Appendix

The Interpretive Turn in Phenomenology: A Philosophical History*

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> It is experience ... still mute which we are concerned with leading to
> the pure expression of its own meaning.
>
> [E]xperience is the experience of human finitude.[1]

Phenomenology and the Overcoming of Metaphysics

Richard Rorty has said of phenomenology that it is "a form of philosophizing whose utility continues to escape me," and that "hermeneutic philosophy" is a "vague and unfruitful" notion.[2] Remarks such as these should be of no surprise, coming as they do from someone who does not view philosophy as (as Hegel said) "serious business"—i.e., as a reasoned and principled search for the truth of things—but rather as a kind of "professional dilettantism" and who, accordingly, sees no difference between philosophy and literary criticism. It is hard to imagine two philosophers (if that is the right term to apply to Rorty) standing in greater contrast than Richard Rorty and Edmund Husserl. Whereas in Rorty's neopragmatic view philosophy can be nothing more than a kind of "culture chat" and, inasmuch as it may have some relevance to actual practice, a criterionless, unprincipled "kibitzing" and "muddling-through," Husserl defended phenomenology because he saw it as a means at last for making of philosophy a "rigorous science," one moreover which would be of supreme theoretical-critical relevance to the life of humanity.[3] One thing Husserl meant by his programmatic remarks on this subject in his 1911 *Logos* article, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science,"[4] is that a properly

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* This paper is dedicated to the memory of Franz Vandenbusche, S.J., of the University of Louvain (Leuven), who forty-some years ago introduced me as a young graduate student to the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and who was killed in a collision with a train in 1990.

phenomenological philosophy would rigorously eschew idle metaphysical speculations of the traditional sort and seek instead to remain in close contact with "the things themselves," i.e., our actual lived experience.[5] In the early twentieth century, dominated as it was by various forms of idealist philosophy, the phenomenological motto "Back to the things themselves!" was for a great many a revolutionary call which held out the promise of transforming philosophy into a genuinely "useful" and "fruitful" endeavor.

The "problem of cognition" was one area in which Husserl sought to demonstrate the "utility" of a phenomenological approach to traditional philosophical problems. In a series of lectures in 1907 at the University of Göttingen (published in 1950 under the title *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*), Husserl presented a phenomenological response to the central problem that had bedeviled all of modern philosophy and which he stated thus: "How do I, the cognizing subject, know if I can ever really know, that there exist not only my own mental processes, these acts of cognizing, but also that which they apprehend? How can I ever know that there is anything at all which could be set over against cognition as its object?"[6] This, as any student of the history of philosophy will immediately recognize, is the problem Descartes bequeathed to modernity and which came to be known as the problem of the "external world": is there a world "out there" and, if so, how can I know there is? More technically: How can I transcend my own subjectivity so as to make contact with something "objective"? In these lectures, Husserl took a truly radical and unprecedented approach to this traditional problem. He did not seek to *solve* it, as philosophers before him had, by coming up with a "proof" for the existence of the world, but to *dissolve* it. By means of the *phenomenological reduction*, which Husserl presented for the first time in these lectures, he was able to show that the central epistemological problem of modern philosophy rests on certain *metaphysical* assumptions, assumptions having to do with the relation that obtains between the cognizing subject and the objective world. He showed as well that these assumptions are, from an experiential (i.e., phenomenological) point of view, wholly without warrant—and therefore stand in need of being deconstructed.

By putting into play the phenomenological reduction, showing thereby how the modern problem of the "external world" is a pseudo-problem, Husserl's phenomenology accomplished a decisive overcoming of modern theory of knowledge (*Erkenntnislehre*) and, indeed, the entire tradition of "epistemolog-ically centered philosophy," as Rorty has referred to it. In his account of the phenomenological movement, Gadamer wrote:

> [A]bove all, it [phenomenology] aimed its attacks at the [metaphysical] construction that dominated epistemology, the basic discipline of the philosophy of the time. When epistemological inquiry sought to answer the question of how the subject, filled with its own representations,

knows the external world and can be certain of its reality, the phenomenological critique showed how pointless such a question is. It saw that consciousness is by no means a self-enclosed sphere with its representations locked up in their own inner world. On the contrary, consciousness is, according to its own essential structure, already with objects. Epistemology asserts a false priority of self-consciousness. There are no representative images of objects in consciousness, whose correspondence to things themselves it is the real problem of epistemology to guarantee (*PH*, 131).

What Gadamer refers to in these remarks is the phenomenological doctrine of *intentionality* which, rejecting the standard "copy theory" of knowledge, asserts that consciousness is never in the first instance mere self-consciousness (consciousness only of what is "inside" it: its own *cogitationes*, "ideas," sense impressions, "representations"), but is always consciousness-of-*something* (i.e., something *other* than it—namely, the world). The realization that the essence of consciousness is intentionality represents an overcoming of the metaphysics of modernity, that is, the metaphysical assumption that there is an ontological gap or chasm between subject (consciousness) and object (the world). The subject/object split is the *fons et origo* of modern philosophy,[7] and it was this "*situation phénoménale du clivage*" that it was the purpose of the reduction to deconstruct.[8] What the reduction teaches us is, in short, that the existence of the world does not need to be "proved," since the world is precisely that of which consciousness is conscious. The world is a primary "datum" of consciousness, an immediate, phenomenological "given." Sartre summed up phenomenology's accomplishment in the following graphic way:

> Consciousness has been purified. It is as clear as a strong wind. There is no longer anything in it apart from a movement to flee from itself, a slipping outside itself. If, *per impossibile*, you were to enter 'inside' a consciousness, you would be seized by a whirlwind and thrown outside, next to the tree, in the dust. For consciousness has no 'inside.' It is nothing other than the outside of itself, and it is this absolute flight, this refusal to be substance that constitutes it as consciousness.... [E]verything is outside, even ourselves—outside, in the world, amid others. It is not in I know not what inner retreat that we discover ourselves; it is on the road, in the city, in the midst of the crowd, thing among things, man among men.[9]

Once the metaphysics of modernity has been overcome, it becomes phenomenologically self-evident that consciousness is not a self-contained realm of "inner experiences" (subjective "states of mind"), but is rather a mode of *being-in-the-world*, i.e., a direct experience of the world itself. The

world is that which consciousness intends; to experience a world is precisely what it *means* to be conscious. Once we have performed the reduction and deconstructed the metaphysical presuppositions of modern philosophy—the notions of an "external world" and an "inner subject"—we need no longer, as Merleau-Ponty has remarked, "wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive."[10] By setting aside all mere constructions, the phenomenological reduction opens up the field of truth, conceived of not logically or epistemologically, i.e., as the "objective" correlation between "ideas" and "things," but experientially, i.e., as the self-givenness (*Selbstgegebenheit*) of the thing (*Sache*) itself, its presence to consciousness "in person," in "flesh and blood" (*Evidenz*)—and thus, at the most primordial level, as the field of lived *meaning*.[11]

The function of the reduction is, as Sartre says, to purify consciousness; it affords us access to what Husserl calls the "realm of pure experience," i.e., it enables us to explore and describe our experience of the world precisely *as* we experience it, free from the distorting lenses of metaphysical prejudice ("pure experience" was also the term favored by William James). Husserlian phenomenology is the systematic attempt to explore the various ways consciousness has of "intending" objects and *correlatively*—since every *act* of consciousness (*noesis*) is always paired with an *object* (*noema*) which it "intends"—of the various ways in which objects of all sorts (perceptual, imaginary, ideal) come to be for consciousness; "phenomenological research," as Gadamer says, "transcends in principle the opposition between object and subject and discovers the correlation of act and object as its own great field of study" (*PH*, 144–5). In other words, phenomenology is, as Husserl says, the study of "what it means that objectivity is, and manifests itself cognitively as so being" (*PRS*, 90). This sort of "intentional analysis" (or "meaning analysis"—phenomenology, like pragmatism, which is also a philosophy of experience, is in the first instance a theory of meaning and only secondarily a theory of truth) proceeds entirely by means of reflexive acts—"the phenomenological method proceeds entirely through acts of reflexion"[12]—and is thus a form of inquiry that is resolutely *transcendental*.

To say that phenomenology is a form of transcendental analysis means that, as a philosophy of experience, i.e., as a reflexive analysis of our experience of the things of the world *exactly as we experience them*, it deliberately refrains from making speculative, metaphysical assumptions about the ontological status of what it seeks to describe; the phenomenological reduction, as Gadamer says, is a "return to the phenomenologically given as such, which renounces all [mere] theory and metaphysical construction" (*PH*, 146). To take the "transcendental turn" that the reduction calls for is to adopt a stance of self-critical responsibility in the examination of one's own experience, pursuing in a methodologically rigorous fashion Montaigne's guiding question, *Que sais-je*? What exactly is it that I can legitimately claim to know, and how

is it that I know this? Or, to put it in a less epistemological manner: what are those things of which I can say, "I have experienced them," and in what exactly did this experience consist? David Michael Levin sums up the matter when he says that "the heart of phenomenology is a methodologically formulated respect for the integrity and validity of our experience just as we live it."[13]

The overriding injunction of the phenomenological method—Husserl called this "the principle of all principles"—is that one must always seek to describe what one experiences precisely *as* one experiences it without importing into this description suppositions which are not warranted by the experience (Gadamer refers to this as "the fundamental phenomenological principle that one should avoid all theoretical constructions and get back 'to the things themselves'" [*RPJ*, 22]). Phenomenology is indeed nothing other than a systematic attempt to cut through the thicket of metaphysical misunderstanding in order to describe our lived experience of the things themselves.

One thing that I *cannot* legitimately claim to know or to have experienced is what metaphysicians call "reality in itself," reality as it exists (supposedly) apart from my consciousness of it. Indeed, from a strictly phenomenological or experiential point of view the notion of a reality that would be totally "in itself," totally "outside" of consciousness, is a notion devoid of any discernible meaning; it is, as "the distinguished Husserl" would say, "absurd."[14] The notion of an absolute "being-in-itself" is, to speak like William of Occam, a notion that, while it can be *said*, is nevertheless one that it is impossible to *think*. The only thing that is genuinely real for us is our own experience of reality; we live, as James said, "in a world where experience and reality come to the same thing."[15] This being so, we must "reduce," "bracket," or "put out of play" the metaphysical notion of a world absolutely in-itself and focus instead on objects of the world as we actually experience them. Phenomenologically speaking, we do indeed experience a "transcendent" world, but this "real" world does not lie on the far side of the subject/object gap. For phenomenology, "transcendent" is not a metaphysical concept referring to something existing "beyond" our experience of it; "transcendent" is the *meaning* we attach to certain objects of our experience (e.g., the maple tree outside my window).

Once we make this transcendental move we can no longer conceive of consciousness metaphysically, in a Cartesian style, as a kind of substance or *thing* (of a "mental" sort) standing in an objectivistic relation with other things (of a "material" sort) and being acted upon by them in a quasi-mechanical, *causal* fashion (this, as Emmanuel Levinas remarks, was "the great merit of the theory of the phenomenological reduction"[16]). Since the essence of consciousness is intentionality, the relationship between consciousness and the world is "*sui generis*"; it is not a "real" (causal) relationship but an intentional ("irreal") one. Consciousness itself (the "mind") is not something "real" in the metaphysical sense of the term;[17] what we call "reality" is rather an

object *for* consciousness, something that comes to be *constituted* as exactly *what* it is in accordance with the way in which it is "intended." Or as James had earlier remarked: "The way in which the ideas are combined is part of the inner constitution of the thought's object or content."[18] As later hermeneutical phenomenology, which continues to operate under the phenomenological reduction (i.e., under the refusal to speculate on what anything is in any absolute sense of the term), would maintain, there can be no doubt that what human beings (and realist philosophers) call "the world" is a constituted entity—although, as we shall see, hermeneutics also maintains that the constitutional activity by means of which the world becomes a world is not that of a sovereign, transcendental Ego.[19]

As a reflexive inventory-taking of the "field of consciousness,"[20] phenomenology is thus necessarily a form of transcendental analysis—"all phenomenology is transcendental," as Paul Ricoeur notes[21]—such that the notion of a "realist" phenomenology is a contradiction in terms. The most insidious form of realism from a phenomenological point of view is the naturalism that Husserl singled out for criticism in his 1911 article. As Husserl there noted, naturalism is a philosophical-scientific stance arising out of the way modern, mechanistic science conceives of nature, that is, as an all-encompassing spatio-temporal whole (encompassing both the physical and the psychological), as mere matter in motion subject to determinable laws of a causal nature. As Husserl says:

> [T]he naturalist ... sees only nature, and primarily physical nature. Whatever is is either itself physical, belonging to the unified totality of physical nature, or it is in fact psychical, but then merely as a variable dependent on the physical, at best a secondary 'parallel accompaniment.' Whatever is belongs to psychophysical nature, which is to say that it is univocally determined by rigid laws [of a mechanistic sort] (*PRS,* 79).[22]

The trouble with naturalism is that it is philosophically naive. It is naive in that (as is most evident in the case of logical positivism) it accepts unquestioningly, as ontologically valid, the modern scientific concept of "nature," and modern, natural science is itself naive, in the strict sense of the term, in that for it, as Husserl said, nature is "simply there" (*PRS,* 85). Modern science simply presupposes the existence of nature; it does not raise the question as to how it is that there can be (for us, as knowing subjects) anything like nature at all. Only a transcendental, phenomenological analysis can hope to clarify this matter ("*Was besagt dass Gegenständlichkeit sei*"); only an analysis of this sort is capable of raising in a fully reflective, thematic manner the question as to *the meaning of the being of the world.*[23]

It should perhaps be noted that although phenomenology is inherently "antirealist," and while Husserl came to speak of transcendental phenomenology

as a "transcendental idealism," Husserl's phenomenology is not for all that a form of idealism in any customary sense. A number of Husserl's early students (e.g., Roman Ingarden and members of the "Munich school") reacted with dismay when Husserl began referring to the study of transcendental, purified consciousness as a transcendental idealism, but as Heidegger sought to point out, their realist objections were off the mark. For Husserl's "idealism" amounted to no more than maintaining (the phraseology is Heidegger's, but the idea is Husserl's[24]) that one can never account properly for the being of the world merely in terms of real relations between real entities within the world—which is to say: the *being* of an entity is not itself an entity nor is it of an entitative (substantialist) nature. "If what the term 'idealism' says," Heidegger wrote in defense of Husserl's transcendentalism, "amounts to the understanding that Being can never be explained by entities but is already that which is 'transcendental' for every entity, then idealism affords the only correct possibility for a philosophical problematic. If so, Aristotle was no less an idealist than Kant."[25] Antirealist though it is, Husserl's "transcendental idealism" is in no way a Berkeleyan psychological idealism—a form of idealism that Husserl held to be as philosophically absurd as the naive realism to which it stands opposed.[26] Despite Husserl's sometimes infelicitous manner of speaking (as when in the *Ideas* he referred to "the annihilation of the world"), the transcendental-phenomenological reduction is not, as Merleau-Ponty perceptively remarked, the hallmark of an idealist philosophy; it is, rather, that which, by enabling us to set aside metaphysical constructions of whatever sort (realist or idealist), enables us to gain undistorted access to the most primordial phenomenon of all: our own everyday being-in-the-world.[27] The only thing that is "idealist" about the phenomenological reduction is the language Husserl often used to describe it.[28]

It must be admitted in this regard that Husserl's way of presenting phenomenology and the phenomenological reduction, particularly in the *Ideas* (*Ideen I*) and the *Cartesian Meditations*, and, more generally, his "idealist" manner of speaking have the unfortunate effect of blurring the true significance of his work as a crucial overcoming of the metaphysics of modernity. Unlike William James, who was much clearer on this score and who fully realized the postmetaphysical significance of his own phenomenological-pragmatic investigations, Husserl presented his thought in a way that can easily mislead readers (who often come away with the impression that the phenomenological reduction is but a version of Descartes's doubt). Paul Ricoeur very rightly speaks in this regard of "Husserl's opaque presentation of the famous phenomenological reduction."[29] The difficulty Husserl ran into in presenting the reduction in a nonidealist manner is in a way understandable nevertheless, in that Husserl was, so to speak, born and raised in the conceptuality or *Begrifflichkeit* of modern philosophy and, as is often the case with innovators, was never able fully to free himself from it (which is perhaps one reason why

he had so much difficulty understanding Heidegger who, early on, had sought to work out a strikingly different conceptual terminology[30]). The fact remains that it was precisely by means of this epistemological terminology that Husserl sought to effect a decisive break with modern epistemologism, or with modern philosophy's bifurcational way of viewing the world and our relation to it. Husserl's "idealist" way of proceeding can be viewed as a kind of crude anticipation of the existential-phenomenological thesis that being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon of which self and world are, to use Hegel's terminology, two "moments." What in his own "idealist" fashion Husserl, like later existential phenomenologists, was doing was denying that there exists, between consciousness and world, any kind of metaphysical *dualism* (self and world exist as what they themselves are only in the form of what Gadamer would call a reciprocal interplay).

The postmetaphysical significance of Husserl's work is something that one of Husserl's late assistants and the editor of his *Experience and Judgment* (1939), Ludwig Landgrebe, noted in a 1962 article entitled, significantly enough, "Husserl's Departure from Cartesianism." Referring to Husserl's 1923–24 lecture course, *First Philosophy*, Langrebe speaks of how in this work "metaphysics takes its departure behind Husserl's back." He writes:

> A retrospective glance from the historical distance we have now achieved permits us to understand that there occurs within this text a departure from those traditions which are determinative for modern thought and a breaking into a new basis for reflection. It is a reluctant departure insofar as Husserl had wished to complete and fulfill this tradition without knowing to what extent his attempt served to break up this tradition. It is therefore a moving document of an unprecedented struggle to express a content within the terminology of the traditions of modern thought that already forsakes this tradition and its alternatives and perspectives.

In noting how in general the novelty of Husserl's work is obscured by his own self-interpretation of it, Landgrebe remarks:

> Today, primarily as a result of Heidegger's work, the 'end of metaphysics' is spoken of as if with a certain obviousness. We shall first properly understand the sense of such language if we follow closely how, in this work, metaphysics takes its departure behind Husserl's back. One can state quite frankly that this work *is* the end of metaphysics in the sense that after it any further advance along the concepts and paths of thought from which metaphysics seeks forcefully to extract the most extreme possibilities is no longer possible. To be sure, neither Husserl nor those who were his students at the time were explicitly aware of

this, and it will still require a long and intensive struggle of interpretation and continuing thoughtful deliberation until we have experienced everything that here comes to an end.[31]

The interpretive turn in phenomenology, one might say, is nothing other than a long and thoughtful, interpretive reflection on the "shipwreck" (as Landgrebe referred to it) of Husserl's rationalist construal of the phenomenological project, and hermeneutical phenomenology, as Ricoeur has pointed out, can be said to be a realization of Husserl's phenomenology—to be, indeed, the "truth" of it—to the degree that it is a "reversal" of the idealist formulation that Husserl imposed on it.[32]

Just as in his riposte to logical positivism Husserl declared that it is "*we* [phenomenologists] who are the genuine positivists,"[33] so likewise—Husserl's own idealist self-interpretation notwithstanding—one could say that a "transcendental idealism" which abstains from abstract theorizing and focuses on the actual givenness of things is the only genuine realism. For the notion of modern philosophers that we are imprisoned in our own minds and have no direct experience of the "real" world is neither a datum of "common sense" nor what the "man or woman in the street" believes in his or her concernful dealings with a universe of things ready-to-hand; it is an invention, a construct of modern metaphysics. Ordinary people do not ordinarily doubt that there is a world with which they are in direct contact, and by putting out of play ("reducing") the metaphysical notion of an in-itself, noumenal—which is to say, inaccessible—reality (the "reality" of modern philosophy), phenomenology is doing no more than attempting to bring our lived experience to the proper expression of its own meaning. Thus, the reduction is a "suspension of belief" not in "the world" but in a particular philosophical-scientific ("Galilean") theory about the world. (Of course, to the degree that common sense supposes, in a somewhat contradictory fashion, that the experienced world exists altogether "independently" of our experiencing it—what Husserl called the "natural attitude"—it too needs to be "reduced.")

It is crucial in this regard to recall that phenomenology is not a phenomenalism, and that what phenomenology understands by "phenomenon" ("the phenomenon in the phenomenological sense of the word," as Gérard Granel always made a point of saying[34]) is nothing other than *the thing itself* as it shows itself, reality itself insofar as it appears to us, as Heidegger sought to make clear in the second introductory chapter of his *Being and Time*. By "bracketing" the so-called external world, Husserl's transcendental idealism effected a decisive break with the most basic—and, as Nietzsche maintained, the most pernicious—of metaphysical oppositions: that of *reality* versus *appearance*. It is not transcendental phenomenology that is idealist, but the "realism" of modernist philosophers. For what could be more idealist than to maintain that we never have direct experience of the real world but only

of "ideas" (sense impressions, etc.) existing in (as Locke said) the "cabinet" of our minds? Husserl's "difficult and original setting up of the problem of reality," as Ricoeur remarks, "is phenomenology's essential philosophical contribution."[35]

To those of his critics who, reluctant to follow his lead, fell back into an uncritical realism and who feared that a concern to explore the field of transcendental subjectivity must necessarily result in an outright subjectivism, Husserl replied thus: "For children in philosophy, this may be the dark corner haunted by the spectres of solipsism and, perhaps, of psychologism, of relativism. The true philosopher, instead of running away, will prefer to fill the dark corner with light."[36] Taking as their object of investigation the "I am," reflexive self-consciousness, which Husserl called the "wonder of wonders," and filling the dark corner of subjectivity with light was the task that Husserl's existential and hermeneutical successors were to undertake—albeit in a manner that Husserl barely envisaged and certainly would not have endorsed.

From Transcendental to "Existential" Phenomenology

Despite his aversion to speculative metaphysics and despite his resolute attempt to focus, by means of the phenomenological reduction, not on metaphysical constructions but on our lived experience, Husserl was unable to jettison one of the traditionally most metaphysical, or rationalist, of notions: the notion that philosophy, to be true to itself, must culminate in an absolute, apodictic science of reality, a kind of *mathesis universalis* or "science of the universe, of the all-encompassing unity of all that is," "the complete universe of the *a priori*."[37] Husserl believed that the only way of achieving such an all-embracing science of the *a priori*, of apodictically certain truths, a "science which is alone science in the ancient Platonic and again in the Cartesian sense,"[38] was by discovering an absolute, unshakable grounding for all the evidences given to us in our experience (which it is the task of a descriptive phenomenology to catalogue). In a time-honored fashion, Husserl looked for this *fundamentum inconcussum* in something standing behind, as it were, our immediate consciousness of the world: the transcendental Ego. Accordingly, for Husserl the being, or "origin," of the world was to be accounted for in terms of the immanent and invariant structures of the transcendental Ego, structures which prescribe in advance (*a priori*) the conditions of objectivity of any object whatsoever. From this point of view the world is a "subjective achievement" (*Leistung*) on the part of the transcendental Ego. Husserl's "transcendental idealism" may not, as I have argued, be an idealism in any usual, metaphysical sense, but to a large extent it is, in both its conceptuality and its methodology, an "egology," a "philosophy of consciousness" focused on the description of "mental processes."

From a purely phenomenological or descriptive point of view, however,

it is not at all clear what exactly this transcendental Ego is and what relation obtains between it and the philosophizing, reflecting subject. Is there, as Averroes (Ibn Rochd) said of Aristotle's agent intellect (*nous poetikos, intellectus agens*), just one transcendental Ego for all conscious beings or, as Aquinas argued, is each of us a transcendental Ego (agent intellect) in our own right, such that each of us is guaranteed our own personal immortality? Such questions have every appearance of being the kind of metaphysical questions from which a thoroughgoing phenomenological reduction should free us. As James remarked in this connection, in order properly to describe our lived experience, "we need not be metaphysical at all. The phenomena are enough."[39]

Most of Husserl's phenomenological disciples[40] would no doubt have preferred that he had been more faithful to the phenomenological "principle of all principles" and had stuck with what, following James, he had said of the traditional notion of a transcendental or "pure" Ego—as the subjective center of relations for everything that is "in" consciousness but is not itself an object "for" consciousness—in the first edition (1900–01) of his *Logical Investigations.* "I must frankly confess," he there wrote, "that I am quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary center of relations."[41] Although Husserl subsequently chose to disregard James's precept about not "going metaphysical" and claimed to have found this "central ego," later phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty remained unconvinced. For them the notion of a transcendental Ego as the linchpin of a Cartesian-like absolute science had no "phenomenological credentials."[42] In this, and without knowing it, they were following in the footsteps of James, who argued that the unity of consciousness is not the product of a substantial and perduring Ego but is a matter instead of an ongoing, dynamic, and retrospective self-appropriation on the part of a bodily subject, or in other words temporality (lived time). "Transcendental subjectivity" is nothing other than a name for the way the "stream of consciousness" (Husserl's rendering of James's "stream of thought") "hangs together" (*der Zusammenhang eines Lebens*).

Although Husserl, by means of the phenomenological reduction, may have "purified" consciousness of its naturalistic misinterpretation, he did not question the priority of consciousness in the constitution of the world, and as the existentialists pointed out, there is more to our being than our being-conscious (*Bewusstsein*). Accordingly, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty sought to overcome not just ego-metaphysics but the overarching framework that dominates Husserl's philosophizing, that is, the philosophy of consciousness itself. However, both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty in their early writings did so without abandoning the transcendental turn and without falling back into naive realism (which is why, in the section title above, I have placed "existential" in scare quotes: existential phenomenology is still a form of transcendental phenomenology).[43] The point to note in this regard is that a transcendental phenomenology need in no way be a "constitutive" phenomenology in the idealist or neo-Kantian

sense of the term, one in which consciousness is conceived of as "producing" meanings (the meaning "sensuous object," for instance) out of itself or which bestows meaning on the world through a sovereign act of meaning-giving (*Sinngebung*). "Transcendental" must not be taken to mean "primary," as when Husserl spoke of consciousness as constituting, as being "prior to" or primary over against the world as constituted. To express the matter in still another way, there are not, as Husserl tended to say, two kinds of "conscious- nesses" or egos—a transcendental or pure consciousness and a mundane or worldly consciousness; there is, as Aron Gurwitsch argued, only one consciousness (or, better said, self): a thoroughly worldly consciousness, but one which may nevertheless adopt a transcendental or reflexive attitude toward its own worldliness, and whose essential (eidetic) understanding of things is always hemmed in and limited by its worldliness or facticity.

The two most important notions that later phenomenologists took over from Husserl and which they sought to extricate from a questionable philosophy of consciousness are those of intentionality and the lifeworld.[44] Regarding intentionality, Heidegger, concerned with "the *being* of intentionality," sought to reconceptualize this notion in terms not of "consciousness" but of "existence." According to Heidegger, "knowing" or "cognizing" ("intuiting") the world is not the most basic relation we have to the world; "knowing" is rather a derivative or "founded" mode of something more basic: our being-in-the-world. "[K]nowing is grounded beforehand in a Being-already-alongside-the-world, which is essentially constitutive for Dasein's Being" (*BT*, sec. 23, 88). To speak of Dasein and "being-already-alongside-the-world" is Heidegger's way of articulating Husserl's notion of intentionality while avoiding the terminology of a philosophy of consciousness. It represents, as Ricoeur says, an "overthrow" of the primacy Husserl accorded to consciousness[45] and a "deepening" of the notion of intentionality; "being-in" is a more primordial phenomenon that the subject-object (*noesis-noema*) relation, and Heidegger's "existence" is something decidedly more than Husserl's "intuitional consciousness."

Thus, while Husserl spoke of consciousness "intending" objects, Heidegger, in his reformulation of the notion of intentionality, stated:

> When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated [Husserl's egological 'sphere of ownness'], but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered (*BT*, 89).[46]

This world which is "always already there," into which Dasein is "thrown," is what the later Husserl called the lifeworld—a "magic word," as Gadamer says of it, that Husserl himself invented.[47] The notion of the lifeworld is one

Husserl came upon in the course of the investigations he undertook later in his life into the origins of modern science. By means of this "archeology" of Western consciousness Husserl was able to flesh out his earlier critique of naturalism by showing how the lifeworld is "the forgotten meaning-fundament [*Sinnesfundament*] of natural science." The lifeworld is the *prescientific* world of lived experience on which all (natural) scientific constructs are based and which they necessarily presuppose. Indeed, as Husserl again and again insisted, scientific constructs are mere idealizations, abstractions from and interpretations of this prereflective world of immediate life, "a garb of ideas (*Ideenkleid*)" thrown over the lifeworld. While this is hermeneutically incontestable, Husserl nevertheless went on to insist that the natural sciences could be placed on a rigorous footing, and surmount their supposed "crisis," only if the lifeworld itself could be scientifically accounted for. This, of course, was to be the task of the most ultimate of all sciences, "a science without bounds,"[48] i.e., a transcendental phenomenology which relates everything back to the constituting activity of a transcendental Ego.

For Heidegger, the significance of the notion of what Husserl was to call the lifeworld lay elsewhere. What the "pregivenness," as Husserl would say, of the lifeworld means is that by virtue of our very existence we possess what Heidegger calls a "pre-ontological understanding" of the world (of being). This was not, however, the formula for an ultimate science of being in Husserl's sense, since what the discovery of the lifeworld signifies for Heidegger is that *all* explicit understandings or theorizings, even those of transcendental phenomenology, do no more than build on, and are interpretations of, this always presupposed, and thus never fully thematizable, "ground." This is what Heidegger called the "hermeneutical situation" (see *BT*, sec. 45, 275). Everything comes to us, as it were, preinterpreted (or prearticulated). To see or deal with something, for instance, is always to see or deal with it *as* this or that thing (this is what Heidegger referred to as the "existential-hermeneutical as" [*BT*, sec. 33, 201]). For Heidegger, all being is in effect interpreted being; as later hermeneuticists would say, "interpretation goes all the way down and all the way back."[49] For Heidegger, interpretation is not just one mode of being-conscious, as it was for Husserl; it is the all-embracing form of our awareness of the world. The "given" is always an *interpreted* given, such that there is, and can be, no such thing as a "pure" seeing. Unlike Husserl, therefore, Heidegger did not believe that the lifeworld could ever be transformed into the fully transparent object of an absolute, presuppositionless (*veraus-setzungslos*) science.

For Heidegger, the ultimate discovery of the reflecting subject (the ultimate phenomenological "given") is not a transparent, luminous transcendental Ego, but rather the "opacity of the fact," as Merleau-Ponty was later to say. Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit* (disposition) is meant to express a primordial characteristic of the lifeworld: the fact that we simply "find" ourselves

in a world, "thrown" (*geworfen*) into it. We discover ourselves as "already there," and the sheer, brute facticity of our being-there blots out any apparent "why" or "wherefore" for this factual state of affairs: "The pure 'that it is' shows itself, but the 'whence' and the 'wither' remain in darkness" (*BT*, sec. 29, 173). Or as Heidegger also says: "Even if Dasein is 'assured' in its belief about its 'whither,' or if, in rational enlightenment, it supposes itself to know about its 'whence,' all this counts for nothing as against the phenomenal facts of the case: for the mood [of attunedness to Dasein's factual situation] brings Dasein before the 'that-it-is' of its 'there,' which, as such, stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma" (*BT*, sec. 29, 175).

These remarks of Heidegger's are thoroughly "un-Husserlian," and are fully in line with what that earlier critic of the Cartesian ideal, Blaise Pascal, had written in his reflections on what, like subsequent existential writers, he referred to as the "human condition":

> When I consider the brief span of my life absorbed into the eternity which comes before and after, ... the small space I occupy and which I see swallowed up in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I know nothing and which know nothing of me, I take fright and am amazed to see myself here rather than there: there is no reason for me to be here rather than there, now rather than then. Who put me here?

> When I see the blind and wretched state of man, when I survey the whole universe in its dumbness and man left to himself with no light [no 'science' of being], as though lost in this corner of the universe, without knowing who put him there, what he has come to do, what will become of him when he dies, incapable of knowing anything, I am moved to terror, like a man transported in his sleep to some terrifying desert island, who wakes up quite lost and with no means of escape.[50]

The kind of existential anxiety Pascal described was one of the major topics of *Being and Time*. In Heidegger's treatment of anxiety (which owed more to Kierkegaard's morbid individualism and irrational decisionism than to Pascal's more sober assessment of the human condition), the function of anxiety or dread and the "call of conscience" is to lead the individual Dasein to "wrest" itself away, in an act of resolve ("anticipatory resoluteness"), from its "fallenness" in the impersonal, average everydayness of anonymous mass man, the "they," so as to set itself on the path of authentic selfhood. For Heidegger, the "authentic" self was a kind of heroic, radically individualized, and guilt-ridden "*solus ipse*" capable of achieving genuine selfhood only in a kind of voluntaristic, self-assertive, quasi-Promethean manner and for whom "the Dasein-with of Others" had nothing to offer (see *BT*, sec. 40). This particular view of selfhood or subjectivity, which was to become greatly accentuated in the

1930s, was, in the eyes of many subsequent phenomenologists, one-sided (and thus phenomenologically unsound[51]), and it was indeed one that would later come back to haunt Heidegger in such a way as to lead him, in a kind of compensatory overreaction, to turn away (in his famous "turning" or *Kehre*) from the human subject to concentrate more directly on Being itself, "Being-as-such" (*Seins als solchen*), abandoning in the process the very notion of subjectivity (which he came to equate with the unbridled, modernistic Will to Power extolled by Nietzsche). Later phenomenologists would not follow Heidegger down this path, but would instead attempt to conceptualize "authentic selfhood" in a less "subjectivistic" manner and would seek to view the phenomenon of intersubjectivity (our *Miteinandersein,* our being-in-the-world-with-others) in a much more positive light—discarding in the process not only Husserl's "transcendental solipsism" but also Heidegger's "existential 'solipsism.'"

For all that, *Being and Time* was the crowning work of Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie* and a foundational work for interpretive phenomenology. In this book, Heidegger pursued further, with the "necessary tools" provided by Husserl, but in a more radical way, the overcoming of metaphysics and modern epistemologism that Husserl had inaugurated (the book, one should not forget, was dedicated to Husserl "in friendship and admiration").[52] However, in going beyond the framework of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness and in abandoning all talk of a transcendental Ego, Heidegger was not, contrary to what many have said and what, indeed, Husserl himself seems to have thought, turning away from transcendental philosophy and lapsing into a crude form of empiricism, into "anthropologism" and "irrationalism."[53] As John Caputo rightly observes:

> If *Being and Time* practices a hermeneutic phenomenology, this is because Heidegger has acted upon certain suggestions of Husserl, exploited certain resources in Husserl's own method, moved phenomenology in a direction which Husserl himself made possible. If the phenomenology of Heidegger is explicitly hermeneutic, Husserl's phenomenology is already in an important sense a 'proto-hermeneutics.'[54]

Heidegger characterized his own project in *Being and Time* as that of a "fundamental ontology" and while he ignored Husserl's transcendental Ego he maintained, in line with Husserl, that ontology can responsibly be pursued only in the mode of phenomenology, i.e., transcendentally ("Phenomenological truth [the disclosedness of Being] is *veritas transcendentalis*" [*BT*, sec.7, 62]). Thus, as Heidegger indicated, if we wish to raise the question of the meaning of being, we must first conduct a thorough analysis of that being which itself raises the question of what it means to be (and without whom there would, obviously, be no question), the being for whom its own being is itself a

question.[55] That being is, of course, the human being, Dasein. As Heidegger the phenomenologist stated:

> [T]o work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity—the inquirer—transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*.... This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term '*Dasein*.' If we are to formulate our question explicitly and transparently, we must first give a proper explication of an entity (Dasein) with regard to its Being (*BT*, sec. 2, 27).

The phenomenological analysis of human being that Heidegger undertook in *Being and Time* was meant to furnish the "transcendental horizon" for raising the question as to the meaning of being, but as Heidegger remarked in his 1935 lectures on metaphysics, "the 'transcendental' there [in *Being and Time*] is not that of the subjective consciousness; rather, it defines itself in terms of the existential-ecstatic temporality of human being-there [Dasein]" (*IM*, 18). The purpose of Heidegger's "existential analytic" in *Being and Time*, which was directed at "conceptualizing existentially [ontologically] what has already been disclosed in an ontico-existentiell [prereflective or 'factical'] manner," is to reveal, by means of an eidetic analysis, the essential structures or basic traits, "existentialia (*Existentialen*)," of human being-in-the-world. What this "phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity," this phenomenological explication of the lifeworld, discloses is that the most basic meaning, the essence, of human being is temporality ("*der Sinn des Daseins ist die Zeitlichkeit*"[56]).

The human subject constitutes itself as a subject by means of its being essentially ("ecstatically") related to futurity. It exists not in the static mode of a *thing* (which is never more than what as a matter of fact it is), but in the dynamic mode of possibility or potentiality, of continual self-transcendence. The human being is a being which is *always more* than what it ever actually is; it exists (ex-sists, stands out from itself) as an ongoing process of self-interpretation and reinterpretation.

Since the human being is that being for whom its being is always in question (until the day it is no more), the basic relation of the self to itself and to the world is that of a concernful or "circumspective" understanding of itself. The name Heidegger gave to this existentially-ontologically fundamental, future-oriented ("ek-static") relatedness of self to self and to world (the "intentional" relation), a relation in which Dasein's "ownmost potentiality-for-Being is an issue" (see *BT*, sec. 39, 275), is *care* or *concern* (*Sorge*). Unlike knowledge, which is something we may or may not have, understanding—an understanding of what it means to be (*Seinsverständis*)—is what we most essentially and always *are*. This tacit, pre-ontological understanding which is constitutive

of our being-in-the-world is of a "horizonal" nature—existing, as James would say, on the "fringes" of consciousness—in that it is an undefined or underdetermined understanding of the possible ways in which we *could* be (of our "potentiality-for-being"). Since the concernful understanding that we are is always future-oriented, temporally "already ahead of itself," it is essentially "projective" in nature.

"The phenomenology of Dasein," Heidegger stated, "is a *hermeneutic* in the primordial significance of the word, where it designates [the] business of interpreting" (*BT*, sec. 7, 62). As regards the exigencies of philosophical *method*, to maintain that understanding is projective in nature means that the hermeneutic task of ontological interpretation, of phenomenological research, cannot be that of metaphysical, free-floating speculation but can only be that of a patient and care-taking working-out and "appropriating" of the meaning-structures ("fore-structures," as Heidegger called them) of our pre-ontological, "projective" understanding of things—an understanding which, being "projective," is itself interpretive in nature. Or as Heidegger says: "the Interpretation by which such an understanding gets developed [i.e., phenomenology] will let that which is to be interpreted *put itself into words for the very first time*" (*BT*, sec. 63, 362).[57] The relation between the understanding that we are and the various ways in which this understanding, which is already interpretive (in a pre-ontological sort of way), itself gets interpreted ("developed," "worked-out") in an articulated (philosophical or ontological) fashion is, therefore, an inescapably *circular* relation.

Indeed, one of the most significant accomplishments of *Being and Time* is the way in which in this work Heidegger transformed what traditional hermeneutics had called the "hermeneutical circle" which, as a purely methodological rule, means that when interpreting a text one ought continually to interpret the parts in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the parts. Heidegger "ontologizes" the hermeneutical circle, showing how the "circle of understanding" is in fact rooted in the existential constitution of human being itself. All understanding is of a circular nature in that all explicit understandings always presuppose a pregiven world of meaning, this being the everyday, historically conditioned lifeworld into which we find ourselves "thrown." This was a decisive move on Heidegger's part in that it represented a truly radical break with modern metaphysics, or with the Cartesian ideal that dominated modern philosophy, the notion, namely, that genuine, scientific knowledge must be presuppositionless or "foundational," grounded upon some ultimate foundation—this search for apodictic certainty being expressive of what Pascal called the "desire to find a firm footing, an ultimate, lasting base on which to build a tower rising up to infinity."[58] This, of course, is an ideal (or idol) that Husserl, a "kind of super-rationalist"[59] ever concerned to discover a solid, scientific foundation for all human knowing and doing, could not bring himself to relinquish.

Heidegger's transcendental-existential analytic, which he considered to be "a more faithful adherence to the principle of phenomenology" than Husserl's own would-be science of being,[60] provided the crucial impetus for the subsequent interpretive turn in phenomenology that would come to fruition with Gadamer and Ricoeur, and it did so by reason of the way in which it managed to "existentialize" Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, as well as in the way in which it managed to overcome the rationalist-foundational project of modernity running from Descartes through Husserl. In this way it laid the groundwork not only for hermeneutical phenomenology but also for the phenomenological philosophy of human finitude that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was to develop some fifteen years later.

In contrast to Husserl, who insisted that "science is a title standing for absolute, timeless values" (*PRS*, 136), who as a philosopher lived in and for the Absolute, and who held that humanity's own highest vocation is to live in and for the Infinite, Merleau-Ponty flatly stated: "No philosophy can afford to be ignorant of the problem of finitude under pain of failing to understand itself as philosophy" (*PP*, 38). As would be the case with his hermeneutical successors, Merleau-Ponty insisted that as reflecting subjects we have no access to the absolute, and his phenomenology was nothing other than a sustained attempt to draw out the far-ranging philosophical implications of human finitude.

Also in response to Husserl who, in his customary way, presented the phenomenological reduction as a means by which the reflecting subject could be *led back* (*reducere* means to lead back) to some kind of "inner" realm of pure experience, and who in the very last lines of his *Cartesian Meditations* stated, quoting Augustine, "Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself; truth inhabits the inner man," Merleau-Ponty declared:

> Truth does not 'inhabit' only 'the inner man,' or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science ['naturalism'], I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to be in the world (*PP*, ix).

In saying this Merleau-Ponty was reacting against the roundabout way in which Husserl, struggling to work out his position *vis-à-vis* Descartes and Kant, sought to overcome the subject/object dichotomy of modern philosophy in such a way as to effect a return to lived experience. Husserl's general tactic in this regard was to present the reduction not only as a "bracketing" of the nonsensical (*unsinnlich*) notion of traditional realism of a "being-in-itself" but, beyond that, as a reduction of everything that is to the "concrete ego" conceived of as the constituting source of all meaning, and thus as *omnitudo*

realitatis, as the sum total of reality, as a system of *absolute being*, the transcendental, self-enclosed field of all possible acts and objects outside of which there is quite literally nothing (since for Husserl to be is to-be-an-object, i.e., a meaning, being exists only *for* a consciousness which "intends" it). Along the way, Husserl adopted the Leibnizian term "monad" to refer to this "inner man." In order, however, to counteract the manifestly idealistic and solipsistic implications of such a move (a move dictated by Husserl's Cartesian quest for an absolute, presuppositionless starting point), Husserl then argued that this monad is not altogether self-enclosed but had "windows" through which it could make empathetic contact with other such monadic egos. Eventually—but only eventually, and as a kind of filling-in of the blanks—this "universal self-knowledge—first of all monadic, and then intermonadic" was supposed to get around to dealing with the concrete, existential "problems of accidental factualness, of death, of fate, of the possibility of a 'genuine' human life," and the "problem of the 'meaning' of history."[61] Such was the complex manner—working to get at our experience of the world from, as it were, the top down and the inside out—in which Husserl sought to subvert or deconstruct the metaphysics of modernity. Although Merleau-Ponty always tried to present Husserl in the best possible light, he was not prepared to grant any validity to this typically modernist way of proceeding (this "methodic idealism," as Ricoeur has called it), since the most important thing for him was to effect a decisive overcoming of that most basic conceptual opposition of the metaphysics of modernity, the opposition between "inside" and "outside." "Inside and outside are inseparable," he categorically stated. "The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself" (*PP*, 407). Such, for Merleau-Ponty, was the true meaning of phenomenology's great discovery: intentionality.

In the Preface to his major work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which he responded to the question "what is phenomenology?" and in the course of which he presented his own existential reading of some major themes in Husserl's phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty stated what he himself saw as the most important lesson to be learned from putting into play the phenomenological reduction: "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us," he wrote, "is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (*PP*, xiv). In this much-noted phrase Merleau-Ponty was not calling into question the need for the reduction, i.e., for a conscientiously transcendental approach to the question as to the meaning of the being of the world. He was not advocating any form of "realist" phenomenology, but was instead objecting to the way in which Husserl presented the reduction. While for Merleau-Ponty the reduction was indispensable for overcoming the metaphysics of modernity and leading us back to our lived experience of the world, it does not, and cannot, afford us access to a "pure," monadic ego which would be the absolute source of all that is and can be for us, an absolute consciousness that would be coextensive with being itself.

In rejecting Husserl's "idealist" presentation of the reduction, Merleau-Ponty also ruled out the possibility of our ever achieving the kind of apodictically certain *science* of being that Husserl envisioned. Like Heidegger,[62] Merleau-Ponty believed that the ultimate discovery of the reflecting subject is that of his or her own "thrownness" into the world, or as Merleau-Ponty put it, "the unmotivated upsurge of the world" (*PP*, xiv).[63] Accordingly, what a genuinely transcendental or "radical" reflection amounts to is "a consciousness of its own dependence on an unreflective life which is its initial situation, unchanging, given once and for all" (*PP*, xiv).

The greater part of the *Phenomenology of Perception* was devoted to an exploration of this unreflective or prereflective life which underlies and supports that of the reflecting subject, i.e., perception. In this work, intended as a kind of "inventory of the perceived world" (*PP*, 25), Merleau-Ponty, contrary to what is often supposed, sought less to put forward a theory of his own regarding the nature of perception than to criticize various objectivist theories of perception characteristic of the metaphysics of modernity.[64] These theories are of two sorts, realist (empiricist or materialist) and idealist (intellectualist or spiritualist), but they both rest on the assumption that there are "two senses, and two only, of the word 'exist': one exists as a thing or else one exists as a consciousness" (*PP*, 198).[65] This is the metaphysical assumption *par excellence* of modern philosophy which constitutes the subject/object split. In attempting to deconstruct this metaphysical assumption Merleau-Ponty's goal was to effect a "return to the phenomena," to our actual lived experience ("the phenomenal field"). This "reduction" to lived experience was meant to serve as the means of elucidating the unique mode of being of that being which, in our everyday, unreflective, perceptual lives we ourselves are.

This particular being—the perceiving subject—is not a thing-like object, as naturalistic realism or materialist neuroscience would have it, but it is also not the self-conscious, transparent subject of idealist philosophy (the pure spectator of its own bodily experiences). A *subject* it most definitely is, but a unique, philosophically ambiguous sort of subject whose mode of being is neither that of the "in itself" (mere object) nor that of the "for itself" (pure subject). Far from being a pure Ego, the perceiving subject is an *embodied* subject, a *body-subject*, so to speak. Inasmuch as I am aware of the world, I do not merely "have" a body (as modernist philosophers tend to say); I *am* a body—an often overlooked yet, as regards the overcoming of modern epistemology, crucial insight that Merleau-Ponty took over from Gabriel Marcel's existential phenomenology of embodiment (for his part, James also maintained that our bodies are not simply "ours," they are *us*[66]). The perceiving subject is one's own body, *le corps propre*. This is not the purely objective body that appears in the pages of anatomy textbooks and which is the body of nobody in particular; it is, as it were, a "subjective" or "lived" body. As Sartre put it, I *exist* my body; my body is my unique point of view on the world, one

on which I cannot myself take a point of view as an outsider might. The subject that perceives a world—and which is capable of perceiving a world only to the degree that it is capable of acting and moving about bodily in this world (in lived space)—is that body which, as human subjects, each of us is. While the notions of the lived body (*Leib*) and action (motility—"I can") are not absent from Husserl's work, Merleau-Ponty held that the true significance of those notions was obscured by Husserl's overarching "mentalism" (or "psychism"), that is, Husserl's habitual way of viewing intentionality from within the framework of a philosophy of consciousness, as essentially a kind of psychic phenomenon or "mental process" (a feature of Husserl's way of approaching issues to which Charles Sanders Peirce had earlier objected).

Following up on clues provided by Husserl,[67] Heidegger had already pointed out that all higher-level knowledge of the world is founded on our "prepredica-tive" being-in-the-world, but in showing in a thoroughgoing way how all reflective consciousness rests upon and presupposes the unreflective life of our bodily or corporeal being, Merleau-Ponty advanced considerably beyond Heidegger in spelling out what it actually means to be in a world, to have a world (a "world," Merleau-Ponty said, is "a collection of things which emerge from a background of formlessness by presenting themselves to our body as 'to be touched,' 'to be taken,' 'to be climbed over'" [*PP*, 441]. As Alphonse De Waelhens, one of Merleau-Ponty's early defenders, observes:

> Heidegger always situates himself at a level of complexity which permits imagining that the problem which concerns us here is resolved. For it is at the level of perception and the sensible that the problem must receive its decisive treatment.... But in *Being and Time* one does not find thirty lines concerning the problem of perception; one does not find ten concerning that of the body.[68]

Indeed, one of the outstanding merits of Merleau-Ponty's work on perception is how, with the aid of Gestalt psychology and the biological and behavioral sciences, he was able to elucidate in a concrete way the interpretive nature of perception and to show how there are no "pure sensations" ("Pure sensation, ... this notion corresponds to nothing in our experience" [*PP*, 3]), and how all seeing is a hermeneutical seeing-as. (Like other French phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty had no sympathy for Husserl's attempt to salvage the modern epistemological notion of "sense data" by arguing that the meaningful objects of consciousness [*noemata*] are arrived at by means of intentional acts "animating" hyletic data existing within consciousness [as real, i.e., non-intentional parts thereof] and which are themselves uninterpreted and without meaning.)

In pointing to the essentially *ambiguous* mode of being of the body-subject,[69] Merleau-Ponty was attempting to take seriously something that the mainline

tradition in philosophy had always passed over in silence.[70] Contrary to the impression created in some of his early readers, Merleau-Ponty's attempt to show how the personal, self-conscious subject is dependent "on an unreflective life which is its initial situation, unchanging, given once and for all" was in no way intended as a celebration of the unreflected life. He was certainly not advocating, as others have, that we renounce the reflective or philosophical life and seek to coincide with immediate experience; "without reflection," he insisted, "life would probably dissipate itself in ignorance of itself or in chaos."[71] Indeed, Merleau-Ponty, as a philosopher, was not particularly interested in the unreflected, in "perception," purely as such; his overriding concern was rather with reflective consciousness itself, with what, in line with the tradition of French reflexive philosophy, he called the *Cogito* (the presence or "proximity" of the self to itself). The whole point of effecting a "return" to perception was, for Merleau-Ponty, to discern its "philosophical consequences" and to show how this "genealogy" of the conscious subject necessitates on the part of a phenomenological philosophy a resolute abandonment of the philosophy of consciousness and a thoroughgoing reconceptualization or *refonte* of what it means to be a self-conscious, rational subject. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and the body-subject is, as Ricoeur notes, "entirely in the service of a philosophy of finitude."[72] It is important to note, however, that in criticizing Husserl's transcendental idealism Merleau-Ponty was not in any way (contrary to what is sometimes thought) endorsing traditional realist philosophy.[73] As he stated in his first book, *The Structure of Behavior*, his goal was "to define transcendental philosophy anew" (*SB*, 3).

In this he was not altogether successful, for as he subsequently realized the *Phenomenology of Perception* retains significant (residual, so to speak) traces of the philosophy of consciousness. In his later writings, therefore, Merleau-Ponty sought to "deepen and rectify" (*VI*, 168) his earlier phenomenological investigations into our bodily being-in-the-world and to reconfigure the notion of subjectivity in a more radical way.[74] In this regard, Merleau-Ponty's philosophical development is quite different from that of Heidegger.[75] Unlike Heidegger who, after *Being and Time*, sought to overcome the "dominance of subjectivity" by "leaving behind" not only modern subjectivism but also the very notion of subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty remained committed to the notion of the subject and the tradition of Western humanism that Heidegger criticized in his *Letter on Humanism* (a criticism that is part of his attempt to come to terms with his earlier embrace of Nazism[76]).

Heidegger's attempt to overcome the very notion of subjectivity (as well as philosophy itself, which Heidegger came to equate with metaphysics pure and simple, i.e., the "forgetfulness" of Being) was criticized by Merleau-Ponty, and in his political philosophy[77] Merleau-Ponty reaffirmed those basic principles of the Enlightenment tradition of liberal democratic humanism that Heidegger

rejected (realizing that if humanism and the notion of the subject cannot be defended philosophically, neither can the idea of democracy[78]) and adhered to the age-old cosmopolitan ideal of *humanitas*—an ideal that, in contrast with Heidegger as well, Gadamer would take up and defend in his philosophical hermeneutics (despite Heidegger's criticisms). To the end, Merleau-Ponty's goal was to overcome modern metaphysics by reconceptualizing or reconstructing in a resolutely postmetaphysical and nonfoudationalist fashion the modern notion of subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty's work was in fact a life-long attempt to explore subjectivity to its depths, in search of what in his late work he referred to as "*le fondemental*" (a "transcendence within immanence"). Unlike the later Heidegger, he did not think that modern subjectivism ("anthropo-centrism") could be overcome simply by dissolving subjectivity and returning to a presocratic age of ontological innocence before the advent of self-consciousness, and in this Merleau-Ponty anticipated both Gadamer's guiding notion of effective-history and Ricoeur's conscientious attempt at effecting a hermeneutical decentering and nonidealist retrieval of the notion of the subject.

Throughout his work Merleau-Ponty anticipated the interpretive turn in phenomenology in a number of ways, not the least of which had to do with the emphasis he placed on the issues of *linguisticality* and *intersubjectivity*. In his ongoing battle with the philosophy of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty argued that both language and intersubjectivity are not, as modern philosophy had generally assumed, secondary phenomena, but are central to what it means to be a thinking, personal subject. Against Husserl who, like Frege and others at the time, was fixated on the logic of signification and who maintained in the traditional manner that language (speaking) is a merely secondary phenomenon in relation to thought (the "stratum of expression—and this constitutes its peculiarity— ... is not productive"),[79] Merleau-Ponty insisted in the *Phenomenology* on what Gadamer would later refer to as "the indissoluble connection between thinking and speaking" (*RPJ*, 25). Rejecting Husserl's "mentalism" (or "logicism") and Husserl's modernist way of separating thought from expression (redolent of the metaphysical opposition between mind and body), Merleau-Ponty maintained that expression *is* productive of meaning.[80] The thinking subject, he insisted, is none other than the speaking subject (there is no thought, properly speaking, without speech; "inner experience ... is meaningless" [*PP*, 276]) and, in his later work, he went so far as to maintain that language is coextensive with our very being ("Language is a life, is our life and the life of things.... [W]hat is lived is lived-spoken.... [V]ision itself, thought itself, are, as has been said, 'structured as a language'"). The later Merleau-Ponty would have had no objections to Gadamer's famous dictum: "Being that can be understood is language."

Nor would Merleau-Ponty have had any trouble endorsing Gadamer's assertion that "[o]nly through others do we gain true knowledge of ourselves."[81]

For Merleau-Ponty, the issue of intersubjectivity ("other minds," as modern philosophy refers to it) is not a marginal issue, or a kind of afterthought as regards the constituting activity of a pure Ego. In contrast with Husserl who, in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*, experienced great procedural difficulties in dispelling the notion that his transcendentalism, like that of his Cartesian predecessor, leads to solipsism by trying to give an account of how, within the realm of transcendental subjectivity (the "sphere of ownness"), we come upon a knowledge of the "Other," for Merleau-Ponty the Other was from the outset a primordial given. From a Merleau-Pontyan point of view, what Husserl's way of portraying the reduction as a reduction to one's own ego (the "sphere of ownness," the "primordial sphere") overlooks is that what is "properly" one's own is never merely "one's own": "We are mixed up with [*mêlés au*] the world and others in an inextricable confusion" (*PP*, 454). Merleau-Ponty always insisted that subjectivity is, at its most primordial level, an inter-subjectivity, and in his later work, with his notion of the "flesh," he was able to show how the reflecting subject is already, as it were, an Other for itself and how, accordingly, the Other is inscribed in, is woven into, the very fabric of the subject's own selfhood—is part of its own flesh.[82] The title of Ricoeur's book, *Oneself As Another*, has a distinctly Merleau-Pontyan ring to it (not surprisingly, perhaps, since for Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty was "the greatest of French phenomenologists").

Hermeneutical Phenomenology

If Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology was already to a great extent hermeneutical, as it undoubtedly was,[83] Gadamer's accomplishment was to have transformed phenomenology into an explicitly hermeneutical discipline. Although Gadamer was not familiar with Merleau-Ponty's work at the time he was preparing *Truth and Method*, his own work is, like Merleau-Ponty's, solidly grounded in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. What Gadamer learned from Husserl and Husserl's aversion to idle metaphysical speculation—from, in a word, Husserl's praxis—was, as he indicated, a sense for the "concrete," i.e., the "phenomenological art of description" ("the fundamental phenomenological principle that one should avoid all theoretical constructions and get back 'to the things themselves'" [*RPJ*, 105, 113]). It was this concern for the concrete, as well as for the practical issue (one that Heidegger ignored[84]) of *phronesis* or *prudentia* ("the sense of what is feasible, what is possible, what is correct, here and now" [*TM*, xxxviii]), that led him to bypass Heidegger's ever more pronounced preoccupation with the Being-question (*die Seinsfrage*) (*PHC*, 106)—culminating, as many have alleged, in a kind of *Seinsmystik*—and to focus directly on human understanding itself, explicating exactly what it means to maintain, as Heidegger had in his existential analytic in *Being and Time*, that as existing beings an understanding of being is what we most essentially

are.

With Gadamer phenomenology fully accomplished its interpretive turn, and also with him the long tradition of hermeneutic thought dating from the seventeenth century (and, in some ways, even before) became phenomeno- logical. With regard to hermeneutics, Gadamer's accomplishment was indeed to bring about a phenomenological turn within this old discipline. He did so, as Husserl had earlier, by breaking with the preoccupations of the modern "era of epistemology," ones that had set the parameters for earlier hermeneut- icists like Schleiermacher and Dilthey.[85] As Gadamer stated in the Foreword to the second edition of *Truth and Method*, "I did not intend to produce an art or technique of understanding, in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics.... My real concern was and is philosophic" (*TM*, xxviii). Gadamer's hermeneutics was indeed "philosophic" in that he was concerned not with technical issues of correctness ("objectivity") in matters of textual interpretation but with clarifying "the conditions in which understanding [itself] takes place" (*TM*, 295). His intent in *Truth and Method* was not epistemological (prescriptive) but phenomenological (descriptive),[86] in that he was concerned with ascertaining what, in actual fact, has occurred whenever we claim to have arrived at an understanding of things, other people, or ourselves ("what always happens whenever an interpretation is convincing and successful" [*RAS*, 111]).

Truth and Method was in this sense a transcendental (reflective) inquiry, not into the logical "conditions of possibility" of understanding, but into its actual, phenomenal makeup (its "conditions of actuality," so to speak). Gadamer's transcendentalism is not a speculative-deductive transcendentalism à la Kant (transcendental-logical) but a reflective and interpretive transcenden- talism (transcendental-phenomenological). Because Gadamer's hermeneutics is a reflective inquiry concerned with "our entire understanding of the world and thus all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself" (*PH*, 18), it is not so much a theory of textual interpretation, as was the case with Romantic hermeneutics, as it is a general, all-inclusive philosophy or ontology of human existence. Since it is an attempt to elucidate the nature of that understanding which, at bottom, we are, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics could appropriately be described as an exercise in fundamental phenomenological ontology.

Because Gadamer's concern was with the human lifeworld, with "all human experience of the world and human living," and because he wanted "to discover what is common to all modes of understanding" (*TM*, xxx, xxxi), he could rightly claim that the scope of hermeneutics so conceived is genuinely *universal*.[87] Faithful to his mentor, Heidegger, Gadamer's main thesis in this regard was that all human experience of the world is essentially linguistic in nature; language "is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the- world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world" (*PH*, 3), whence Gadamer's oft-cited remark: "Being that can be understood is language"

(*TM*, xxxiv). In putting forward this claim Gadamer was opening himself to the criticism (articulated by Habermas) that he was falling into a kind of linguistic idealism (*Sprachidealismus*) or was (as Rorty approvingly thinks) defending a version of linguistic relativism. Neither interpretation holds, however, for the relation between language and the world in Gadamer's thought is of the same "intentional" nature as is the relation between consciousness and the world in classical phenomenology. Just as the world is not "outside" of consciousness, so also it is not "outside" of language; being what language "means" (intends), the world is the "inner" meaning (*verbum interius*) of language itself. That is to say, language is not something of a "subjectivist" nature standing over against the world and barring us from access to it; language is the world itself insofar as it is present to us and inasmuch as we have meaningful experience of it ("what the world is is not different from the views [language] in which it presents itself" [*TM*, 406]). As Gadamer remarks, "language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to language within it" (*TM*, 401); as he also writes, "things bring themselves to expression in language" (*PH*, 81).[88] To speak of "the nature of things" and of "the language of things" is, for Gadamer, to use two expressions "that for all intents and purposes mean the same thing" (*PH*, 69). In short, language is the means by which our mute experience of the world is brought to the proper expression of its own meaning.

By way of forestalling a possible (and common) misunderstanding, it should be noted that Gadamer's linguisticality thesis does not *deny* the meaningfulness of nonlinguistic modes of experience; rather, it *affirms* that meaningfulness by maintaining that such experience can always in principle be brought to expression (can be interpreted) in language. Indeed, if the pre- or nonlinguistic could not be so interpreted, it would be meaningless to speak of it as having any meaning at all. The important thing to note in this regard is that, as Ricoeur says, the language of phenomenology "is a language which expresses that which precedes language" (*MTP*, 126).

Thus, unlike the structuralists and poststructuralists who came upon the scene a short time later, and who set themselves up as implacable foes of phenomenology and the phenomenological approach to language (and whose views on language Ricoeur would set himself the task of contesting), Gadamer did not maintain that language is a kind of "prison," as Derrida would imply ("*Il n'y a rien hors du texte*"), or something we cannot "break out of," as Rorty would say. Unlike them, he was not seeking to call into question the very notions of "knowledge" and "truth" but was simply seeking, as Merleau-Ponty would say, to divest these notions of their metaphysical trappings by bringing them down to earth.[89]

What Gadamer's emphasis on the linguisticality of our experience of the world clearly did contest is the modernist metaphysics of referentialist-representationalism, i.e., the notion that understanding ("knowledge") consists

in forming "inner representations," mental copies, of an "external," in-itself reality ("philosophy as the mirror of nature"). To maintain that "language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs" (*TM*, 389) amounts to maintaining that understanding is not "representational" but *interpretive* in nature: "All understanding is interpretation" (*TM*, 389). Interpretation is never a merely reproductive activity but is always transformative of what is to be interpreted: "[U]nderstanding is not merely reproductive but always a productive activity as well" (*TM*, 296).

In regard to the more specific area of text-interpretation, and in opposition to the objectivist assumptions of traditional, Romantic hermeneutics (and to contemporary representatives of it like Emilio Betti and E. D. Hirsch[90]), Gadamer insisted that "understanding" (*subtilitas intelligendi, subtilitas explicandi*) and "application" (*subtilitas applicandi*) cannot be separated. The text is not an "absolute object" (as if it were something existing "in itself," like the "external world" of modern philosophy) whose meaning one first grasps and then only subsequently "applies" to the situation at hand, for it is only in applying what the text says to our own situation that we can be said to understand it. Understanding is always of an "applicational" nature;[91] it "always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter's present situation" (*TM*, 308). As Ricoeur would later show on the basis of his detailed studies of textuality (*Schriftlichkeit*), it is only in the act of reading that the meaning of the text itself is actualized.[92] The "meaning" of what is to be understood is inseparable from its "significance" for the subject in search of understanding, and this is because, as Merleau-Ponty already observed, anticipating one of the main tenets of the hermeneutical theory of text-interpretation, the true meaning of a work is not necessarily the one intended by its author (see *S*, 24).

Gadamer's rearticulation of the relation between understanding and application amounts to an overcoming of an age-old metaphysical opposition, one as pernicious as the opposition between mind and body or between reality and appearance: the opposition between the *universal* (the timeless and invariant) and the *particular* (the local and merely contingent). In opposition to this traditional, dichotomous way of viewing the matter, Gadamer insisted that the universal (e.g., the meaning of a text) never exists fully defined in its own right but always only in its varying instantiations—which is not to say that in the matter of textual interpretation "anything goes" (this is what Gadamer refers to as "hermeneutical nihilism"). When Gadamer said, somewhat paradoxically, that it is the (universally) *same* text that we necessarily always understand in *different* ways, he was seeking to move beyond both objectivism and relativism. From a strictly phenomenological point of view, the universal cannot in fact be separated from the particular; "it's simply the case," Shaun Gallagher observes (invoking Gadamer's notion of *phronesis*), "that we have no way to understand the universal except from within the particular situation

in which we happen to find ourselves."[93]

Gadamer's way of reconceptualizing the age-old philosophical problem of the relation between universality and particularity by means of his notion of "application" ("application—that is, ... bringing the universal and the individual together"[94]) has, it may be noted, a great deal of relevance to the global lifeworld that is now everywhere emerging. Speaking of the phenomenon of globalization ("the world-wide interwovenness of economies"), Gadamer highlighted the challenge confronting humanity when he stated: "Humanity today is sitting in a rowboat, as it were, and we must steer this boat in such a way that we do not all crash into the rocks."[95] This challenge—that of avoiding what some refer to as a global "clash of civilizations"—is to a large extent a hermeneutical one having to do with reconciling universality and particularity, that is to say, the lifeworld reality of cultural diversity with the philosophical need for a common, global ethic of human values (human rights in particular), an ethic which, while being universal, would nevertheless be respectful of cultural or historical differences.[96] One of the chief legacies of Gadamer's "philosophy of conversation" undoubtedly lies in the way it can serve to promote, in the realm of human finitude, the hermeneutical-universalist ideals of "global dialogue (*Weltgesprächs*)" and cross-cultural understanding, in other words "solidarity," i.e., "rational identification with a universal interest"[97]—and can do so in a way which is decidedly "nonhegemonic." Ricoeur as well is keenly aware of the interpretive need to reconcile ethical universalism (universal human rights) with cultural particularity. "How can we attain some kind of universalism of reflection," he asks, "if cultural roots are so different? No doubt this is one of the greatest problems of the end of this century and the next century."[98]

In stressing the role of "application," Gadamer was emphasizing the inescapable "situatedness" (as Marcel would say[99]) of understanding and the unavoidable role that presuppositions or prejudgments ("prejudices") play in understanding, and thus also our unavoidable "belongingness" (*Zugehörigkeit*) to our own particular cultural/historical traditions—all of which is summed up in his notion of historically-effective consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichliche Bewusstsein*). As Ricoeur would later point out, effective-history (*Wirkungs-geschichte*) is "the massive and global fact whereby consciousness, even before its awakening as such, belongs to and depends on that which affects it."[100] Effective-history, it could be said, is the action of cultural/historical tradition ("historicality" or what Ricoeur calls "*traditionalité*") and is that which provides us with our "enabling" presuppositions, these presuppositions being what Alfred Schütz had called the "typical constructs" that are "the unquestioned but always questionable sum total of things taken for granted until further notice."[101] Like language itself, effective-history is the ontological milieu in which, as understanding, socially constituted beings, we "live, move, and have our being."

Gadamer's hermeneutics was grounded in Heidegger's notion of "thrown-ness" (*Geworfenheit*),[102] and thus, as Ricoeur also makes clear, the notion of effective-history means that we can never achieve a God's-eye view of our historical situatedness in such a way as to realize the metaphysical ideal of an all-encompassing science; "[t]o exist historically," Gadamer wrote, "means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete" (*TM*, 269). Or as Ricoeur observes, "[b]etween finitude and absolute knowledge it is necessary to choose; the concept of effective history belongs to an ontology of finitude" (*HHS*, 74). Gadamer's ontology of finitude was not, however, a version of relativism, as I mentioned above. To say that understanding is finite or situated is to say that it is always bounded by horizons ("essential to the concept of situation is the concept of horizon" [*TM*, 304]), but a horizon is not a wall or a barrier (an absolute limit) that closes us off from what is "other." On the contrary, horizons, being mobile, invite exploration and allow us to move about in the world and make contact with what is distant and alien (the world itself being, as Husserl said, the "horizon of all horizons"). What lies beyond one's horizon at any given time is necessarily unknown, but it is not in principle unknowable; a horizon always points beyond itself to, as Husserl would say, a vast realm of "determinable indeterminacy." Indeed, from a phenomenological point of view the very notion of a "closed horizon" (and thus also the notion that different cultural lifeworlds are "incommensurable") is, as Gadamer said, "artificial" (see *TM*, 304), a metaphysical construction without any basis in lived experience. Thus, as Gadamer insisted, "[p]recisely through our finitude, the particularity of our being, which is evident even in the variety of languages, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of the truth that we are" (*PH*, 16).

Just as Merleau-Ponty maintained that truth is nothing other than the experience of a "concordance" between ourselves and others, so likewise for Gadamer truth is not a matter of "adequation" between an isolated, cognizing subject and an objective, in-itself world (*adequatio intellectus et res*) but is a matter of mutual agreement between actual human subjects freely engaged in dialogue and seeking a common understanding of things. We are "in the truth" when, through a "merging of horizons (*Horizontsver-schelzung*)," the "hermeneutical experience" *par excellence,* we are able to encounter other people and other ways of life and to arrive in this way at mutual understandings and common agreements as to what is or ought to be the case.[103]

Gadamer's crucial insight, one that dominates all of his work, was that there is, or need be, no contradiction between "openness" and "belongingness" (between emancipation and tradition), which is what allowed him to assert that there is "no higher principle of reason" with which to think our effective-history than that of *freedom*.[104]

In maintaining that the locus of truth—of reason (the *logos*)—is not the

isolated, monological subject of modern philosophy but the dialogical encounter between situated human beings, Gadamer's hermeneutics effected a decisive break not only with modern epistemology but with the quasi-solipsism of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty maintained that the "germ of universality" lies not in a transcendental "I think" but in "the dialogue into which our experience of other people throws us."[105] Like Merleau-Ponty, who equated rationality with communication and whose focus was on the speaking subject, for Gadamer as well, language lives only in speech, such that what as linguistic, rational beings we most essentially are is, as he always liked to say, a conversation (*Gespräch*). Because Gadamer's hermeneutics is a "philosophy of conversation" (*RPJ*, 36) and is animated by an ethics of communicative rationality,[106] he could rightly say that "there is no higher principle than this: holding oneself open to the conversation" (*RPJ*, 26). Insofar as we hold ourselves open in this way (see Marcel's notion of *disponibilité*), we are open to the truth of things, for truth, as something universal, is of a "horizonal" nature; like the world itself, truth is the realm of unrestricted openness (of "boundless communication," as Karl Jaspers referred to it), and its locus is the trans-subjective and transcultural community of all reasonable beings.

Ricoeur (who discovered Gadamer in somewhat the same belated way that Gadamer discovered Merleau-Ponty) was no less sensitive to the finitude of the human condition than was Gadamer, as is amply attested to by his early work in the 1940s and 1950s on human fallibility, frailty, suffering, passivity, and the mystery of evil in the world. Ricoeur's early writings on philosophical anthropology (the kind of philosophical anthropology that Heidegger dismissed but that Gadamer thought was called for by Husserl's discovery of the lifeworld, and which, in Ricoeur's case, was part of a larger, never completed "grand project" on the philosophy of the will) were inspired by Merleau-Ponty's magisterial work on perception, and in them he sought to extend the Husserlian method of eidetic analysis to a dimension of human existence that Husserl, given his "cognitivist" preoccupations (or what Ricoeur calls "Husserl's logicist prejudice"[107]), largely passed over in silence: the whole noncognitive domain of affectivity and volition. Husserl's "intellectualism" (as Levinas refers to it) notwithstanding, it was Husserl's transcendental philosophy of the subject which furnished Ricoeur with, as he says, his "starting point" (*BSS*, 643).[108] What in this regard Ricoeur sought to do was to separate the phenomenological method from Husserl's idealist interpretation of this method ("I attempted to dissociate what appeared to me to be the descriptive core of phenomenology from the idealist interpretation in which this core was wrapped" [*IA*, 11]). Subsequently, and in conjunction with his "linguistic turn" in the 1960s, he attempted to "graft hermeneutics onto phenomenology" and entered into an ongoing debate with various disciplines or intellectual trends such as Freudianism and structuralism, which—functioning as a kind

of "hermeneutics of suspicion"—seem to undermine the primacy that a reflexive philosophy such as Ricoeur's accords to the subject ("A reflexive philosophy considers the most radical problems to be those which concern the possibility of *self-understanding* as the subject of the operations of knowing, willing, evaluating, etc." [*OI*, 188]).

Ricoeur's overall work follows a rather complicated trajectory and undergoes numerous shifts in direction, all nevertheless "nesting one within the other" (*IA*, 38). Subsequent to his early writings on the will, there is a gradual progression in his work from a hermeneutics of the symbol through a confrontation with Freudian psychoanalysis and structural linguistics to a hermeneutics of the text, and from there to a hermeneutics of action and intersubjectivity (passing by way of an analysis of metaphor, time, and narrativity), and culminating (at the time of this writing) in a renewed concern with ethics and politics (with issues such as justice, responsibility, remembrance, and *phronesis*). Ricoeur's overriding concern throughout all of this has been the acting person (*l'homme agissant*), a concern that reflects his indebtedness to the personalist philosophy of Emmanuel Mounier, a philosophy, in Ricoeur's words, "of man's recurrent protest against being reduced to the level of ideas and things" (*MTP*, 356).[109] Although, like his phenomenological predecessors, Ricoeur is highly critical of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness or what he generally refers to as Husserl's "idealism" ("transcendental subjectivism" might be a more appropriate term), he nevertheless considers the heritage of Husserlian phenomenology to be "the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics" (*IA*, 36). (It was indeed Ricoeur's early work as a translator and interpreter of Husserl that firmly established his academic credentials.[110])

Because the shape Ricoeur's work has taken is the result of debates he has engaged in on numerous occasions with proponents of views with which he felt he must come to terms, his philosophical development is extremely complex, with many twists and turns along the way (one might say that Ricoeur's "method" [*methodos*, the way he followed in his thinking] is essentially one that proceeds continually by way of detours).[111] There is nonetheless a kind of Ariadne's thread running throughout it, an underlying continuity in terms of both method and motivation. Methodologically speaking, Ricoeur's basic concern, like that of other phenomenologists, has always been the reflexive-transcendental one of bringing our lived experience to the proper expression of its own meaning. As he stated in an early work, the vocation of philosophy as he sees it is "to clarify existence itself by use of concepts."[112] Ricoeur's philosophical motivation in this regard is his fundamental belief that our existence is indeed meaningful, and thus expressible (*dicible*)—this belief in the expressibility or "sayability" (*dicibilité*) of experience corresponding to Gadamer's thesis of the linguisticality or "speakability" of the world (*die Sprachlichkeit der Welt*). "There is no human experience that is not structured by language" (*BSS*, 680), Ricoeur, echoing Merleau-Ponty, maintains.

Ricoeur's philosophizing has in this way always been a search for meaning and has throughout been guided by a "central intuition," or basic conviction. This is that, notwithstanding the very real existence of unmeaning, necessity (unfreedom), and evil, there exists a "super-abundance of meaning to the abundance of non-sense."[113] The underlying presupposition in Ricoeur's work is his "presupposition of meaning" (or "postulate of meaningfulness"), which he formulates thus: "It must be supposed that experience in all its fullness ... has an expressibility (*dicibilité*) in principle. Experience can be said, it demands to be said. To bring it to language is not to change it into something else, but, in articulating and developing it, to make it become itself" (*HHS*, 115). In connection with his work on metaphor and narrative, he has stated that "these analyses continually *presuppose* the conviction that discourse never exists *for its own sake*, for its own glory, but that in all of its uses it seeks to bring into language an experience, a way of living in and of being-in-the-world which precedes it and which demands to be said." There is always, Ricoeur asserts, "a *being-demanding-to-be-said* (*un être-à-dire*) which precedes our actual saying" (*OI*, 196). Ricoeur's dual concern with *meaning* and *existence*[114] makes for an overarching thematic unity to his work; as "a hermeneutics of the 'I am,'" its focus has consistently been on issues of subjectivity and self-understanding. "[I]t is indeed the fate of human subjectivity," he has said, "that is at stake throughout the whole of my work."[115]

In pursuing his inquiry into the nature of selfhood, Ricoeur was acutely aware of the "idealist" pitfalls that menace any reflexive philosophy of the subject, for the traditional idea of reflection, as he remarks, "carries with it the desire for absolute transparence, a perfect coincidence of the self with itself, which would make consciousness of self indubitable knowledge" (*OI*, 188). As he freely admits with regard to his presupposition of meaning, "[i]t is difficult, admittedly, to formulate this presupposition in a non-idealist language" (*HHS*, 115). It was, accordingly, in order to counteract the idealist tendencies of reflexive philosophy that Ricoeur insisted that "a philosophy of reflection must be just the opposite of a philosophy of consciousness" (*CI*, 18). For the phenomenological fact of the matter is that the consciousness of self is, proximally and for the most part, a distorted, false consciousness. This is why he rejected Heidegger's "short cut (*voie courte*)" to an ontology of understanding and insisted that reflection must be "indirect" and that the passage from misunderstanding ("inauthenticity") to understanding is not merely a matter of willful self-assertion but must necessarily follow an arduous detour through a painstaking decipherment of the various cultural/historical signs, symbols, and texts in which are expressed the human "effort to exist and desire to be" (*CI*, 18). The reflecting subject is a subject that is lost in the world and that must "recapture" itself "in the mirror of its objects, of its works, and, finally, of its acts" (*CI*, 18). It is only in this painstaking way that what at the outset is a bare *ego* can become a genuine, human *self*.

In attempting to effect a "qualitative transformation" of reflexive consciousness, Ricoeur insisted that there is no "originary" presence of the self to itself and that the notion of intuitive self-knowledge is an illusion (for Ricoeur, the truth of the *Cogito* is as empty as it is certain). The phenomenological subject is not a transcendental Ego that would be an absolute creator or dispenser of meaning; it is not a subject that is, as Descartes would say, *maître de soi*, but a speaking, listening, questioning, story-telling subject that is itself "given" to itself by means of a long process of semiosis, a "reappropriated" subject that is both interpretive and interpreted. Being of a "mediated" nature, genuine self-understanding always involves a corrective critique of misunderstanding and can only be envisaged as a kind of "distant horizon": "A hermeneutical philosophy is a philosophy which accepts all the demands of this long detour and which gives up the dream of a total mediation, at the end of which reflection would once again amount to intellectual intuition in the transparence to itself of an absolute subject" (*OI*, 194).

In his attempt to work out a hermeneutics of self-understanding Ricoeur always had to do battle on two fronts. On the one hand, and in the name of a phenomenology of human finitude and "fallible man," he had to resist idealist tendencies in traditional reflexive philosophy and in Husserl's transcendentalism by, so to speak, "desubjectivizing" subjectivity ("phenomenology is always in danger of reducing itself to a transcendental subjectivism" [*HHS*,112]). "Subjectivity," he writes in this regard, "must be lost as radical origin if it is to be recovered in a more modest role" (*HHS*, 113). On the other hand, and in order to defend the very notion of the subject, he contests all those disciplines and intellectual trends of an objectivist or naturalist sort which would make of subjectivity an illusion pure and simple. Subjectivism and objectivism have always been Ricoeur's twin foes. Typical of his polemic with the latter was his dispute with the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the stated goal of which (anticipating the "death of 'man'" theme in French philosophy) is not to understand better that entity we call "man" but, quite simply, to "dissolve" him, to reduce him to his "physical-chemical conditions."[116] Lévi-Strauss's structuralist reductionism (wanting to "study men as if they were ants") extended even to the very notion of meaning. As he says to Ricoeur in the course of a famous debate:

> Meaning (*sens*) is always the result of the combination of elements which are not meaningful (*signifiant*) in themselves.... In my perspective, meaning is never a first-order phenomenon; meaning is always reducible. In other words, behind all meaning there is non-sense (*un non-sens*), and the contrary is not true. For me, meaning (*signification*) is always just a mere phenomenon *(est toujours phénoménal).*

To these remarks Ricoeur objected: "If meaning is not an element in self-

understanding, I don't know what it is." (What in that case it is, as Ricoeur himself said, is "the admirable syntactical arrangement of a discourse which says nothing at all."[117])

As an existential-phenomenological hermeneuticist, Ricoeur has always insisted that the point of all attempts at understanding the world around us (such as those evinced in Lévi-Strauss's own anthropological research) is, ultimately, to understand ourselves better and what it means for us to be (the "human condition," as Pascal called it). His most powerful insight in this regard is that self-understanding is never a given but is always a task, and that, moreover, our own selves which we seek to understand are, as it were, themselves products of our encounter with what is "outside" and what is "other." A crucial "other" in our becoming who we are is the textual other, which is to say, the portrayal of other ways of being-in-the-world that we encounter in our reading of texts, the function of texts being that of calling into being or projecting "virtual" worlds, i.e., alternative, imaginative ways of being-in-the-world. Through its encounter with that "higher order referent" or "new reality" that Ricoeur calls "the world of the work" (a notion that he shares with Gadamer), the subject is exposed to other possible selves and ways of being—"imaginative variations of the ego" (*HHS*, 94)—and is able to emerge with a "refigured," enlarged, more meaningful self: "To understand oneself is to understand oneself as one confronts the text and to receive from it the conditions for a self other than that which first undertakes the reading" (*OI*, 193). The great lesson of Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology is that what we as human subjects most essentially are is what we can become, the being-otherwise and being-more that are the objects of the effort to exist and the desire to be.

Ricoeur's vital contribution to an interpretive, postmetaphysical phenomenology is to have shown how—Heidegger to the contrary notwithstanding—it is indeed possible to overcome modern subjectivism (now known as the "metaphysics of presence") while at the same time upholding a renewed, nonidealist or nonsubstantialist, notion of subjectivity itself—a notion that Merleau-Ponty viewed as one of the great discoveries of modern philosophy (albeit one that was decidedly creative, Montaigne being a key figure in this regard) and which, flawed though it may have been in its modernist version, he thought it foolish to seek to abolish (as if the notion of the subject were nothing more than "a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea," destined to be erased by it). By means of his work on selfhood, narrativity, and creative expression (*la poétique du possible*), Ricoeur has managed to provide a properly hermeneutical, which is to say, nonidealist and nonmetaphysical, account of the "origin of the world," i.e., of how, through the creative work of interpretation, the world, and we ourselves, come to be "constituted" as that which it, and we, are. Viewed as a whole, Ricoeur's work, by fully accomplishing the interpretive turn in phenomenology, provides an outstanding example

of how post-Husserlian phenomenologists have struggled not only to break out of the philosophy of consciousness but also to overcome in a decisive manner the classical opposition between realism and idealism that continued to the end to plague Husserl's presentation of phenomenology.

Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences

If, as philosophical hermeneutics maintains (akin in this way to Jamesian pragmatism), the meaning of any philosophical doctrine or theory lies in its "consequences," in the way it "applies" to concrete situations and practical affairs—i.e., to the realm of *praxis*—the domain of the human sciences could be said to reveal the true meaning of hermeneutics which, as Gadamer always insisted, is itself a *scientia practica* ("hermeneutics is philosophy, and as philosophy it is practical philosophy" [RAS, 111]). To employ a Husserlian expression, the human sciences (*Geiteswissenschaften*) can be viewed, to a great extent, as being so many "regional" hermeneutics; as interpretive sciences (*verstehenden Wissensenshaften*), it is the function of the human sciences to bring general hermeneutical theory to bear on the different realms of human action and endeavor in an interpretive attempt to discern the meaning of human being-in-the-world that transpires in these various lifeworlds. To a significant extent, the various human sciences are nothing other than "applied hermeneutics," "extensions" of hermeneutics to the domain of practice (philosophical hermeneutics, from this point of view, being not a regional but a transcendental discipline). As Gadamer stated in this regard, "[t]he human sciences are not only a problem *for* philosophy, on the contrary, they represent a problem *of* philosophy" (PHC, 112). As the philosophical-theoretical "science" of the human lifeworld, hermeneutics, one might say, is in its very essence a philosophy of the human sciences. Hermeneutics is nothing other than, as Gadamer said, the *theory* of the *practice* of interpretation, the reflective analysis of what is "at play in the practical experience of understanding" (RAS, 112). Thus, as he also said, "as the theory of interpretation or explication, it is not just a theory" (RAS, 93). Hermeneutics, one might say, is theory "with practical intent." In the last analysis, the ultimate justification of hermeneutical theory, as a theory *of* practice, is its significance *for* practice.

Just as Merleau-Ponty went further than Heidegger in the exploration of the bodily nature of our being-in-the-world, likewise Ricoeur has gone farther than Gadamer in dealing with methodological issues confronting the human sciences and in entering into a full-fledged debate with various human disciplines such as psychoanalysis, linguistics, historiography, and literary studies. He has always held the conviction that "philosophy cannot exist on its own" (BSS, 653), and that indeed it "perishes if its dialogue with the sciences ... were to be interrupted" (IA, 39). He has in this regard voiced a criticism of Gadamer's stance in relation to which, as he says, he has "taken a certain

distance" (CC, 73). According to Ricoeur, Gadamer's way of opposing truth and method (the "and" in the title of Gadamer's *magnum opus* functioning in fact as a kind of disjunctive) seemed to have the unfortunate effect of continuing the "anti-methodological conclusions of Heideggerian philosophy."[118] Thus, Ricoeur views his own endeavors as falling more under the heading of "methodological hermeneutics" than that of "ontological hermeneutics" and defines his own approach *vis-à-vis* both Heidegger and Gadamer as wanting to contribute "to this ontological vehemence an analytical precision which it would otherwise lack" (OI, 196). Although Ricoeur fully subscribed to the basic ontological concerns of Heidegger and Gadamer, he nonetheless felt that their preoccupation with fundamental ontology tended to hinder philosophical hermeneutics from entering into a productive dialogue with the more empirically oriented sciences. While, as he once said, ontology may be the "promised land" of phenomenological reflection, "like Moses, the speaking and reflecting subject can only glimpse this land before dying" (CI, 24).

In attempting to work out a methodological hermeneutics in dialogue with the empirical sciences, Ricoeur was here also, as it were, following in the footsteps of Merleau-Ponty, whose way of thinking represented a methodological alternative to Heidegger's "ontologism." Whereas Heidegger's preoccupation with "Being"[119] effectively precluded him from taking much of an interest in the social sciences and the more mundane realm of human affairs, Merleau-Ponty's concern to explore the bodily nature of our being-in-the-world with the aid of the empirical sciences led him to devote a great deal of attention to the relation between phenomenology and the human sciences in his lectures at the Sorbonne in the early 1950s.[120] When in his later work Merleau-Ponty turned his attention to explicitly ontological issues (under, in part, the influence of the later Heidegger), his way of doing so again contrasted with that of Heidegger. Unlike the later Heidegger who wanted to think Being directly, to "think Being without regard to its being grounded in terms of beings," to "think Being without beings,"[121] Merleau-Ponty thought that the only appropriate way of pursuing the Being-question was by means of a "methodological" ontology or what he called an "intra-ontology" (VI, 179). Reminiscent in a way of Marcel's "concrete approaches" to ontology, Merleau-Ponty sought to think Being indirectly and only insofar as it manifests itself in beings—in Nature and in the various realms of human expressivity conceived of as various "regions of Being" ("the mirrors of Being,"[122] "the topology of being" [S, 22]).

Central to Ricoeur's own endeavors to develop a methodological hermeneutics was the way, starting in the late 1960s,[123] he sought to overcome the classical hermeneutical distinction between "explanation" (*Erklärung*) and "understanding" (*Verstehen*). This distinction was the centerpiece of the earlier hermeneutics of Dilthey, and, inasmuch as it paralleled the clear-cut distinction he made between the natural sciences and the human sciences, it reflected the modern, Cartesian split between mind and nature (Gadamer speaks in

this regard of Dilthey's "latent Cartesianism" [PHC, 124]). Ever the dialectical thinker, Ricoeur sought to overcome Dilthey's dichotomous distinction between explanation and understanding by arguing that "objective" explanation is not something purely and simply antithetical to "subjective" understanding and that, as the science of linguistics clearly demonstrates, its sphere of validity is not limited to the natural sciences. While for Ricoeur (as for Gadamer) self-understanding is the ultimate goal of all attempts at understanding,[124] it nevertheless remains, Ricoeur argues, that objective "explanation" has an important role to play in the overall understanding process.[125]

In the case of text interpretation, for instance, the ultimate goal is that of appreciatively entering into the particular world projected by the text in search of a meaning that we can "appropriate" for ourselves in such a way as better to understand ourselves, but along the way it can be quite helpful to treat the text as a "worldless and authorless" object and to engage in a purely objective, semiotic analysis of the text's linguistic and structural features or to analyze the text in a strictly empirical manner by focusing on historical and philological factors (Ricoeur refers to this as "the statics of the text"). For Ricoeur, purely explanatory procedures, although "secondary in relation to understanding" (OI, 185), have nonetheless an altogether legitimate role to play in the overall interpretive process (in the "recovery of meaning"); one must, as Ricoeur says, explain more in order to understand better. "Explanation" forms one segment, the initial cornerstone, of what he calls the "hermeneutical arc," which is ultimately grounded in our own lived experience (see HHS, 161–4). Not only, therefore, should "explanation" and "understanding" not be set at odds with one another, the "detour by way of objectification" (IA, 48) can—most importantly—help a reflexive-transcendental phenomenology to circumvent the pitfalls of a mere philosophy of consciousness, i.e., one animated by the naïve desire for absolute transparency and a perfect coincidence of the self with itself in the form of immediate and indubitable knowledge (Ricoeur refers to this as "the narcissistic ego" [HHS, 192]). The detour by way of methodic "distantiation" is the key to overcoming what James called "viscious intellectualism" and is the means, as Ricoeur sees it, of achieving a less distorted self-understanding than the one with which we invariably start out.

Rorty notwithstanding, the hermeneutical theory of Ricoeur and Gadamer has proven, in the eyes of numerous practitioners of the human sciences, to be anything but "unfruitful." Human scientists as diverse as ethnographers, historians, communicologists, psychologists, and nursing specialists have found in hermeneutical phenomenology an important source of support in their struggle to overcome the stifling and dehumanizing legacy of logical positivism in the human sciences. In this connection, hermeneutics could be said to constitute the most recent, "third wave" of influence and inspiration that phenomenology has had on the human sciences, the "second wave" having

come several decades earlier pursuant to the existential phenomenology of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and the "first wave" having originated in Husserl's own phenomenology and the influences this exerted in the fields of psychology and sociology.

By drawing out the methodological implications of Gadamer's ontology of human understanding, Ricoeur was able to extend the scope of hermeneutics from its traditional base in text interpretation to the wider, overall realm of the social sciences, i.e., to those sciences such as sociology or economics that are concerned primarily not with texts but with human *action*.[126] (Heidegger's preoccupation with "Being"—his "ontological vehemence"—and the quietist position he adopted in this regard ["*Gelassenheit*"] led him to ignore completely the notion of action [or practical thinking], which he tended to reduce to mere technological busy-ness ["calculative thinking"], while at the same time asserting that the only "true" action [*Tun*] is something that is not action at all, viz., the "meditative thinking" of Being.) Ricoeur's key thesis in regard to the issue of action is that to the degree that the social sciences seek, interpretively, to discern the *meaning* of human action, action itself can be viewed "on the model of the text," as a kind of "quasi-text" or "text analogue." The reason for this—in terms of the hermeneutical theory of both Gadamer and Ricoeur—is that, in the case of both text and action, meaning cannot be reduced to the psychological intentions of the author/actor; meaning must, so to speak, always be "desubjectivized." This is obviously the case as regards human agency, since individual action takes place in a cultural/institutional context and thus has an irreducibly *social* dimension to it. As Hannah Arendt, who, unlike her mentor, Heidegger, was greatly concerned with the issue of action (the *vita activa*), said, "no man can act alone, even though his motives for action may be certain designs, desires, passions, and goals of his own."[127]

To the degree that human action is social in nature, it cannot properly be understood in terms of individual psychology alone (actors's intentions), since in the social realm "our deeds escape us and have effects which we did not intend" (HHS, 206). The meaning of our deeds escapes us in the same way that, as Ricoeur has argued in his theory of text interpretation, "the text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author" and embodies a meaning "that has broken its moorings to the psychology of the author" (HHS, 201). In going beyond the finite horizon of individual agents, human acting and doing opens up a public space in which its meaning or significance (its significative effects, as it were) gets "sedimented" or "inscribed," this "place" being what we call "history" ("History is this quasi-'thing' *on* which human action leaves a 'trace,' puts its mark" [HHS, 207]). For phenomenology, history is the history of human agency (according to Merleau-Ponty, only human beings strictly speaking have a history; history, as Alfred Schütz said, is the "sediment" of human action), and, as the "record" of human actions and

transactions, history is, effectively speaking, a text to be interpreted. As one commentator sums up the matter: "Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of any expression of existence which can be preserved in a structure analogous to the structure of the text....Taking it to the limit, the entirety of human existence becomes a text to be interpreted."[128] Thus, in his application of Ricoeur's reflections on the relation between textuality and action to the field of anthropology, Clifford Geertz states: "Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior."[129]

One "reads" the traces of human agency and behavior in much the same way as one reads a text, for, as both Geertz and Ricoeur maintain, the realm of social action is thoroughly "symbolic" in its make-up.[130] What makes a text a text in the proper sense of the term is that it has a certain logic or "inner dynamic," as Ricoeur calls it (OI, 193), which it is the business of text interpretation to make evident. History likewise has a certain logic to it, as Merleau-Ponty ever insisted (there is, as he said, a "logic immanent in human experience" [SNS, 65]). The phenomenological fact of the matter is that history is not, as the empirically-minded English like to say, "just one damn thing after another" (nor is it, as Rorty would say, "mere contingency"). Although history unfolds chronologically and although events in the lifeworld are not, in the scientistic sense of the term, predictable, history itself is not a mere chronology, nothing more than a haphazard listing of disparate events.[131] As Ricoeur says, history ("social time") is "the place of durable effects, or persisting patterns," these patterns becoming "the *documents* of human action" (HHS, 206). Hermeneutics, conceived of as the interpretation of history, is nothing other than the attempt to discern—amid what Kant called the seemingly "idiotic course of things human"[132]—various *patterns* of action and to interpret these as to their significance.

This sort of pattern-analysis (the discernment of what Geertz calls "structures of significance") is a form of eidetic analysis. Patterns are "essences" of a sort, and when we attempt to understand anything we must have recourse to essences or universals (*individuum ineffabile est*). This is something Merleau-Ponty fully realized; speaking of Husserl's notion of essences, he stated that the need to proceed by way of essences (*eidē*) is simply a recognition of the fact that "our existence is too tightly held in the world to be able to know itself as such at the moment of its involvement, and that it requires the field of ideality in order to become acquainted with and to prevail over its facticity" (PP, xv).[133]

One must not, to be sure, misconstrue the nature of this "ideality." Essences are not "metaphysical entities" (see PriP, 10); they do not exist, Platonic-wise, *in rem*, nor for that matter are they, as Husserl thought in his quasi-Platonism,

things (of a quasi-sort) that can be directly intuited by means of an "eidetic insight" (*Wesenshau*). Everything is always, inextricably, part of a larger process, and the essence of any historical course of events is simply the way (*Sosein*) in which, in retrospective hindsight, i.e., narration or storytelling, it appears to the storyteller to have unfolded: *Wesen ist was gewesen ist*, as Hegel remarked. Essences are not things that can be "seen" or, *faute de mieux*, deduced; they are not mentalistic *a priori* (valid for all time), but are rather things of an "ideal" sort, which is to say (using the term "ideal" in a decidedly non-Husserlian sense) that they are semantic, interpretive—which is to say, also, imaginative—*constructs* of what has been and what, in light of a discernible pattern, is quite likely to be in the future.[134] In short, the essence of anything is not an object (of whatever sort) that can be "referred to" or "intuited"; an essence is nothing more than a function of the interpretive-definitional statements we may make in order to appease our desire for intelligibility by saying "what" something or other is. The "whatness" (*quidditas*) of things is thus a function of the way in which, by means of language, we interpret them (for whatever purpose), and the "essential relationships" (*Wesenszusammenhänge*) between things (that metaphysicians believe are simply "there" waiting to be discovered) are a function of the particular *point of view* with which we approach them. (The "correctness" of these points of view—which, as Schütz observed, are never absolute but are always expressive of particular interests, theoretical or practical, on our part—is always a function of their usefulness, as James would say, in leading us profitably from one resting place in the stream of experience to another.)

The point I wish to stress in all this is that essences, so conceived, are the only means by which we can prevail over our facticity (our lostness in the everyday world) so as to *think* our own history; as Arendt would say, they are the means of revealing "the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings."[135] To allude to an ancient maxim (*sapientia est ordinare*), the function of interpretation is precisely that of discerning, amid what is often a welter of confusing detail, the nonapparent, yet essential, order or logic in things. It should of course go without saying that, being interpretive constructs, the "essences" we arrive at in this way are always (to use a Husserlian term) "inexact" and are thus always revisable in the light of further experience. It should also be noted that although these essences or *eidè* are not "metaphysical entities," they are also not (as Husserl rightly observed) mere generalizations or "inductions" in the empiricistic sense of the term, and that statistical analyses can never provide us with the essence of anything, since such analyses, in order to be meaningful, must always be interpreted in a suitable manner (statistical or regression analyses can of course alert us to the existence of patterns that we might not otherwise have noticed.)[136]

One could equally well in this context speak of "ideal types," a key notion

in the phenomenology of the social lifeworld of Schütz that he took over from Max Weber.[137] For Schütz, who remained faithful to Husserl's transcendental turn and for whom the social world was essentially a "nexus of significance," a "texture of meaning" (*Sinnzusammenhang*), the only way by means of which we can grasp the logic of human affairs or discern meaningful patterns of human action ("the logic of everyday thinking" or, as Geertz calls it, "the informal logic of actual life") is by means of what he called "typification." In attempting to understand the significance of what people do, the social hermeneut must view the results of human agency through the lens of "ideal types," these being "constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by actors on the social scene, whose behavior the scientist observes and tries to explain in accordance with the procedural rules of his science"[138]—the assumption being that the function of the social sciences is that of attaining "objective," i.e., intersubjectively verifiable, knowledge of the "subjective" meaning structures that guide and inform the action of individual agents.

The reason why the social scientist must have recourse to second-order constructs such as these is because, as Ricoeur would say, the consciousness actors have of themselves is often a false consciousness and the meaningful consequences of human action are often not the ones consciously intended by these actors. Because we are not sovereign consciousnesses ("a pure consciousness is capable of anything except being ignorant of its intentions," as Merleau-Ponty said [PP, 440]), we do not have full control over the meaning of what we do and are liable to be surprised (often unpleasantly so) by the consequences of our own actions. In any event, depth psychology has sensitized us to the fact that we can never be altogether certain as to what our "real" intentions actually are. "To imagine that one might ever attain full illumination as to his motives or his interests," Gadamer insisted, "is to imagine something impossible" (RAS, 108). As any number of observers of the human condition (or folly, as Erasmus called it) have remarked, human beings seem to have an undeniable talent for duplicity—even, and perhaps especially, as regards themselves. Genuine self-understanding is always an arduous undertaking, as Marcel indicated when he stated: "The task of the profoundest philosophic speculation is perhaps that of discovering the conditions (almost always disconcerting) under which the real balance-sheet [of one's life] may occasionally emerge in a partial and temporary fashion from underneath the crooked figures that mask it."[139]

However great the difficulties of achieving a genuine understanding of things may be, the nature of the hermeneutical task as regards any historical/cultural community was nonetheless clearly stated by Merleau-Ponty.

It is a matter, in the case of each civilization, of finding the Idea in the Hegelian sense, that is, not a law of the physico-mathematical type,

discoverable by objective [objectivistic] thought, but that formula which sums up some unique manner of behaviour towards others, towards Nature, time and death: a certain way of patterning the world which the historian should be capable of seizing upon and making his own (PP, xviii).

Given the hermeneutical difficulties alluded to above, Ricoeur was assuredly right when he said that there is "nothing … more obscure than the present in which we live" (BSS, 648).[140] Because of the "effectivity" of history, "we are located so completely in it," as Gadamer said, "that we can in a certain sense always say, We don't know what is happening to us" (RAS, 36). But this is precisely why something like Schütz's "typification" is indispensable if we are to understand anything at all. Although Ricoeur was also right when he remarked that "every periodization is problematic" (BSS, 665), periodization, though always a legitimate subject for debate, is nevertheless indispensable when we seek to provide a properly narrative ("emplotted," as Ricoeur would say) account of the past. In the various spontaneous orders of human endeavor—and to the degree that, as in the case of the evolution of language or morals (*moeurs*), these orders are indeed spontaneous and not consciously designed and technocratically maintained—an "invisible hand" or structural logic is always at work and (for better or worse) produces its effects independently of actors's intentions.[141] It is always a matter, as Merleau-Ponty said, of discovering "in this unrolling of facts a spontaneous order, a meaning, an intrinsic truth, an orientation of such a kind that the different events do not appear as a mere succession" (PriP, 52).

Despite Ricoeur's aversion to terms like "modern" and "postmodern" (see BSS, 648, 660–1, 690), these periodizing terms (whatever might be the personal reasons for Ricoeur's aversion to them) are highly useful ways of viewing cultural and intellectual history, i.e., historical and sociological *processes*, for, as Ricoeur does recognize, there are "certain trends in the history of philosophy" (BSS, 665). It is the function of ideal-type analysis to identify these trends. Thus, although Ricoeur says that he does not "know what 'modernity' is" (BSS, 648), it is not especially difficult to know what the term "modern philosophy" means, as I sought to indicate in the first part of this paper. Likewise, in sociology and developmental studies "modernization" has a well-defined meaning; we also know perfectly well what we mean when, in regard to architecture, we speak of "modernist" and "postmodern." The case is no different with regard to philosophy. If one did not know that one of the essential characteristics of mainstream modern philosophy was its preoccupation with, as Gadamer would say, the "epistemology problem," one could never appreciate the true significance of phenomenology (and Ricoeur's own place within it). Indeed, to the degree that phenomenology effects a break with what Gadamer called the modern "era of epistemology,"

phenomenology can, in this precise sense of the term, rightly be said to be "postmodern."

In opposition to the antitheory movement in recent philosophy (and to the stance taken by Rorty in this regard), hermeneutics staunchly defends the exercise of theory as described above.[142] Human beings are, after all, "theoretical beings," as Gadamer put it, and they are such precisely because "humans are the beings who have the *logos*," i.e., language/reason.[143] The hermeneutical fact of the matter is that we cannot make sense of our practices, or what Geertz calls our "shaped behavior," without having recourse to theory (to typifications, periodizations, pattern-analyses, etc.) Without theory (the "field of ideality," as Merleau-Ponty referred to it), experience would be meaningless. Without theory, we would have no well-formulated questions to put to our own mute experience that would allow us to bring it to the proper expression of its own meaning ("We cannot have experiences without asking questions" [TM, 362]), and thus, without leading questions, there would be nothing for us to learn. Moreover, without theory, without an interpretive grasp of the structural logic of the various realms or orders of human agency, we could not intervene—in a responsible manner, that is—in the empirical arrangement of things in such a way as, on the one hand, to enhance the likelihood of achieving the beneficial results we desire and, on the other hand, of decreasing the chances of inadvertently producing undesirable, counterproductive results. Without theory, there would be no social science and thus no means for bringing reason to bear on human affairs in such a way as to ameliorate the life conditions of humanity. Were there no eidetic-type laws ("formulae," as Merleau-Ponty would say) discernible by means of theory in the way in which human events seem to unfold, we could never have any realistic hope of successfully making the kind of structural or institutional changes that are likely (subject, of course to the vicissitudes of *Fortuna*) to make for genuine progress and the greater freedom of all.[144]

As the preceding remarks indicate, the operant presupposition of hermeneutical reflection is that there is always a kind of objective logic at work in human affairs—"objective" in the sense that this logic is not the result of mere human willing and wanting and is in this way expressive of an element of "necessity" (*necessità*, as Machiavelli called it) in human affairs. This logic is, as it were, a logic that is the result of human action but not of human design. The logic at work in human affairs (Hegel referred to this as "objective spirit," a notion that greatly fascinated Merleau-Ponty[145]) is objective in the sense also that the patterns of meaning with which the social sciences are concerned are not merely "subjective"; they exist not in people's heads but, as Charles Taylor aptly remarks, "out there" in the *intersubjective* realm of social practices and cultural/political/economic institutions (the social/historical *intermonde*, as Merleau-Ponty called it).[146]

The fact that various such logics exist renders vain the modernist, utopian

idea that human beings can arrange things however they see fit so as to achieve total mastery over their own destiny (Ricoeur refers to this pathological form of utopianism as "the magic of thought"). Even Kant, that great believer in the ability of enlightened human beings to take their destiny in hand and better their condition, recognized that "from such crooked wood as humanity is made of nothing perfectly straight can be built."[147] Although hermeneutics is fully in agreement with Kant on this score, it would nevertheless amount to a gross misunderstanding of the hermeneutical position to think that it implies some kind of determinism and undermines the reality of human freedom.

Freedom and necessity (*le volontaire et l'involontaire*, to allude to the title of one of Ricoeur's early works) should not be viewed as metaphysical opposites. In actuality, eidetic, ideal-type analysis, by enabling us to realize what is "necessary" in human affairs, also, by the same token, enables us to realize what is genuinely possible. For, the utopian, revolutionist impulse notwithstanding, the not unhappy fact of the matter is that not just anything is possible at any moment. Since we are not pure consciousnesses fully aware of our motives and intentions, and thus fully in control of the meaning of what we do, there is a kind of objective logic or necessity at work in the various human lifeworlds. Through interpretation, it is possible to become reflexively aware of these logics—but never in such a way as to be able to change them in any way we please. Just as, in reply to Habermas, Gadamer argued against the possibility of a total critique of "tradition" while, at the same time, maintaining that there is no inherited presupposition that cannot, in a piecemeal sort of way, be subjected to critique and revision, so likewise, although the logic of things is beyond the ability of human beings deliberately to control, it is nevertheless always possible, through the creative power of the imagination, to introduce into this or that order of human behavior new structural/institutional constraints or incentives (in the economic sense of the term) which operate not in a moralistic ("subjectivistic") way through an appeal to people's "good intentions" but in a thoroughly *praxial* manner by directly affecting people's *behavior*. The same is true on a personal level. In both instances, social and personal, human freedom is the freedom to create new habits and new constraints, thereby altering *la force des choses* and opening up new directions for our being-in-the-world.[148] As Merleau-Ponty pointed out in this regard, "[o]ur freedom does not destroy our situation, but gears itself to it" (PP, 442).

Human freedom is never absolute, nor is it merely "necessity understood," freely submitted to. Or again, for hermeneutics, human freedom is not the libertarian or anarchic (criterionless, unprincipled) freedom extolled by some poststructuralists (*la liberté sauvage*), pure, unconstrained spontaneity. Human freedom is a function of the ability humans, as beings which have the *logos* (language/reason),[149] have of intervening judiciously in the course of events by interpreting necessity in a transformative way, thereby, on occasion, by

means of a certain "power of initiative," as Merleau-Ponty called it (PP, 439), bringing about new beginnings. The "gift of freedom," as Arendt observed, is "the mental endowment we have for beginning something new, of which we know that it could just as well not be."[150]

The crucial thing is that we exercise our limited freedom in a reflexively enlightened way.[151] As Heidegger said in response to Marx's saying that philosophers have only interpreted the world and that the point is to change it, the fact is that if we want to change the world for the better, we must first interpret it in the appropriate way. Therein lies the essence of human freedom. History is never rigidly determined, but neither is it ever simply invented—"out of whole cloth," as Marx would say. Historical forces (necessity) are something to be interpreted, and, in being so interpreted, transformed. The important thing is to think well. As Pascal said in his famous *pensée* on "man the thinking reed, the weakest thing in nature," the uniqueness (*grandeur*) of human beings in regard to nature is that they are reflective, thinking beings who, as such, know full well the great, crushing advantage that natural forces have over them, whereas nature knows nothing of this—from which he concluded that "all our dignity consists in thought," and that accordingly "to strive to think well; that is the basic principle of morality."[152]

Because, as Heidegger said, the essence of Dasein lies in its existence, the essence of the human being—the speaking, storytelling, self-interpreting, questioning animal—is nothing other than freedom itself. Necessity notwithstanding, we are ultimately, as Dostoevsky said, responsible for everything we do. The fact, however, that our freedom, though real, is finite and that we are not pure consciousnesses fully aware of our own intentions and thus fully in control of the meaning of what we do introduces an element of tragedy into the human condition. It is especially tragic when we have no other option but to choose, freely but with heavy responsibility, not between the good and the not-quite-so-good, but between what are manifest evils, in the hope that the evil we do choose is a lesser evil than the others. Because we are free, we are also necessarily guilty, to one degree or another.

Hermeneutics and the Limits of Meaning

Hermeneutical phenomenology is the philosophical search for meaning, understanding. As such, and as is the case with all attempts at understanding, it is guided by certain presuppositions. The most important of these is what Ricoeur calls the "postulate of meaningfulness." That our lived experience is indeed meaningful and can accordingly be brought to the proper expression of its own meaning is a "prejudice" or, as Merleau-Ponty called it, a "presumption on the part of reason," but this presumption is not at all of an idealist nature (having to do with an "idealism of meaning") and does not presume that there exists some kind of pre-established harmony between the rational

and the real or even that the notion of total intelligibility is at all meaningful. The hermeneutical postulate of meaningfulness is not metaphysical but phenomenological in nature in that it is grounded in our own lived experience and is nothing other than the articulation, on the level of reason or reflection, of what Merleau-Ponty called our "primordial faith" (*Urdoxa*) in the existence of the world, a "faith" which is constitutive of what, as perceiving beings, we essentially and inescapably are. As Merleau-Ponty said in this regard, the "ever-reiterated assertion" in our lives is: "'There is a world' or rather; 'There is the world'" (PP, xvii).

The postulate of meaningfulness, one might say, is a "working hypothesis" of hermeneutical reflection—one, moreover, that is borne out or "validated" in actual experience, for it is a fact that we are always able, to some degree or other, to discern meaningful patterns in the traces of human life. It is, of course, also a fact that no interpretation can ever legitimately claim to be "final," to be the definitive truth of things, the one and only correct interpretation, for, as we also know from experience, there is no interpretation that cannot be challenged and is not susceptible of being displaced by subsequent, more developed and sophisticated, interpretations. Any given interpretation, no matter how satisfying, is only, as James said, a provisional resting place. "The very idea of a definitive interpretation," Gadamer insisted, "seems to be intrinsically contradictory. Interpretation," as he goes on to say, "is always on the way"—such that "the word *interpretation* points to the finitude of human being and the finitude of human knowing" (RAS, 105). It is, in short, the nature of experience and interpretation that there can be no such thing as "the last word" (see GOC, 60). As the phenomenological psychologist Eugene Gendlin has shown in a revealing study of the relation between experience and expression (based on his own clinical experience as a practicing psychologist), it is the very nature of experience that the "felt meaning" of any experience can always be articulated in ever more refined ways; one "vital characteristic of experiencing," as Gendlin points out, is that "any datum of experiencing—any aspect of it, no matter how finely specified—can be symbolized and interpreted *further and further*."[153] Adding to Gendlin's observations on this matter, David Michael Levin points out that

> ... the relation between experience and the language of its articulation is an ongoing process of hermeneutical disclosure, whereby (1) language forms the experience it is articulating in the process of articulating it and (2) experience continues to talk back to the words that have been used to render it articulate.[154]

The unavoidable incompleteness of any attempt at bringing our lived experience to the proper expression of its own meaning that Gendlin has highlighted is itself, as it were, empirical confirmation of Ricoeur's basic

conviction that in human existence there is a super-abundance of meaning to the abundance of non-sense (there is no experience that cannot be interpreted and reinterpreted productively, "further and further"). In any event, what the phenomenology of perception—that of both Merleau-Ponty and James—has shown is that, at its most basic level, the "stream of consciousness" is not the chaotic jumble of discrete "sense data" that British empiricism took it to be (or as James said of Kant's metaphysical epistemology, "[t]here is no originally chaotic manifold to be reduced to order"[155]), but is from the very beginning the lived experience of an ordered, meaningful world. As Merleau-Ponty said, "[b]ecause we are in the world, we are *condemned to meaning*" (PP, xix). "[T]he sensible," as he also said, "is, like life, a treasury ever full of things to say" (VI, 252). This is, of course, something that poets and great novelists like Marcel Proust have always known.[156]

In an arresting image, Merleau-Ponty once provided this description of the human situation: "Instead of an intelligible world there are radiant nebulae separated by expanses of darkness" (SNS, 4). Thus, as he also said: "The highest form of reason borders on (*voisine avec*) unreason" (SNS, 4). Hermeneutics's postulate of meaningfulness does not preclude it from recognizing the existence of a kind of radical ignorance and uncertainty in human existence; there is, as Jean Grondin rightly observes, "no triumphalism of reason" to be found here.[157] Hermeneutics's presumption of meaning, though rational, is not rationalist or idealist in that it is not simply a version of Leibnitz's "principle of sufficient reason" (*nihil est sine ratione*). In human affairs there are many things that are without reason or are resistant to reason, such that there is, and can be, no *ultima ratio* to which human beings could have access and which would bring their search for meaning to a happy conclusion. Apart from the absolute or "apodictic," but empty, certainty of the *Ego cogito*, the only kind of certainty available to human beings is of a strictly relative and conditional sort, the kind of certainty Husserl called "empirical" or "presumptive."[158] Hermeneutics, as Ricoeur says, echoing Merleau-Ponty, is thus "a philosophy without any absolute" (IA, 13). The highest knowledge we can attain is the knowledge that there are many things we do not know and likely cannot ever know, or even know that we do not know. As Pascal remarked, reason is nothing if it does not go as far as to recognize that.[159] At some point or another, reason always runs up against the "opacity of the fact" which, as such, stares it in the face "with the inexorability of an enigma." Hermeneutical enlightenment is not philosophical *gnosis*; it is rather, as Gadamer said, "*sophia*, a consciousness of not knowing.... [H]uman wisdom is ... the awareness of not-knowing [*das Wissen des Nichtwissens*], *docta ignorantia*" (RPJ, 31, 33). "There is," as Gadamer also stated, "no claim of definitive knowledge with the exception of one: the acknowledgment of the finitude of human being in itself."[160] To be reasonable is "to know the limits of one's own understanding."[161]

To emphasize, as hermeneutical phenomenology does, the unsurpassable finitude of human being is not, for all that, to issue a call for resignation in the face of the unknown; it is rather a recognition of the need for, as Merleau-Ponty would say, "unremitting *virtù* (*la* virtù *sans aucune résignation*)" (S, 35). The search for meaning can never be anything other than a constant *struggle* for meaning, a struggle against our inveterate tendency to misunderstand things—as well as against what James called "a certain blindness" as regards the Other to which we are all prone—by keeping ourselves open to new experiences, to further expansions in our horizons. When Gadamer said that "[b]eing that can be understood is language," he was not making a metaphysical statement and was not claiming that being could ever be made fully intelligible or that our life-experience could ever be fully explicated. He was rather pointing to what is morally incumbent on any reflecting subject: "The principle of hermeneutics simply means that we should try to understand everything that can be understood" (PH, 31). "A hermeneutically informed notion of truth," as Calvin Schrag observes, is one "liberated from its traditional epistemological paradigm,"[162] which is to say that, for hermeneutics, "truth" is not so much a cognitivist-epistemological concept as it is an existential-moral concept and refers to a way of living, a resolutely communicative mode of being-in-the-world. Truth, for hermeneutics, is always of a "processual" nature and is a matter of "openness." "The truth," as Ricoeur says, "is ... the lighted place in which it is possible to continue to live and to think."[163] Or as Gadamer said, "[t]he truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience.... The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but in that openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself" (TM, 355). As one phenomenologist has correctly observed, "while for Hegel experience is overcome in the closure of absolute knowledge, for Gadamer it is fulfilled in the openness to new experiences."[164]

All language, including that of philosophy, is, as Merleau-Ponty maintained, indirect, and in whatever comes to understanding there are always many things that necessarily remain unsaid. The most profound insight of Heidegger, who pursued with determination always the same question, the question as to the "meaning of being"—or, as he later preferred to say, the "truth of being"—was that the truth-process, the advent of truth (unconcealment, *a-letheia*), always has the dual character of both revealing and concealing. That being so, the self in search of self-understanding never experiences a "full" presence of itself to itself. Being in the nature of a *process*, human understanding is always only "on the way." The important thing, that which allows for a certain coherence and meaning in our lives, is persistence in the asking of questions, for as Merleau-Ponty remarked, "[e]very question, even that of simple cognition, is part of the central question that is ourselves" (VI, 104). Or, as Marcel had earlier said, the question concerning the self is the question on which "all other questions hang."[165]

An ancient Chinese sage once said: "The various artisans dwell in their workshops in order to perfect their craft, just as the *junzi* [the 'gentleman' or wise person] keeps on learning in order to discover the truth [to reach the utmost of the Way]."[166] This persistence—"To know how to question," Heidegger said, "means to know how to wait, even a whole lifetime" (IM, 206)—is what the Confucians called virtue (*de*), which consists in "awaiting one's destiny (*ming*)" in "steadfastness of purpose."[167] This is the Way (*Dao*) of understanding and the basis of humanness (*ren, humanitas*) and the moral life.[168]

Postscript

I have sought in this paper to cast a retrospective glance over some one hundred years of phenomenology, taking as my theme the interpretive turn in phenomenology. Despite significant differences between the leading figures I have considered (and despite the fact that some of them branched off in directions others declined to follow), there are nonetheless many commonalties binding them together. There is, indeed, as I hope to have shown in this "phenomenology of phenomenology" (limited, as it necessarily has been, to a select number of general themes), a certain logic—dictated by the things themselves—in the way in which phenomenology has unfolded over the last many decades and during which time new themes and concerns have appeared at this or that moment and some older ones have faded away.

Given the protean way in which phenomenology has developed, it would undoubtedly be best to avoid speaking, as is often done, of "the Phenomeno-logical Movement" (the title Herbert Spiegelberg gave to his monumental history of phenomenology). Not only was phenomenology never a "school" of philosophy (as Spiegelberg readily allowed), it was not even a Movement in Speigelberg's (capital-M) sense of the term, i.e., a general, multifaceted trend of thought but one having a well-defined "common core" (this, as one might say, "hard core" being for Spiegelberg the disciplined, disinterested, and patient search for "essences" by means of a direct, intuitive grasp or "seeing" [*Wesenschau*] and faithful description of phenomena and their "modes of givenness" [to, as Spiegelberg says, "our inner eye"]). Husserl, as we know, hoped that his attempt at working out an ultimate science of being would be carried on after him by a dedicated group of researchers who would, in concerted teamwork, penetrate ever deeper into the field of pure subjectivity, mapping out ever more completely its essential, a priori, necessarily determined configurations. But this was not to be. In contrast to certain other trends in philosophy, there was never anything like a phenomenological orthodoxy—or even a phenomenological orthopraxy. Certainly, there is a particular way of doing philosophy that is recognizably "phenomenological" and which makes for a definite set of "family resemblances" among its practitioners, but this

is not to say that there is anything like a specific and commonly accepted "phenomenological method." Perhaps the most that can be said in a general way about phenomenology as it has unfolded over the course of the last century is that, to use a term of Merleau-Ponty's, phenomenology is a certain "style" of thinking (expressive of a "phenomenological attitude"), the "essentials" of which are an unremitting aversion to all forms of metaphysical reductionism and an abiding concern for the integrity of our own lived experience of things both human and natural. Whether this particular style of thinking—this tradition—can be expected to survive or even to flourish in this new century is another question. In the realm of human affairs, nothing is certain, but given the renewed interest in the leading figures of classical phenomenology and given also the significant number of new phenomenological organizations continually springing up, there are grounds for being, if not optimistic, at least hopeful in this regard.[169]

One thing that can be safely said, I believe, is that there exists no better conceptual apparatus than that of existential-hermeneutical phenomenology for counteracting the ever-present and seemingly ineradicable, naturalistic tendency on the part of humans to reduce human beings to that which is purely objectifiable (and thus manipulable) about them. The task of contesting this scientific-technocratic, antihumanist, or "engineering" approach to things human and recalling humans to their own humanness remains the indispensable task of any phenomenologically-inspired philosophy, both as a "pure" or general philosophy and in its "applications" to the different realms of the socio-cultural, the political, and the economic lifeworlds. In all these domains the supreme theoretical/practical task must be that of defending the claims of communicative or dialogical rationality (*Vernüftigkeit*) over the imperious demands and one-sidedness or "monologic" (as Gadamer called it) of merely instrumental or calculative rationality (*Rationalität*).[170] In this respect, "phenomenology" is not merely the name for a twentieth-century school of philosophy which may or may not have passed its zenith, but indicates what remains one of the most crucial tasks of thinking and which, as such, is something that, as Merleau-Ponty would say, still has all of its life before it (see PriP, 190). By its very nature, the truth of the phenomenological project can never be a "completed" truth (*une vérité accomplie*) but must remain always what Merleau-Ponty called *vérité à faire*.

I shall, however, leave the last word to Heidegger who was particularly attuned to what Marcel referred to as the "mystery of being" and who, however errant he may have been in some respects and however one-sided his "thinking of Being" may have been, nevertheless pursued the task of thinking with an uncommon steadfastness of purpose. After remarking how in the last century phenomenology determined the spirit of an age, Heidegger, in a late text, went on to say:

And today? The age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over. It is already taken as something past which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy. But in what is most its own phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought. If phenomenology is thus experienced and retained, it can disappear as a designation in favor of the matter of thinking whose manifestness remains a mystery.[171]

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Notes

For the reader who would like to explore in greater detail this or that issue dealt with in this text, a select number of the author's relevant writings are listed in the following notes. Quotations from standard English translations have sometimes been modified in order better to capture what I take to be the meaning of the author's original text.

1. This is Merleau-Ponty's rendering of a line in Husserl; see Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 129 [hereafter **VI**] and Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), sec. 16, 38–9. Also, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1990) [hereafter **TM**], 320.

2. See C. G. Prado, "A Conversation with Richard Rorty," *Symposium* vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 228.

3. For a forceful statement on Husserl's part of the responsibility as he saw it of philosophy for humanity, see his 1935 "Vienna Lecture" ("Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity") in Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970); published also in Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

4. See Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1965); English translation in Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* [hereafter **PRS**].

5. See the following remarks of Gadamer's, a pupil of Husserl's at one time: "He [Husserl] regarded himself as a master and teacher of patient, descriptive, detailed work, and all rash combinations and clever constructions were an abomination to him. In his teaching, whenever he encountered the grand assertions and arguments that are typical of beginning philosophers, he used to say, 'Not always the big bills, gentlemen; small change, small change!' This kind of work produced a peculiar fascination. It had the effect of a purgation, a return to honesty, a liberation from the opaqueness of the opinions, slogans, and battle cries that circulated" (Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 132–3 [hereafter **PH**].

6. Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William P. Alson and George Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 16.

7. See in this regard Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" in Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1977).

8. See the Introduction by Alexandre Lowit to his French translation of Husserl's *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970). Already in 1904 William James had sought to undermine the notion that there exists a "gap" between subject and object; see James, "A World of Pure Experience" (*Essays in Radical Empiricism*) in *William James: Writings 1902–1910* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1165. (Husserl apparently possessed a reprint of this article as a gift from James himself— see Herber Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 2 vols. [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960], 1:112 n2.)

9. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: L'intentionnalité" in Sartre, *La transcendence de l'ego* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1966), 111, 113.

10. See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) [hereafter **PP**], xvi. For Merleau-Ponty, the whole point of phenomenology as a mode of transcendental analysis was that of "re-awakening a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status" (PP, vii).

11. See Alphonse De Waelhens, *Phénoménologie et vérité, Essai sur l'évolution de l'idée de vérité chez Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953). Husserl first developed his notion of *Evidenz* in the sixth of his *Logical Investigations*, a text which made a profound and

lasting impression on Heidegger and which was in part the basis for his own notion of truth as unconcealment (*aletheia*).

12. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), sec. 77, 197.

13. David Michael Levin, "Liberating Experience from the Vice of Structuralism: The Methods of Merleau-Ponty and Nagarjuna," *Philosophy Today* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1997), 96.

14. This is something that Charles Sanders Peirce—"the distinguished Husserl" is Peirce's own expression (See Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 1:18)—had already pointed out in his groundbreaking article of 1878, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear."

15. William James, "A World of Pure Experience," 1168.

16. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1963), 208.

17. As James said, "consciousness" is "the name of a nonentity" and, strictly speaking, does not *exist*; see James's 1904 article, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" In a subsequent article of 1905, "La notion de conscience," James expressed thus the phenomenological notion of intentionality: "Nos sensations ne sont pas de petits duplicats intérieurs des choses, elles sont les choses mêmes en tant que les choses nous sont présentes." Both arti-cles were subsequently published in James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912).

18. James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publica-tions, 1956 [1890]), 2:286. In his *Logical Investigations*, 2 vols., trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), Husserl expressed his indebtedness to James (1:420).

19. For a detailed treatment of Husserl's notion of constitution, see Robert Sokolowski, *The Formation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), 1070.

20. For an example of this type of analysis, see Aron Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1964).

21. Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. Edward B. Ballard and Lester E. Embree (Evanston: Northwestern University Press,

1967), 203.

22. Commenting on this passage, Quentin Lauer remarks: "According to Husserl, there is in every act of consciousness an element which is simply irreducible to nature. This we might call the basic intuition that set Husserl on the path to transcendental phenomenology" (80 n. 13).

23. Or as Eugen Fink, one of Husserl's later assistants, would say, the question as to "*the origin of the world*" (see Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism" in R. O. Elveton, ed., *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings* [Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970], 96). One is inclined to wonder if Rorty might not have discovered some "utility" in phenomenology had he made a detailed study of Husserl. Although in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) Rorty effected a "hermeneutical turn" and mounted a thoroughgoing critique of modern, "epistemologically centered philosophy," in the end he fell back into a form of materialistic behaviorism which had all the appearances of being a mere metaphysical opposite to the modernistic mentalism he had so effectively criticized. As Richard Bernstein, a sympathetic critic, said of this work: "There is something fundamentally wrong with where Rorty leaves us" (Bernstein, "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind" in Robert Hollinger, ed., *Hermeneutics and Praxis* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985], 77). It is as if, Bernstein remarks, Rorty remained a prisoner of the metaphysical foundationalism of which he was otherwise such a perceptive critic and was unable to see any meaningful alternative to it. Husserl's critique of naturalism might have helped him to do so. It is in any event unfortunate that Rorty, the "neo-pragmatist," appears to have ignored the fact that one of the founders of American pragmatism, William James, was himself an early defender of the phenomenological notion of intentionality (and actually exerted an influence on Husserl in this regard); see for instance: Hans Linschoten, *On the Way Toward a Phenomenological Psychology: The Psychology of William James* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1968); John Wild, *The Radical Empiricism of William James* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970); James M. Edie, *William James and Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); and Richard Stevens, *James and Husserl: The Foundations of Meaning* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

24. See Levinas: "Sous forme de phénoménologie, elle [la philosophie de Husserl] poursuit essentiellement des intérêts ontologiques" (*Théorie de l'intuition*, 178 [see also 218]).

25. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) [hereafter **BT**], sec. 43a, 251. In *An Introduction of Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) [hereafter **IM**], after stating that "Appearing [being a "phenomenon"] is the very essence of being," Heidegger said: "This punctures the empty construction of Greek philosophy as a 'realistic' philosophy which, unlike modern subjectivism, was a doctrine of objective being. This widespread conception is based on a superficial understanding. We must leave aside terms like 'subjective' and 'objective,' 'realistic' and 'idealistic'" (101).

26. See Husserl's remarks on this subject in the Preface to Gibson's translation of Husserl's *Ideas* (this being a translation of Husserl's 1930 *Nachwort zu meinen* Ideen).

27. See PP, xiv: "Far from being, as has been thought, a procedure of idealistic philosophy, the phenomenological reduction belongs to existential philosophy: Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' appears only against the background of the phenomenological reduction."

28. For a refreshingly clear description of the reduction and Husserl's argumentative tactic in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, see Richard Cobb-Stevens, "The Beginnings of Phenomenology: Husserl and His Predecessors" in Richard Kearney, ed., *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century* (Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. 8) (London: Routledge, 1994), 18–9. Regarding the "contradictory" way in which Husserl presents the reduction, see Merleau-Ponty's essay on Husserl in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) [hereafter **S**], 161–5.

29. Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography" in Lewis Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Library of Living Philosophers, vol. 22) (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 11 [hereafter **IA**].

30. For a detailed account of the early Heidegger's attempt to strike out in a new direction, see John Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

31. Ludwig Landgrebe, "Husserl's Departure from Cartesianism" in R. O. Elveton, ed., *The Phenomenology of Husserl*, 260–1. For further remarks by Landgrebe on "the contradiction between [Husserl's] 'program' and that which is revealed unintentionally in his analyses," see Landgrebe, *Major Problems in Contemporary European Philosophy: From Dilthey to Heidegger*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), 27ff.

32. Ricoeur, "On Interpretation" in Alan Montefiore, ed., *Philosophy in France Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) [hereafter **OI**], 191. In the view of some commentators (Ricoeur tending to be one of them), Husserl's idealist-logicist way of dealing with phenomenological issues began, as it were, to self-destruct in his own later writings.

33. See Husserl, *Ideas*, sec. 20, 78.

34. See Gérard Granel, *Le Sens du temps et de la perception chez E. Husserl* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1968).

35. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, 9.

36. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), sec. 95, 237.

37. Husserl, "Phenomenology" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 4ᵗʰ ed. (1927), 17:67; reprinted in Richard Zaner and Don Ihde, eds., *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973). For a detailed discussion of this matter, see my "'Phenomenology and Existentialism': Husserl and the End of Idealism" in Frederick A. Elliston and Peter McCormick, eds., *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

38. Husserl, "Phenomenology," 68.

39. James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1:346.

40. See Aron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966).

41. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2:549. In the second, revised edition (1913) of this work Husserl added to this sentence a footnote: "I have since managed to find it, i.e., have learnt not to be led astray from a pure grasp of the given through corrupt forms of ego-metaphysic."

42. This apt expression is John Caputo's; see his "Husserl, Heidegger and the Question of a 'Hermeneutic' Phenomenology," *Husserl Studies*, vol 1 (1984), 177.

43. See Gadamer, PH, 138, 148: "*Being and Time* ... preserved the external form of an affiliation with the transcendental philosophy of his [Heidegger's]

master [Husserl].... Heidegger's critique of Husserl ... has nothing to do with 'realistic' softenings. Rather, it presupposes the consistent carrying out of the transcendental thought in Husserl's phenomenology—admittedly, in order to make it the object of an ontological reflection and critique that takes an entirely different direction." For his part, Levinas, a student of both Husserl and Heidegger, observed that "malgré tout l'abîme qui la sépare de Husserl," Heidegger's philosophy in *Being and Time* "demeure tributaire de la phénoménologie de Husserl" (Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1967), 52. On Merleau-Ponty's continued adherence to Husserl's transcendentalism, see my *Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty: A Search for the Limits of Consciousness* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), chap. 1.

44. See Ricoeur: "it was through the theme of intentionality that Husserlian phenomenology became recognized in France" (IA, 7); also see Gadamer, who refers to the notion of the lifeworld as "the most powerful conceptual creation of the later Husserl" (PH, 147).

45. Ricoeur, *Main Trends in Philosophy* [hereafter **MTP**] (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), 129.

46. Compare this formulation of the notion of intentionality with that of Sartre quoted above. The sentence in BT, sec. 43a, 251 beginning thus: "Only because Being is 'in consciousness'—that is to say, only because it is understandable in Dasein..." clearly indicates that the term "Dasein" is Heidegger's functional equivalent of Husserl's "consciousness."

47. See Gadamer, *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, trans. Chris Dawson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 55.

48. As Husserl said in his entry on "Phenomenology" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

49. The phraseology is Calvin O. Schrag's; see Schrag, "Traces of Meaning and Reference: Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Explorations," *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory* 73 (1992), 26. For a discussion of Schrag's contributions to phenomenology, see Martin Beck Matustik and William L. McBride, eds., *Calvin O. Schrag and the Task of Philosophy After Postmodernity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002).

50. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), nos. 68, 198.

51. Some phenomenologists would argue that (appreciative) *wonder* is as basic ("equiprimordial") a reaction to the "thrownness" of our existence as is Heidegger's (dreadful) guilt. In any event, Heidegger's "resolve," focused exclusively as it is on Non-Being (*Nichts*), has no praxial relevance to the question of how we should *act* in the world of everyday existence (which Heidegger equated with inauthentic being). (Interesting in this connection is the story told by Karl Löwith of one of Heidegger's students who, upon emerging from a lecture of his, exclaimed: "I am resolved! Only I am not sure on what" [see Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 1:309].)

52. That Husserl was unable to appreciate the genuinely *phenomenological* significance of Heidegger's work is another matter; see Husserl's 1931 Frankfurt lecture "Phänomenologie und Antropologie" and Husserl to Alexander Pfänder (Jan. 6, 1935).

53. According to Levinas, what Heidegger essentially did was to draw out the deeper, concrete, or existential "consequences" of Husserl's intellectualistic "theory of knowledge"; in so doing, Heidegger continued along the way traced out by his teacher (see *Théorie de l'intuition*, 187, 218).

54. Caputo, "Husserl, Heidegger and the Question of a 'Hermeneutic' Phenomenology," 158. However, as Caputo also points out in this article, Husserl betrayed his own phenomenological-hermeneutical insights by subordinating them in the end to the Cartesian ideal of an absolute science.

55. See Heidegger, BT, sec. 43, 244: "The question of the meaning of Being becomes possible at all only if there *is* something like an understanding of Being. Understanding of Being belongs to the kind of Being which the entity called 'Dasein' possesses. The more appropriately and primordially we have succeeded in explicating this entity, the surer we are to attain our goal in the further course of working out the problem of fundamental ontology."

56. See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), sec. 65, 331 (English trans. 380).

57. See also BT, sec. 29, 179: "Phenomenological Interpretation must make it possible for Dasein itself to disclose things primordially; it must, as it were, let Dasein interpret itself. Such Interpretation takes part in this disclosure only in order to raise to a conceptual level the phenomenal content of what has been disclosed, and to do so existentially [ontologically]."

58. Pascal, *Pensées*, no. 199. Pascal went on to say: "but our whole foundation cracks and the earth opens up into the depth of the abyss."

59. See Husserl to Lévy-Bruhl, March 11, 1935; cited in Herbert Spiegel-berg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 1:84.

60. See Heidegger's 1962 letter to William J. Richardson in Richardson's *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), xiv.

61. See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, sec. 64, 156. It is obvious that Husserl, in a kind of afterthought, as it were, is here trying to find a place in his own transcendental-idealist conceptual framework for Heidegger's existential concerns.

62. As Ricoeur observes, the "horizon" of the *Phenomenology of Perception* is "nothing other than Heideggerian care and being-in-the-world" (IA, 11).

63. This is what Merleau-Ponty elsewhere refers to as *contingency*, which was for him the most basic of all phenomenological facts.

64. See my "Did Merleau-Ponty Have a Theory of Perception?" in Thomas W. Busch and Shaun Gallagher, eds., *Merleau-Ponty, Hermeneutics, and Postmodernism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992). In this essay I maintain that "if 'perception' is understood in its traditional sense, as referring to some kind of reproductive, mirroring process, whereby what is 'outside' is duplicated 'inside,' the concept 'perception' does not figure in the *Phenomenology*" (93–4).

65. See also PP, 37: "Everything that exists exists as a thing or as a consciousness, and there is no half-way house."

66. See James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1:291.

67. See Caputo's article cited above, "Husserl, Heidegger and the Question of a 'Hermeneutic" Phenomenology."

68. Alphonse De Waelhens, "A Philosophy of the Ambiguous" in Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963) [hereafter **SB**], xviii–xix. One of the earliest published studies of Merleau-Ponty's "philosophy of ambiguity" was De Waelhens' *Une philos-ophie de l'ambiguïté, L'existentialisme de M. Merleau-Ponty* (Louvain: Bibliothèque philosophique de Louvain, 1951).

69. See PP, 169: "[A]mbiguity is of the essence of human existence"; and PP, 123: "This ambiguity is not some imperfection of consciousness or existence, but the definition of them."

70. See my "Merleau-Ponty's Deconstruction of Logocentrism" in M. C. Dillon ed., *Merleau-Ponty Vivant* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991). See also my "Between Phenomenology and (Post)Structualism: Rereading Merleau-Ponty" in Busch and Gallagher, eds., *Merleau-Ponty, Hermeneutics, and Postmodernism*, 123: "If Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is rightly referred to as a 'philosophy of ambiguity,' it is because the central thrust of his thinking, from beginning to end, lay in his attempt to overcome the discrete, oppositional categories of modern philosophy and, indeed, of the entire metaphysical tradition."

71. See Merleau-Ponty's reply to his critics in his "The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences" in Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, James M. Edie, ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) [hereafter **PriP**], 19.

72. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, 209.

73. See PP, 47: "[T]he return to perceptual experience, in so far as it is a consequential and radical reform, puts out of court all forms of realism, that is to say, all philosophies which leave consciousness and take as their datum one of its results."

74. For a study of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical development and his attempt to escape from the confines of a philosophy of consciousness, see my *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*.

75. For an overview of Heidegger's work, see my "Heidegger's Dialectic," *Reflections* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1980).

76. As regards Heidegger's Nazism and his hostility to liberal democracy and the values of the Enlightenment, see Tom Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), as well as Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

77. For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy see the following articles of mine: "Merleau-Ponty Alive," *Man and World* 26 (1993), and "The

Ethics and Politics of the Flesh" in G. B. Madison and Marty Fairbairn, eds., *The Ethics of Postmodernity: Current Trends in Continental Thinking* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999) (reprised in Duane H. Davis, ed., *Merleau-Ponty's Later Works and Their Practical Implications: The Dehiscence of Responsibility* [Amherst: Humanity Books, 2001]).

78. Given Heidegger's one-sided view of modernity as the rise to prominence of instrumental-calculative reason (the Will to Power or Will to Will) *and nothing more,* he rejected both Western liberal democracy and Eastern communism in favor of an idealized Nazism, since in his eyes both liberalism and totalitarianism were part and parcel of the modernist metaphysics of unbridled subjectivity and its project aiming at the technological domination of the earth.

79. Husserl, *Ideas*, sec. 124, 321; as Derrida observed in his translation of Husserl's *L'origine de la géométrie* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962], 61): "Aux yeux de Husserl, il serait absurde que le sens ne précède pas … l'acte de langage dont la valuer propre sera toujours celle de l'*expression.*"

80. Nothing could be further from Husserl's logicist approach to language—according to which words or "verbal expressions" are "signs" whose referential function or "signification" is bestowed on them by mental acts of "intending"—than Merleau-Ponty's maintaining that speaking (signifying) is in the nature of a bodily *gesture* (see PP, 183–4). Both Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer insisted, against both Husserl and the logicians (*logikous*), that words are not mere "signs"; for a discussion of the phenomenological-hermeneutical view of language, see my "Being and Speaking" in John Stewart, ed., *Beyond the Symbol Model: Reflections on the Representational Nature of Language* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

81. Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness" in Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds., *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) [hereafter **PHC**], 107.

82. See my "Flesh As Otherness" in Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, eds., *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990).

83. See my "Merleau-Ponty in Retrospect," in Patrick Burke and Jan Van Der Veken, eds., *Merleau-Ponty in Contemporary Perspective* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1993).

84. In Gadamer's opinion Heidegger "disregarded *phronesis* and raised the question of being in its place" (Gadamer, *A Century of Philosophy: A Conversation with Riccardo Dottori*, trans. Rod Coltman [New York: Continuum, 2004], 127).

85. See Gadamer, "Le défi herméneutique," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 151 (1984), 334.

86. See TM, 465: "Fundamentally I am *not proposing a method*, but I am describing *what is the case.*"

87. See my "Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" in Lewis E. Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, and see Gadamer, PH, 25: "The phenomenon of understanding ... shows the universality of human linguisticality as a limitless medium that carries *everything* within it—not only the 'culture' that has been handed down to us through language, but absolutely everything—because everything (in the world and out of it) is included in the realm of 'understandings' and understandability in which we move."

88. See also PH, 77: "Is not language more the language of things than the language of man?"

89. For a more detailed treatment of Gadamer's position in this regard *vis-à-vis* both Rorty and Derrida, see my "Coping with Nietzsche's Legacy: Rorty, Derrida, Gadamer" in Madison, *The Politics of Postmodernity: Essays in Applied Hermeneutics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2001).

90. For a critique of Hirsch's positivist-style version of hermeneutics from a Gadamerian point of view, see my *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

91. For a discussion of the hermeneutical notion of application, see my "Hermeneutics, the Lifeworld, and the Universality of Reason (The Case of China)" in Madison, *The Politics of Postmodernity*.

92. For both Gadamer and Ricoeur, the act of reading is not, as the earlier Heidegger claimed, an act of "violence" but presupposes "good will" aiming at genuine dialogue.

93. Shaun Gallagher, "Hegel, Foucault, and Critical Hermeneutics" in Gallagher, ed., *Hegel, History, and Interpretation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 161.

94. Gadamer, *Praise of Theory*, 61.

95. Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary*, trans. Richard E. Palmer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) [hereafter **GOC**], 81.

96. See my paper presented to the Chinese National Academy of Social Sciences, "China in a Globalizing World: Reconciling the Universal with the Particular," *Dialogue and Humanism* (Polish Academy of Sciences) 12, nos. 11–12/2002.

97. Gadamer, "The Power of Reason," *Man and World* 3, no. 1 (1970), 13; for a further discussion of this matter see my "Gadamer's Legacy," *Symposium* vol. 6, no. 2 (Fall, 2002). It should be noted that Gadamer's attempt to revise the notions of "universal" and "particular" has been greatly expanded upon by Calvin Schrag, who, in this context, speaks, perhaps wisely, not of "universalism," but more "postmetaphysically" of "transversalism." Both Gadamer's defense of universalism and Schrag's notion of transversalism are meant to contest the notion (promoted by Rorty and other relativistic postmodernists) that the various cultures of the world are "incommensurable."

98. See Thomas Tóth, "The Graft, the Residue, and Memory: Two Conversations with Paul Ricoeur" in Andrzej Wiercinski, ed., *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium* (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2003) [hereafter **BSS**], 647; and for a discussion of Ricoeur's position in this matter, see also in this volume my "Paul Ricoeur: Philosopher of Being-Human (*Zuoren*)."

99. As Thomas Busch has pointed out, Marcel's notion of situatedness anticipates Gadamer's hermeneutic theory; see Busch's entry "Marcel" in the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, Lester Embree, et al., eds. (Dordrecht; Kluwer Academic, 1997).

100. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and th Human Sciences*, John B. Thompson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) [hereafter **HHS**], 74.

101. Alfred Schütz, "Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action" in Richard M. Zaner and Don Ihde, eds., *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 299.

102. See Gadamer, *A Century of Philosophy*, 130.

103. For a discussion of this matter, as well as of other basic themes in philosophical hermeneutics, see my "Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur" in Richard Kearney, ed., *Continental Philosophy in the 20ᵗʰ Century;* for a more succinct overview of philosophical hermeneutics, see my "Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur" in Richard H. Popkin, ed., *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

104. See Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981) [hereafter **RAS**], 9.

105. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston.: Northwestern University Press, 1964) [hereafter **SNS**], 93.

106. For a detailed discussion of the hermeneutical notion of communicative rationality, see my *The Logic of Liberty* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), chap. 10; for an analysis of the notions of communicative rationality and practical reasoning in both Gadamer and Ricoeur, see Paul Fairfield, "Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Practical Judgment" in Wierscinski, ed., *Between Suspicion and Sympathy*.

107. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, 221.

108. It would be more correct to say that Ricoeur's "starting point" was Marcel's existential philosophy of embodiment (Ricoeur dedicated his *Philosophy of the Will* to Marcel), as reinterpreted through the lens of Husserlian phenomenology; for an insightful discussion of Ricoeur's relationship with Marcel, see Boyd Blundell, "Creative Fidelity: Gabriel Marcel's Influence on Paul Ricoeur" in Wiercinski, ed., *Beyond Suspicion and Sympathy*.

109. For an excellent survey of Ricoeur's philosophical writings, see Mark Muldoon, *On Ricoeur* (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002).

110. See Ricoeur's translation of, and commentary on, Husserl's *Ideen I*: *Ideés directrices pour une phénoménologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), a work that Merleau-Ponty used and cited in his lectures at the Sorbonne in the early 1950s.

111. For an account by Ricoeur of the piecemeal way in which he has handled philosophical problems, see Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction:*

Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) [hereafter **CC**], 81–2; for a thematic overview of Ricoeur's work, see Domenico Jervolino, "The Unity of Paul Ricoeur's Work" in Wiercinski, ed., *Between Suspicion and Sympathy*.

112. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 17.

113. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed., Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974) [hereafter **CI**], 411.

114. These two terms are ones that Ricoeur himself suggested as the title for the *Festschrift* in his honor that I edited on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday: *Sens et existence, en hommage à Paul Ricoeur* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975).

115. Ricoeur, "Reply to G. B. Madison" in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 93; see also in this volume my "Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of the Subject."

116. See Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 246–7.

117. See the text of the debate in *Esprit* 31, no. 322 (Novembre, 1963); Ricoeur's frustration with this sort of objectivistic reductionism came to the fore when he said to Lévi-Strauss: "You despair of meaning, but you save yourself by thinking that if people have nothing to say, at least they say it so well that their discourse can be subjected to a structuralist analysis."

118. See Ricoeur, "Langage (Philosophie)" in *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (1971), 9:780; see also Ricoeur, *Main Trends in Philosophy*, 268-69.

119. As Gadamer observed, Heidegger's preoccupation with "Being," with the *Sein* of *Da-Sein*, "meant the search for God. He was a seeker of God his entire life" (*A Century of Philosophy*, 122, 127).

120. See Merleau-Ponty's "Les sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie," translated by John Wild as "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man" in PriP.

121. See Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 2.

122. See Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952–1960*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 112.

123. Ricoeur's key essay in this regard is his "What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding" (reprinted in HHS).

124. See Gadamer, PH, 55: "In the last analysis, *all* understanding is self-understanding, but not in the sense of a preliminary self-possession or of one finally and definitively achieved."

125. Ricoeur's position contrasts in this regard with that of a disciple of the later Wittgenstein, Peter Winch, who around the same time attempted to revive in an Anglo-Saxon format the Diltheyan dichotomy between the natural sciences and the social sciences, between (causal) explanation and (empathetic) understanding; see Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

126. A key work of Ricoeur's in this regard was his 1971 essay, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered As a Text" (reprinted in HHS).

127. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978), 2:180.

128. David Pellauer, "The Significance of the Text in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory" in Charles E. Reagan, ed., *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), 112, 109.

129. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 10.

130. Ricoeur discusses Geertz's noton of "symbolic action" in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, George H. Taylor, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), chap. 15 [hereafter **LIU**]. For an exposition of what he calls "semiotic anthropology," which is in effect fully hermeneutical, see Milton Singer, *Man's Glassy Essence: Explorations in Semiotic Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

131. See Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in W. J. T Mitchell, ed., *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chic-

ago Press, 1981).

132. Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*, Preface.

133. See also Merleau-Ponty's remarks on Husserl's notion of eidetic insight in his "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man" (PriP, 54–5 and passim). In this lecture course Merleau-Ponty stated that "a knowledge of facts always implies a knowledge of essences" (PriP, 67).

134. Being semantic constructs, "essences," like all concepts, have (as Gadamer pointed out [TM, 428ff]) their origin in the metaphorizing-analogizing imagination, and they are "validated" not by logical demonstration but by rhetorical persuasion (on the intimate relation between hermeneutics and rhetoric, see my *The Politics of Postmodernity*, chap. 4; on the heuristic and cognitive function of metaphor, see my *Understanding: A Phenomenological-Pragmatic Analysis* [Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982]).

135. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1968), 104.

136. As economists Deirdre McCloskey and Stephen Zilich have shown, "statistical significance" in pattern-analysis is no guarantee of real-world relevance and is not a reliable substitute for economic (interpretive) significance; see McCloskey and Zilich, "The Standard Error of Regressions," *Journal of Economic Literature* 34, no. 1 (March 1996) and "Size Matters: The Standard Error of Regressions in the American Economic Review," *Journal of Socio-Economics* (forthcoming).

137. For a discussion of Schütz's attempt to extend Husserlian phenomenology to economic science and to work out a phenomenological grounding for Austrian economics, the most prominent school of economics at the time, see my entry "Economics" in the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*; see also my "Phenomenology and Economics" in *The Elgar Companion to Austrian Economics*, Peter J. Boettke, ed. (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1994).

138. Schütz, "Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action" in Richard M. Zaner and Don Ihde, eds., *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 293. In his discussion of "the typicality of the world of daily life" Schütz was building on Husserl's analysis thereof in *Experience and Judgment*, secs. 18–21 and 82–5.

139. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), 1:207.

140. See also BSS, 690: "[W]e do not know in what time we live. The darkness, the opaqueness of the present to itself seems to me completely fundamental."

141. For a discussion of spontaneous orders and the "invisible hand" from a hermeneutical point of view, see my *The Political Economy of Civil Society and Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 1998).

142. See my "The Practice of Theory/The Theory of Practice" in Madison, *The Politics of Postmodernity*.

143. Gadamer, "In Praise of Theory," *Ellipsis* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1990), 88.

144. Laws of human behavior of the social-scientific sort can be formulated once the essence of any particular category, or its sub-types, has been (as Merleau-Ponty would say) "seized upon." Lord Acton's saying that power tends to corrupt and that absolute power corrupts absolutely counts as a universal law of a particular type (echoing Montesquieu, Gadamer observed that "every form of power, not just that of a tyrant or an absolute ruler, is dedicated to increasing its own power" [*Praise of Theory*, 94]). For a discussion of the role of hermeneutical theory in the understanding of social practices, see my "Between Theory and Practice: Hayek on the Logic of Cultural Dynamics," *Cultural Dynamics* 3, no. 1 (1990).

145. A key factor in the development of French phenomenology was the "existentialized" Hegel of Jean Wahl and Alexandre Kojève.

146. See Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" in Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Philosophical Papers, vol. 2) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 36.

147. Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, Sixth Thesis.

148. See James's chapter on habit in *The Principles of Psychology*.

149. See Merleau-Ponty: "We are born into reason as into language" (SNS, 3).

150. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 2:195.

151. In this regard, it should be noted that the dynamics of social orders can be, and often are, transformed or "short-circuited" in an unintended manner by human agents. By acting on what is seemingly predictable, given the dynamics of a given state of affairs, human beings can, by that very fact, alter the course of events in unanticipated ways. Predicting the behavior of the stock market, for instance, can significantly affect what that behavior turns out to be. This has to do with what financier-philosopher George Soros calls the "reflexivity" of human behavior (Soros, *Soros on Soros: Staying Ahead of the Curve* [New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1995], 72, 209–20), a phenomenon that Ricoeur also talks about under the heading of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Ricoeur, *Main Trends in Philosophy*, 147–8). From a hermeneutical point of view, this is an extremely interesting phenomenon in that it highlights an essential difference between the human order of symbolic interaction and the natural order of deterministic cause and effect.

152. Pascal, *Pensées*. no. 200; see also *pensée* no. 620: "Man is obviously made for thinking. Therein lies all his dignity and his merit; and his whole duty is to think as he ought."

153. Eugene T. Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning: A Philosophical and Psychological Approach to the Subjective* (Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 16; see also Gendlin, "Experiential Phenomenology" in *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences*, Maurice Natanson, ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

154. Levin, "Liberating Experience from the Vice of Structuralism," 96–7.

155. James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1:363.

156. In his *Recherche*, Proust described many experiences of this sort, such as the one occasioned by the church towers of Martinville which he glimpsed in the course of an automobile ride or the three trees near Balbec that he once sighted; see Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1954), 1:180 and 1:717–9.

157. See Jean Grondin, "Gadamer on Humanism" in L .E. Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, 167.

158. See Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), sec. 77.

159. See Pascal, *Pensées*, no. 188: "Reason's last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things which are beyond it. It is merely feeble if it does not go as far as to realize that."

160. Gadamer, "The Science of the Life-World" in *Analecta Husserliana*, Anna-Maria Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1972), 2:184.

161. Gadamer, "The Power of Reason," 14.

162. See Schrag, *Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 187.

163. Ricoeur, "Reply to My Friends and Critics" in Reagan, ed., *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*.

164. Saulius Geniusas, "Analysis of Historically Effected Consciousness," manuscript (2003).

165. See Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 1:130.

166. Confucius, *Analects*, 19.7.

167. See Mencius, *The Mencius*, 7A1 and 7B33.

168. The *Dao* to which I have alluded is the *Dao* of humanistic self-cultivation (*Bildung*) of the early Confucians and should not be confused with the mystical and anithumanist *Dao* of Laozi, i.e., of "Daoism," which was, not surprisingly, the *Dao* invoked by Heidegger (see Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz [New York: Harper and Row, 1971], 92).

169. At the present time there exist some 117 phenomenological organizations worldwide. For information on developments in phenomenology, contact the web site of the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology (CARP) directed by Lester Embree: www.phenomenologycenter.org.

170. See my "Critical Theory and Hermeneutics: Some Outstanding Issues in the Debate" in Lewis E. Hahn, ed., *Perspectives on Habermas* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000).

171. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, 82.