

From Adequacy to Apodicticity. Development of the Notion of Reflection in Husserl's Phenomenology

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Abstract The article explores a gradual refinement of the notion of reflection in Husserlian phenomenology. In his early period, Husserl takes phenomenological reflection to attain adequate evidence, since its object is self-given in an absolute and complete manner. However, this conception of reflection does not remain unchanged. Husserl later realizes that immanent perception or phenomenological reflection also involves a certain horizontality and naivety that has to do with its temporal nature and must be queried in a further critical, apodictic reflection. Focusing more on the notion of apodicticity than adequacy, Husserl subsequently ascribes a new methodological role to reflection: instead of a mere epistemic warrant that guarantees for us the ultimate truth of our experiential life once and for all, phenomenological reflection ensures the strictness of phenomenology insofar as it entails an ethical-existential dimension as the norm of a life-form where the subject pursues full self-understanding and self-justification.

In Husserl's phenomenology, reflection plays a central role. In *Ideas I*, Husserl writes that “the phenomenological method proceeds completely in acts of reflection” (Hua III/I, p. 162).¹ With this assertion, reflection becomes “the” phenomenon upon which Husserl's whole enterprise of phenomenology rests. Without an exposition of reflection as well as its methodological function, phenomenology would certainly lack a firm foundation. This is why Husserl claims that reflection should become the theme of a major chapter in phenomenology (Hua III/I, p. 165). Although this promised chapter appears neither in *Ideas I* nor in other

¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotes from Husserliana are translated from the original German text by the author. I would like to thank Steven Crowell for his suggestions on the translation.

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major works of Husserl, discussions of the notion of reflection are nevertheless scattered throughout his various texts. Like other significant concepts in Husserlian phenomenology, the idea of reflection by no means remains unchanged as Husserl looks more closely into the structure of experience and develops phenomenology into its mature transcendental form. The present article is concerned precisely with the gradual refinement of the notion of reflection we find in Husserl's thinking. This refinement is not a mere modification of a particular concept but indicates a development in the methodological principle of phenomenology. As I hope to show by drawing on some of Husserl's late manuscripts, he finally stresses an *ethical* and *existential* role—in addition to epistemological one—that reflection plays within phenomenology.

The article proceeds in the following three steps. First, I explicate Husserl's relatively early view of reflection as immanent perception, a view that is quite familiar to most scholars and students in philosophy. In the period around *Ideas I*, Husserl conceives of phenomenological reflection as providing adequate evidence, in contrast to the inadequate evidence available in transcendent perception. However, whereas in the beginning the evidence of reflection is chiefly defined in terms of adequacy, Husserl's later thinking places more emphasis on a connection between reflection and apodicticity. I will turn to this in the second part. For Husserl, reflection's methodological significance comes to be more a norm of life than an epistemic warrant for absolute truth. I conclude the article by making explicit what such refinement means to transcendental phenomenology and how it may help to illuminate the puzzling problem of the beginning of phenomenology.

1 Adequacy of Reflection

In *Ideas I*, Husserl expressly associates transcendent perception with dubitability and immanent perception (which is for Husserl the phenomenological type of reflection) with indubitability. To some extent, this assertion follows a Cartesian motif. According to Descartes and many others, reflection in the sense of the mind's self-perception can reach a distinctively indubitable type of knowledge, in contrast to the knowledge acquired through external perception. After putting everything—including one's own body—in doubt, Descartes writes in his second meditation that “it must finally be established that this pronouncement ‘I am, I exist’ is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind” (Descartes 1993, p. 64). This self-affirmation of the mind via reflection is the starting point for a philosophical pursuit of absolute knowledge. Although few philosophers now would embrace Descartes' picture of the mind, the general idea that there is something special about reflective consciousness, or first-person access to oneself, in comparison with the consciousness of things and others' minds, is not uncommon.

Husserl is well aware of the problems with Descartes' picture. Repeatedly referring to Descartes in his various works, he sees his own phenomenology as beyond Cartesian philosophy, which is not yet transcendental. In Husserl's view, there is a decisive difference between what he calls immanent perception and Descartes' reflection—or rather, between phenomenological reflection and

Cartesian, psychological reflection. Husserl elaborates this significant difference in various places and argues that in sticking to the absolute evidence of a substantive *cogito*, Descartes fails to break into the realm of the transcendental and remains saddled with a psychologistic view of ego (Hua I, p. 63; Hua VIII, pp. 80f). Taking the mind to be a “thinking thing”, Descartes, according to Husserl, carries out an internal reflection, the thematic field of which is the so-called *res cogitans*, a region of being parallel to *res extensa*. Such a reflection is not yet phenomenological in the strict sense,² since it is still “positive”; that is, it still naively posits the being of the mind without bracketing and making explicit such a positing. Husserl criticizes Descartes’ reflective attempt to put everything in doubt for leaving intact “a little tag-end of the world” (*ein kleines Endchen der Welt*)—namely, the mind—and for believing that the rest of the world can somehow be deduced from this remnant part (Hua I, p. 63).³

In the phenomenological reflection that starts with a radical *epoché*, in contrast, this naïve faith in the existence of the mind is inhibited and brought to light. While Cartesian philosophy (as well as other disciplines imbued with a certain psychologism) remains “natural” to the extent that it unwittingly posits the mind as a region of being *in* the world, phenomenology—or more precisely, transcendental phenomenology—thematizes what Ricoeur calls the “primal region” (*Urregion*), which is the origin of being of any worldly region (Ricoeur 1996, p. 105). By means of phenomenological reflection the philosopher is able to see that all transcendence—be it a spatial object or an allegedly existent mental state—gains its validity in the conscious life of the subject, which is no longer the Cartesian *cogito* but rather a transcendental, world-constituting ego. This distinction between phenomenological and psychological reflection is so crucial that it marks the uniqueness of a transcendental project.

On the other hand, although Husserl does not take Cartesian reflection to be as indubitable as Descartes once believed, he nevertheless claims for his own phenomenological reflection a similar kind of evidence that is beyond any doubt. Husserl unequivocally distinguishes phenomenological reflection qua immanent perception from transcendent perception by its feature of indubitability:

Each immanent perception necessarily guarantees the existence of its object. If the reflective apprehension is directed toward my experience, then I have grasped an absolute being itself, the existence of which cannot in principle be

² For Husserl, “phenomenology” in the strict sense is a transcendental project. Nevertheless, he also talks about “descriptive” phenomenology or “phenomenological psychology,” which can be seen as an early stage of the full-blown transcendental phenomenology (Hua IX, pp. 277–278; Hua VIII, pp. 128f; Hua I, pp. 70f). Such a descriptive phenomenology aims at a pure description of one’s world-directed intentional life, but it is not yet transcendental, since it does not refrain from the positing of the *cogito* as a region of being parallel, and connected, to the outside world.

³ Admittedly, in *Ideas I* Husserl himself also talks of a “residuum”, which gives the impression that he is somehow advocating a kind of foundationalism. But this is not what Husserl actually means to say. In a later text from 1924 (now published as an appendix to Hua VIII), he criticizes his early use of phrases such as “residuum”: “it easily misleads us into believing that the world henceforth drops out as a phenomenological theme and instead only the ‘subjective’ acts, the modes of appearance that relate themselves to the world, remain the theme” (Hua VIII, p. 432).

negated, i.e. the insight that it is in principle impossible that the object does not exist. [...] On the contrary, as we know, it belongs to the essence of the worldly thing that there is no such perfect perception in its realm that can present an absolute, and hence essentially connected with this is the fact that any such extensive experience leaves open the possibility that what is given does *not* exist in spite of the continual consciousness of its bodily self-presence (Hua III/I, pp. 96–97).

For Husserl in this period, it is always possible to doubt transcendent worldly objects, given in transcendent perception. This fallibility or inadequacy belongs to the very essence of transcendent perception and makes a theoretical skepticism about the external world possible and even inevitable. In contrast, to doubt the experiences thematized in phenomenological reflection is, as Husserl puts, an “absurdity” (*Widersinn*; Hua III/I, p. 96).

In a transcendent thing-perception—say, the perception of a book on the table—only the front is fully given or “really presented” (*wirklich dargestellt*) in the sensations, whereas the back side is co-intended or horizontally “co-given” (*mitgegeben*) but not adequately fulfilled. This perspective-boundedness thus establishes the infinite possibility for subsequent exploration, correction or even negation of the perceived thing. Instead of holding this to be a defect of merely human cognition, Husserl sees such inadequacy (and the endless process towards an ideal of absolute givenness) as belonging to the nature of any transcendent perception; in other words, worldly things are so structured as to present themselves in perspectives and horizons.

The object of immanent perception, in contrast, does not appear via perspectival adumbration. As the object of phenomenological reflection, experience is given absolutely rather than through perspectives. In other words, the object acquired by such reflection coincides with the *reell* experience itself and thus leaves no part unfulfilled. According to Husserl, experiences that are initially operative as “background” are unreflected, but they are at the same time “conscious” (*bewußt*) and “ready to be perceived” (*wahrnehmungsbereit*); thus they too may be made into thematic objects in a subsequent reflection that possesses indubitable certainty. It is, so to speak, the nature of the “mode of being” (*Seinsart*) of immanent experiences that they can become adequately accessible in immanent perception (Hua III/I, p. 95).

One may notice a certain equivocation in respect to the notion of adequacy: it can either denote the opposite of a perspectival experience, that is, an experience in which the object is not present in adumbration, or it may refer to an experience where one acquires knowledge that cannot be cancelled out later on, a type of experience which Husserl later calls apodictic.⁴ To this extent, both a skeptical inquiry about the *being* of the object and a further exploration with regard to its *content* terminate at an adequate experience; one has neither reason to doubt its

⁴ In the period of *Ideas I*, apodictic evidence is not an important concept for Husserl and he defines it as relating to the seeing of an essence, in contrast to which is the assertoric seeing of something individual (Hua III/I, p. 317). However, it seems that from the early 1920s on, Husserl reaches a new understanding of the notion. Apodictic evidence then denotes a type of evidence that is indubitable (Hua VIII, p. 35).

existence nor the need to carry out a closer investigation into it. The object of adequate evidence can therefore be said to be “absolute” in both senses, namely, indubitability and completeness. At this stage, Husserl has not yet separated these two aspects in a clear-cut manner; or more precisely, he has not defined the notion of apodicticity—i.e. indubitability—as independent of that of adequacy and conceived of the possibility that an indubitable evidence can be inadequate. Rather, for him, adequacy implies indubitability as one of its essential aspects, so that indubitable evidence is necessarily adequate and vice versa.

Initially, the idea that immanent perception provides adequate evidence leads Husserl to believe that everything we learn through such perception about the structure of our experiential life is indisputably true. Phenomenological reflection thus appears to be a superior source of knowledge compared with transcendent perception, including psychological reflection, which is unaware of its naivety as it dominates our natural life and research. Henceforth, a phenomenologically regulated reflection becomes the method which can guarantee the truth of phenomenology as a whole.

2 Reflection and Apodicticity

As was mentioned, however, the concept of phenomenological reflection as providing completely adequate evidence does not persist in Husserl’s developing thought. Instead of focusing on the idea of adequacy, he increasingly refers to the notion of apodicticity, especially after 1920s.⁵ In doing so, Husserl finds that immanent perception has its own naivety and hence is open to critique. Heffernan has remarked in a recent article that while Husserl’s early thinking on evidence is “strongly oriented on the ideal of adequation”, in his later works the primacy is gradually given to “relative, imperfect, and dubitable evidence” (Heffernan 2009, pp. 28–37). I shall start with the question concerning the type of inadequacy that phenomenological reflection involves and then consider how, for Husserl, an experience can be counted as apodictic.

In the view of early Husserl, the kind of inadequacy that characterizes thing-perception is not found in phenomenological immanent perception, since our experience itself is not given to us in terms of perspectival adumbration. Yet one may well ask whether perspectival inadequacy is the only type of inadequacy experience may have. Even though our own experience does not present itself in spatial perspectives, can we rule out the possibility that it is given in other forms of inadequacy or horizontal structure? Indeed, as Husserl enquires further into the temporal structure of the transcendental ego, it becomes clear to him that the transcendental experience gained in phenomenological reflection is also

⁵ In his article “Apodictic Evidence”, Hans Bernhard Schmid looks into five major works (stages) of Husserl from 1900 to 1936, and his result well supports the observation of this article. Schmid discerns that “Husserl’s concern with ‘evidence’ remains more or less on the same level of intensity throughout his work, whereas the motive of ‘adequacy’ continually loses its importance. Apodicticity, on the other hand, becomes more important in the course of the development of Husserl’s thought, its graph peaks on the *Cartesian Meditations*” (Schmid 2001, p. 223).

characterized by a certain horizontality. In the lecture course “Introduction to Philosophy” (*Einleitung in die Philosophie*) from 1922/1923, Husserl says: “the immanently perceived is free from any reservation; what is perceived there is actually self-apprehended; it is itself there, the original at one with the apprehending. *This is at least how it appears on the initial approach*” (Hua XXXV, p. 120; my italics).⁶ Rather than insist on the adequacy of immanent perception as firmly as he used to, Husserl here suggests that his earlier proposal is merely “the initial approach” and requires critical re-examination. As he states immediately afterwards, what we need to recognize is the fact that “the original self-apprehension has a necessary structure and has moreover gradations in itself” (Hua XXXV, p. 120).⁷ If immanent perception were absolutely transparent, there would be no gradation involved. Husserl now sees the need to carry out a further critique of immanent perception in order to look into its deeper structure.

In *Cartesian Meditations* one can find an often quoted passage that distinctly indicates Husserl’s more mature standpoint on phenomenological-transcendental reflection:

In it <the transcendental experience> the ego is accessible to himself originaliter. But at any particular time this experience offers only a core that is experienced with real adequacy, namely the ego’s living present, which the grammatical sense of the sentence, *ego cogito*, expresses; while, beyond that, only an indeterminately general presumptive horizon extends, a horizon that is strictly non-experienced but necessarily co-meant. To it belongs not only the ego’s past, most of which is completely obscure, but also his transcendental abilities and his habitual peculiarities at the time (Hua I, p. 62; Husserl 1977, pp. 22–23).

In this passage and those that follow, Husserl, in sharp contrast to his earlier view, such as in *Ideas I*, talks about a parallel horizontal structure characterizing both thing-experience and transcendental reflection. Immanent perception is no longer regarded as the opposite of an inadequate thing-perception; instead, it carries in itself an unfulfilled horizon, which is only presumptively intended. As Husserl explains, what is adequately intuited in a transcendental reflection is merely the “living self-presence” of transcendental subjectivity, whereas a horizon including its past, its transcendental abilities and habitualities, etc. is inevitably co-intended. In other words, what one is directed to in phenomenological reflection is not merely a transcendental subjectivity living at a “now-point” (*Jetztpunkt*), but necessarily a concrete ego that has a history and will continue to have an experiential life in the future.

This horizontal character of immanent perception has its root in the universal structure of temporality. In the study of inner-time consciousness Husserl discovers that each perceptive experience is a synthesis of “retention-primal impression-

⁶ “Das immanent Wahrgenommene ist frei von allen Vorbehalten, was da wahrgenommen, ist wirklich Selbsterfasstes; es ist in eins mit dem Erfassen das Original selbst da. So lautet wenigstens der erste Ansatz.”

⁷ “Originale Selbsterfassung eine notwendige Struktur hat und in sich wieder Gradualität hat, ohne die es gar nicht denkbar ist, und gerade hier in der Kritik der immanenten Wahrnehmung ist die Stelle, es ursprünglich zu lernen.”

protection”. In the present context, we are not able to go into detail concerning time-consciousness, but it suffices to point out that, for Husserl, the living present is a mere abstract moment that cannot be separated from the concrete whole in which it is embedded. This makes all intentionality *in essence* horizontal and involves an inherent gradation of originality. Given that phenomenological reflection is also a type of intentionality in which a certain object is self-present, it is structured like a “comet tail” (*Kometenschweif*), since the scope of the reflected transcendental subjectivity extends far beyond the living present (Hua XXXV, p. 127).

Thus immanent perception, which was formerly conceived of as absolute and adequate, turns out to be inadequate insofar as not all aspects of transcendental subjectivity are self-given in an equally original way. This inadequacy of immanent perception has less to do with the spatial perspectival givenness of the object than with its temporal nature. Such a theoretical refinement, as we are to see next, has its methodological necessity in the progress of phenomenological justification.

In *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl defines the notion of evidence in the following way: “any evidence is a grasping of something itself that is, or is thus, a grasping in the mode of ‘it itself’, with full certainty of its being.” (Hua I, p. 56/15). In an experience of evidence, say a thing-perception, the object is given in full certainty; that is to say, in a straightforward and unhesitating manner one perceives it as something truly existent.⁸ Nevertheless, this by no means indicates that evidence is a warrant for ultimate, absolute truth. Husserl calls this initial evidence a “naively functioning evidence” (Hua I, p. 68/29; translation modified), since at the very moment of this experience we immediately yield to the being of the object with no attention to the enactment of the evidence itself. To express it differently, this immediate evidence is characterized by a kind of faith that itself has not yet been reflected upon.⁹ Hence, being a faith, the evident experience is open to critical reflection. For instance, one may see with immediate evidence that there is an old woman in a black cloak sitting on the street bench; yet after a while one may start to doubt whether this motionless old lady is a real human being or just a statue. This shows that one is not merely committed to a faith naively but may take it up spontaneously, attempting to assure oneself of its truth explicitly. It is precisely here that the term “apodicticity” comes into play.

What apodicticity denotes is clearly expressed by Husserl:

An apodictic evidence has the peculiarity that it is not merely certainty of the affairs or states-of-affairs evident in it; rather it discloses itself, through a critical reflection, as at the same time the absolute unimaginableness of their

⁸ According to Husserl, evidence can have various degrees, depending on how much a given intention is fulfilled. However, it is not correct to conclude from this that this necessarily correlates with degrees of certainty. A thing perception, for instance, presents its object in full certainty in spite of the fact that it is not adequate; that is to say, one yields to the presence of a real being without the slightest inkling that it may turn out to be questionable later.

⁹ Merleau-Ponty calls such an immediate evidence “perceptual faith”. See Merleau-Ponty 1968/1992, p. 28.

non-being, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as objectless (Hua I, p. 56/15; modified translation).

One can see that there are two important aspects to such apodicticity. The first aspect concerns how apodictic evidence is achieved. Apodicticity stands on a higher level than immediate evidence. In an evident experience the object, at least at the moment of this experience, is self-given with complete certainty; this, however, does not rule out the possibility of a subsequent critique, i.e., a reflection upon the evident experience itself, in terms of which one may later come to speak of apodictic evidence. As Husserl claims, apodicticity is “a critical achievement, a critical construction” (Hua XXXV, pp. 401–402); hence, compared with immediate evidence, it possesses “the highest dignity” since it goes beyond the naivety of immediate evidence and its transient certainty (Hua I, p. 56/15).

This relates to the second aspect of apodicticity, namely its form as a double negation. What is self-given in apodictic evidence is not merely the object itself, but rather the *impossibility of its non-being* (Hua XXXV, p. 384). Husserl formulates the double negation as follows:

An evident certainty is apodictic if it is impossible, in the unity of a single consciousness, to continually fantasize or transform it such that, while it itself remains the current certainty that it is or was, simultaneously the possibility of its being doubtful or nugatory comes to givenness (Hua XXXV, p. 387).¹⁰

Putting immediate evidence to the test, critical reflection provides a proof: via a negation of negation, it confirms that the object given directly in the evidence is apodictic, i.e., indubitable in an absolute sense, that a doubt about its being cannot be motivated. For this reason, Husserl also calls apodictic evidence “probe evidence” (*Probeevidenz*; Hua XXXV, p. 387). In such a critique, one no longer yields to the evidence passively but probes it explicitly for the sake of a higher-order justification. In other words, instead of merely “living” the evident experience, one knows through an apodictic critique that one is living it and gains an undeniable truth in it.

By making the notion of apodicticity prominent in this way, Husserl is able to progress in the separation of apodicticity from adequacy. As we saw, Husserl earlier considered apodicticity, i.e. indubitability, to be a constitutive moment of adequacy, and thus subordinated to it. As he gradually makes the horizonality or inadequacy of immanent perception explicit, he must now ask whether this experience still possesses apodicticity, that is, whether transcendental self-experience—albeit now inadequate and incomplete—provides us with infallible knowledge about transcendental subjectivity. Husserl gives an affirmative answer to this question. Whereas a completely fulfilled intention without any horizon seems more like an ideal that

¹⁰ “Eine evidente Gewissheit ist apodiktisch, wenn es unmöglich ist, sie in der Einheit eines Bewusstseins so fortgesetzt zu phantasieren oder so umgebildet, dass, während sie selbst bleibt, wie sie als aktuelle Gewissheit ist oder war, zugleich die Möglichkeit des Zweifelhaft- oder Nichtseiend zur Gegebenheit kommt.”

cannot in principle be reached, apodictic evidence is for Husserl a stage of justification that must be achieved in strict phenomenological research.¹¹

The two aspects of apodicticity—namely, its being a critical achievement and a double negation—indicate its distinctiveness from immediate evidence as self-giveness, with which it nevertheless remains closely connected. Apodictic evidence is on a higher, reflective level; thus it always presupposes a straightforward self-giveness of an object. This applies not only to transcendent perception—that is, to perception within the natural attitude—but also to immanent perception or phenomenological reflection. That is to say, phenomenological reflection is also open to a higher-order self-critique and can undergo a more profound justification. There is not just one level on which transcendental-phenomenological insights are given as a whole, all at once. Rather, as Husserl claims in *Cartesian Meditations* and other texts from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, it involves (at least) two levels, the higher of which tends to overcome the naivety of the lower one.

What comes first is a vast realm of reflective, transcendental experience where we merely indulge in “the evidence that is inherent in the harmonious flow of such experience” without critical clarification of the performance of this evidence itself (Hua I, p. 68/29). As phenomenologists, we take leave of the natural attitude through an initial *epoché* and, in the evidence of phenomenological reflection, gain access to the thematic field, i.e., the transcendental ego in its constitution of the world. Yet, the access itself—namely, the phenomenologically reflective experience—has not yet come to the fore, just as in natural experience the evidence of access remains unknown to those who simply indulge themselves in what is directly given in this evidence. Therefore, although phenomenology overcomes the naivety of mundane life by means of the phenomenological reduction, it is still characterized by what Husserl calls “transcendental naivety”, the conquest of which is the task of a further stage of phenomenological research. As Husserl writes in a text from 1930, phenomenology is from the start a “naive-straightforward phenomenology” (*naiv-gerade Phänomenologie*), in which the phenomenological spectator is *anonymous*:

Now I exercise transcendental experience and thinking naively, and if I become aware of this naivety itself, this will take place—as I can see by means of reflection—in a reflection of a higher level, in which I grasp the anonymity of the transcendental spectator (Hua XXXIV, p. 177).¹²

¹¹ In Husserl’s view, apodicticity is something that the phenomenologist can reach, whereas adequacy is more of an ideal goal. In a text written in 1925, Husserl explores the relation between apodicticity and adequacy. There he distinguishes between “apodictic conviction of *being*” (apodiktische Überzeugung vom *Sein*) and “that of being-*so*” (und solche vom *Sosein*) and argues that one can be apodictically certain about the being of the object without at the same time having apodictic evidence of its content. “The object can be apprehended in ‘absolute’ indubitability, apodictic, and yet the content of this being can be dubitable: it is not given as completely determined, it is perhaps given presumptively in a broad scale, without disrupting the apodicticity.” Accordingly, the transcendental subjectivity given in phenomenological reflection is apodictic in the sense that it is “the ‘style’ of life”, the “subject of a life with endlessly open horizon” (Hua XXXV, pp. 410–411).

¹² “Ich übe nun naiv transzendentales Erfahren und Denken, und werde ich dessen selbst inne, so geschieht es, wie ich durch Reflexion sehe, in einer Reflexion höherer Stufe, in der ich die Anonymität des transzendentalen Zuschauers erfasse.”

A higher level of reflection is necessary if one aspires to gain apodictic knowledge about the transcendental life.

To distinguish this reflection from phenomenological reduction on the first level, Husserl terms it an “apodictic reduction”, that is, a self-critique of the transcendental evidence which is tacitly at work in naïve phenomenology. Such a reflection raises the question of whether the evidence of transcendental reflection is apodictic, that is, whether the non-being of its subject matter (i.e., transcendental subjectivity) is imaginable. To answer the question requires, on the one hand, a thematization of transcendental self-experience and, on the other, a careful examination of the scope of transcendental subjectivity. It is precisely through this apodictic critique that immanent perception appears to be inadequate and have a horizontal structure. The transcendental ego given in the evidence of phenomenological reflection is not merely at an abstract, albeit adequate, now-point but a concrete one with its history, habituality, etc. The task of an apodictic reflection is to inquire into how far the apodicticity of this transcendental subjectivity reaches; for instance, one question to ask is whether the past experiential life of the transcendental ego, which is horizontally given in immanent perception, is still indubitable. On this account, the second stage of phenomenology is a self-referential “phenomenology of phenomenology” (Hua XXXIV, p. 178); it unfolds and puts to the test what is implicitly presumed in the first stage. By querying and explicating its own horizon, phenomenology achieves a self-justification and brings itself to completion.

Husserl’s gradual transition from adequacy to apodicticity is more than a shift of attention in concepts or terminologies. It indicates a development in the idea of reflection as well as the methodological principle of phenomenology. To wit, in the early period Husserl takes phenomenological reflection or immanent perception to provide adequate evidence of the structure of experience, and this serves both as the ground for a phenomenological study of conscious life and as warrant for the truth of phenomenological insight. However, from the early 1920s onwards, this faith in the indubitability and perfectness of phenomenological reflection turns out to be naïve. Not only is immanent perception inadequate in that it involves a presumptive and anonymous horizon, but its apodicticity must be probed in a higher-order critical reflection as well. The so-called “principle of evidence” (earlier called by Husserl “the principle of principles”) is shown to be insufficient and must be completed by a subsequent apodictic, critical reflection.¹³ Transcendental reflection does not provide us with firm and complete knowledge once and for all; rather, both its own performance and the correlated thematic insights demand a further critique, which would justify and enrich the transcendental knowledge. In a certain sense,

¹³ In *Cartesian Meditations*, after stating the “principle of evidence”, Husserl adds the following: “Indeed, even then I must also always reflect upon the pertinent evidence; I must examine its range and make evident to myself, how far that evidence, how far its perfection, the actual giving of the affairs themselves, extends. Where this is still wanting, I must not claim any final validity, but must account my judgment as, at best, a possible intermediate stage on the way to final validity” (Hua I, p. 54/13). Apparently, Husserl now realizes that a single (piece of) evidence can never suffice for a phenomenological project; rather, it must be justified in yet a further evidence. This finally makes evidence a methodological norm.

reflection as a method is now more negatively than positively characterized: instead of offering some irrefutable knowledge about one's inner states, it is more *an effort of doubting, questioning and overcoming oneself*. It shakes us out of the easy life in evidence and brings us to no end. Husserl is well aware of the incompleteness and unfinishedness of a phenomenological self-understanding. He writes:

Perhaps it can also be shown, as something dependent on that structure, and indeed as part of it, that the Ego is apodictically predelineated, for himself, as a concrete Ego existing with an individual content made up of subjective processes, abilities, and dispositions—horizontally predelineated as an experienceable object, accessible to a possible self-experience that can be perfected, and perhaps enriched, without limit (Hua I, p. 67/28–29).

3 Reflection as the Norm of Life

Husserl's apodictic turn therefore prompts us to reconsider the *methodological* role of reflection in phenomenology. Phenomenological reflection serves as a methodological norm not because it brings us indubitable knowledge all at once, but because the whole phenomenological enterprise embodies the movement of reflection as a means of access to our true self-understanding and self-justification. This also implies that phenomenology is not merely a theoretical pursuit outside of or higher than life; rather, the late Husserl recognizes in reflection an *ethical or existential dimension*, so that it becomes the norm of the kind of life which the phenomenologist lives.

Initially Husserl understands phenomenological reflection merely as a method that restricts itself to what is self-given as it is given, freeing the latter from presumptive horizons. Departing from all mundane reflections which are still grounded in the natural attitude, phenomenological-transcendental reflection is "shadowless" in the sense that there is no unfulfilled part, no prejudice involved in it. For this reason, a gap between mundane life and transcendental reflection is obvious, a gap which the novice philosopher needs to leap by means of a willful resolution. As Husserl gradually carries out a critique of evidence and begins to distinguish apodicticity from adequacy, however, the function of phenomenological reflection also changes. If phenomenological reflection is itself inadequate—characterized by a horizontal structure and a certain naivety—a further reflection on phenomenological reflection itself becomes necessary, one that brings the former naively accepted presumptions into the open. This chain of reflection will not come to a halt, since naivety or horizon accompanies each level of reflection and motivates a new reflection at a higher level. Thus, instead of a single reflection, Husserl now speaks of a method of "zigzag" (*Zickzack*), that is, a "*sceptical circle of method*" (*skeptischen Zirkel der Methode*; Hua XXXV, p. 391): "I must subject my way itself—or more precisely: my meditating operation itself, insofar as it is a cognizing operation—to a critique and justification" (Hua XXXV, p. 392). Thus, he continues, "the method of zigzag is necessary: I find absolutely justified principles

in a naively evident process and then go back and justify through this the preceding meditation (Hua XXXV, p. 394).¹⁴

Thus the operation of a method as the access to the theme always anticipates the knowledge or justification of this method. It is therefore inevitable that in order to achieve an absolute justification—that is, to be able to claim that nothing is presupposed unknowingly and uncritically—one must turn back and examine the performance of the method that has already been in play. The method of “zigzag”—or, less metaphorically, of a constant alternation between non-reflection and reflection—further implies that the search for a final absolute justification is a task extending to the infinite future. On a zigzag path each step is an index to a further one, with no end. Consequently, a complete, transparent self-givenness, self-comprehension or self-justification with no anonymous part is a “mere” ideal, whose positive sense nevertheless serves as both the primary motivation and the ultimate purpose regulating the reflective pursuit (Hua VIII, p. 33).

Accordingly, there is indeed a sense in speaking of the “way” leading from natural life towards transcendental phenomenology, a way that draws us on continuously by a common thread, namely, the self-questioning, self-fulfilling access of reflection. Husserl often opposes phenomenological reflection to ordinary and psychological reflections, which may give the impression that the former is just one outstanding type of reflection among others; as though phenomenological and mundane reflections were parallel options for a study of experience—the former being a “pure” one that can reveal the experiential life authentically. Nevertheless, what we have learned leads us to acknowledge that reflection, as a factual experience in human life, is primordially natural reflection. In everyday reflection, we see our own experience as a mental event and ourselves as real human beings living among worldly things and other worldly subjects. Such common-sense self-objectification or self-mundaneization is *de facto* part of our life and constitutes our natural habituality. What Husserl describes as mundane reflection is nothing wrong-headed; rather, it is the only reflection there is, one that, on further reflection, turns out to be naive and inadequate in certain respects. In other words, reflective access to one’s own experiential life must begin with natural reflection; phenomenological reflection is not distinguished from this by an act of will but is, rather, anticipated in natural reflection’s self-conception.

One is not able to analyse the structure of intentionality phenomenologically and conceive of transcendental subjectivity if one does not live mundane life, being an anonymous transcendental ego and taking oneself to be a psychophysical subject relating to a natural world. The life upon which phenomenology reflects is not absolute naivety; the pre-reflective life being studied itself involves various levels of reflection. Since any reflection is relative and horizontal, reflection and non-reflection always go hand-in-hand. While it is reflective towards ordinary life and psychological construction, phenomenology is pre-reflective in relation to higher-order apodictic reflection, which sheds critical light on the performance of naive,

¹⁴ “Ich muss also meinen Weg selbst, oder deutlicher: mein meditierendes Tun selbst, sofern es erkennendes Tun ist, einer Kritik und einer Rechtfertigung unterziehen.” “So ist notwendig die Methode des Zickzack: Ich finde absolute gerechtfertigte Prinzipien in einem naiv evidenten Verfahren und gehe dann zurück und rechtfertige durch sie die vorangegangene Meditation.”

phenomenological reflection. The latter is thus no ultimate justification but is a kind of constant “intermediate stage” (*Zwischenstadium*; Hua I, p. 54/13); it denotes a whole series that encompasses endless steps of self-critical reflections. On this account, there is no mysterious gap or a radical rupture between natural and transcendental life of the sort that creates problems for the beginning of phenomenology; the zigzag way connects the two and the transition is made through a self-critique of the transcendental subject, the same subject who was anonymous in the natural attitude and who will continue to carry out a further, apodictic reflection upon himself as the phenomenologist.

Husserl has good reason to emphasize the phenomenologist’s “resolution of will” (*Willensentschluss*) when talking about the beginning of phenomenology (Hua VIII, pp. 6–7). But the resolve is not to break thoroughly with natural life; it is a resolve to question oneself ceaselessly, to not give up putting what is evident into question and allow oneself “to come to rest in it” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008, p. 461). Such an interpretation does not drive a wedge between mundane and phenomenological life, and to initiate phenomenology is not to suppress the so-called impure reflection in favor of a pure one. It is, rather, to critically re-view mundane reflection and then phenomenological reflection itself in order to proceed on the way leading to a more sufficient self-understanding.

If, as on this account, phenomenological reflection is no instantaneous ascent to a realm of unquestionable certainty but is borne by a resolve to approach this absolute self-giveness and self-justification, it is no accident that Husserl finds an ethical dimension in the problem of reflection. Indeed, it is out of an ethical demand that the norm of reflection comes into play. This demand, as Husserl himself formulates it, is the demand for an authentic life in the form of an ethical human being:

The human—that always means the individual human being and also “human writ large”, i.e. the human community—the human, I say, should not naively take each day as it comes. He must once wake to the ethical, reflect upon himself and take that radical decision through which he first makes himself into a true, an ethical human being. It is the resolution to strive with all one’s powers toward a new kind of life, a life lived from an absolutely clear conscience that can justify oneself before oneself in an absolute way (Hua XXXV, p. 58).¹⁵

To transcend naivety, to question and justify one’s own opinions, knowledge and practices, is a vocation (*Beruf*), a responsibility of the individual and the human community. In these terms Husserl clearly shows that the theoretical practice of philosophical reflection is not an abandonment of mundane life but a passionate striving for self-responsibility *within* mundane life. It is a distinctive form of that life.

¹⁵ “Der Mensch—das sage jetzt immer der Einzelmensch oder auch der ‘Mensch im Großen’, die vergemeinschaftete Menschheit—der Mensch, sage ich, darf nicht dabei bleiben, sozusagen naiv in den Tag hineinleben. Er muss einmal ethisch erwachen, sich besinnen und jenen radikalen Entschluss fassen, durch den er sich selbst erst zum wahren, dem ethischen Menschen macht. Der Entschluss geht dahin, mit allen Kräften nach einem neuartigen Leben zu streben, einem Leben aus einem absolut klaren, sich vor sich selbst absolut rechtfertigenden Gewissen.”

Gadamer once remarked that what preoccupied Husserl in the aftermath of the First World War, when he saw the whole European civilization in a crisis, was the question: “How do I become an honest philosopher?”¹⁶ For Husserl, what matters most is not the final achievement of a scientific philosophical system but “a *wish and will* [...] for a life lived from complete good conscience, or a life whose subject can at any time fully justify to him- or herself”, as he states in the *Kaizo* articles on cultural renewal (Hua XXVII, p. 32; my italics).¹⁷ Such a wish, and the will to realize it, is what characterizes the genuine philosopher.¹⁸ A life is an ethical and responsible one not because it is completely free from naivety and falsity, but because it is guided by one’s resolute practice of radically and continually reflecting upon and bringing to light whatever one uncritically presupposes.

Accordingly, reflection turns out not only to be epistemologically significant for phenomenology; it also entails an ethical dimension, providing the norm and spirit of a new form of life. In my view, only this double role of reflection captures the full picture of the methodological principle of Husserlian phenomenology, and as his thought matured Husserl put ever more weight on the ethical dimension of reflection as the norm of a self-justifying life. Ultimately we must bear in mind that the rigor of phenomenology lies in both aspects of reflection, namely, its being a distinctive method guiding us to the acquisition of phenomenological truth and the norm of a life of conscience and responsibility.

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¹⁶ In his article “Die Wissenschaft von der Lebenswelt”, Gadamer writes of Husserl: “Der tiefe Ernst seiner im Grunde schlichten und arglosen Persönlichkeit ließ ihn damals und fortan von einer einzigen Frage beherrscht bleiben: wie werde ich ein ehrlicher Philosoph? Ein Philosoph, das hieß für ihn: ein Selbstdenker, ein Mann der sich für alle seine Gedanken und Überzeugungen—über das Feld der Wissenschaft hinaus (Husserl war Mathematiker gewesen)—letzte Rechenschaft zu geben suchte und dem jede unkontrollierte und unbeweisbare Überzeugung wie ein Verlust seiner inneren Glaubwürdigkeit vor sich selber erschien” (Gadamer 1999, p. 152).

¹⁷ “Eine *Wunsch und Wille* [...] zu einem Leben aus einem vollkommen guten Gewissen oder einem Leben, das sein Subjekt vor sich selbst jederzeit und vollkommen zu rechtfertigen vermöchte”. See also Hua VI, p. 17.

¹⁸ As Zahavi (2003, pp. 67–68) points out, Husserl’s ethical motivation for doing philosophy reflects a Socratic-Platonic idea of philosophy.

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