THE WAY TO THE SUBJECT BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Nicola Zippel

At the beginning of Chapter 2 of his recent study on consciousness, Nicholas Humphrey mentions to his audience the practice of the Husserlian *epoché* as an example of a possible method of entering a not only visual but also theoretical new experience of seeing and, in a broad sense, perceiving.[1] This fleeting state of a classic phenomenological concept within a current psychological-cognitive discussion represents a stimulus to reflect once again on the Husserlian method of studying consciousness.

The phenomenological reduction allows the revealing of the authentic inner life of the subject, by bringing about the reflection on the I and on its transcendental structures. The splitting (*Spaltung*) of the Ego, which follows the phenomenological reduction, does not cause an irrecoverable separation but on the contrary allows precisely the recovery of the naïve dimension of the I on the higher level of the phenomenological attitude. The latter thematizes the egological naïve existence in its eidetic-temporal features. The passage from the natural attitude to the phenomenological one consists of a specific methodological choice: the phenomenological experience is the experience which the subjectivity makes of itself as transcendental entity. Therefore the reduction constitutes the radical "breaking" with the anonymous and forgetful (un-aware rather than un-conscious) life of the worldly-I and determines the reawakening of the transcendental-I.

If one considers psychology, in accordance with a Husserlian point of view, as a "positive" science, i.e., without any phenomenological background, a psychological consideration legitimizes the relationship between the Ego and transcendence in terms of a link between two equivalent realities, where the givenness of the world is accepted in an unproblematic manner. As a consequence, consciousness is interpreted according to a purely naturalistic grammar: "Following the model of the science of nature means almost inevitably: to reify the consciousness."[2] Conversely, since the phenomenological reduction discovers the intentional relationship between the I and transcendence, it represents an original attempt to carry on the psychological experience of introspection and self-reflection (*Selbst-Besinnung*, in the Husserlian terms).

The psychologist, too, has the subjective manners of world-experience as a theme of his research, so much so that Husserl admits that it is possible to see universal subjectivity as the psychological inquiry field.[3] But the philosopher has to stage a phenomenological life[4] and bluntly interrupt (*brechen*) the psychological way of proceeding, because the psychologist accepts the world pure and simple (*schlechtin*) and is therefore lacking the sceptical doubt goading the phenomenologist and is not in urgent need to wonder about the fundament of validity of his experience of the world, on which he grounds his investigations and statements.

> To the psychologist reality and the eidetic possibility of a world are given in advance as existing, natural, and unquestioned . . . since it [psychology] doesn't even inquire back about its ultimate presuppositions of validity.[5]

The theoretical situation of the psychologist is connoted by the oblivion of himself as transcendental subjectivity and only the passage to the phenomenological attitude allows the freeing of the researcher's Ego (both the psychologist's and the philosopher's) from this forgetfulness, as well as the building of what Husserl calls a "phenomenology as transcendental psychology."[6]

In his *Amsterdam Discourses*, known also by the title of "Phenomenological Psychology,"[7] Husserl describes phenomenology as a radicalization of a method which was exercised by some psychologists, like Brentano, as well as scientific investigators of nature, like Mach. This radicalization allows elaborating the first form of a psychology, which is no longer naïve and not yet strictly phenomeno-

logical, i.e., "phenomenological psychology." It plays a double role: from one side, it represents a science of fundament for psychology, and from the other side it is the preliminary but necessary step to pure transcendental phenomenology.

In order to go beyond mere psychology, phenomenological psychology has to adopt a new method, which has in the reflection (*Reflexion*) its theoretical core. The subject who reflects is quite different from a subject who simply lives: while the latter restricts itself to living through (*durchleben*) its own life, the former puts itself over this life and lives it mentally (*erleben*).

The act of reflection means entering into the thematization of one's own life, where the subject not only lives directly its activity and tasks but also considers this active life from a point of view of self-observation, in order to grasp the common trait of all its experiences. In this way, this kind of reflection, which seeks in depth along the structures of subject, is just a phenomenological experience, since it aims to shed light on the eidetic character of the subject's life.

> What for us is accessible through reflection, has a meaningful general character, that of the consciousness of something . . .we talk about intentionality. It is the eidetic character of life in its strictly psychic sense, from which therefore it is purely and simply inseparable.[8]

As phenomenological, psychology does not deal more with single acts of the inner life, like perceiving, remembering, desiring, etc., but questions the set character, i.e., the eidetic one, about these psychical experiences and finally it finds the trait of intentionality. As it reveals the peculiar dimension of consciousness, psychology has to definitively leave its naturalization of the psychic and engage itself in a rigorous and careful intentional analysis.[9]

The exit from viewing consciousness as analogous to something existing in nature takes place through the comprehension of the radical difference between inner and external time. This understanding is crucial for the transition to a pure phenomenological psychology, because, as Husserl explains, "the underlying source of all confusion [is situated] in the equivalence of immanent temporality and objective real temporality, an equivalence which imposes itself self-evidently."[10]

Understanding the difference between the way of being of these two forms of time means understanding the essential difference between the way of being of what belongs to the subject and what does not. The external, objective time, which connotes the reality of natural entities, has the character of coexistence and succession; the inner life of the subject, as such, cannot have the same living dimension of the external things, because its existence has any form of extension and develops itself through mental processes (*die Erlebnisse*), which have nothing analogous in nature.

The form of the unitary stream of consciousness, which belongs essentially to the mental processes, is not a real parallel form of this space-temporality.[11] It is interesting to note that Husserl adopts here the same scheme of *res extensa* and *res cogitans* which he normally strongly criticizes; but the scheme is of use only to explain that it is a false one based on a parallelism, which has the wrong assumption that one deals with two "things." If one reveals this mistake, it is possible to realize that the subject, as a psychical entity, has to have another way of being, the one of the intentional life, which doesn't undergo a natural life process. The figure of a "stream" is only an image used to describe the inner life of consciousness, which has therefore a simply heuristic function, as Husserl had explained in his *Zeitvorlesungen* of 1905.[12] The recognition of the peculiar structure of inner time is crucial to carry on a proper intentional analysis, because the intentional life of the subject consists of its temporal moments, like impression, retention and so on.

The Reduction as Medial Passage to the Philosophical Dimension

Once it is clear that the study of inner life consciousness is quite different from the study of nature, it is possible to open the authentic dimension of the subject, especially regarding its egological trait. Phenomenological psychology, as *descriptive*, takes upon itself the task to make clear the life of the Ego, which is a strictly conscious life, because "no I is thinkable without an egological consciousness,"[13] and, as intentional, this psychology is able to

free itself from the naturalistic pattern and get to the eidetic heart of this subjective life.

But as merely psychological, this analysis remains "unphilosophisch,"[14] because it does not become independent of its original and worst presupposition, the presupposition of the world. Eugen Fink also recalled the "realistic" and in a critical sense "dogmatic" trait of a simply "descriptive" psychology, which understands the given being as "thing" and so maintains itself in a "pre-philosophic" dimension.[15] The real emancipation from other positive sciences is possible for psychology only if it leaves the unquestioned idea of an existent world and transforms it in the concept of a noematic world. This theoretical gesture means the very entrance into the authentic phenomenological dimension of the inquiry. Considering the world as a noema denotes not only the recognition of the intentional structure as the way of being of the subject, what has made the phenomenological psychology too, but also the comprehension of this structure as the way of being in relationship to the world by the subject, therefore the understanding of this relationship itself as an intentional experience.

In this way, the world is not primarily an existent world, rather it is originally a constituted world within a plan of intentional networks, which has its source in consciousness and temporal subjective life. From the psychological level the phenomenological inquiry changes over to the transcendental one.[16]

On the basis of the Husserlian reflections, it seems the problem of psychology is intrinsic and linked to its denomination. By this I mean that, since psychology has the peculiar theoretical feature in its call to the reality of a psyche, it cannot free itself from the bond to a concept, which includes a related world and thus presupposes this world as given in advance. On the contrary, phenomenology has its essential characteristic in its being a discourse about phenomena, and the world becomes just a phenomenon, a noema, which presupposes therefore the subject as the holder of noetic-noematic correlation.

Hence phenomenology essentially gives a philosophical interpretation of the psychological categories, which has its nucleus in the reading of the consciousness-temporal structure of the subject. Clearing the constitutive limit of the inner experience of psychology opens the way to a more authentic inner experience, the one of the phenomenological correlation.

Leaving the presupposition of the world involves departing from the idea of a subject as a merely human subject and putting attention exclusively to the eidetic or transcendental dimension of the Ego. In this perspective, the phenomenologist as "man" is "parenthesized" (*eingeklammert*) and he becomes a phenomenon, the phenomenon of his transcendental I.[17]

This means there is a sort of redoubling of the I, an I-object and an I-subject; it is common knowledge that Husserl deals with this problem in section 53 of the *Crises of European Sciences*, where he calls the question "a necessary theoretical question,"[18] theoretical, i.e., philosophical, and not psychological. As regards the reflections Husserl develops in the *Krisis*, I am interested in stressing another passage, where he talks about the "indirect" tie between body and psyche. Even if he admits the clear connection body-mind, Husserl is careful not to reduce the subject's identity to its bodily life:

> A body [*Körper*] is what it is as substratum of "causal" qualities, which is located in its own spatial essence. . . . But the I is "this one" and it has its own individuality in itself and by itself, it does not have an individuality by causality. . . . As such it has especially in itself its uniqueness. Space and time don't represent principles of individuation for the I.[19]

If one considers the human being apart from its corporeity, the subjective feature of this being loses nothing of its intentional relationship with reality. As in the case of the *Amsterdam Discourses*, the independence of the way of being of the subject is linked to its essential difference from the way of being of nature; in this perspective, there may again be a *res extensa*, but there is certainly no *res cogitans*, rather an *ego cogito*, which has in itself, i.e., in its consciousness-temporal mark, the origin of both its sense and the comprehension of it.

According to Husserl, psychology lacks a phenomenological perspective and for this reason it is not structurally able to reveal the transcendentality of the subject. The method of the transcendental reduction, which takes

place as a return revealing the subjectivity to itself, makes it possible to grasp the link connecting worldly reality and the egological dimension, i.e., the world's becoming in the ways of the originally subjective constitution. The assumption of the phenomenological attitude allows the psychologist to not take part in the belief in the world and so to be able to identify and thematize the intentional life of the subject. The *epoché* is the necessary medium to realize the passage from the natural attitude to the phenomenological one:

> In a psychology that is pure, i.e., descriptive in the real sense of the term, the epoché is the medium to make subjects . . . something that can be experienced and thematized in their own essential purity.[20]

In accordance with this perspective, the legitimate aim of the psychological experience to understand the original structures of the life-consciousness can find in the conceptual figure of the phenomenological reduction both a valid methodological approach and a useful term of comparison. But psychology, if it wants to really understand the inner structure of human life, must have no fear to leave a merely anthropological idea of man, which is an unquestioned heritage of the positive sciences, in favour of an authentic philosophical conception of it.

Phenomenology, thanks to its attitude bearing no position about the reality of the world and of man as a merely worldly man, i.e., thanks to the *epoché*, is able to offer to psychology the right way to enter a quite philosophical dimension of inquiry.

As Eugen Fink remarks, phenomenology is not a "regional," i.e., limited science, but "as philosophy" talks about the world in general, the world becomes a philosophical question to investigate *beyond* its evident coming into sight to a subject, towards the source of this becoming visible: "the ensemble of the existing, which we call with the name 'world,' as a unit of validity situated in the life of the transcendental subjectivity opened by reduction, becomes the problem."[21] And phenomenology represents the theoretical way to approach this question in a non-naïve manner. The passage from the psychological-natural I to the phenomenological-transcendental one is possible thanks to the peculiar dimension of *Selbstbesinnung*, where the method of reduction moves. The level of the awareness of one's own transcendentality distinguishes the phenomenological attitude from the natural one: having conscience of the intentional subjective performance is not a definitive renouncing of the natural I, but allows the revelation of its transcendental root. It constitutes a definitive renouncing of the natural, i.e., naïve approach to the problem of the psychical life of the I.

The *epoché* can play the role of medium just because psychology and phenomenology deal with the same subject, that is, with the same subjective structure, the intentional one. As Husserl explains in a passage of *Crisis*, "the fully realized problem of intentionality [is] one of pure psychology, which then belongs to every science which deals with the psychical (the psychophysical, biological sciences)."[22]

Thus phenomenology becomes the philosophical method of psychology, a sort of "philosophical awareness" of the psychological experience (and science).

The difference between philosophy and psychology has perhaps no more reason for being, on condition that an authentic philosophy, as a formal method without a practical application, can exist without a psychology too, but an authentic psychology cannot realize itself without the guidance of philosophy.[23]

A Not-Worldly Answer to the World-Problem

If one compares some passages of the basic reflections by William James on psychology and its features, one can affirm that phenomenology begins where psychology ends:

> Now the *relation of knowing* is the most mysterious thing in the world. . . . The psychologist, for his part, does not consider the matter so curiously as this. Finding a world before him which he cannot but believe that *he* knows. . . . Knowledge becomes for him an ultimate relation that *must be admitted, whether it be explained or not*.[24]

In his assertions James seems to confirm precisely the critical judgment articulated by Husserl's point of view on psychology. Phenomenology starts questioning the givenness of the world in its obviousness and the knowing approach to this world by the subject. To discuss the knowledge of the world, i.e., the world-experience, involves refusing the simple world-belief (*Weltglauben*) and the human status of the Ego as performer of this belief. It means beginning with the absence of presuppositions, which Husserl states to be one of the conditions for a genuine phenomenological analysis, and which the psychological enterprise lacks. [25]

In his stringent confrontation with the neo-Kantian critique of phenomenology, which compares phenomenology to an empirical psychology, Fink recognizes that the idea of world-relations is the main difference between the phenomenological and the psychological approaches to the existing (*seiend*). The theoretical character of the world-experience has to lead to the overcoming of the purely cognitive level, in which the world is the simple object of knowledge (and as such is unquestioned in its givenness); in this way one can penetrate under this visible and apparently quiet surface and arrive at the dynamic root of the world-relation, i.e., the transcendental life of the subject and the continuous interweavements of consciousness, which always constitute the sense of world-experience: "We can consequently consider now also the world itself as a "stratum" in transcendental life, as the level of termination of all constitutive processes, and as the surface of transcendental life, which allows the rising of a world."[26]

To abolish the world-belief doesn't involve renouncing the world-relation or the transformation of the world in a simple existing grounded on a transcendence that is just as obscure; the reduction as way of access to the original structures of the subjective experience of a world permits one to take the world back (*zurücknehmen*), to keep it back (*einbehalten*) in its genuine sense by the same gesture of transcending it, since such a transcending doesn't mean a simple overcoming beyond the world or out of it, but an aware and methodological movement behind the world; it reveals the transcendental background of the sense, which is rooted in a subjectivity that is also worldly, and for this reason it remains a movement internal to the originary world-feature. Therefore, the comprehension of reduction involves that of constitution, because making clear the phenomenal structure of the world entails the transfer of attention from the world as existing to the world as ensemble of the sense-bestowing performances of the subject. According to such a perspective, phenomenological philosophy does not set against one another "empirical" and "transcendental," but "it follows the opposition of '*worldly*' and '*transcendental*,'"[27] which is based precisely on the right to question the world as to its constitutive origin.

The most genuine feature of phenomenology with respect to psychology consists precisely in this freeing from the uncritical adherence to the world-givenness, making possible a new understanding of the being of the world.[28] Subjectivity is the place of this consciousness-raising regarding its own worldly condition, which, by means of the phenomenological reduction, thematizes, overcomes and then supplies the world-experience with a new sense, that is, a really philosophical, transcendental sense. This is possible thanks to the threefold egological structure, which allows one to realize this thematization that transcends and keeps back what is transcended, since all three Egos play a role complementary to the one of the others: the Ego enmeshed in the world is the subject of the naïve world-belief, the transcendental Ego is the fundament of the sense of this worldly-enmeshed being, but it is not the actual performer of the *epoché,* by which it is revealed in its constitutive richness; only the onlooker Ego (*Zuschauer*) realizes the reduction, because it is the only subjective feature that can break the world-belief, since it is not entangled in it, not even in the superior form of transcendentality. This I as the uninterested observer of the vital subjective process is able to read and recognize the phenomenality of the world, and to see its essence of intentional correlate.[29] The comprehension of the threefold egological structure, and the particular attention which must be paid to the figure of the onlooker I, allow one to grasp the basic difference between phenomenology and psychology, considering that the latter is "a methodology of the *limitation* within the world," while the *epoché* or

phenomenological reduction establishes the method "of the *de-limitation* beyond the world: the totality of the existing, which we mean under the name 'world,' becomes a problem as a unity of validity that lies in the life of the transcendental subjectivity disclosed with the reduction."[30]

By grasping the authentic trait of the transcendentality of the subject, namely its sense-bestowing character, its being the sense-source of the world, one recognizes the constitutive dimension uncovered by reduction; if the reduction has permitted one to exit from the naïve world-belief and, thus, to transcend the pre-givenness of the world, to unmask its apparently unproblematic obviousness, making the world the problem of philosophy, the constitution as a feature of the subjective life shows the sense-bond between world and subject, a tie which remains also with the transcendence of the world and allows that overcoming and keeping back, from which phenomenology as not-worldly philosophy of the world originates.

Such a philosophical perspective can allow the formation of a renewed psychology as a not-worldly psychology, which must not renounce its ambition to explain personal life as world-life, making possible the understanding of this existence in its transcendental and constitutive complexity.

ENDNOTES

1. See Nicholas Humphrey, *Seeing Red: A Study in Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
2. Edmund Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911–1921)*, Hua XXV, ed. T. Nenon, H. R. Sepp (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 26. My translation.
3. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926–1935)*, Hua XXXIV, ed. S. Luft (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 396.
4. Cf. ibid., 395.
5. Ibid., 397. My translation.
6. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität: I. Teil (1905–1920)*, Hua XIII, ed. I. Kern (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 169. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, Hua VI, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 261.
7. Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, Hua IX, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 302–49.
8. Ibid., 307. My translation.
9. "The phenomenological method describes things as they are—not as we think they are. The phenomenological psychologist asks 'What is it?' before asking 'Why is it so?' The 'stimulus error' is minimized because experience is not described in terms of what we know about physiology, childhood sources, or environmental determinants." M. S. Lindauer, "Phenomenological Method," in R. J. Corsini, ed., *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, vol. 3 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), 70.
10. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, 310. My translation.
11. Cf. Ibid.
12. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins (1893–1917)*, ed. R. Boehm (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 75.
13. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, 323. My translation.
14. Ibid., 327.
15. Cf. Eugen Fink, "Die phänomenologische Philosophie Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik," in *Studien zur Phänomenologie (1930–1939)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 85. About this harmful effect of the "descriptive" psychology on phenomenology, see also the observations by J. Drummond, "The Transcendental and the Psychological," *Husserl Studies* 24 (2008): 195.
16. Cf. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, 328.
17. Cf. ibid., 341.
18. Husserl, *Krisis*, 184. My translation.
19. Ibid., 221–22. My translation.
20. Ibid., 247. My translation.
21. Fink, "Die phänomenologische Philosophie Husserls," 126. My translation. In the phenomenological perspective, the "problem" of the world is enriched by the notion of the "life-world," see P. Ashworth, "An Approach to Phenomenological Psychology: The Contingencies of the Life

World," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 2 (2003): 145–46.

22. Husserl, *Krisis*, 246. My translation.
23. "Husserl seems to have realized that a systematically executed phenomenological reduction as used in phenomenological psychology must necessarily evolve into the transcendental reduction. But this would mean that phenomenological psychology ultimately would be taken up into transcendental phenomenology." J. J. Kockelmans, "Philosophy of Psychology," in L. Embree et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 532.
24. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1950), 216 (last emphasis mine).
25. This doesn't mean that there is no correspondence between James's thought and Husserl's philosophy; on the contrary, it is possible to find a lot of contact points as to the themes and aims of both inquiries, such as mental stream, personal self, association, time experience, and so on. Concerning this, Dorion Cairns notes that James "had an ability to nose out important phenomenological data, but . . . did not do much with intentionality and so missed the essential thing in the mind." *Conversations with Husserl and Fink* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 62. Cairns reminds us of a reason for the failed encounter between James and Husserl: "[The US philosopher] Pitkin was in Dilthey's seminar, became interested, and came to Göttingen, where he received permission to translate the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Later, the prospective publisher was advised by William James not to publish. Husserl thinks that James saw only the *Prolegomena*, and that its anti-*Psychologismus* was very *unsympatisch* (unattractive) to James" (ibid., 9–10). The interest of Husserl for James's researches (so to speak a one-sided interest) has been recently recalled by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi: "Although James did not cite Husserl, a student of both Brentano and Stumpf, the latter had recommended that Husserl read James's *Principles*. Husserl did so, and he clearly learned from James." S. Gallagher and D. Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2. See also the classic studies by R. Stevens, *James and Husserl: The Foundations of Meaning* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), and B. Wilshire, *William James and Phenomenology: A Study of the "Principles of Psychology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).
26. Fink, "Die phänomenologische Philosophie Husserls," 149. My translation.
27. Ibid., 147. My translation.
28. As Drummond properly remarks: "Transcendental subjectivity is characterized by a completeness that is lacking in psychological subjectivity, which is merely region of the world, and it is not "relative" to the world but "prior" to it as the medium of access thereto," ("The Transcendental and the Psychological," 202–03).
29. On the notion of the "onlooker Ego" as "phenomenologizing" (*phänomenologisierend*) see some notable even if brief reflections by Husserl himself in *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion*, Appendix XII, 175–76, and again Fink, *Vi. Cartesianische Meditation: Teil I. Die Idee einer tranzendentalen Methodenlehre*, ed. H. Ebelin, J. Holl, and G. Van Kerckhoven (Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1988), 24 and 85–86; see also"Die phänomenologische Philosophie Husserls," 153.

La Sapienta University, Rome, Italy