Empirical psychology is to be a descriptive, classificatory science, offering a taxonomy of mental acts. Later, in his lectures on *Descriptive Psychology* (1889), Brentano employed the phrase ‘descriptive psychology or descriptive phenomenology’ to differentiate this science from genetic or physiological psychology.¹⁵ Descriptive psychology is conceived of as an a priori science of the laws of the mental, identifying universal laws on the basis of insight into individual instances.

Following Descartes, Brentano believed in the self-evidence of our grasp of inner mental life—inner perception—as opposed to the fallible nature of outer perception. It must be stressed that Brentano thought of inner perception as quite distinct from introspection or what he called ‘inner observation’. We are not able to observe our mental acts while occupying them but we can reflectively grasp them as they occur. They can be grasped *en parergo*, ‘by the way’ (*nebenbei*), a conception Brentano borrowed from Aristotle and Aquinas. There is no act without an object; an empty act cannot be conscious of itself. Given the presence of the intentional content or object awakening the intentional act, then the act is directed primarily on the object. However, acts can have a secondary moment whereby they become conscious of themselves. This accompanying secondary act of reflection is so built into the original act that it cannot be wrong about the nature of the act upon which it is reflecting. Following Aristotle’s analysis in his *De anima*, Brentano holds that, in sensing, I am aware that I am sensing. The awareness is not an act of the sensing itself whose proper object is always the sensible as such, rather there is a common inner sense which is aware of the operation of the primary act. But, for Brentano, the apodicticity of this reflective act is severely limited to the act itself and the immediate memory of it.

From such empirical instances of inner perception general laws could be extracted by reflection. Such a law of the mental, for Brentano, is, for example, that there can be no mental act which is not either a presentation or based on a presentation. Brentano went on to think of the relation between

the object and the act in terms of the relation between *part* and *whole*. When we are aware of a complex phenomenon, awareness of the part is present in the awareness of the whole though it may not be explicitly noticed. Thus when I see a red patch, it is a part of that presentation that it is also a presentation of extension, but this part-presentation may not be explicitly noticed. Like Sartre and John Searle, Brentano explicitly denies the possibility of purely unconscious mental acts.¹⁶ Acts of that kind are simply not mental. A mental act must be at least a possible object of inner reflection for the Brentanian tradition.

Brentano envisaged his new science of descriptive psychology as providing the conceptual foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, that is all the sciences which employ mental acts in their formulations, for example, the law, politics, economics, sociology, aesthetics, religion, etc. Descriptive psychology will provide clear, evident truth about the mental acts employed in these sciences. This became Brentano's overall project of philosophy as a rigorous science. Husserl went on to develop this descriptive *psychology* into the most general descriptive science of consciousness, underlying not only the *Geisteswissenschaften*, but all forms of scientific knowledge.

The presuppositionless starting point

Right from the outset, Husserl laid great stress on phenomenology's *principle of presuppositionlessness* (*Prinzip der Voraussetzungslosigkeit*, LI, Intro. § 7, p. 263; Hua XIX/1 24); that is, the claim to have discarded philosophical theorising in favour of careful description of phenomena themselves, to be attentive only to what is *given* in intuition.

Husserl first extended the application of descriptive psychology to the clarification of concepts of the exact sciences in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891). Then, ten years later, in his 'breakthrough work' (*Werk des Durchbruchs*), *Logical Investigations*, he went on to develop the application of descriptive psychology, now also called *phenomenology*, to the epistemological clarification of the essential concepts in logic. Phenomenology, at this stage, is a kind of conceptual clarification which is to form part of a wider 'critique of reason'. But the key feature of this conceptual analysis was not that it engaged in an examination of the role of concepts in a language, but rather that it relied on the self-evident givenness of insights in intuition. The clarion cry of phenomenology, "back to the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*, LI, Intro. § 2, p. 252; Hua XIX/1 10), first announced in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, summed up this dependence on intuition. Indeed, this emphasis on the importance of 'intuition' in philosophy was, of course, in line with the mood of the times. Many philosophers at the turn of the century, including Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, and William James, were one in emphasising the role of intuition, though they differed in their accounts

of it. Thus, Henri Bergson had claimed in his *An Introduction to Metaphysics*:

By intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within the object in order to coincide with that which is unique in it and consequently inexpressible.¹⁷

Indeed, the prevalence of notions of intuition as a kind of spiritual sympathy with the object of knowledge has often led to phenomenology being widely misunderstood as a form of irrational mysticism. At least in the vision of its founder, Edmund Husserl, nothing could be further from the truth.

Husserl's understanding of phenomenology grew out of his attempt to understand the nature of mathematical and logical truths, and from his more general concern with a critique of reason whereby all the key concepts required for knowledge would be rigorously scrutinised as to their essential meanings, their validity, and justification. Intuitions are the highest stage of knowledge and as such are hard-won insights, akin to mathematical discoveries. When I *see* that '2+2=4', I have as clear an intuition as I can have. Husserl thought, however, that similar intuitive fulfilments occurred in many types of experience, and were not just restricted to the truths of mathematics. When I see a blackbird in the tree outside my window under normal conditions, I also have an intuition which is fulfilled by the certainty of the bodily presence of the blackbird presenting itself to me. There are a wide variety of different kinds of intuitive experience. Husserl was led by reflection on these kinds of experience to attempt to develop a classification of all conscious experiences, with an eye to considering their essential natures and the kinds of intuitive fulfilment which were proper to them.

In his mature works, Husserl called these intuitions 'originary giving' or 'presentive' intuitions. Thus, even after his transcendental turn, first publicly announced in *Ideas I* (1913), Husserl retained the primacy of intuition. In *Ideas I*, he announces his *principle of all principles*:

*that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak in its "personal" actuality) offered to us in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.*¹⁸

Every act of knowledge is to be legitimised by "originary presentive intuition" (*originär gebende Anschauung*). This concept of *originary presentive intuition* is at the core of Husserl's philosophy. Indeed, he criticises traditional empiricism for naively dictating that all judgements

be legitimised by experience, instead of realising that many different forms of intuition underlie our judgements and our reasoning processes (*Ideas* I, § 19, p. 36; Hua III/136).

What does Husserl mean here by ‘givenness’ (*Gegebenheit*), the term which Heidegger characterised in his 1920 Freiburg lectures as the ‘magic word’ (*Zauberwort*) of phenomenology, which, nevertheless, stands as a ‘stumbling block’ (*Stein des Anstoßes*) to others?¹⁹ ‘Givenness’ sums up the view that all experience is experience to someone, according to a particular manner of experiencing. There is a ‘dative’ element in the experience, a ‘to whom’ of experience. Intuitions, for Husserl, occur in all experiences of understanding; but in cases of genuine certain knowledge, we have intuition with the highest kind of fulfilment or evidence.

The suspension of the natural attitude

In works written subsequent to the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl came to believe that the scrutiny of the structure and contents of our conscious experiences was inhibited and deeply distorted by the manner of our engagement with experience in ordinary life, where our practical concerns, folk assumptions, and smattering of scientific knowledge all got in the way of a pure consideration of experience as it is given to us. In order to ensure against theoretical stances creeping back in to the phenomenological viewing of the phenomena, Husserl proposed a number of steps, most notably the phenomenological epoché, or suspension of the natural attitude, as well as a number of methodological reductions and alterations of viewpoint (including the so-called ‘eidetic’ and ‘transcendental reductions’), in order to isolate the central essential features of the phenomena under investigation. This bracketing meant that all scientific, philosophical, cultural, and everyday assumptions had to be put aside—not so much to be negated as to be put out of court (in a manner not dissimilar to that of a member of the jury who is asked to suspend judgements and the normal kinds of association and drawing of inferences in order to focus exclusively on the evidence that has been presented to the court). Thus, in considering the nature of our conscious acts, we should not simply assume that the mind is some kind of a container, that memories are like picture images, and so on. Nor should we assume any scientific or philosophical hypothesis, for example that conscious events are just brain events. Indeed, in genuine phenomenological viewing, we are not permitted any scientific or philosophical hypotheses. We should attend only to the phenomena in the manner of their being given to us, in their modes of givenness. Later, many phenomenologists will appeal to our different way of approaching art works as paradigmatic for revealing the different modes of givenness of phenomena, for example Heidegger’s reflection on the art work or Merleau-Ponty’s account of the experience of

looking at Cézanne's paintings. The mode of givenness is best approached when assumptions about the world are put out of account.

For Husserl the suspension of the natural attitude, and the development of theoretical manoeuvres for excluding distortion in order to gain insight into the nature of the conscious processes themselves, are at the centre of his understanding of the practice of phenomenology. Thus he always stressed that his greatest discovery was the reduction. The reduction led Husserl in two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, it led him in a Neo-Kantian and Cartesian direction towards the transcendental ego as the formal structure of all self-experience; while on the other hand, it led him towards the manner in which consciousness is always wrapped up in its intentional correlate, completely caught up in a world. This intuition of the worldliness of consciousness led to Husserl's investigations of the environment and of the *life-world*.

The life-world and being in the world

Focusing on what is given intuitively in experience led Husserl, in his late writings such as *Experience and Judgment* (1938),²⁰ to focus on what he termed "prepredicative experience" (*die vorprädikative Erfahrung*), experience before it has been formulated in judgements and expressed in outward linguistic form, before it becomes packaged for explicit consciousness. As Husserl put it, all cognitive activity presupposes a domain that is passively pregiven, the existent world as I find it. Returning to examine this pregiven world is a return to the *life-world* (*Lebenswelt*), "the world in which we are always already living and which furnishes the ground for all cognitive performance and all scientific determination" (EJ § 10, p. 41, 38). Husserl claims that the world of our ordinary experience is a world of formed objects obeying universal laws as discovered by science, but the foundational experiences which give us such a world is rather different: "This experience in its immediacy knows neither exact space nor objective time and causality" (EJ § 10, p. 43,41). Returning to the life-world is to return to experience before such objectifications and idealisations (EJ § 10, p. 45, 44).

In attempting to rethink the life-world, one has to understand the impact of the scientific world-view on our consciousness. Phenomenology has to interrogate the supposedly objective view of the sciences, what has been termed the 'God's eye' perspective, or the 'view from nowhere'. Husserlian phenomenology did not dispute the possibility of our gaining a 'view from nowhere', understood as the aperspectival, theoretical, 'objective' understanding of things. This indeed was the traditional ideal of knowledge. Husserl in particular was very anxious to give full credit to this view, which is the view adopted in mathematics and in the exact sciences. But he saw this as an *idealisation*, as a special construction of the theoretical attitude, one remote from everyday experience. This view from nowhere is constructed

on, and abstracted from, our ordinary experiences which take place in time and space. One must not think of objects as existing exactly in the manner in which they are given in the view from nowhere. All objects are encountered perspectively; all conscious experience occurs in a temporal flow, the nature of which must be recalled in any analysis of human perception. The positing of entities outside experience is ruled out as meaningless.

Besides rejecting rationalist and idealist accounts of reality, phenomenologists in general were also critical of the narrow, reductionist models of human experience found in varieties of nineteenth-century empiricism, positivism, and sensationalism. Phenomenology was understood to have challenged traditional epistemology in so far as it had oscillated back and forth between the alternatives of rationalism and empiricism. Phenomenology claimed to have overcome the basis of this opposition between rationalism and empiricism and indeed to have rejected the subject-object distinction altogether. Phenomenologists claimed that both the traditional concepts of subject and of object were philosophical constructions which in fact distorted the true nature of the human experience of the world. Phenomenology claimed instead to offer a *holistic* approach to the relation between objectivity and consciousness, stressing the mediating role of the body in perception, for example. Phenomenology's success came in calling attention to aspects of experience neglected by empiricism, in particular the horizons and background assumptions involved in all acts of understanding and interpreting.

Martin Heidegger, who claimed Husserl remained too Cartesian and intellectualist in his account of human engagement with the world, decided that the only way to avoid what he regarded as sterile epistemological formulations was to abandon the use of the terms 'consciousness' and 'intentionality' altogether. Humans are always already caught up in a world into which they find themselves thrown, which reveals itself in moods, the overall nature of which is summed up by Heidegger's notion of 'Being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-sein*). When Levinas attended Heidegger's lectures in 1928 he was captivated by Heidegger's attempts to understand Being-in-the-world. Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty followed Heidegger in reading intentionality as naming an irreducible ontological relation with the world.

Drawing on Husserl's investigation of the manner in which consciousness is both enabled and inhibited by its corporeality, Merleau-Ponty explored the relation of consciousness to the body, arguing for the need to replace these categories with an account of embodied human being in the world. Adopting Husserl's and Scheler's distinction between a material body (*Körper*) and a living, animate body (*Leib*), Merleau-Ponty further explores the manner my experience of my own body differs from my experience of inanimate physical objects. My whole mode of being in regard to my body

is very different from my relation to other things, and phenomenology must be attentive to describing that mode of being as accurately as it can.

Merleau-Ponty maintained that the whole scientific edifice is built upon the world as directly perceived, and that science is always a second-order expression of that world. He was deeply suspicious of scientific naturalism which treats human beings as an outcome of evolution and material processes. This ignored the nature of consciousness and myself as the 'absolute source' (*la source absolue*, PP ix; iii). Merleau-Ponty of course claims that this return to the self as absolute source of all meaning is not a kind of renewal of idealism. Idealism, whether in its Cartesian or Kantian forms, had, for Merleau-Ponty, detached the subject from the world.

Phenomenology as the achievement of knowing

While Brentano saw phenomenology as rooted in Aristotle's description of psychological acts in the *De anima*, and Husserl saw it as a radicalisation of empiricism, phenomenology has often been portrayed by its critics as an appeal to a long-refuted form of introspectionism, or to mystical, irrational intuition, or as promoting an unregulated rhapsodising on the nature of lived experience, or as seeking to repudiate science and the scientific view of the world, and so on. These views do not just come from those practising analytic philosophy, but are often held by the followers of structuralism and deconstruction, movements which have grown out of phenomenology itself. Indeed, as much as one has to defend phenomenology from various misinterpretations current among analytic philosophers, there is equally a growing need to distinguish the more disciplined practice of phenomenology from some of the more baroque elements present in current Continental theorising, which seem to regard unregulated assertion as the fundamental mode of philosophising. Even some of the best practitioners of phenomenology have been guilty of sloppy talk in relation to the phenomenological approach. For instance, Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his ground-breaking *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), having stated correctly that phenomenology describes rather than explains ("It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing"²¹), then casts the Husserlian bracketing of scientific explanation as if it were a *repudiation* of science. Thus, he writes, phenomenology is "from the start a rejection of science" (*le désaveu de la science*, PP viii; ii). This suggests that Merleau-Ponty sees phenomenology as replacing science, whereas in fact both he and Husserl thought of it as supporting and clarifying science in its fullest sense.

The problem of clarifying accurately the nature of phenomenology has been exacerbated by the application of the term to any vaguely descriptive kind of philosophising, or even to justify proceeding on the basis of hunches and wild surmise. For example, the term 'phenomenology' is also increasingly often encountered in analytic philosophy to mark off any zone

or aspect of experience which cannot be fully articulated. For example, Owen Flanagan speaks of “the phenomenology of our mental life”²² and Colin McGinn talks of the “technicolour phenomenology” our brains produce.²³ Here the term is used to stand for the flow of psychic life itself. But the term is also used for the mode of access to this subjective life, for *the first-person experience* of conscious states. Thus contemporary philosophy of mind in the analytic tradition has been engaged in a long-running debate as to whether phenomenological description has a place in the investigation of consciousness and intentionality; that is, whether close attention to the actual qualitative features of our conscious experience (those features which Bertrand Russell termed ‘qualia’) are illuminating for the scientific study of consciousness. Daniel Dennett talks about the need to replace impotent first-person “auto-phenomenology” with a properly objective, third-person “heterophenomenology”.²⁴ Gregory McCulloch and Christopher Peacocke debate the issue of whether there is a non-conceptual *content* to sensory experience, or whether these experiences are completely colourless or ‘transparent’.²⁵ In analytic terms this is usually referred to as the problem of ‘qualia’ or of ‘first-person truths’, or of the ‘how’ of experiences, the what-it-is-like to have the experience.²⁶ Though analytic philosophy of mind in general does recognise the need to provide some account of this qualitative aspect of experience, it rarely concedes that the methods of traditional Husserlian phenomenology are adequate to this task. Husserlian phenomenology is seen as a kind of *introspectionism* and as such is vulnerable to all the criticisms of introspection which emerged in experimental psychology and cognitive science.

It is indeed true that central to phenomenology, and indeed part of its continuing appeal, is its attempt to provide a rigorous defence of the fundamental and inextricable role of subjectivity and consciousness in all knowledge and in descriptions of the world. But phenomenology attempts to recognise and describe the role of consciousness in the achievement (*Leistung*) of knowledge and is not a wallowing in the subjective domain purely for its own sake. Indeed, the whole point of phenomenology is that we cannot split off the subjective domain from the domain of the natural world as scientific naturalism has done. Subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity. Thus, for Husserl, the central mystery of all philosophy, the “mystery of mysteries” is the question: *how does objectivity get constituted in and for consciousness?* There is only objectivity-for-subjectivity. Heidegger’s own development of phenomenology was motivated by a deep unhappiness with the inescapably Cartesian metaphysical overtones of Husserl’s concept of consciousness. He resorted instead to a description of the manner in which Being appears, which speaks of human beings as the site of that appearing, using the German word *Dasein*, existence, or literally ‘there-being’. But despite the radical

differences in these accounts, both philosophers are struggling to express the manner in which the world comes to appearance *in and through* humans. Phenomenology's conception of objectivity-for-subjectivity is arguably its major contribution to contemporary philosophy.

The structure of intentionality

The basic insight which allowed Husserl to explicate this conception of objectivity-for-subjectivity was his radical understanding of the intentional structure of consciousness. Franz Brentano had retrieved an earlier Scholastic conception of the intentional inexistence of the object of consciousness in order to characterise the essential nature of psychic acts. Husserl took this basic structure of intentionality and, having stripped it of its metaphysical baggage, presented it as the basic thesis that all conscious experiences (*Erlebnisse*) are characterised by 'aboutness'. Every act of loving is a loving *of* something, every act of seeing is a seeing *of* something. The point, for Husserl, is that, disregarding whether or not the object of the act exists, it has meaning and a mode of being for consciousness, it is a meaningful *correlate* of the conscious act. This allowed Husserl to explore a whole new domain—the domain of the meaning-correlates of conscious acts and their interconnections and binding laws—before one had to face ontological questions concerning actual existence, and so on. Phenomenology was to be true *first philosophy*. While it is true, then, that phenomenology turns to consciousness, it is proposing above all to be a science of consciousness based on elucidating the intentional structures of acts and their correlative objects, what Husserl called the noetic-noematic structure of consciousness.

Sometimes, as we have mentioned, phenomenology's emphasis on the mutual belonging of the notions of subjectivity and objectivity is expressed as an overcoming of the subject-object divide. But this overcoming, at least in Husserl, is really a retrieval of the essential radicality of the Cartesian project. Husserl saw intentionality as a way of reviving the central discovery of Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*. Instead of proceeding to an ontological account of the *res cogitans* as a thinking substance as Descartes himself did, one can focus on the intentional structure which Husserl describes as *egocogitatio-cogitatum*, the self, its acts of consciousness, and its objective correlate. We have overcome the subject-object divide only by finding a deeper meaning within subjectivity itself. There is, therefore, a central paradox in Husserl's thought which sought to overcome a certain crude kind of Cartesianism by a radical rethinking of the Cartesian project itself.

After Husserl, phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Levinas saw Husserlian phenomenology as the apotheosis of modern subjective philosophy, the philosophy of the *cogito*, and rebelled against it. Heidegger and others proposed a more radical phenomenology which broke with the metaphysical assumptions still underpinning Husserl's enterprise. Levinas

wanted to orient phenomenology on the basis of the founding experience of the other and hence to overcome self-centred subjectivity from the outset. Sartre, on the other hand, still tended to see phenomenology as a carrying out of Cartesian philosophy. One way or another, phenomenology is always in a tension with Descartes and hence with the subjective turn of modern philosophy—either radicalising it or seeking to overcome it.

After Heidegger, both Levinas and Sartre interpreted the thesis of intentionality as expressing the manner in which consciousness comes into direct contact with the world and with being, and thus in a sense creatively misunderstood Husserl. This misunderstanding led both Levinas and Sartre to an ontological intuition of being in itself as something impassive and all encompassing, something which resists consciousness. Levinas's response is to seek to identify ways to evade this all-encompassing being, ways of achieving a kind of transcendence, a kind of 'exteriority', a preservation of the experience of the unlimited and *infinite* against the *totality*. Sartre, beginning from a very similar thesis about the relation of being and consciousness, understands consciousness in terms of its unending attempts to seek to become pure being and its failure to achieve that status. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, regards the relation of human consciousness to being in itself as so intertwined and interwoven that there is no possibility of even attempting to conceptualise one without the other. The challenge of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, then, is to describe what he terms the 'chiasmic' intersection between humans and the world, a relation which comes to be in the personal lived body (he is employing the term 'chiasm' both in its rhetorical sense as an inversion of phrases and in its physiological sense as an intertwined nerve in the eye—the sense, as applied to the body—world relation, is of a mutual intertwining that cannot be undone).

Philosophy and history

Despite its initial open antipathy towards history, phenomenology, like all philosophical movements, was shaped by the particular historical and cultural circumstances of its foundation. It was unavoidable, therefore, that phenomenology's fortunes should become tangled up in the history of the twentieth century and the impact of the world wars. These upheavals claimed the lives of Husserl's own son, as well as of some of his most gifted students, for example Adolf Reinach, who died on the front during the First World War, and Edith Stein, who died in a Nazi concentration camp during the Second World War. Similarly, the lives of Heidegger, Gadamer, Arendt, Levinas, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty were all, in one way or another, seriously affected by the war. Difficult times disrupted studies, closed avenues of intellectual exploration, and forced whole schools of philosophers to flee Germany. Levinas and Arendt grieved both for their loss of family and home, and, more generally, for the destruction of Jewish intellectual culture in

Europe. From an entirely different perspective, Heidegger's controversial espousal of National Socialism led to his suspension from teaching at Freiburg after 1945 and thereafter permanently cast a shadow on his reputation. Sartre said the war split his life in two, and Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the manner in which war compromised everyone are strikingly evoked in his essay, "The War Has Taken Place" (1945), published in *Les Temps modernes*.

Events such as the founding of the New School for Social Research in New York, and the refoundation of the Frankfurt school after the Second World War, led to a transformation of the nature of European philosophy, and also had their impact on phenomenology. Both Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) began their philosophical careers with critical studies of Husserl. Adorno's first work in philosophy, his 1924 doctoral dissertation, written at Frankfurt under Hans Cornelius, treated critically of Husserl's theory of the object from the standpoint of Neo-Kantianism.²⁷ Later Adorno wrote several studies critical both of Husserlian phenomenology and of Heideggerian mysticism. Hannah Arendt considered the phenomena of totalitarianism, moral evil, violence, and human action, even love, from her unique perspective without allowing her thought to be academised or dominated by the shadow of her early mentor, Heidegger. Phenomenology, then, is in many ways inextricably linked with the twentieth century. It is a fractured movement, and its inspiration often appears to run like an underground stream enriching the ground rather than as an explicit and self-confident movement in its own right.

Phenomenology in France

A number of Husserl's students, including Jean Héring, Raymond Aron, and others, brought phenomenology to France.²⁸ But the most prominent of Husserl's French interpreters was Emmanuel Levinas who was responsible for making available a French translation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* some twenty years before the German text was published. Similarly, Heidegger's thought first entered France through Levinas and through the translations of Henri Corbin, but later, crucially, through Jean Beaufret and Jean Wahl. Husserl's work entered a French philosophical tradition dominated by René Descartes, Auguste Comte, Henri Bergson, and Léon Brunschvicg. Indeed, Husserl explicitly played to this Cartesian heritage when he gave his lectures in Paris in 1929. In the French context especially, phenomenology was understood as a radical Cartesianism, a Cartesianism which ignored substance dualism in order to probe more carefully the manner of appearances of entities in consciousness and the structure of transcendental consciousness itself. Phenomenology developed in France in a distinctive manner through Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Ricoeur,

Julia Kristeva, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida, all of whom began their philosophical careers by writing careful studies of Husserl.

Emmanuel Levinas studied with both Husserl and Heidegger in Freiburg in the late 1920s and returned to France to become a major force in nascent French phenomenology through his 1930 study *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, as well as through his part in translating the *Cartesian Meditations*. Levinas wrote a number of phenomenological reflections on the nature of moral experience before producing *Totality and Infinity* (1961), a major study of human intentionality and its limits. Levinas's contribution consists in orienting phenomenology towards ethics, specifically towards the appearance of the other in our subjective sphere. Though Husserl was interested in, and lectured on, the phenomenology of value and on ethical theory (understood as the attempt to achieve universal rational community), especially in the period from 1910 onwards, the first published phenomenological treatment of ethics came from Max Scheler whose *Formalism in Ethics* appeared in Husserl's *Jahrbuch für Phänomenologie* in 1913.²⁹ Scheler's concept of the person had a formative influence on the thought of the early Heidegger, who was drawn towards Scheler's treatment of the concrete person over Husserl's more abstract discussions of the self. But ethical matters did not receive favourable treatment in Heidegger's conception of fundamental ontology, as it was laid out in *Being and Time* (1927). Subsequently Scheler had an influence on Gabriel Marcel and on Merleau-Ponty. Sartre's ethical focus, on the other hand, at least as it appeared in published essays after *Being and Nothingness* (1943), for example, when he was defending his existentialism against charges of amoralism and nihilism, relied heavily on a Kantian appeal to universalism. In fact, the influence of Heidegger, and of structuralism, on Continental philosophy in general was such that there was little to say on the subject of ethics, and it is in the light of this dearth of ethical theory that Levinas's ethical explorations must be viewed.

Jean-Paul Sartre was initially very taken with the possibility for extracting philosophy from phenomenological description, and, in his early studies of the 1930s, embraced the key concept of intentionality while offering thoughtful criticisms of Husserl's conception of the transcendental ego and his account of the nature of perceiving and imagining. By the time of *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre had inserted his phenomenological accounts of human behaviour into a vast metaphysical edifice, and in his later writings he moved more in the direction of political philosophy. Sartre was hugely influential in wedding phenomenology to existentialism, a union which, however, had a detrimental effect on the understanding of phenomenology as it tended to link it with irrationalism. In fact, Sartre's portrayal of Heidegger as an existential thinker led directly to Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* which explicitly repudiated Sartre's interpretation of his philosophy.

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Around the same time as Sartre was writing *Being and Nothingness*, Merleau-Ponty was engaged in writing a major critique of behaviourism in psychology and exploring Husserl's discussions of the nature of the living body and his critique of scientism in the unpublished manuscripts *Ideas II* and the *Crisis*, which were available in the newly opened Husserl Archives in Leuven. Reacting against naive empiricism, positivism, and behaviourism, and strongly influenced by Aron Gurwitsch, Merleau-Ponty applied Gestalt psychology to Husserl's researches in phenomenology. In his first book, *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty was a major critic of the mechanistic stimulus/response mode of explanation as applied to human beings. His second book, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), is regarded by many as the most important phenomenological study of perception. Here Merleau-Ponty recognises that there is a basic form of intentionality already present in the body which cannot be explained in merely mechanistic terms. There seemed to be a symbiotic relationship between the act of perception and the environment of the perceiver, which Merleau-Ponty sought to describe in dialectical terms. Thus he pioneered the study of the relations between consciousness and embodiment which are now the subject of major debate. In later writings, Merleau-Ponty wrote on language, combining Heidegger's views on language with insights drawn from the semiotic and structuralist tradition.

Jacques Derrida (b. 1930) studied Husserl with Jean Hippolyte and Paul Ricoeur. Although he went on to develop the movement or style of thinking known as *deconstruction*, he drew his inspiration from problems in Husserl's theory of signification in general and even in his later work he remains a radical interpreter of Husserl. Derrida's deconstruction itself arose from considerations of certain aspects of the problem of presence and absence, sameness and difference in Husserl, Hegel, Heidegger, and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913).

Conclusion

Phenomenology has been subjected to an internal critique (by, for example, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer) as well as an external critique. The most important internal critique came from Heidegger. Heidegger rejected three central facets of Husserlian phenomenology. On the one hand, Husserl, especially in his 1911 *Logos* essay, *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, had been explicitly opposed to life philosophy and the philosophy of world-views, whereas Heidegger, though deeply critical of both these movements, nevertheless adopted the central claim that phenomenology must be attentive to historicity, or the facticity of human living; to temporality, or the concrete living in time; and furthermore it must not remain content with description of the internal consciousness of time. Secondly, from Friedrich Schleiermacher and the tradition of theological hermeneutics, Heidegger

claimed that all description involves *interpretation*, indeed that description was only a derivative form of interpretation. Husserl's project of pure description, then, becomes impossible if description is not situated inside a radically historicised hermeneutics. Thirdly, Heidegger rejected Husserl's concept of transcendental idealism and first philosophy as an 'egology', and instead proclaimed that phenomenology was the way to raise the question of Being, leading Heidegger to state publicly, from 1925 onwards, that only as phenomenology is ontology possible. Though Heidegger changed his manner of doing philosophy in the years that followed *Being and Time*, he never repudiated the essence of the phenomenological approach, the phenomenological attention to the things themselves. Thus in his 1962 letter to William Richardson he proclaims that he is moving *through* phenomenology to thinking (*Denken*), if one accepts phenomenology to mean "the process of letting things manifest themselves" (*als das Sichzeigenlassen der Sache selbst*).³⁰

The external critique of phenomenology came from positivism and from the members of the Vienna Circle. Thus Moritz Schlick (1882–1936) criticised Husserl's reliance on intellectual intuition, Carnap criticised Heidegger for promoting a meaningless pseudo-metaphysics, and A.J. Ayer popularised the critique of all forms of phenomenology. Another line of critique came from Marxism, which, in general, saw phenomenology as the apotheosis of bourgeois individualism. Thus Horkheimer, the founder of the Frankfurt school, saw Husserl's phenomenology as exemplifying what he termed 'traditional theory' against which he opposed his own critical theory, which was not the product of an isolated ego thinking on its own.³¹ Adorno also subjected phenomenology to an immanent critique in a number of important publications, notably in *Negative Dialectics*.³² In France, the structuralism of Althusser, Lévi-Strauss and others also repudiated phenomenology for maintaining a naive trust in the evidence of consciousness, generally defending a humanist perspective, whereas structuralism wished to argue that invariant unconscious structures underlie our experiences of conscious, free, meaning-intending. Derrida's deconstruction, by deliberately attacking the assumption of the possibility of the full presence of the meaning in an intentional act, and by emphasising the displacement of meaning, led to the collapse of phenomenology as a method.

What then is the enduring influence of phenomenology? It is frequently argued that the main contribution of phenomenology has been the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the nature of knowledge. Phenomenology will continue to have a central role in philosophy because of its profound critique of *naturalism* as a philosophical programme. From the beginning, Husserl's phenomenology initially set itself against *psychologism* and more generally against all forms of *naturalism*. Husserl

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and his followers see naturalism as self-defeating because it consciously excludes consciousness, the very source of all knowledge and value. Today, it is quite clear that phenomenology shared much with Neo-Kantianism, in particular the critique of naturalism and positivism. Husserl himself also criticised relativism and especially its cultural version, typified in historicism. However, Heidegger immediately reintroduced the historical and relative into phenomenology, and Merleau-Ponty was a self-conscious relativist while proclaiming to practise a version of the phenomenological method. It is this very diversity and conflict among the practitioners of phenomenology that leads one from an interest in the general considerations of phenomenology to the study of the thought of the individual phenomenologists themselves.