

TOWARDS THE ESSENCE OF THE REFLECTION ABOUT EVERYTHING

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Phenomenology is one of the major strands to existential philosophy and existential therapy, but its history and successive definitions are not well known. Its waters came into contact with the influence of the existential writers: Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, on the one hand - and met with the more ontological philosophers on the other, such as Kant and Hegel. Phenomenology is also a critique of the rationalists, eg Galileo, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. I believe that if current users of existential-phenomenological theory were more aware of the successive definitions of phenomenology, they would be better informed in making decisions when they apply it. I provide some historical information and ask readers to make sense of it in the context of making existential-phenomenological therapy. As phenomenology precedes the creation of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology of existence, the basis for existential therapy, the (re)creation of a phenomenology for psychotherapeutic healing is an aim.

First of all, some brief definitions of the word phenomenology prior to its major usage by Edmund Husserl. Next, Franz Brentano's position must be described so the link between the movement's instigator and its developers can be understood. The next sections define the major senses of phenomenology as given by Husserl, followed by some of its inconsistencies and problems. Finally, the practical consequences are noted for therapists. The work of Spiegelberg, briefly a student of Husserl, is a source for applying this approach to therapy (Spiegelberg, 1972, 1982).

Phenomenology before Brentano and Husserl

It seems that the first person to have used the word phenomenology was the German philosopher Johann Lambert in 1764, a contemporary of Immanuel Kant. Lambert described a new theory about the illusory aspects of human experience, which he named phenomenology in his book *Neues organon oder gedanken uber die erforschung und bezeichnung des wahren und der unterscheidung von irrtum und schein* (new basic instrument...). This was also a theory of

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appearances that was fundamental to all empirical knowledge. Kant also used the word, but to contrast the study of appearances to the study of things in themselves, the noumena. In 1786 in *Metaphysische anfangsgrunde der naturwissenschaft*, Kant believed that all humans can ever know are phenomena, the appearances of objects, people and events.

Georg Hegel's first major philosophical work printed in 1807, was the *Phanomenologie des geistes*. *Phenomenology of spirit* describes Hegel's belief that the mind first perceives itself as an appearance, but through proper development can come to be aware of itself, precisely as it is in itself. Here phenomenology was the science of knowing the mind as it is in itself, by studying the ways in which it appears.

By the mid-1850s the word phenomenon became synonymous with the observation of a state of affairs. Phenomenology was used in the sense of a purely descriptive study of any given subject. For instance, in 1856 Moritz Lazarus in his *Leben der Seele* commented that phenomenology describes mental life, whereas psychology seeks causal explanations. Sir William Hamilton in his *Lectures on metaphysics* (1858), used phenomenology of the mind or "phaenomenal psychology" to mean the purely descriptive observation and generalisation about the mind. Similarly, Eduard von Hartmann's 1878 *Phenomenology of moral consciousness* was an attempt to provide a complete description of morality and ethics.

Franz Brentano

Brentano became a Roman Catholic priest in the Dominican order in 1864 and worked as a lecturer in the history of philosophy and psychology. Because he could not accept the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope, he left the church in 1873. He was promoted to professor of philosophy at Wurzburg University and later took up a post as a Privat Dozent at Vienna University. Researchers have documented how Freud's cathexis, the channelling of psychic energy toward goals and wish-fulfilment, most likely first came to light as Brentano's intentionality (Ellenberger, 1970, p 541).

Often when authors precis Brentano's output they state that he contributed intentionality, also called mental or intentional in-existence, to psychology in the work *Psychologie von empirischen standpunkt* in 1874 (Brentano 1973). In fact he revived intentionality which had previously been part of the philosophy of Aristotle and the Scholastics. Intentionality receives its

name from the intentional in-existence (existing within) of consciousness. The word comes from the Latin noun, intentio, an effort or exertion of the mind. Intentionality has several important implications. Firstly, what exists for humans are realms of interhuman realities which are made of our interpretations about what exists. Only humans have the ability to perceive and interpret something or someone. Secondly, the epoche is implied. The existence of what another thinks or feels is accepted, and not judged or disputed.

However, Brentano's work covered almost every aspect of philosophy including psychology, morality, and truth. Evidence, categories, logic and theology were also touched on. However, the areas that are important for existentially and phenomenologically oriented therapists are his writings on the objects of mental phenomena, morality and ethics; with evidence, truth and categorisation as lesser concerns. Brentano distinguishes lived experience from the biological or economic aspects of human existence, by the phenomena of perception through the senses, thinking, judging, loving and hating. Barclay comments that Brentano did not rule out the possibility of the unconscious, but he thought that psychologists should first try other hypotheses to explain the phenomena at hand (Barclay, 1964, p 19).

For Brentano all consciousness can be put into three categories: representation, judgement, and love or hate, which are three modes of intentionality (consciousness or mind). Intentionality is the act of interpreting-and-perceiving, the act of relating to, always being consciousness of some meaning. Belief is a belief that... Anger is anger about something. I might believe something which is not the case, or I can be angry about something which has not actually happened. People can think of things which do not exist and are not currently present in the observable world. "Reference to a content", "direction upon an object", and "immanent objectivity" were equivalent terms for intentionality. The three ways in which people are intentionally related to someone or something are:

1. Representations, ideas and cognitions are the objects of judgements or desires. They are the bases for 2 and 3 below.
2. Judgements are part of Brentano's non-propositional belief that acceptance or rejection, and, affirmation or denial, are the key aspects of judgement. In a particular context and moral order, he argued that there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of judging. In judging we affirm or deny that something exists. To judge is to take a stand with respect to an object.

3. The phenomena of love and hate, being pleased or displeased, occur towards the object of an idea. These emotional phenomena also include the will and are similar to 2 above. Love and hate can also be deemed appropriate or inappropriate by reference to some moral order.

Edmund Husserl

It was Husserl and his colleagues in the phenomenological movement who developed Brentano's "descriptive psychology", and "descriptive phenomenology". Descriptive psychology was hoped to be an exact science that could find laws that are universally and absolutely True. The phenomenological movement was based mainly at Gottingen and Munich universities. Perhaps its other best known protagonist is Max Scheler, a social philosopher, but there were at least a dozen major contributors. Martin Heidegger was also part of the same group.

The participants within this movement felt that their method was the best and only correct way of philosophizing. Their motto was "*Zu den sachen*", which has the overt meaning of "To the things" and implies "*Zur sache*", which means "Get down to business". Phenomenology is anti-reductionistic (holistic) and deplored "nothing but-ing" when a subject is reduced to *nothing but* the interaction of a few principles. Reductionism destroys real complexity and uncertainty. Phenomenology is also anti-positivistic, anti-causal and anti-psychologistic (which meant that it is against the view that all knowledge is based in psychology). It aims to be presuppositionless and take nothing for granted. Nothing was above close scrutiny. Phenomenology describes by providing data. Psychology explains by creating hypotheses for testing. Husserl's first conception of phenomenology was an a priori "science" which was linked to descriptive psychology. Husserl was a man with a mission of grand design. Phenomenology is both:

... an a priori science... which is intended to supply the basic instrument for a rigorously scientific philosophy ... to make possible a methodical reform of all the sciences.

Husserl, 1971, p 77.

Edmund Husserl's definitions evolved throughout the course of his writings and it is worth recording his reconsiderations. Husserl began a career as a mathematician, receiving his

doctorate in 1881. He moved to Vienna and attended Brentano's lectures from 1884 to 1886. This meeting galvanised Husserl into action and he devoted the rest of his life to his vocation. For him, philosophy was a science in which he was a "perpetual beginner" who was searching for the absolute foundation for human knowledge, which he dubbed the "Archimedean point" following Descartes. He felt this movement was the only genuine philosophy. It was a science of perception and subjectivity, which later focused on essences, dynamic factors and perception. Phenomenology was the science of essences and their necessary relations. The eidetic reduction of Husserl was used to find essences, universals and categories of being. This process was independent of induction, and is therefore a priori knowledge. Phenomenology has universal applications and was believed to be the starting point for all other disciplines.

Husserl's first publication in 1891 was on the philosophy of mathematics during his influence by Brentano. It was not until 1900 that the first volume of his *Logical investigations, Logische untersuchungen, Prolegomena zur reinen logik* defined "pure logic" as the theoretical science that was independent of empirical knowledge and centred on finding universal categories, possible truths and facts (Husserl 1970a). Pure logic is the pure formal theory of meanings. In this work Husserl qualifies phenomenology as "pure" if it distinguishes subjective from objective, and ignored biological and contextual influences. The second volume in 1901 covered the areas of logic, meaning, judgement and intentionality. Phenomenology was established in this work as being free from all presuppositions of actual existence, particularly psychic existence. Husserl also thought that one could be an objective onlooker on one's own subjectivity to such a degree that one ceased to participate in it.

During 1907 Husserl gave a series of lectures entitled *Die idee der phanomenologie* where he first presented the transcendental-phenomenological reduction (Husserl 1964). This must be carried out before the work of transcendental phenomenology can be begun. This is the shift from an ordinary non-reflective engagement with the world, to a reflective one towards one's own experiences about it. The word *epoche* was first used by the Sceptics and means abstention, but is used in the sense of suspension of belief in the existence of something being described. Spiegelberg comments that it is not used wholly synonymously with Husserl's use of phenomenological reduction, (Spiegelberg, 1982, p 743).

In *Philosophy as rigorous science* of 1911 (*Philosophie als strenge wissenschaft*) Husserl commented that phenomenology and psychology must be distinguished (Husserl 1981). The

method of reduction was first published in 1913 in *Ideen zu einer reinen phänomenologie und phänomenologischen philosophie* (Husserl 1982). The lectures were first published posthumously as the *General introduction to pure phenomenology*. In this work he pointed out that it did not matter if essences were about real or imaginary things. They and universals were observable objects that could be denoted. At this time he referred to his discipline as an eidetic science of "material" essences. The definition of "pure" phenomenology changed to become a description of particular objects in the context of the world at hand. Schmitt notes two senses of the word "act" in intentional acts. In *Logical Investigations* it is used to describe the perception of the world as it is. After 1913 it refers to actions in the creation of a perception of something and active interpretation of the world (Schmitt, 1971, p 25/6). Husserl had difficulty in defining his terms and the method of epoche. His writings in the early years proclaimed the existence of a transcendental ego (also called pure transcendental consciousness) that could be found by the epoche. When the transcendental ego is obtained everything in the world becomes an object and is made available for being known in truth. Some of his collaborators did not agree with these findings and complained that they were distractions from an open-ended quest for truth.

During the years 1919 to 1934, approximately, Husserl believed that his discovery of the transcendental ego was the soul. A soul which is individual and apart from the mind and physical body, and would remain even if the world were destroyed. This was reiterated in his *Formale und transcendental logik* of 1929 where the transcendental ego existed absolutely, and all else was relative to it (Husserl 1969). Also, true reality could no longer be defined by a single transcendental ego, but only for a community of intersubjective transcendental egos. This view was elaborated in a series of lectures given in Paris in 1929 entitled *Cartesian meditations* (Husserl 1960).

It was not until a lecture in 1935 that Husserl spoke of a new set of conclusions. These were published a year later under the title of *Die krisis der europäischen wissenschaften und die transcendentale phänomenologie* (Husserl 1970b). He now stated that the transcendental ego, revealed by the epoche, is co-relative with the world. Husserl's final definition of phenomenology was no longer the description of a separate realm of being, but the description of, and reflection on, the ways in which the lived world, the *lebenswelt* comes to be. Phenomenology must find the criteria for the agreement of definitions and their adequate description. Phenomenology concerns itself with the necessary conditions for the coherency and

adequacy of lived experience. The *lebenswelt* becomes the single focus for phenomenological investigation. As for the "objective" sciences, they can only be understood in relation to the *lebenswelt*. We have Maurice Merleau-Ponty to thank for bringing out this last emphasis of Husserl's career by studying his unpublished writings.

Husserl's phenomenologies

Husserl created five areas for phenomenology. The starting place is mundane phenomenology as Spiegelberg calls it (Spiegelberg, 1982, p 145). Mundane phenomenology explores "the phenomena of the world before subjecting them to the transcendental reduction", (Ibid, p 750). Its brief is to concentrate on "logic and formal ontology, ethics, psychology" and other areas of the everyday.

Second, is the eidetic phenomenology of "universal essences, their structure and relations, based on the eidetic reduction", (Ibid, p 750). Eidetic phenomenology defines the core methods of direct intuition and essential insight. The general agreement within the movement was that phenomenology is the description of phenomena by direct intuition, *anschauung*, literally view or opinion, but used in the sense of contemplating and exploring a phenomenon in lived experience (Ibid, p 738). This core sense of phenomenology as eidetic (the study of essences) is given as: "...direct intuition... as the source and final test of all knowledge, to be formulated as faithfully as possible in verbal descriptions", and essential insight into "essential structures as a genuine possibility and a need of philosophical knowledge", (Ibid, 5/6). Essences were contrasted to what is ordinarily observable; universal Truths to perception by humans.

Thirdly, "synchronic" phenomenology is my name for the static study of phenomena at any given moment (Ibid, p 750). It is in contrast to "diachronic" phenomenology (my name) for Husserl's "temporal" or "genetic" phenomenology that studies how experiences are laid down in sequence in consciousness. Its role is to "determine the structural order according to which the constituting acts are built upon one another", (Ibid, p 130).

Finally, transcendental phenomenology takes its name as the study based on the transcendental-phenomenological reduction (Ibid, p 112). Transcendental phenomenology is the exploration and description of this previously hidden realm of existence opened up for phenomenologists' consciousnesses made pure by the method. One of Husserl's key terms was the *psychological epoche* - the suspension of all objective, empirical and factual claims for the

purpose of looking again at the actual experiences of consciousness in their pristine entirety. This realm of being is not available to empirical observation and is only perceived by eidetic intuition, which means the seeing, hearing or feeling by an individual, which is not available to another. The epoche became an attitude of neutrality, observer non-participation and self-restraint which enabled a more "fundamental" consciousness to be experienced. Two aspects of the epoche were self perception in a world; and the perception of all else.

Spiegelberg uses the terms transcendental and phenomenological interchangeably with that of bracketing, but this term is not always synonymous with that of epoche (Ibid, p 743). Furthermore, "...what is transcendental about phenomenology is that it suspends... all transcendent claims (i.e., assertions about reality other than that of consciousness itself)", (Ibid, p 112/3). This quote says to me that all realities are intersubjective (both intrapsychic and interpersonal) and within our consciousnesses. No reality can be perceived outside of consciousness. Another Husserlian term, the *transcendental-phenomenological epoche* is not participating in one's automatic and natural attitude of presupposing, doubting or affirming the existence of something, but is an attempt to see the world for oneself (whatever that is).

A coherent definition for therapy

I believe that it is possible to concentrate on eidetic phenomenology as the best example for therapy and to mark out its boundaries, even though it was in a constant state of flux throughout Husserl's writings. Also, it is the nature of the discipline to change and check itself for consistency. Phenomenology seeks to expose how consciousness imposes or projects its own structures, processes and distortions on what is usually "outside" of its sphere of influence. Bracketing out current understandings of *lebenswelt* is done in an attempt to understand it. The epoche aims for new information about these distorting processes by trying not to employ them. There are two parts of Husserl's definitive 1927 paper that I would like to focus on. First of all in his original circumlocution, the phenomenologist:

... must inhibit every co-performance of objective positing operative in unreflective consciousness, and... in the mode of judging, where what is posited is the world as it exists for him purely and simply. The specific experience of this house, this body, of a world as such, is and remains, however, according to its

own essential content and thus inseparably, experience "of this house", this body, this world; this is so for every mode of consciousness which is directed towards an object.

...The method of phenomenological reduction... consists (1) in the methodical and rigorously consistent *epoche* of every objective positing in the psychic sphere, both of the individual phenomenon and of the whole psychic field in general; and (2) in the methodically practised seizing and describing of the multiple "appearances" as appearances of their unitary objects and their unities as unities of component meaning... accruing to them each time in their appearances.

Husserl, 1971, p 80.

I believe these two sections are key elements which define existential-phenomenological therapy. My rendition of the first quotation is that phenomenologists must inhibit all objectivity and not judge what they investigate: they must accept it. (Maybe this is where Carl Rogers got this principle from via his reading of Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Buber (Spiegelberg, 1972, p 148)). The second quotation defines the method of the *epoche* to be employed. The *epoche* means we abstain from all affirmation and denial, and all psychological acts concerning beliefs. More of this in the final section below.

Eidetic phenomenology (the search for universal essences) aims to find the implied criteria within the intentional acts of everyday life. It is a type of reflection or meditation on unfamiliar aspects of the familiar. It makes conscious what may have previously been out of awareness (preconscious or "unconscious"). It reflects on what things could mean. Its aim is to reduce the amount of superfluous and irrelevant presuppositions. Any premise must be tested by examining its phenomena with unbiased an eye as possible. These phenomena are only revealed by the phenomenological method. It acknowledges a need to break out of closed circles of definition, and find more certain, independent criteria for adequate and cohesive descriptions.

Phenomenology is the prior discipline to psychology because reliable and relatively unbiased data may be found, prior to any identification of causes and hypotheses. Eidetic phenomenology is the study of essences and their definitions. It uses reflection to describe non-

reflective experience. It bridges subjective experiencing, and, the objective experienced, by the concept of the world, a sphere of involvement or engagement. It aims to describe both the knower and the known so that both maybe more clearly distinguished. Phenomenology aims to find the essence of phenomena as they are perceived by another person. It asks about the nature of beliefs, emotions and the will.

Schmitt's reading of *Husserliana* found the method of reflection defined twice as the shift from everyday non-reflective engagement to **the reflective experiencing of everything** (Schmitt, 1971, p 19). Thus the great similarities of free floating association and free association to phenomenological practise. Any experience is an example to be explored in an open-ended fashion. Free association allows the attention to wander to any subject and so breaks up rigid associations. In this way new material and interpretations of the same memories, emotions and situations are facilitated. Psychological change may take place when new gestalts occur in these free acts of reflection and contemplation. They are spontaneous changes of meaning which take place in the freedom and constraint of the therapeutic hour. Psychological change is inseparable from behavioural and emotional change, so these aspects also become manifest in the lives of clients.

Phenomenological statements are about the phenomena discovered in such meditations or reflections. Phenomena are reduced to verbal descriptions of essences, as defined above, which are directly experienced and lived by a person (the self-validating, personal truth, or reality of that person) which have been revealed by the method. At any moment, or through a span of time, these phenomena may not be observable by anyone else, but still must be reasonably coherent and appropriate according to the dictates of language and grammar, within the normal usages and tolerances of that language.

Phenomenological statements can be defined with the help of Richard Schmitt's exposition by reference to the key words intentional, empirical, a priori, phenomena, and necessarily true (Schmitt, 1967). These statements are empirical in the sense that they are revealed by a regular experimental method and so may be practised by others. But they are non-empirical in the sense that the interpretations and statements are not required to be agreed or observed by another. The statements are a priori in the sense that they are non-empirical and necessarily true (no matter what happens to be the actual state of affairs in the world).

To round up one of Schmitt's conclusions: originally, not all phenomenologists agreed

that phenomena were intuited essences (perceived by one person). Those who disagreed with this criteria for the definition of phenomena, believed that the epoche was the only method which could define phenomena. But the epoche alone is not sufficient, as the nature of intentionality also needs clarifying. So, the criteria for the coherence-intelligibility-adequacy-of-meaning of intentional acts requires further clarification.

According to eidetic phenomenology we can describe or distinguish the criteria of identity, for knowing what makes an X an X. This is the search for the crucial characteristics or essences that define a phenomena, and so mark it out from all it is not. It follows that an adequate description can only be made with respect to some criteria, which must also be made known (rather than being implicit and unknown). What is being sought is the relation: this specific x is a kind of X, and has sufficient X-ness, to make it a worthy example within the verbal category X. During this search it is found that some features are more fundamental than others. The method of finding essences is a meditation on the essence of both the example x, in the past remembered now, and whether it is correct to call it an X, according to the current definitions of X. How does it become interpreted as a x? How did you first learn to recognise an experience as being an x when you were a child? And, does this structure current choices and abilities? Phenomenological thinking can ask questions like: When is "love" not love? When is a marriage not a marriage? And, how may I best help this client?

On a similar note, Gurswitch also comments on how a figure and ground are defined (Gurswitch 1985). According to my reading he seems to suggest that there is a systemic process of co-influencing, and co-creation in the existence of figure and ground. This line of thought can be extended to include the question "what makes a figure and a ground?" The relation between the two is interdependent, such that figures do not exist without grounds, and no combination of figure and ground exists without some dynamic succession of meanings. Also, what happens when attention is given to the figure-ground constellation, and all else "disappears" into insignificance? The criteria for an adequate description of essences is required, ie adequate for what stage in the discussions, by what criteria, and for whom?

Some inconsistencies

In opposition to phenomenology I point out that there are at least four inconsistencies. Firstly, I claim that all knowledge and perception is perspectival. There are no non-perspectival

viewpoints. We are children of the particular social a priori of the lebenswelt that makes us, and through which we know others. The social a priori prevents us from ever seeing things or people in themselves. There is always an interpretative system already in place. Also a conundrum exists:

No description about appearances is absolutely True.

The above description is not absolutely True either.

Therefore, all descriptions are relatively true

(in agreement with someone and against another).

Also, if I privilege no perception as being above further investigation. Why do I privilege this? Why not privilege some perceptions as being correct?

Secondly, it is impossible to bracket anything fully out of existence so it no longer influences the on-going process of discussion and clarification. So why attempt it in the first place? It is impossible to set aside what is already a part of us and investigate a subject, entirely separate from others and the world. There are no fully open minds, and the ones we have contain blind spots. Self-reflexivity played a part in Husserl's redevelopments of his method as phenomenologists looked for blind spots in themselves and their method.

A third inconsistency is that phenomenology does not strip away the presuppositions of its own method, or of its quest for more dependable statements that are "better", more coherent descriptions. The assumptions of phenomenology are its system: First, consciousness is intentional, as are all its acts. Second, consciousness is assumed as having subject, noesis, noema, and object. Third, the human social and physical worlds are only known by a series of intentional acts. The doctrine of intentionality is the assumption on which phenomenology is based. Yet strictly, no explanatory concept may be given precedence over others.

Fourth, descriptions and definitions are inherently reductive, so phenomenology can reduce experience to a description in words, the basis for any alleged knowledge. But experience is more than words. Words are the medium for describing lived experiences, and when two people speak, they may come to agree that their perceptions are similar. But there is certainly no

proof or method by which we can say that their experiences are actually the same. In a sense, speech alienates or dissociates the speaker from lived events because speech is always *spoken about* them. The experience in itself never speaks.

Some consequences for therapy

There are many practical consequences of this discussion for everyday life and the practice of psychotherapy. I will hurriedly list some of these without linking them more cohesively to the prior body of text due to lack of space. The type of interventions phenomenology justifies start with accepting clients' beliefs and personhood without criticism (Husserl, 1971, p 80). They require self-acceptance, and the desire and ability to introspect.

Heidegger adapted phenomenology and founded existential philosophy. Boss, Sartre and Binswanger applied it in creating three brands of existential therapy. Heidegger insisted that the talking cure is striving towards authenticity (finding oneself) and moving away from inauthenticity (loosing oneself). This is only part of the legacy for existential therapists.

It is not possible to categorically define what something means, and, morally or ethically, it is not permissible to tell another what to do. Every meaning exists with respect to some stated or unstated semantic and moral order which people usually hold out of awareness. It seems to me that the whole point of entering a reflective state is to search for what is normally assumed as being the "natural" or "automatic", non-conscious, not-chosen items that need to be brought into the discussion and relationship with the therapist. An event, feeling, person, memory, or oneself, can be seen to have a thousand changing or vague meanings when reflected on in this way: Also, the more you look, the more you will see. As criticism and explication are open ended, nobody can have the last word.

Both therapists and clients can be wrong. Their meanings can be affirmed or denied, and may exist or not, and this leads to the acceptance and rejection of clients without proper consideration. Also, just because someone has had therapy does not mean they have become infallible and gifted with a clearer view of self or other. In fact there is no such thing as clearer or better views of realities, just different ones.

The method of bracketing and reflection also implies questioning. This is not done in the spirit of an inquisition, but that of inquisitiveness. Therapists can assume nothing about clients. Therapists question self and clients. Clients question self, therapist and others. Supervisors

question therapists... This questioning of one's own reactions produces insights, realisations and change.

In phenomenology guidelines have been provided, but in the end, individual practitioners can make up their own minds about how to interpret the fine details. One of the ground rules of meeting with clients are for therapists to bracket themselves out of the meetings in some ways, yet to be very present in others. The influence of therapists could be to help clients clarify their own material so they can decide what to do. Some method of distinguishing what belongs to oneself, or is a valid perception of another is required. Therapists supply both methods and attitudes so this might be achieved. Remaining at the descriptive level is part of the main principles of phenomenological therapy. If clients want to hypothesize about causality, or jump to conclusions then that is their choice.

Conclusion

Phenomenology, the reflection on human worlds, raises more questions than it solves. It is necessary for the criticism of alleged knowledge, the ultimate source of which is *lebenswelt*. These worlds of culture, language and meanings are as alive as we are. Likewise, society contains the traditions and customs of all manner of the "they" who try to impose on us their methods of making us into people we are not.

Phenomenology serves to clarify obfuscations, and can also obfuscate clarity. It can accept the unusual or reject the familiar. Whoever seeks to be in the place of the psychotherapist must be able to satisfy this role, its implications and its reasonable expectations. Phenomenology rules out inflexibility and rigidity in favour of searching, taking a journey which goes in a changing direction. There is an inherent problem in reducing being to speech. Therapy is not just finding *le mot juste*, but of being true to, and creating, one's own essence via the relationship with a therapist. It is partly a process of getting a second opinion on yourself. A problem of describing one's life is that we inescapably are never able to tell the whole truth because there is no Absolute Truth to tell. The Truth of the matter is that I swear not to tell the truth, the whole truth or anything like the truth.

There are too many factors at work to isolate some and not others. Nobody knows how people become who they are, how they stay the same or change. Nobody can prove to us how we should behave with others of different kinds. Yet, how can we be more of who we desire to be?

May be phenomenological investigation can help us start again.

The final word must go to Husserl: Phenomenology demands its followers must "foreswear the ideal of a philosophic system and yet as a humble worker in community with others, live for a perennial philosophy", (Husserl, 1971, p 90).

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