

The Tacit Dimension Operative in Phenomenology

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Abstract

This paper tries to assess the tacit dimension operative in the doing of phenomenology itself. The pre-phenomenological, pre-thematic naive skills of everyday abstraction and reflection comprise the tacit basis upon which phenomenology draws to do its work.

In the natural attitude we are always already using these skills in daily life, and in the phenomenological attitude we have refined these skills to different levels of proficiency, where abstraction is named eidetic variation, and reflection is then named phenomenological reduction.

In both the natural attitude and while doing phenomenology we can make reflection and abstraction into explicit subjects for reflection and abstraction, and while doing so we tacitly use the same sedimented skills as background.

If reflection and abstraction are the two basic skills of the rational mind, and if both skills can be executed with different levels of accomplishment and if these two skills can take each other as material, then a multitude of possible rational operations can be worked out. The paper explores the possible permutations of the combination of these elements.

§ 1. The question about taciticy in phenomenological perspective

What is and how works the latent dimension of human experience? With Heidegger's admonishment in mind about the virtue of sticking to, and radicalizing a question in order to find an answer, I propose first to play around with the question a little in a self-referential way. Maybe I can tease out some insights by kicking around the question itself. If the question is about the latent dimension of human experience and its description, it might be appropriate to ask what this question itself assumes about us, students, in receiving and understanding that question. Who are we, or, who am I, that this question could make sense?

Before further radicalizing the question I have to reflectively investigate the setting of the question in my present situation. I am a student of phenomenology investigating the structure and logic of consciousness and the whole spectrum of human experience, without using the tools of science, metaphysics or theology. Instead I am supposed to use a non-scientific, non-revealed, non-speculative faculty of access. But access to what? Apparently not the phenomena to which science, theology and metaphysics think they have access to, i.e. those

phenomena, which are already presupposed as unproblematic, like the universe for science, the whole or absolute for metaphysics, and the divine in theology. The questions these disciplines are engaged in are about proofs about the existents they deal with, not the way in which these existents are already presupposed to exist.

§ 2. The tacitly pre-supposed in science

For the scientist the existence of the universe, as the totality of all objects and processes (including those he has not yet discovered) is not problematic *per se*. Even if he inquires about its beginning and possible end—or even dares to speculate beyond these parameters and ask about the nature of time, space and causality before the supposed beginning and after the plausible end—he still will investigate these questions within the framework of the universe’s pre-given existence and will stick to the meanings of the categories as used within science itself, however these concepts by themselves might have evolved into mind-boggling constructs for most people.

§ 3. The tacitly pre-supposed in theology

In a similar way there is a field of pre-given ‘existents’ for the theologian, irrespective of his religion. For the Christian theologian it is not the existence of God, Christ or the Bible, which is problematic. It is obvious to him that God revealed Himself through history, the Bible and Christ. His questions are about the triune nature of God; the mixture of human and divine elements in Christ; the proper interpretation of the Bible; developing effective apologetics to convince prospective converts and strengthen the faith of the already converted. All these questions are dealt with within this faith’s framework of the existence of God, Christ and the Bible, which themselves are not *im Frage*. And if you *do* question their existence—a question, which has always been open to ask, because there have always been alternative non-Christian theologies—you risk going outside the faith and possibly de-convert yourself, a move you might not dare to make because the ultimate salvation of one’s soul is at stake. Maybe only a few, like some *thinking* mystics, might have penetrated to a deeper layer of questioning and thereby going beyond, but not necessarily outside, the exoteric doctrines of their faith.

In atheistic Buddhism it is Buddha’s enlightenment, and the possible attainment of enlightenment by oneself, which are the *sine qua non* of a Buddhist’s faith. But here the situation of the pre-givenness of a Buddhists’ basic faith is more fluid

and, from a philosophical point of view, more interesting. Most Buddhists will live their religion as most people do. They have made a leap of faith, which can be re-enacted time and again, and thereby they have put certain questions beyond the pale, out of order. This pattern is of course strengthened by the fact that a whole community carries this sedimented act within its deeper collective consciousness and re-affirm it explicitly in ritual, and implicitly in the ethics guiding their daily life. But because there runs a deep anti-authoritarian and doubting stream within Buddhism the access to deeper questions is more open. It has even crystallized into certain schools, where the supreme virtue is the letting go of anything taken for granted, including, or even specifically, one's own beliefs about the Buddha and enlightenment themselves, because those by themselves might be the most subtle of obstacles in the pursuit of enlightenment. (And beyond this are the philosophically interesting ideas of the letting go of letting go, the radical nothingness of emptiness, and the non-existence of enlightenment itself.)

§ 4. The tacitly pre-supposed in metaphysics

In metaphysics the situation is different again. It has the impetus of radical doubt and questioning in common with Buddhism, but it is not aiming at an altered state of consciousness. It aims at an integrated view of the world, integrating and bringing to resolution the problematics of knowledge, consciousness, freedom, origin, teleology, etc. in a cohesive whole. In history, as inherited by us, this endeavor resulted in different positions, like materialism, idealism, dualism, skepticism, etc., which we, as starting thinkers, find in our own Western intellectual world as possible world-views. But most of us will have already imbibed from our parents and teachers a pre-thematic sense of reality, which, if not challenged, stays operative throughout one's life. This pre-thematic sense of reality might possibly stay tenaciously operative even during studying this discipline called philosophy. Philosophy here might be taken only as a receptacle of diverse arguments and systems. One can just pick and choose those ideas which seem to be most in harmony with one's deeper pre-thematic sense of reality, instead of taking philosophy as the possibility and space to question and investigate one's deepest assumptions about reality itself. 'Man, know thyself' was the Greek imperative, not 'Man know philosophy.'

[Personal note: What about the operative assumptions in Theosophy? If Theosophy is taken as a synthesis of science, philosophy and theology, together with its stated objectives of open dialogue, comparative investigation and

experimentation, there will be a lot of room to overcome its own articles of faith, which in spite of its professed anti-dogmatic, free-thinking, non-partisan persona, are quite prevalent. For example there are the *Mahatmas* as Theosophy's collective God, the ever so interesting Helena Blavatsky as Their messenger and *The Secret Doctrine* as its Bible. Because of the strong intellectual, Buddhist and scientific elements within Theosophy the just enumerated sacred objects can be easily de-constructed. The Mahatmas are not unlike Zen masters, who can only point the way; Blavatsky was an advanced, but fallible, student; and *The Secret Doctrine* is no more than an interrelated set of hypotheses to be experimentally tested. But after more than 125 years Theosophy needs to be updated with an integration of the latest breakthroughs in science, philosophy and theology. It will not suffice to deepen the understanding, as Theosophy can bring, of trans-personal psychology, or quantum mechanics, or existentialism, or history, or, as is often done, to merely recognize similarities between Theosophy and these investigations and be self-congratulatory satisfied with the congruencies. The real work lies in a more active attempt at integration of the most developed positions within science, philosophy and theology. Personally I see a great potential in the integration of the very encompassing hypothesis of morphogenetic fields and morphic resonance as developed by Rupert Sheldrake (science), the epistemological and existential ideas coming out of the phenomenological movement (philosophy) and the spiritual philosophy of Krishnamurti (theology, if I may say so).]

§ 5. The non-elective dimension of science and rationality

In short, before doing phenomenology it is appropriate to see what the presuppositions are that we are asked to suspend, so they will not re-enter, in disguised form, at a later stage of the investigation. If one sees the elective nature of one's metaphysics and religion, the basic assumptions underlying them might be the easiest to overcome. If one's faith is deep-rooted, then the underlying assumptions might act as a deep invisible rudder, steering subsequent thoughts, not so much in a pre-determined fashion, but toward or within a certain field of possibilities and away and outside others. With science, given the scientific nature of our culture, it is a little more difficult. One can define oneself within the field of religion as an anti-theist, or anti-atheist, anti-pagan or anti-Muslim, etc.; and within the field of metaphysics as anti-materialist, or anti-idealist, or non-dualist, etc. and still stay respectable. All because of the elective, contingent nature of one's own religion and metaphysics. But with science it seems to be different. It has such deep roots now that it seems to be too radical

and dangerous to come out against science and its results. Who could even conceive of becoming anti-scientific, let alone anti-rational or even anti-logical? Who hasn't benefited from science? Of course there are protests against certain technologies, or even technology in general, and protests against certain sciences, but probably not so much against science in general. In the majority of cases the protests will be expressed with rational arguments, even citing scientific investigations from the disciplines of medicine, psychology, sociology or ecology. Therefore moving outside of rationality might not be easy, even unconceivable, if the goal one sets is the investigation of a certain matter under question and not to move into mysticism or madness. The best we can do, according to phenomenology, is asking after the how, what, wherefrom and whereto of science, rationality and logic itself. This then should be done in such a way that the claims these disciplines exert upon our mind in daily life are not taken for granted in our investigative mode. Instead we are asked to closely observe and describe or interpret them in their operations from a point of view as neutral as possible.

§ 6. The nonsensicality of the question from an analytic viewpoint

Now back to the question about the latent dimension of human experience. A first shot at the question would be to investigate if the question is a legitimate question in the first place. Maybe it is one of those pseudo-questions the analytic philosophers try to warn us about. They will understand the intention within the question of having something *described*. After all, they are so-called empiricists, i.e. relying on the faculty of observation and the method of experimentation (and also quackery and 'without due regard for science and theory' according to my Webster Dictionary!?) in order to get solid scientific results. They will also have their own ideas what *human experience* is: a barrage of atomistic sense data processed by the brain into actionable aggregates, which will produce a certain output. No problem there. But what about a *latent dimension*? We know about three spatial dimensions and maybe a fourth for time. Are there dimensions we haven't seen yet, which are not manifested or visible? And what has that to do with human experience? If dimension stands for measurement and human experience can be measured as far as input and output is concerned, where is the hidden aspect of measurement? What is it about measurement we don't know? The only thing hidden is what we don't know *yet*, but eventually we will and we will find it either through science or logic. Therefore to ask for the description of something we don't know is absurd. At face value the question breaks down into nonsense and the empiricist will sigh in exasperation and say

'typically continental. Much ado about nothing!' 'Not so fast,' would the 'continental' respond, there is a style of philosophy about no-thing which can fill a library. Webster might be right in assessing you as having no 'due regard for science and theory' in their most radical and philosophical sense.

§ 7. Phenomenology as a methodological innovation of reflection and abstraction

A methodological innovation has been made by the German mathematician-philosopher Edmund Husserl, which opened up a field of research unheard of in previous philosophical attempts to understand science, logic and especially consciousness in all the many ways it relates to the world and itself. The key of this method is a peculiar kind of refined reflection of consciousness upon its own operations by purging this reflection of some of the prejudices and suppositions, which were previously not acknowledged and which blocked the view of a realm that had been always there, but just not noticed. Because of the *aha-Erlebnis* character of the refinement procedure and the great resistance of daily consciousness to execute something it can hardly even imagine, this method by itself has stayed one of the more enigmatic parts of Husserl's legacy, though for some it is strangely obvious, as obvious that a movie is a movie, even though from the first scene on you forget that fact and are focused on what the movie is about. With this example of the experience of movie watching many of the points phenomenologists brought to light can be illustrated, especially the latent dimension of human experience.

§ 8. An introductory phenomenological reflection on the tacit dimension illustrated with the pastime of watching movies

At this stage of the investigation I will not just report about phenomenology, but will try to convey what phenomenology itself is about and will develop it using the theme of movie watching. I will zoom in on this peculiar difference between on one side the experience of watching a movie and getting absorbed in the characters and the story, and on the other side watching the movie as a movie, and the many things implied in that, like for example the movie being the end product of an elaborate production process.

The way I live my life has parallels with how I watch a movie. The way one practices phenomenology has parallels with seeing the movie as a movie. I'm mostly absorbed in the execution of the routine tasks of life, going about my business either on my own or within the context of the tasks taken up with my

fellow men and women, taking care of the necessities of life and pursuing my freely chosen interests. When watching a movie I live vicariously through the characters and am focused on their concerns and actions. Or I project myself as a neutral observer who just happens to be there and gets mysteriously swept along from one place and time to another, but still engaged in what the characters are engaged in. The better the movie is, the less I experience it as a movie, but as real, and can get as scared, perplexed, joyful or sad as the protagonists themselves.

But there is a limit of how good a movie can be before the awareness sets in again that it is a movie I am watching and this time a really, really good one. This would be one of the limit situations where one is triggered into a reflection and one becomes aware of the previously submerged dimension of the movie being a movie. Or maybe when the movie moves outside of my comfort zone, when it gets very boring or scary, I might wake up again to the fact that I am watching a movie and tell myself reassuringly so: It was not my life that got boring or scary, merely the movie had these qualities. In these limit situations I suspend or bracket the realistically lived content of the movie and create a distance between the movie and myself and see it from a different vantage-point. This perspective might only endure for a little moment, just enough to, let's say, recollect myself, and before I know it I am back again living the movie in a naïve way, swept along into the exciting world of the characters and forget the 'movie-ness' of the movie.

On the other side it is also possible that, once triggered out of the naïve mode of movie watching, I stay within the new position sustained by a budding mode of curiosity and wonder and resist the natural tendency to get 'back' into the movie. Now I might start inquiring into the larger context or horizon of the movie as a movie. Now I can look at the actors as actors, the plot as plot, and all the other integral parts of the movie like the editing, the camerawork, the special effects, and so on. Now I can look at what all these aspects mean by themselves, or in relationship to each other, or in relationship to the whole of the movie itself as a temporal unity. Meanwhile I remain the possibility to slip back into the natural attitude. And with a little training can switch back and forth, like a gestalt switch, ever more easy. Because of this skill the natural attitude will be slightly transformed, because it will carry the growing background presence of the possibility to switch and it can more easily import the new sensitivities opened up in the theoretical realm. In the long run this might result also, but not necessarily so, in the actual loss of the capacity of going back into straightforwardly enjoying

the movie, because the reflective attitude can become so strongly habituated that it just prevents the regaining of innocence from happening.

Here should be noted that what is now looked at from a different vantage point is still the same movie, there is nothing added to the phenomena appearing to consciousness. The only thing extra coming into play is my tacit knowledge of making a movie, though I might never have made one myself and might not even be able to run a camera. The only thing changed was the attitude in which the phenomena are looked at. This attitude can be called the theoretical or phenomenological attitude as contrasted with the pre-theoretical naïve natural attitude of watching absorbedly. This attitude has to be set off against another closely related possibility of investigation with which it might be easily confused. And that is a historical genetic reconstruction of the movie in the way it was actually made. The actual when, how, why and by whom of the movie are not in question in the phenomenological quest.

§ 9. What phenomenology is not

The phenomenological attitude also has to be contrasted with the attitude operative in scientific, metaphysical and theological investigations. None of their presuppositions and subject matters are in play here. The phenomena are investigated as far as they are phenomenal, as far as they appear as such to consciousness, not as effects of yet unknown scientific causes, or manifestations of noumenal metaphysical substances, or emanations of theological spiritual absolutes. None of these are even needed. In fact, these themselves can be seen from this newly acquired mode of access and be investigated anew. And to bring the argument to its logical conclusion, and going a little ahead in the laying out of the new mode and field of investigation, this mode itself can become a legitimate and possible, even necessary per demand of completion, subject of investigation, i.e. the phenomenological investigation of the investigative mode of phenomenology itself.

§ 10. Phenomenology's first and last subject: the tacit dimension

Let's backtrack here a little and see what structure, if any, can be gleaned from the previous paragraphs to make the case for the intelligibility and possibility of the phenomenological attitude more clear. Basically, and as compressed as possible, I made the following claim:

As we can watch a movie either in an absorbed way or in a reflective theoretical way, we can make a similar distinction between life lived in an absorbed naïve

way, and see it from a specifically refined reflective theoretical way, i.e. the phenomenological vantage point.

Or, similarly stated, but more elaborate: As we can watch a movie either in an absorbed way or in a reflective theoretical way--free of all historical, scientific, metaphysical and theological presuppositions, though not without the tacit knowledge of what a movie is--we can make a similar distinction between life lived in an absorbed naïve way--be it our involvement with ourselves, our body, things in the world, our fellow men and women, the world, the universe; be it as a professional, a scientist, a philosopher; be it in watching movies, reading fine literature or creating art, etc.--and see and interpret the whole of life from a specifically refined reflective theoretical way, i.e. the phenomenological vantage point, and investigate its heretofore hidden outer and inner contexts and the way the phenomena are experienced. Again without any presuppositions, just zooming in on this tacit knowledge of what life is, or just letting this dimension come to the fore, and lay it out in explicit assertions.

Here it might be stated that it looks like that phenomenology opens up nothing less nor more than the implicit dimension itself. It is its first and last subject. Next to a phenomenology of logic or language or whatever else, there is not another separate phenomenology of the tacit dimension of human experience. All phenomenology is about the tacit dimension of experience, and it is always human, because that's the only kind of experience we have reflexively access to. All phenomenological key terms like intentionality, intersubjectivity, evidence, horizon, temporality, passive synthesis etc. find their origin in the tacit dimension and are descriptors of structural aspects of this realm. Some of these terms, like lifeworld or *Dasein* even try to bring the whole of this realm to expression.

Maybe a useful distinction can be made between deep and surface structures of the tacit realm, where the tacitly of the surface realm is more obviously recognized as such, and the tacitly of the deeper structure is more hidden. In this distinction I would place on the side of surface tacitly the tacit dimension revealed in the concept of kinesthetics (the coordination of bodily action and perception in the context of our environment); the dimension of our pre-reflective tacit skill in dealing with people, including our spontaneous use of language and gestures in communication and our capacity to empathize; and the almost always pre-thematic obvious sense that we share a world with others. These philosophical themes can be laid out and made intelligible even for those who have had no introduction to phenomenology itself. Its tacitness lays on the

surface and no great intellectual effort has to be made to bring its tacitly into the open. On the more hidden side I would place issues like Husserl's concept of the lifeworld, which would for example lay out the embeddedness of science and philosophy within the lifeworld itself; the complex interconnected issue of intentionality, synthesis and evidence; and the complex structure of inner time-consciousness. Without these deeper tacit dimensions there would be no intelligible human experience whatsoever, including the so-called category mistakes, which can only happen if there are tacit categorial structures operative within consciousness in the first place. When trying to open up these deeper structures it might seem that one is engaged in speculative constructions.

§ 11. The tacit dimension operative in phenomenology

The deepest and most interesting aspect of the tacit dimension is the one operative within the doing of phenomenology itself. Here we enter the realm of the phenomenology of phenomenology, and if, as stated earlier, all phenomenology is by its very essence about the tacit dimension, then the phenomenology of phenomenology is about its own still hidden horizon of meaning and pre-thematic skill. In terms of skills, or accomplishments (*Leistung*) as Husserl characterizes all operations of consciousness, the following idea suggests itself. Some phenomenologists, like Dreyfus, have developed, or opened up, a phenomenology of skill acquisition and made careful distinctions in the stages of this process. The insights thus obtained about the tacit pre-reflective human capacity to acquire specific skills found its way in a very fruitful manner into the community of nursing educators and practitioners and educators in general. The obvious thought for a philosopher, who should always be on the lookout for self-referential possibilities, would be to apply these insights, as developed within phenomenology, to the procedures and skills operative in doing phenomenology itself. I am not sure if this has ever been tried, but the possibility presents itself as quite obvious. Its possible outcome might replace the existing introductory books to phenomenology with one that not only specifically describes the different stages a novice would traverse before he would become an expert, but would also include exercises for every of the identified stages.

§ 12. The phenomenology of skill acquisition and the acquisition of phenomenological skill

The question now to be addressed is how to put some more meat to this abstract possibility of exploring the pre-reflectively operative skill in doing phenomenology. Skill acquisition is based on a process of sedimentation of

subtle insights, both explicitly experienced in *Aha-Erlebnisse* and in hardly noticed moments of just-getting-something-right, all in the context of trials and errors, of hands-on grappling with real life or artificial challenges. But a skill doesn't develop *ex nihilo*, it is based on previously acquired skills, but now set to new tasks of ever more complex possibilities. The acquisition of mathematical skills comes to mind, where one first has to be able to count before making additions and subtractions, which by themselves become the basis for multiplication and division, on which can be build the rest of mathematics, provided that one combines it with the skill of abstraction and formalization. The very skill required in higher mathematics to abstract and formalize is a skill which is already operative, but then in a very basic form, within the mathematical entry skill of counting itself. In counting one has to abstract already from the diversity of things to be counted and experience the essential nature of counting as it is executed. Even on a deeper level the notion of object permanence is operative, which is a spontaneous skill of perceiving an entity enduring as itself throughout its diverse temporal manifestations. This subsequently forms the possibility condition of counting and, keeping as counted, the entities, which just have been constituted as time-transcending endurances. Keeping the counted as counted is also by itself an enduring time-transcending entity without which the next level would not be possible. Besides the time-transcending nature of the products constituted by skill, the skill itself is also enduring. This might, as many phenomenological observations, sound very obvious, but in a phenomenological frame of mind, which would discount any and all mechanistic explanatory devices, one can come to great wonder about the enduring nature of skill, especially within the context of the living now. How a specific skill transcends the ongoing sequence of moments in which it is operative, and how it can become operational again in a later moment after it has run its course, is not as obvious as one might think, though in our daily life we experience it on an ongoing basis and take it for granted.

§ 13. Eidetic variation as refined abstraction

Within phenomenology the skills of abstraction and formalization are operative in a peculiarly refined and skillful manner, called eidetic reduction, through which certain structures of human experience can come to the fore. Starting with a phenomenon as found reflexively within immanent consciousness, one can 'abstract,' or draw out, by imaginatively varying the phenomenon, a meaning, or structure, or essence, which seems to endure throughout the variation and can be construed as its time- and variation-transcending essence. As stated above,

this skill is based on, and is a peculiar refinement of, the skill of abstraction as found in mathematics or formal reasoning. An interesting question here to pursue might be to inquire phenomenologically if any abstractive procedure whatsoever is already eidetic in itself. If this is found to be so, as I think Husserl tried to point out, then the more formally presented phenomenological technique of eidetic variation is nothing more than the essence of the abstractive procedure itself, only now brought out from its tacit dimension into the open, reflexive, thematic-explanative realm. Here it has to be noted that the procedure itself applied to bring out this insight was what the insight was about. I am not claiming here that I executed that procedure. It is more the case that I, as a novice, see its possibility, but lack the skill to bring it to completion, though seeing the possibility itself is already half the work. In short the eidetic reduction of the eidetic reduction would be one 'moment' of the phenomenology of phenomenology.

§ 14. The phenomenological reduction as a refined reflexivity

Besides the skill of abstraction and formalization another skill is operative in phenomenology and that is reflexivity. This is another skill that lies ready-at-hand within the horizon of human experience and is pre-thematically operative in many situations. Reflexivity is here the capacity of consciousness, within the spacious structure of the living now, to reflect upon itself and find the just-passed as its own possession and find therein structures and meanings, which can be brought out thematically, and were previously pre-thematic. For example, if I am asked what I am doing and why, I can reflect and answer with a descriptive statement, going from a certain concerned absorbed attitude about something to its wider context and meaning. As Sartre pointed out, even in memory I can reconstruct every remembered lived moment as having been my own and place it in a larger framework. In combination with abstraction and memory I can reflectively discover enduring characteristics about myself, like certain desires and fears, values, skills etc. Reflexivity can bring out this enduring sense of individuality that we take ourselves to be. Here one is reminded of a parallel with the experience of the object permanence of things. The permanence here is the sense of the time-transcending endurance of the individual self, though I leave it here open what the results might be from ultimate phenomenological investigations into the relation between consciousness and self, especially the issue of the egological or non-egological structure of consciousness.

As there is a pre-thematic sense of, and skill in, reflexivity in daily life, there is the phenomenological equivalent called the epoché or reduction, which can be

construed as the revolutionized variant of reflexivity in the natural attitude. Natural reflexivity sets the condition for the widening of a horizon, like in the example of movie watching where reflexivity moves the naïve watcher into an explicit awareness of the movie as movie and on that basis can access a diversity of aspects of the movie, which were hidden within the natural attitude. One could say that the movie watcher bracketed the movie, froze it, so to speak, in the just-passed, and created a little distance by zooming itself out to bring into focus the horizon itself and therefore have certain aspects appear. In a similar manner the phenomenological reduction reflexively turns upon consciousness, but now with the conscious motivation to bracket the being of the world and the manner I experience it, thereby opening up the lived world as the horizon of all horizons, the meaning of all meaning, or the structure of all structures, the context of all contexts, and the ultimate possibility condition of any reflexive abstraction or abstractive reflection whatsoever. With this last characterization I am going ahead of myself again. Suffice it to say that reflexivity is besides abstraction another essential skill of phenomenology.

§ 15. the temporo-logical architectonic of abstractive and reflexive refinement

An architectonic of a phenomenology of phenomenology is now arising, and this will be stated to direct this investigation to a possible finale, not as a final conclusion or ultimate insight, but as a personal progress report. What is emerging is the idea that if reflexivity and abstraction in their phenomenological variant, i.e. phenomenological reduction and eidetic variation, are the two essential moments of phenomenology then phenomenology self-reflexively and abstractively applied to itself would have to include these moments themselves.

As reduction/reflection is procedure-wise the *sine qua non* of any rational/phenomenological investigation and therefore precedes abstraction, the structure, to put it in a temporo-logical order, should start with a reflection upon abstraction, proceed with an abstract investigation of abstraction, then move into a reflection on reflection, and end with an abstract investigation of reflection. The whole procedure will be duplicated on two other levels: a phenomenology of abstraction and reflection in the natural attitude, and a phenomenology of abstraction and reflexivity in their refined phenomenological level of skill. Therefore the whole temporo-logical order will start with a reflection on abstraction in the natural attitude and will end with an eidetic investigation of the phenomenological reduction, which might be the most basic *Wesenanschauung*

to be gotten from a Husserlian point of view, and actually is its start and finish, its origin and highest accomplishment.

So we start with:

A) the naïve assessment of abstraction and reflexivity of themselves in the natural attitude:

- 1) a reflection on abstraction, i.e. the naïve reflexively executed hold on abstraction itself.
- 2) an abstract investigation of abstraction, i.e. what is abstraction thought to be in the natural attitude,
- 3) a reflection on reflection, i.e. the naïve reflexively executed hold on reflexivity itself.
- 4) an abstract investigation of reflection, i.e. what is reflection thought to be in the natural attitude.

These four steps have to be duplicated in:

B) a straightforward phenomenology of abstraction and reflexivity:

- 1) a phenomenological reduction of abstraction, i.e. the refined reflexively executed hold on abstraction itself.
- 2) an eidetic investigation of abstraction, i.e. what is abstraction essentially in all its variations,
- 3) a phenomenological reduction of reflexivity, i.e. the refined reflexively executed hold on reflexivity itself, and
- 4) an eidetic investigation of reflexivity, i.e. what is reflexivity essentially in all its variations.

As a finale these four steps have to be duplicated in:

C) a phenomenology as turned upon itself:

- 1) a phenomenological reduction of eidetic variation, i.e. the refined reflexively executed hold on eidetic variation itself.
- 2) an eidetic investigation of eidetic variation, i.e. what is eidetic variation essentially in all its variations,

- 3) a phenomenological reduction of phenomenological reduction, i.e. the refined reflexively executed hold on phenomenological reduction itself, and
- 4) an eidetic investigation of the phenomenological reduction, i.e. what is the phenomenological reduction essentially in all its variations.

This architectonic is of course slightly annoying, because it is the overly elaborate systematic bringing out of a structural insight and its possibilities, which could be grasped in a flash, and could be stated in short as follows:

If reflection and abstraction are the two basic skills of the rational mind, and if both skills can be executed with different levels of accomplishment (above only the levels of naïve/natural and refined/phenomenological were used), and if these two skills can take each other as material, then a multitude of possible rational operations can be worked out, as was done above.

Whatever level of refinement we accomplish in abstraction or reflection, both as skill in action and in our understanding of these skills as subjects to be investigated, this skill will be always already non-thematically operative as the inescapable background when we do reflect upon and abstract from any subject whatsoever, even if the subject is reflection and abstraction themselves. As these skills are operative they can never be made into full presence for the phenomenological onlooker. It is this onlooker who applies the skill, and has to forget about the skill thematically to be able to successfully apply it upon a subject, which needs his full attention. Even at the highest level of reflection within phenomenology, when it takes itself as explicit subject matter, there always will be and stay a subtle difference between phenomenological skill as tacit background, phenomenological skill as consciously applied skill and phenomenological skill as subject of investigation. A complete self-transparency, where subject and object and background collapse into each other might not be possible.

§ 16. The naïve assessment of phenomenology as the crucial entry level to phenomenology.

Mathematically speaking I might have to end up with 16 variations instead of the 12 above, because the equation would be as follows: 2 (operations: abstraction and reflection) x 2 (subjects for 'operation': abstraction and reflection) x 2 (levels of skill in operation: naïve and refined) x 2 (levels of skill as subject: naïve and refined) = 16 permutations. I have 12 so far, therefore I am missing 4! This would be the set of four operations where the natural attitude reflects and abstracts

upon the phenomenological attitude. This might be quite impossible, because, as Fink showed, the natural attitude doesn't know anything about phenomenology, it only has a tacit understanding of abstraction and reflection and has no notion of the refined way phenomenology proceeds. *Per* Fink the human mind first needs the know-how of the phenomenological reduction before it can do phenomenology, but as the architectonic shows, the founding insight for this skill comes from the eidetic investigation of the phenomenological reduction, which is only to be had at the very end of the long and arduous quest of phenomenology for its self-clarification and foundation.

D) the naïve assessment of phenomenology in the natural attitude:

- 1) a reflection on eidetic variation, i.e. the naïve reflexively executed hold on eidetic variation itself.
- 2) an abstract investigation of eidetic variation, i.e. what is eidetic variation thought to be in the natural attitude,
- 3) a reflection on phenomenological reduction, i.e. the naïve reflexively executed hold on phenomenological reduction itself.
- 4) an abstract investigation of the phenomenological reduction, i.e. what is the phenomenological reduction thought to be in the natural attitude.

As impossible as this set might be, it is at the same time the crucial entry level for doing phenomenology in the first place, because one will, and has to, start with a naïve notion of phenomenology in order to proceed and find out what the phenomenological paradigm is really about. Therefore one starts with the tools of reflection and abstraction on the level of the natural attitude to investigate the phenomenological tools of phenomenological reduction and eidetic variation. What will come out of that will be the phenomenologically cleared notion of the natural attitude. Temporo-logically the D-set will have to be placed between A and B, because it is based on, and one step beyond the naïve assessment of the natural attitude, and is the introductory level towards a phenomenological assessment of the natural attitude. In this way the 16 permutations found their temporo-logical order. As we can learn from Kuhn, the right set of introductory problems can ignite the learning process, and as Husserl was confident, a gradual 'zig-zag-wise' change of one's notions of abstraction and reflection will then come about. In terms of taciticy what happens in the process is that our tacit skill in reflecting and making abstractions will guide our effort to become self-

aware of these two skills in ever more refined ways depending on the amount of levels of skill one wants to differentiate between.

§ 17. Conclusion

This paper tries to assess, at a lower level of phenomenological skill, the tacit dimension operative in the doing of phenomenology itself. The pre-phenomenological, pre-thematic naive skills of everyday abstraction and reflection comprise the tacit basis upon which phenomenology draws to do its work. In the natural attitude we are always already using these skills in daily life, and in the phenomenological attitude we have refined these skills to different levels of proficiency, where abstraction is named eidetic variation, and reflection is then named phenomenological reduction. In both the natural attitude and while doing phenomenology we can make reflection and abstraction into explicit subjects for reflection and abstraction, and while doing so we tacitly use the same sedimented skills as background. The highest possible level of phenomenological reflection would comprise the following structure: Having the sedimented phenomenological skill as tacit background, we use the phenomenological skill as consciously applied skill, and apply it to phenomenological skill itself as subject of investigation. It's crowning achievement would be an eidetic investigation of the phenomenological reduction, i.e. what is the phenomenological reduction essentially in all its variations. Once this is figured out the opening up of the tacit dimension in all its varieties will be a piece of cake, for the sedimented tacit skills of eidetic variation and phenomenological reduction will be at their most effective. If anyone has achieved this is dubitable. The one who went farthest along these lines, Eugen Fink, did not finish the quest, and only indicated in his *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* the preliminary concept of a full-blown phenomenology of phenomenology, or, as he called it, the 'idea of a transcendental theory of [phenomenological] method.' I wonder why he stopped.

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