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## HUSSERL VS. HEIDEGGER: A HOUSE DIVIDED

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written for K & K

In a phenomenological scheme, it is experience that is regarded as the foundational layer of our engagement with the world. Within what constitutes experience there has to be involved “the thing itself”, which, importantly, ought to be “given” directly. The phenomenological conception of experience, though, shows

critical divergences from the conception of experience as pursued in modern empirical philosophy. Thus, John Locke and David Hume viewed experience as primarily sensuous and modelled it after the natural sciences. That amounted to identifying the basic components of experience – sensations and impressions – and inquiring into the ways in which those elements formed higher wholes, that is, reflections and ideas. Yet the phenomenological account of experience rather is concerned with the “naïve” conception of experience, that is, a sort of experience we can get *prior* to any philosophizing, a mundane sort of lived experience, as it were. Such experience entails an unmediated, unadulterated access to a thing, a primordial encounter with an object, a person or an idea in question. Having experience implies, above all, immediate seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, or feeling concrete things in their particular actuality. Equally, having experience also presupposes having a possibility of verifying what has been claimed. When someone insists that such-and-such an object is green, then having had such experience entails a possibility to vindicate the object’s coloring through evidential seeing, by taking another look at it.

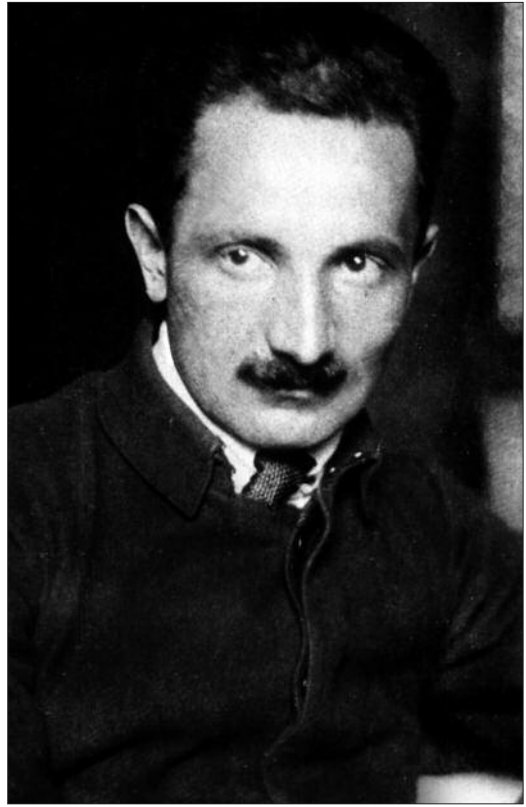
### Experience in the limelight

Phenomenology is grounded on several principles. The first one claims that truth is primarily evidence as a mode of the self-presentation of a thing. The assertion that phenomenological truths are at once their own criteria is associated with the thesis that phenomenology thematizes the basic stratum of our perception of the world. Things are perceived as such-and-such, and it is, then, reasonable to maintain that perceiving at its basic level is its own criterion, i.e., a thing’s perception carries within itself its own evidence. When I am experiencing an object as red, then it is impossible that someone from the “outside” should try to correct me by insisting that the thing I am perceiving is not red but, say, blue. In this regard, phenomenology endeavors to retrieve the stratum of evidence which is its own criterion. In this sense, it really holds that there do exist self-evidential truths. Truth, first off, is a “self-appearance” of things. A path towards “the

thing itself” is via the phenomenological reduction, or bracketing out entities from their pragmatic and causal nexus of the natural attitude. For Husserl, phenomenological reduction was something like a “royal road” to the realm of meanings. From its very onset, phenomenology takes pains to have definitively demonstrated the autarky – as well as, actually, self-reliance – of the realm of meanings and signification. Phenomenologists were keen on clearly and unambiguously separating “meaning” from “psychological states”; on distinguishing relations among meanings and those among things or among psychic contents. (The singularity of the sphere of meanings was initially advocated by Husserl in his polemics with psychologism. The texts following his Logical Investigations could be read as elaborations on the disputes with psychologism.)

If we return to the articles of faith governing phenomenological investigations, phenomenology’s second principle holds that whatever

is implicit can and need be rendered explicit. The third principle insists that the sphere of meanings is independent and self-sufficient, hence not “derivable” from the determinations of real – whether material or psychic – entities. And, lastly, the fourth principle asserts the existence of the “subject”, “the transcendental subject”, looming behind each and every meaning, but this meaning-constituting “subject” is the transcendental consciousness. Philosophical reflection is entrusted with the task of recovering, “sieving” and differentiating various modes of meaning-bestowal and determining their interrelations. The principal regimen of meaning-bestowal, illustrative of the later phenomenology, would come to be that at the level of the “natural” world, i.e., the lived world as experienced by us in unassuming everydayness. The “natural world”, then, is enlisted as a backdrop against which there are constituted “artificial” worlds of science, art, religion, and technology. Here, Husserl gives his attention to the constitution of the world of science. For him, it is a “superstructure”, towering above the natural world and experienced through the prism of such categories as those of an end and a means, of purpose, value and decision and of responsibility or of contingency. That is the world within which things present themselves to us in their qualitative characteristics and are always positioned relative to the “here and now”. The natural world is opposed by that of science, where reality manifests itself through the imposition of such categories as quantity, cause, effect, function, and probability.



Martin Heidegger

### Rifts and ruptures

The abovementioned principles – evidence, explicitness of the sphere of meanings, the autarky of meanings, and transcendentalism – are, on Husserl's conviction, mutually interdependent. His successors, though, came to sever those principles. According to Husserl's disciples – such as Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Martin Heidegger – the practices of phenomenology, such as the identification, descriptive analysis of meanings and their networks could have been carried out with the help of less “cost-intensive” means than the “phenomenological reduction” turned out to be. In regarding the principle of evidence as the pivotal one, Husserl succumbed to the lure of mathematics and the mode of givenness of mathematical entities was established as a guiding pattern to be emulated by all modes of givenness. Mathematical entities, on this view, are evidentially accessible, for the relationship between given values appears as fully determined: we know everything knowable of that relation. It was Husserl's conviction that the selfsame evidence is obtainable regarding all spheres of reality. His mentees, however, owing to their stressing the interface between perception and the bodily life dynamism, enfeebled the epistemological status of evidence (albeit supporting the thesis to the effect that the primordial mode of “truth” is the self-presentation of the thing as such). Moreover, the main concern of phenomenology after Husserl would switch over to the investigation into the relations within the sphere of explicit meanings and, also, within that which had “preceded” it and, indeed, made possible – the realm of implicit meanings. According to Heidegger, though, the implicit can be transmuted into the explicit but fragmentarily and sporadically. The point is that the realm of meanings is never fully autonomous, being ever dependent on the “being-in-the-world”. Heidegger points out that the “consciousness” itself is a construct, that meaning precedes the consciousness or, putting it otherwise, the “consciousness” is not just a producer of meanings, but also a product of the meaning-bestowal operations.

### The lure of the implicit

One of the most crucial contributions of the last century's philosophy is its thematization of the “tacit”, spontaneous, implicit, pre-thematic, pre-reflective, and pre-theoretical knowledge. The topic was introduced by the philosophy of life, and Wilhelm Dilthey already came up with the first methodology for analyzing this mode of gaining familiarity with the world. Heidegger would later on systematically engage his attention with those taken-for-granted and as-if unseen aspects of our being-in-the-world. We are ever moving around in the complex and for us not quite transparent web of meanings. That net both “carries” us and ensures that we be able to adapt it, via our individuation of meanings, to our needs. It is exactly due to its complexity that we do not even realize everything that is the “condition of possibility” for our meaningful gestures, for everything that we will set in motion by our actions, gestures, and words. We ourselves are explicitly aware of just a small portion of the meaningful lines along which our comportment takes on significance. What is more, it is just a precious modest number of genuine motives for our action that we realize. Meanings carry us, more neatly, we are borne along by the flow of meanings like a boat hurrying down the stream and aided by the force of its flow. Then again, even though swimming up the stream, you nonetheless make use of its power.

For Husserl, the ultimate source of meaning remains the transcendental consciousness. Now Heidegger proceeds from the conviction that the fundamental experience, which

serves as the starting point for all our concrete encounters with the world, is intimately linked to being-in-the-world. That structure is indivisible into its components, albeit, in reflection; the latter may be foregrounded in order for them to be more pliable to methodical cognition. Heidegger's intent is to define the uniqueness and uncanniness of man's involvement with the world. The carrier of that distinctiveness is *Dasein*, existence. Heidegger employs the term to denote (let's avail ourselves of a bit of simplification) the ability of the human being to be situated in the world, related to her relatedness with the world and with herself, while her attitudes to that relatedness remain unmediated by the mind. Heidegger makes no use of the concept of consciousness in his existential analytics; it has no role in his discourse. The peculiarities of our relation to the outside reality, circumscribed by our sensory and mental equipment, are all "sublated" and assimilated in the dimension of *Dasein*; therefore, it is of import that we focus exactly on this dimension. What we are here dealing with are dimensions which are only definable relative to other relations, by distinguishing those dimensions from other relations: from the thing's embeddedness in its milieu and from an animal's relation to its environment. Heidegger's thrust is thus on the complex of self-interpretive practices as meaning-giving operations and on a new identification of the basic layer where our relation to the world is configured.

After Heidegger, one of the possible avenues for philosophical reflection to pursue is analyzing what might be referred to as implicit ontologies, that is, ontologies underpinning our quotidian experience. Implicit ontologies will come in handy when we, facing entities showing up before us, decide on taking them in as either real or illusive. Simultaneously, those ontologies will give us a sense of what reality involves and how its individual components correlate; or of what our human situation in the world is like and where our possibilities and limits lie. Implicit ontologies, thus, proceed as our unsaid yet fundamental and taken-for-granted frameworks for making sense of the world. Religion, philosophy, science, and art are, in this light, regarded as attempts to explicate at least some part of implicit ontologies, hence enabling their transmutation into the format of conscious accommodation of a certain picture of the world. Any explication procedure, however, will rely on tacitly accepted beliefs and convictions which are inextricably entwined with our "being-in-the-world". Heidegger would recall Aristotle's thesis to the effect that philosophizing takes its origin from the wonder at the very being of Being. Inquiry into implicit ontologies may then well enable us to get back to authentic philosophy and get rid of drab and dreary academism which overlooked the wonder as the basic source of philosophical insights.

Translated by Emma NEŽINSKÁ