

Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity
and Values in Edmund Husserl

Edited by

Susi Ferrarello

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

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PREFACE

As a phenomenological psychologist, I am honored to be able to make some brief comments introducing the work of my colleagues in philosophy. From the perspective of my discipline, psychology, I look at this book not only as a collection of discrete scholarly achievements. More than that, this collection embodies a lived-experience, an event—and not a solitary experience, but a shared one.

This book is the fruit of the collaboration of Husserl scholars who gathered in Rome in the summer of 2012, at the invitation of Dr. Susi Ferrarello. The participants gathered to share their perspectives on phenomenology's contemporary implications. The event was envisioned not merely as an occasion for scholarly monologues but, rather, as an invitation to dialogue. In this context, we should remember that for Husserl, the activity of phenomenologizing finds its fulfillment not in solitary reflection but in community, and not in a static form of community, but rather in a community which generates increasingly open and expanding inquiry, welcoming others into the conversation.

In 1934, nearing the end of his life, in his notes in response to Fink's *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl describes the beginning of phenomenological exploration as a solitary one:

I at the start of the phenomenological reduction and then solitarily phenomenologizing in "solipsistic" solitude, i.e. in which I still have no fellow phenomenologizer. (Fink 1995, 191)

He then poses the question, "How far can this solipsistic phenomenology reach?"

He answers by observing that the aim of this path of inquiry is "the progressive development of a phenomenological community," which implies a "transcendentally wakeful communalization as co-searching and living life as a whole accordingly" (Fink 1995, 191).

That the process of communalization he envisions is fully social, and not merely scholarly, is evident in Husserl's use of quasi-religious language (for instance "conversion," which he places within quotation marks) to describe the requisite shift in attitude, and his description of the outcome as "a living community of transcendentally awakened subjects."

He then returns to the question, “how long can I phenomenologize as *solus ipse*, as the ‘only man,’ how long can I remain at it ... how long can I *want* to remain at it” (Fink 1995, 191)?

In these late reflections, Husserl takes phenomenology’s ultimate aims to be directed toward the social world: as he writes, human life is “we-life,” and a search for individuated realization that, in a way, “each has to understand in a sense appropriate to himself” and yet “is a striving of the we toward unity in a we-satisfaction,” which finds its fruition in “the creation of a new enviroing human world” (Fink 1995, 192).

It seems to me that a radical reading of Husserl’s words requires us to assess the degree to which our phenomenological work has succeeded, by asking whether our work contributes to this intersubjective end. How, in other words, does the present work reflect an engagement with and a promotion of the kind of “wakeful communalization” which Husserl described?

You have in your hands (or on your screen) a text. Is the fulfillment of lived-philosophy to be found in the artifacts produced—viewed discretely, as empirical objects—or the process through which they came to be and from which they have an impact in the world? To view a book such as this primarily as an object seems to me to reflect a particular kind of “natural attitude” that we lapse into in the course of scholarly life. Of course, the production of such objects is a requirement of scholarly life—but, as phenomenologists, we know that the meaning of something like an essay or a book is not exhausted by its facticity.

To regain a wider horizon upon which to engage with a text like this requires, I suggest, employing a kind of bracketing of our everyday academic attitude, within which its contents are viewed as factual accomplishments, to be assessed solely on the basis of the eloquence, novelty, and disciplinary value of their arguments as new contributions to the field—as important as all of these are within the academy.

But if we bracket the facticity of these attributes—without neglecting their value—we can make ourselves available to a wider horizon upon which each of these essays may be read as a window onto the world and a way of asking questions about the world. Because, ultimately, this is what philosophy does and is what this volume’s contributors sought to do.

It might seem presumptuous for a psychologist to propose a frame within which to view these philosophical essays. I suggest that by applying the bracketing which I have suggested, the reader can look through these essays back at the world. Proposing this shift in attitude to the reader, in relation to this volume’s chapters—which is arguably not merely descriptive, but also the adoption of a kind of hermeneutic

attitude—is, in a way, a kind of intervention, psychologically speaking. Shifting from a natural attitude to another kind of wakefulness does require a break, even a rupture, from the reflexive flow of everyday life—but this is the kind of rupture that phenomenology requires all the time. And it is perhaps phenomenological psychology’s task—hand-in-hand with phenomenological philosophy—to suggest alternate ways in which experiences as mundane as picking up a book *could* be lived differently.

So, as we enter into this text, I propose that we quite consciously set aside the natural attitude of scholarly reading and ask ourselves, how do each of these authors bring us back to reflection on the lived-world? What are the implications of their investigations for the lived-world of everyday experience? Asking these questions, of both our own and of others’ work, is a way of bringing together Husserl’s call for the progressive development of a phenomenologically-informed community and the development of a new way of living life as a whole.

Marc Applebaum, PhD
Saybrook University
San Francisco, California

References

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