

The Idea of Rigorous Science in Husserl's Phenomenology and its Relevance for the other Sciences

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Abstract: In this paper I intend to grapple with the idea of philosophy as rigorous science from the point of view of Husserl's phenomenology in order to show that this idea may have an important contribution to the way in which the scientific character of sciences in general, and of human and social sciences in particular, is being conceived. As rigorous science, phenomenology emphasizes and investigates the *a priori* context of other sciences. In this way, it plays a vital role in the development of every particular eidetic upon which any sciences rely. This eidetic (or the eidetic layer of any mature science) embraces the goal and strives to reach the objective of determining the valid sense of the fundamental notions used by the scientist in his research, without, nevertheless, stirring a radical questioning of this sense and of the ultimate validity of these notions. To define them requires passing from the usual level of inquiring of that particular science (the processes of dealing with facts and experiments) to the level (or meta-level) of a radical reflection on the sense or the meaning of the basic notions of the science in question (its own foundations). Philosophy as rigorous science connects the researcher's assertions not only to the empirical state of affairs envisaged by his work, but, moreover and in a fundamental way, to their noematic content, to their intrinsic intentional meaning. Therefore, the idea of rigorous science elaborated in Husserl's phenomenology is heavy with the potential of clarifying the foundations and stakes of the research undertaken by the other sciences.

Key words: naturalism, historicism, rigorous science, human sciences, social sciences, phenomenology, epistemology of science, possibility of knowledge.

Introduction

I shall start this paper with raising a few questions concerning the idea of rigorous science:

1. How philosophy as rigorous science is constituted from Husserl's point of view?
2. What characteristics of philosophy as rigorous science can be extrapolated to other sciences?

3. How can be reached a more rigorous level of scientificity with regard to other sciences by using philosophy and, in particular, transcendental phenomenology?
4. How can Husserlian phenomenology contribute to the clarification and deepening of the level of rigorousness and thoroughness of other sciences?

And these are only a few of the many questions related to the claim of Husserlian philosophy to be a rigorous science. I shall only point to two of the most important aspects entailed by a serious understanding of philosophy as rigorous science:

1. The use of the method of reflection – as Merleau-Ponty justly remarks, for Husserl “reflection is not the mere observation of a fact, but an effort to understand; not equivalent to the passivity of a subject who observes himself living, but the effort of a subject to extricate the meaning of his own experience” (Merleau-Ponty 1975, 33).
2. The use of the phenomenological reduction – parenthesizing or neutralisation. The usage of this method leads to accessing a completely different type of attitude than the natural-naïve or naturalist (scientist) one: the phenomenological attitude, which is ultimately an attitude of neutralisation (with regard to the assertions, affirmations and theses proposed by the positive sciences).

The idea of philosophy as rigorous science is rooted in Plato and Aristotle (based on Socrates’ impetus of seeking the truth and on his aspiration toward knowledge and wisdom), for whom the activity of philosophising was closely related to both the empirical research of nature, and the mythical and religious thinking which appeared when the natural boundaries of what could be perceived, observed and stated were surpassed.

The Husserlian idea of philosophy as rigorous science germinates and sees the light as a counterpart of his critique of naturalism, historicism and philosophy as *Weltanschauung*. For Husserl, philosophy is a universal science¹ which tries to discover and underline the generally valid structures of human thinking and doing. In order to achieve this goal, philosophy should use a rigorous method to gain access to the way in which phenomena appear to (pure) consciousness, as well as to the way in which they lead, through consciousness’s subjectivity,

¹ This statement does not imply that philosophy would be a science, similar in status with positive sciences. The term ‘science’ should be taken into account, in this context, in a wide sense which goes back to its initial meaning (inspired by Socrates and Plato) and not according to its modern usage (by modern sciences). What Husserl has in mind by underlying philosophy as rigorous science is not a reduction of philosophy to science, but a re-signifying of what usually is understood as science, a re-signifying of scientificity as such (see Olaru 2004, 310). To this effect, Husserl states that: “Only as philosophy is science rigorous, science in its most pregnant sense” (Husserl 1956, 56). Therefore, with regard to the Husserlian perspective on this matter, maybe a more appropriate expression than ‘philosophy as science’ or ‘scientific philosophy’ would be ‘philosophic science’ or ‘rigorous philosophic science’.

to the constitution of knowledge (in general, and in particular to objective knowledge). According to Husserl, phenomenology is the necessary condition for the possibility of developing a rigorous (truly scientific), empirical psychology, but also a general (objective) theory of human thinking, feeling and action.

Philosophy as rigorous science turns its searing attention from the knowledge of (external) things to the structures of consciousness. For Husserl, the psychologism and positivism of his time represented completely misleading paths of research because they followed the road carved out by positive sciences, whereas philosophy had to constitute itself as rigorous science by reorienting its gaze from the objectifying knowledge of transcendent objects to the knowledge of the subjectivity of consciousness and its structures wherein and through which any kind of possible knowledge is established. In other words, it entailed a reorientation from the external, positive reality toward 'the reality' of consciousness and the manner in which things appear to it as such. The investigation of consciousness and its structures must precede, according to Husserl, any research of the objects from the external world, of the Cartesian *res extensa*, because the reality of external things cannot be given independently of consciousness and it has sense for us only through consciousness. Therefore, consciousness is intentional, that is always *consciousness-of-something*. In this way, Husserl accords primacy to consciousness over the transcendent world, endowing it with primordial status in relation to the objects of the transcendent world, as well as to any possible knowledge concerning them.

By arguing in favour of the pre-eminence of consciousness, Husserl proposes a re-evaluation and re-valuing (from both an ontological and epistemic point of view) of what is concrete, of the subjective lived experience (in a transcendental sense) wherein and through which any possible reality, any phenomenon or thing/object from the outer world comes to be given as such. Keeping his eyes on the ideal of rational rigour, Husserl undertakes to rehabilitate the concrete, the lived experience and the subjective in general, in a historical time when these themes were not only neglected, but their genuine potential to produce, engender or ground knowledge in any way was vehemently denied. Proofs of this state of affairs are the main philosophical trends from this period: naturalism, psychologism and positivism, which together brought on a serious crisis of grounds and foundations (in philosophy, as well as in other sciences such as mathematics). In this difficult context, Husserl develops the idea as rigorous science by a detailed and thorough critique of the above mentioned theories. If philosophy aspires to be a rigorous science, it must steer clear of naturalism, positivism, psychologism, historicism or philosophy as *Weltanschauung*. They are, for Husserl, a kind of

pseudo-philosophies, misleading directions which veer, sooner or later, into a *cul-de-sac* of reason and of its undisputed powers of insight and knowledge. They occult the authentic sense of philosophy and render opaque the originary impetus of philosophising which is to seek the truth in accordance with the rigorous laws of reason. The Husserlian maxim with regard to the necessity of going back to “the things themselves” may be understood, in this context, primarily as a going back to the ways in which the diverse phenomena appear to consciousness. To wit, a return to the research of consciousness and its structures; *expressis verbis*: a going back to investigating the essence of pure consciousness and the eidetic laws which structure, *in an a priori manner*, the entire life of consciousness.

The relevance of philosophy as rigorous science for the research undertaken by other sciences

Generally speaking, behind the basic concepts that are meant to compose and clarify the scientific theories describing reality, behind the scientific discoveries from any field and behind the way in which are conceived and built the experiments that verify scientific ideas, lays human subjectivity. One of the fundamental problems tackled by phenomenology is the (transcendental) subjectivity and its relationship with objectivity on the whole. Husserlian phenomenology emphasizes that the scientific objectivity itself is constituted in and by transcendental subjectivity (and, evidently, taking a step further, in and by transcendental intersubjectivity). Phenomenology argues that ultimately science itself is grounded in subjectivity. Therefore, as any method or procedure or scientific experiment involves the observer, the consciousness which observes the operations taking place, science itself has its ultimate ground in human subjectivity. And in order not to succumb to a kind of psychological subjectivism or subjectivist psychologism, we should add that this perspective over the grounding of science in subjectivity is transcendental. However objective a certain scientific theory or experiment, they remain nevertheless closely tied with, and conditioned by, human consciousness, by human subjectivity (in a transcendental sense).

The researcher (either from the sciences called ‘spiritual’, or from the natural ones) usually makes all kinds of assertions with regard to his object of research, to a certain state of affairs without paying too much attention to the significance of his own assertions and without analysing them from the point of view of their intentional ‘load’ (or ‘charge’). Phenomenology reconnects the researcher’s statements not only with the empirical state of

affairs that they envisage, but also with their noematic content, with their intrinsic intentional sense. Consequently, as *rigorous science*, phenomenology emphasizes and interrogates the *a priori* context of all other sciences.

For Husserl, phenomenology acts as an indispensable grounding path for the development of empirical psychology as objective science with regard to the fields of human knowledge, feeling and doing. At the same time, Husserlian phenomenology offers a valuable critique of the theoretical tendencies toward a reductionist “naturalization” of consciousness (in philosophy and psychology) expressed at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Naturalism (in Husserl’s time) assimilates faultily the methods used in philosophy and psychology with those from the natural sciences (physics, chemistry and biology) (Diehl 2005, 203). This identification is, according to Husserl, one of the most serious errors to make because it is caused by a lack of critical, philosophical *reflection* on the method, objectives and goals of different sciences or scientific fields, as well as on the entire psychic domain to which we have access in a subjective and introspective way. On the other hand, this deficiency in philosophical reflection is also at play in the fields of logic and the theory of knowledge, which both envisage what can be perceived and analysed in a rational manner.

Lack of philosophical reflection leads essentially to serious errors such as: the reification of the psychic realm, the negation of the subjective reality of the psychical field, the neglect of reflection with regard to the *a priori* conditions and categorial structures of thinking. Therefore, the philosophical (i.e. phenomenological) reflection should be applied both to the entire sphere of theoretical knowledge and to the practical one.

In his programmatic article from 1911, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, Husserl conceives philosophy as a *universal* science, and at the same time, as an *authentic* science. The ideal of philosophy as rigorous science is rooted by Husserl in the dawn of philosophy: “From its earliest beginnings philosophy has claimed to be rigorous science” (Husserl 1994, 5; Husserl 1987, 3). What has ensued from this originary grounding moment was, from Husserl’s perspective, a series of philosophical endeavours to achieve this ideal, more or less directly, more or less successfully. According to Husserl’s diagnosis, this ideal has never been attained and exactly for this reason to resume this task represents one of the most important and stringent requirements which should be re-analysed and accomplished before any other philosophical ventures. That is why Husserl takes up this difficult task to elaborate afresh a first philosophy. Similar moments and attempts alike have been registered in the history of

philosophy. For example, at its beginnings (with Socrates and Plato), philosophy tried to be a rigorous science which seeks the truth according to the laws and principles of reason; or during the 17th and 18th centuries, especially with Descartes; and, evidently, with Kant. Even though philosophy has not reached this ideal of scientificity, its accumulated efforts helped, in a central way, the birth and foundation of the other sciences.

In order to play an essential role in the grounding of the other sciences, philosophy as rigorous science must firstly ground itself. Appealing to the Socrates-Plato's sense of philosophy, Husserl deems that "the problematic of a 'rigorous science' is part of the problematic of a *grounding science in a universal sense*, and this includes in itself *the theme of the self-grounding of philosophy as philosophy in an authentic sense*" (Olaru 2004, 33). If philosophy is meant to become a founding science in a universal sense, then it has to, initially, ground itself in a rigorous manner, and consequently as rigorous science. In a certain sense, phenomenology represents in fact the propaedeutic necessary for a philosophy that aims to embrace this role as rigorous science, as well as grounding science for the other sciences.

Critique of naturalism, historicism and philosophy as *Weltanschauung*

Husserl develops the idea of philosophy as rigorous science by critically analysing the following three thinking trends:

- *naturalism* (positivism is included here also);
- *historicism* (Dilthey is targeted here);

These two perspectives are picked out by Husserl because they both take into account a rigorously scientific reform of philosophy. On the one hand, naturalism claims to have already carried out this reform, whereas, on the other, historicism opposes naturalism by proposing the idea of philosophy understood rather as *Weltanschauung*.

- *philosophy as Weltanschauung* (a personal, private and subjective – in a psychological sense – perspective over the world).

The idea of philosophy as rigorous science (i.e. phenomenology) had been laid out and matured exactly in order to counter these philosophical trends. It tries to describe, clarify and understand without any prejudices what appears as such to consciousness. On the other hand, the idea of philosophy as *Weltanschauung* cannot lead, according to Husserl, but to a mire of

all sorts of psychological subjectivisms because it overestimates the role of the psychological subjectivity of the individual in the process of attaining objective knowledge.

The biggest error of naturalism, from Husserl's point of view, consists in the naturalization of consciousness and ideas (of the ideal level, or the eidetic one). One of the consequences of the naturalist stand is the conception of the laws of logic as *natural* laws of thinking. And this leads further to a naturalist-scientific philosophy which is no longer able to account neither for ideality, the necessity and universality of logical principles and laws of thinking, nor for entire fields of human thinking and doing, such as ethics or axiology. Therefore, naturalism understands the idea of rigorous science as naturalist-positivist science and tries to ground philosophy in this positive science (Husserl 1994, 14; Husserl 1987, 11). Husserl counteracts by arguing that it is self-evident that philosophy (as *grounding science in a universal sense*) founds any positive science and not the other way round.

For example, the naturalist perspective from psychology makes the serious error, according to Husserl, of attempting to investigate psychic phenomena by using similar methods to those from the natural sciences (naturalization of psychic phenomena) and ignores what phenomenology (of the acts of consciousness) has to offer with regard to method, as well as content. Therefore, Husserl's conclusion is that naturalism leads, in fact, inevitably to an unacceptable reductionism.

The way toward philosophy as rigorous science passes through the critique of naturalism, but also of historicism. According to the latter, the diverse philosophical trends and schools of thought are configurations of culture engendered in certain historical circumstances determined by a certain epoch. However, by following the thread of the argument until its final consequences, it becomes clear that the historicist perspective ultimately contests the objective validity of the other sciences. Hence, it is necessary to conceive of sciences "not only as spiritual configurations, but also as unities of validity" (Husserl 1994, 51; Husserl 1987, 43). Otherwise, it would lead to sceptical subjectivism: "It is easy to see that historicism, if consequently carried through, carries over into extreme sceptical subjectivism. The ideas of truth, theory and science would then, like all ideas, lose their absolute validity." (Husserl 1994, 5; Husserl 1987, 43). Husserl reproaches historicism with the lack of rigour of philosophical reflection with regard *to a priori* and regulative structures of human thinking and doing (Diehl 2005, 204).

Concerning philosophy as *Weltanschauung*, Husserl declares in his article from 1911, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* : “The ‘idea’ of *Weltanschauung* is consequently a different one for each time [...] The ‘idea’ of science, on the contrary, is a supra-temporal one, and here that means limited by no relatedness to the spirit of one time”. And then he adds: “Science is a title standing for absolute, timeless values” (Husserl 1994, 62; Husserl 1987, 52). What Husserl strives to resuscitate in this way is the idea of an authentic, rigorous knowledge. Philosophy should become, according to Husserl, *strenge Wissenschaft*² and not *Weltanschauung*.

The manner in which naturalism tried to shape philosophy as rigorous science was wrong from the start; on the other hand, historicism, although rejecting the naturalist claims, ended up in an unacceptable historic relativism even if the supporters of philosophy as *Weltanschauung* purported to present the correct version of a scientific philosophy, carried out on the bases of the other sciences, already constituted. This philosophy would have been encompassing and erected on the results of positive sciences. But, according to Husserl, the idea of philosophy as *Weltanschauung* should be overridden by the idea of a philosophy as rigorous philosophical science (reference to the old Greek philosophy), and, as we shall see below, as (phenomenological) critique of reason.

Philosophy as science of reflection and philosophy as (phenomenological) critique of reason

For Husserl, philosophy as rigorous science is a science of reflection. Taken in this way, it is defined by a double delimitation: in relation to *natural sciences* (the empirical and mathematical levels), and in relation to *spiritual sciences* (the historical and hermeneutical levels). Therefore, philosophy should be constituted (with regard to its own method and content) as a science of reflection and take a different path than the two types of sciences mentioned above. This path is similar to a certain extent to the Kantian project of the critique of reason. Nevertheless, philosophy as science of reflection, in a Husserlian sense, is different

² Several critics remark upon the fact that, in the context of the Husserlian project, the adequate syntagm to use would be ‘rigorous scientificity’ and not ‘rigorous science’. Husserl tries thus to circumscribe and determine the concept of universally valid, systematic science. Both particular sciences and philosophy aim, according to this perspective, to reach and gain a ‘rigorous scientificity’ which means, at the same time, sticking with the rigorous research of a particular problem and the questioning of the conditions of possibility of the research as such (and this, in turn, enables the elements connected to the grounds of the research in question to stand out). See Orth, E.W. 1999. *Edmund Husserls 'Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie'. Vernunft und Kultur*. Darmstadt: WBG (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).

from Descartes's method of radical doubt and from the Kantian method of transcendental philosophy with regard to the conditions of possibility of knowledge.

As science of reflection (or reflective science) and as a *sui generis* form of knowledge, philosophy should combat these two tendencies of thinking, fraught with mistakes: naturalism from the natural sciences and historicism from the spiritual sciences, which both misconstrue the idea of philosophy as rigorous science. On one hand, natural sciences exert an increasing influence over social and human sciences (sociology, psychology, etc.) because of their aspiration toward objectivity (which leads mostly to a reductionist objectification or reification of the psychic sphere – of the subjectivity and intentionality of psychic phenomena). On the other hand, spiritual sciences produce, according to Husserl, an excessive historicization and relativization of the representations, convictions and goals of the spiritual life of man, which ultimately entail to abandon the attempts to reach scientific objectivity and principles and norms that hold a general validity in social and human sciences (as well as in such fields as applied ethics, law and legal system). This situation inevitably engenders an erroneous perspective (because reductionist and false) over human personality and man's spiritual capacities, as well as a distorted understanding of alterity and the other, which endangers the recognition of personal dignity, of the unicity and irreducibility of each human being. In view of these unwelcomed outcomes delineated by Husserl, it is necessary, more than ever, to go back to *reflection* and to strive to re-ground philosophy as rigorous, reflective science. To absorb, uncritically and unquestioningly, the scientific methods and attitudes of natural sciences (especially their naturalist tendencies) and those of spiritual sciences (especially their historicist and relativist tendencies) within philosophy, and, furthermore, within all social and human sciences, represents a serious danger for the entire human culture. This illicit transfer of methods and attitudes from natural and spiritual sciences to philosophy brings about the naturalization, historicization and relativization of all norms, principles, values and ideas. This means, according to Husserl, extreme empiricism and scientific positivism (which in fact is self-contradictory and ends in a stalemate of reason), as well as ethical and moral scepticism and relativism (which can degenerate any time into a real moral anarchy) with poisonous and nefarious consequences for the entire culture and society.

We can notice at least several of the profound motivations that convinced Husserl to assume the arduous task of elaborating the idea of philosophy as rigorous science by shedding light upon the necessity to go back to the idea of reflection and to philosophising as radical, reflective activity.

For Husserl, philosophy as rigorous science has the task to reflect on the universally valid principles of rational thought in general which apply to all life's realms. In other words, philosophy is meant to become a true and authentic critique of reason. This critique of reason is, more precisely, a *phenomenological* critique of reason. The understanding of philosophy as critique of reason determined Husserl to go from descriptive phenomenology to transcendental phenomenology. The attempt to ground the other sciences in and through transcendental phenomenology will be followed by another endeavour, very suggestive for Husserl's entire philosophical perspective: going back to the problematic of egological phenomenology and the elaboration of the concept of *Lebenswelt*.

How is it possible to pass from the subjective psychic area (whose characteristic is the introspection with regard to the data of consciousness) toward certain generally valid and interpersonally testable conclusions that are specific to the (objective) critique of reason? This possibility stems from the fact that philosophy, as reflective science or critique of reason, understands itself, firstly and primarily, as a critical-argumentative activity which envisages the *a priori* validity of the principles, norms and abstract rules of human thinking and doing (Diehl 2005, 207). How well suited is, for example, introspection for emphasizing and extricating the structures of consciousness through which the phenomenal contents appear? Or how can certain acts of intuition play an important role in knowledge in general, when the contents of the said intuitions belong themselves to the subjective level which is not objectivatable as such without residue? Is the method used by Husserl in his descriptive phenomenology apt to develop a (phenomenological) critique of reason?

As reflective-critical science, philosophy should delimit itself rigorously from all particular sciences, be they formal, natural or spiritual sciences, social or behavioural sciences, practical or cultural sciences etc. And this is so because philosophy grasps itself in understanding as science of *a priori* and reflective research of the foundations of all domains of reason (theoretical, formal or practical) (Diehl 2005, 208).

Science of reflection and logic

Husserl does not refute naturalism, psychologism or historicism by endorsing, at the opposite pole, logicism. In reality, an extreme logicist stand would only reinforce psychologist or historicist reactions. Husserl tries with phenomenology to find a philosophically coherent and relevant middle way between logicism and psychologism, or better said between logic and

psychology, between objectivity and subjectivity, whose stake consists in ‘conciliating’ the objectivity of knowledge with the subjectivity of consciousness. He attempts to find a method able to account harmoniously or complementarily for the without (which is intrinsic to any science of man), as well as for the within (which is the condition *par excellence* of philosophy), for contingency, as well as for rational certitude (Merleau-Ponty 1975, 14).

Philosophical reflection does not cause a breaking in the bond we usually have with the world. The essential role of reflection is to re-give us the world such as it was before carrying out the reflection (see the problematic of *Lebenswelt* in *Krisis*³), but from another perspective, a world that is brought about by pushing aside the multitude of our naïve or scientist prejudices. Reflection sweeps clear the path toward what comes to show and give itself as such, in an originary way: the things themselves.

Rigorous science is based upon the universality of the laws of logic. And for Husserl, these laws are in accordance with and an expression of the internal structure of the world. Therefore, the laws of thinking are laws of being. However, the universality of logic’s laws is not grounded in facts, but in the fundamental evidence, based on reflection, that what we think cannot be in contradiction with the laws of thinking itself (logical principles) and with the states of affairs to which they refer. Philosophy as rigorous science is a progressive, reflective activity which should always be renewed, over and over again, with regard to the ultimate validity of the ideas and principles according to which reason governs. That is why Husserl declares that philosophy is actually an infinite meditation.

The ultimate level of foundation of the objectivity of knowledge is rooted, according to Husserl’s phenomenology, in transcendental subjectivity, which, in its turn, is grounded in transcendental intersubjectivity. Toward the end of his life, Husserl states that the ultimate and most radical subjectivity (transcendental subjectivity) is essentially intersubjectivity (Merleau-Ponty 1975, 13). In this context, it should be taken into consideration the subjective turn (*die subjektive Wendung*) (Husserl 1974, 46) of logic that Husserl details in his work *Formale und transzendente Logik*⁴ from 1929.

To the subjective turn of logic corresponds its transcendental approach by Husserl who aims to show that any objectivity in general is constituted in and through subjectivity. Likewise, he

³ Husserl, Edmund. 1976. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, hrsg. von Walter Biemel. Haag: Martinus Nijhoff – Husserliana VI.

⁴ For the references to this work, see the edition: Husserl, Edmund. 1974. *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*, hrsg. von Paul Janssen. Den Haag, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff – Husserliana XVII.

envisages elaborating a system of eidetic disciplines meant to account for the transcendental foundation of any other sciences already constituted within the natural attitude. It is important to say, in this sense, that Husserl proposes a transcendental grounding of the logical operations themselves as such. Aside the task of analysing how logic is rooted in transcendental subjectivity, Husserl takes up again, in his *Formale und transzendente Logik*, the task, about which he spoke previously in *Logical Investigations*⁵, of grounding logic as theory of sciences (*Logik als Wissenschaftslehre*) (Husserl 1974, 32).

The relationship between phenomenology and psychology

But is the phenomenological, radical reflection able to operate a thorough and clear distinction between the empirical and eidetic levels of scientificity? Usually, this type of delineation seems to faintly show its relevance once the difference between the natural and phenomenological attitudes has been established by the kind of thematic orientation that the science in question demands: sciences that manifest an essential interest in the outer world, and respectively sciences directed inwardly, towards the operative immanence of the conscious subject, carefully parenthesized. However, what happens when the two varieties of scientificity – empirical and eidetic - seem to, either partially, or completely coincide despite the decisive cut operated by the phenomenological reduction? This is the case of the difficult and, to a certain extent, still obscure relationship between empirical and eidetic psychology.

Emotion is a relevant example for the analysis of the relationship between phenomenology and psychology. Psychology conceives emotion as both a psychic and corporal state and tries to establish which one of them is the cause of the other. In this regard, phenomenology attempts to stay neutral and to not postulate from the start that emotion is something psychic or something physical. Phenomenology, through what is called *eidetic reflection*, does not ask what is emotion, but rather what does it signify, what is its meaning. Thus, emotion is deemed to be a total act of consciousness, a certain type of relationship of the consciousness with the world. Phenomenological probing tries to determine and to indicate what exactly is intended by emotion, which is the noematic correlation of the emotional intending⁶ (Merleau-

⁵ See *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*: Husserl, Edmund. 1975. *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Teil. Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, hrsg. von Elmar Holenstein. Den Haag, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff – Husserliana XVIII.

⁶ In his introduction to *Ideen I*, Husserl makes the following remark with regard to the relationship between phenomenology and psychology: “[...] I can sharply emphasize from the start that *pure phenomenology* [...] is *not psychology* and that neither accidental delimitations of its field nor its terminologies, but *most radical*

Ponty 1975, 28). Nevertheless, certain psychologists elaborated theories which were very close to the phenomenological perspective. For example, Pierre Janet who asks what is the sense of emotion, or Freud for whom emotion represents a symbolic achievement in the framework of the behavioural dynamic, and psychic facts in general, such as dreams, have a signification, a sense that requires decoding, deciphering.

According to Husserl, psychology is meant to develop its own eidetic side, to become an eidetic psychology. And eidetic psychology must not be confounded with or reduced to empirical psychology. Husserl states that the relationship between eidetic and empirical psychology is analogue to the relationship between sociology and statistics. Even though statistics is necessary to sociology, it is not sociology as such. For statistics to gain a true social significance, it should firstly be integrated in a broader, sociological, perspective of defining the social phenomenon and the signification of social action. Still, the clear delimitation between empirical and eidetic psychology is hard to accomplish because even in experimental research or in the observation of the simplest facts, the psychologist uses procedures typical of eidetic psychology and phenomenology: intuition of essences (*Wesenschau*), introspection or, to a certain extent, *reflection*.

In order to better grasp these last arguments, we can choose as example the analogy with physics. Galilei not only carried out experimental measurements, but, within their framework, he fully used eidetic procedures, achieving thus a re-definition of the physical object (and this refers already to a superior level – eidetic or phenomenological – where measurements, experiments and observations become the starting point for putting into question the sense of the physical object itself, its signification). Physicians like Galilei had an intuition of what the physical object means. And this intuition is, according to Husserl, an eidetic intuition which goes beyond mere observation of physical phenomena. All the ulterior contributors to the development of the notion of physical thing (object) contributed, to all intents and purposes, to the development of an eidetic of the physical thing. For this reason, insight into essences or the knowledge founded upon eidetic intuition and upon eidetic procedures does not constitute the sole and exclusive prerogative of phenomenologists. On the contrary, every time that the foundations of a science come into disrepute and demand a radical reconfiguration, scientists become also phenomenologists because they work at an eidetic level specific to philosophical

essential grounds, prevent its inclusion in psychology. [...] pure phenomenology (if only because it is a science of ideas) is no more psychology than geometry is natural science.” See Husserl 1983, XVIII-XIX.

and phenomenological interrogation. Eidetic intuition and the knowledge based on it are involved in the experimental activity itself of the other sciences.

Concerning the relationship between eidetic and empirical psychology, it should be noted that they entail different methods and logical procedures. Eidetic psychology employs the eidetic intuition obtained through imaginary variation (hence, a procedure of imaginary variation), whereas empirical psychology uses induction and empirical generalization⁷.

Psychological knowledge cannot and must not be reduced to the mere experience of facts, nor must it be conceived merely as reflection on facts or experiences. It is both reflection and experience. For this reason, Husserl uses in this sense the term 'material *a priori*'. Psychology is, as Merleau-Ponty rightly stated, a sort of methodical reading of phenomena from within and without the human being and of the signification of human behaviour. Phenomenological psychology, in a general sense, is a research or investigation of essence or sense, but not outside the facts (Merleau-Ponty 1975, 77) because, ultimately, the essence becomes accessible only through the contact with the particular situations in which it appears and manifests itself as such.

Philosophy as rigorous science and human and social sciences

The relevance of human and social sciences (for example, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology etc.) for the proper course and well-adjusted workings of a society cannot be thought of in a completely separate way from the essential role that philosophy can play in the self-clarification of these disciplines. The seminal contribution of philosophy to the elucidation of the foundations of human and social sciences certainly deserves a more comprehensive and meticulous analysis, as well as a series of applied studies with regard to each science concerned. In the context of this paper, however, I will restrict my investigation to only certain general considerations about the ability of philosophy as rigorous science (i.e. phenomenology) to help this type of sciences achieve self-clarity.

Concerning psychology, sociology, history and every other human or social science, Husserlian phenomenology proposes the development of an eidetics specific to the science in question (an eidetic side which corresponds, in fact, to the fundamental level or to the ultimate

⁷ For more details concerning the difference between eidetic intuition (or 'insight into essence' – *Wesensschau*) and induction, see, for example, Merleau-Ponty 1975, 38-41.

foundations of the respective science). This eidetics represents, according to Husserl, the *a priori* layer of that particular science and its mission is to determine the valid sense of certain fundamental notions used by the scientist (historian, psychologist, sociologist etc.) without, nevertheless, a proper and serious, radical reflection on their intrinsic validity. The scientist has to clarify the sense and meaning of such fundamental notions as objective science, social process, social action, religion, culture, consciousness, etc. before drawing any conclusions with regard to his observations of empirical facts, to his own field of activity. Moreover, the definition of these terms cannot be attained, from Husserl's perspective, solely on the basis of the processes of observation of empirical facts or experiments, but, in equal measure, it entails a radical *reflection* on the sense or the signification of these concepts for the science in question according to the logical principles or laws of thinking. For this reason, Husserl deems logic to be a grounding fundament for any science, and phenomenology essential to their self-clarification.

The cultural realities and representations, when submitted to the attentive gaze of reflection in their becoming, exhibit a sort of sedimented history of their own sense or meaning. This history of sense points to the becoming, changing and permanent transformation of the main concepts and notions of sciences. For example, Euclidian geometry will be redefined and modified by subsequent non-Euclidian geometries. The geometry of the 19th century takes up the idea of space from Euclidian geometry but redefines it in such a way that the Euclidian space loses its characteristic of absolute reference point and becomes a particular case of the space conceived in a broader and more general manner. In this regard, the idea of Euclidian space represents a cultural reality. A similar evolution and the same continual redefinition of fundamental terms and basic notions of sciences, such as psychology, anthropology, linguistics etc. may be observed from the perspective of their ultimate sense and relevance attested by a philosophical analysis as rigorous science.

Likewise, a serious investigation of economic, political and social institutions demands the eidetic insights of philosophical reflection. In other words, it requires a critical discussion of the foundations of these institutions, including the ultimate grounds of the particular sciences which take an interest in them. Such an inquisitive analysis is based on a progressive knowledge which is not limited to a certain epoch and which complies with fundamental scientific requirements and tasks (always renewed, re-analysed, thoroughly scrutinized and defined anew) that incessantly transcend the historical and cultural realities of the era in question.

Nevertheless, an eidetics of history cannot do without the historical investigation as such because historical knowledge entails co-existence with the significations of a society and not just the mere solitary reflection of the historian. Philosophy as eidetics of history (i.e. the phenomenology of history) should research and attempt to understand primarily the experiences of social life, the experiences of human collectives deployed in time (what we usually call history) and only afterwards it can excavate, by reflecting on these experiences, their intrinsic sense, their ultimate signification. Therefore, an eidetics of history points to, first of all, the idea of an intentional history of sense, which brings into question the techy problem of genesis (in general, and, in particular of genesis of sense or meaning). Whereas at the start of his philosophical career Husserl did not put too much emphasis on the problematic of genesis (especially psychological genesis) from a phenomenological point of view, in the second section of his philosophical ventures (see, for example, *Cartesian Meditations*⁸) he bestows special attention upon and conveys considerable relevance to the idea of genesis and the formation of a genetic phenomenology.

To question the foundations of sciences represents a frequent and current practice in the researches undertaken by the philosophy of science. The investigation of the ultimate grounds of sciences, of the conditions and presuppositions that render possible sciences as such is a task related, primarily, to the idea of philosophy as rigorous science, as radical reflective science or (phenomenological) critique of reason.

Final remarks

Husserl's stake in developing the idea of philosophy as rigorous science (within the framework of transcendental phenomenology) is, in the long run, to help sciences reclaim their ultimate foundations. This entails also to upgrade sciences to their philosophical status (Husserl 1956, 56-57, 188). The understanding of philosophy as rigorous science means mainly to adhere to the task of elaborating a serious critique which precedes any form of knowledge, already constituted under the headline of one or the other of sciences, and which investigates both the conditions of possibility of this knowledge and the effective manner of its actualization. Thus, Husserl's endeavour to whip philosophy into a rigorous shape through

⁸ Husserl, Edmund. 1973. *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, hrsg. von S. Strasser. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff – Husserliana I.

a radical, reflective research, leads to a vital re-signification of the concept of science in general.

The Husserlian project to ground afresh philosophy as a rigorous science and to found anew in a rigorous way the sciences with the aid of philosophy (i.e. transcendental phenomenology) is due to the crisis that afflicted the sciences, and especially the philosophy of his time. In this regard, Husserl's efforts targeted primarily the possible solutions to the crisis of philosophy (which was called to clarify the other sciences), to the crisis of human and social sciences (by confronting them directly with the problems that eroded their own fundamentals and foundations), as well as to the crisis of the sciences altogether (by the reconfiguration of the idea of science in general). Husserl employed the method of a radical reflection on the possibility of thinking and knowledge. Through this reflection with regard to the conditions of possibility of the constitution of knowledge and of developing a scientific character, philosophy as rigorous science shows that the sciences in general (and human and social sciences in particular) are more than able to function as rigorous sciences.

Philosophy as rigorous science (transcendental phenomenology) spotlights and discusses the totality of conditions and presuppositions the sciences as such are based upon. Hence, philosophy understands itself, in this sense, as a critical science of foundations. Starting with an actual datum (which also comprises particular sciences, along with their empirical or factual data) that is analysed in a minute and in-depth manner, phenomenology discovers, scrutinizes and emphasizes the conditions of possibility of the way of being and manifestation of this datum. To the extent to which it takes into account and questions exactly the conditions of possibility of particular sciences (hence, their foundations), but also their historical determinations (belonging to a certain epoch) and the diverse forms of their becoming (wherefrom it extracts and distils their intentional sense or meaning), philosophy as rigorous science is an abreast-with-the-time endeavour *par excellence*, which still has something essential and relevant to say about ourselves, the world we live in and the unbreakable relationship between the two sides of the same, old coin: objectivity and subjectivity.

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