

What Does the Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl Want to Accomplish? (The Phenomenological Idea of Laying-a-Ground)¹

EUGEN FINK

Translated by Arthur Grugan

In its relationship to our era, the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl finds itself in a *paradoxical situation*. Even in its fourth decade powerful effects are radiating from it, which hardly one of the philosophers of this time has been able to avoid; a host of prominent thinkers have received their impetus, incentive and point of departure from it; a true torrent of interpretations,² of friendly and hostile critiques, has passed over it; even in the methodology of the positive sciences, thought-motifs of Husserlian philosophy have become effective. All of this testifies to the extraordinary, spiritual-historical power of this philosophy.

Yet it is strange and astonishing that this broad "effect" is not at all derived from a real understanding, but rather is grounded in the

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In the translation the use of parentheses, italics, and quotation marks conforms entirely to the German original. In the few cases where additions are made by the translator for purposes of clarity such additions are placed in brackets. Notes by the translator are indicated by numerals; Fink's own footnotes are indicated by small-case letters.

²We translate "*die Interpretation*" as "interpretation" with a small-case letter and "*die Auslegung*" with an initial capital.

consideration and appropriation of peripheral courses of thought. The contemporary judgment of the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl fails, almost without exception, to recognize its true meaning. Husserl is judged, admired and reproached sometimes as an eidetician and logician, at other times as a theoretician of knowledge,³ on the one hand, as an ontologist giving word to the "matters themselves,"⁴ and, on the other hand, as an "Idealist." Thereby, every such Interpretation is capable, with moderate violence, of "proving" itself from his writings. The *authentic* and *central* meaning of Edmund Husserl's philosophy is today still *unknown*.

The deeper ground for this lies not in a lack of willingness to understand on the part of our era, but rather in the essence of phenomenology itself. The appropriation of its true meaning cannot at all come about within the horizon of our natural deportment of knowledge.⁵ Access to phenomenology demands a radical *reversal of our total existence* reaching into our depths, a change of every *pre-scientifically-immediate* comportment to world and things as well as of the disposition of our life lying at the basis of all scientific and *traditionally-philosophical* attitudes of knowledge.⁶ The phenomenological idea of philosophy can come into view not by advancing the directions of theoretical research already entered into by life, nor by radicalizing problems already set previously into motion, but only in a *turn-about* of the *constant ground-deportment* of human life which supports all theoretical directions of research.

Almost without exception the self-interpretations of great philosophies share the common feature that they feel themselves determined by a deeply penetrating opposition to the natural deportment of life: as "awakening from out of the dogmatic slumber," as the "world turned upside down." In these philosophical concerns,

³Erkenntnis. To distinguish between "*Erkenntnis*" and "*Wissen*," both of which translate as "knowledge," we translate the latter with an initial capital.

⁴"*Sachen selbst*."

⁵*Erkenntnishaltung*. "*Haltung*" also carries the important sense of foundation or support which our "deportment" does not.

⁶*Erkenntniseinstellungen*. We translate "*Einstellung*" as "attitude," with a small-case letter, and "*die Attitude*" with an initial capital.

however, the opposition to the "common understanding" is by no means the same, but always obtains its genuine meaning from the idea of a *specific* philosophy. Thus phenomenology does not share with other philosophical approaches the reversal of one's total existence that necessarily is demanded for its understanding.

The paradoxical situation peculiar to Husserl's phenomenological philosophy can be symbolized, though, by means of the *Platonic allegory of the cave*, not because it is somehow itself a modernized Platonism, but because Plato, from out of the power of mythical intuition, discovered the great, visionary symbol of all philosophizing. To be sure, this allegory reveals its power of illumination firstly with regard to the *Platonic* philosophy. Nevertheless, applied in free modification to phenomenology, it still shows an enlightening, symbolically-disclosing luminary power.

In a cave into which a dim light descends from a narrow, highly placed entrance, men are immovably shackled fast and enchained, are turned away from the entrance and the light's intrusion, and are turned towards the wall of the cave, upon which stand out the shadows of themselves as well as those of things outside, moving past in front of the cave's entrance. Now they must necessarily regard the shadows as what-really-is, because at no time have they been able to experience either themselves or the things moved past outside. Thus all their knowledge is knowledge of shadows, their truths [truths] about shadows, without their ever coming to Know shadowness as such. And as there will be some among these men who, more quickly and more adequately than the others, can recognize and determine the shadows which have been taken for what-really-is, so will there be, in the shadow-knowledge, the distinction between a naive and a more perfect knowledge.

For a phenomenological Interpretation, this cave becomes a simile for the *constant world-situation of man*. We are always unmovably enchained in the bind of an overpowering tradition of "prejudices" which keeps us turned away from what-really-is and turned towards the world of "shadows," towards the shadows of ourselves and of things. Here, though, "shadows" signifies not so much what-is-not-real, what-properly-is-not, but rather what derives the sense of its

Being from what-really-is, what *has been fashioned* from it. A shadow is recognized when it is understood *as such*, that is, when it is referred back to what is casting the shadow. The sole mode of knowledge that is possible in the constant world-situation, is, thus, one which is never capable of becoming a real grasping of the things accessible to it, precisely because we remain turned away from the dimension from whence alone these things can be authentically understood. More explicitly expressed: Constrained and imprisoned in the "cave" of the world, open only for worldly entities ("shadows"), addressing ourselves, too, as being worldly, as "shadows," we have indeed an idea of knowledge which is bound to the world, and what is more: the idea of a worldly "science." However, from the very beginning this Knowledge is *in toto*, in all of its possible perfections, already confined and determined by the ground-deportment of the knowing life, by its "turning away from the light-world lying in front of the cave." Thereby, this world-constraint (the imprisonment in the cave) does not strike us as constriction and confinement; on the contrary, we are so thoroughly delivered over to the power of this ground-deportment that determines our total existence from the ground up that we take the world as the totality of entities in an utterly questionless way and as altogether obvious.

Now if—as the Platonic allegory continues—it were given to one of the prisoners in the cave to be rid of his chains and thereby to be able to experience himself moving about, then, at first, pain would be the result of the movement [to which he is] unaccustomed, so that he would want to return again into the state-of-motionlessness. And, if he now dragged himself forcibly to the entrance of the cave and there partook of the sight of the sun's light, then, blinded, he would see nothing at first and would yearn again for the familiar dusk of the cave. But when he, being held fast above, gradually has learned to see, when he has really recognized his true self and the true things, and when he, having returned again back into the cave, then sees the shadows once again, he will never again regard these shadows as the real things themselves nor his own shadow as his true "self"; rather, he will understand the shadows as such by referring them back to the real things. He will thus not at all reject the knowledge which the others have, but will understand it precisely in its "shadowiness." However, the others who

are still enchained will not understand *him*. Constrained in the cave, naively confident of their shadow-knowledge, they know nothing of a world of light of true Being that is inaccessible to them; they will meet the pronouncements of the one who has been rid of his chains with the profoundest mistrust. All of their concepts and modes of understanding, though, collectively stem from the knowledge of shadows which they regard as what-really-is. Now how are they to understand the one who wants to disclose shadowiness to them, without themselves being able to experience real things in the light, thus as things which are casting shadows. And when this one who has been unchained attempts to free them, and thereby to bring them to the movements which will cause them pain, they will, to be sure, be hostilely disposed toward him.

The violence, tension and struggle of the *accomplishment* of philosophizing symbolized in this allegory also determines the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl. The philosophical "unchaining," the tearing oneself free from the power of one's naive submission to the world, the stepping-forth from out of that familiarity with entities which always provides us with security, in one word, the phenomenological "epoché," is anything but a noncommittal, "merely" theoretical, intellectual act; it is rather a spiritual movement of one's self *encompassing* the *entire man* and, as an attack upon the "state-of-motionlessness" supporting us in our depths, the pain of a *fundamental transformation down to our roots*. And, if, then, the spiritual loosening and unchaining of the bonds by which we are bound to the world really gets underway, then, too, the freedom which was gained with so much difficulty has seemingly become *senseless*: we have freed ourselves of the world in order to stand in the face of nothingness; we have suspended⁷ worldly science in order now to know nothing at all. However, here, too, it is apparent that we are merely *blinded* by the splendor of totally new kinds of possibilities of knowledge, that we, as long as we stand fast, shall come to a real knowledge of the *original-dimension* from whence every worldly entity, like the shadows finally can be grasped from the things which are really casting the shadows.

⁷*Ausgeschaltet*. By "suspended" we mean to translate the notion of setting something out of action or working order, thus preventing it from having any kind of effective impact on us.

Also, he who philosophizes phenomenologically will not reject the knowledge which was won in the pre-phenomenological "natural attitude," in the constant world-situation of our human life, but will refer it back to the fundamentally restricted and constrained situation from out of which it stems and thereby will "relativize" it.

However, he himself *necessarily* remains exposed to misunderstanding insofar as he, philosophizing, turns himself to the others. All thought-habits, ways of understanding, concepts and words of the others are rooted precisely in that ground-deportment of knowledge which, as a fundamental *constraint* (as imprisonment in the "cave"), is overcome and transcended⁸ by the phenomenological philosophy. Without going through this overcoming and transcending [for] oneself, no one can gain a real access to phenomenological philosophy. Our era can really attain to Husserl's philosophy, which down to today is still unknown and ungrasped, only by ascending out of the cave of world-constraint, by passing through the pain of self-release—*and not* through "critiques" that are thoroughly bound to the naive understanding of the world, enslaved to the natural thought-habits and entangled in the pre-constituted word-meanings of the everyday and scientific language.

Thus, if phenomenology—as what is to come to expression by referring to the Platonic allegory—eludes a direct and easily understandable, general characterization, then a reporting can assume only the form of a limited "preview." In what follows, such a preliminary perspective is to be presented: in terms of that idea of the ground-laying of philosophy that is peculiar to it, the phenomenology of Husserl is to undergo a definite characterization such that, precisely in reference to this idea, phenomenology's *movement of self-transformation* can be exhibited positively.

Now, first of all, what does the "idea of the ground-laying of philosophy" mean? The laying-of-a-ground of a philosophy is the

⁸*Überstiegen*. We translate "*Übersteigen*" as "to transcend," with a small-case letter, or as "to go beyond"; "*transzendieren*" is rendered as "to Transcend" (with an initial capital).

original beginning of the philosopher himself, not with and for others but for himself alone; it is the disclosing of the ground which is capable of bearing the totality of a philosophical interpretation of the world. Regardless of how such a ground-laying is carried out—be it as a return to the concealed, a priori law-giving of reason, or be it as a progression towards essentials, and the like—the meditation, in which such a ground-laying is carried out, is always the first, fundamental decision of a philosophizing. It is a fateful error to suppose that the principles, in accordance with which a ground-laying of philosophy is to proceed, would be present—transported, as it were, from the conflict of philosophers—as a normative ideal prior to and outside of that philosophy. The commencement of the idea of laying-a-ground, which determines a philosophy, is always already the implicit (and perhaps only obscurely conscious) *fore-grasp upon the system*.⁹ Thus in embryonic form, the idea of the system is sketched out in the idea of laying-a-ground.

The idea of the ground-laying working itself out in the philosophy of Husserl can, at first, be made understandable from the *pathos of phenomenology*, that is, from the deportment of the human existence lying at its ground. Of course, this pathos is in no way a specifically “phenomenological” one, but is, rather, the constant pathos of every philosophy which, when taken seriously in a particular, inexorable way, must lead to phenomenology itself. Only in a time in which an alleged radicalism believes itself capable of disdainfully casting aside the *rational* ground-deportment of philosophy as a one-sided Attitude of life and in which talk about the existential presuppositions of philosophizing threatens all too often to step into the place of real philosophical work—in such a time which, with its keenness of hearing and of sight claims to see through and to unmask every pathos—in such a time it becomes necessary to bring to consciousness what, as a self-understandable, reticent pathos, impels all philosophizing. This pathos is nothing other than the world-wide storm of the *passion of thinking* which, extending out into the totality of entities and grasping it, subjects it to the spirit. As the pathos of philosophy, the will,

⁹*Vorgriff auf das System*. “*Vorgriff*,” taken from “*vorgreifen*,” means “anticipation,” with which we also could have rendered it. However, to retain the sense of grasping or clutching we translate “*Vorgriff*” literally as “fore-grasp.”

resolved to understand the world out of the spirit, signifies not the naive belief in a pre-given and present-at-hand "spiritual sense" of the world, but solely the willingness to bring the spirit first to its realization precisely through the knowledge of the All of entities. But is this not the crassest "intellectualism"? Are not powerful forces of contemporary philosophy at work to repel the presumptuous claim of rationalism and from out of the irrational ground-experiences of our existence of today, to demand the modesty of knowledge in the face of the impenetrability of Being? Does not the "rationalistically" claimed self-certainty of the spirit still live in Husserl's phenomenology in close alliance with the optimistic belief in the advance of culture, in the meaningful work of science? However, it is an illusion to identify the rationalistic ground-pathos of philosophy with the relaxed demeanor of an intellectual game-playing: in this pathos the ground-experiences, of which the irrationalistic philosophy is so proud, are by no means missing. For the mass of the educated today, the ruin and disintegration of the old culture makes experienceable, in an obviously coarsened form, the ground-situation in which the man who is philosophizing always and at every time begins: the insecurity, the questionableness, of every certitude, of every element of belief, of all familiarity with entities—the fascination of chaos. With his successors of today, even the magnificent Interpretation of philosophical existence made by Nietzsche falls into the danger of sinking in the "irrationalistic" deepening of our consciousness of life. But no consciousness of life, however abysmal, is, as such, already "philosophy," but always only an existential presupposition for it. It is the Janus-face of the "philosophy of life" that the loosening-up and absorption of the feeling of life taking place in it, the opening-up of the chaotic under-ground of existence which is for the most part covered over, all too easily is transformed into a *defeatism of reason*, into an abandonment of the spirit.¹⁰ Precisely in the face of

¹⁰This sentence presents a particular translation difficulty since it is cast in terms peculiar to something like agriculture. Our "loosening up" translates "*Auflockerung*"; an *Auflockerung* is a loosening or turning of the soil so that the soil might become more porous, more receptive, for example, to rain. "Opening-up" translates "*Erschliessung*"; this word is often used in the sense of making something accessible or useable, such as land which might be built upon or tilled for some future purpose. "Underground" is a literal rendering of "*Untergrund*," the everyday word for "subsoil."

chaos, standing fast against it, the philosopher ventures the spiritual conquering of the entity; he raises the claim of a *radical* and *universal* knowledge of the world. How, though, can the spirit maintain itself and its claim? Has it itself already become a "ground-experience"; do we know what authentically is "spirit," what the true power of the philosophizing existence is? Understanding itself in the passion of thinking, the pathos of the one who is philosophizing is cast back upon itself: it radicalizes itself into *self-meditation*, as into the way in which the spirit experiences itself. The phenomenological philosophy of Husserl lives in the pathos of that *self-realization* of the spirit which takes place in self-meditation.

As indefinitely as this pathos is exhibited here, the governing idea of phenomenology can, nevertheless, already be derived from it.

I. THE IDEA OF LAYING-A-GROUND

The idea of the ground-laying of philosophy peculiar to phenomenology is the idea of the pure and persistent self-meditation. The transformation of this idea should exhibit simultaneously the change of the phenomenological self-understanding.

In the subjective mode of self-meditation, every philosophy carries out the business of laying-a-ground. However, phenomenology is also materially¹¹ grounded exclusively on self-meditation. For phenomenology this is not a mere subjective method for disclosing, as the ground and basis of the philosophical interpretation of the world, an objectivity sketched out in our spirit, for example, the objective essence of reason; rather it re-delineates the sole fundamental realm in which the philosophical problem of the world can arise. That is, from the very beginning phenomenology foregoes ever abandoning the deportment of pure self-meditation in favor of an objective deportment. It wants to be grounded solely upon the results of a radical and persistent self-meditation and to establish upon them the entirety of its philosophical system. In phenomenology the concept of "ground," in return to which the philosophical grasping of the world realizes itself, has lost its usual "objective" sense precisely through the persistent adherence to self-meditation, carried out with a certain radicalism of "purity," as the exclusive thematic source of philosophy. The ground,

¹¹*sachlich*.

posited in the phenomenological idea of laying-a-ground, is the "self" which uncovers itself only in pure self-meditation.

At this point, a host of serious objections immediately arise. How can a persistent "self-meditation," thus the reflexive self-thematic of a man, become an organon for a knowledge of the *world*? Does not the phenomenologist, precisely through the pure "inward-turn," lose the possibility of coming to know the All of entities in which his "self" is merely an infinitesimally small and insignificant part? Moreover, with the turning-back upon the "self," is the objective character of the philosophical ground-sphere really overcome? Is not the "self" *in every case one self*, is not self-meditation an objectively persisting deportment possible for everyone?

In such objections there is expressed the ever *familiar* understanding of the human possibility of self-meditation. But it is precisely a question of whether, with the phenomenological idea of laying-a-ground, the naive and familiar, pre-given concept of "self-meditation" can be meant at all. In fact, we must *transform* the idea of self-meditation. The dimension of philosophy can be attained only in the radical change of self-meditation from the indeterminateness of the preliminary, still unclarified concept into the determined phenomenological setting. How can such a change be accomplished? Of what nature must a self-meditation be, such that, precisely in the thematization of the self, the question of the totality of entities is included and traced out in its fundamental solution?

To this there is only one answer: the transformation of the idea of the common self-meditation happens *eo ipso* in an *extremely intensified taking of self-meditation seriously*. The seriousness demanded here wants nothing less than to expose the spirit to a *ground-experience* which will bring it back into the power of the essence that is purely proper to it. In the self-meditation radicalized into the "phenomenological reduction," the spirit should accomplish a *movement* towards itself, should come unto itself.

Is that not an arbitrary commencement which contains in itself the "presupposition" that the spirit is at first outside of itself, estranged from its ownmost essence? Should not this presupposition be exhibited in the first place? But phenomenology does not begin with a "presupposition"; rather, by an extreme enhancement and transformation of the natural self-meditation, it leads to the ground-experience which opens-up not only the concealed-authentic essence of the spirit, but

also the authentic sense of the natural sphere from out of which self-meditation comes forth.

In the manifest existence-forms of its reality, pre-given in the world as individual and communal spirit, as a human life of consciousness, the spirit exists not only in the ground-department of a passive experience of things, but also in a definite way accomplishes *movement*, self-realizations: namely in the creative expressions of the "life of the spirit." The spirit is "in movement" in the formative powers of the political destiny, in the researches of the sciences determined by discipline and rigor, in the revelations of art, in the explanations of the world given by religion, in all the areas of "culture." But the spirit's *culturally-creative state-of-motion*—philosophically regarded—is, nonetheless, always restricted and enclosed by *the spirit's* more deeply-lying *state-of-motionlessness* which, in the ground-experience of the phenomenological reduction, it is the task to raise up.

No cultural history, however concretely it proceeds (and despite the enormously abundant material accessible to it today), no theory of science, however encompassing and geared to every existing science, is ever capable of attaining the *philosophical* concept of the spirit. Just as little does a method which lays exclusive claim to the so-called "inner perception," thus to a purely reflexive department, succeed in overcoming the pre-given psychological concept of spirit as human soul. Even an intentionally-reformed psychology—with all due recognition to its fundamental philosophical significance—does not lead back into the deeper essence of the spirit.

From out of the attitude of phenomenology, the *philosophical* attempts which are oriented in definite respects towards the determination of the spirit, are also to be rejected: thus, the "culturally" oriented attempt (Dilthey, for example); thus, the attempt which proceeds from the fact of science (the Marburger School, for example); thus, the psychologically guided attempt (Brentano, for example). The illegitimacy common to these attempts lies in their being lead by a fundamentally *pre-philosophical* sight.

In opposition to this, the philosophically *independent* question of the Being of subjectivity, of the spirit, is being raised precisely in our day: as philosophical anthropology, as philosophy of existence, coupled with the idea of ontology. But, thereby, the "subject" not only is questioned as a definite *regional* area within the totality of entities, but also [is

questioned] in such a way that the Interpretation of the *ground-essence* of man should ground all particular regional ontological disciplines, even the *particular* ontology of subjectivity. With that, a motif again breaks through which, in the history of occidental philosophy, again and again announces the impossibility of thoroughly determining the spirit *ontologically*: be it in the ancient form of the disturbing question of the connection of *ousia* and *psyche*, *noein* and *einai*; be it as the problem of the possibility of synthetic apriori knowledge which, as such, compels a return behind the ontic, regionally pre-given subjectivity; be it the grand attempt of German Idealism, speculatively to derive "Being" in general from out of the essence of reason.

Husserl's phenomenological philosophy must deny *decisive radicality* to all these forms of questioning which, though certainly magnificent, nevertheless reside within the traditional, that is, *ontological* idea of philosophy. Each of them puts into question the essence of the subjective spirit *before* it has yet gone through the ground-experience which brings it [i.e. the spirit] unto itself first of all in the most radical self-meditation. The ground in which all ontologically-philosophical views of the essence of the spirit are rooted, whether they are meant in a naively regional way, or as first founding metaphysics, or as "speculative," is the totally elementary and original self-understanding in which the spirit first of all exists *prior to the "phenomenological reduction."* This self-understanding has the unbroken force of what is utterly unquestionable, of what is entirely "self-understandable"; indeed, it is the *most understandable* thing of all. The spirit is already standing in a self-Interpretedness. This self-Interpretedness does not stem from a spiritual activity; it is no result of reflection, no outcome of scientific meditation, no discovery of psychological analysis, no thesis of philosophy, but an understanding-of-self which goes in advance of all of man's spiritual expressions of life and in which the spirit, insofar as it is, already finds itself: to the facticity of the existing spirit belongs the Knowledge of itself in the world as an entity among entities. Enclosed by the cosmos, imbedded in the infinite manifold of things, together with them in the one space and in the one time, delivered over to the superior powers of nature, impotent in the face of the governing destiny, the spirit understands and addresses itself as "*man*." That is, the *ontological* self-Interpretedness of man—whether it is worked out or not—stands, always, in the *cosmological horizon*.

The Interpretedness of man, his self-familiarity, which is here merely pointed to but which announces a fundamental philosophical *problem*, may for the sake of brevity be named the *mundane-ontological* self-understanding of the spirit. All spiritual actions first take place under its spell, are bound to it and constrained within it. Even the spiritual activity of a "self-meditation" is, already in advance, encompassed by it. The beginning [of "self-meditation"] is determined as an ontical occurrence in the life of the man existing in the world, as a possibility, permanently sketched out in the ontological nature of the spirit, to comport itself to itself.

Is there possible, then, an entirely different, "pure" and "radical" self-meditation in which, in accordance with the idea of the ground-laying of the Husserlian phenomenology, the spirit is to be brought to itself as to its pure self? In every case it is not possible *inside* of the mundane-ontological, naively familiar self-understanding of the spirit existing in the world. The ground-experience is to lead away from the obviousness of this self-understanding, in which the spirit, motionless, always already is resting. It is to become an explicit problem. Its unbroken power and original might suppress all commencements toward a deeper self-meditation, towards a setting of the spirit into motion; they do not even give rise to the astonishment¹² about what significance this "self-understanding" has. Because of the fact that the attempts of radical self-meditations do not philosophize exclusively and purely in relentless consequence from out of self-meditation, but always carry into it a Knowledge stemming from the natural (mundane-ontological) self-understanding, the radicalism is broken, and the unfolding movement of the spirit is again set to rest.

The phenomenological ground-laying of philosophy can succeed only when, with the most extreme sharpness and consequence, every naive claiming of the mundane-ontological self-understanding is cut

¹²*Verwunderung*. The tie to *Wunder* (wonder) is evident, but beyond that there is a philosophical tie between astonishment and wonder which Fink thinks through in the final essay of the *Studien*-volume, "Das Problem der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls," especially pp. 179-185. Fink writes: "*Der Ursprung der philosophischen Probleme ist die verwunderung*"; and he refers to Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155 d, and to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982 b 11. Thus, our "astonishment" is meant to translate basically the same astonishment or wonder which for the Greeks gives birth to philosophy.

off, when the spirit is forced back upon itself to Interpret itself *purely* as that "self" which is the bearer and accomplisher of the valuation of every natural "self-understanding." That is, the project of phenomenology is possible only in the ground-method of a persistent abstention, in the so-called "epoche."

Every self-meditation proceeds from the Knowledge of the situation in which it begins, arises, and which it wants to make transparent. Now what is the situation from out of which the self-meditation of the phenomenological method of laying-a-ground proceeds? This is no definite, more or less accidental situation of life, but the *primal-situation* which bears every determined, changing situation: the spirit's finding of itself in the world. World, though, is given not only in the manifold experiences of entities, of the things of the outerworld and of the data of the inner world; rather, it is *given-in-advance* as the *field* of real and possible experiences, as the totality of co-given *horizons*. In every experience of definite entities, we already comport ourselves in developed, apperceptive types; we move about in a system of familiarity with things which has not been explicitly cast into relief. The world is familiarly and horizonally pre-given in its totality, even though in a way passing over from a determinate environing world to an open "indeterminateness." And we ourselves are pre-given in it. That is: the mundane-ontological self-Interpretedness of the spirit is, as such, a moment in the totality of the *pre-givenness of the world*.

But what, then, does this universal pre-givenness of the world signify? Nothing other than an enormously manifold *system* of *ontic validities*, of intuitive and unintuitive opinions, of kinds of appearances which flow into manifold modes of consciousness which fashion the unquestionably certain and *obvious ground* of all our ways of comporting to entities. This ground of valuation is, as such, never cast into relief at all; let alone is there interrogated the structure of its ways of being-given, according to the manner in which its unquestionable certitude should be grounded therein. It is left untouched even by philosophy. The "having" of the world "in acceptance" and the "keeping" of the world "in acceptance"¹³ precisely in the mode of the universal pre-givenness of the world alluded to—of the entirely unquestionable apperceptive system in which the world is understood in

¹³Die Welt "in-Geltung-Haben" und "in-Geltung-Halten."

its most general "ontological style," this accomplishing of world-acceptance is precisely the profound *state-of-motionlessness and rest of the spirit* which is to come "into movement" in the phenomenological reduction. Cast back upon itself in the most radical self-meditation, the spirit explicitly questions its essence which has been covered over by the power of the greatest self-evidency. The having-of-the-world-in-acceptance and, therein, the having-of-oneself-in-acceptance becomes questionable. Not, though, as if it were uncertain or could be uncovered as an error; rather, because it is non-transparent, non-understood. Simply and solely in order to understand it, the philosopher, accomplishing the movement of the spirit itself, may make no use of it; he may not thematically step upon the entirely self-understandable ground of the valuation of the world; because it is constantly on the point of ensnaring and entwining him, he must free himself from the *self-evidency* of the universal apperception of the world which, though constantly changing, obtains unity and certitude of the world nonetheless. As one who is self-meditating, he does not enter into a naive and non-transparent use of what is accepted in worldly belief; he practices the "epoche" and does not take part in the belief of flowing, unified life of consciousness: the entire universal system of valuations, of manifold modes of consciousness and their syntheses, which runs together into the unity of the worldly belief, of the consciousness of the world, becomes the "*phenomenon*" for him. But while the world has come to be known as a universal unit of subjective ontic validities, the phenomenologist does not, through the epoché, interest himself in these valuations; on the contrary, he searches for a comprehensive final clarification of these valuations which have become phenomena for him; that is, he seeks the *Logos of the phenomenon of world*. At first, this has the manner of exhibiting the "origin" of the apperception of the world. In what life, then, do these ontic validities originate? In man, perhaps? But man, interpreting himself in his natural self-understanding as a unit taken for granted, is included in the totality of the pre-givenness of the world, that is, included as a unity of a flowing manifold of modes of consciousness of himself. He who is self-meditating is thus led back upon a more deeply lying life, in which there *originates* the complete valuation of the world, wherein is included the "valuation of the self," as of a man in the world.

The spirit thereby becomes accessible to itself in a depth which it otherwise always keeps covered over by the "view of the self": Man. It

is uncovered in the "concrete" depth of its existence which fashions the valuation of the world. The ground-experience thus leads back to the ground of a "self" which is never pre-given in a worldly way but which in a concealed way bears all pre-givenness of the world.

This return cannot really be presented at this point; indeed, it cannot even be pointed to in its extraordinary difficulties. The "phenomenological reduction" is the *permanent ground-theme* of the phenomenological task as such, namely as a process of questioning back—proceeding continually under the direction of the phenomenon of the world—into the originally achieving¹⁴ life, out of which the unity of the constantly accepted world becomes understandable.

We have explicitly to ward off, however, the conception according to which the difference between the I which precedes the world and allows worldly belief to arise and the I of man which itself presents a unit taken for granted would perchance be the result of a formally constructing thinking which, as it were, works to death the thought of the non-objectifiability of the subject, of the "non-objectivity of the subject." The phenomenological reduction is the *analytically exhibited and accounted-for ground-activity* of phenomenological philosophy. The key to the understanding of this spiritual conversion, which is extremely difficult really to accomplish and systematically to carry out, lies—this might suffice for the purposes of a preliminary orientation—in the distinguishing of the *human* self, that is, of the world-experiencing life which always already has been apperceived as a worldly entity, from the "life of consciousness" which is *prior to* every objective, worldly conception of Being, and through which the world and also the Being of this consciousness itself as human have their given validity. In other words, the customary Interpretation of the self, which is bound to the usual and familiar Interpretation of self-meditation (as a constantly possible human ground-deportment), does not at all go beyond the naive, pre-given concept of the "self"; it does not first obtain it from self-meditation, but already has it beforehand in advance. It is entirely different in the "self-meditation" which functions as the ground-laying of phenomenology: inasmuch as the latter "brackets" all pre-acquaintance with and pre-givenness of the entity, [it] does not make use of such, but simply and solely accomplishes

¹⁴*leistenden.*

pure self-meditation, it goes beyond, "Transcends," the worldly-ontical "self," man, and presses forward to "transcendental subjectivity," to the authentic self.

The idea of the ground-laying of philosophy, at first determined in the phenomenological self-understanding as persistent self-meditation, *transforms* itself into the method of the unfolding of "transcendental subjectivity," into the method of the "phenomenological reduction." In this there is included: first, the transformation of an "inward-turn," which apparently relinquishes the spiritual overpowering of the entity, into the uncovering of the true dimension of the philosophical elucidation of the *world*; further, the transformation of the self-meditating "subject" which is accomplished in the radicalization of self-mediation (the humanly understood self-meditation becomes the self-meditation of the transcendental subject which precedes the world); and finally, the merely "subjective" deportment of the phenomenological laying-of-a-ground, which at first does not seem to be fitted to lay bare an objective ground-sphere of philosophical knowledge, removed from subjective chance and arbitrariness, transforms itself—precisely in the extreme enhancement of subjective deportment inasmuch as it expressly eliminates from it every "objective" interpretation of such—into the method of access to a ground-sphere in which, in an entirely unexpected, new sense, "objective," that is, intersubjectively obligating and compelling [modes of] knowledge are possible.

So long as it is understood again and again in terms of the guidelines of the structure of an entity's (man's) turning back upon itself, [a structure] pre-given and well-known to us, thus in its ontical prototype, the idea of self-meditation is incapable of developing itself into a really productive idea of a ground-laying of philosophy. Again and again the motion of the spirit, unfolding itself in that motion, is *snatched away*¹⁵ into some kind of *worldly position* of its self-understanding. Only the phenomenological radicalism which wants resolutely to ground philosophy upon the idea of pure self-meditation, without bringing the meditation which has been set into motion under

¹⁵*abgefangen*. Our "snatched away" translates only one sense of this word. A second, rather important sense is "to bring under control," "to obtain power over," as one would bring under control an automobile which has gotten out of the control of its driver. In the next sentence we translate *abfangen* by its second sense.

control by arguments and considerations which have sprung forth from the naive, pre-given understanding of "self-meditation"—only this radicalism opens up a *fundamentally non-worldly* position of the spirit from out of which the world can be grasped and spiritually overpowered.

II. THE IDEA OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Though "perspectively" limited, the outline of the phenomenological *idea of philosophy* is always already sketched out from the *idea of laying-a-ground*. The *ground-experience* which the spirit makes with itself in the radically endured self-meditation is the self-uncovering of its inviolate, own essence: self-meditation shatters to pieces the concealing Interpretations of the self and the conceptions of the self in which the spirit, as placed into the totality of entities, apprehends itself as a definite entity (man). The spirit retrieves itself from out of its lostness in the world and its estrangement from its self; it finds itself as the "transcendental ego," from out of whose life all worldly acceptances spring forth, thus even the acceptances in which its own, worldly-ontical view of its self, a covering over of its ownmost essence, its human self-understanding, is fashioned. The return of the spirit out of its worldly "being-outside-of-itself" unto itself is the *ground-happening of philosophy* which, as such, is in no way an occurrence somehow "mystically" or "speculatively" to be grasped. Rather, in phenomenology this return of the spirit unto itself is accomplished as the analytic, demonstrative phenomenological *explication of transcendental subjectivity* which is to be verified in a most rigorous sense. The idea of philosophy is thus determined as the self-unfolding of the spirit in the analytic Interpretation of its transcendental self-understanding, [a self-unfolding] which has been sketched out in the idea of the ground-laying.

Fundamentally, that means: the phenomenological idea of philosophy is based exclusively upon the ground-thought of the "phenomenological reduction."

The principle emphasis of this entirely elementary insight into the idea of phenomenological philosophy is of the greatest importance because the usual interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology has stubbornly held fast to the conception of a definite, descriptive methodology, which furthermore logicalizes itself through "an intuition of es-

sences." A mere deportment of careful description and of intuition which establishes laws of essences, which is applicable to any and every entity, is no philosophy. Of course, phenomenology is a "method," but it is the method of the most radicalized self-meditation, of the self-assertion and self-realization of the spirit in the opening-up of the depths of its own transcendental life.

In the phenomenological reduction, the *concept of the "spirit"* undergoes a fundamental transformation. The radicalization into the "reduction" leads from the *human* spirit, pre-given at the beginning of self-meditation, back into *transcendental* subjectivity. The latter, taken concretely as *that which underlies all acceptance of the world*, as the "life of consciousness" which continually takes the world for granted, constitutes the *first* form of the transcendental concept of spirit. Philosophy becomes, first, the Interpretation of the transcendental "*consciousness*" arrived at through the reduction.

The distinction between the transcendental concept of consciousness and the worldly-ontical one is a cardinal point in an explanation of the phenomenological idea of philosophy. Consciousness is pre-given to us in the world, originally experienced in us ourselves, perceived through "empathy" in others. Now, phenomenology does not want in any way to make consciousness as pre-given in its worldly-ontical self-Interpretedness the theme of demonstrable analysis. That is the task of psychology. Phenomenology does not undertake an interpretation of the world by returning to man's consciousness of the world, which itself exists in the world; such a procedure would necessarily lead to a "philosophy of immanence," to an ontical "subjectivism." But phenomenology is far removed from this. Through the accomplishment of the reduction alone, it attains to that "life of consciousness" which, itself not in the world, precedes, as the place of every intention which puts the world into acceptance, the Being of the world.^a

Only in regard to this does the *positing of the transcendental problem of the world* in phenomenology become at all clear. Only in that way can it become understandable how a thematization of "consciousness"

^aIt is well to note that throughout, both here as well as in a genuine intentional psychology, "consciousness" is not to be understood in the general, narrowest sense of the word. The "unconscious" is, thus, always included along with it.

can become an encompassing *knowledge of the world*. Inasmuch as the transcendental life of consciousness, the “world”-apperceiving life, becomes the theme of an analytic explication, so, too, must the “correlate” lying in this life—the world precisely *as such*, the world experienced, meant and lived-through in it—necessarily be thematized along with it. But that means that the world as accepted unit is grasped in the return to that through which it is put into acceptance, to the fashioning of sense. Philosophical knowledge of the world obtains the style of an understanding of the All of worldly entities from out of the transcendental fashioning of sense, that is, from out of its *constitution*. In other words self-meditation, breaking open out of the pathos of the self-assertion of the spirit in the face of chaos and radicalizing itself into the phenomenological reduction, leads finally to an understanding of Being—at first impenetrable by the spirit—out of the spiritual fashioning of the world. As the power and the life of the pure spirit, the fashioning of the world, (constitution), is not, as an “objective” happening, present somewhere, if not in the world, then in a metaphysical space. Such a conception has not really freed itself yet from the ontical idea of the spirit, from its worldly self-Interpretation. The fashioning of the world is not at all an occurrence to be taken objectively or which is graspable in objectivistic categories, as, for example, the “world-spirit’s” act of creation in which man would participate. The fashioning of the world is accessible only in the *most subjective* of all possible subjective deportments, but that in no way excludes the fact that the predicative expression of the modes of knowledge won in this extremely subjective attitude can attain an intersubjective validity of the most rigorous dignity.^b

The attitude in which alone the access to the essence of the world-fashioning constitution can be found is the “*transcendental*” one, that is, the one created by the phenomenological reduction. It *totally* determines the idea of phenomenological philosophy. The latter thereby sees itself brought into radical opposition to that idea of philosophy which—in all its splinterings, nevertheless conceivable as a unity—has

^b Here, of course, is a fundamental problem (one which has been overcome for a long time in the phenomenology of Husserl): the clarification of “transcendental intersubjectivity” proceeding from the transcendental ego, as well as of the way in which it functions in the constitution of the world and in its grounding of an intersubjective validity.

grown up upon the ground of the world as taken for granted, that is, in the "natural attitude." The phenomenological idea of philosophy can never be interpreted from out of the horizon of the traditional idea of philosophy because it conceives a new, radically new concept of philosophy. Just as little does the worldly concept of "science" provide a guideline for the understanding of phenomenology. All science first originates in the "natural attitude." Only in phenomenology does an *entirely new kind of Knowledge* arise which compels a *transformation of the concept of science*.

Now if the essence, the idea, of phenomenological philosophy is unattainable for the "naturally-acclimated"¹⁶ philosopher or scientist as long as he persists just in the "natural attitude," then that does not mean that, conversely, worldly science and worldly philosophy can mean nothing to phenomenology. On the contrary, the latter demonstrates its "universality" precisely through the fact that, by a certain transformation of sense, it is capable of taking up into itself the knowledge of mundane philosophy and science, so that worldly "truth" becomes a *moment* in transcendental truth. With all of its truths, the "natural attitude" shows itself to the phenomenologist as a *constituted* situation, as the situation of the transcendental subject which has objectified itself into man and which has gone outside of itself, as the situation of the spirit's self-estrangement. In the spirit's retrieving of itself and in its coming unto itself in the phenomenological reduction, all the truths which have originated in this situation and which are relative to it are also retrieved and transformed.

III. THE PROBLEM-AREA OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

The "perspective" which is pursued here by passing from the pathos of phenomenology to the idea of its ground-laying and to the idea of philosophy formally traced out with it, ends with the announcement of the *concept of system* ruling phenomenology. It is the system of the exclusive and persistent self-meditation; that now means, of the *constitutive interpretation of the world* made possible by the phenomenological reduction. Such a system can be fundamentally only a *closed* one, namely as the exhaustion of the *problem-area* which has

¹⁶*natürlich-eingestellten.*

been encompassed in advance by the unconditioned consequence of spiritual deportment. However, the closedness of the phenomenological system in no way asserts the character of what can be run through in as quickly a way as is possible, a mastery of the same from out of a few basic formulae. Phenomenology is no architectonically closed, esthetically satisfying phantasy, but a *philosophy of toil*. It has an infinity of analytical work in front of itself, an endlessly open horizon of concrete researches. To understand the world out of the spirit—if such an idea is not to be a mere program or a pious belief—exacts an enormous effort in really verifying the proof; it demands the work of many, many lives.

In the work carried out by Husserl, the possibility of a really successful interpretation of the world out of the spirit, out of transcendental subjectivity, is once and for all *secured*. Not only the disclosing method, the access to the problem-dimension of philosophy: the phenomenological reduction; but also the ground sketch of a real philosophy of the spirit has already, in its complete totality, been worked out in a differentiated, analytical way. Of course, the published writings of Husserl (which present only a small part of his philosophical life-work) are, almost without exception, only “introductions,” that is, they merely lead up to the enormous problem of the constitutive interpretation of the world.

Phenomenological work, which is endless within the closed problem-area, is, at first, articulated into researches which serve for the preparation and the accomplishment of the reduction. In this connection, the explication of the “natural attitude” designates a ground-task. The persistently carried out theory of intentionality, with its elementary analyses which are decisive for the destiny of philosophy, as well as the doctrine of the stages of the reductive accomplishment, which transform themselves in a manifold of ways, are titles for comprehensive problem-fields which can successfully be begun only in the phenomenologically grounded method of intentional analysis. The second large, main group of researches concerns the *constitutive problem*. In the light of the guidelines of the ontologically pre-given articulation of entities, one must carry out the corresponding constitutive theories and the demonstrations of the fashioning of nature and of all other regions of entities, a fashioning which is included in the fashioning of the world.

However, even the highest "metaphysical" problems, which in traditional philosophy have never arisen as problems exacting work but only as "theses" (like God, death, teleology, "meaning of existence," etc.) do *not* lie *outside* of the horizon of the work of phenomenology. Even though these problems do not offer themselves to an initial grasp, if though a long and laborious way leads to them, still a philosophy which Knows that in its self-understanding it is placed within the innermost essence of the spirit which precedes the world and all Being can never capitulate in the face of ultimate "irrationalities."