



# History Of Phenomenology: A Discourse With The Indian Philosophy

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Is it in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the rating of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, who is a radical new development in western philosophy. What did he explorers is in alternative approach to the truth from that which for the last few has been applying. In the past, it is as if he saw went all the way back to Plato he took a different turn off along the path to truth. This turn off has resulted in phenomenology having much more in common with the eastern schools more than any other school of the western tradition. In this paper we are going to look at the history and method of phenomenology and explorer, its kinship with Eastern philosophy in more depth. The seeds of phenomenology ca be traced back to Immanuel Kant's distinction between noumenal and world as it is experienced through our senses. The lead was taken by Hege in 19<sup>th</sup> centaury. Through the thread was picked up in the early 19 century but the birth of phenomenology is a philosophy school. Martin Heidegger in his 1928 work '*Being and Time*' is it defining moment in 20 century philosophy. After Second World War philosophy's centre move from Germany to France and there became a foundational aspect of existential philosophy. Its influence is written across the landscape of continental philosophy and everyone. The word phenomenology comes from the Greek phenomenon meaning "that which appears".

The school of phenomenology is dedicated to understanding consciousness in its raw form, taking first hand subjective experience as its starting within and objective word for nature. It is and experiential rather than a rationalist philosophy. So if I were to study time through rationalist perspective, the I wouldn't get it in terms of second, minutes and hours. That is the objective noumenal time that run at the same speed regardless of human experience of it. But the phenomenological perspective will look at the human experience that is subjective to individual experience within and across time. The saying attributed to Einstein, " Put your hand on the hot stove and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour and it seems like a minute". To the rationalist, time is same, but to a phenomenologist, it can appear very different.

What is really remarkable about phenomenology is that it is a complete reversal of the course of Western philosophy since Plato.

Most philosophers offer minor adjustments in the flow of the great conversation. They will criticise their near contemporaries and adjust the courses lightly. But what's fascinating with phenomenology is that in many ways it goes back to Plato and takes an alternative course. Since Plato's analogy of the cave, philosophy has been riding the rationalist wave with what's called the representational theory of consciousness. This representational theory holds that we have incomplete access to reality because our senses are creating a representation 00:03:37.480 of what is real and so we are missing out on this reality because our senses are spoon feeding us a warped, personalised version of what is real? This is the true beginning of the mind-body separation that crystallised in the work of Ren Descartes. There is a sense of tragedy in the Western

philosophical tradition at humanity's inability to access this objective Truth. Instead we are stuck in the cave of mere appearances which is devalued as a poor copy of the objective reality. Phenomenology takes a different tact. Instead of devaluing this phenomenal world of subjective experience, it studies it. What Husserl was trying to do with phenomenology was to make an objective study of the subjective. He was looking to make a science out of consciousness by using systematic reflection to determine the essence of consciousness-its properties and its structures. Instead of the Platonic representational theory of consciousness, Husserl offers an alternative philosophy of phenomenology. And as is all too often the case with philosophy you have to be careful not to think of this word in its everyday use. The term originally comes from the Scholastic medieval philosophical tradition and was resurrected by Husserl's teacher Franz Brentano. Husserl took the concept and made it the cornerstone of his philosophical school Phenomenology. Intentionality is often summed up as "aboutness". This relates to the fact that consciousness is not a thing that can be isolated; consciousness is always about something. It is always in some kind of relationship and interaction with the contents of its experiences. What is interesting with this intentional conception of consciousness is that it works just as well for the dream world as it does for the waking world. Whether the phenomenon is a fantasy or a reality is irrelevant; the focus is on the interaction between the phenomenon and consciousness. It is not about the external existence of the object but about the study of consciousness and how it interacts with the phenomena presented to it-whether those phenomena come from the external world, a memory or a dream. This meeting between the phenomenon and consciousness is what Husserl calls Intentionality-it's the interplay between the content of consciousness and the structures of consciousness. These structures are called intentionalities and they are the many ways that consciousness interacts with the objects of its experience. They are the different relationships consciousness can have with the object it is "about". These structures of consciousness are numerous and include perception, memory, protention, retention and signification among many others.

Now that we know the basics let's talk about the methodology of phenomenology.

How does one go about doing phenomenology?

The first step is what Husserl called bracketing (or alternatively phenomenological reduction or epoch). What this means is that when we are approaching a phenomenon let's say a fire we work to set aside all filters and all judgements. We hone in on the experience of the fire by reducing the phenomenon to its rawest experience. The fire you're seeing could be in your imagination, it could be in a dream or it could be a real fire. To the phenomenologist it's all the same and this this all comes back to the idea of Intentionality and the aboutness of consciousness-the relationship it has to the phenomenon fire. Once the phenomenon has gone through this process of bracketing and we have reduced it to its raw form, the next stage is called Eidetic reduction. This comes from the Greek word eidos which is the same word that Plato uses for his metaphysical Forms or Ideas. The goal of this eidetic reduction is to find the essence of the phenomenon. This is done using a technique known as imaginary variation whereby the phenomenologist varies all the possible attributes of the phenomenon in order to figure out what its fundamental essence is. So let's say you've bracketed off the phenomenon of fear and now you're applying an eidetic reduction to it. With imaginary variation you would mess with the attributes of this fear until you boil it down to what its essence is. So after this sort of investigation you would be left with -as Jose Arcaya noted in his paper on the phenomenology of fear attributes like: a feeling of lacking choices and the sense of freezing that accompanies the fear. What you are doing is separating the necessary parts of the phenomenon from the contingent parts. This essence is the end goal of the phenomenological investigation. For Husserl, at this point we have arrived at a universal scientific truth. We have reached the essence of the phenomenon and this should be as true for you as it is for a Kalahari bushman.

But Husserl's successor disagreed. Husserlian phenomenology aims at developing a pure, rigorous science that seeks to capture "knowledge of essences" by bracketing all conditions that may make one's consciousness of something partial. But with Heidegger, the project of phenomenology takes a different direction. Husserl's phenomenology was aimed at developing a pure rigorous science that would capture the knowledge of essences. Phenomenology was to be a scientific discipline. With his ontological twist however Heidegger has a different perspective. For him science is just one way of knowing. Philosophy goes a layer

deeper; it is prior to science and provides it with its foundation. Whereas Husserl's primary concern was formulating the science of consciousness, for Heidegger it was ontology and understanding the nature of being. He didn't believe in Husserl's quest for knowledge of essences and argued that the experiences in consciousness cannot be separated from the context in which they arise. You can't give an objective account of consciousness because it is entangled in the world, it is entangled in being and the conditions of this entanglement vary between individuals, between ages and between different species. Your fear in the 21st century is different from the fear of an ancient Aztec warrior and both are different from the fear of a dog or a gazelle. There is no essence that can be caught and magically bottled. Phenomenology is not a science but something more fundamental-it is an investigation into being itself. This philosophy of Heidegger is called existential phenomenology over against the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl.

There is a growing literature on the connections between phenomenology and eastern philosophy. It seems that phenomenology has somehow found a bridging point with the eastern philosophical traditions of India and China that other schools of Western philosophy have not. Even at a cursory glance it makes sense. If we look at things like the meridian system

of Chinese medicine and the chakra system of the Indian tradition, we see something that looks bizarre from the rationalist point of view. Anatomically speaking there is no heart chakra or third eye chakra to be found. But approached from the phenomenological perspective,

we find that we now have a way of approaching these systems. They are maps of the first-person subjective experience of energy in the body. The ancient phenomenologists of China and India mapped out their embodied experience into these models of the human body.

And having been at a number of 10 day vipassana retreats, the phenomenological overlap becomes apparent. The work of meditation is to observe the body non-judgementally and not to generate aversion to negative sensations or craving for positive sensations. The goal is just to observe to look at the experience objectively and experience the impermanence of the sensations. The process of vipassana meditation is bracketing-it's just to observe the sensations, the biases, the judgements, the resistances and cravings that are constantly bubbling up every moment. Vipassana meditation is a fundamentally phenomenological practice. There is a growing literature on the relationship between phenomenology and these eastern philosophical traditions in particular with Zen Buddhism and Daoism and it even seems that Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein may have been influenced by his reading about the Chinese Daoist philosopher Chuang-Tzu.

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