

INTRODUCTION

Sebastian Luft and Søren Overgaard

The importance of phenomenology today

Since its inception over a century ago, the “phenomenological movement,” as it was christened by its founder, Edmund Husserl, has established itself as one of the dominant philosophical movements in contemporary philosophy worldwide. Comprising fifty-nine chapters, this volume aims to cover all aspects of phenomenology, including its main proponents, its history, systematic scope, and its overlaps with and influence on other movements and branches within philosophy and beyond.

Phenomenology is not, and never was, a philosophical *school*, if one understands by that a group of philosophers committed to identical, or very similar, sets of doctrines. Yet the importance phenomenology assumes today would be inconceivable if phenomenologists did not share certain *methodological* commitments as well as closely related ideas about the proper domain of phenomenological research. Indeed, Husserl was proud to have opened up a new research domain that he ambitiously called a “new continent.”

Phenomenology has always presented itself as a *working philosophy* that is not only meant to engage, but also aims to provide a meaningful space for philosophical *research*. A quick look at recent developments in science and philosophy confirms that phenomenology has infiltrated nearly all fields of philosophy, several different sciences (natural as well as human), and intellectual and cultural life more broadly. This wide impact no doubt accounts for its strong position in intellectual and academic life today. Even within contemporary philosophy, which, at least since the middle of the twentieth century, has been torn between so-called “continental” and “analytical” philosophy, phenomenology assumes a key position. With its recommendation of a careful, piecemeal approach and its commitment to rigorous research responsive only to the “matters themselves,” it is a philosophical movement that has the potential to move contemporary philosophy beyond the oppositions that have arguably crippled, rather than advanced, philosophy as an academic discipline.

Here is not the place to engage in the debate over the much-discussed “parting of the ways” between continental and analytic philosophy, but suffice it to say that phenomenologists, in their best moments, have been utterly unconcerned with digging philosophical trenches or widening existing crevasses between philosophical

traditions. In turn, some of the best minds of the so-called analytic “camp” have fruitfully adopted ideas, concepts and analyses from the rich tradition of phenomenology. All of this taken together means that phenomenology, today, is not the title for a “battlefield of ideas” or a “clash of (scientific or other) cultures,” but rather the name for a space (among others) where minds and ideas can meet for constructive debates about serious philosophical and scientific issues. As mentioned, phenomenologists have often emphasized the ethos of philosophy as a working discipline with clearly defined tasks, methods and results that need to stand up to scrutiny by peers. But at the same time, most phenomenologists have explicitly acknowledged that this ethos is not phenomenology’s invention, but rather expresses its commitment to the tradition of occidental philosophy since the Greeks.

Emphasizing phenomenology’s engagement with contemporary analytic philosophy and the sciences should not, however, lead us to disregard its achievements on its own turf. While certainly influenced by philosophical schools and ideas of the past, phenomenology has established its own agendas, with its own methods and topics. Indeed, it may be argued that phenomenology has discovered a novel subject domain with its own structure and governing principles: the realm of consciousness or subjectivity and its world of experience, famously dubbed the *lifeworld* by Husserl. Despite their many departures from, and criticisms of, Husserlian phenomenology, it is also in the investigation of this domain, broadly construed, that one must locate the efforts of all later phenomenologists. It is therefore this field of investigation and the methods used to approach it that will take up the majority of space in this *Companion*.

In the following section, we will give a brief historical overview of the movement of phenomenology, its main authors and development up to the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the third section, “Brief Systematic Overview of Phenomenological Paradigms,” we will offer an overview of themes that define phenomenology in systematic terms. In the fourth section, “The Structure of the Volume,” we explain the rationale behind the different parts of the volume.

A brief history of phenomenology

Although Husserl is almost universally credited as the founder of the movement (at least in continental Europe), he was heavily influenced by Franz Brentano (1838–1917), one of his teachers in Vienna. Brentano, in turn, saw himself in the tradition of medieval scholastic philosophy, and appreciated the common-sense stance of the British empiricists. In this sense, one can certainly trace phenomenology back to modern or medieval philosophy, and one can easily find in it ideas inherited from Aristotle, Plato and the Presocratics. But such a narrative would lose sight of the specificity of phenomenology as a movement. In order to capture the latter, we must let phenomenology originate in the Germanophone world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with Brentano and Husserl being the most important founders.

It has mostly been stated by *fiat* that phenomenology’s founding literary document, the “breakthrough work,” was Husserl’s two-volume *Logical Investigations*

(1900/1, consisting of nearly one thousand pages). Other chroniclers of the movement might prefer Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874). And while the influence of Brentano on Husserl by the time of the *Logical Investigations* might be disputed, one can say that phenomenology presented itself initially as a descriptive science of mental phenomena, whereby the main idea was the *intentionality* of the mind, the idea that all or most mental phenomena are "of" or "about" something. While the notion of intentionality might have faded into the background in later developments, it was certainly defining for the movement in its early stages. In short, phenomenology was widely identified as a descriptive science of the mind, which, in turn, was construed as being constituted at the most fundamental level by intentionality.

The *Logical Investigations*, consisting of a book-length introduction (*Prolegomena to a Pure Logic*) and six individual investigations, was, to Husserl, merely the beginning of a series of investigations into the intentionality of consciousness. The *Prolegomena* was devoted to a thorough and – as most perceived it – devastating critique of psychologism. Psychologism is roughly the view that logical laws are at bottom nothing but empirical laws of human consciousness. Husserl argued that psychologism leads to a problematic relativism with regard to all truth claims. Indeed, already here the notion of intentionality was the key to solving the problem that led to psychologism: just because phenomena are given to the mind, one must not therefore conclude that they are themselves mental phenomena. The notion of intentionality allows Husserl to distinguish between the actual carrying out of a mental act and its (in this case) ideal content, which is irreducible to the mental act. The six investigations that followed the *Prolegomena* were discussions of the workings of the logical mind, though this was to be only the introductory part of a systematic investigation into the essential structures of consciousness, which Husserl held could be structured into the main classes of logical, emotional and volitional acts. But it was to be Husserl's fate that his systematic ambitions were nearly always squashed by his perceived inability to find a satisfactory final form of his writings for publication. For that reason Husserl held back with publishing continuations of the investigations, which made many regard Husserl – even to this day – as exclusively a philosopher of logic and logical thinking. Still, a beginning was made with a work that took the philosophical scene of the time by storm, in the same year (1900), by the way, in which another pupil of Brentano's, Sigmund Freud, published his *Interpretation of Dreams* that also probed, however differently, the depths of the mind.

Husserl's relative dearth of publication is noteworthy, because the growing influence of the movement of phenomenology was not so much due to Husserl's publications as to the circle of students that gathered around him in Göttingen, as well as to the students of fellow phenomenologist Max Scheler, residing in Munich. These two groups of students, consisting of highly talented young men and women who were to become pillars of the phenomenological movement in Germany and beyond (Gerda Walther, Jean Hering, Johannes Daubert, Theodor Conrad, Edith Stein, Roman Ingarden and many others), made phenomenology famous as a descriptive discipline committed, were one to categorize it by today's terms, to realism. That is to say, they took phenomenology to be a philosophy that would finally – that is, after the excesses of idealism in the nineteenth century – return to

the reality of life and describe it in an unbiased and presuppositionless way. It was this ethos of phenomenological philosophizing that later made Jean-Paul Sartre "pale with excitement" when he heard that phenomenology was a method to describe the famous cocktail glass in a Paris café in the most vivid details.

If there ever was a moment when phenomenology became a movement with an organized, institutionalized form, it was in 1913, when the main proponents in Munich and Göttingen – Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Alexander Pfänder, Moritz Geiger and Adolf Reinach – founded the *Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, which became the main outlet for works in phenomenology between 1913 and 1931. Many phenomenological classics were published in the *Yearbook*, including Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy (Ideas I)*, Scheler's *Formalism in Ethics and the Material Ethics of Value*, Heidegger's *Being and Time* and Stein's *On Empathy*, to list only the most famous.

Ironically, however, it was precisely at the moment when phenomenology set out to become a cohesive movement that disagreement broke out. The first volume of the *Yearbook* featured Husserl's mentioned *Ideas I*, a book that came as a tremendous surprise to most members of the movement (though Husserl expressed, in turn, great astonishment at this). This surprise was owed to the fact that Husserl clearly moved away from the realistic paradigm, embracing – the horror of all horrors – transcendental idealism and labeling his phenomenology a "phenomenological transcendental philosophy." Husserl never renounced the idealistic turn that he took here, however, and the disagreement that ensued later prompted Ricoeur to announce that phenomenology was really a movement of heretics rather than adherents – a most fruitful heresy, one may add in hindsight. With the emergence of Husserl's most gifted student Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who introduced existential and hermeneutical elements to phenomenology in his groundbreaking *Being and Time* (1927), whatever might have been called a movement exploded into different camps. Whereas the early school lost its cohesiveness after Husserl's apparent departure from his earlier position, which many had interpreted along realist lines, Heidegger, and before him Scheler, soon drew large crowds of followers who moved away from the Husserlian paradigm. Meanwhile, Husserl continued to pursue his transcendental-constitutive phenomenology, which was, however, largely unknown to his contemporaries because he worked mainly on research manuscripts not intended for publication, and had only a small, though devoted circle of pupils.

What were the philosophical differences between these emerging fractions within the phenomenological movement? The realistic branch of phenomenology investigated the surrounding world, including its manifestations in art, culture and science, in an attempt to unveil the essential features of the world as experienced by ordinary human beings. Comparisons with the concurrent movement of Impressionism in art have been drawn more than once. Though Husserl, Heidegger and their adherents agreed that phenomenology should faithfully describe the "things themselves" (phenomenology is about "letting things be seen in the manner in which they show themselves," as Heidegger put it in *Being and Time*), they placed phenomenological description in the service of larger systematic projects. According to Husserl, phenomenology should, as an eidetic science, ultimately make intelligible the constitution of the

world in transcendental consciousness. For Heidegger, phenomenology had to reawaken the "question concerning the meaning of being," and this necessitated an inquiry into that being (human "Dasein") that has an understanding of being. Arguably, efforts in phenomenology after the phenomenological movement's dispersion can be said to be situated somewhere between these three – realistic-empiricist, transcendental-idealistic, and existential-hermeneutic – alternatives.

But back to the historical situation and geographical setting, where the center of gravity had in the meantime shifted to Freiburg in the south-west corner of Germany, where Husserl taught and lived as of 1916 until his death. At Freiburg was also a young, gifted *Privatdozent* by the name of Martin Heidegger, whom Husserl took under his wing (though Heidegger was never Husserl's assistant, as is sometimes claimed). Heidegger soon started to exert an enormous influence on the youth, owing almost exclusively to his lecture courses first at Freiburg (1919–23), and later at Marburg (1923–28), one of the hotbeds of German Neo-Kantianism. Heidegger's impact has led one of his students at the time, Hannah Arendt, to speak of him as the "secret king of philosophy," about whom rumors traveled throughout Germany. Indeed, Heidegger's influence was so great that he gradually seemed to eclipse his teacher's influence. When Husserl retired in 1928, Heidegger returned to Freiburg to take up Husserl's chair. After his retirement, Husserl felt increasingly isolated, and since he was of Jewish descent, his isolation became near total after the Nazi Party's rise to power in 1933. Not only did the Nazi reign loom large over Husserl's last years, but it also sank his work into near oblivion on German soil. When the Nazi regime ended in 1945, a decade of complete neglect had rendered Husserl an entirely unknown figure. At the same time, Heidegger, due to his Nazi engagement (Heidegger was *Rektor*, president, of the university of Freiburg 1933–34 and publicly embraced Nazism), was barred from teaching by the allied forces after his denazification process. This, together with the death and expulsion of a great many intellectuals, including philosophers, meant that Germany lost its status as the main stage of phenomenology. That status now belonged to France.

A trek to the phenomenological centers in Germany had started to set in after World War I, such that both Husserl and Heidegger could proudly count several foreigners – not only from Europe, but also from East Asia and North America – among their students. And as of the late 1920s, a number of young, gifted French philosophers had turned their eyes to the new and exciting philosophy that was done in Freiburg. This German impact does not mean, however, that France did not have its own philosophers who were influential for French phenomenology and were even co-opted as phenomenologists *avant la lettre*, such as Maine de Biran (1766–1824) and Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Just like in Germany, French academia was dominated by the Neo-Kantians (such as Boutroux, Brunschvicg and Meyerson), and it was primarily against this old regime that the younger French philosophers wanted to rebel.

The first wave of French thinkers influenced by phenomenology included Emmanuel Levinas (originally from Lithuania), Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who, however, formed merely the tip of a large and vibrant intellectual iceberg in Paris. Most of the French phenomenologists – especially Sartre, Beauvoir and Camus – coupled their philosophical endeavors with a time-honored French tradition, namely that of the engaged, public intellectual.

Through literary works more than academic philosophy, they gained fame (and notoriety) as "existentialists." At the same time, Sartre and Beauvoir were able to make extremely important contributions to phenomenological philosophy more narrowly construed. Sartre's early works *The Transcendence of the Ego*, *The Imaginary*, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* and the massive *Being and Nothingness* are all phenomenological classics, offering exhilarating (if controversial) analyses of, among other things, shame, love and human freedom. Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* contains acute phenomenological descriptions of women's lives in a society dominated by men, and is not just a classic of phenomenology but a seminal work of feminist philosophy as well.

Merleau-Ponty, while also part of the circle of public intellectuals surrounding Sartre and Beauvoir, was the most academic and possibly the most profound thinker inspired by phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty was the first official visitor to the newly founded Husserl Archives in Louvain (Belgium), where Husserl's famous research manuscripts were kept after being smuggled out of Nazi Germany by the Franciscan priest, Hermann Leo Van Breda. Having already read Husserl's published works and Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Merleau-Ponty was able to appropriate and deepen analyses and insights found in Husserl's unpublished texts, as well as develop them further in ways not always loyal to the letter of Husserl's writings. This effort culminated in the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception* of 1945, arguably Merleau-Ponty's main contribution to phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty sides with Heidegger (and others) that the phenomenological reduction can never be "complete," in that it reveals a Heideggerian "being-in-the-world" rather than the pure, constituting subjectivity sought by Husserl. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty follows Husserl in developing in detail a theme virtually ignored by Heidegger, namely that of the lived-body (*Leib*, as opposed to the physical *Körper*), which Merleau-Ponty understands as a fundamental structure of our human existence. Although Merleau-Ponty's work was seen for many years as "merely" an attempt to synthesize Husserl and Heidegger, his engagement with empirical sciences such as psychiatry and developmental psychology has given him a key role in current attempts to bring phenomenology into conversation with the cognitive sciences.

Emmanuel Levinas, another member of the French scene, established his name as a translator of, and an expert in, Husserl's phenomenology, but he would grow to become possibly the most original of the French phenomenologists. His two main works, *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974), attempt a wholesale redefinition of the aim of phenomenological philosophy in some ways not unlike, and in other ways very unlike, the revolution Heidegger instigated when he let the "question concerning the meaning of being" take center stage. For Levinas, the "ontological" attempt to grasp being has been characteristic not just of Heidegger but of Western philosophy in general. Instead of contributing to the ontological project, however, Levinas urges that *ethics*, rather than ontology, should be "first philosophy." He also provides some highly original descriptions of the encounter with other human beings, stressing the way in which such encounters invariably have an irreducibly ethical dimension to them.

After its initial appearance in forms not wholly alien to the German forerunners, French phenomenology was mingled with ideas stemming from Marxist, structuralist

and psychoanalytical philosophies. Of decisive importance in this context were thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. These have been very influential, and not just in their native country, though in the Anglophone world their influence has been at least as pronounced in literature departments as in those of philosophy. Especially Derrida, who never succeeded in attaining a proper professorship of philosophy in France, achieved “rock star” status in the US, where he traveled regularly as of the 1980s and held several appointments as visiting professor, attracting huge audiences.

This brings us to the other parts of the globe where phenomenology flourished after World War II. As mentioned, already Husserl and Heidegger had a significant number of students from East Asia – mainly Korea and Japan – who traveled to Germany, in particular Freiburg, to be taught by the masters. The tradition of exchange between Germany and the Far East continues to this day. Here, the influences were always bilateral, in that East Asian philosophers profited from phenomenological methods or insights (into the descriptions of the lifeworld, say, despite its regional differences), while many Asian philosophers in turn brought their own traditions to bear on phenomenology and its manner of thinking. The Heideggerian question of Being, which also included the question of Nothingness, exerted a particularly great fascination on philosophers and theologians from the Buddhist tradition. Heidegger took these filiations very seriously, but ultimately concluded that there was at bottom a radical incommensurability between Asian and European thought. But it is indicative of the strength and originality of this strain in phenomenology that most scholars did not follow Heidegger in this assessment.

The latter third of the twentieth century saw phenomenology spread to all corners of the globe, thriving particularly well in the Americas. Ties between the classical phenomenologists and South America existed from early on and continue to this day. However, phenomenology was arguably most productively received in North America. A number of phenomenologists (as well as other philosophers, including critical theorists and logical positivists) emigrated from Europe before and during World War II, bringing their ideas and traditions with them and seeking to disseminate them in the new intellectual milieu. And since linkages between Europe and North America had already long been established, these efforts fell on relatively fertile ground. In 1940, phenomenologists in America founded the journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, an Anglophone revival of Husserl’s *Yearbook*, which, due to its pluralistic editorial policies has since become one of the most important journals in *analytic* philosophy. Initially the scholars of phenomenology were confined to a very limited number of institutions, such as the New School for Social Research in New York, which had been founded with the express intention of creating a safe haven for academic refugees. Nevertheless, the influence of phenomenology grew, and although mainstream North American academia continues to be dominated by analytic philosophy in its many guises, today there is hardly a philosophy department without a “token phenomenologist” of one stripe or another.

This is not to suggest that the history of phenomenology in North America has always been one of peaceful and blissful coexistence with the analytical majority. Indeed, there have been violent clashes and hostile attitudes aplenty. Although one should be wary of laying all the blame at one party’s doorstep, it should be noted

that the logical positivists and their American pupils were not always as tolerant of their phenomenologist fellow immigrants as the latter tended, at least in their best moments, to be of the former. When Herbert Feigl and Wilfrid Sellars founded *their* own journal – *Philosophical Studies* – in 1950, the journal was devoted exclusively to analytic philosophy (and it remains so to this day). Though both terms to describe the respective camps are more than diffuse and problematic, “analytic” and “continental” have nonetheless historical as well as political relevance, and they have shaped the North American academic scene in philosophy as well as in other parts of the humanities.

In the past decade, however, these erstwhile sharp boundaries have begun to soften, for different reasons. On the side of analytic philosophy, one can discern a certain loss of defining paradigms. When at one time analytic philosophy could be identified as philosophy of language following Wittgenstein’s and Carnap’s linguistic turn and the concomitant critique of metaphysics and its language, this paradigm has more or less evaporated. Instead, the philosophy of mind has moved to the top of the analytic agenda, which has vastly increased the opportunities for rapprochement with phenomenology.

On the side of “continental” philosophy, the decades after the war saw a flourishing of different paradigms – late Heideggerian, deconstructivist, post-structuralist, etc. – most of which were self-assuredly “post-modern” and critical of the modern ideals of rationality and objective truth, or of the Enlightenment quite generally. In recent years, however, what Habermas called “modernity, an unfinished project,” seems to have gained more prominence once again. When Simon Critchley, an influential scholar of Derrida and Levinas, in his recent book *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, calls for a return to phenomenological description in order to circumvent the danger of “obscurantism” that he suggests continental philosophy is facing, then it seems to us that the tide must be turning. Phenomenology may be on its way to regaining its position at the very center of the continental tradition.

The result of these developments has been that both camps have approached one another and have begun to appreciate their mutual strengths: analytic and conceptual clarity on the one hand, phenomenological description, openness to and appreciation of historical embeddedness and tradition, on the other. As mentioned at the outset, many of the best minds in contemporary philosophy seem refreshingly unconcerned with partisanship and instead find themselves simply working on philosophical problems, trying to solve them, taking methods, concepts and ideas from wherever they can find them.

So where does this leave phenomenology at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Though never dead or obsolete, it is now once again gaining influence and has assumed a dominance that was unimaginable some two or three decades ago. But the way in which phenomenologists exert their influence has become increasingly diversified. A large portion of work in phenomenology is still devoted to exegesis of its main authors at a time when the oeuvres of, say, Husserl and Heidegger are slowly becoming visible in their entirety. This work is not something to be discounted. Especially Husserl’s vast unpublished oeuvre contains many “nuggets” that will pose problems and challenges to interpreters for generations to come. But phenomenology has also made an increasingly noticeable impact within the philosophy of mind

(including the philosophy of perception) and within the cognitive sciences. What above all appeals to researchers in these fields is the Husserlian ethos of philosophy – phenomenological or otherwise – as a working philosophy, an *Arbeitsphilosophie*, that takes seriously the demand for rigorous research, and where any hope of progress depends on intersubjective validation and ultimately on a communal effort of attaining the truth, even if its full attainment is an ideal lying in infinity. In these and many other contexts, the ideal of providing careful, unbiased, phenomenological descriptions of various phenomena precisely the way they are experienced by us has once again come to the fore.

With this historical narrative, we now turn to phenomenology itself and offer some general remarks about what characterizes phenomenology as we see it. In other words, are there some basic ideas or fundamental paradigms that all or at least the majority of phenomenologists would be able to underwrite, even if they might have not used the same vocabulary? We believe there are, and we shall present them in the following.

Brief systematic overview of phenomenological paradigms

What we intend to offer in this section is a preliminary list – perhaps incomplete – of main paradigms that define *what phenomenologists do* when they go about their work. Some of the labels used in the following have been expressly rejected by some phenomenologists; but this is not to say that they do not adhere to the general idea(s) behind these labels, if suitably rephrased. What follows should, however, be taken with a grain of salt, and is not meant to restrict the efforts done under the heading of phenomenology.

The first-person perspective

The conceptual pair “first-person perspective” and “third-person perspective” was made famous by Thomas Nagel in his widely read *The View from Nowhere* of 1989. Yet it makes good sense to label phenomenology writ large as an account of whatever is in question *from the first-person point of view*, from the perspective of the I who is directed at, or open to, the world. Phenomenology is, in the most general of definitions, a science of the first person perspective and what is experienced in it. The often-mentioned “matters themselves,” to which one is supposed to turn in phenomenology, are the matters as experienced in the first-person perspective – by the respective *I* in each case.

For instance, when introducing the world of the natural attitude (prior to science and philosophy), Husserl in *Ideas I* points out that he deliberately has to switch to the first-person singular in describing what is experienced in the pre-philosophical mindset. The account of how the world appears to *me* can, accordingly, only be given in the parlance of “I experience, I see, I hear. ...” Accordingly, what are described are not the objects *as such*, but the objects *as they appear to me*.

That is, phenomenology does not aim to give an account from the third-person perspective, a so-called *objective* account, as the empirical sciences generally do. The

impetus of phenomenology is to emphasize that there is just as much "objectivity" and truth in the subjective access to the world once it is *articulated* and *intersubjectively confirmed*. Hence, despite its commitment to a subjective account, phenomenology is meant to be anything but "subjective," if that is to mean random, subject-relative and hence inaccessible to intersubjective corroboration. To the contrary, phenomenologists generally emphasize that once subjects put themselves in the position of describing the manner in which things are given or appear to them, they will quickly discover that these descriptions are valid not only for their own private selves, but for others too. For instance – and this is a famous example – the experience of a three-dimensional object, such as a coffee cup, has a seen front side and an unseen back side, and once I turn the cup around, the hitherto unseen back side is visible and the front side invisible. In general terms, visual objects never show themselves from all sides at once; they "adumbrate" themselves. This has nothing to do with my personal individual psycho-somatic constitution, but pertains to every creature that has visible perception, be it with one, two or ten ocular organs. In this sense, despite the *first-person* access, phenomenology is by no means an individual, solipsistic or private affair.

Description

As already hinted at, once the turn to the first-person point of view – that is, to our normal view on the world, which is usually disregarded in other scientific inquiries – has been performed, the task of phenomenology is to *describe* first-person experience. Phenomenology is a descriptive science of what appears. But phenomenological description is anything but a naive and simple endeavor. One can characterize the method of description negatively and positively. Negatively, what does description *not* mean or entail? A "pure" description attempts (ideally) to proceed without biases and presuppositions, without "blindness," metaphorically speaking, and without any kind of commitment to authorities, values, interests, ideologies, and so on. This is an ideal, clearly, and may not be fully attainable. It attempts to regain an originality, neutrality, and purity of experience of the world prior to any "layers" or sedimentations that have been shrouded over it. This means that anything that potentially has a *falsifying* or *distorting* effect on the description of things as they appear should be "bracketed," left out of play.

Positively speaking, the methodological ideal of phenomenological description is captured in Husserl's famous "principle of principles," which exhorts us to simply take everything that presents itself to us originally in 'intuition' (in the reality in the flesh, so to speak), as the way it gives itself, but also in the boundaries within which it gives itself to us. Very similar remarks can be found in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The point is that a phenomenological description must faithfully record the appearance of a phenomenon, including everything that belongs to it, but without adding anything that is not there. In the case of the perceptual object, part of the phenomenon is the surrounding in which it appears – the cup on a table, the table in a room, and so on – all of which can be described in literally endless detail. The same goes for the phenomenon itself, its appearance in space and time, its endless details of showing itself, the layers that can be discerned (abstractly, of course), the

correlated and interrelated aspects, and so on. The task of description, hence, can be described as applying the magnifying glass to whatever is the current object of inquiry – and there is an endless plethora of possible objects of inquiry. The details revealed under this metaphorical magnifying glass are in principle just as vast as those revealed by a magnified look at nature that reveals an ever more fine-grained relief.

For these reasons, the phenomenological account, not of the world as such but of the *experience* of the world from the first-person perspective is an endless task. This is why Husserl would speak of phenomenology as a working philosophy with infinite horizons. It is an acknowledgement that the field of conscious experience is just as vast as the world itself. Hence, description means – negatively – keeping at bay distorting and falsifying claims, and – positively – a commitment to paying close attention to phenomena and their complexity, their richness, which is never completely exhausted. To phenomenology, the world as it is experienced is an endless field of riddles, enigmas and questions that demand to be made intelligible by a faithful description of their manner of being, their functioning, their appearing, or their *meaningfulness* to experiencing agents.

Intentionality

While the first two paradigms can be said to fall on the side of the *method* of carrying out phenomenological inquiry, the third paradigm is one – perhaps the only one identifiable for the totality of the phenomenological movement – that has an element of substantial philosophical doctrine to it. Human experience does not present itself as a flow of purely internal, mental events. Rather, it is always related to something, and that something is usually out there in the world. Generally speaking, to be conscious is to be conscious *of* something or other: I see something (a flower, a book, a face), I hear (a melody, a voice), I remember (yesterday's lunch, my deceased mother), I expect (tomorrow, a friend's visit), and so on. The phenomenological *terminus technicus* for this directedness of consciousness onto a world in the widest sense is *intentionality*. Intentionality is a term that was introduced by Brentano, who derived it from the medieval scholastics; but with Husserl's *Logical Investigations* the term was assigned a key role in phenomenological research.

Again, one can say that the thematization of intentionality has a negative and a positive function. The negative function of the claim that consciousness is generally consciousness-of is to overcome, or avoid altogether, false dichotomies and pseudo-problems that have plagued traditional philosophy, such as the problem of how it is possible that a subject *here* can become conscious of an object *over there*. This conundrum may be phrased in different ways, such as, how it is possible to have representations in my mind ("my head") of things external to me (the epistemological problem of representationalism). The descriptive phenomenological approach, which implies doing away with all presuppositions, even hidden philosophical ones, asserts that this problem is indeed a pseudo-problem. Descriptively, consciousness is consciousness-of something. To see always implies something seen, and even a visual illusion or hallucination presents something as "seen" (Macbeth, for example, "sees" a dagger before him). The question regarding the "true nature" or the "actual

existence" of the object seen is an ontological problem and thus not one for phenomenology, as a descriptive enterprise, to address. Phenomenology can "afford" to adopt this attitude because, by holding in suspension ontological questions, it neither denies their importance nor argues for or against any ontological claims; such claims are sidestepped altogether.

The positive function of the paradigm of intentionality is that it sets the initially vague task of describing the wealth of experience that an experiencing agent has of the world on a concrete path. The descriptive look at intentionality breaks down the structure of intentionality into different, though of course related, sub-elements, such as my consciousness-of, that of which I am conscious, and the *meaning* of that of which I am conscious. A more fine-grained analysis may even reveal further details, for instance, the consciousness-of may be divided into the actual focal act of (e.g.) seeing, and the visual background experience.

When we say that intentionality is perhaps the only common defining notion describing phenomenology as a whole, the term must be understood in a very broad sense. Many phenomenologists have criticized Husserl's analyses of intentional experience and of the systematic role of intentionality within phenomenological research. Yet it is arguable that it is precisely in their critical engagements with Husserl's intentional analyses that later phenomenologists have accomplished some of their most fruitful and creative work. When discussing sense-perception, for example, it is undeniable that the ideal that Husserl has before his eyes – accordingly the example that has been used here – is the relaxed and quiet contemplation of an object placed in front of a disinterested perceiver content to let things parade before her or his eyes. In different ways, later phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty all took issue with Husserl's tendency to invoke this contemplative, disinterested and mentalistic paradigm.

Yet it is clear that their criticisms are not directed at the notion of intentionality *per se*, but at Husserl's typical way of cashing it out (that Husserl, in turn, found these critiques unfounded is a different story). Indeed, the positive conceptions that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, for example, put forth have more the character of subtle revisions than wholesale rejections of Husserl's analyses. For instance, Heidegger's analyses of the way in which things show up for us, in our everyday interaction (*Umgang*) with the world, as "equipment" rather than pure things or objects, themselves move within the structure of intentionality as presented by Husserl: something *shows* itself to someone in a particular *way*. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the being-towards-the-world (*être-au-monde*) of the ego as an embodied creature, where the boundaries between my body and that which I inhabit (the famous examples of my body scheme as expanded when, for example, operating a vehicle or playing a musical instrument) are fluid, can be construed as a deepened and expanded account of the essential "aboutness" of human existence.

In sum, whereas one will rarely find "intentionality" featured as a prominent term in phenomenological works after Husserl (at least the "classical" ones), it is nevertheless the case that what is essentially meant by it – the correlation between first-person experience and its content – lives on under different guises. Moreover, perhaps precisely because it has been discarded as an operative concept, intentionality has continued to circumscribe the domain of phenomenological research.

The structure of the volume

In the attempt to give phenomenology its fullest due, we have divided this volume into five parts. We shall briefly sketch the rationale for each of these.

The *first part* ("Main figures in the phenomenological movement") covers the main authors in the phenomenological movement. These entries give introductory overviews of the lives and works of the phenomenologists in question. Regarding the selection itself, some readers may miss "their" author (such as members from the early circles in Göttingen and Munich, some of the affiliates of the circle around Sartre, or more recent proponents of French phenomenology, such as, Michel Henry). Here we must draw attention to two things. First, the sheer magnitude of the phenomenological movement made it simply impossible to include all significant proponents in a volume of this size. Tough choices thus had to be made. In some cases (e.g. including Arendt and Derrida, but not Gadamer), our choices are certainly debatable, but so be it. Secondly, however, there is one very significant omission, which is not due to decisions made on our part. An entry on Paul Ricoeur was commissioned but failed to materialize. Though Ricoeur's work is treated in other entries (see, in particular, the entries on "narrative" and "hermeneutics"), we believe his position in the phenomenological movement merits a separate entry, and one such will be supplied in a possible new edition of the *Companion to Phenomenology*.

Part II ("Main topics in phenomenology") comprises what we take to be the main topics, ideas, paradigms and concepts that have defined phenomenological research up until now. Each entry gives an in-depth treatment of a central phenomenological theme. Again, in selecting these topics, tough choices had to be made. Even so, some might feel that Husserlian themes are over-represented in this part. In reply, we would like to stress two things. First, as the founder of phenomenology, Husserl developed analyses, topics, paradigms and avenues that later phenomenologists elaborated upon, developed further, took up for their own purposes, or responded to in a critical fashion. If Ricoeur is right that the phenomenological movement is a movement of heretics, then one can hardly understand post-Husserlian phenomenologists without a thorough grasp of the Husserlian path from which they deviated. And even when later authors reject or repudiate certain Husserlian analyses or concepts, it is often the case that underneath the criticisms central Husserlian notions – such as intentionality, as discussed above – continue to live on, possibly under different names. Secondly, entries 25–33 directly address key notions of later phenomenologists, which are for the most part absent in Husserl's oeuvre. We believe the result is a balanced selection from the main writers in phenomenology with a certain – we think justified – emphasis on Husserl.

The *third part* ("Phenomenological contributions to philosophy") focuses on how phenomenology has contributed to the traditional disciplines of philosophy. Each entry assesses the contribution phenomenology has made, or potentially could make, to the main contemporary discussions in the relevant discipline. The texts in this part mainly (though not exclusively) have a systematic aim: they are meant to constitute starting points for philosophers seeking an understanding of the ways in which phenomenology contributes to the main fields of contemporary philosophy.

The *fourth part* ("Phenomenological intersections") describes and assesses the ways in which phenomenology has influenced (1) other philosophical traditions and movements, some of which even grew out of phenomenology, and (2) disciplines outside of philosophy as traditionally conceived. This section, hence, has a more historical focus than Part III, and is meant to highlight the way in which the phenomenological movement has helped shape the philosophical and scientific landscape of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. (A projected entry on Asian thought failed to materialize, but will be included in a future edition of the *Companion*.)

The *Companion* ends in Part V ("Historical postscript") with a translation of the magisterial piece by the late Karl Schuhmann on the history and origin of the concept "phenomenology". While abundant in its resources, Schuhmann's chapter also makes an implicit argument as to the meaning and future task of phenomenology. If there is a kernel of truth in Heidegger's phrase, that "Herkunft ist stets Zukunft" – freely translatable as "where one comes from will always determine where one is headed" – those working in shaping the future of phenomenology will do well to behold the origin and history of their discipline.