
The muddled concept of life: from *Lebensphilosophie* to hermeneutic
phenomenology in Heidegger's earliest University lecture

O conceito confuso de vida: da *Lebensphilosophie* à fenomenologia
hermenêutica na primeira palestra universitária de Heidegger

DOI: 10.12957/ek.2023.81747

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ABSTRACT

A century ago, Heidegger — then Husserl's scientific assistant — delivered at the University of Freiburg a lecture entitled *The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview* on the War Emergency Semester (*Kriegsnotsemester*). From our contemporary viewpoint, the lecture is not only important for historical reasons, but rather because of its combative and radical tone regarding the muddled concept of life in philosophy. Heidegger's definition of phenomenology as originary pre-theoretical science redefines the scope of phenomenological research and prepares the path for its hermeneutical transformation. The lecture serves as testimony of the development of Heidegger's own philosophical voice, as early as the very beginning of his teaching career, but also untangles the rather confusing underpinnings that plagued *Lebensphilosophie* since the late 19th century.

Keywords

Lebensphilosophie, Vitalism. Life-World. Irrationalism. Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

RESUMO

Há um século, Heidegger — então assistente científico de Husserl— proferiu na Universidade de Freiburg uma palestra intitulada *A Ideia da Filosofia e o Problema da Visão de Mundo* no Semestre de Emergência de Guerra (*Kriegsnotsemester*). Do nosso ponto de vista contemporâneo, a palestra é importante não apenas por razões históricas, mas sim por seu tom combativo e radical em relação ao conceito conturbado de vida na

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filosofia. A determinação de Heidegger da fenomenologia como ciência pré-teórica originária redefine o escopo da pesquisa fenomenológica e prepara o caminho para sua transformação hermenêutica. A palestra serve como testemunho do desenvolvimento da própria voz filosófica de Heidegger, já no início de sua carreira docente, mas também desvenda as bases bastante confusas que assolaram a *Lebensphilosophie* desde o final do século XIX.

Palavras-chave

Lebensphilosophie. Vitalismo. Mundo da vida. Irracionalismo. Fenomenologia Hermenêutica.

1 THE RUMOR OF THE HIDDEN KING

The encounter between Heidegger and Husserl is one of the most significant events in contemporary philosophy. Although upon his arrival in Freiburg in 1916 Husserl appointed Edith Stein as his assistant, that same year he began his relationship with the young Heidegger, whose personality and talent made a deep impression on him.² In 1919, Husserl appointed Heidegger as his scientific assistant and thus began a philosophical alliance that would transform the landscape of German philosophy in just a few years. It is Gadamer who tells the anecdote according to which Husserl was boasting at that time that “phenomenology... that’s Heidegger and I” (1987, p. 188), although the breakdown between master and disciple was already lurking on the horizon very early on, as this paper is about to show.

Hannah Arendt (2008) recalls that academic life at that time was characterized by a milieu permeated by professional boredom and the tedious organization into schools that offered safe doctrines and ready-made answers. Heidegger’s teaching activity dramatically transformed a philosophical panorama that said nothing to the German youth who had witnessed first-hand the horrors of the Great War. A rumor circulated in Germany about a teacher who was almost unknown: “the secret hidden king of the kingdom of thought” (Arendt, 2008, p. 116). According to Arendt, “what was known about him was not much more than a name, but this name traveled throughout Germany as the rumor of a hidden king who wants to go unnoticed” (2008, p. 114). His teaching activity, witnessed by Arendt herself, Löwith, Jonas, Marcuse, Gadamer and many others, was characterized by being able to distinguish between erudition and the matter of

² On Husserl’s years in Freiburg, see Mohanty, 2011.

thought, and to look at scholarly positions with sufficient indifference and disdain. Another witness to Heidegger's spectacular entrance onto the philosophical stage was Leo Strauss, who does not hesitate to describe Heidegger's teaching as a revolution in thinking:

Gradually, the extent of the revolution in thought that Heidegger was preparing became apparent to me and my generation. We saw with our own eyes that there had been no similar phenomenon in the world since the time of Hegel. He managed to overthrow the established philosophical schools in Germany in a very short time. (2008, p. 42)

Heidegger's first lecture at the University of Freiburg as Husserl's scientific assistant, *Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem*, took place during the emergency semester (Kriegsnotsemester) of the postwar period in 1919 and had a decisive impact on the philosophical milieu of the time. Heidegger presents himself as the one who would concretely fulfill Husserl's promise of "going to the things themselves" but only after carrying out a transformation and radicalization of the master's thought. The lecture therefore serves as a hinge holding the door between the discussions that are found in the early stages of phenomenological philosophy and the contemporary debate on the proper place of philosophical thinking.

The lecture is a genuine testimony of Heidegger's axe, i. e., his way of thrusting, though not to completely make the tree's trunk fall apart, in this case Husserl's philosophy. At least in the period referred to as the phenomenological decade (1919-1929), Heidegger carried out a hermeneutic transformation of phenomenological philosophy, thanks to which its scope can be expanded and its tasks redefined. The result is none other than what Heidegger calls "die Eigenständigkeit des Philosophierens" (GA 29/30, p. 31), that is, the conviction—undoubtedly bold—that proclaims the autonomy, independence, and sovereignty of philosophical thinking, whose thematic scope should not be confused with the themes and problems of the other sciences. On Heidegger's judgment, the matter of thinking—the so-called *Sache des Denkens*—is untransferable and impossible to delegate to other forms of inquiry.

In the following, I offer a reconstruction of the conceptual content of the 1919 lecture, (published as *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, GA 56/57), in order to present the key aspects of the hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology forged by the young Heidegger from the very start of his teaching career. The radicalization of phenomenology carried out in this lecture revolves around the concept of life (*Leben*) and lived experience

(*Erlebnis*), and takes as its starting point a series of objections that at the time sought to undermine the foundations of the phenomenological project. Heidegger, I argue, successfully overcomes such criticism and places phenomenological philosophy in a wholly new direction.

2 THE TRADITIONAL EQUIVALENCE

The main thesis of the *Kriegsnotsemester* lecture is that the phenomenon of lived experience belongs to a type of philosophical work that focuses on the original sphere of the pre-theoretical and pre-reflective. The significance of the lecture lies in Heidegger's definition of phenomenological research as an originary science of life (*Urwissenschaft des Lebens*). While this terminology did not survive in his 1927 magnum opus, the hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology with the intention of following the orientation of the factic life did. The method of research used in *Sein und Zeit* was defined as hermeneutic because *Dasein* already has a constitutive pre-theoretical and pre-ontological pre-understanding of its way of being-in-the-world. The structure of the pre-understanding is thus not irrational, ineffable or mystical, for it already has a sense and structure that must be the topic of phenomenological research. All knowledge, including the most sophisticated scientific knowledge, is initially based on the existential structure of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, *SZ*, p. 71).

The decisive point of the *Kriegsnotsemester* lecture lies in the dissociation that Heidegger performs between life and the irrational, thereby rescuing the validity of the concept of *Leben* as a theme of philosophical investigation and stripping it of the most scandalous aporias traditionally associated with the term. As Bollnow states, "life remains a concept of struggle [*Kampfbegriff*]" (1958, p. 14). In fact, around the concept gravitate those who place phenomenological thought in the chronicle of philosophical defeats, as well as those who see phenomenology as a romanticized enterprise that is dedicated to preserving experiences not amenable to scientific rationality. In my opinion, both cases exemplify what Heidegger—in a subsequent lecture—denounced as disfigurements of the idea of phenomenology (*Verunstaltungen der Idee der Phänomenologie*), "in terms of a narrowing and obscuring of its motives, [or] in terms of an uncritical and cosmovisional exacerbation of the them" (GA 58, p. 18).

The equivalence of life and the irrational has cavorted the pages of transcendental philosophy at least since Kant (Baeumler, 1967), and this most certainly due to the ambiguity of the very concept of *Leben* that one can already find in Kant's philosophy (Molina, 2010). It has thus been suspected that, in principle, access to the phenomenon of *Erlebnis* escapes any theoretical inspection, since all immediate experience is given to us in an unreflective way. On the other hand, conceptual activity inhabits the dimension of reflective thought and has nothing to do with a mythical pure sphere that we imagine as being beyond all reference and thinking. Everything is spirit, that is to say, everything is *logos*, and this pure immediate and interior life that we fantasize about can be nothing but an illusion (Hyppolite, 1996, p. 29).

However, these difficulties did not prevent philosophical reflection on life from acquiring the form of a true philosophical movement (*Lebensphilosophie*) in just a few decades, mainly during the turn of the century (19th-20th) and up until the 1920s. The relevant question was posed as follows: Is there not a way in which life expresses itself from within and under its own conditions? To deny this possibility of self-expression, is it not like rationalizing and petrifying life? We count as pioneering 19th-century philosophers who rebelled against such rationalization Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, the vitalists (Bergson, Driesch), the historians (Troeltsch, Meinecke, Misch, Ranke), and certainly, in the previous century, there was some element of vitalism in the proponents of *Existenzphilosophie* (Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre). All of them, it is often said, rebelled —each in their own way— against the absolutization of objective thinking. But it is incorrect to conclude from this that *Lebensphilosophie* constituted a school of thought with a homogeneous philosophical agenda. As Scheler (2013) argued, the interest in the concept of *Leben* brought together different thinkers with diverse scientific and philosophical leanings, who nonetheless expected that a reflection would emerge in the near future that would finally allow life to be placed at the center of philosophical research. All efforts in this direction seemed more programmatic than anything, as there was more expectation than philosophical concretion. However, there were always fierce opponents who resolutely opposed a vitalist turn of thought: from those who considered it to be a sort of fad, like Rickert, to those who doubted the theoretical possibilities of a proper vitalist philosophical reflection, like Cassirer and Natorp (Ebrecht, 1992).

From its very historical origins, phenomenological philosophy has been the target of skepticism precisely because of a certain aura of purity that is attached to it. Watt (1906) and Natorp (2013)³ observed that the *peccatum originale* of phenomenology was that both self-observation and reflection were powerless *vis-à-vis* immediate experience. As is well known, for Natorp immediate experience is inaccessible (2013, pp. 101-102). On his terms, all description is objectifying and strikes down subjective life, for reflection is purely theoretical and as such renders as a result something different than what lays originally in lived experience itself. Natorp even holds that pre-scientific knowledge itself is objectifying: “*Die gesamte auch nichtwissenschaftliche Vorstellung der Dinge ist in der Tat das Ergebnis einer oft schon weitgehenden Objektivierung*” (2013, p. 106, emphasis added). The point is that reflecting on immediate experience might render the impression that one gains pure access to it, but in reality all we get is a mirror producing a distortion. Captivated by this illusion of immediacy, we rush towards the unconditional —*das Unbedingte*, as Novalis said— but the truth is that we only find things (*Dinge*): conditioned things, mediated by the subject. In our search for the constitutive, we only find what has already been constituted.⁴ As can be seen, such objections hit the nerve of phenomenological thinking. And this is why both Husserl and Heidegger were obligated to defend phenomenology from these allegations, although in a way that showed their deepest philosophical and methodological disagreement.

Husserl himself has time and again submitted that, given the enormous and growing amount of misunderstandings about phenomenology, his preference has been to fully address the *real* demands and problems that his new science has raised. After all, many of the criticisms “so poorly understand the sense of my phenomenology that they are not affected by them in the least” (Husserl, 1966, p. vii). So why waste time on bitter refutations and counter-replies that have nothing to do with the motives of his thinking? However, if we are aware of Watt’s confusion of the phenomenological method with self-observation (*Selbstbeobachtung*), it is because Husserl offers a detailed refutation of it in §79 of *Ideas* (1913). According to Husserl, mounting a refutation of phenomenology based on a methodological skepticism that denies internal experience is nothing more

³ Natorp’s *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kristischer Methode* was originally published in 1912.

⁴ Here I am referring of course to Novalis’ famous aphorism: “Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte und finden immer nur Dinge” (2000, p. 49).

than a gross confusion between pure phenomenology and empirical psychology, which fatally loses sight of the fundamental difference between fact (*Tatsache*) and essence (*Wesen*) (Hua III, pp. 7-32). Watt holds that lived experience, as absolute reality, cannot be known in itself because it is not held or retained in the very act of *Selbstbeobachtung*. Husserl, however, is not very impressed by this criticism:

A phenomenological theory of essences is of no more interest to the method by which the phenomenologist can make sure of the *existence* of those mental processes which serve him as foundations for his phenomenological findings than the geometer would be interested in how the existence of figures on the board or the models on the shelf could be methodologically established. As sciences of pure essence, geometry and phenomenology do not recognize any findings about real existence. Connected with just that is the fact that clear fictions not only offer them foundations as good as, but to a great extent better than the data of actual perception and experience. (Hua III, p. 153)

In other words, Watt confuses empirical perception with the meaning of intentional experience. Moreover, he presupposes what his skepticism was intended to deny: the reflection and knowledge of experiences. If experiences belong to an absolute reality that cannot be known, how does Watt know this exactly, namely that the immediate mental living is altered by reflection? In any case, if Watt holds a dichotomy between unreflective experience and reflection, it is because he is already reflecting. And by reflecting, he is also assuming that he knows something about that unreflective experience: the fact that it undergoes a modification through reflection. On Husserl's terms, "all that is sufficient to make the contradiction distinct" (Hua III, p. 156). A contradiction which is characteristic of the "*essentially necessary countersense of the natural sciences*" (Hua III, p. 159).

Heidegger agrees with Husserl that the criticism of phenomenology as self-observation in no way affects it fundamentally. Nevertheless, the phenomenological discovery of the sphere of *Erlebnis* is not guaranteed by the method of reflection. For this reason, Natorp's objections deserve serious consideration. Therefore, the methodological question should be raised as to which method guarantees the access to the sphere of lived experience. In addition, an account for the reasons underlying the skepticism concerning the very possibility of phenomenology must be given.

3 THE PARTIAL AGREEMENT WITH NATORP

It should be clear from the outset that Husserl's critical observations against Watt can also be directed towards Natorp's arguments against the possibility of phenomenological research. Natorp's own method of reconstruction surmises what it claims to be unattainable: a modification of subjective experience as immediate mental life. In both the case of Watt and Natorp, perhaps the most serious issue is the assumption of a traditional idea regarding lived experience: its ineffable and irrational character. Heidegger, of course, does not succumb —like Husserl— to the skepticism of lived experience. However, he partially accepts Natorp's criticism: "the only one who has been able to launch a series of scientifically relevant objections against phenomenology" (GA 56/57, p. 101). In this partial agreement the hermeneutic transformation of Husserl's reflective phenomenology can be already hinted at.

Factic life has a texture that could be deemed eventual: it occurs, it erupts and manifests itself, and we are in it in a way that does not primarily admit the theoretical distinctions of traditional philosophy. Particularly, the scheme between a living subject and external objects is shattered over against the genuine mode of being in our factic form of existence. Natorp is of the opinion that a radicalization of subjectivity would be of use to counteract any substantialization or objectification of the subject (Natorp, 2013, pp. 29-31). However, Natorp's scientifically relevant objections against phenomenology that, according to Heidegger, should be taken into consideration do not concern an ontological radicalization of the subject: they solely refer to the Husserlian concept of reflection. According to Heidegger, it is necessary to challenge outright the Husserlian methodological requirement that phenomenological research be carried out through acts of reflection (Husserl, Hua III, p. 144). Reflection is problematic in as much as "we no longer live in experiences, but we observe them. Lived experiences become observed experiences" (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 99). It is true that the act of reflection is in itself an experience that is lived, but the question still remains: what is the purpose of observing lived experiences that, in most cases, do not require a theoretical gaze? Isn't this very act of *Selbstbeobachtung* somewhat unnatural and uncalled-for?

According to Heidegger, Natorp has a point when he questions the method of reflection because such method implies a sort of deprivation of life [*Ent-lebung*] (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 91). Even the living self, the historical self, is "de-historized

[*ent-geschichtlich*] to the point of being reduced to a specific residue of selfhood [*Ichheit*] in correlation with thinghood” (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 89). As a result, “the meaningful is de-signified [*ent-deutet*] to the point of being reduced to the mere fact of being real [*Real-sein*]” (HEIDEGGER, GA 56/57, p. 89). And this is nothing but a sort of absolutization of the theoretical [*Verabsolutierung des Theoretischen*] (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 90).

Natorp's own objections to phenomenological reflection do not undo the entanglements of the absolutization of the theoretical; in fact, on Heidegger's terms, “they themselves arise from the theoretical point of view” (GA 56/57, p. 102). In a sense, Heidegger's lecture might give the impression of an apparent inconsistency, an ambivalent pendulum swing between Natorp's serious objections to phenomenology and Heidegger's defense of its sphere of inquiry. But precisely in this apparently ambivalent attitude towards Natorp, the early Heideggerian thrust against his master's conception of phenomenology is revealed to us once and for all. And this is achieved via the influence of another neo-Kantian philosopher, Emil Lask, to whom Heidegger even dedicates his habilitation thesis: “To the fallen soldier in the second year of war” (Heidegger, GA 1). This whole way of speaking of “the theoretical” is extracted from Lask's doctoral dissertation, where the conflictive relationship between *Erlebnis* and theoretical knowledge in Kantian philosophy is systematically investigated (Lask, 2003). Indeed, the very origins of the theoretical attitude must be investigated. However, “the only person who was troubled by the problem, Emil Lask, has died” (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 88). Lask's investigations into the relationships between pre-theoretical experience and knowledge, and between the logical and the pre-logical, put Heidegger on the path towards the problem of the theoretical attitude.

Natorp criticism is on point when he argues that reflection and description are elements foreign to lived experience, but he errs when he succumbs to the traditional doctrine of the irrational alogicity of the sphere of lived experience. Rather, it is the primacy of the theoretical (*Primat des Theoretischen*) what “destroys the lived experience of the surrounding world” (HEIDEGGER, GA 56/57, p. 85), and becomes an obstacle preventing the access to *Erlebnis*. Therefore, Heidegger's agreement with Natorp is partial but fundamental: the phenomenological method of reflection is indeed inadequate. Unlike Natorp, however, Heidegger does not hold that facticity is unknowable and

inaccessible. If we have a reasonable suspicion that the theoretical attitude somewhat distorts factic life, it is because it is not mute, blind, or inexpressive. Despite what the traditional viewpoint stipulates, there is not only a theoretical gaze but also a prior form of vision that already provides orientation in lived experience. Practical life has its own way of seeing, on which the derivative form of theoretical observation emerges. Thus, the logical has a deep connection with the pre-logical, which in no case should be conceived as an ineffable and mystical dimension that cannot be investigated philosophically. This is, indeed, what the young Heidegger pretends to show.

4 THE EXPANSION OF INTENTIONALITY

According to Husserl, the “*new region of being never delimited in its particularity*” (Hua III, p. 58) that has been now unveiled by phenomenology is not a *factum brutum*, i.e., it is not an inaccessible or illusory dark region. Rather, the sphere of intentional acts can be defined as conscious life itself. But given the usual distortions and “*naturalistic misinterpretations*” of conscious life (HUSSERL, Hua III, p. 33), the distinctive character of phenomenology requires its own method to provide a solid footing for its investigation. However, if consciousness is to serve as the very theme of phenomenological research, it is easy to realize that there might be an overlap with psychology. Husserl himself, having been trained in Brentano's descriptive psychology school, was always very aware of the dangers of a conflation between phenomenology and experimental psychology. Confusing the subject matter of phenomenology with that of psychology is nothing but a fatal misunderstanding for Husserl's goal of founding a completely autonomous first science. Thus his constant efforts to refute the apparent paradoxes of the time that, if they did not confuse phenomenology with a psychological science, they ended up relegating it to the history of failed projects. From Wundt to Titchener, empirical psychology was bogged down in introspective methods.⁵ Is phenomenology, as far as its method is concerned, a *Naturwissenschaft* or a *Geisteswissenschaft*? Is it a nomothetic or ideographic theory? Should it follow empirical or historical-spiritual methods? Is it a formal or material science? The answer, as per Luft (2019), is: none of the above.

⁵ On the history of introspective methods in psychology, see Lyons, 1986. First-person approaches have recently given a new impetus to introspection, see Jack & Roepstorff (eds.), 2003.

It is nothing but the stipulation of its radical and autonomous nature that has lent itself to the continuous misunderstanding of phenomenology. As Fink has stated, “the contemporary judgment on Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy severely misinterprets its true sense” (1990, p. 167). And perhaps Husserl is not without responsibility in the very misinterpretation of his philosophy by adopting the traditional term of consciousness. In fact, all the phenomena that Husserl associates with intentionality (perception, memory, recollection, etc.) are part of the psychological field of research and, for that same reason, are difficult to extract from the mundane sphere. It is true, as Fink states, that the reasons that explain the paradoxical situation of phenomenology should not be sought “in a deficient disposition of the times to comprehend it, but in the essence of phenomenology itself” (*ibidem*). The very stumbling block for this understanding might ensue from the radical inversion of the natural attitude that not only dominates our pre-scientific practical existence, but also the epistemological disposition of the sciences. Phenomenology’s starting point is, as Husserl asserts, “that which is found before all viewpoints: the entire domain of the given itself intuitively and before any theoretical thinking” (Hua III, p. 45). However much Husserl pretends to distance himself from all viewpoints, adopting a traditional philosophical vocabulary might just not do the trick.

And this is where Heidegger’s criticism against Husserl’s concept of consciousness is clearly formulated:

Husserl’s primary concern does not deal with the character of the being of consciousness. Rather, he is guided by the following concern: How can consciousness become the possible object of an absolute science? The primary concern guiding him is the idea of absolute science. This idea, that consciousness must be the region of an absolute science, is not simply invented. It is the idea that has occupied modern philosophy since Descartes. The elaboration of pure consciousness as the theme of phenomenology does not derive from going back to the things themselves but from going back to a traditional idea of philosophy. (GA 20, p. 147)

Husserl’s theoretical sloppiness regarding the nature of the consciousness explains the ontological turn that Heidegger imposes on phenomenology. The problem with taking consciousness as the theme of phenomenology is its narrow scope, given that the intentional phenomena dear to Husserl are conceived from a structural relationship between acts and their objects. But intentionality is much broader than referring objects,

imagining them, perceiving them, or remembering them. It is the assumption of the traditional concept of consciousness that ultimately shapes this abstract relationship between acts and objects; a relationship that Heidegger still deems too theoretical.

In 1919, Heidegger did not yet have the concept of *Sorge* in his conceptual repertoire, which in *Sein und Zeit* is presented as the being of Dasein, but it is precisely with this concept that the Husserlian idea of a subject intentionally directed towards objects is replaced by that of Dasein as a factic existing being-in-the-world. Hence, “the factual existence of Dasein is not just, in general and indifferently, a potentiality-for-being-in-the-world in a condition of thrownness, but it is already always absorbed in the world of its occupation” (SZ, p. 192). We thus witness an expansion of the phenomenological concept of intentionality, which Husserl characterized as the fundamental structure of experience: the idea of a “Bewußtsein von einer Wirklichkeit”, which served as a starting point for later determining the sphere of consciousness as a series of noetic-noematic correlation acts.

The Heideggerian expansion of the concept of intentionality involved removing experiences from the traditional concept of consciousness. In effect, being absorbed in the world of occupation does not primarily mean being aware of the practical acts that serve as constitutive elements of our existence. Existence should not be reduced to a series of acts of consciousness, but rather it is dispersed in a multiplicity of ways of occupation by which Dasein procures its existential possibilities in its factic existence-already-in-the-middle of the world. In this case, it can be stated with Gadamer that we are “more being than consciousness” (1993, p. 247).

5 THE PRE-WORDLY SOMETHING

In Heidegger's magnum opus, *Sorge* is defined as an a priori, since being an originating structural totality, it existentially exists “before, that is, always, in all factic behavior and situation” (SZ, p. 193). In the *Kriegsnotsemester* lecture, the young Heidegger discovered this apriority in the phenomenon of the *vorweltliches etwas* (the pre-worldly something), which can be discovered through a genetic process: “the process of theorization in relation to its origin and its growing deprivation of life” (GA 56/57, p. 122 ff.).

The apex of any theoretical process deserves the most critical epithets on Heidegger's behalf: it is the objective, which the German philosopher does not hesitate to call merely empty and formal. And this is not only because objectivity implies a suppression of subjectivity (Daston & Gallison, 2010, pp. 36-37), but above all because the objective consideration of something has lost all reference to its worldly content. This *etwas* is "absolutely deprived of the world, foreign to the world; it is the sphere where one loses his breath and cannot live" (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 122). As proof of this process, Heidegger provides the example of the experience of the surrounding world in a university lecture. Thus, we have two contrasting experiences: the objectifying consideration and the actual experience in the surrounding world.

I enter the classroom and see the podium... what do I *see*? Are they brown surfaces that intersect at right angles? No, I see something else. Do I see a box, more precisely, a small box placed on top of a larger one? Not at all. I see the podium from which I must speak, you see the podium from which you are spoken to, where I have already spoken. In pure experience there is no foundation link, as it is often said. That is, it is not that I first see brown surfaces that intersect, and then they are presented to me as a box, then as a podium, and later as an academic podium, so that I would attach the properties of the podium to the box as if it were a label. All of this is a bad and distorted interpretation, a change of direction in the pure gaze into the experience. I see the podium all at once, so to speak; I do not see it isolated, I see the podium as if it were too high for me. I see a book on the podium, as something that immediately annoys me (a book, not a number of stratified pages and speckled with black spots). (GA 56/57, p. 71)

In the experience of seeing the lecture hall, something is given to me from an immediate environment. This world that surrounds us... does not consist of things with a certain content of significance, objects to which it is also added that they mean this and that, but rather what is significant is primary, it is immediately given to me, without any intellectual detour that passes through the capture of a thing. In living in a surrounding world, I always find myself surrounded by meanings everywhere, everything is worldly, it's worldling [*es weltet*]. (GA 56/57, pp. 72-73)

In other words, objective being is not autonomous with respect to the pre-worldly something. Paraphrasing a passage from *Sein und Zeit*, but now with the terminology from the lecture that concerns us, one could say that knowledge does not achieve uncovering the objective without first going through the pre-worldly something. So it would never have been possible to reach objective knowledge of the world if it were not through the engagement provided by the structure of being-in-the-world: "the unthematic,

circumspect absorption in the references constitutive for the handiness of the totality of useful things” (SZ, p. 76). In the absence of this anchoring of scientific knowledge in being-in-the-world as the ontological-existential constitution of Dasein, even the possibility of objective knowledge cannot be explained. There is certainly the objection that the pre-worldly something is only possible on the basis of what is-there (because, obviously, the being-there, for example, of the cosmos, is not a subjective-idealist creation). But from this it does not follow —that is, from the fact that the planet Earth existed before us— that the pre-worldly something is ontologically founded in objective being or that it can be accounted for therefrom. Quite the opposite, in fact: we discover something like objective knowledge on the ontological basis of our experience in the *Umwelt*.

Be that as it may, however, is it not the case that in the final analysis phenomenological research is nothing but a rationalization of the irrational? Heidegger is aware of this objection, but he regards the irrational as a convenient label invented to refer to that which no one knows what to do with (GA 56/57, p. 117). On the contrary, phenomenology defined as the science of pre-theoretical life should not be confused with any “call to darkness as a refuge, nebulous effluvia of grandiose ‘world feelings’ [*Weltgefühlen*] being conducted behind the light” (Heidegger, GA 61, p. 101). This is to say that phenomenology is not to be conflated with a “philosophy of feelings or with a genius philosophy” (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 110).

Putting into question the primacy of the theoretical does not mean that phenomenology suffers from an anti-scientific phobia. On Husserl's terms, when the natural scientist speaks of the science of nature, “we listen with pleasure and with an attitude of disciples. But not always does the science of nature speak when researchers of nature speak; and certainly not when these people speak of natural philosophy and epistemology of natural science” (Hua III, p. 46). We must adopt a critical attitude when the primacy of the theoretical absolutizes the objectifying dimension and makes us blind to our ontological footing in existence. In fact, there is no conclusive proof that factic existence is blind, mute, and ineffable. On the contrary, “das Bedeutsame ist das Primäre” (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 73), that is to say, a meaningful world is original and primordial. The same dimension that the phenomenological research deals with has its own vision (*Umsicht*) and its own way of dealing (*Umgang*) with the surrounding world (*Umwelt*).

The very differentiation between objective theory and subjective practice is parasitic of the traditional distinctions that have arisen from the theoretical attitude. This is why “practical behavior is not ‘atheoretical’ in the sense of being deprived of vision, and its difference between it and theoretical behavior lies not only in the fact that on the one hand we contemplate and on the other we *act*” (Heidegger, SZ, p. 69). Both things are fundamental: both the fact that every theoretical attitude is a form of practical occupation, and that every practical action has its own vision and orientation. The point is to free ourselves from the supreme abstraction that defines our anchoring in the world on the basis of our conscious being and of the ways from which we obtain objective knowledge alone.

6 HERMENEUTIC INTUITION

If we are to learn something from the *Kriegsnotsemester* lecture is the security of Heidegger's philosophical disposition from the beginning of his university career, by means of which he shows an autonomous position with respect to Husserl. As is widely known, the history of philosophy is full of intellectual parricides and bitter ruptures between masters and disciples. The dramatic breakdown between Husserl and Heidegger not only begins to take shape somewhat timidly in the lecture of 1919, but it is rather already entirely outlined there. How wrong was Husserl when he imagined his and Heidegger's work as a joint philosophical venture! Heidegger seems to dislocate the unitary sense of phenomenology, since his own version of it is a hermeneutic transformation that openly renounces the most transcendental aspects that Husserl had imparted to his method since *Ideas* from 1913, and that directly contradicts Husserl's constraint that the investigation be carried out entirely through acts of reflection.

By questioning Husserl's methodological demands in a crucial manner, Heidegger succeeds in broadening the thematic scope of phenomenological research. But he also contradicts the phenomenological character of Husserl's philosophy outright, because consciousness is not obtained by turning back to the things themselves, but by assuming the project of modern thought from Descartes, albeit in a radicalized form. Therefore, the method must be both phenomenological and hermeneutic. Phenomenological, because that which will serve as the research field must show itself from itself (under the conditions of its own manifestation); hermeneutic, because *Dasein* already has a pre-theoretical and pre-ontological pre-understanding of what must be researched. When

Heidegger asserts that “everywhere *the fundamental demand of phenomenology to put all points of view in parentheses* is overlooked” (GA 56/57, p. 109), he might also be thinking about Husserl and his reflective method. In effect, “since phenomenology is self-sufficient... every assumption of a point of view is a sin against its own proper spirit. And it would be a mortal sin to think that it itself is a point of view” (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 110). The lecture has a certain rhetorical tone of urgency that must have had an impact on the newly arrived students from the Great War:

We are at the methodological crossroads that decides the life or death of philosophy in general. We find ourselves at an abyss where either we plunge into nothingness —that is, into the nothingness of absolute objectivity— or we manage to jump into another world or, to be more exact, we are for the first time in a position to make the leap into the world as such. (GA 56/57, p. 63)

Having broadened the scope of phenomenological research radically, Heidegger suddenly found himself in the pursuit of a completely unknown territory. But this was not another world, but the world as such, which had been overlooked by traditional philosophy. Any mode of access to objective being presupposes the world, but the phenomenon of the world as such has been omitted by the assumption of the theoretical viewpoint. It is therefore required an “appropriate phenomenological starting point that makes that omission impossible” (Heidegger, SZ, p. 66). The *Blickwendung* of reflection also omits the sphere of factic life by assuming that there is no self-awareness other than that obtained reflectively. But as Dilthey once said, life interprets itself for “thought cannot go beyond life because it is an expression of life itself” (1986, p. 184). Therefore, the truly phenomenological starting point should be an extension of that same self-understanding movement.

The expression “es weltet” flatly rejects the supposed blindness and muteness of the sphere of factic life (Natorp), but also the assumption that our access to it requires a reflective turn on the phenomena (Husserl). In order to meet Husserl's demand for *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* (the absence of any assumptions), phenomenology, as an original science, “does not *need* to make any *assumptions*, but it is not even *able* to make them, because it is not theory. It is located *before* or beyond the sphere in which it generally makes sense to talk about assumptions” (Heidegger, GA 56/57, p. 96-97). A

non-reflective understanding of life and beyond all objectification, that is the task that the young Heidegger set for himself in this first university lecture.

7 CONCLUSION

In the *Kriegsnotsemester* lecture Heidegger's best insights that will end up in his 1927 magnum opus are already announced on the horizon. In my opinion, Heidegger succeeds in overcoming the difficulties that were found in neo-Kantianism and *Lebensphilosophie* through a deep exploration of the fundamental motives that inspired Husserl's project; an achievement that, in a single move, resolves the contradictions that forced philosophy to oscillate between the dead ends of Romanticism and Positivism since the 19th century. One hundred years after Heidegger's lecture, what we can gain from it is a starting point to make untenable the traditional blindness regarding the phenomenon of existence and the omission of the phenomenological concept of the world.

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Recebido em: 31/01/2024 | Aprovado em: 15/02/2024