

## **A Brief History of Husserl's Phenomenology**

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### **Structured Abstract:**

**Purpose:** Edmund Husserl was born in what is now the Czech Republic on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1859. Phenomenology is the reading of structures of consciousness as knowledgeable from the first person point of view. Husserl called his phenomenology 'transcendental philosophy'. Husserl considers transcendental or pure, phenomenology as a special kind of study of the structures of consciousness, and from this revision we get an outcome which is "purified" of – all empirical or naturalistic hypothesizes. Husserl believed that phenomenology could give a solid basis for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, and could set up philosophy as a rigorous science. The method of epoche or reduction is the main method of Husserl's phenomenology. The main purpose of this paper is to know the main feature of Husserl's phenomenology, presupposition less philosophy which is the foundation of this world.

**Design / Methodology / Approach:** This research paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. The study materials are collected from various kinds of books and journals. In this paper attempt has been taken to analysis the key-issue of the fundamental themes, concerning around the basic feature of the phenomenology Edmund Husserl.

**Findings:** The researcher found that phenomenology can provide a concrete foundation for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, and also set up philosophy as a rigorous science.

**Originality / Value:** How Husserl searches the ultimate truth, essence of consciousness, which is the basis of this world.

**Keywords:** Phenomenology, Method of Epoche, Essence of Consciousness, Intersubjectivity, Intentionality.

**Paper Type:** Theoretical Research Paper.

### **Introduction**

Husserl is unanimously accepted as a transcendental philosopher. Husserl tried to establish a scientific ideality of philosophy. According to Husserl science should be rigorous and phenomenology only gives this scientific method to philosophy, which discovers the essence through intuition. Husserl puts forward the theory that the objective of philosophy is to describe the data of consciousness with an unbiased or impartial approach, and by ignoring

all metaphysical and scientific theories, with the aim to accurately describe and analyze the data, which is collected by the mind and human senses. He tries to give a pure analytical explanation of human experiences. In this context Husserl mentions the freedom from presuppositions. The students of Husserl call his phenomenology the study of “the things themselves”.

### **Review of Literature**

Highlights of few past research works on the present topic are being incorporated in this section of the work:

Husserl, Edmund, (1931) in his book, *Cartesian Meditation* – (D, Cairns, Trans,) deals about moral and existential crisis of the society of that time and also mentions philosophical relevance for scientific progress and overcome the political crisis. It introduces Husserl's important notion of the 'life-world' – the pre-given, familiar environment that includes both 'nature' and 'culture' – and presents the most excellent introduction to his phenomenology as both method and philosophy. Husserl provides not only a history of philosophy but a philosophy of history. This book is very helpful to understand the general concept of phenomenology and also the philosophical thinking of Husserl.

Mohanty. J. N (2002) in his book, *Explorations in Philosophy - western Philosophy* (Gupta, Bina Ed,) provide a clear idea about Husserl's phenomenology. This book is collection of twenty-one essays written by the renowned philosopher J. N. Mohanty. Ten essays are directly concerned with Edmund Husserl's philosophy. This book provides a clear idea of Husserl's phenomenology. We find from this book the clear idea about Husserl's phenomenological method, theory of Husserl's intentionality etc. This book also mentions the philosophical thinking of Kant, Heidegger, Sartre, MerleauPonty and Brentano. It contains a clear and critical concept which forms the foundation of the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl like essence, meaning, noema, etc. So this book gives a general account of Husserl's philosophy.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this research paper are-

- i. To know the general idea of phenomenology.
- ii. To know the Husserl's concept of transcendental phenomenology.

- iii. To find the essence of consciousness, this is the solid basis for all human knowledge.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the phenomenology?
- ii. What is the significance Husserlian phenomenology in the society?
- iii. How phenomenology provides the basic structure of all human knowledge?

### **Limitations of the Study**

Readers of this paper who are not familiar with the phenomenology of Husserl may find it useful to have a general account of Husserl's phenomenology. In this paper I have just given a brief outline about Husserl's phenomenology. We know that Husserl is one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. As it is not easy to discuss Husserl's phenomenology in a couple of pages, I will nevertheless make an attempt here.

### **Methodology**

The study is mainly analytical in nature. The secondary information has been collected from various publications, books, journals etc. Further internet source and websites are also consulted for purpose.

### **Discussion**

#### **What is Phenomenology?**

Phenomenology is the reading of structures of consciousness as knowledgeable from the first person or subjective point of view. Generally phenomenology deals with phenomenon or things as they appear in our experience. (Sinha.1974). Experience is always experience of some object. So experience is directed to something. From this point we can say that all experiences are intentional. As the frontline thinker in the phenomenological movement, Edmund Husserl, either directly or indirectly, is influenced most future existentialists. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century like Husserl, Martin Heidegger, MerleauPonty, and Sartre were involved in the phenomenological movement. Husserl explained phenomenology as the intuitive study of essences, because we have seen that through this discipline Husserl tries to know the essence of the world. (Mohanty.2002). We can say that Husserl's phenomenology is an explanatory analysis of subjective process.

### **Some important theories in Husserl's Phenomenology**

Quinton Lauer expresses Husserl's thinking like this way: "only a phenomenology can be truly scientific and only a scientific philosophy can be truly Philosophy". (Lauer.1965) Husserl believes that pure phenomenological analysis is possible, when mind is completely detached from the world or is pre-suppositionless. By the Method of bracketing Husserl starts the 'third stage of phenomenology', which is called transcendental or pure phenomenology. According to Husserl this transcendental phenomenology is the basis of philosophy and science. We see that there are three techniques in phenomenology, which are able to search the essences in phenomenology. These three techniques are phenomenological reduction, eidetic reduction and cognitive analysis.

Conscious experience is the beginning point of phenomenology and the phenomenologist only considers what is instantly present to consciousness. Sartre recommends that an object or a person is only what are perceives and experiences of that object or a person, so we can evaluate a person or object what we know.

We see some important theories in Husserl's phenomenology. These are -

- (i) Reaction against psychologism.
- (ii) Intentionality of consciousness.
- (iii) The method of reduction.
- (iv) Phenomenology of the life world.

Firstly Husserl admits the theory of psychologism in his book "*The Philosophy of Arithmetic*". Generally psychologism theory tries to convert the logic into the psychology. But after criticizing of Frege, Husserl changes his position and in "*The Prolegomena to the logical investigations*" Husserl tries to reject the psychologism. Psychologism teaches us that logic is dependent upon psychology, because all judgments and inferences of logic are merely human mental activities. But Husserl says that there is a relation between logic and our mental feelings or activities, but there is no relation between rules of logic and our mental feelings and activities.

In the theory of intentionality of consciousness we see that the main nature of consciousness is intentionality. Consciousness is always directed to other objects. In other word we can say consciousness means consciousness of something. Husserl mentions that this object must be present in our mental activity as an intentional state.

There are two aspects of Husserl's phenomenology and these are positive aspect and negative aspect. The negative aspect takes a vital place in Husserl's philosophy. In this negative side Husserl deals with epoche or reduction, which is the main method of phenomenology. The main target of this method is to establish the ideal of a presuppositionless philosophy and to disclose the essence of consciousness. So he bracketed the empirical concepts. But like other saints, Husserl too ways entrapped in his own ecstasy, failing to come out of transcendental suspension. According to Husserl we have to bracket the entire doubtful, irrelevant and contingent factors at the time of searching the essence of consciousness. However he does not deny the existence of the world, because according to him without our consciousness world may exist.

As per sequence of purity we see there are four stages of reduction. These are psychological reduction, eidetic reduction, phenomenological reduction and transcendental reduction. There are four steps of 'epoche' or reduction. The first is psychological, where the knower gets a clear concept of consciousness. In the second step or in eidetic reduction we purify the object of consciousness. The abstraction of essences is called eidetic reduction and the essence abstracted by means of eidetic reduction is the intelligible structure of the phenomena found in consciousness. In eidetic stage we purify the objects of consciousness. The goal is to discover the essential components of a phenomenon. The question of the existence of the material world is irrelevant here. These are basic things that allow us to communicate and illustrate a phenomenon with some exactness, although this reduces the original phenomena to some extent. In the third or phenomenological reduction, we know the pure knower. (Husserl, 1962).

In the final step or in transcendental reduction we know the transcendental pure ego consciousness. In this stage the subject and the object of consciousness is consciousness itself. It is the subject because everything in the world and the world itself derives its meaning from this consciousness and its intentionality.

Conscious experiences have a distinctive characteristic, one hand we experience them, we live through them or perform them and other things in the world we may observe and engage. The detailed relationship between the phenomenon as presented in consciousness and the universal form of the phenomenon is known as cognition analysis. The human tendency is to strive to merge our experience of colour with our scientific knowledge of colour. The intent of phenomenology is to match human experience with what human is supposed to know

through theory. There is a difference between the phenomenon as experienced and the cognition. Appearance is contrasted by Husserl to that which appears. (Woodruff. 2006).

### **The Role of Ego, Cogito and Cogitata**

According to phenomenologist the important thing is that which can be experienced through the senses. Conscious experience is the beginning point of phenomenology, but experience shades off into less explicitly conscious phenomena. An individual's knowledge, inspired by the scientific and transcendental data, is what remains following reduction and abstraction. Three forms exist after the removing of scientific and transcendental data and these are ego, cogito and cogitata. All the acts of consciousness constitute cogito or cogitations. This includes doubting, understanding affirmation etc. The existence of the ego is nothing but a consequence of these cogitations and these cogitations continue only if we are self-conscious. Cogitations are the subject of our thinking or objects of our thought and we cannot deny it because consciousness means consciousness of something. So ego, cogito and cogitata exist.

Phenomena must be reconceived as objective, intentional objects or contents of subjective acts of consciousness. And that is why phenomenology would then study this composite of consciousness and correlated phenomena.

After the reduction we get phenomenological ego. In this stage consciousness turns from outside to inside and here 'I' or knower is the object of consciousness. Therefore phenomenological ego is the stream of consciousness. (Zahvi. 2007). In this ego, which is the stream of consciousness we obtain the meaning and reality from the surrounding environment. Human consciousness is the phenomenological consequence of introspection because objects are given to consciousness and so as the knower of object consciousness must exist. The ego exists always while nothing exists for the individual and 'I consciousness' must exist otherwise we can't explain the intentionality of consciousness. (Quentin. 1977).

### **Theory of Intersubjectivity, which avoids Solipsism**

As per Husserl, everything which has value for man exists only in one's own consciousness. The world is not an absolute being but is relative to the experiencing subject. All experience is worldly, but world is always an experienced world. The existence of egos is presupposed by humans while it is assumed that other humans are self-aware lacking the proof of the same. This is because we cannot observe the thought of others, but we can see their actions. Husserl tries to establish a 'community selves', wherein we are aware of each other. Husserl

asserts when a man comes into contact with the world, that world is intersubjective world, because other's egos are also in that world and they are aware of each other. Intersubjectivity is a correlation between me and another. This relationship lies in the fact that other is "within me" and the "otherness" can be considered beginning with the way in which that "otherness" is coming up in my ego. The other is not unknown to me. In Husserl's language the other's otherness is present to me "in person." Husserl's phenomenological investigation of the lived-experience of a subject structure is the subject as a transcendental intersubjective unit. As we gain knowledge of the world throughout watching external phenomena and thus we gain knowledge of ourselves. (Husserl.1931) Hence, we must learn about ourselves through others.

Husserl's transcendental self in one side is a subject or knower and in other side it is also an object or object of knowledge. So it is object and non- object or subject. For the reason that when this transcendental self is attached with object then it is appeared as a knowable object and knowable objects confirm the existence of knower or subject. (Carr.1999). So we can say like Berkley Husserl does not declare the solipsism of subjectivity. As Husserl admits the existence of material world and he separates the material or external world from consciousness. He puts the material world in bracket. But the world of consciousness and the empirical world are dependent on one another. We cannot detect the significance of factuality without the subjectivity and similarly the world of subjectivity depends on factuality. Humans presume that other egos exist. We also presume that other humans are self-aware. Every knower has a conscious world and in this world of his consciousness he is not alone, other persons or egos exist. 'Other person' is a 'knowable object' to me and I am also a 'knowable object' to the 'other person'. In thus way every knower or subject transfers into the object of knowledge of the other person. Thus Husserl requires a "Community of selves" in which all were aware of each other and a person while experiencing the world, experiences as an intersubjective world, and not his personal world. As when we learn about ourselves, we learn through others or external phenomena. Similarly we cannot see our own emotions and thoughts, without the responses of other humans. So like 'my ego' other egos must exist and we have to admit the intersubjective world. Thus after avoiding solipsism we can reach at intersubjectivity. As a result we can say that, transcendental immanence is the basis of intersubjectivity.

Husserl's phenomenological investigation of the lived-experience of a subjective structure is the subject as a transcendental intersubjective unit. Lived-experience of world is coming up



in a subject's experience. If someone would like to come across into his lived experience of thinking about something, firstly he or she will take a specific lived experience of himself or herself in which he or she will think about something like 'x' and after that he or she can inspect this lived experience phenomenologically in order to explain its necessary structure. This type of phenomenological method will be principally thoughtful to the presence of the other in our lived experience. When someone think about 'x' then his or her thinking can be affected by many contexts—for example, we have to consider the opinions of the others about 'x' or relation of 'x' with other etc. So our personal lived experience is never a purely private experience, it always absolutely takes part in intersubjectivity. For the reason that our personal lived -experience will be the result of an embodied, social experience. So we can say phenomenological method has an access to the other's "otherness" from inside. According to Husserl, as a member of community of persons when someone finds his lived -experience then he or she is not aware only of others but of himself or herself also.

### **Conclusion**

Husserl called his phenomenology 'transcendental philosophy'. Phenomenology gives the totality of its theory, instead of present a special part of the world. Phenomenological reflection represents a radical transcendence of the whole world. Thus phenomenology develops a complex and total account of self-awareness, spatial- temporal awareness, self in different functions, awareness of other and life- world activities etc.

We see that Husserl's theory of consciousness has historical background. Self or ego and intentionality are the two main concepts in the philosophy of Husserl. At the final stage of reduction or by the transcendental reduction we get the concept of transcendental self or subject, which is nothing but pure consciousness or transcendental consciousness. It is reached by a consciousness reflective methodological move which is renowned as epoche or reduction. Husserl believed that phenomenology could give a solid basis for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, and could set up philosophy as a rigorous science. However Husserl's intention is to search the ultimate truth and know to the essence of consciousness, which is the basis of this world.

### **Policy Suggestions / Recommendations**

In this paper I have tried to provide a brief outline about Husserl's phenomenology. It is not easy to discuss Husserl's phenomenology in a couple of pages. Interested readers may try to



discuss elaborately about the nature of self, consciousness and the importance of phenomenology in modern time.

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