

got long and tedious. I am also most grateful for the friendship of Michel and Anne Henry which was truly the *Essence of Manifestation* to me when I visited them in Montpellier and again in Switzerland in 1971.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM OF THE BEING OF THE EGO AND THE FUNDAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF ONTOLOGY

"Mit dem *cogito sum* beansprucht Descartes, der Philosophie einen neuen und sicheren Boden beizustellen. Was er aber bei diesem 'radikalen' Anfang unbestimmt lässt, ist die Seinsart der *res cogitans*, genauer dem Seinssinn des '*sum*.'"

"With the '*cogito sum*' Descartes had claimed that he was putting philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined when he began in this 'radical' way, was the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or—more precisely—the meaning of the Being of the '*sum*.'" (1)

The meaning of the Being of the ego is the theme of this investigation. Its goal is to bring to light, to submit to philosophical scrutiny what we mean by 'I' or 'me' whenever it is a question of ourselves. In recent times, we have become accustomed in philosophy to question ourselves—in a radical way—concerning the things which more often than not present themselves as self-evident, as the things which everyone knows and understands. Does not the ego belong in an eminent way to the realm of the [2] most fashionable and the most banal? It is true that for a long time psychology has made of the ego or of the personality an object of study, the 'title' of one of its 'chapters'. However, concerning the manner in which the idea of the ego is formed in us, concerning its content, concerning its role in the overall picture of the psychic life and other similar problems, we will teach psychology nothing. How much value can we give to research which has never clarified its own nature, which is incapable of evaluating the significance of its findings? If Descartes himself failed to raise to the status of a problem that which constitutes the meaning of the Being of the *sum*, how much help may we safely expect from psychology, which builds its empirical knowledge on an unexplained foundation of Being, and which treats the 'I' as an object or—what amounts to the same thing—as a 'subject', without first

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 46.

raising the question as to what constitutes the condition of the possibility of each and every object as such.

Before claiming to obtain any results, every inquiry must first try to render itself transparent to itself. It must first try to determine whether the problematic which it inaugurates can be considered as original and fundamental or whether it is subordinated to a first inquiry upon which it proves to be dependent. In the latter case, it necessarily implies presuppositions, it utilizes determined results which it has not itself obtained, or it makes use of certain ideas which it does not bother to clarify. This is a general difficulty which confronts any specific inquiry. Independence, and consequently, an internal measure of validity, is given only to a truly original problem, and, in some way, an *absolute* one. Not only does such a problem draw its knowledge only from itself, but it has already clarified whatever makes possible all knowledge as such. First Philosophy has long understood the necessity for bringing up such a problematic at the origin of all human inquiry.

Does the problem of the Being of the ego pertain [3] to First Philosophy? Rather, is it not evident that any question dealing with the ego in its Being, first implies that an answer be given, or at least sought, to the question of *the meaning of Being in general*? For, when I say 'I am happy' or more simply 'I am', that which turns out to be 'aimed at' by my affirmation is possible only insofar as *Being has already appeared*. Thus should not the true object of an inaugural inquiry be the Being of the ego rather than the ego itself, or more precisely, the Being in and by which the ego can rise to existence and acquire its own Being? This is why the Cartesian beginning is not at all 'radical', because such a beginning is possible only upon a foundation which he did not clarify and which is more radical than the beginning.

The science which studies the problem of Being in general, Being as Being, is ontology. It is necessarily universal. Its object is never this or that thing, nor even this or that type of thing; its object is that which affects them all equally. *First Philosophy is universal ontology*. Every inquiry, and in particular the one which concerns the ego, must acknowledge its inevitable subordination to this fundamental discipline, but this subordination must itself constitute the theme for an inquiry. The bond which attaches the problematic of the ego to universal ontology is however, particularly complex. An approximate clarification of this bond or relationship will serve as an introduction to the problem of the ego.

1. THE IDEA OF APODICTIC EVIDENCE AS A PATH OF PRIVILEGED ACCESS TO THE BEING OF THE EGO

Why did Descartes think he could by-pass an ontological context, the sole context wherein a question can receive the clarification it needs if it is not to remain an idle question [4] or lead to results which are completely undetermined in their scope and in their meaning? Why? Because this context itself seemed to him to be a source of confusion and of sterile discussions. To reject all these presuppositions which invariably present themselves to us under the form of historical tradition, to rid himself once and for all of all 'prejudices'; such seemed to him to be the condition to which every inquiry must submit if it is truly and freely 'to begin'. Thus a royal pathway opens up for philosophy, a path which it follows as long as it entrusts itself without further ado to its *object*, a path which leads *directly* to the result. To turn one's back on all theories and on all conceptual edifices which mask the real for us, to abandon oneself to the object, to let it be such as it is in itself, to return at last to the things themselves, this is a Cartesian teaching. Nevertheless, Descartes knew quite well that that which truly gives itself to us does not let itself be known so easily, and that the majority of things which we believe that we reach in their very Being are as a matter of fact confused or uncertain. Consequently, once he decided to submit the totality of the data of our experience to systematic criticism, he realized that that which presents itself to us with irrefutable evidence is nothing other than the *ego cogito*.

Nevertheless, the central role accorded the *ego cogito* by philosophical inquiry implies that certain presuppositions be made in making the inquiry. In reality, these presuppositions stem from the very nature of such an inquiry, which always remains faithful to the idea of a *truth-to-be-attained*. However, if something like philosophy is legitimate, it is because the goal it pursues and secretly animates it, is not proper to it. *Evidence is the telos of all intentional life*. The problem of evidence is located in the natural flow of life as it takes its course. *It is this problem which serves both as context and category for the birth of the ego cogito as theme for philosophical reflection*.

The problematic of evidence belongs to the realm of the phenomenology of reason. Such a problematic consists in 'making radical' according to the meaning of intentionality, [5] a problematic of intuition. Intuition is the foundation of every rational assertion. The study of reason requires that this foundation be brought to light.

The philosophical analysis of intuition and of its fundamental structure, the systematic examination of the different types of intuition and their diverse modalities, the corresponding clarification of the field of the intuitive datum, of the diverse structures and differentiations of the eidetic order which the field exhibits, these tasks constitute the first task of phenomenology. By adhering strictly to this task which it has set for itself at the beginning of its inquiry, phenomenology already discards quite a few prejudices. In opposition to empiricism, it shows that sense experience is only one fundamental type of intuition. Intuition in the *essence* of sense experience, presupposed by empiricism, puts us in the presence, at least once, of the existence of an eidetic intuition. Starting with such an eidetic intuition, an exhaustive investigation of the different eidetic types of intuition, as well as the examination of their respective values, must be carried out. Consequently, it becomes apparent that the Being which originally presents itself to these intuitive 'consciousnesses', made distinct in each case by a specific eidetic structure, distributes itself according to the very manner in which it presents itself to a plurality of 'regions' to which certain specific types of the original intuition strictly correspond. In conformity to these diverse regional types and, correlatively, interior to each 'region' of Being, there exists for Being a privileged manner of presenting itself. This takes place when Being presents itself as it is in itself and, so to speak, 'in person' to an intuitive consciousness which is in the presence of the thing in itself and, in a manner of speaking, lives in its immediate proximity. This situation is characterized by the fact that the signifying intentions of consciousness find a fulfillment capable of reaching the living presence of the thing itself, in such a way that in the noema, a specific characteristic of corporeity is added to the meaning intended by consciousness. The way in which this fulfillment takes place [6] defines the degree of evidence. Consciousness strives to obtain perfect evidence; but the perfection of evidence does not depend solely on the psychological flow and the subjective efforts of a specific consciousness; as a matter of fact, the *type*, namely the type of evidence, is prescribed by the ontological structure proper to the region under consideration, and this type represents an ultimate possibility attached to and strictly defined by this region. Consequently, it would be absurd to claim to obtain adequate evidence with respect to a given object, whose eidetic structure and the regional genre to whose domain it belongs, call for a mode of presenting itself which in principle excludes the possibility of a presentation conforming to this type of evidence. We can only

define for each sphere of Being a strictly-determined mode of presenting itself—in privileged cases it will be an original mode of presenting itself—which indicates which category of evidence, in some way optimal, can be obtained in the specific sphere under consideration. Thus we will be led to circumscribe fundamental types of evidence in correlation with the different regions and with the ultimate modalities of the intuitive-and-presenting-consciousness, modalities whose differentiation will itself be pursued on the eidetic level.

Since the different types of evidence are strictly ordered to objective essences where *a priori* structures of various regions manifest themselves and since, because of this, they obey the laws of an eidetic order, these different types of evidence have, in this respect, an equal degree of validity. Each of them offers us, in conformity with a specific category of apprehension, a possibility of experience which strictly corresponds to a sphere of Being and which is capable of presenting to us, within this sphere, Being itself such as it manifests itself there in its essential structure. Nevertheless, we cannot put all types of evidence on the same level. A discrimination of sorts obviously establishes itself between them, a discrimination of an axiological order, if you prefer, but one which finds its source, not in the subjective preferences of a consciousness, [7] but in the teleology of a universal significance immanent to intentional life in general. In conformity to this teleology which animates it, consciousness turns toward evidences which exhibit a remarkable degree of perfection. The highest degree of perfection is reached in an immediate and original sort of evidence wherein the various elements of the 'signifying' intention whereby consciousness aims at the object are completely fulfilled by a corresponding intuition in such a way that nothing obscure or indistinct remains in such an experience. Such an experience gives us absolute certitude that the Being grasped with evidence exists exactly as it presents itself in the sort of evidence in question. However, as long as the possibility remains open for the Being, grasped with evidence, to become later the object of doubt, the evidence is in no way perfect. As a result, perfect evidence must furnish a new characteristic whereby it becomes evidence which cannot be refuted in the course of subsequent experience. Only apodictic evidence is capable of furnishing philosophical reflection with the guarantee that its object will not change at all, and that this reflection will always find the object to be identical to itself each time that it again effects the act which will yield the object with evidence. Therefore, we can say that the object of apodictic evidence is given to us with

absolute certitude and, for this reason, it plays the role of a veritable beginning with respect to the inquiry.

The consciousness which looks to obtain apodictic evidence does not orient itself according to whim. Since there exists a strict relation between the eidetic type of evidence and the genre of Being which such evidence exhibits, it is a very specific reality that reflection deals with in abandoning itself to the *telos* of apodicticity. *The ego cogito necessarily becomes its own theme which was not the case in the beginning.* Neither the ego as such, nor the knowledge of oneself, nor any sort of individualism, nor any solipsism—whether affective or metaphysical—initially enjoys the favor of the Cartesian consciousness. [8] The latter is rational consciousness which aims at the universal and the apodictic. The ego arises for it only insofar as it is the sole Being capable of furnishing to such a consciousness an adequate intuitive fulfillment. The ego is the content and, in some way, the real element which a type of philosophy, essentially oriented toward the idea of an absolute certitude, must seize and order to itself, at least if such a philosophy does not wish to remain in the state of being a project and a desire.

The paradox which binds consciousness, whose meaning is to attain the universal, to the singular reality of the ego, of this ego which consciousness apprehends with apodictic evidence, an ego which always belongs to it; such a paradox is not easily surmounted. May we not expect that it would at least be the object of an explicit problematic? Must not this problematic ultimately bring to light *the bond which unites the problem of truth with the problem of the ego at the source of the two?* However, classical philosophy has never raised such a bond to the status of a problem, and reason tries to escape the paradox or to forget it: the *cogito*-consciousness is not individual but it is true. The original intuitive datum which manifests itself in the apodictic evidence of the *cogito* is only the motive of a rational 'positing'. The latter finds its original basis for validity in the original content of the intuitive field. Evidence is precisely the union of the rational 'positing' with the datum which motivates it. In the case of the *cogito*, this union is invested with a privileged form by reason of the specific characteristic of the region of Being from which the intuition draws its content. By virtue of its eidetic structure, such a content actually makes possible a consciousness of apprehension whose experience is fulfilled in conformity with the apodictic type of evidence, and consequently shows itself capable of engendering a rational 'positing' in the strong sense of the term, namely one whose validity can no longer be questioned. Thus

there is discovered a first truth which belongs to an altogether special mode of 'positing'. That which is posited is a true Being, a real Being in an absolute sense. The *cogito* is thus the first element of a rational science which first realizes [9] in the *cogito* its project of apodicticity. It is the departure point, the beginning: with it, a truth is discovered, consciousness can live in certitude.

As philosophical truth, the *cogito* is a rational 'positing' in a privileged sense; it brings to realization precisely the type of 'positing' which reason aims at insofar as it is faithful to itself. However, once the rational 'positing' of the *cogito* has been effected, two paths are open to the reflections of the philosopher. It is a question of whether he should select the task of pursuing the clarification of the Being of the ego as a goal in its own right. Such an inquiry is of special 'rational' interest to philosophy because of the specific characteristic of apodicticity furnished by the types of evidence—under the rubric of possible experiences—which rule over the domain of Being to which the *ego cogito* belongs. Such an inquiry, pursued under the rubric of 'the rational phenomenology of the ego' cannot constitute, however, any more than a specific inquiry. As a matter of fact, the problematic concerning the Being of the ego occupies no more than a strictly limited place in the totality of phenomenological investigations. It is always in relationship to these latter investigations, considered as an architectonic totality whose *telos* is the systematic clarification of Being in all its structures and in all its ultimate eidetic differentiations, that the task of phenomenological philosophy must be understood, at least if we wish to restore to it its proper scope. Reason must be understood in a broader sense. Its domain cannot be correctly understood if one tries to limit this domain by binding it, in an exclusive manner, to a specific type of evidence, no matter how privileged this evidence may be. Reason is rather a reflection on the totality of 'positings' which find their foundation—and this in a manner which must be made precise each time—in the totality of the fundamental types of evidence and in the realm of the regions corresponding to such types of evidence. A specific type of rational 'positing' is possible in each case and in each domain—in conformity to strictly defined intuitive and rational modalities. [10] The manner in which the truth of this type of 'positing' must be confirmed or refuted, as well as the mode according to which rationality, dealing with its corresponding domain of Being, is realized, these in turn are the object of a study which itself lays claim to apodicticity. Thus the Being of the ego seems to lose its exclusive privilege in proportion

to the effect realized by philosophical consciousness in its efforts to be equal to its own task, namely to realize in all its amplitude a rational vision of Being.

2. THE NEED FOR FIRST CONSTRUCTING A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

The surpassing of the *ego cogito* toward a problematic which aims at restoring to the power of intuition all its forms and, as a corollary, at showing forth Being in the totality of its fundamental structures and its ultimate regions ought not to be an illusory undertaking. The inquiry which begins with the *ego cogito* remains conditioned, and this in a decisive manner, by the theme which it set for itself at the beginning. How must such a conditioning be understood? The theory of intuition has already rejected any pretense of reaching all spheres of Being with the type of evidence furnished by the *cogito*. The attempt to subsume under one homogeneous category of apprehension which achieves an ideal type of evidence, the totality of the intuitive field which is offered in human experience is absurd in the sense that it contradicts the structure of the datum such as it appears in the field with characteristics that are different and determined in every case. Descartes was duped by his prodigious ambition, both when he wanted to reduce the totality of the real to homogeneous essences under the aegis of a unique type of evidence (whose prototype was the *cogito*), as well as when he attempted to bind together all these essences by deductive bonds, themselves grasped by intuitive modalities made to conform with this type of evidence. As a matter of fact, it is this characteristic to which the problematic of the *ego cogito* is obedient when it assigns indisputable [11] limits to subsequent steps in the phenomenological inquiry. Insofar as this inquiry remains faithful to the *telos* of reason, it continues to deal exclusively with the degree of validity and the legitimacy of the 'positings' which consciousness effects. This inquiry submits the intuitive foundations of these 'positings' to a minute investigation; it scrutinizes the various regions of Being, disengages the meaning of its most general structures together with their eidetic aspects. It is by taking such a meaning into consideration that it tells how Being can and must present itself inside a given region, how the various types of presentation differ, how the various specific presentations can be called forth, confirmed, or refuted, what type of evidence Being is capable of yielding in a given

region, and finally, how the various 'positings' of consciousness must operate in order to accommodate themselves to the universal structures of various regions, so as in every case to be in conformity with the Being at which they are aiming so that they may conform to it.

Assuredly, the accomplishment of these different tasks in their strict correlation is still only an Idea, a practical and regulatory idea of an unending theoretical task of the ontological order. It is precisely this Idea which dominates inquiry and in it the *telos* of reason lives. Once again, this means that the project of consciousness is meant to arrive at stable, valid 'positings' whose correlate is 'real Being', 'true Being'. As a result, what is finally attained are truths, realities with their proper contents which one can legitimately 'posit'. The theme of thought is constituted by these particular contents about which we wish to be assured. In each case, it becomes a matter of arriving at certitude regarding something; this some thing, precisely because it is the correlate of such a certitude, is true Being, it is a particular truth. The *cogito* remained a truth of this type, intended by a rational consciousness in a specific sense. It is Cartesian rationalism which confers on the *cogito* its philosophical meaning. [12] This rationalism tries to make up its mind regarding other truths analogous to it. This is why it consists, first of all, in a reflection upon the conditions which permit it to make decisions in a rational way. The *cogito* serves as a prototype in a two-fold way; on the one hand, because the Being which it shows is a true Being, a real Being in an exemplary sense; on the other hand, because the mode according to which such a truth is obtained in the *cogito* serves as a model for all apprehension seeking to enjoy rational certitude. If the power of apprehension, considered in its own peculiar structure, is put into relation with the rules to which it must submit in order to attain a 'real' Being, and if in each case it must be in conformity with the meaning which pertains to this real Being, this is because the acquisition of rational truths remains the ultimate goal to which reflection submits under the conditions for making this acquisition. The *cogito* is only one of these rational truths, but precisely because it permits consciousness to attain—at the very heart of its own individual Being—the order of rationality, it remains the ideal of an inquiry which is first realized in itself and to which it imparts or entrusts a specific task: the acquisition of contents which can serve as valid under the rubric of 'truths'.

Reason then is not a faculty of the universal. While determining, in each case, the validity of the 'positings' of consciousness which take

The bewildering shock of the return of the thing questioned to the questioner—which takes place in the question of Being—does not yet allow for the raising of the fundamental difficulty which is immanent to this question and which treats of the problem of the *homogeneity of Being*. It is only after a decisive answer has been given to this problem that the place and the role of human reality in the question of Being can be defined in a rigorous way. [46]

7. THE PROBLEMATIC CONCERNING THE BEING OF THE EGO INTERPRETED AS AN ORIGINAL AND FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMATIC

The necessary inclusion of the phenomenology of the ego within the context constituted by universal ontology cannot be questioned because *it is only by starting from the clarification of the central phenomenon of the ego that ontology can acquire its the fundamental dimension*. Once again it is necessary to understand in a correct way the precedence of the problematic which aims at the Being of the ego phenomenologically. Such a precedence in no way signifies that a certain being (for example, one who says 'I') must first be questioned about his Being, at least if the setting free of the meaning of Being in general is to remain possible. *Rather that which is in question in an explicit way is the solidarity of the meaning of Being of human reality with that of Being in general*. If the problematic concerning the Being of the ego must be interpreted as a truly original and fundamental problematic, it is because the Being of the ego is not homogeneous to 'Being in general'—and not in a restricted sense as if one wished simply to understand by this that the ego defines another 'region of Being' different from that to which other beings belong because they are constituted differently, but in an ultimate sense even though it is still incomprehensible to us. The problem is one of knowing whether the primacy of the analytic of human reality is of the methodological order or whether we must concede to it an ultimate ontological meaning.

Has philosophy ever been able to give a positive interpretation of the fact that it is in the absence of any context that the problematic of the *ego cogito* arises for Descartes? Has the profound meaning of the Cartesian identification of certitude and *truth* ever been understood? Were these fundamental themes ever clarified by Descartes himself? It is not exact to say that the meaning of the Being of the ego remains undetermined in Cartesianism. [47] On the contrary, very quickly it is

as *ens creatum* that the Being of the Ego is interpreted, as is that of every other simple nature, and this in the light of the philosophical and theological conceptions of medieval thought, itself the progeny of Greek ontology.¹ Does the incorrectness of such a determination stem from the fact that the Being of the ego is made subordinate to an erroneous or insufficient conception of Being in general? Is it not rather that the very idea of such a subordination is inadmissible? Even if the horizon of Being in general is interpreted as a 'transcendental' horizon, this does not remove the difficulty; rather, it makes the solution all the more urgent.

How can the ego become a 'phenomenon'? Is it not on the condition of submitting itself to a horizon of visibility in and whereby every thing can become 'visible'? Is not the power which unfolds such a horizon, namely *transcendence, the condition of the Being of the ego*? The present inquiry has been undertaken in order to show the need for answering these fundamental questions in the negative. In the last analysis, that which these questions wish to clarify is that, even though it be *that which realizes* the condition for the possibility of every phenomenon in general, the *mode* whereby the ego *becomes a phenomenon* is something so *fundamental* that it cannot be subordinated to any condition. The problem of philosophy is the problem of truth. The latter is nothing more than that which, in general, makes phenomena possible. The problem of truth is more original than that of reason. 'Real' and 'true' Being, which reason succeeds in 'positing' on the foundation of a determined intuitive datum, implies, as its condition, that which makes the realization of such a datum possible. Insofar as it is the object of a rational 'positing', the *ego cogito* is subordinated to a horizon of truth. Its privilege has no more than a limited meaning, it is relative to the *telos* [48] of reason. Nevertheless, how and why the Being of the ego is that which must carry out in an original way the problem of truth cannot be understood unless such a Being is interpreted as *that which realizes in the very process of its own fulfillment every truth as such*. The Being of the ego is truth. Not that truth which is possible only through transcendence and as the very work of transcendence, but a truth higher in origin, more ancient, and without which transcendence itself would not be. To such a truth, which is not different from the ego itself and which constitutes its very *Being*, we give the name of original truth. It is only

¹ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 46.

when it is capable of going back to the origin that the problem of truth proves to be identical to that of the ego.

Do we not lose the proper meaning of essence entirely by identifying it with a real and determined Being? We can think of the essence correctly only as the ultimate condition of possibility of every existence. It is the foundation in an ontological sense. As a result, the essence cannot be identified with a particular existence, even if the latter plays a privileged role in an ontic process of connecting links. The first truth cannot mean the truth of a singular content from which one could claim to deduce other truths. The realization (problematic, to say the least) of such a deduction would leave the problem of foundation intact. The first truth is an ontological condition of possibility whose meaning is absolutely universal. Nevertheless, the possibility understood as an antecedent transcendental condition which constitutes the foundation for any effectiveness in any order whatever is itself nothing but a pure possibility. We leave the problem hanging at a completely undetermined terminus when, after the fashion of Kant, we make no attempt to define in a rigorous way the status of 'the condition for the possibility of experience'. To institute a reflexive analysis in the hope of obtaining by this indirect path a more exact determination of such a 'condition' [49] is a completely unsatisfactory method. The source toward which thought thus works backward is no more than a pure possibility which does not have the right to be called a foundation. It is a pure possibility because it is still no more than the condition of a possible experience and not that of real experience. It is an 'empty' possibility because such a condition refers to a purely formal structure, deprived of all content. Finally, it is a possibility which, strictly speaking, is nothing because the problem of the Being of this possibility, of its status, is never even brought up. Actually, the condition of experience is no more than a 'source' posited by reflective thought,—a freely-floating thing—a mere correlate of a consciousness searching for a principle of explanation; in the last analysis it is nothing more than a hypothesis. That such a condition is most often presented under the rubric of 'subjectivity' or of 'transcendental subjectivity', such is a mysterious affirmation without any foundation in the doctrine and which, in the absence of any problem concerning the Being of this subjectivity, has absolutely no sense.

However, is not the reality of the essence safeguarded by thought which thinks the essence as Being? The transcendental condition which plays the role of an ontological foundation with regard to every being is not a pure and simple possibility, something virtual which in itself

is not yet anything. If Being is identical to Nothingness, it is only with regard to a being that this Nothingness is 'nothing'. Considered in itself Nothingness is a real Nothingness. Being is not an abstract universal. *The ontological possibility is the absolute reality.* Nevertheless, is the affirmation of the reality of the essence anything other than the pure and simple realization of the essence? And is not such a realization dependent upon an act of thought of the philosopher? Must it not be considered as a pure and simple 'theory'? If it is anything other than a simple metaphysical hypothesis, the foundation must prove its reality without appealing to intermediate considerations or theories whose meanderings [50] are always considered as obeying a logical bond. Being must be able to *show itself*. The method of ontology is phenomenological. It is precisely when it lends its support to ontology that the phenomenological method acquires its decisive philosophical meaning. What can claim for itself in an urgent and imperative manner a mode of explicit presentation and the title of 'phenomenon' unless it be that which does not at first show itself but remains most often hidden, namely Being itself, the object of ontology? Philosophy therefore is in difficulty. The difficulty which it encounters can be expressed formally in the following manner: How can the condition for the possibility of every manifestation become itself something manifest? "Only as phenomenology," says Heidegger, "is ontology possible."² But can Being ever truly and in itself become 'a phenomenon'?

A lot of equivocation will be avoided if we keep in mind the idea that the theme of phenomenological ontology is in no way constituted by the determined, and in a certain way material, content of any manifestation whatever, but on the contrary, deals with the 'how' of this manifestation and of every possible manifestation in general. In a phenomenon, that which makes it *something capable of appearing*, regardless of the determined content of this thing, is that which is in question. But Being, the condition of possibility of every manifestation in general, cannot become a 'phenomenon' if this is taken to mean the singular content of a determined manifestation. Then what meaning can the project of a phenomenological ontology have? Exactly what do we mean when we say that Being must be able to 'become a phenomenon'?

Is the question of the reality of the foundation itself bound to the [51] possibility for Being becoming a phenomenon? Are we not rather

² *Ibid.* 60.

obliged to recognize the rights of a kind of thought which—while conceiving of the original task of disclosure as a hiding of that from which this task can be accomplished in every case—is in no way thereby a dialectic, but rather rests upon a real experience whose meaning is to reveal the contradictory structure of the foundation? If the essence of the foundation hides itself in the very act whereby it opens a horizon of light, it is because it pertains in principle to this essence not to show itself. The essence is real insofar as it forms the basis for truth; nevertheless, it in no way is itself the truth, but rather a more original non-truth. However, it is to this non-truth that the phenomenon always refers insofar as the latter shines forth from the foundation of an obscure relationship. Ontology is still possible on a phenomenological basis. *That which is in question, but in an essential manner, is simply the possibility of absolute knowledge.*

That the foundation be actually a 'phenomenon' through and through, that it be the truth in an ultimate and original sense cannot be understood until a radical clarification of the concept of phenomenon has served as guide for the problematic, until it arrives at the idea of a *revelation which owes nothing to the work of transcendence*. The clarification of the concept of phenomenon will be the first task of this inquiry. Its result will be to make us understand that the determination of the 'phenomenon' as something which shows itself within the horizon of light interior to which all things can themselves become visible, remains in fact one-sided. However, the fundamental insufficiency of such a determination has dominated almost the entire history of human thought. Philosophy will build on a new foundation when it will be capable of circumscribing an absolutely original 'phenomenon' so that *the very mode in conformity to which the phenomenon reveals itself is irreducible to the 'how' of the manifestation of transcendental phenomenon*. However, it so happens that this mode which designates the *how of a revelation*, the *manner* in which the latter takes place—abstracting [52] from all considerations concerning the content—has also, in a paradoxical way, a material meaning. *The original revelation is its own content unto itself. The 'how' of this revelation is a real Being*. This phenomenon, or rather this way of being a phenomenon which does not shine at all in the universal light, this 'manner' which is a concrete Being, this is what will be designated by the title of 'ego'.

That which permits something to be *in itself manifesting*, is what we call a foundation. The latter obviously deals with the mode of manifestation of something which manifests itself. However, this mode

of manifestation (insofar as we designate by 'manifestation' the work or the product of transcendence) refers to a more original mode of revelation. Transcendence rests upon immanence. The original truth is the true foundation. As the origin of transcendence, the original truth is the ontological condition for the possibility of all transcendental phenomena for which it constitutes the foundation. *It is itself, however, a phenomenon*, but in an irreducible sense, namely, insofar as it is an immanent revelation. The fact that the foundation is a 'phenomenon' in the sense of a 'revelation', is that *which confers upon this foundation its reality by giving it its moment of presence*. Insofar as it has to do with the origin, presence is not that which is subordinate to a horizon of presence, neither is it the Being, which is in reality never present, of the horizon itself. This original ontological presence, which eludes the general conditions of Being, is that of the ego itself. The phenomenological Being of the ego is one with the original revelation which is accomplished in a sphere of radical immanence. The reality of the foundation rests upon the phenomenal character of the latter; but insofar as this characteristic flows from a strictly determined mode of revelation, the reality of the foundation is, by the same token, perfectly defined. *The reality of the ontological possibility is the Being of the ego.*

If the foundation is itself a phenomenon in an original sense, it would seem that the path of access to the foundation is none other [53] than the foundation itself. *However, that which remains in this fundamental identity between its reality and an 'arrival at', this reality, is life itself, it is the transcendental life of the absolute ego insofar as it is the ultimate foundation*. The foundation is not something obscure, neither is it light which becomes perceivable only when it shines upon the thing which bathes in its light, nor is it the thing itself as a 'transcendent phenomenon', but it is an *immanent* revelation which is a presence to itself, even though such a presence remains 'invisible'. *An immanent revelation is an internal experience. It is necessarily invested with a monadic form. It is within the eidetic structure of the original truth that the ipseity of the ego is rooted*. An internal experience understood as an original revelation which is accomplished in a sphere of radical immanence exists by itself, without any context, without the support of any exterior and 'real' Being, it is itself precisely an 'existence', or better, existence itself, which it is well to think of under the rubric of 'human reality'. Such an existence owes nothing to transcendence, rather it precedes it and makes it possible. More original than the truth of Being is the truth of man.

The interpretation of the essence of the foundation as immanent and original revelation leads us to re-think the essential connection which unites phenomenology and ontology. The mode of phenomenological treatment which ontology justly wishes to apply to the problem of the foundation, remains in fact totally undetermined as long as the meaning of the concept of phenomenon has not been fixed in a decisive manner. What is worse, this mode of treatment becomes essentially dangerous as long as the problematic continues to be pursued in the light of a uni-lateral conception of 'phenomenon'. Insofar as it considers itself 'phenomenological', ontology understands its task as a 'clarification'. Does not 'to clarify' mean 'to make manifest', 'to bring to light'? Hence, clarification receives the meaning of an [54] intuitive realization and of a progress in evidence. That which needs such a clarification cannot be effectively determined, on the other hand, other than "that which proximally ... does not show itself," but remains most often "hidden".³ In fact, *the methodological task of phenomenology is henceforth interpreted in the light of a philosophy of transcendence*. Phenomenology receives a radically different meaning when it understands that its task is not to submit reality, for example, the foundation, to clarification, to a type of univocal manifestation conceived as the universal transcendental truth, but to ask itself if there does not exist *another mode of revelation* whose consideration alone can introduce us to the problem of the foundation. The ultimate meaning of phenomenology in the last analysis hangs upon the fact of the discovery of a 'phenomenon' which is itself the foundation. Moreover, this 'discovery' must itself be correctly understood, for it does not mean a 'bringing to light' of something which would originally be 'hidden'. If it makes any sense to say that the foundation is an original revelation, it is on the ontological condition of the possibility for every effective transcendental presence to be present to itself at the heart of an internal transcendental experience which strictly speaking can neither be 'obtained' nor 'lost'. To want 'to bring to light' the foundation is the ultimate ontological absurdity. The ego has no business at all manifesting itself in the milieu of transcendent Being, some day or other, sooner or later, in the course of a history whether individual or universal, or within the progress of philosophy, if it is true that it is henceforth present to itself at the heart of a revelation which owes nothing to time or transcendence, but

³ *Ibid.* 59.

is accomplished within the sphere of the radical immanence of absolute subjectivity.

We may ask if it is not on the sole condition of losing all methodological interest that phenomenology is [55] capable of assuming this ultimate ontological meaning. Why must the foundation submit to the treatment of a method whose essential aim is to bring from obscurity, to 'clarify', if its principal characteristic is self-revelation? How can there be any progress in an inquiry whose theme is that which is henceforth revealed such as it is in itself? How can the necessity of such an inquiry which is nothing other than philosophy itself, be made legitimate? As a matter of fact, the aim of this work is to show that there exists *absolute knowledge* and that the latter is not dependent upon some isolated bit of progress. Actually, such knowledge is not bound to a determined mode of existence, it is not the privilege of the moment. It is rather the very milieu of existence, the very essence of life. The 'utility' of philosophy is not jeopardized by thought which thinks of the essence of life as an original immanent revelation. Whatever is most simple and most 'evident', we have long known to be also that which is the most 'difficult'. It is precisely because the foundation is a revelation that philosophy is possible, in a very determined sense, namely as phenomenological philosophy. Doubtless there is no need whatever to 'clarify' the Being of the foundation, but the phenomenological method cannot be reduced to a process of clarification; this method can no longer be understood in a uni-lateral sense. *Phenomenology is rather a critique of all revelation*, of its different forms and its fundamental conditions. It is in this sense that it has a universal meaning.

When it is correctly understood, the task of phenomenology appears in all its complexity. *The problem of knowing which mode of phenomenological treatment should be submitted to the foundation is none other than the problem of the relationships between philosophy and life*. It is true that the in-depth investigation of this problem which establishes the foundation of philosophy confronts us with special difficulties, all of which converge on the question of the possibility of an 'absolutely subjective science' [56] which Husserl thought he possessed. The understanding of these difficulties leads reflection to the idea that if philosophy is secondary in relationship to life, nevertheless there must exist a mode of philosophizing which does not in any way prejudice the essence.

Thought does not rise to such a mode of philosophizing unless it is capable of accomplishing in a decisive manner a surpassing of intuition-

ism; however, the surpassing of intuitionism is not effective as long as such a surpassing considers itself as a reflection on the transcendental conditions which make possible the realization of a presence in intuition or 'in' evidence, namely as a liberation of the universal phenomenological horizon. It is no better if it consists in the integration of a philosophy of intuition with a constituting transcendental philosophy. In both cases and no matter how different the paths followed by philosophical reflection, the latter in fact remains exclusively conditioned by preoccupations with a problematic of the object. In spite of essential transformations, the inquiry actually remains incapable of breaking the barriers which encircled it when Kant gave it this ontological meaning which we so much admire. If the 'critique of the paralogism of rational psychology' was chosen as the object of an ontological destruction which brought to light the absence of all ontologies of subjectivity at the very heart of a problematic which claimed to make the ego its explicit theme, this is because the meaning of this destruction, we believe, is of interest to the totality of modern philosophy. The metaphysical themes of the latter, in spite of their apparent novelty result from fundamental imperfections which become particularly visible in Kantian philosophy but which actually corrupt philosophical thought since its Hellenic origins. The *cogito* of Descartes or the philosophy of existence of Kierkegaard do not play [57] the role of a beginning with respect to modern 'culture'. Rather they correspond to historical moments in the history of philosophy wherein paradoxically is 'manifested' a trend of thought which most often remains subliminal and that for essential reasons.

It is precisely these reasons which become comprehensible to a trend of thought which, while effecting the radical surpassing of intuitionism, shows itself capable of bringing into question the ontological primacy of transcendence. Such a trend of thought is capable of advancing into a new region and thereby of conferring a new dimension on ontology. The universal light is not the homeland of all phenomena. The 'invisible' is the mode of a positive and truly fundamental revelation. The ambiguity of the philosophy of Night dissolves before the gaze of reflection which distinguishes between two things: 1) the first interior tremor of knowledge where, within the scope of the light, it reveals itself first to itself and 2) the obscurity which is the *sharing* of transcendence. However, if the mode according to which the manifestation of any phenomenon whatever is accomplished, is always transcendent with regard to the material content of this phenomenon, it is not the same in the case of the original phenomenon of revelation. This original phenomenon,

understood in the sense of a manner of revealing itself, in the sense of a 'how' is co-extensive with its content upon the foundation of its essential identity with this 'how'. Every manifestation is in principle inadequate; but where there is not transcendence, neither is there finitude.

The sphere of absolute knowledge is rigorously defined. *The ontological task which arrives at the determination of this sphere is none other than that which permits reflection to posit the problem of self-knowledge on a correct basis.* As long as philosophy remains prisoner to the idea of a transcendent horizon of human knowledge, *the relationship of the ego to itself* cannot be understood except as a particular case of a transcendental relationship of Being-in-the-world. Once the fallacious interpretations of Being [58] have been cast aside—the ones which most often dominate the existentiell understanding of the self—then we find that on the ontological level the problem of the Being of the ego is legitimately subordinated to that of the meaning of Being in general, namely to the problematic of transcendence. The relationship to self can be effected only in errancy. The problem of the knowledge of self is placed on a completely new basis when in the light of the problematic of immanence this knowledge ceases to be looked upon as a 'relationship'. With regard to the sum total of the ontological theses advanced in the course of these present investigations, the refutation of the transcendence of the ego plays the role of a *reductio ad absurdum*. The concept of alienation loses all ontological meaning once the problematic has brought to light the transcendental immanence of the ego and once the relationships between absolute subjectivity and time have been defined in conformity with the eidós of this immanence. The understanding of the essential meaning of human alienation requires that there be established a rigorous distinction between the level of existence and that of ontology. This very distinction, understood in its relationship to the problem of alienation, permits reflection to prepare the way for an understanding of the essence of freedom.⁴

By tearing existence away from the absolute milieu of exteriority, these present investigations wish to draw attention to the 'subjective' character of this existence; we are invited to ask ourselves if it would not be better today to give a new meaning to the concept of 'interior life'.

⁴ The analyses to which allusion has just been made, as well as the ontological destruction of the paralogism of rational psychology, could not be included in this work; they will be the object of subsequent endeavors.

SECTION I

THE CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF PHENOMENON;
ONTOLOGICAL MONISM

8. THE CLARIFICATION OF THE ESSENCE OF THE PHENOMENON:
THE CENTRAL TASK OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is the science of phenomena. This means that it is a description anterior to all theory and independent of all presuppositions, of everything that presents itself to us as existent, regardless of order or domain. Understood as a description, phenomenology implies the rejection of all hypotheses, of all principles having some unifying value, whether real or supposed, with regard to some area of knowledge, and finally, the rejection of a sector of reality which would contain in it a rule of intelligibility as a necessary condition for its existence. Science, it is true, is concerned with going beyond the facts and coordinates them into systems of explanation. But in all cases, the scientific element and the totality, to which it belongs, necessarily refer to a phenomenological datum without which they could have no meaning whatever. Moreover, these elements and these systems themselves exist for us only under the rubric of data. They are juxtaposed in the phenomenological milieu within the very reality which they pretend to explain. [60] By consequence, this reality will never be capable of total reduction, any more than *the scientific reality itself* in all its forms will be capable of total reduction. Once their explanatory value is put between parentheses (and remains in this condition), these theories penetrate our environment as data. As such, they require the attention of the phenomenologist who is capable of describing the structures of their peculiar configurations. The distrust which phenomenology demonstrates regarding philosophical or scientific conceptions stems solely from the fact that the latter frequently hides from us a reality whose characteristics and proper *meaning* they forget or misinterpret while believing that they explain them. But upon closer inspection, this distrust is not merely discernible as one which is merely taken into consideration, it is the index of a positive undertaking. What is first of all, and most frequently found altered by theories, is the very meaning of the theoretical undertaking and its products. It is with regard to the meaning of the various ensembles constituted by explanatory principles that phenomenology first accomplishes its task of preservation; it is the Being of scientific objects and the groupings which these constitute whose integrity it restores by conferring upon them a status. It is phenomenology which defends science against the temptation of being a new metaphysics by forbidding it to constitute itself as an absolute reality and, on the other hand, by effecting the insertion of its constructions and abstract

principles into the context of human experience. If the scientific object is *the same* as the object of this experience, this is not merely because it necessarily refers to an object of experience (whether sensible or not), but it is also because it is itself an object of experience.

If the concept of phenomenology is easy to grasp in its negative meaning insofar as it implies the putting between parentheses of all interpretations and constructions which theoretical thought super-imposes upon the real to the point of mistaking its own products for reality and of hypostatizing them as an absolute form, its positive determination [61]—precisely because it aims at introducing us into the realm of *positivity*,—demands an analysis. Such an analysis must be centered around the idea of phenomenon because as a science of phenomena, phenomenology pretends to stick exclusively to that which manifests itself precisely as it manifests itself. We are the true positivists, as Husserl said. Certainly it is a question here of taking exception to empiricism and of admitting as the source for the rights of knowledge “not merely the sensory seeing of experience, but seeing in general as primordial dator consciousness of any kind whatsoever.”¹ It is when the specifically theoretical element of knowledge limits itself to expressing the intuitive datum in the meanings which strictly correspond to it, that it can serve as a foundation for the further development of knowledge and thus be what Husserl calls an ‘absolute beginning’ or a ‘principle’. Because it rests precisely upon that which shows itself in itself and as it is, the phenomenological proposition claims to have an absolute value. Actually the appearance to which it refers is absolute, precisely insofar as it is an appearance. That which appears is that which we cannot challenge, that which escapes reduction. A truly positive science is possible therefore insofar as it constantly refers to such an appearance. Because it wishes to entrust itself to the latter and to restore to it all its dimensions, phenomenology sets free the foundation upon which may be re-established “with the rights they enjoyed as of old, metaphysics and, at the same time, Being and life, as absolute data.”² Moreover, Scheler adds: “A philosophy founded on the phenomenological intuition of the essence must affirm that absolute Being is

¹ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, tr. W.R. Boyce Gibson. (New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1969) 84.

² Max Scheler, “Die Idole der Selbsterkenntnis” in *Vom Umsturz der Werte*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, III. (Bern: Franke, 1955) 215.

knowable, in an evident and adequate way, in each sphere of the external and internal world.”³

It is true that a philosophy which bases itself [62] on the datum does not thereby escape the problem of non-truth; but it possesses the means for substituting in the place of the traditional problem of error, the more radical one of illusion, which in fact justifies appearance whose ‘content’ is always ‘true’, illusion resulting from the inadequate transposition of a *Sachverhalt* upon a stratum of Being other than its own. Regarding error, which is in the last analysis nothing more than a particular case of illusion, it consists in the establishing of an inadequate relationship between a *Sachverhalt* referred to in the judgment and the corresponding *Sachverhalt* present in intuition.⁴ But the phenomenon of knowledge always and in every case refers to a datum, to an appearance which plays the role of an ultimate foundation and whose proper meaning must merely be understood and located on the level of Being proper to it. For this it suffices to let the appearance appear such as it appears and simply to read in it that which is indicated.

The absolute meaning of phenomenology thus bases itself on the presence of the thing, that is, on its appearance. When we interpret phenomenology as a philosophy of consciousness, this absolute meaning translates itself into a dogmatism of intentionality which, because it attains to Being itself, is capable of furnishing a real foundation for the ‘ontological argument’. But if the relationship of the thing to consciousness makes the latter, insofar as it is a phenomenological datum, an absolute, the meaning of this is quickly shown to be relative, because every appearance as such is surrounded by a zone of shadows. The phenomenological datum includes in itself implications whose meaning in every case is to refer to something which is not there. Is not the precise meaning of phenomenology *considered as method*, the pursuit of the clarification of “what is ‘included’ and only non-intuitively co-intended in the sense of the *cogitatum*,”⁵ [63] thus extending the domain of the appearance, namely the domain of life and of reality, as well as of rationality, which finds its foundation in the appearance? But the accomplishment of the phenomenological task cannot, in spite of its positive meaning, totally dissipate the shadows which surround the appearance

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* 225.

⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, tr. Dorion Cairns. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969) 48.

and compromise its absolute character. There is no intuitive totality because the clarification of that which is implied in the apparent datum cannot be pursued unless this datum sacrifices its presence to the further unfolding of the phenomenological process. Moreover, the following question occurs to us: That to which the appearance refers, is it capable of presenting itself to us in its turn as an appearance? Otherwise, does not finitude, in virtue of which an appearance *always* requires clarification, refer to a more essential finitude which makes such a clarification *forever* impossible?

In any case, the law which calls for the relating of the appearance to a phenomenological process of explanation, remains a stranger to the natural consciousness for which appearances merely succeed one another, a stranger also to phenomenology as long as the latter is taken only as a positivism, or even if it is taken in a broader sense which restores to the power of vision the plurality of its fundamental dimensions. As a matter of fact, this law is that of the essence which is not taken into consideration as long as thought sticks to *that which appears* as an absolute. But such a way of thinking remains at the level of a naive and somewhat pre-critical type of phenomenology; it makes use of a concept of phenomenon which remains in fact unexplained. *Therefore, what is it that makes phenomena possible in the positivistic sense, what is it that constitutes for us the foundation of the presence of that which appears, unless it be the very act of appearing, the essence of the phenomenon and presence as such?* And insofar as [64] natural consciousness laments the temporal destiny of Being which comes to it, thinking, which concerns itself with the essence, understands the need for going back to the law which commands this destiny. The content, which appears to us each time, is not responsible for this destiny, rather it submits to destiny as to an outside law. However, the *reason* which posits the content within the appearance eludes it in the same way as the reason which tears it away from existence. Actually, it is one and the same reason, one and same law which does the founding and the suppressing, and the content does not contain this reason.

The radical dependence of *that which appears* with regard to the act of *appearing* requires that this act henceforth become the theme of the problematic. The problematic aims at the presence of that which is present, it refers to the essence as to the foundation upon which everything that is given us can be there for us. Its object is the *mode of manifestation* of that which manifests itself; it is, as Hegel has already said in commenting on the 'religions of light', 'a simple manifestation'.

Thought arrives at such an object only when it is capable of surpassing the consideration of the single existant which presents itself to us, in order to raise itself to the Being of that existant, namely to the act of appearing as such. The critique of positivism means that phenomenology must not be confused with a description of the ontic order, no matter how broad its field may be, but that it acquires its special philosophical meaning only when it is understood in its ontological plan in conformity to which it works out this surpassing of the existant toward the essence which constitutes the foundation of the existant in its Being. Phenomenology is the science of phenomena *in their reality*. Its object is not the ensemble of phenomena with their structures and, as a result, with their specific domains, but the essence of the phenomenon as such. The phenomenological reduction does not try to save certain contents considered as 'certain', while others become cancelled or suspended. The *reality* which it sets free as an irreducible foundation is not a privileged phenomenon, it is [65] the omnipresent and universal essence of every phenomenon as such. For this reason, the *phenomenological reduction* is *the same as the eidetic reduction* taken in an ultimate sense. The reduction is the setting free of the essence which cannot be reduced and which subsists alone as a condition. The reduction therefore introduces us into the sphere of the absolute. That the condition be absolute results from the fact that it is not posited by analysis or merely thought of as necessary. The condition is the essence of the phenomenon, the appearance as such in its act of appearing. The transcendental truth to which the phenomenological reduction introduces us is not some mysterious reality 'x'; it is truth itself identified with Being insofar as 'Being' and 'truth' mean nothing other than the appearance as such. "Being and truth 'are' equiprimordially," says Heidegger.⁶ This means that the fact of appearing is that which confers Being upon each thing and that truth, considered in a first meaning, is itself nothing other than this act of appearing considered in and for itself. This truth, insofar as it is transcendental, we can also call the Form. It is the formal and peculiarly ontological element to which each phenomenon, precisely insofar as it is a 'phenomenon', belongs. The insufficiency of positivism stems from the fact that it does not take into account the *positivity* which is constantly presupposes in

⁶ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 272.

describing phenomena without undergoing the prior interrogation concerning phenomenal-Being as such.

Insofar as it sticks to the essence of the phenomenon, the problematic which phenomenology inaugurates must be understood in its absolutely universal and fundamental meaning. Insofar as error, or more exactly illusion, is a problem, at least for phenomenological positivism, reflection which aims at the essence of the phenomenon finds in the examination of the 'simple appearance' a confirmation of its absolute character, because the essence [66] is "the appearance [Erscheinen]... of that shining-forth [Schein] needed by an appearance [Anschein] to be a simple shining-forth."⁷ Error, illusion, truth (in a rational sense) are co-determined by a common foundation. It is absolute truth which allows illusion to manifest itself and which thus constitutes the foundation for it in its *Being*. Error is not some instant separated from the absolute. The immanence of absolute knowledge at the heart of non-true knowledge is that which permits us to answer the question of Hegel: How can true knowledge prove its truth against non-true knowledge? Does it simply affirm that it is the true knowledge? "By giving that assurance," remarks Hegel, "it would declare its force and value to lie in its bare existence; but the untrue knowledge appeals likewise to the fact that it is."⁸ Nevertheless, it is not beyond the power of non-true knowledge to understand the meaning of its affirmation in order that it also might be a true and real knowledge. For, the fact that non-true knowledge exists comes from that which makes of it a true knowledge in an absolute sense. Knowledge is the manifestation and as such the essence. Because it is knowledge, non-true knowledge is also something which manifests itself, it carries within it as its condition the act of manifesting itself, namely, the essence. By reflecting upon the act of appearing, upon the fact that even apparent knowledge appears, the problematic which aims at the essence, reduces to itself and subordinates to itself, the secondary problems which concern 'truth' or 'error', 'appearance' or 'reality', understood each time in a specific sense. In itself the problematic has a universal meaning insofar as it shows that reality is precisely the reality of appearance under all its forms and, as a result, an absolute reality.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*. (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950) 129.

⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, tr. J.B. Baillie. (New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1966) 134.

The problematic henceforth rises from the idea of the equality of true and non-true knowledge to the consideration of absolute knowledge. True knowledge, in opposition to non-true knowledge, is true only in a secondary sense, for, as the sun shines upon the just and the unjust, truth taken [67] in an absolute sense does not make distinctions and in its ontological power, it promotes existence and protects illusion and 'reality' equally. Truth is the absolute reality, the truth of the true and the non-true, the origin which clarifies all things, the universal foundation.

It is true that natural consciousness most often forgets the essence which makes the gift of presence to it and hence, in opposition to its apparent knowledge, we can call true or real knowledge that which recognizes the work of the essence. Phenomenology is precisely true knowledge thus understood insofar as, understood in its universal meaning, it aims at being the knowledge of the essence. Phenomenology is the science of the essence of the phenomenon. It is because he understands Being as the essence of the phenomenon that Heidegger can say that phenomenology is the science of Being and hence ontology. For, phenomenology in no way consists in the application of a uniform method to diverse problems. It is in place here to distinguish the ultimate problems of phenomenology which define the field of a first phenomenology from a secondary phenomenology which aims at clarifying the meaning of Being in various regions. Expressions such as 'phenomenology of Being', 'phenomenology of the ego', 'phenomenology of time', are in themselves essentially ambiguous because the disciplines which they point out risk being juxtaposed in our minds with, for example, a phenomenology of social forms or of the object of mathematics. However, as long as the latter investigations obviously belong to the domain of a secondary phenomenology, then the problem arises of knowing whether the phenomenology of the ego or the phenomenology of time does not stem from the problem of phenomenology understood in a first sense, in which case, the ego and time would not be realities of the same order as society or mathematics, *in the sense that, far from being submitted to the essence, they would belong, on the contrary, to its internal structure and would thus enter as constitutive elements into the immanent definition of absolute truth.* [68]

But if such a question cannot be answered until the essence of the phenomenon has first been clarified, that which now appears quite clearly is that the object of first phenomenology cannot be external to the essence of the phenomenon; *rather its object is so internal to it that first phenomenology is founded upon the object and finds in it*

its principle. This object is the essence of the phenomenon and phenomenology is nothing other than the putting to work of this essence insofar as, upon the foundation of the latter, it aims at a 'clarification', namely, a promotion and a realization within presence. The understanding of the bond which unites phenomenology (understood as first phenomenology) and its object turns out to be difficult. Actually, phenomenology is the mode of treatment which we wish to make subject to reality, namely, to the essence. It is the 'how' which indicates to us the manner of treatment which must be debated by it. Nevertheless, that which must be debated is nothing other than the 'how', it is the *manner* in which reality manifests itself and must manifest itself to us. The reality of the real is no more than the manner in which the real manifests itself. "Ontology and phenomenology are not," says Heidegger, "two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object."⁹ But in the case with which we are preoccupied, the object is the mode of treatment itself. Phenomenology is that which gives us access to the phenomenon understood in its reality, namely to the phenomenon as such; but the path of access to the phenomenon is the phenomenon itself. Phenomenology presents itself to us as a means, the means of bringing close to us the concrete and true essence, the essence of presence, the absolute insofar as it is the Parousia; but the means is the absolute itself because the 'act of bringing close to us' is the work of the essence insofar as it is the essence of presence, the Parousia and the absolute. Phenomenology investigates the Parousia [69] of the absolute on the foundation of the absolute understood as the Parousia.

Insofar as it is the application of the phenomenological method to the problem of the essence of the phenomenon, phenomenology moves in a circle. This is the sign of its absolute character. This absolute character of the problematic which it inaugurates does not mean that phenomenology is without presupposition. Rather it admits a fundamental presupposition insofar as this presupposition is the foundation itself, the absolute. Phenomenology is an inquiry which aims at clarifying its own foundation, it is a reflection upon itself. Phenomenology is its own object.

The ultimate problems of phenomenology are related to the reflection of phenomenology upon itself and its foundation. It is in the answer given to these ultimate problems that the meaning of phenomenology

is decided. This meaning actually depends upon the nature of the foundation. 'How' can phenomenology enter into a relationship with the essence, namely, with the *fundamental 'how'*, in conformity to which reality realizes itself by becoming a 'phenomenon'? Obviously this depends on the nature of the 'how'. The problem of the essence of the phenomenon comes first with respect to the problem of clarification. Phenomenology allows itself to be guided by its object. The 'how' of its approach is subordinate to the 'how' of the reality which it approaches, reality which is the 'how' itself. In the last analysis, it is this reality which comes toward us and which enlightens us. Does not the manner in which this reality comes before us regulate the manner with which we receive it and in which we open ourselves to it? Or rather, is not the 'how' of our reception necessarily the same as the 'how' of the arrival of the absolute in us? The eye whereby the absolute looks at us is the same as the eye through which we look at the absolute. But how are we to understand this eye which is the absolute [70] itself? What is the nature of vision? What is the essence of the phenomenon?

All problems, whether already formulated of merely foreseen, which are related to first phenomenology must be held in abeyance pending the outcome of this question. The understanding of the bond which unites ontology and phenomenology remains undetermined as long as thought has not yet reached the interior of the structure of the essence. Because it remains subordinate to an unclarified essence, the very project of the clarification of the essence, which first defines the methodological task of phenomenology, remains uncertain with regard to itself, with regard to its meaning and to its foundation. Surely we cannot let ourselves be deterred by the objection of circular argumentation: The task of clarification begins and continues without fear of straying from the essence; rather, it entrusts itself to the essence and thus the essence will end up by making itself transparent to itself at the heart of this task—unless it be the 'will' of the essence to refuse this final transparency and to remain definitively in mystery. In any case, this 'will' will be brought to light, and the essence brought before itself. How must this putting the essence in the presence of itself be worked out? The essence, understood as the ontological power which constitutes the foundation for all presence, is certainly not a stranger to natural consciousness. Insofar as the latter is a consciousness, a Being-there, absolute knowledge is immanent to it. However, does the thematic grasp of the essence, does true and real knowledge, namely, the knowledge of absolute knowledge in its absoluteness, consist of the repre-

⁹ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 62.

sentation of the essence? This cannot be unless the essence itself consists of representation. And how must we interpret the nature of the latter? Hence, the understanding of the relationship of the essence to itself depends in the last analysis upon the determination of the structure of the essence. In the last analysis, only this determination can tell us if such a 'relationship' has a meaning.

"In the sphere of the psychic," says Husserl, "there is no difference [71] between being and appearance."¹⁰ But this affirmation upon which we would have thought we could lay the foundation for the absolute character of the phenomenological problematic, insofar as it aims at the immanent sphere of consciousness, actually remains an extremely vague indication, as long as we have not defined what we are to understand by the fact of appearing. By the same token, if we say that there is in the essence itself something which does not appear, then that which does not appear, or, to be more exact, the fact of not appearing, remains just as undetermined in its Being as pure and simple manifestation, as long as the latter is not grasped in a rigorous way in its essence. Moreover, the fact of not appearing has perhaps only a limited meaning, a purely negative one, if it remains in relationship to a non-elaborated concept of the phenomenal essence, because it could happen that that which is given as not appearing may be such with regard to a uni-lateral conception and hence, one which was abstracted from the essence. To push to the limit the determination of the essence in order to recognize it in its fully concrete characteristics, is perhaps to bring to life a Form, a more fundamental 'How' whose law bestows a presence, even though one of another order, on that which was first thought of as 'not appearing'.

The determination of the essence must likewise furnish us with the ontological cadre allowing for a discussion of the relationship of this essence to the existant which finds in it its foundation. Only this determination can say whether the surpassing of positivism is, from the ontological viewpoint, definitive and without appeal, whether the surpassing of the existant is worked out without need of returning, and whether the essence acquired in such a surpassing can be self-sufficient, can abstract from the ontic determination, can absolutize itself in this abstraction and thus subsist by preserving its absoluteness in its autonomy. [72] It is the manner of understanding the concrete character of the essence and ultimately its absoluteness which is in question.

¹⁰ *Logos* (1913), cited by Scheeler in *Idole*. 246.

The determination of the internal structure of the essence is alone capable of delimiting the field of the ultimate problems of phenomenology. It alone can say whether the phenomenology of the ego belongs to this field of first problems, and in what sense.

The task of a determination of the essence of the phenomenon thus appears as the central task of phenomenology; it is imperative for us, and this in a manner that is all the more urgent because it is on the foundation of an unexplained concept of phenomenon that philosophy has always posited and resolved its problems. The clarification of the essence of the phenomenon will show that when this essence has finally become the theme of an explicit problematic, the latter will do more than ratify, by making them absolute, the ontological presuppositions which have, since the beginning and in an almost uninterrupted manner, not only guided, but also—and perhaps more truly—misled philosophical investigation and thought.

9. THE UNILATERAL DETERMINATION OF THE ESSENCE OF THE PHENOMENON AND THE CONCEPT OF 'PHENOMENOLOGICAL DISTANCE'

In his *Objections to the Meditations of Descartes*, Gassendi states: "In my reflections as to the reason why it is the case that neither does sight see itself nor the understanding understand itself, the thought presents itself to me that nothing acts on itself. Thus neither does the hand (or the tip of the finger) strike itself nor does the foot kick itself. But since in other cases, in order for us to acquire knowledge of a thing, that thing must act on the faculty that discerns it and must convey into it the semblance of itself, or inform it with its sensible appearance; it is quite clear that the faculty itself, since it is not outside itself, cannot convey a similar semblance of itself into itself, and cannot consequently acquire knowledge of itself, or, what is the same thing, perceive itself. [73] And why, do you think, does the eye, though incapable of seeing itself in itself, yet see itself in the mirror? Why, because there is a space between the eye and the mirror, and the eye so acts on the mirror, conveying thither its sensible appearance, that the mirror reacts on it again, conveying back to the eye that sensible appearance's own appearance. Give me then a mirror in which you yourself may in a similar fashion act; I promise you that the results will be that this will reflect back your semblance into yourself and that you then will at length perceive yourself, not indeed by a direct,

but a reflected cognition. But, if you do not give this, there is no hope of your knowing yourself."¹ The empiricism of Gassendi appears in this text as influenced by conceptions inherited from Scholastic philosophy and through the intermediary of the latter, by those of the thought of antiquity. These conceptions, nevertheless, do not constitute the foundation for the argument directed here against Descartes, and empiricism in its turn is no more than a possible expression of the fundamental ontological presupposition which, even though it is not even expressed, nor clearly perceived, is nevertheless at the center of this argument. The theory of species, the idea of action at a distance upon things and upon oneself, and finally that of the 'mirror', are not foreign to this ontological presupposition; they rather constitute various means at the disposal of a type of thought which has not yet learned to lift to an ontological level the problematic it raises and which lives on 'theories', nor has it learned to express by means of the latter the ultimate ontological presuppositions from which theories are never entirely separated. The fact that only one and the same presupposition shows up throughout these various theories attests to *the persistence throughout history of a common ontological horizon* underlying varying philosophical subject matter; and that such a horizon can remain intact to the present day in spite of the revolution in thinking and, in particular, [74] in spite of the Cartesian revolution—for the reason that these upheavals are always produced interior to and, upon the foundation of, this horizon rather than by questioning it—this is what appears with evidence if we wish to compare the text of Gassendi to that of a contemporary author who, commenting on modern ontology, expresses himself in these terms: "In order to see something, we must have what we call a *field*. I do not distinctly see this inkwell, this book, unless it is because a certain distance separates me from them. If I bring them close to my eye, I perceive them less and less in proportion to the diminution of the distance. In the end, I no longer see anything. With regard to my cornea, I am never allowed to see it, I can perceive its *image* in a mirror and its *structure* in a treatise on anatomy. But it is no longer my cornea which I see. Certainly it can be seen. But this is only by someone other than myself and because there is a field. In brief, immediate knowledge is in reality always mediate. It operates through

¹ Gassendi in "objections Against the Meditations of Descartes", in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, II, tr. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 162-63.

the intermediary of a minimal distance. On the other hand, it is a fact that Being knows itself, through man or through any consciousness whatever. Therefore it is necessary that Being be at a distance from itself..."²

The presupposition underlying the text of Gassendi, and clearly operative here, is only rather vaguely expressed. The *ontological* meaning of this presupposition is questioned at the very moment when it seems to affirm itself, because the only precision made concerning the nature of the distance which is posited as the condition for the knowledge of Being, tends to confuse this distance with a real distance which can be considered as an ontic characteristic of the existant. As a matter of fact, it is the cornea of the eye which is considered as the zero point of this distance which is otherwise conceded as being more or less great. It remains that 'distance' enters in as a universal condition for knowledge, it is imposed upon the latter in the accomplishment of its task with a necessity of the eidetic order: [75] "Immediate knowledge is actually *always* mediate." That of which distance is the condition is not yet thought of except under the title of knowledge. In the thought of this author, there is no restriction made on the universal and eidetic meaning of the condition thus defined; the condition in no way limits itself to the phenomenon of knowledge alone which it aims at defining; rather it is the very possibility of a 'phenomenon' in general. The fact that the phenomenon, understood in its universal ontological structure, is falsely identified with knowledge understood in the classical sense is nothing but a heritage of classical thought. That which is ultimately aimed-at in spite of the imperfections and the imprecisions of the analysis, is therefore the ontological and universal possibility of a phenomenon in general, it is the *essence of the phenomenon*. Insofar as it is thought of as the condition of the phenomenon as such, namely *identified with its essence*, the distance in question should be called 'phenomenological distance'. It is only with the concept of 'phenomenological distance' that we raise ourselves to the level of the *ultimate ontological presupposition*, which underlies the texts that have just been quoted.

Understood in its ontological meaning as the condition whereby something such as a 'phenomenon' presents itself to us, or more exactly, as the very structure of phenomenality, the concept of phenomenological distance must obviously be distinguished from that of spatial distance

² L. Malverne, "La condition de l'être", in *La Revue de la Métaphysique et Morale*, January 1949, p. 42.

or 'real' distance. The distance which separates things or separates us from them, is a distance which we can measure objectively but which exists already anteriorly to every measure of this sort, as distance immediately tested and belonging to a surrounding world. Nevertheless, this lived distance in the original perceptive experience, in its turn, together with the space which it structures and to which it belongs, rests upon a more original spatiality which is nothing other than the phenomenological milieu originally opened in order that some [76] thing such as a space can first *manifest itself*. This original spatiality is the phenomenon of the world, the phenomenon of all phenomena, *their visibility as such*. The world, understood in its pure world-ness, is precisely this very visibility from which everything borrows the possibility of manifesting itself and thus, of being a 'phenomenon'. The world is the transcendental condition of space, for as Heidegger has shown, far from the world's resting in space, rather it is space that rests in the world. However, *the concept of phenomenological distance is in no way bound to space*, and herein it differs *fundamentally* from our ordinary concept of distance. 'Fundamentally' means insofar as it belongs to the foundation, to the world-ness of the world.

The concept of phenomenological distance is not merely 'bound' to that of the 'world', *the unfolding of this distance is, in reality, one with the arising of the world in its purity*. Understood in its radical ontological meaning, the concept of phenomenological distance passes as a name for the essence; but this ontological meaning is not safeguarded, or even first thought of, unless the concept of distance in opposition to all ideas of a spatial distance, receives the original meaning of a power. The distances upon which we build the concept which habitually corresponds to them in our minds, are *discovered* distances. It is true they are discovered within a field which is a phenomenological field before being spatial; but distance, insofar as it now characterizes the original and non-spatial phenomenological extension of this pure field, is itself in no way discovered. Distance is rather the power which permits us to discover. It is the original working of transcendence which unfolds the horizon. It is 'remoteness', but understood as Heidegger does, "in a signification which is both active and transitive."³ Before dealing with Remote-Being, distance is *that which [77] removes*. It is that which removes, not taken as a particular and determined type

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 139.

of behavior, whereby we push away an object on the table or throw a stone in the field. Such behavior, whether physical or not, is still no more than a process of the ontic order. It presupposes as a condition of the act of removing that it accomplishes in every case, *a more original removing*, namely *the ontological event which brings forth the horizon* toward which and inside of which the concrete act of approaching and removing can actually take place. Phenomenological distance fashions these original remotenesses, it unfolds the ultimate horizon of visibility within which everything can become visible for us. Every presence is a presence starting from a horizon and resting on the foundation of such a horizon. The horizon unfolds the milieu of presence. It opens the *ontological dimension of existence*. Phenomenological distance is the ontological power which gives us access to things, it is this access itself, an access in and through remoteness.

We say of things that they are far from us or near to us and this determination varies correlatively with the modalities of ontic behavior, whether real or virtual, which bind us to them; but this relationship with its characteristics specific to each case depends upon a more original relationship which is the result of remoteness. Proximity and remoteness are two modalities within a more fundamental remoteness which belongs as a condition to the very structure of phenomenality. The essence of the phenomenon is remoteness itself as transcendental remoteness. It is this remoteness which is the condition of every presence. It is remoteness which constitutes the proximity—admittedly variable—of things, a proximity of which the oft-mentioned remoteness is but a modality. Proximity, understood not as a characteristic of an ontic order but as its ontological possibility, namely, in its very essence, is one with primitive remoteness which is the product of the essence. Proximity and remoteness are equivalent sub-titles [78] for the essence of the phenomenon considered in its purity; taken together they mean that the essence of presence in some way hides an internal antinomy, but this is precisely what confers upon the essence its peculiar ontological power. Remoteness is the condition of every presence, of presence as such. Remoteness is the essence of proximity. "And so," Heidegger can say, "man ... is a creature of distance. Only through the primordial distances he establishes toward all being does a true nearness to things flourish in him."⁴

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, tr. Terrence Malick. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969) 131.