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On the Foundational Compatibility of Phenomenology and Thomism

Jacques Maritain criticizes the phenomenological method, *i.e.*, the ἐποχή, of Edmund Husserl as being incompatible with the sense realism of St. Thomas Aquinas. Maritain takes Husserl’s method as either equivalent to or necessitating idealism.¹ For Maritain, it is the denial of the fundamental importance of the existence of things of experience that “is the πρῶτον ψεῦδος [first falsehood] of phenomenology.”² Maritain explains:

This fundamental misunderstanding is connected to the phenomenological ἐποχή insofar as it “puts into parentheses” the whole register of extra-mental existence and in this way separates the object (the essence-phenomenon) from the thing . . .³

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¹ Portions of the treatments of Maritain and Husserl’s approach to phenomenology in this study have been taken from my paper, “Penitential Method as Phenomenological: The Penitential *Epoche*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 3, ed. R. Mary H. Lemmons (July–September 2018): 487–518.

² Jacques Maritain, *Distinguer Pour Unir ou Les Degrés du Savoir* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), 197: “C’est là le πρῶτον ψεῦδος de la phénoménologie.” The translations are my own.

Maritain goes on to compare Husserl's phenomenological method directly to that of Descartes and to argue that, while both forms of epistemological foundationalism might achieve a separation of existence from the known object by way of signification (*ut significata*), they result in contradiction in the practical order (*ut exercita*), since it is practically impossible to think of being while at the same time thinking of it as not being.⁴

Maritain's reading of Husserl is not altogether foreign to the phenomenological tradition itself. Indeed, Karl Ameriks has called this view the common reading.⁵ In Husserl's own lifetime, a group of his students and followers centered at Munich, including—most importantly—Roman Ingarden and Max Scheler, took his method as committing him to idealism.⁶ Ingarden identified idealism as the “fatal defect of the philosophic method introduced in [Husserl's] *Ideas* and *Cartesian Meditations*.”⁷ Preferring Husserl's critiques of psychologism and historicism in his earlier work, *Logical Investigations*, Scheler shared the sentiments of Ingarden.⁸

³ *Ibid.*: “Cette méprise fondamentale est liée à l'εποχή phénoménologique, en tant qu'elle «met entre parenthèses» tout le registre de l'existence extramentale et sépare ainsi l'objet (l'essence-phénomène) de la chose . . .”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵ See Karl Ameriks, “Husserl's Realism,” *The Philosophical Review* 86, no. 4 (October 1977): 498. Harrison Hall echoes Ameriks' assessment in his “Was Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?,” in *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus in collaboration with Harrison Hall (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1982), 169, footnote 2.

⁶ See Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 212–213.

⁷ See Hall, “Was Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?” For the text of Ingarden as cited by Hall, see Roman Ingarden, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*, vol. 2 (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1965); and *id.*, “Die vier Begriffe der Transcendenz und das Problem des Idealismus in Husserl,” in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 1, ed. A.-T. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1971), 37–74.

⁸ See Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 213.

If Husserl's ἐποχή is intended to deny the existence of objects of experience—to commit him to an idealism—then Maritain certainly presents a valid concern: Thomists should flee the ἐποχή as Adam and Eve should have fled the lie of the father of sin and the temptation of the forbidden fruit. The Angelic Doctor, after all, decisively rejects any position that would make ideas or concepts the objects of knowledge as opposed to the things through which they are known:

But the species of the perceived is not that which is perceived, but rather that by which the perceiver perceives. Therefore, the intelligible species is not actually what is known in an act of knowing, but it is that by which the intellect understands.⁹

Not surprisingly, this concern has taken root in the thought of contemporary Thomists commenting on Karol Wojtyła's ground-breaking approach of enriching Thomism through phenomenology,¹⁰ who seek at times to distance Wojtyła's method from that of Husserl.¹¹ Wojtyła's

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *sed contra*: “Sed species sensibilis non est illud quod sentitur, sed magis id quo sensus sentit. Ergo, species intelligibilis non est quod intelligitur actu, sed id quo intelligit intellectus.” (Full text in Latin is available online—see the section *References* for details.) The translation is my own. For St. Thomas's Aristotelian position that the ultimate source of knowledge is sensation, see also *ibid.*, I, q. 84, a. 6, *resp.* As will be seen below, Husserl actually agrees with the Angelic Doctor on this matter.

¹⁰ The turn of phrase, “enriching of Thomism through phenomenology,” belongs to Hittinger.

¹¹ In contemporary literature on the work of Karol Wojtyła, see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 68. Contrasting Wojtyła's methodological orientation toward apprehension of essence or εἶδος/*eidos* to that of Husserl, Schmitz indicates that Husserl separates phenomenological essence from existence, while “Wojtyła does not suspend the factor of existence, nor does he put out of play the whole fabric of metaphysical principle, and above all, the principle of causality.” Jaroslaw Kupczak, O.P., *Destined for Liberty: The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 75: “Wojtyła does not use Husserl's phenomenological reduction, which consists in a suspension of belief in an object's existence.” See also, Thomas D. Williams, L.C., “What is Thomistic Personalism?” *Alpha Omega* VII, no. 2 (2004): 170: “Seeking to avoid the imposition of pre-conceived notions or

view of Husserl's phenomenology is complex. On the one hand, Wojtyła appears not to think that phenomenology is sufficient to establish realism in itself and, at times, he also seems to follow the idealist reading, which he likely obtained from Ingarden and Scheler.¹² In one of his Lublin Essays, for example, he employs language echoing Maritain, characterizing Husserl's *ἐποχή* as "bracketing the existence, or reality, of the conscious subject."¹³ On the other hand, it is clear that he did not believe that phenomenology is doomed by its method to terminate in idealism. Indeed, Wojtyła sees a fundamental compatibility between realism and the phenomenological method, as he explicitly credits the Husserlian phenomenological tradition with breaking down the "line of demarcation" between subjectivity and objectivity precipitated by the Cartesian reduction.¹⁴ Distinguishing sharply between Kantian phenomenalism and phenomenology, Wojtyła is careful to note that phenomenology seeks knowledge of essences given immediately in experience, rejecting Kant's *a priori* divorce of consciousness from things-in-them-

structures on reality, phenomenology goes 'back to the thing' (*zurück zum Gegenstand*) by bracketing (*epoche*) all philosophical presuppositions about the world, man, and the rest of reality." Miguel Acosta and Adrian J. Reimers, *Karol Wojtyła's Personalist Philosophy: Understanding Person and Act* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 21: "Whereas Husserl placed the epistemological status of the phenomenological *epoché* on the subjective plane as a product of consciousness, and thus fell into transcendental idealism, Ingarden, and other phenomenologists such as Scheler, admitted a basis in ontological realism. Karol Wojtyła would follow this latter realist line."

¹² See Karol Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 209–217.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 210. On Wojtyła taking Husserl's approach as a form of idealism, see also Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 46 (and the corresponding footnote 21, on page 304).

¹⁴ Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 32–33; and Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 10.

selves.¹⁵ Most importantly, Wojtyła himself synthetically pairs the phenomenological method of bracketing with an Aristotelian method of induction in his philosophical masterpiece, *The Acting Person*.¹⁶ Given Wojtyła's approach of bringing phenomenology up under the perennial

¹⁵ Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics," 32–33: "As far as its relation to experience is concerned, phenomenology—despite the similarity of its name—differs decisively from Kantian phenomenalism [or idealism]. Phenomenalism assumes that the essence of a thing is unknowable; phenomenology, on the other hand, accepts the essence of a thing just as it appears to us in immediate experience. Phenomenology is therefore intuitionistic . . . It treats knowledge as a certain whole known from experience; experience, in turn, reveals the phenomenological essence of objects and the relations and connections occurring between them." Wojtyła goes on to make the following remark: "What interests phenomenologists is not what a thing is in itself, but how something manifests itself to us in immediate experience. Phenomenologists do not have the kind of cognitive ambitions that Aristotelians and Thomists have—they do not give priority to the philosophy of being; but then, on the other hand, they also differ from Kantians, who sever experience from the *noumenal* essence of a thing . . . In light of phenomenology's epistemological assumptions presented above, it is obvious that phenomenology contributed, by virtue of those assumptions, to a partial rebuilding of the relation to the experience of ethical life that had been completely demolished by Kant."

¹⁶ In stressing the importance of the unity of knower and known object in acts of human cognition, Wojtyła explicitly remarks on the commensurability of his method for gaining knowledge of the human act and that of phenomenology. See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 10. Wojtyła utilizes induction in the Aristotelian sense found at *Posterior Analytics*, II, 19. See the introduction of Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 5–7. In chapter 1 of his *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła first utilizes the bracketing method in order to disclose the essential structures of consciousness, which provides the basis for understanding human efficacy: "The singling out of consciousness as a separate object of investigation is only a methodological operation; it is like taking a term out of the brackets in order thereby to gain a better understanding of what remains bracketed." See *ibid.*, 29–30. Rather than casting the method in terms of the suspense of belief in certain objects (Husserl's approach), Wojtyła's prefers to conceive of the method as removing from the brackets what is not immediately contained in one's inquiry, as in an algebraic operation. The effect is the same for Wojtyła as for Husserl: aspects of some reality, or beliefs, are "set aside" or put out of consideration so that a subject can be appropriately analyzed without prejudice. In chapter 2 (*ibid.*, 60–61), he again utilizes the bracketing method, "abandoning" or setting aside the aspect of consciousness in order now to better understand its functions through the fact that man acts. For a detailed account of Wojtyła's Aristotelian methodology, see Daniel C. Wagner, "On Karol Wojtyła's Aristotelian Method. Part I: Aristotelian Induction (ἐπαγωγή) and Division (διαίρεσις)," *Philosophy and Canon Law* 7, no. 1 (2021): 1–42.

wings of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomists would do well, thus, to reevaluate Husserl's phenomenological *ἐποχή*.

Seeking to establish a firm foundation for Wojtyła's Phenomenological-Thomism, this study shows that Husserl's method is not incompatible with the realism of St. Thomas. This is accomplished by looking to Husserl's approach to phenomenology as a science in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, and *Cartesian Meditations*. In line with the Aristotelian conception of science, Husserl's phenomenology consciously presupposes the *existence* of its subject matter and the *ἐποχή* is formulated as the most fitting method for obtaining knowledge of the essential characteristics of this subject matter *without* universally negating the existence of objects of consciousness.

Husserl's Own Response to the Charge of Idealism

While Husserl used the phrases "transcendental idealism" or "phenomenological idealism"¹⁷ to describe phenomenology, he explicitly rejected the charge that phenomenology is idealism. Indeed, later in his career, he came to regret using the term "idealism" altogether, and he abandoned it. What he meant by these admittedly unfortunate phrases was, in fact, realism and the rejection of Kantian idealism.¹⁸ Husserl explicitly denies that the phenomenological method is intended to "deny the factual [*wirklich*] existence of the real [*real*] world."¹⁹ Moreover,

¹⁷ Accordingly, *Cartesian Meditations* is the primary focus of Maritain's critique. Here, Husserl calls phenomenology "transcendental idealism," *e.g.*, at §§ 40–41.

¹⁸ In a 1934 letter Husserl wrote to Abbé Baudin, he says the following: "No ordinary 'realist' has ever been as realistic and concrete as I, the phenomenological 'idealist' (a word which by the way I no longer use)." See note 19, immediately below, for the complete source reference.

¹⁹ I am greatly indebted to Dr. Dan Bradley for having brought these important texts to my attention, and for offering his helpful thoughts on Husserl in our discourses. See

and like St. Thomas Aquinas, Husserl himself considers it a fundamental error to substitute what he calls “picture consciousness” or “sign consciousness,” *i.e.*, the intentional awareness of mental images/concepts /ideas, for the perception of physical objects, since making ideas the object of knowledge contradicts the very sense of perception.²⁰

Beyond simply denying the charge that phenomenology is idealism and defending a basic sense-realism in this manner, Husserl also demonstrates a vision of phenomenology terminating in a robust realism in the fifth meditation of his *Cartesian Meditations*—the very work which was the focus of Maritain’s critique.²¹ Here, his explicit purpose is to answer the charge of thinkers like Ingarden and Scheler that phenomenology is a solipsism and an idealism mired in the very skepticism it was formulated to overcome. In this profoundly important and novel text, Husserl famously reasons analytically from the phenomenon of empathy, or the pairing of my transcendental-ego with that of the other through the lived body (*Leib*), to the necessity of the real transcendence

David Woodruff Smith’s book *Husserl* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2006), 169. The original English source is Dagfin Føllesdal, “Husserl’s Idealism,” in *Philosophie in synthetischer Absicht: Synthesis in Mind* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998). Føllesdal is translating and quoting from the Husserl archivist Iso Kern, *Husserl und Kant: Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 276n. Here is the full quote from Husserl’s preface to the first English edition of the *Ideas* (Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson [London: Allen & Unwin, 1931]): “Phenomenological idealism does not deny the factual [*wirklich*] existence of the real [*real*] world (and in the first instance nature) as if it deemed it an illusion . . . Its only task and accomplishment is to clarify the sense [*Sinn*] of this world, just that sense in which we all regard it as really existing and as really valid. That the world exists . . . is quite indubitable. Another matter is to understand this indubitability, which is the basis for life and science and clarify the basis for its claim.”

²⁰ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, bk. I, §43, trans. F. Kersten, *Collected Works*, vol. 2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983).

²¹ See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations V*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 89–157. See especially, §§ 42–49, 50–56 and 62.

(*i.e.*, extramental existence) of others along with intersubjective objects of knowledge or truth.²² In other words, he takes himself to have established, working from within the phenomenological attitude itself, that other knowers and the things of perception really exist extramentally as they are known.²³

The fact, however, that Husserl explicitly denies that phenomenology is idealism, and that he thinks he has established phenomenology as a realism by showing the real transcendence of others and known objects in the world is not sufficient to free him from the critique leveled by Maritain. Husserl's own claim to realism may in fact be in principle incompatible with his methodology—the *ἐποχή*. In what follows, it will be shown that this is not the case by a careful examination of Husserl's *ἐποχή* and his Aristotelian approach to phenomenology as a science.

The Natural Attitude and the Need for the *ἐποχή*

Husserl's way to phenomenology through the *ἐποχή* begins with a description of what he terms the *natural attitude* (*natürliche Einstel-*

²² The core basis of Husserl's approach to empathy, presented here, comes at *ibid.*, §§ 45–55.

²³ At *Cartesian Meditations* V, § 44, Husserl employs a "peculiar *epoche*," bracketting his belief in the other as a transcendental-ego, precisely, in order to establish the fact. Thus, he sees himself as working from within the phenomenological attitude to the claim that other persons and objects of knowledge really exist as transcending individual conscious knowing. Full explanation of this novel and enormously important philosophical work by Husserl, which would also require treatment of the role of apperception of the other, must be left for another study. George Heffernan has kindly pointed out that scholarly opinion is highly critical of whether Husserl *succeeds* in overcoming solipsism and idealism in *Cartesian Meditations* V. In accord with the end of this study, however, the text of *Cartesian Meditations* V is sufficient to show that Husserl himself does not take phenomenology as committing him to idealism and solipsism, and how he thinks he has established a phenomenological realism.

lung).²⁴ The natural attitude consists in our everyday perceptual and psychological experience of the world along with the scientific mode of studying objects. The natural attitude is first characterized as the most basic conscious (*bewußt*) experience of a world and the objects that reside in it.²⁵ Immediately experienced and intuited as “endlessly spread out in space, [and] endlessly becoming and having become in time,”²⁶ the world is taken as singular from the perspective of consciousness.²⁷ Experience of the world comes primarily through the “field of perception,” where objects are simply present to the experiencer—“on hand”—and their actual existence is taken for granted.²⁸ This experience of a world includes the animate—especially other persons with their accompanying feelings, actions, thoughts, and desires, with which they are blended and taken as immediately given.²⁹ While attention in the natural attitude is actually “turned—in acts of intuition and thought—to

²⁴ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Buch 1, § 27 and § 62. Earlier, in the 1907 lecture, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Husserl used “Geisteshaltung” meaning similarly, “mindset” or “mentality.”

²⁵ Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy I*, § 27, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, 51–53. Hereafter, the work will be referred to simply as *Ideas*. Emphasis is retained from both Husserl texts cited in this study from the translated source throughout.

²⁶ *Ideas I*, § 27, 51.

²⁷ As Robert Sokolowski says, the *world* is given in experience as a “singular tantum.” See *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 44. It is spatially and temporally limitless for the experiencer in the sense that the notion that there is some object of experience beyond it, or another world, is unintelligible: such an object/world would have to be both part of the world and not part of the world of conscious experience.

²⁸ *Ideas I*, §27, 51: “By my seeing, touching, hearing and so fourth, and in the different modes of sensuous perception, corporeal physical things with some spatial distribution or other are *simply there for me*, ‘on hand’ in the literal or figurative sense, whether or not I am particularly heedful of them and busied with them in my considering, thinking, feeling, or willing.”

²⁹ *Ibid.*

things given to us,”³⁰ it holds an interrelated temporal and perceptual potency. Acts of consciousness occur in a horizontal stream between retention and protention and they extend to objects that are partially or wholly absent or not given *now* and directly or immediately in the field of perception.³¹ Along with being mundane, the *natural attitude* also constitutes the mode of consciousness we call *positive science*, i.e., the study of objects.³² In acts of both mundane and scientific thought, consciousness is presented with the opportunity to focus in on, *categorize*, *predicate with respect to*, and *judge*³³ particular objects of experience and their relationship[s] with one another.

The natural attitude is non-reflective to the extent that, while its characteristic acts may lead to the acknowledgement that some things are “otherwise” than once supposed, and thus, not actually part of the world (e.g., hallucinations), they do not lead to a dismissal of what Husserl calls the “general-thesis” of the natural attitude (*die Generalthesis der natürlichen Einstellung*).³⁴ This “general thesis” of the natural atti-

³⁰ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, lecture I, trans. Lee Hardy (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1907), 15.

³¹ See *Ideas I*, § 27, 51–52: “Along with the ones now perceived, other actual objects are there for me as determinate, as more or less well known, without being themselves perceived or, indeed, present in any other mode of intuition. I can let my attention wander away from the writing table which was just now seen and noticed, out through the unseen parts of the room which are behind my back, to the verandah, into the garden, to the children in the arbor, etc., to all the Objects I directly ‘know of’ as being there and here in the surroundings of which there is also consciousness . . .” On retention and protention, see *Ideas I*, § 75, 175. Retention is constituted through the memory of what has just been, but no longer is actually. In contrast, protention is constituted by the anticipation of what is potentially, but not yet actually given immediately in experience.

³² Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, I, 15.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ideas I*, § 30, 57: “I find the ‘actuality’, the word already says it, as a *factually existent actuality* and also *accept it as it presents itself to me as factually existing*. No doubt about or rejection of data belonging to the natural world alters in any respect the *general positing which characterizes the natural attitude*. ‘The’ world is always there as an actuality . . .”

tude is expressed through the concepts of transcendence and immanence. What is essential to the *natural attitude*, or its “general-thesis,” is that in it consciousness always “takes its objects as transcendent,”³⁵ which is to say, as being *outside* its knowing act.³⁶ Taking the object as transcendent, as Husserl says, means that, “the known object is not really [*reell*] contained in the act of knowing.”³⁷ Through misguided reflections on this general thesis of the natural attitude, a conception of *immanence* is formulated lending itself directly to a radical skepticism. In the natural or now Cartesian attitude, *immanence* means that the object *as known* is only “really [*reell*] immanent to the experience of knowing.”³⁸ Here, the object as known is really and only “contained” in the act of knowing and does not extend to that to which it is taken to refer outside of the knowing act. In other words, the same object, which is

³⁵ Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, II, 27. Husserl says further, “All positive knowledge, prescientific and even more so scientific, is knowledge that takes its objects as transcendent . . .”

³⁶ This is the first taste of a move on Husserl’s part that appears to conflate the natural attitude with the Cartesian attitude—*i.e.*, the *cogito*. At *Ideas* I, § 28, he makes a similar claim. Having described both mundane and scientific “theorizing” modes of consciousness, Husserl goes on to say, “All of them—including the simple Ego-acts in which I, in spontaneous advertence and seizing, am conscious of the world as immediately present—are embraced by the one Cartesian expression, *cogito*. Living along naturally, I live continually in this *fundamental form of ‘active’* [*aktuellen*] *living* whether, while so living, I state the *cogito*, whether I am directed ‘reflectively’ to the Ego and the *cogitare*.” See *Ideas* I, § 28, 54. In spite of such passages—which certainly give credence to Maritain’s critique—it is clear that Husserl understands Descartes’ *cogito* as the result of a kind forced and artificial (non-rational) reflection on the nature of knowledge in the natural attitude. While there is ambiguity in the text of Husserl regarding the relation of the natural attitude to that of the Cartesian, an important distinction between the natural attitude and the Cartesian attitude is also manifest in the text of Husserl itself—if not explicitly, at least latently. Husserl’s comparison of the Cartesian approach to a form of sophism, highlighted below, is sufficient to show this fact. Also, see *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, § 93, where Husserl makes clear that Descartes’ ego is not transcendental subjectivity but rather an egological remnant of the real world in the natural attitude.

³⁷ Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, II, 27. See also, *Ideas* I, § 38.

³⁸ Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, II, 27.

supposed to be *transcendent*, is most precisely not contained *immanently* in the act of knowing—lest, this sense of *transcendence* would evaporate in contradiction. What is known is not the transcendent object itself, but a likeness or impression, which is only *immanently* contained in the supposed act of knowing.³⁹ An equivocation, thus, comes to light from reflection on the natural attitude itself between two senses of “object.” First, there is “object” taken in the sense of that which transcends subjective awareness, and then there is “object” taken as what is merely immanently present to awareness. Here, we could use Maritain’s distinction between *chose et objet*: “thing” (*chose*) designates “object” in the transcendent sense, and “object” (*objet*) designates “object” in the immanent sense.⁴⁰

Through a critical philosophical reflection on these senses of *transcendence* and *immanence*, epistemology (historically speaking) is confronted with the Humean critique of the Cartesian view of knowledge. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes utilized a method of hyperbolic or universal doubt, negating the whole of objective reality along with the sense faculties, in order to establish *res cogitans* as the indubitable foundation of all knowledge.⁴¹ Consequentially, he sep-

³⁹ Husserl, identifies another related form of transcendence assumed in the natural attitude, which is even more problematic, but beyond our scope. In a second sense, *transcendence* refers to any kind of knowledge the object which is not immediately evident, *i.e.*, where there is no immediate and pure act of seeing—where the knowledge claim goes “beyond what can be directly seen and apprehended.” *The Idea of Phenomenology*, II, 28. The phenomenological attitude, however, also removes the problematic sense of this form of transcendence. *Cf.*, Sokolowoski’s treatment of the “Perception of a cube as a paradigm of conscious experience,” which is chapter two of his *Introduction to Phenomenology*.

⁴⁰ See Maritain, *Distinguer Pour Unir*, 176–195.

⁴¹ See Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Modern Philosophy*, ed. Forrest E. Baird & Walter Kaufmann (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003). At the end of the *Meditation I*, having enlisted the imagined all powerful evil deceiver to help him accomplish a doubt that reason cannot, Descartes sums up the act of hyperbolic doubt in its scope. Denying the existence of the “sky, the air, the earth, colors, shapes, sounds, and all other objective things,” he then severs the faculties correspond-

arated consciousness from its known object or the thing. As the *cogito* is grasped clearly and distinctly at a point in the methodological enquiry where nothing else is so given, it must exist in its own immanence and, consequently, any perceptive-object it might have must be taken only as a really transcendent thing.⁴² Indeed, Descartes took this very fact as the foundation of his substance dualism.⁴³ In perception, the senses of the body, then, produce for the mind a representation of the sensed thing. The immanently perceived representation is what is grasped by the mind and known. The thing, of which the immanent perception is supposed to be a representation, must be taken as really transcendent and other than the “perception.” On this view, which is that of Descartes, and is precisely the view that Maritain is criticizing where the meaning of a thing (*objet*) is divorced from the existing thing (*chose*) itself, the distinction between “perception” and “idea” is totally dissolved. From this point of departure, idealism is the only consistent approach.⁴⁴

ing to these objects from consciousness also: “I will consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses, yet falsely believing that I have all these things.” *Ibid.*, I, 22. In the *Meditation* II, he then concluded that, even in his radical universal doubt of everything, he cannot help but reaffirm the existence of something, namely, the very “I,” the thinking thing, or *res cogitans*, which was so convinced that nothing else existed. See *ibid.*, II, 23.

⁴² This separation becomes most salient and explicit in Descartes’ conception of the soul—in his mind-body dualism—which he presents in *Meditation* VI: “[S]ince on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself insofar as I am only a thinking and not an extended being, and since on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body in so far as it is only an extended being which does not think, it is certain that this ‘I’—that is to say, my soul, by virtue of which I am what I am—is entirely and truly distinct from my body and that it can be or exist without it.” Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 50.

⁴³ This is, of course, a fallacious argument for substance dualism. Even given Descartes’ method, the ontological claim of substance dualism does not necessarily follow from the fact that the idea of the *cogito* can be conceived clearly and distinctly prior to that of the body. This is an *error abstractionis*.

⁴⁴ Hence, and actually taking a cue from John Locke, John Deely refers to modern Cartesian epistemology, in general, as the “Way of Ideas.” See, e.g., *Four Ages of Under-*

It is this understanding of objects of experience as really transcendent in relation to the *cogito* that provides the basis for Hume's skeptical critique of knowledge. If we assume *transcendence* and *immanence* to have a kind of relationship characteristic of the natural attitude, *i.e.*, one where what is claimed to be known is also claimed to be discrete and separate from the knower, where the known is then not really contained immanently in the act of knowing, then the question becomes, how do we bridge the gap between the knower and the known in such a way as to have certain knowledge about the things that we study? This is precisely the question behind Hume's formulation of skepticism in section xii of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. His answer is clear: no such bridge can be established, so that no knowledge is obtainable about things in themselves.⁴⁵ As Husserl will ask, if the essential structure of knowing is characterized by *transcendence*, how can experience "go beyond itself?"⁴⁶ Thus, we are faced

standing: The First Postmodern Survey of Philosophy from Ancient Times to the Turn of the Twenty-First Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), chapters 12 and 14; see also *id.*, *Intentionality and Semiotics: A Story of Mutual Fecundation* (Chicago: University of Scranton Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ Consider the following passages from Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §12, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): "[N]othing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and . . . the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object." Hume continues, "No man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existences, which we consider, when we say, this house and that tree, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent." His presentation of the *problema pontis* then hits its crescendo: "The mind has never anything present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connexion with objects. The supposition of such a connexion is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning."

⁴⁶ Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, I, 27. See also, *Ideas* I, § 39: "And if that is true of the material world, if the material world stands in contrast to all consciousness, and to the own-essentiality of consciousness, as 'something alien', the 'otherness', then how can consciousness become involved in it—with the material world and consequently with the whole world other than consciousness?"

with the possibilities of both skepticism and solipsism; with the fact that what we call knowledge is merely a matter of prejudice, since we can no longer get at the essence (εἶδος) of the thing in itself.⁴⁷ It is the face of this crisis that Husserl will propose phenomenology as a rigorous scientific critique of knowledge.

Phenomenology as an Aristotelian Science and the ἐποχή as Its Method

In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle conceives of science (ἐπιστήμη) in a twofold manner.⁴⁸ First, an ἐπιστήμη is a habit (ἕξις) following on the syllogistic act of demonstration (ἀπόδειξις), which grasps the cause of a fact with necessity.⁴⁹ Second, every ἐπιστήμη is an or-

⁴⁷ In the second sense of *transcendence* mentioned above, an even more difficult question arises: “[H]ow can knowledge posit something as existing that is not directly and genuinely given to it?” How, without direct apprehension of it, can I claim there is a back to the house I am currently seeing the front of, let alone that the back of the house must be in certain way? If I presuppose that the house itself is not part of the intentional act I am engaged in, I simply cannot perform these basic knowing functions. Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, I, 27. The treatment of Aristotle’s conception of science offered here follows and is taken from Chapter 2, of my “φύσις καὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν: The Aristotelian Foundations of the Human Good” (PhD diss., University of St. Thomas, Houston, Tex., 2018). For a comprehensive account of the topic, see the same work.

⁴⁸ Cf., M. F. Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge,” in *Explorations in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, vol. II (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), 115.

⁴⁹ See Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I, 2 (71b9–12): Ἐπίστασθαι δὲ οἰόμεθ' ἕκαστον ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὸν σοφιστικὸν τρόπον τὸν κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὅταν τὴν τ' αἰτίαν οἰώμεθα γινώσκειν δι' ἣν τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐστίν, ὅτι ἐκείνου αἰτία ἐστὶ, καὶ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι τοῦτ' ἄλλως ἔχειν. Or, “We think ourselves to know (Ἐπίστασθαι) a particular thing without qualification, and not in the sophistic manner which is according to accident, when we think we know the cause on account of which the thing is—that it is its cause—and that this cannot be otherwise.” And, again, see *ibid.*, I, 2 (71b16–19): Εἰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερος ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐπίστασθαι τρόπος, ὕστερον ἐροῦμεν, φημέν δὲ καὶ δι' ἀποδείξεως εἰδέναι. ἀπόδειξιν δὲ λέγω συλλογισμὸν ἐπιστημονικόν· ἐπιστημονικὸν δὲ λέγω καθ' ὃν τῷ ἔχειν αὐτὸν ἐπιστάμεθα. Or, “Now, whether there is another manner of knowing (ἐπίστασθαι), we will say later, but [for now] we say that knowledge (εἰδέναι) is

ganized body of knowledge rigorously formulated through subject–genus, principles, and conclusions.⁵⁰ Importantly, and with the possible exception of the science Aristotle called first philosophy and theology (we call it metaphysics),⁵¹ every science assumes the existence of its subject–genus,⁵² and its methodology is formulated in light of the manner in which the subject exists. Accordingly, in his comments on scientific methodology at *Physics* I, 1, Aristotle explains that, in seeking knowledge of its subject, a science proceeds from what is better known, which is the vaguely and indistinctly grasped universal/whole (καθολου) given to sense–perception or experience, through a process of de-

through demonstration. With respect to ‘demonstration’, I mean a scientific syllogism; and, with respect to ‘scientific’, I mean precisely that by which the possession is itself scientific knowledge.” Aristotle’s Greek is taken from *Aristoteles et Corpus Aristotelicum Phil.*, “Analytica priora et posteriora,” ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, repr. 1968). The translations here are my own.

⁵⁰ For the tripartite division of an organized science, see Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I, 10 (76b11–16): “πᾶσα γὰρ ἀποδεικτικὴ ἐπιστήμη περὶ τρία ἐστίν, ὅσα τε εἶναι τίθεται (ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ γένος, οὗ τῶν καθ’ αὐτὰ παθημάτων ἐστὶ θεωρητικῆ), καὶ τὰ κοινὰ λεγόμενα ἀξιώματα, ἐξ ὧν πρώτων ἀποδείκνυσι, καὶ τρίτον τὰ πάθη, ὧν τί σημαίνει ἕκαστον λαμβάνει.” Or, “For every demonstrative science is concerned with three things: (1) those things which it supposes to exist (and these are [constitutive of] the genus, concerning which it [*i.e.*, the science] inquires into the attributes belonging to it itself properly); (2) what are called the common axioms, from which primaries it demonstrates; and (3) third, the attributes, the meaning (τί) of which signifying each [attribute] it assumes.” For helpful treatment of Aristotle’s conception of science along these lines, see Michael W. Tkacz, “Albert the Great and the Revival of Aristotle’s Zoological Research Program,” *Vivarium* 45, no. 1 (2007): 30–68; and also, Rollen E. Houser, “The Place of the First Principle of Demonstration in Avicennian Metaphysics,” in *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance (PMR) Conference*, vol. 6 (Villanova: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1981), 121; and, *id.*, “Let them Suffer into the Truth: Avicenna’s Remedy for Those Denying the Axioms of Thought,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 110–111.

⁵¹ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VI, 2. Aristotle calls the science of the book πρώτη φιλοσοφία at 1026a24, and a “φιλοσοφία θεωρητικαὶ . . . θεωλογικῆ . . .” at 1026a17–20.

⁵² Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I, 10 (76b5–10): “ταῦτα γὰρ λαμβάνουσι τὸ εἶναι καὶ τοδὲ εἶναι.” Or, “For these [*i.e.*, theoretical sciences] assume the existence of the subject and that it is in a certain manner.”

fining/analyzing (διαφοῦσι) the principles (ἀρχαὶ) and elements (στοιχεῖα) of this whole, to clear and distinct knowledge of the subject through these principles and elements, which can be expressed in a proper definition.⁵³ In Aristotelian science, thus, one must already know something of the existing “whole” that one is studying in order to formulate a method for studying it—only then can one determine how to “define” it appropriately and draw demonstrative conclusions about it. Conversely, no Aristotelian science could ever begin by denying the existence of its subject in order to demonstrate its existence and/or meaning. Such an approach is in principle impossible for the Aristotelian as it entails a contradiction. Any pursuit of knowledge characterized as an Aristotelian science, thus, cannot universally negate the existence of known objects. Rather, it must presuppose the existence of its subject—genus and posteriorly formulate a method for coming to know it in accord with what is already given about its meaning. Thus, if Husserl conceives of phenomenology as an Aristotelian science, as will now be shown, it will necessarily follow that his phenomenology and its method do not universally negate the existence of known objects of experience.

In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl indicates that the methodology of any science is formulated with respect to its end.⁵⁴ The method for

⁵³ Aristotle, *Physics*, I, 1 (184a21–26): ἔστι δ' ἡμῖν τὸ πρῶτον δῆλα καὶ σαφὴ τὰ συγκεχυμένα μᾶλλον· ὕστερον δ' ἐκ τούτων γίγνεται γνώριμα τὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ διαφοροῦσι ταῦτα. διὸ ἐκ τῶν καθόλου ἐπὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα δεῖ προϊέναι· τὸ γὰρ ὅλον κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν γνωριμώτερον, τὸ δὲ καθόλου ὅλον τί ἐστι· πολλὰ γὰρ περιλαμβάνει ὡς μέρη τὸ καθόλου. Or, “And what is first manifest and clear to us, rather, are things taken together without distinction (τὰ συγκεχυμένα). Later, the elements and principles come to be known by the division of these (διαφοροῦσι). Therefore, it is necessary to advance from the universals (ἐκ τῶν καθόλου) to the particulars (ἐπὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα). For the whole (τὸ ὅλον) according to sense-perception (κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν) is better known (γνωριμώτερον), and the universal is a certain whole—for the universal embraces many things as its parts.”

⁵⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. I, trans. J. N. Findlay (Routledge: London, 2001), ch. 1, § 11: “Sciences are creations of the spirit which are directed to a cer-

obtaining scientific knowledge of a subject must be functionally and teleologically fitted to the subject itself. The end of the phenomenological method is an understanding of the possibility of conscious-knowing and its contents. Unlike Descartes, Husserl does not take the existence of this subject matter itself as provable by thought experiment and hyperbolic doubt. Rather, it is discovered through candid reflection on the natural attitude. The senses of *transcendence* and *immanence* that characterize the natural attitude, coupled with the inability of the special sciences to provide firm epistemological basis for their findings, provide *rational cause* for questioning the possibility of knowledge. This kind of questioning cannot, without the kind of forced and irrational manipulation that is illustrated by Descartes above, result in radical skepticism about our ability to know things of experience. At the same time, this enquiry can be seen as the basis for establishing a distinct subject matter (conscious-knowing) for a distinct science (phenomenology).⁵⁵ Given our natural, and reasonable tendency to take objects of experience as transcendent, a question *naturally* arises as to how we know objects themselves. Because this enquiry or puzzle (ἀπορία) about knowledge points to the *existing* subject matter of phenomenol-

tain end, and which are for that reason to be judged in accordance with that end. The same holds of theories, validations and in short every thing that we call a ‘method’. Whether a science is truly a science, or a method a method, depends on whether it accords with the aims that it strives for.”

⁵⁵ To see an ancient premonition of the problem of epistemology born in Descartes’ *Meditations*, and discovered by reflection on the natural attitude by Husserl, I would first suggest a reading of, for example, Aristotle’s *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, in which, in order to explain the process of recollection, he draws an explicit distinction between the thing itself as recollected and the concept or impression of it immanently existing in the mind. He emphasizes that the remembering is of the former and not the latter. One may further reflect and draw similar conclusions from his conception of primary and secondary being/substance (οὐσία) at *Categories* 5. Primary substances are individuals, e.g., particular horses and human beings, while secondary substances are the universal concepts, genus, species, and difference, by which primary substances are defined. Once these distinctions are drawn, it is reasonable to ask the question of how knowledge is related to its object/thing.

ogy, it can be called an ontological reduction.⁵⁶ It is motivated by the desire for true and complete scientific knowledge and recognition of the fact that the particular sciences cannot provide such completeness, since their focus is limited to the objects of experience that constitute their own subjects. Each science treats its own “marking off of being,”⁵⁷ to put it in Aristotelian terms, but does not address the subjective mode of consciousness itself which makes knowledge of these objects possible. In *Cartesian Meditations* I and *Ideas* I, Husserl’s Aristotelian approach along these lines is explicit. Husserl clearly displays phenomenology as assuming the subject of the science and proceeding to seek clarity in meaning in Aristotelian terms:

How are we then to differentiate the possibility, into which at first we have a *general insight*, and thereby mark out the determinate methodical course of a genuine philosophy, a radical philosophy that begins with what is intrinsically first? Naturally, we get the *general idea* of science from the sciences that are factually given . . . We do not yet know whether that idea is capable of becoming actualized. Nevertheless, we do have it in this form, and in a state of *indeterminate fluid generality*.⁵⁸

In perhaps his earliest formulation of the science of phenomenology at *The Idea of Phenomenology* (I, 19), Husserl had already made a similar point, noting a fundamental connection between phenomenology and metaphysics: “What is required is a science of what exists in the absolute sense. This science, which we call metaphysics, grows out of a “critique” of positive knowledge in the particular sciences.” The subject matter of phenomenology is already indicated, though in a vague, indeterminate, and general form. As Husserl explains at *Ideas* I, § 39, while

⁵⁶ See Sokolowski’s *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 52. The well formed phrase and description of this method as an “ontological reduction” appears to be Sokolowski’s, and not to have been coined by Husserl.

⁵⁷ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VI, 1 (1025b9).

⁵⁸ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* I, 8. Emphasis added.

a “concretum” or whole exists and is given in the natural attitude, it is not clear how its parts, namely, consciousness and the world, can form an essential unity or a “community of essence.” The essential structures of conscious-knowing are not yet fully expressed and known.⁵⁹ Thus, a *need* arises for a scientific investigation of the very conscious-knowing that is the fundamental possibility for knowledge and the objective sciences whatsoever.⁶⁰ Accordingly, and along Aristotelian lines of formulating a science (ἐπιστήμη), Husserl begins by positing the existence of a subject matter (γένος) known only in a vague and confused manner. Conscious-knowing, then, as the general subject of phenomenology, is parallel, for example, to Aristotle’s own setting down of “being in motion” as the general subject of physics (*Physics* I, 2, 185a12–14), and the “principle of living beings” (*De Anima* I, 1, 402a6–7) as the general subject of the science of the soul, or “the human good” as the general

⁵⁹ Most importantly, intentionality has not yet been analytically identified as the basic form of consciousness, and thus, there is not a complete definition of the general form of the subject matter which, as will be shown, is accomplished by the phenomenological reduction or ἐποχή.

⁶⁰ See Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 53. As Fr. Sokolowski points out, this need is not unlike that indicated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, IV, 1—again, the need to go beyond particular sciences to that of the whole or the science of being *qua* being. This analogy holds insofar as both phenomenology and first philosophy as conceived by Aristotle seek a science that is prior to the particular/special sciences and unifies and grounds them. While Aristotle’s concern is to found this science on a unifying subject-matter which is substance objectively speaking (see, e.g., *Metaphysics*, VI, 1), phenomenology seeks a similar unity through the subjective reality of knowledge and the relation it must have to its objects in order to know them. Interestingly, Husserl will refer to the subject-object phenomenon, or intentionality, which phenomenology studies, as a “this-here,” at times using Aristotle’s phrase for indicating a primary substance (τὸ δε τι). Not only does this express a unity of subject and object in intention—that these are moments in one concretum—but it suggests a harkening back to a philosophy grounded in our perceptual experience of *beings* in the world, like that championed by Aristotle. In Husserl, and keeping in mind that phenomenology is epistemology, or the critique of knowledge, see again, for example, the passage presented in the body immediately above, from *The Idea of Phenomenology* I, 19, where Husserl equates phenomenology and metaphysics, and sees the science as formulating its subject with reference to the already existing particular sciences.

subject of ethics and political science (*Nicomachean Ethics* I, 2, 1094a 18–22). Here, then, we have arrived at the crux of the matter: Husserl’s Aristotelian approach to phenomenology as a science requires that he assume the existence of the subject, along with some general idea as to its meaning. It is with the aim of fully formulating a definition of this subject matter and in enquiring into the appropriate methodology for treating it, that Husserl sets down the *ἐποχή* as the fitting method of phenomenology. Only by use of the *ἐποχή* can the already existing subject-genus of phenomenology, conscious-knowing, be properly divided and defined. Let us look now to the details of this method, along with its major accomplishments, in order to further show that Husserl is not guilty of committing *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*, as Maritain has charged—*i.e.*, of universally negating the existence of known objects/things in a Cartesian manner.

The *ἐποχή* and Intentionality as the Essential Structure of Conscious-Knowing

While Descartes intends the exercise of “universal doubt” to strip away all un-tested assumptions in order that an indubitable epistemic foundation may be established, such doubt, in its *negation* of reality, amounts to an un-founded assumption itself: namely, that any thing, as it is related to *res cogitans*, is actually discrete from the same, and vice versa. In fact, Descartes’ exercise of hyperbolic doubt and reduction to the *cogito* make it impossible for him to transcend the natural attitude, and the whole of his thought is caged in it (in a way that is quite unnatural). This is to fall into an idealism and a solipsism, and it is a trap, as Hume has shown, which cannot be escaped once it has been entered. To avoid these pitfalls, Husserl proposes the *ἐποχή*.

In performing the phenomenological *ἐποχή*, Husserl exhorts the practitioner, not to “universally doubt,” but to “suspend” or “neutral-

ize,” most exactly, that natural belief (δόξα) in the object as *transcendent*, as actually existing discretely from consciousness.⁶¹ We do not, then, negate our belief in the world, we simply suspend it, or view it as a superfluous supposition. In a word, “*We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude.*”⁶² By supplying all forms of transcendence with the “index of indifference” through the ἐποχή, the practitioner reduces to a state of pure phenomenological immanence and “sees,” in this case, intentional acts of knowing, which are immediately given and available for phenomenological analysis.⁶³ Accordingly, an “individual” “region of being” is acquired as the distinct subject of the science: conscious-knowing and its contents.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Ideas* I, § 33, 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*, § 32, 61.

⁶³ Thus, Husserl notes, with respect to epistemology, which he takes as phenomenology, “[I]mmanence is the necessary mark of all knowledge that comprises the critique of knowledge . . .” Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, II, 26. Again, however, this “pure immanence” is not to be taken as an idealistic divorce of the mind from things-in-themselves. How could this be the case when the express end of the ἐποχή is to suspend belief in transcendence, which such a distinction presupposes? Far from committing the phenomenologist to such a divorce, the ἐποχή actually requires that the phenomenologist remain silent on this issue—at least initially. “Phenomenological immanence” means only that the phenomenologist’s stance is such as to take all objects of experience as integral to consciousness. It does not mean, and cannot mean, that objects of experience exist only in the mind.

⁶⁴ In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl compares this subject to Aristotle’s concept of the primary sense of substance as individual or some “this here” (τόδε τι): “Every intellectual experience, indeed every experience whatsoever, can be made into an object of pure seeing and apprehension while it is occurring. And this act of seeing it is an absolute givenness. It is given as an *existing* entity, as a ‘this-here.’” Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, II, 24. Similarly, in *Ideas* I, 33, Husserl says that the “goal” of the ἐποχή is “the acquisition of a new region of being never before delimited in its own peculiarity,” *i.e.*, essence or *eidos*. Like any other region of being, what is discovered through the ἐποχή is “a region of individual being.” Husserl’s appeal to the Stagyrite’s terminology seems indicative of his own desire to locate the source of human knowledge directly in the experience of being. As opposed to taking the *cogito* or any *a priori* concepts of the understanding as his point of departure, Husserl takes the experience of consciousness, which *is*, as intentional as his point of departure, and this means that his

Clearly looking to distinguish the *ἐποχή* from the Cartesian method, Husserl has the following to say at *Ideas* I, 32: “We could now let the universal *ἐποχή*, in our sharply determinate and novel sense of the term, take the place of the Cartesian attempt to doubt universally.”⁶⁵ A few lines later, Husserl goes on to note that in employing the *ἐποχή*,

I am *not negating* this “world” as though I were a sophist; I am *not doubting its factual being* as though I were a skeptic; rather I am exercising the “phenomenological” *ἐποχή* which also *completely shuts me off from any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being*.⁶⁶

Characteristic of this suspension is not a negation of transcendent objective reality, but a complete setting aside of the question of real transcendence. This notion of suspension and setting aside is not all together foreign to natural modes of thinking. The mathematician, for example, does not need to negate the world of perceived objects in order to study mathematical objects, which he takes in abstraction from the sensuously perceived world. The natural world is, in fact, always there for him in experience, though it is not considered in his mathematical mode of consciousness.⁶⁷ So too, in the phenomenological attitude, belief in transcendence of objects of experience is suspended, bracketed, or set aside. It is simply not considered, at least initially, in this mode of thought—a fitting demand of the subject matter of this science—though it is thereby in no way negated. Such a negation, in fact, is incompatible with the very meaning of the *ἐποχή* as an attitude of “suspension,” “neutrality,” or “cessation of belief.”

Analysis of consciousness after performing the *ἐποχή* divides its being as a whole into the elements or correlated moments of νοησις

foundation incorporates all of the world as sensually perceived as the objective correlate of consciousness.

⁶⁵ *Ideas* I, § 32, 60.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, § 32, 61.

⁶⁷ Husserl uses this example at *Ideas* I, § 28, 62.

(*noesis*) and νοημα (*noema*)—thinking and what is thought of. The first fruit of the phenomenological reduction, thus, is the concept of *intentionality* grasped with necessity as the essential structure of all forms of consciousness. Having reduced to the *transcendental-phenomenological attitude* through the ἐποχή, I am first made aware of myself, not as the Cartesian *thinking I*, the isolated *cogito*, but necessarily as a “consciousness of” something—a *cogitatio* that always takes with itself a thought-object or *cogitatum*.⁶⁸ In the phenomenological attitude, the subject, my reflection on myself as the “consciousness of” something, becomes the νοησίς, and the object, which in this purely immanent transcendental and phenomenological sphere is not posited as something discrete from myself, is now termed the νοημα (the object of my thought), viz., the “something” to which the “consciousness of” is directed and must be correlated. Νοησίς and νοημα, then, exist, in this properly reduced sphere, as *moments* to each other, as parts in singular wholes or *concreta*.⁶⁹

That Husserl does not intend the ἐποχή as the universal negation of the existence of objects of experience is clear from his formulation of phenomenology as a rigorous science. Through the ontological reduction, Husserl formulates the subject matter of phenomenology (conscious-knowing), which already exists as a given datum capable of rigorous analysis. Through phenomenological analysis disclosing the essence of conscious-knowing, the basic structure of consciousness is

⁶⁸ In *Cartesian Mediations*, Husserl uses the Latin terminology, modifying Descartes’ *Meditations*, which is fitting as the set of lectures was given at the Sorbonne in honor of the Frenchman. In *Ideas*, he prefers the Greek terms.

⁶⁹ *Ideas I*, see § 88. Also, see Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 60–61. In a more comprehensive treatment of Husserl’s phenomenology, phenomenology as eidetic analysis would need to be treated. In the phenomenological attitude, the phenomenologist performs eidetic analyses, disclosing the essences of noetic-noematic wholes. Presentation of eidetic analysis had to be limited, here, to the Husserl’s eidetic analysis of conscious-knowing itself as a noetic-noematic whole.

then disclosed as intentional—as a noetic-noematic concretum.⁷⁰ It must be understood thus, that phenomenology presupposes the existence of its subject matter (conscious-knowing) and that, by way of analysis, it defines this subject matter in such a manner as to include in its essence both the knowing (νοησίς) and the known (νοηµα). The existence of objects of experience or things is, thus, not negated, even though judgment about the real transcendence of these objects is initially suspended by the ἐποχή. Human consciousness, thus, is not foundationally severed from things, and a properly philosophical account can be given of knowledge.⁷¹

It must be said at this point that the phenomenological method and its discovery of intentionality certainly do not in themselves establish the transcendent existence of objects/things of experience, which is necessary for the robust sense-realism espoused by St. Thomas Aquinas, Jacques Maritain, and Karol Wojtyła. No, it is just such transcendence that the method is initially intended to put out of consideration so that the structure of conscious-knowing as the subject of phenomenology could be known definitively in its correlated moments of νοησίς and νοηµα. At the very same time, however, this suspension also requires a non-commitment to idealism.⁷² All Husserl's method commits him to is not considering the possibility of real transcendence, at least initially. By no means is he committed by it to the claim that objects of consciousness are not transcendent things. Far from it, he must be open to the possibility of real transcendence if he is going to successfully employ the ἐποχή. In short, and at the outset, if one is still asking ques-

⁷⁰ It is not my intention here to reduce phenomenology to epistemology, although this is its primary thrust. Even in the *Idea of Phenomenology* lectures of 1907, Husserl is already clear that the aim of phenomenology is not only epistemological, but also metaphysical.

⁷¹ *Ideas* I, § 32, 61.

⁷² Cf. Hall, "Was Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?"

tions about the real extra-mental existence, the transcendence or immanence of objects of experience—if one is still asking questions the answers to which would commit him to an idealist or a realist position—then one is still operating in the Cartesian attitude and he has not yet entered into the phenomenological attitude. For this reason, interpreters of Husserl's *ἐποχή* who claim that this method is an idealism have neither understood nor employed this method. Indeed, and as Wojtyła holds, the phenomenological method and its initial discovery goes quite a long way toward showing the absurdity of an idealist position following on the Cartesian *cogito*: if conscious-knowing is always constituted by a knower-known relationship, any position that begins by severing knowing from the known object is already un-reasonable as self-contradictory.

Conclusion

Husserl's phenomenological method does not succumb to the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος* that Maritain and some phenomenologists hear whispered in its inception. Husserl does not intend the *ἐποχή* to universally negate the existence of all objects of experience. The bulk of work here was to show that Husserl's formulation of phenomenology as an Aristotelian science requires that it openly take for granted the existence of its subject matter—conscious knowing. Moreover, this subject matter includes as part of its essential structure the noematic, *i.e.*, the known. This approach to phenomenology does not commit Husserl to idealism. Indeed, its discovery of intentionality provides a strong foundation for showing the absurdity of idealism, which started in modernity with the *cogito*—an unreasonable severing of consciousness from what is known. Moreover, the *ἐποχή* leaves Husserl open to a full-blown realism, wherein known objects may also be known to have existence which transcends the knower. As was briefly mentioned at the outset, here, Hus-

serl himself strives for this robust realism in *Cartesian Meditations V*. The *ἐποχή*, therefore, is foundationally compatible with St. Thomas' sense-realism along with Maritain's critical realism, and the Phenomenological-Thomism of Karol Wojtyła.



On the Foundational Compatibility of Phenomenology and Thomism

SUMMARY

Jacques Maritain criticized Husserl's phenomenological method—the *ἐποχή*—as being incompatible with the realism of St. Thomas Aquinas. Maritain equated phenomenology with idealism, holding that it universally negates the existence of known objects as things in the world. Not surprisingly, then, a tendency has arisen in the thought of Thomists commenting on Karol Wojtyła's phenomenological-Thomism to distance Wojtyła's method from that of Husserl. However, since Wojtyła himself saw fit to appropriate the phenomenological method, Thomists will do well to reevaluate Husserl's *ἐποχή*. This study shows that Husserl's phenomenology is formulated as an Aristotelian science, consciously presupposing the *existence* of its subject matter and not universally negating the existence of known objects as things in the world. The *ἐποχή*, thus, is compatible with the realism of the Angelic Doctor, and the phenomenological-Thomism of Karol Wojtyła stands on firm realist ground.

KEYWORDS

Edmund Husserl, Karol Wojtyła, Thomism, phenomenology, epoche, idealism, realism.

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