

# INTRODUCTION

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Husserl's phenomenology has sometimes been harshly criticized for its methodological and philosophical basis: transcendental idealism. At first glance, the thesis that phenomena exhaust the whole meaning of reality's being (a thesis which gives the phenomenological movement its name) seems to anchor phenomenology in a form of idealism. Indeed, from the very beginning of the phenomenological movement, phenomenologists have distanced themselves from an idealism that would presuppose subjectivist principles, or that would prevent access to things in themselves or to other conscious subjects in their dimension of transcendence. Already among the phenomenologists of the very first generation, Husserl's transition from the *Logical Investigations* (Hua XVIII-XX) to the transcendental idealism of *Ideen I* (Hua III-2) was a turn in the wrong direction. Many phenomenologists believed that in order to remain faithful to the philosophical aims and ideals of phenomenology, the idealism inherent to transcendental phenomenology would need to be abandoned. Nevertheless, from Fink to A. Schnell, transcendental phenomenology—and its idealism—has persisted in claiming to be the authentic form of phenomenology. As Husserl himself argued in the Fourth of the *Cartesian Meditations*, only a misunderstanding of the transcendental reduction and the intentional method could justify separating phenomenology from transcendental idealism. (Hua I, 119; 86).

If we try to retrace a single thread that runs through the various reversals of perspective and method among the representatives of the phenomenological movement, two problems arise: one concerning the status of the transcendental, and another concerning the relationship of phenomenology to idealism. This book attempts to address these two problems from different perspectives that allow us to clarify the key concepts of transcendental phenomenology. On the one hand, the contributors to this volume identify the paradoxes internal to the idealist and transcendental perspective in phenomenology and propose solutions based on a careful reevaluation of texts from the phenomenological as well as the idealist philosophical tradition. On the other hand, the contributions revisit the motivations for phenomenologists adopting transcendental idealism by establishing conceptual and methodological dialogues between its various representatives.

The precise nature of the transcendental is an issue that extends to the whole history of philosophy. More precisely, it is a question that is at the crossroads of the history of philosophy and that of phenomenology—a crossroads that can be understood in the way Husserl described in the *Krisis* (Hua VI), as the manifestation of a single teleological history of reason. Starting from the idea of an excess in Aristotelian categories to the Scholastic transcendentals, the transcendental possessed an ontological dignity which, in the late modern period—and specifically with Kant—was oriented toward an epistemological framework. For Kant, in fact, the transcendental is related to the conditions of the possibility of experience and knowledge. Kant’s “German Idealist” successors were then confronted with the challenge of overcoming this strictly epistemological approach, which was perceived as a limitation of the mind’s access to the transcendental.

When Husserl calls his transcendental phenomenology *idealism*, he aims to give a new meaning to an old term. For Husserl, idealism refers less to the construction of a system as it does to the recovery of the powers of the mind: equipping it with

intuition that is not merely empirical, but categorical, *eidetic* and intellectual. Similarly, the transcendental must be understood through the noetic-noematic correlation, which reveals the experience of the constitution of meaning. It does not simply designate the conditions of the possibility of knowledge, but also the opacity inherent in the operative life of consciousness, and the dynamic of its escape from any static categorization: the impossibility of experience being grasped under the category of “thing” or “fact.”

From the first generation of phenomenologists, voices have sought to develop another phenomenology freed from Husserl’s transcendental apparatus: the Munich-Göttingen school (Pfänder, Reinach, Conrad-Martius, Scheler) sought to orient phenomenology toward an ontological, realist or naturalist path—while the existential tradition, inaugurated by Heidegger, substitutes *Dasein* for transcendental subjectivity. Within post-Husserlian phenomenology, the critique of Husserl’s transcendental idealism and of German Idealism became commonplace, as found in the writings of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir and Ricoeur—it was often influenced by the Marxist interpretation of German Idealism, which was a critique of the system’s distance from reality. Finally, in recent years, attempts have been developed to naturalize phenomenology and German Idealism; to integrate the transcendental perspective into experimental protocols (Bitbol 2014; Malabou 2009).

The transcendental, a theme very much debated in contemporary philosophical studies today, is not always examined in terms of its anchorage in idealism, even though it is assumed to be. Unlike other studies of the subject, this collective work attempts to show the paradoxical relationship between phenomenology and idealism. This paradoxical relationship appears both within the phenomenological method and in the relationship of the phenomenological corpus with other idealist thinkers in the history of philosophy. This will allow us to find concrete applications to topics such as emotions, aesthetics and philosophical anthropology, but also to explore the metaphysical significance

of phenomenology as transcendental idealism. It allows us also to examine the justification of idealism and the reasons why it may or may not be legitimate to adopt an idealistic position.

The confrontation between the history of phenomenology and the idealist tradition has been the theme of recent works, including the collective work *Husserl, Kant and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Serban, Apostolescu 2022), which interprets Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in the light of the Kant. While some contributions in the present volume question the Kantian influence on phenomenology altogether, it also attempts to rekindle other dialogues, notably those between representatives of the phenomenological tradition and Schelling. On this issue, *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism and Phenomenology* (Coe 2021), proposes a systematic approach, divided by themes, whereas we propose more to problematize specifically, and without claiming to address all areas of philosophy, the common thread of transcendental idealism in the sense that, here, the transcendental cannot be studied independently of its idealist anchorage.

The difficulties raised by the transcendental were the subject of a recent publication, *Les limites du transcendantal* edited by Jean-Baptiste Fournier and Laura Tavernier, which distinguishes four limits of the transcendental (a metaphysical or speculative limit, an empirical one, an epistemological one and a historical one) in the history of modern and contemporary philosophy (Fournier, Tavernier 2023, 11). The question of the limits of the transcendental, while animating some of the contributions in our book, does not exhaust it, insofar as transcendental idealism is here considered from the point of view of what it allows us to think phenomenologically, whether in the form of a critique of the method or an exploration of what it allows us to resolve.

Finally, the collective book *La philosophie transcendantale aujourd'hui* (Fazakas, Slama 2023) proposes several critical studies to the phenomenology of Alexander Schnell, whose generative and speculative approach today presents one of the strongest voices in the return of transcendental idealism to phenomenology.

Rereading the history of phenomenology as transcendental idealism means grasping the scope of a philosophical program that is undoubtedly as fruitful for what it proposes as for the difficulties it raises.

The aim of this book is to understand how phenomenology has been able to give the transcendental a form of philosophical necessity, by understanding itself as idealism. Today, idealism is at the heart of contemporary debates, particularly in the context of the strong and stimulating presence of realism, in the form of the so-called new realism. Indeed, as the recent collective book *Nouvelle philosophie en Allemagne et en France* (Benoist, Gabriel, Rometsch 2023) reminds us, the old opposition between idealism and realism, which seemed to have faded away some thirty years ago, is resurfacing today as a result of idealist or neo-idealist positions. These idealist positions often take the phenomenological method as their field, and transcendental philosophy as their horizon, which, since Husserl, has been inseparable from an idealist position.

Obviously, today's enthusiasm for research into idealism, transcendentalism and phenomenology is reorienting the old debates. The contributions to this book, all by young researchers, make this clear. Far from dogmatically defending idealism against all other philosophical positions, this book is conceived more as a historical rereading of the debates that have animated the history of phenomenology on the topic of transcendental idealism, which marked the originality of Husserl's phenomenology and has never ceased to be questioned.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part is devoted to investigating the relation between transcendental idealism and phenomenology and to shed light to the problems and issues inherent to the transcendental perspective. It takes up such issues as: what is the meaning of the transcendental and of idealism in Husserlian and post-Husserlian phenomenology?

Can phenomenology detach itself from a transcendental perspective? Can phenomenology detach itself from an idealist perspective? What are the advantages and disadvantages of including these positions at the center of the phenomenological project? We will see that the different ways of understanding transcendental idealism in phenomenology shed different light on concepts such as embodiment, intentionality, reason, truth, meaning and science.

Contrary to the perspectives that attempt to identify a break between a realist Husserl and an idealist and transcendental Husserl from 1913 onwards, in the first chapter, entitled “Husserl’s Idealistic-Transcendental Turn as a Coherent Development of the Theory of Truth and Sense in the First Phase of his Phenomenology,” Giulio Marchegiani shows that Husserlian transcendental idealism can be found in Husserl’s work from its very beginning. The author shows that the first formulation of Husserlian phenomenology in the *Logical Investigations* is in continuity with what is called the transcendental turn in *Ideas I*. Here, importance is given to the concepts of intuition and fulfillment, both of which are present in the phenomenological sense of truth in the *Logical Investigations* and which will lead to the noematic dimension of transcendental phenomenology. In this chapter, there is an attempt to defend the broad sense of Husserlian transcendental idealism and of the unity of the phenomenological project. Daniel Stil, in his article entitled “The Problem of Embodiment of Transcendental Subjectivity in Husserl’s Phenomenology,” also addresses the unity of the Husserlian project, but argues Husserl’s work can be understood to be united by the themes of embodiment and that of transcendental subjectivity. This is demonstrated from the identification of a paradox that constitutes subjectivity which is both subject and object. This paradox is resolved through the relevance of the spirit over nature, which allows us to conceive the immortality of transcendental subjectivity from a process of idealization and homogenization of the consciousness of time. Here, consciousness is treated as separate from the experience of embodiment. However, phenomenology allows

us to resist this separation when we decide not to overcome the paradox of corporeality, which allows us to refrain from the idealization of subjectivity.

The following two contributions conduct a dialogue between Husserl transcendental and other thinkers, to highlight important problems or key concepts of the transcendental project. For his part, Benjamin Straehli, in the chapter entitled “Does Science Need Transcendental Idealism? Pure Ego and Scientific Responsibility,” is concerned to question the necessity of transcendental idealism for science. He puts in dialogue the Husserlian transcendental and idealist perspective with Paulin Hountondji’s call for responsibility in science and with the importance of consciousness for mathematics according to Jean-Toussaint Desanti. According to Benjamin Straehli it is possible to find a way to conceptualize responsibility in science according to Husserlian phenomenology but only if, following Desanti’s reflections, the absolute foundation of the transcendental ego is abandoned. Zixuan Liu, in his article entitled “On the Unique Relationality of Intention as the Origin of Husserlian Transcendentality: A Laskian Critique of Phenomenal Intentionality,” establishes a dialogue between Husserl transcendental perspective and Emil Lask’s theory of meaning. From this dialogue, the chapter’s author critiques the Husserlian account of intentionality in a manner similar to Lask’s treatment of meaning: prereflexively it is not an entity, but on reflection we treat it as an entity. This allows us to gain, with this article, great clarity regarding the meaning of the Husserlian transcendental and the misunderstandings of intentionality.

The second part of this book will allow us precisely to review the historical background of phenomenological transcendental idealism. Thus, the main issue pursued in the second part of this book is the following: from a historical perspective, does phenomenology fit into the idealist tradition by extending it? Does German Idealism allow us to better understand the phenomenological project? Is the history of the concept of the transcendental

indispensable to phenomenology? Husserl himself comments upon the German Idealist tradition: not only in the *Krisis*, but also in his reflections on ethics as *Kunstlehre*. Theoretical motifs from the philosophies of Kant and Schelling have also been attributed to Husserlian and post-Husserlian phenomenology as in the case of Sartre.

In the fifth chapter, “Reason and World in Husserl and Whitehead: On two Paradoxical Monadologies,” Quentin Gailhac considers the way in which the question of the essence of reason constitutes a transcendental problem, on the basis of a comparison between Husserl and Whitehead. While Husserl’s pursuit of a phenomenology of reason, as a validating structure and not as a faculty, is a continuation of the transcendental idealism developed in *Ideas I* (Hua III-2), Whitehead’s development of a speculative and rational philosophy in *Process and Reality* that is nonetheless capable of accounting for experience seems, on the contrary, to be achieved through a realism that gives the performances of subjectivity a derivative character in relation to the process of reality. The author shows how the challenge of defining reason makes it possible to evaluate the philosophical status of idealism from a metaphysical point of view. Quentin Gailhac argues that in both of these two authors, the overcoming of Kantian idealism involves a re-appropriation of the Leibnizian monadological model, insofar as it allows us to think both of the historical becoming of the beings in the world and of their constitutive interrelationships.

The sixth chapter presents the relationship between Husserlian transcendental idealism and Kantian philosophy. Luz Ascarate, in the chapter entitled “The Possible and the Transcendental: Husserl’s Kantian Legacy,” explores the philosophical meaning of the transcendental from the concept of possibility and condition of possibility in Kant, which will allow her to establish points of encounter between Kant and Husserl. The author shows that the project of Husserlian phenomenology makes it possible to clarify the power to constitute reality that the concept of possibility possesses, if we distinguish between an actual or naive reality,



given to perception in a natural attitude, and a phenomenological and transcendental reality, which is not simply eidetic, accessible through imaginative capacity. This philosophical revolution of experience as constituted by the possible finds its full meaning in the relationship that, around the concept of possibility, can be established between Husserlian transcendental phenomenology and Kant's transcendental philosophy. But Kant is not only important for Husserl's phenomenological perspective, Kant is situated as an important idealist thinker for the whole phenomenological tradition. Thus, in the seventh chapter, the status of the thing-in-itself in Martin Heidegger's phenomenology is explored in "The Persistence of Kant's Thing-in-itself: The Case of *Being and Time*." In this contribution, Michael Blézy highlights the importance of this concept for the distinction between the "Reality" of Dasein and "the Real," as well as for ontological difference.

However, Kant is not the only idealist philosopher with whom the phenomenological tradition finds common ground. Another philosopher with whom this dialogue can be established is Schelling. Thus, Christos Kalpakidis, in the eighth chapter entitled "Realism and Freedom in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and F.W.J. Schelling's *Freedom Essay*," attempts to present a possible transformation of important aspects of the transcendental tradition, showing how Sartre and Schelling both articulate an ontological sense of freedom. This sense is capable of facing the problems of the idealist perspective in the sense that both thinkers manage to situate consciousness in reality while at the same time saving the independence of the latter with respect to consciousness, but also saving the self-determination of the agents.

The third part of the book looks at post-Husserlian overcoming of transcendental idealism, through various figures in the French phenomenological tradition. The overcoming of transcendental idealism has always placed greater emphasis on the critique of idealism than on that of the transcendental, as if the various overcoming of transcendental idealism criticized idealism

without renouncing the transcendental. The chapters in this part thus focus on redefining the transcendental by questioning the concepts of ontology, consciousness, existence, man, time and ego. Are the criticisms of the insertion of the transcendental and idealism in phenomenology the result of an understanding of the phenomenological project which surpasses Husserl's own? Or, on the contrary (as was Husserl's view), do they merely betray the authentic meaning of phenomenology? In this section we will see that the post-Husserlian phenomenological tradition, going beyond the perspective of transcendental idealism, either through critique or dialogue, but taking root in it, formulates novel philosophical projects in accordance with the spirit of the method of the tradition of phenomenology.

The ninth chapter, written by N'da Jonas Kouakou interrogates Merleau-Ponty's philosophy as transcendental phenomenology in order to overcome the common interpretation of his philosophy as neither realist nor idealist. The clarification of a "new transcendental phenomenology," notably in Merleau-Ponty's last philosophy, is to be understood as an a-constructive transcendental philosophy that the author deploys from two perspectives: that of the pre-theoretical conditions of possibility of knowledge, and that of a thought of totality. The first involves recapturing the meaning of an ontology of possibility, while the second requires the ambition of a transcendental phenomenology as a science of totality. This questioning allows to understand the conditions under which the basis of any idealist position—namely, subjectivity—can be overcome in a phenomenology that remains transcendental, even if in a new sense.

The tenth chapter looks at another way of moving beyond Husserlian idealism within the French tradition. In a text entitled "The Sartrean Modification of the Transcendental Concept: Moving beyond Idealism to Describe Concrete Existence," Michaël Crevoisier examines the transcendental heritage of Sartre's phenomenology, despite its critical stance towards idealism. From the primacy of knowledge that characterized Husserl's

transcendental idealism to the primacy of existence, Sartre's "modification of the transcendental" allows to characterize a type of experience that Sartre emphasizes in his analysis of the concreteness of intentional consciousness, namely existential experience. As existing consciousness, transcendental consciousness is thus defined in the light of the relation of the consciousness to the world, which directs phenomenological reflection towards patterns of human reality.

In the eleventh chapter, "The Anthropological Stakes of Henry's Critique of Transcendental Idealism," Renaud Mallet examines the critique of transcendental idealism in French phenomenology, focusing on the work of Michel Henry. This contribution aims to articulate the relation between phenomenology and anthropology, showing how Henry's critique of transcendental idealism gives rise to a philosophy of man. By thinking through the categories of transcendental life in opposition to any idealistic conception of our humanity, the French phenomenologist elaborates a "transcendental realism" that is integral to an atypical ontology for defining man. This allows the author to characterize Henry's humanism as an arch-humanism understood as a realist humanism, founded on a new concept of mind. It thus appears that material phenomenology makes possible a philosophy of man that criticizes the idealist conception of the transcendental, but maintains its non-idealist concretion.

Chapter twelfth, "On the Hermeneutics of Kairos: Moving Beyond the Transcendental," examines the phenomenology of time through the Greek concept of *Kairos* and its hermeneutical consequences, notably in Blumenberg. In this text, Tareq Ayoub explores the hermeneutics of time, articulating a specific conception of intersubjectivity and temporality, while paying attention to the philosophical repression of transcendental phenomenology. The move beyond the transcendental signifies the necessity of a hermeneutics of time as the foundation of a psychology of temporality, one that is based on its intersubjective and ethical affectivities rather than its logical interpretation.

The final chapter of the third part considers a final overcoming of transcendental idealism through the question of the critique of egology, in Heidegger and Patočka. In this chapter entitled “Decentering Transcendental Ego with Heidegger and Patočka and the Moment of Post-phenomenology,” Reinan dos Santos shows in what sense the critique of the transcendental ego made it possible to think of a phenomenology that would no longer take the transcendental ego as its foundation, which leads us to reflect on the possible meaning of the so-called “post-phenomenology” movement, distinguishing between a classical or orthodox phenomenology, a new phenomenology and a post-phenomenological phenomenology, whose distinctive feature would be a decentering in relation to the ego, which corresponds to a questioning of the foundation of phenomenology and the origin of appearance.

The various overcoming of idealism considered in the third part are thus accompanied by a strong revival of the transcendental, each time redefined in terms of a specific phenomenological project. In order to deepen our understanding of the transcendental as a critical form of idealism, the fourth section will examine a number of objects whose study reveals the scope of transcendental idealism, from Husserl to Dufrenne and to Enzo Paci. This section will look at the phenomenological uses of transcendental idealism in the philosophy of values and emotions, anthropology, aesthetics and the metaphysical question of the existence of God.

In the fourteenth chapter, titled “Enzo Paci and Ernesto De Martino: Crossed Views on Time and the Practice of Phenomenology,” Maririta Guerbo examines the challenge of historicizing the Kantian transcendental by comparing the Italian phenomenologist Enzo Paci with the ethnologist Ernesto De Martino. In his study of rituals in *Il mondo magico* (1948), De Martino challenges the idea of a formal, a priori structure of the transcendental subject through the notion of drama. By focusing on the influence of this book on Paci’s relationalism, the author shows in what sense the relational character of the categories implies, for the Italian

philosopher, that they cannot function if we have recourse to the transcendental self and if we underestimate the importance of space and time. The analysis of the symbol as a central concept for understanding temporality allows Paci to reread the very meaning of the phenomenological method, considering the signification of Husserlian phenomenology's motto, "back to things themselves," which is not purely and simply a return to the identical, but the repetition of a reflexive exercise, subject to failure, that distinguishes a certain practice of philosophy.

The fifteenth chapter, written by Circé Furtwängler and entitled "'The Materialization of the Transcendental in the Body': Dufrenne's Reading of Merleau-Ponty," focuses on Mikel Dufrenne's philosophy, which takes original root in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in the context of a redefinition of the Kantian concept of the transcendental from the aesthetic dimension of experience. Merleau-Ponty's overcoming of the Kantian conception of perception, determined by the possibility of knowledge, in a bodily experience rooted in the material world leads Dufrenne to assert that the *a priori* structures of experience are not merely formal, but also material and embodied. The role played by the affective *a priori* in the deformation of traditional transcendental philosophy has driven Dufrenne to search for an *a priori* of the *a priori*, leading to a Schellingian-inspired philosophy of nature that profoundly redefines the aims of a transcendental philosophy in the light of aesthetic perception.

The sixteenth chapter, written by Alexis Delamare, "Husserl's Idealism at Work: The Example of the Transcendentalization of Value" looks at the status of Husserlian idealism, and argues that Husserl's idealism, far from being the consequence of his philosophical intellectualism, is, on the contrary, the result of his non-intellectualism. To demonstrate this, the author uses the case of value and its relation to the affective dimension of experience, through three phases of what he calls a "dynamic of transcendentalization"; firstly, the phase of formal and material ontology, where value is an object as such, which presupposes the

existence of an axiological region; secondly, the phase of phenomenologization, which refers to how Husserl, between 1900 and 1913, conceives feeling as an experience of value; thirdly, the phase of transcendentalization of value, which shows how value, thanks to the concept of evidence, is transcendentalized in affective consciousness.

Finally, in the seventeenth and last chapter, “The Impact of Transcendental Turn on Husserl’s Early Notion of Metaphysics and his Peculiar Argument for the Existence of God,” Bence Marosan explores a little-studied area in Husserlian studies, namely the question of the proof of God’s existence. The author seeks to reconstruct Husserl’s argument for the existence of God, drawing on texts from 1906 to 1914 belonging to the transcendental turn. The chapter focuses on the metaphysical ambitions of this turn, and the place occupied at the time by the concepts of infinity, teleology and the objectivity of values, leading to the notion that the ideal of ultimate and infinite perfection of the world must assume the existence of an infinitely perfect being. The study of these different texts makes it possible to confront the transcendental turn in the perspective of the history of metaphysics.

We cannot conclude this introduction without first thanking each of the authors of these chapters, with whom we were able to exchange extensively on transcendental idealism in phenomenology in the framework of the Seminar of Young Researchers in Phenomenology organized, by the editors of this book, between September 2021 and June 2022 at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with the support of ISJPS (EXeCo-PhiCo) and HIPHIMO. The editors are deeply grateful to Michael Blézy for his careful reading and proofreading.

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