

Chapter 2

Phenomenology and Meaning for Consciousness

Humanity has explored the ocean depths, been to the moon and used its ingenuity to explore the distant universe. However, when it comes to knowing itself with certainty there has been less success. This chapter argues for the place of Husserl's philosophy in guiding a reformation of psychology and psychotherapy and clarifying their aims and subject matter by creating eidetic ideals: "To every eidetic, as well as to every empirical, constation... a parallel must correspond... [Evidence] if taken, in the natural attitude, as psychology, as a positive science relating to the pre-given world, is utterly non-philosophical; whereas the "same" content in the transcendental attitude... is a philosophical science", (V, 147). "Philosophical science" is meant in the sense that it is exact or rigorous in the way that mathematics is. The sequence of topics below introduces a formal approach to intentionality (Brentano 1973; Richardson 1983). Husserl's philosophy can promote standardisation of the accounts of scientists, researchers and the public around subjective meaningful experience. Husserl's phenomenology is the great grandmother of qualitative approaches for grounding the concepts of mathematics, the sciences, psychology, philosophy and other disciplines and practices in meaningful experience. The chapter starts with noting the fundamentality of the intentionality of consciousness and provides an overview of the arguments made below. The purpose of transcendental philosophy is noted next in relation to what that means in making phenomenological conclusions from the givennesses of what appears. The chapter closes by considering what it means for Husserl to apply qualitative methods that he had pioneered in creating number theory that he applied to the many types of being aware and how this can be applied in thinking through the methods and interpretative stances of natural sciences. The chapter introduces a means of being precise about intentional being, its motivations and conditioning contexts. The function of the intentional analysis of the intersubjective lifeworld of everyday commonsense is stated as the right way of looking through the microscope. Once this is accepted it becomes possible to understand the senses of natural being, transcendent ideas and people as the

contents of consciousness are shared, despite the differences in sense that the same idea, person or natural being can have for two or more people. On closer inspection what comes into sight is consciousness and what it does, because we can analyse what and how we are aware of the contents of our perceptions, memories, imaginings and in doing so what appears are common shapes, patterns, forms and figures that are given a mathematical idealising treatment in a parallel to how numbers refer to natural being. The chapter provides some orienting details about phenomenological argument in order to orient the study.

Intentionality is Ubiquitous

Given that the intentionality of consciousness is fundamental to intellectual and emotional sense and is the heart of shared experience, then the scope of the intentional analysis of it is ambitious. Intentional analysis looks for commonalities of being aware and makes conceptual representations across diverse regions of being and their academic study. For instance, phenomenology and psychotherapy are parallel with cognate science and human studies. Specifically, any drawing of conclusions by therapists is a parallel activity to the drawing of conclusions about consciousness by the practices of cognitive science or phenomenologists. There is only one consciousness transcendently-considered “*in general*” or “*as such*”. Cognitive psychologists might use empirical means such as flashing a word on a computer screen for 20 milli-seconds and then asking participants in the experiment to respond. Phenomenologists might analyse the experiences of association that they or others have experienced (IX, 117–128, 385–389). Psychotherapists ask their clients open questions before formulating their problems to them for discussion. These processes are equivalent in the broader view of considering them as ways of making sense of consciousness. Someone is interpreting meaningful experiential data of some sort, some conscious evidence, and concluding on what has occurred. The point for psychology and psychotherapy is that the overall situation of how consciousness is aware of changing meanings (and changing modes of relating according to that dynamic relationship), enables understanding of the universal feature of human life and variability, leading to the possibility of alterations in a dynamic meaningful relationship of any sort.

There is no topic so central, immediate, tangible, and continually present yet taken for granted as consciousness and its forms of intentionality (III, 152). Starting with the everyday experiences of talking, thinking, dreaming, childcare, driving, loving, relying on habits, wanting to be close with others, sex: all of these concern intentionalities and are wholistically involved in the matrix of meaning, time, intersubjectivity, embodiment, culture and history as well as natural being. Phenomenology is a form of inquiry about how consciousness knows and how meaning exists, regardless of higher intersubjective constructs such as race, gender, class and age-appropriate expectations. Phenomenological inquiry is wholistic, universal and transpersonal. It searches for the most fundamental shared aspects of what it

is to experience meaning of any kind. What is required is seeing the constancies between consciousness and experienced objects, contexts, ideas and other people in an attempt at an *ontologically-neutral* interpretative method entirely dedicated to consciousness itself: A way that is free from the prejudices of past assumptions concerning what exists and how things exist, through bracketing (*Einklammerung*), setting obscuring influences aside in the mathematical sense, to lessen prior prejudices in favour of finding a way of grasping the world of meaning as others have it. One prejudice to be avoided is the mistaking of one's own prior assumptions for the truth of the other, a mistake of prejudging how others experience meaning.

Overview

A definitive statement is required to sum up Husserl's position in regard to the progression between the natural, psychological and transcendental attitudes as he repeatedly claimed that the psychological and the transcendental were parallel (I, 70–71, 159, IX, 294, 342–344). In the natural and naturalistic attitudes, the relation between the biological, psychological and the social has an emphasis on people being separate and a focus on measuring natural-biological processes, as these are assumed to be the only indicators of the causes of consciousness, as an individual experience. When social connection is considered in this view the experience of others can be monitored in various parts of the brain, so again, the biological and physical processes that are measurable show up to fMRI and other techniques. These are naturalistically interpreted as causal of meaningful experience which is why free will, meaning and consciousness are considered by the naturalistic attitude to be products of the brain and biology. However, there are two types of phenomenology. The pure psychological attitude, from the transcendental view, admits natural causes and natural being to the degree that this type of cause is considered in thinking consciousness as consciousness. The aim of pure psychology is grasping consciousness as consciousness, in a worldly context of the really possible, to support theorising and promote empirical research and practice. It makes sense to permit natural-biological causation to be considered and so make collegial contact with colleagues in the natural psychological science disciplines (IV, 295, V, 40, 43, IX, 50, 298). However, there is value in keeping true to consciousness as consciousness revealed entirely through phenomenology's methods of reflection and idealising eidetic analysis.

In the transcendental attitude, the focus is entirely on the meanings of objects that are intersubjectively shared and available within culture, society and history. The purpose is to take intentionality out of the natural context altogether to find out how it works entirely in its own terms (III, 212, V, 40, XXVII, 177). The context around such considerations are claimed to be non-worldly so that a coherent intentional analysis can be carried out in an open context, free from the influences of what is already known and retained. The transcendental attitude serves a purpose of encouraging free contextualisation about the region of meaning for consciousness in intersubjectivity in the history of civilization and nothing else (VI, 275–276). Because there

is fundamentally only one region of understanding, Husserl's usages of the principles of grounding number theory are applied to it (XII, 210). Thus, the purpose is finding the ideals of consciousness as a whole with its dependent moments construed on its own evidence, where implicit and unconscious processes show themselves. The claim for transcendental phenomenology is that there are no worldly natural attitude influences that can contaminate its analyses. But the pure psychological attitude is a lesser version of the transcendental one. In the pure psychological view, there is a focus on intentionality in intersubjectivity that uses some precautions to minimise worldly naturalistic contamination. What is considered are the cultural senses and cultural objects for intersubjectivity between self and other, contextualised as real instances of the really possible concerning the findings of natural being, through natural science and natural psychological science with their natural causes.

Something needs to be said about the ontology of the lifeworld and its role in overcoming Cartesian Nature-Spirit duality whilst working to include individual self-responsibility, ethics and self-reflexivity in theorising. The function of the analysis of the lifeworld is precisely to return to the origin of the constitution of sense before the realisation of natural being and intersubjective being in culture, society and history (VI, 380). Husserl's focus on the world or lifeworld is choosing intersubjectivity with its "triangular" infinite series of self, other and manifold views of the cultural object as singly the most important phenomenon to analyse. The point of eidetic analysis of intersubjectivity is identifying the constant relations within the whole, for there is a pattern of ideal relationships. The ontology of the lifeworld can be studied in the psychological or transcendental attitudes. The difference is that in the transcendental attitude there is only a focus on intentionality in intersubjectivity with no permission to include the natural and naturalistic attitudes. In the pure psychological attitude there is a connection to the natural and naturalistic attitudes despite attempts to minimise them (details below). Even in the psychological attitude what can be seen is the irreducible world in retentive consciousness that influences current experiencing in what is an "intersubjective sphere of ownness", (I, 137, cf 129–130), or primordial world of pre-conceptual nonverbal sense of the "origin of all objective factual sciences or, equivalently, of all sciences of the world, is one and the same... as having been perceived and recalled to memory", (IX, 58). This attention grounds concepts about experiential universals in order to create new reformed "concrete sciences which take as their theme the concrete and individual forms of the experiential objects and which want to determine them in their theoretical truth", (IX, 64). Husserl's vision of philosophical science is achieved as a parallel discipline like theoretical physics and mathematics with respect to experimental physics.

But focusing on solo consciousness is insufficient. The self is non self-sufficient, an abstraction from the intersubjective, which is a self-sufficient whole. No matter the influences in the larger community, the self responds through the accumulation of retained social influences in itself and these contribute to its decisions and preferences. The self makes itself self-reflexively as well as responding to objects, past, present and future. Its personality exists in relation to its connection with a multitude of causes that influence it in relation to the biological and social-intersubjective registers. The self (considered in abstraction) has several options open to it and several influences inside its own being. For instance, a good deal of its

emotions and mental processes operate automatically and unconsciously without conscious permission. Within the self, there is the inertia of habits and the effects of past choices that have set a direction and may help it or hinder it. If negative habits and beliefs contribute to feeling overwhelmed in the ability to cope, therapy claims it can change and minimise distress. Recovery from distress and impairment is possible by finding a corrective set of influences in making good decisions and coping with current stress. To take the matter to the psychological sphere of emotions and relationships between people, then it becomes important to grasp what goes on between self and others. Looking at others and hearing their speech makes transcendent meanings in self that belong to others yet occurs in distinctive ways. Phenomenologists can consider the triangular relations of sense for self, others and each other, the “alpha-beta” overlapping views between two or more persons, about cultural objects, ad infinitum (IV, 168, cf I, 140, 142, 144, 147, “overlapping-at-a-distance”). Technically, the empathic experience of other people is called a double object because vision of the other supports empathising their consciousness and their perspective and so participating in all that lies between persons. The consequence is that meaning exists between people.

Husserl showed it is possible to start afresh: By due diligence and adoption of a sufficient interpretative stance, consciousness can understand itself in the context of other consciousness and the region of natural being that appears through natural science. This is why the primary aim of phenomenology is understanding consciousness in an experiential, comparative and self-reflexive way. What it offers is understanding how the consciousnesses of persons unite to create the senses of a shared reality including the differences in perspective that occur also. The revolutionary promise of phenomenology is explained as programmatic and a counsel of perfection. Phenomenology is a qualitative study of consciousness concerning how we know anything, to generate theory to further empirical research. Specifically, despite the great variation in meaningful experiences, consciousness can be experienced, reflected on, understood and communicated about in a standardised way. Phenomenology has always had the allure of telling the truth about consciousness and the relationship it has to its conditions of possibility in general.

And Transcendentalism too

The word “transcendental” has two senses. It is about the way that *consciousness transcends*; it goes towards the world of all being to understand it, and retains these understandings in itself. “Transcendental” also means the consideration of the conditions of possibility for something to be the case. Specifically, transcendental philosophy is a mandate for finding the conditions of possibility of the theory and practice of a meaningful enterprise. For instance: “How is pure mathematics possible? How is natural science possible?” (Kant 1787, B19). What this means in practice is that the fundamental understanding required can re-start empirical sciences and practices in the real world of shared meanings, starting with understand-

ing how consciousness knows anything. The project of the analysis of intentionality by eidetic imaginative variation demands having direct personal experience of the guiding concepts (XI, 387). Specifically, the point of these thought experiments is making explicit what oneself already knows pre-reflexively and assumes which may have been developmentally constituted across time (Cairns 1976, 41). What this meant for Husserl was progressing between the natural attitude, through the psychological attitude, to attending to how the meaningful lifeworld appears for us in a manner allegedly completely free from natural and naturalistic bias (II, 4, 17, 35, 36, IV, 179, 183). What follows are attempts to connect Husserl's cognitivism with the role of mathematics and abstraction in empiricism.

The mode of argument that Husserl urged is that "validities, actualities, etc., that have been scientifically induced or deduced, or derived from hypotheses, facts, or axioms, remain excluded and are permitted only as "phenomena"; and, of course, the same holds for any recourse to any "knowing", (II, 9), which is an inversion of the usual stance in the natural attitude, natural science and natural philosophy of their shared perspective of naive realism, or metaphysical realism. Phenomenology works to overcome the simplicity of mutually exclusive senses of either realism *or* idealism, to focus more on what can be learned by attending entirely to "*real unities... "unities of sense."* Unities of sense presuppose... a sense-bestowing consciousness which, for its part, exists absolutely and not by virtue of another sense-bestowal", (III, 106). The assertion is that natural science and academic knowledge belong to consciousness, "the natural sciences, as sciences, are enclosed within the human sphere, the sphere of the human spirit", (IV, 392).

Philosophy makes and tests arguments to see whether they hold up with respect to bodies of relevant evidence. Phenomenology gathers evidence to make arguments in this sense but about the most fundamental objects and relationships. For only through experience does it then become possible to argue in the usual philosophical sense. Because the type of argument considers the conditions of possibility in a most cautious way, by sticking to the detail of how different sorts of objects appear to different ways of being aware, then the type of ontology being achieved is a study of appearance and reality as part of intentional being as it appears for an intersubjective audience (XIII, 217–218). What this means in the practice of seeing evidence is preparation for argument where many specific instances need to be focussed on. The technical language of intentionality about objects and processes refers to concrete instances of conscious detail, but can also be used to refer to implicit events. So the Husserlian manner of argument concerns conscious evidence in the first instance. Although in other cases, what can be argued for is sometimes not apparent and this is called argument by eidetic necessity, explained below. Phenomenological arguments are based on the manners of givenness of noemata that appear in specific noetic ways and conclude by identifying the ideal and universal noetic forms (II, 62, III, 175, V, 54). For instance, to remember a past perceptual occurrence is to be in the present here and now and in one's own bodily self-presence and yet remember the previous being present as if one were immediately in bodily contact with that past perceptual being-there. In remembering, a past perception is present again as a whole once more. It comes into the current timeframe even though

it cannot be perceptual now. What is replayed is usually the bodily-associated point of view of what one did previously perceive. The memory is believed to be real most often. So there is *verdeckung*, an overlapping or modality specific interference between the past perceptions replaying in the current perception, a co-presence of two experiences at once (XXIII, 151–152, 481, 485). The simple example of remembering has many versions though. However, the ideal conclusion is a statement of the universal components of remembering while there are multiple versions that include vague remembering, confabulation, dissociated remembering from a point of view outside of the self, plus associations to other memories or emotions, imaginings, etcetera. Thus, remembering implies past perception although its replay is a modification of those perceptions, and of course, egos have such experiences first-hand. Memories are entirely unique and idiosyncratic yet memory has a structure, and if the ideal structure of memory is discussed with another, they might be able to bring back their perceptions of being there too, to check what is being claimed about memory in general. The memory of shared events could be corroborated. The point is not checking on content though. The point is identifying the ideal structure of memory. Similarly, if the intentionality to be analysed was emotion, imagination, hallucination or anticipation, then the structure of these types of experience can be corroborated with others.

Phenomenological Philosophical Argument

The classical form of phenomenological philosophical argument is comparing and contrasting nested parts and wholes of interconnected egoic acts and non-egoic syntheses because these make meaningful experiences of all kinds: literally all objects, regions and classes of objects that exist, or claimed or argued to exist, plus all that is imagined, feared, loved, hated, believed and disputed—and all forms of their complex combinations. Such is the universe of sense (II, 13, 31, 71–72, 75–76, III, 30–31). The key to making phenomenological arguments is then to understand that there are dependent moments of meaning that comprise dependent wholes of meaning. Without a technical language and a formal-agreed notation for these distinctions, there is literally no point to phenomenology. The role of phenomenology is for moving interpretation away from the natural and naturalistic attitudes that consciousness is a dependent whole, because it is caused by and needs the physical body and the social body to exist in a factual way. Phenomenological philosophical argument is based on evidence that is both personal and intersubjective but serves the purpose of working out questions within the history of philosophy and in its contemporary applications in science, psychology and other areas. The type of argument that phenomenology provides interprets experiential evidence that is definitive with respect to how it identifies the forms of meaning and sense that appear with respect to the processes of awareness itself. So, the type of philosophical argument that studying the meaningful givenness of objects creates is identifying how meaningful experiences present themselves to oneself and must do similarly

for other people. There is no other starting point for understanding givenness and intentionality than grounding a theory of shared meaning in qualitative experience. Hence the methods of the comparison and identification of the same and different types of givenness, and the manners of reference involved, are with respect to belief in perceptual existence or perceptual givenness (II, 36–37), or any other epistemological claim (II, 13).

To amplify what givennesses are, let's first compare the difference between the givenness of watching a film as opposed to the givenness of reading its screenplay. While the screenplay contains the dialogue and mentions specific locations where, say, the drama is taking part; it is not until a comparison is made with sitting in a cinema and experiencing the finished film does it become clear how the intentional forms are different. The givenness of reading depends on the clarity and style of writing, for reading is an indirect request for consciousness to understand. The givenness of watching a film in a cinema is more explicit in showing the audience what the story is. There are very many more comparisons of this sort to choose from. When it comes to psychology, and specifically, a psychology for therapy practice, essences about the relationship between consciousness and its objects need to be concluded on. Although the first categorisation might be to mention the biopsychosocial components of any psychology, it is also important to notice that there is a major difference between the laser beam of proper conceptual pointing at referent experiences themselves; as opposed to an excessively diffuse attention to the biological at the expense of the meaningful. What is pointed at are the cultural objects of commonsense culture, the natural attitude lifeworld, sometimes called "folk psychology" or social reality, that is comprised of a number of processes in relation to personal aims or any other parts of the shared whole. What is formative is understanding that every whole is comprised of a number of parts, in terms of earlier or later experiences, and stages and inter-relations between forms of reference, sign and signification, like the example of the difference between the pointing of a screenplay as opposed to the pointing of the film that the screenplay is about. Because of the differences involved, it is easy to lose track of the basics and the type of preparatory work to be done in safeguarding meaningfulness and rationality against excessively naturalistic and Scientific arguments that entail nihilism. For instance, such nihilism denies the experiential differentiation between perception and presentation, *Vergegenwärtigung*, imagining, remembering, anticipating or empathising and so prevents its own account of its own processes. Perception is what is appearing to the five senses and living bodiliness, here and now. What is presentational is understood but may or may not appear as visual, kinaesthetic, believed and situated, like wholes of here and now perception. Presentations create noematic senses of meaningful objects that are not perceptual here and now. The first consequence of these distinctions is that if the precise details of how any concept or claim about psychological experience that publicly claims knowledge is not defined in detail, and is incapable of being understood in first person terms, then it literally does not mean anything.

Husserl urged a self-aware form of theorising. What this means is the integration of previous attitudes that had been held apart, that bring together and explain what

conceptual reference actually means. A guiding metaphor from the *Sixth Logical Investigation* is a good way of making the distinction between ideal understanding and the applied practice of ideas, between an understanding made and its referent. The metaphor is the difference between a map and its territory as a way of focusing human studies and cognate sciences on what they should be about. “The outline of England drawn as a map may indeed represent the form of the land itself, but the pictorial image of the map which comes up when England is mentioned does not mean England itself in pictorial fashion... as the country on the map”, (XIX/2, 75). The distinction is between theory and its referent. The guidance is not to confuse the two. “*The map is not the territory*” is a useful motto and a good deal can be made of it in keeping apart specific representations of the sense of an object and the object itself: appearance and reality. Yet the two are connected and claims about reality remain on the inside of communities of consciousness.

Phenomenology is an approach that could be disparaged as mere “armchair psychology”, (XXV, 18), when it is “*exact psychology*”, (XXV, 18). The word “psychology” in this context should be understood as a theoretical clarification of meaning in the style defined below. It is the philosophical task of concluding in any discipline to compare and contrast conditions of possibility for making suitable empirical methodologies in various regions of being, in a self-aware epistemologically-sophisticated way. What phenomenology studies are these smallest units of conscious meaning, the noesis-noema correlations and the larger composites that the smaller pieces make. What it offers are conclusions on the ideal structures of memory, for instance, regardless of the vividness of the re-presentation of the original scene. So within the context of the multiple views of empirical psychology, there is a further proliferation of views, methods and hermeneutic stances of therapy theory and practice, for instance, which means that people have to know how to read something in order to get the intended meaning of complex behaviour and relationships between people and how they relate to themselves. What phenomenology provides is the ability to relate scientific findings back to everyday experience and provide an all-encompassing frame which can structure and co-ordinate cognate sciences, human studies and the practical disciplines of providing mental health care. The specific means of doing this is through representing the intentional processes involved in a way that is intersubjective and opens up the possibility of discussion and agreement.

The interpretative stance concludes on concepts that accurately and directly refer to all instances of a meaning of a specific sort in a way that relates to inter-related mental processes as well. The concepts are then checked with colleagues who use the same method and interpretative stance. Thus, phenomenology begins with the *revelation* of the truth of meaning and being, that then leads to the sought-after *revolution* in the accuracy of guiding concepts (XXV, 41), and finally to the *reformation* of practices. (No discipline would want to stay with concepts that were inaccurate or practices and sciences that were unjustified or unsuited to their regions of being). As we shall see, seeing essences, the phenomenological gaze, is similar to finding proofs in mathematics and geometry as these eidetic disciplines map the territory of physical objects by idealising them. The mathematical model (XXIV, 80) that shapes the rationalising processes of phenomenological judging is provided

in overview in chapter 5. Husserl worked at improving potentially good evidence (XVII, 255) through the use of imaginative variation, a process of clarification and the identification of definitive aspects of the forms of intentionality (III, 129–141, IX, 72–93, XIX/1, V, Sec. 20, XXIV, 216–220). Husserl urged finding essences, “a “geometry” of mental processes”, (III, 133, cf, 138, 153), for considering the ideals of intentionality itself. Every region of the meaning of being can be mapped to establish new empirical procedures on the basis of having a broader and better grounding of the type of being in question. Phenomenology ends in conclusions about generalisations concerning relationships and being, according to the study of “essential laws pertaining to the essence of any possible quantity, just as pure geometry is not bound to shapes observed in actual experience but instead inquires into the possible shapes and their possible transformations, constructing *ad libitum* in pure geometrical phantasy, and establishes the essential laws, in *precisely* the same way pure phenomenology proposes to investigate *the realm of pure consciousness and its phenomena* not as *de facto* existents but as pure possibilities with their pure laws”, (XXVII, 79, cf XXIV, 416, EU, 426). So the work to be done is a geometry of experiences that have observable structures that need to be brought to awareness. This means little to contemporary academia but it says something which deserves repeating. Phenomenology as fundamentalism contemplates the conditions of possibility for meaning to exist for consciousness. This is the aim for a transcendental philosophy.

To the Things Themselves of Consciousness

Intentionality is a useful concept because it begins a process that can define the many species and genera of experience. The forms of intentionality need to be understood to know how understanding, reasoning and other forms of meaning-constitution occur. Phenomenological concepts represent processes of consciousness intellectually, in notation or discussion. Intentionality is useful for people to be effective in addressing conscious phenomena and comparing how objects appear differently for the same person or different people. Remarkably, everyday persons with no tuition are able to reflect on their mental processes and discuss them easily. It’s easy to engage another in how they can be aware of themselves, make sense of themselves, take a new perspective on what they behold, become more or less active in some way, and how they can tell the difference between imagination, memory and hallucination, for instance. And this is where the initial experience and understanding of the natural attitude shows itself because vague understandings of these different givennesses can be discussed. There are many ways in which one object can appear and many types of intentionality can present it. It would be easy to rush past these differences, to deny them, ignore them or make incorrect reasoning about them. And this is where those in the naturalistic and natural attitude traditions, who argue that there is no self-consciousness, ego or self fail. It is not only possible but necessary to hold two or more senses of the same object in mind, and knowing that



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