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How to investigate subjectivity: Natorp and Heidegger on reflection

One of the decisive tasks facing a phenomenological investigation of subjectivity is to account for its givenness. How does subjectivity reveal itself, how does it manifest itself? If subjectivity rather than being an object that we encounter in the world is the very perspective that permits any such encounter, to what extent can it then at all be made accessible for direct examination? Will any examination necessarily take the subject as an *object* of experience, and thereby distort it beyond recognition? In other words, can subjectivity at all be grasped and described, or is it only approachable *ex negativo*? One of the pivotal issues in this classical debate has been the question of whether *reflection* is at all trustworthy. Does reflection actually give us access to the original experiential dimension, or is there on the contrary reason to suspect that the experiences are changed radically when reflected upon? Is reflection in reality a kind of falsifying mirror or telescope that transforms whatever it makes appear? Thus, some have argued that reflection is an objectifying procedure. It turns that which it reflects upon into an object. But if reflection makes us aware of an object, how could it ever make us aware of our own pristine subjectivity?

In the following, I wish to examine and analyze a dispute between Natorp and Heidegger concerning whether or not it is possible to investigate subjectivity reflectively; a dispute that has had repercussions for the very definition of phenomenology.¹

1. Natorp's challenge

In his *Allgemeine Psychologie* from 1912, Natorp starts out by emphasizing the radical difference between subject and object. Natorp is not concerned with the traditional Cartesian separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, but with a transcendental philosophically motivated distinction. He defines the object as that which is accessible to theoretical description and explanation. In contrast, the subject is that which stands opposed to all objects, it is that in contrast to which objects are given as objects (*Gegen-stände*). Whereas everything else can be made into an object for consciousness, the subject itself cannot be made into an object, nor can it take itself as its own object. Rather, the moment we start to think of the subject as an object, we stop thinking of it as a subject (Natorp 1912, 8, 28-29, 31).

On this background, Natorp argues that we substitute an object of consciousness for the subject of consciousness the moment we start to investigate it reflectively, that is, we transform it into its very opposite. Obviously, Natorp cannot actually ban the use of reflection, but he insists that we should at least realize that reflection is a distorting prism and that that which we investigate reflectively is no longer our original subjectivity, but a kind of reflected image or derived representation. Reflection confronts us with an objectified subjectivity, and this should not be mistaken for the original functioning subjectivity that is performing the reflection (Natorp 1912, 30).

Let me formalize Natorp's argumentation slightly:

- (1) Experience is a relation between a subject (qua experiencing) and an object (qua experienced)
- (2) If the subject is to experience itself, it has to take itself as an object

- (3) If the subject experiences an object, it does not experience itself
- (4) It is impossible to experience true subjectivity

This Kantian way of thinking also comes to the fore when Natorp writes that the I is a principle and a condition. It is not a datum, it is not something that is given. Were it given, it would be given for somebody, i.e., it would be an object, and therefore no longer an I (Natorp 1912, 40). In a similar vein, Natorp writes that consciousness cannot be something with a temporal and spatial appearance, since only objects appear in space and time (Natorp 1912, 151, 169). For the very same reason, it is necessary to resist the attempt to describe consciousness with the help of those categories and concepts that have their legitimate use in the world of objects. To apply them to subjectivity would be a regular category mistake (Natorp 1912, 28).

The full title of Natorp's work is *Allgemeine Psychologie nach kritischer Methode*. It is clear that Natorp's topic is not empirical psychology, but a transcendental philosophical investigation of subjectivity. But given Natorp's critical comments, how is such an investigation to be at all possible? Will it not inevitably be objectifying, and thus fall short of its aim? Even a simple description will make use of concepts and analyses, but insofar as subjectivity is analyzed and subsumed under universal concepts we are already estranging ourselves from it (Natorp 1912, 91-92, 190). In fact, if subjectivity is to be investigated it has to express itself, be it in language or behavior, but every expression (*Äußerung*) is, according to Natorp, an externalization (*Entäußerung*). That is, the moment consciousness expresses itself it leaves its own domain behind and enters the realm of objects, and we thereby once again miss that which had our interest (Natorp 1912, 99). This view is clearly presented in the following passage:

If one were oneself to try, if it were at all possible, to somehow grasp the content of immediate experience purely as it is in itself – far from every expression, every judgment, every intention – would one then not somehow be forced, nevertheless, to delimit it, to raise it above the mesh of experiencing, be it with the pointing of a finger, with a blink of an eye; would one not be forced to artificially still and interrupt the continuous stream of becoming, which surely is how inner life presents itself, to isolate the individual finding, to fixate it with the isolation in mind, to sterilize it, like the anatomist does with his specimen? But doesn't one then detach it from the experienced, from the subjective, and doesn't one then, nevertheless, make it into an object? In the end, one apparently never grasps the subjective, as such, in itself. On the contrary, in order to grasp it scientifically, one is forced to strip it of its subjective character. One kills subjectivity in order to dissect it, and believes that the life of the soul is on display in the result of the dissection! (Natorp 1912, 102-103).

This is not a very heartening conclusion. But is Natorp really claiming that a systematic investigation of subjectivity is impossible in principle, and that every description is a falsification, every conceptualization a violation? Well, in fact, Natorp doesn't give completely in to skepticism. On the contrary, he suggests the following research strategy: Natorp takes it to be established that we have no direct access to our own original subjectivity, and that we in reflection only grasp a paralyzed and objectified subject. Generally speaking, we will never be able to grasp our subjectivity simply by improving and refining our forward-looking object-investigation – no matter how much we sharpen a knife, it will remain unable to cut itself. But what other possibilities are there? According to Natorp, we have to turn around and look closely at the very condition of possibility for such an object-investigation. In order to reach subjectivity we have to effectuate a process of *purification*. We have, so to speak, to neutralize the effect of reflection. That is, after having analyzed and thereby destroyed the lived unity of the experiences, we must try to reverse the process, we must try to unite the detached elements and thereby restore the experiences to their original state (Natorp 1912, 192). Thus, Natorp suggests that we engage in a kind of *reconstruction*. We cannot investigate our own functioning subjectivity directly. But we can start with the objectified counterpart, and then proceed regressively in an attempt to recover the

original subjective dimension. Ultimately, however, the dimension of pure subjectivity remains an unreachable ideal and limit case (Natorp 1912, 233).

2. Heidegger's response

1. Heidegger and reflective phenomenology

In the lecture course *Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem* from 1919 Heidegger observes that Natorp is the only one who so far has raised scientifically noteworthy objections against phenomenology (GA 56/57: 101).² It is in fact not difficult to construe Natorp's position in *Allgemeine Psychologie* as anti-phenomenological. As we have just seen Natorp mainly delivers two critical thrusts: 1. Phenomenology claims to describe and analyze lived subjectivity itself. In order to do so it employs a reflective methodology. But reflection is a kind of internal perception; it is a theoretical attitude; it involves an objectification. And as Natorp then asks, how is this objectifying procedure ever going to provide us with an access to lived subjectivity itself? 2. Phenomenology aims at describing the experiential structures in their pretheoretical immediacy. But every description involves the use of language, involves the use of generalizing and subsuming concepts. For the very same reason, every description and expression involves a mediation and objectification that necessarily estranges us from subjectivity itself.

How does Heidegger view Natorp's criticism of what might be called "reflective phenomenology"? To some extent, he seems to accept it. The question to ask is whether the experiential dimension can be explored adequately by means of Husserl's reflective methodology, that is, through a method of reflective description and descriptive reflection (GA 56/57: 100, GA 59: 194)? But as Heidegger points out, reflection is a theoretical stance, and every theoretical endeavor, every observation and demonstration involves a certain objectifying modification, involves a certain element of "de-living", introduces a certain fracture between the experience and the experienced (GA 56/57: 73-74, 98). This modification is particularly vivid in the case of reflection, since reflection turns a non-reflectively lived through experience into an observed object, i.e., the moment an experience is reflectively given it is no longer lived through, but only looked at (GA 56/57: 100). Thus, basically accepting Natorp's criticism, Heidegger writes that reflection is a theoretical intrusion that interrupts the stream of experiencing, and exercises an analytically dissective and dissolving effect upon it: "We ex-posit the experiences and so extract them from the immediacy of experience. We as it were dip into the onflowing stream of experience and scoop out one or more, which means that we 'still the stream,' as Natorp says." (GA 56/57: 100-101). In short, to answer the question posed above, it is not possible to access the dimension of lived experiencing through reflection. Reflection is necessarily objectifying; it destroys the living life-experience; it petrifies the stream and turns the experiences into isolated objects.

One should not underestimate the radical nature of this criticism. One of the standard ways of defining phenomenology is by saying that its task is to describe that which is given, exactly as it is given, but in consequence of his criticism, Heidegger even questions the legitimacy of this preoccupation with *givenness*. As he writes, for something to be given is already for it to be theoretically affected, if ever so slightly (GA 56/57: 88-89). (However, in his own writings from the period, Heidegger does not seem to respect this admonition, since he himself repeatedly speaks of something as being given).

Despite this basic agreement, Heidegger is not particularly impressed with Natorp's own alternative, nor does he think that Natorp has exhausted all the possibilities.

- To start with, Heidegger points out that Natorp's so-called reconstruction is itself a construction, is itself a theoretical and objectifying procedure. It is hard to understand, however, how such a mediated procedure should ever give us access to the immediacy of subjective life (GA 56/57: 104, 107).³

- Moreover, since Natorp is denying that subjective life is given in any way prior to analysis, his reconstruction lacks any reliable guiding principle. He has no criteria for determining whether his reconstruction has in fact led him to the original lived dimension (GA 56/57: 107). To put it differently, how is Natorp at all in a position to claim that reflection transforms subjective life?⁴ Does this not presuppose the existence of a pre-reflective access to the immediacy of subjective life, and is this not exactly what Natorp is denying the existence of?
- When it comes to Natorp's reservations about the adequacy of a linguistic articulation, Heidegger retorts that this objection (which can also be found in Bergson) presupposes a much too narrow view on language. As he asks, is it really true that all language is objectifying, and that all concepts inevitably fragment a hitherto unfragmented totality? (GA 56/57: 111).⁵
- Ultimately, however, the greatest weakness in Natorp's criticism might be its theoretical bent. Natorp simply assumes that any phenomenological intuition will be externally related to that which is to be intuited, and that any description will always be foreign to that which is given. But perhaps this is simply a theoretical prejudice (GA 56/57: 111-112)? Although a phenomenology based on reflection might inevitably operate with a subject-object dichotomy and thereby be vulnerable to Natorp's criticism, the decisive question is whether phenomenology must necessarily be reflective.

What Heidegger is ultimately driving at is the possibility of basing phenomenology on a non-reflective understanding, on what he also calls a *hermeneutical intuition* (GA 56/57: 117). Let us look more closely at Heidegger's own alternative. Is it really non-reflective?

II. Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology

According to Heidegger, experiential life is not an object, and any investigation that seeks to grasp it as an object is consequently bound to fail. For the very same reason, it would be a fundamental error to approach and investigate life using the very same methods that are found in the positive sciences (GA 58: 145). If we really are to understand the fundamental structures of life, a radically new methodology is called for, a new phenomenological methodology (GA 58: 237). This is also why Heidegger repeatedly speaks of phenomenology as an "originary science of life." (GA 58: 233. Cf. GA 58: 36, 79).⁶ But from the fact that life is not an *object*, one should not, as Heidegger immediately adds, infer that it must then be a (traditionally conceived epistemological or psychological) *subject*. Both objectification and what he calls "subjectification" are, according to Heidegger, theoretical deformations of life (GA 58: 145-147, 236). Thus, when it comes to the study of pure life-experience, traditional categories such as inner and outer or transcendence and immanence are all misplaced (GA 58: 253). This already indicates that when Heidegger speaks of life (*Leben*), experience (*Erlebnis*), and experiencing (*Erleben*), he is not speaking of psychological entities. In fact, to interpret the experiences as psychical processes is already an objectification (GA 56/57: 65-66).⁷ Ultimately, the very term "experience" might be so laden with traditional connotations that it would be better to avoid it altogether, but in 1919 Heidegger still thinks that it is the best term available (GA 56/57: 66), and he doesn't introduce any neologism.

Heidegger's point of departure is not a psychological concept of experience, but rather factic life-experience itself with its concrete articulations and tendencies. As he says, the task is to disclose the non-objectifying and non-theoretical self-understanding of life-experience in all of its modifications (GA 58: 155-156, 250). Thus, Heidegger resolutely rejects the idea that life should be a mute, chaotic, and basically incomprehensible principle (GA 58: 148). Rather, life-experience is imbued with meaning, it is intentionally structured, it has an inner articulation and rationality, and last but not least it has a spontaneous and immediate self-understanding, which is why it can ultimately be interpreted from itself and in terms of itself. Life is comprehensible because it always spontaneously expresses itself, and because experiencing is itself a preliminary form of understanding, is itself what might be called a pre-understanding (GA 59: 166). Thus, Heidegger basically argues that there is an intimate connection between *experience*,

expression, and *understanding* (GA 59: 169). It is also in this context that Heidegger quotes Dilthey – “Thinking is bound to life through an inner necessity; it is itself a form of life”⁸ – and speaks of philosophy as a continuation of the *reflexivity* found in life (GA 59: 156). In other words, phenomenology must build on the familiarity that life already has with itself; it must draw on the self-referential dimension, the persistent care of self that is built into the very life stream.

In clear opposition to the view espoused by Natorp, Heidegger can consequently claim that the phenomenological articulation and conceptualization of life-experience is something that belongs to life itself; it is not something that is imposed on life arbitrarily from without, as if the conceptualization were driven merely by certain epistemological or foundational concerns. A true phenomenological description does not constitute a violation, is not an attempt to impose a foreign systematicity on life, rather it is something that is rooted in and motivated by factic life-experience itself (GA 61: 87, GA 58: 59). As Heidegger writes in the lecture course *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* from 1921/22: “The categories are nothing invented, no ‘framework’ or independent society of logical schemata; they are rather in an originary fashion *in life itself of life*; of life, in order to ‘cultivate’ it. They have their own mode of access which, however, is not such as would be foreign to life itself, imposed upon it arbitrarily from without, rather it is just the eminent way in which *life comes to itself*.” (GA 61: 88).⁹

From what has been said so far, it should be clear that Heidegger does not subscribe to the view that life-experience only becomes acquainted with itself through reflection. On the contrary, Heidegger clearly acknowledges the existence of a more fundamental form of self-acquaintance that is part and parcel of experience. As he writes in the lecture course *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* from 1919/20: “The aim is to understand this character of self-acquaintance that belongs to experience as such.” (GA 58: 157). Any worldly experiencing involves a certain component of self-acquaintance and –familiarity, any experiencing is characterized by the fact that “I am always somehow acquainted with myself” (GA 58: 251). And as Heidegger repeatedly emphasizes, this basic familiarity with oneself – Heidegger also speaks of a *Sich-Selbst-Haben* (GA 58: 257) – does not take the form of a reflective self-perception or a thematic self-observation, nor does it involve any kind of self-objectification. On the contrary, we are confronted with a process of lived self-acquaintance whose distinctive feature is its non-reflective character, and which must be understood as an immediate expression of life itself (GA 58: 159, 165, 257-258). As he writes, the phenomenological investigation has factic life and history as its guiding clue; history not in the sense of the science of history, but in the sense of a going along with life as it is lived, in the sense of a certain lived self-familiarity or self-concern (GA 58: 252, 256, Heidegger 1978, 32). As Heidegger points out, life will never be understood in its living if one excludes the problem of history from the field of phenomenology (GA 58: 238). This is why Heidegger ultimately designates the familiarity which life already has of itself as the *historicity of life* (GA 58: 159).

When we investigate factic life-experience we articulate it and we thereby modify it. In the best of circumstances, this articulation springs from and is motivated by life itself, it is not imposed from without. But we still need to understand what exactly this modification consists in. In *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* from 1919/1920 Heidegger argues that, prior to such an thematization, we live from one momentary phase to the other without looking back, without having a unified overview of our situation. Nevertheless, through the living a certain relatively unarticulated experiential context is already established. When we then start to investigate factic life-experience, it is exactly this experiential context that comes to the fore. The submerged tendencies of life are brought to light and consolidated into a unified constellation. When we notice and articulate the experience, the experiential context takes on a new Gestalt, it gains a new unity (GA 58: 118).¹⁰ Once again, the question imposes itself: Is this process really non-reflective?

III. The problem of self

In the course of his analyses, and already as early as 1919, Heidegger touches upon a question that has been central to both Husserl and Sartre as well: To what extent do the experiences contain a reference to an I? To what extent is it a conceptual and experiential truth that any episode of experiencing necessarily includes a *subject of experience*? To interpret an intentional

experience, say, the experience of writing on a blackboard, as an experience where “I relate myself towards the blackboard” is, as Heidegger writes, not as such an inadmissible objectification and reification of the experience, but it nevertheless introduces something into the experience that wasn’t there from the very start, namely an I (GA 56/57: 66). If one really wants to describe what is there originally, one will not find any detached I, but simply an intentional life (GA 56/57: 68). However, although my experiences do not contain any explicit reference to myself, it is nevertheless the case, as Heidegger then goes on to say, that the experiences are present (to me), they are rightly called *my* experiences, and are indeed part of *my* life (GA 56/57: 69). To put it differently, there is what one might call a certain mineness (or to anticipate a subsequent terminology, a certain *Jemeinigkeit*) to the experiential dimension. Thus, whenever I experience something, my self (and Heidegger prefers to speak of a self rather than of an I) is present, it is so to speak implicated. The experiences do not simply pass me by, as if they were foreign entities; rather they are exactly mine (GA 56/57: 75). Heidegger even speaks of the experiences as properizing events (*Ereignisse*). They are *Er*-eignisse in the sense that there is certain ownness to them (GA 56/57: 75).

What exactly is this self? We are neither confronted with a pure and detached ego-pole nor with some formal epistemological principle (GA 58: 247). Rather, we should be looking at factic life-experience, and what we will then come across is the co-givenness of self and world. Life is, as Heidegger says, as such world-related, it is always already living in the world; it doesn’t have to seek it out (GA 58: 34). My self is present when I am worldly engaged; it is exactly to be found “out there”. Factic life-experience is literally speaking “worldly tuned”, it always lives in a world, it is properly speaking a world-life, and it always finds itself in a life-world (GA 58: 250).

In *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* from 1919/1920 Heidegger pursues this idea further, and describes the life-world as an interpenetration of the three domains: surrounding world (Umwelt), with-world (Mitwelt), and self-world (Selbstwelt) (GA 58: 33, 39, 62). Of these three domains, the self-world is ascribed a certain priority. Not in the sense that the other two are insignificant, but rather in the sense that the surrounding world and the with-world are structured and appropriated by the self-world (GA 61: 95). They so to speak point towards the self-world.¹¹

Just as the self is what it is in its worldly relations, self-acquaintance is not something that takes place or occurs in separation from our living in a world. Originally speaking, self-experience is neither a question of an “inner perception”, an introspection, nor a self-reflection (GA 61: 95). In factic life-experience, I neither experience myself as a conglomerate of acts and processes nor as a detached I-object, rather I experience myself factically in what I do and suffer, in what confronts me and in what I accomplish, in my concerns and disregards. I am acquainted with myself when I am captured and captivated by the world. Self-acquaintance is indeed only to be found in our immersion in the world, i.e., self-acquaintance is always the self-acquaintance of a world-immersed self. To accentuate the close connection between self and world, Heidegger also introduces the notion of self-worldly (*selbstweltliche*) experiences (GA 61: 95). Thus, if we want to study the self, we should not look inside consciousness in the hope of finding some elusive I, rather we should look at our worldly experience, and right there, we will find the situated self (GA 58: 258). That we are here faced with a quite different understanding of what it means to be a self than the one found in the traditional conception of the self as something that stands detached from and opposed to its objectified worldly correlate hardly needs to be emphasized.

Heidegger argues that we primarily encounter our self in and through our engagement in the world. There are several ways to understand this claim. According to Manfred Frank, the correct interpretation is the following: At first Dasein is completely lost (immersed) in the world, and it is only in a subsequent move, that it turns towards itself and thereby acquires self-acquaintance. To substantiate this interpretation Frank often refers to assertions found in the lecture course *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* from 1927, which in his view offers us “a classical formulation of the reflection model of self-awareness.” (Frank 1991, 518). In this course, Heidegger once again takes up the problem of self-acquaintance and writes that the self is somehow present and implicated in all its intentional comportments. Intentionality does not only entail a being-directed towards, and an understanding of the Being of that which one is directed towards, it also entails a co-disclosure of the very self which is comporting itself. Thus, the intentional directedness towards... is not to be understood as an intentional act that only gains a reference to the self afterwards, as if the self would have to turn its attention back upon the first

act with the help of a subsequent second (reflective) act. Rather, the co-disclosure of the self belongs to intentionality as such (GA 24: 225):

Dasein, as existing, is there for itself, even when the ego does not expressly direct itself to itself in the manner of its own peculiar turning around and turning back, which in phenomenology is called inner perception as contrasted with outer. The self is there for the Dasein itself without reflection and without inner perception, *before* all reflection. Reflection, in the sense of a turning back, is only a mode of self-*apprehension*, but not the mode of primary self-disclosure. The way in which the self is unveiled to itself in the factual Dasein can nevertheless be fittingly called reflection, except that we must not take this expression to mean what is commonly meant by it – the ego bent around backward and staring at itself – but an interconnection such as is manifested in the optical meaning of the term “reflection”. To reflect means, in the optical context, to break at something, to radiate back from there, to show itself in a reflection from something (GA 24: 226).

The last sentence is, of course, the crucial one. Heidegger seems to be saying that self-acquaintance is a *derived* and *mediated* phenomenon. It is grounded in our ecstatic world-disclosure. At first, Dasein is completely immersed in the world, and it is only in reaction that it finds itself and achieves self-understanding (Frank 1991, 517). This is how Frank interprets Heidegger, and this is why Frank argues that Heidegger is still operating with a version of the traditional, and highly problematic, reflection theory of self-awareness (Frank 1991, 516-520). The question, however, is whether this is the only way to interpret Heidegger's statements. One page later in the text, Heidegger emphasizes that the self (Dasein) does not need to turn back upon itself as if it were at first standing in front of the things and staring rigidly at them. Rather, it is exactly in the things themselves that it finds itself. It finds itself primarily in the things because it by tending to them always in some ways rests in them (GA 24: 227).

This line of thought is even clearer articulated in the lecture course *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* from 1925. In this text, Heidegger asserts that Dasein itself is co-disclosed in the world. Thus, when the world is disclosed in its meaningfulness, Dasein itself is also discovered in its being-there-with [Mitdabei-Sein], in its intimate involvement with that which is of concern (GA 20: 348). Heidegger can consequently write that the disclosedness [Erschlossenheit] of the world itself along with the fact that Dasein qua being-in-the-world is co-discovered jointly define the unified phenomena *discoveredness* [Entdecktheit] (GA 20: 349). The two statements, “Dasein ‘has’ its world,” and “Dasein finds itself” are, as Heidegger points out, both referring to the one and same basic structure of the being-in-the-world (GA 20: 352).

As Heidegger then goes on to specify, in its preoccupation with the world Dasein always finds itself in this or that way, it is always *affected* by this or that *mood* (GA 20: 351-352). In fact, the co-discoveredness of being-in-the-world in being solicited and summoned by the world is only possible because Dasein originally *finds* itself, and this is why Heidegger calls the primary form of the co-discoveredness of Dasein its *affectedness* [Befindlichkeit]. And as he then adds, the reason he has chosen this term is exactly to avoid construing Dasein's finding itself in its being-in-the-world as a kind of self-reflection (GA 20: 352). At this point, Dasein is not given thematically, rather we are dealing with a modality that founds and conditions any such thematic knowledge (GA 20: 349).

It is at this stage that Heidegger then makes a clarification that elucidates his statements in *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* and which ultimately questions Frank's interpretation: “The co-discoveredness of in-being itself, that I am to my Dasein itself first in a worldly way, that is, that I have myself in a self-worldly way as an accompaniment in my concerned absorption in the world: this is not a consequence of the disclosedness of the world, but is *equiprimordial* with it.” (GA 20: 350. My emphasis).¹² Disclosing a world is always already a self-finding. In fact, the discoveredness of Dasein, its finding itself, constitutes its very mode of being (GA 20: 354).

Given the above it seems reasonable to conclude that Heidegger did in fact operate with a form of self-acquaintance that precedes reflection. And when Heidegger insists that no self-acquaintance can occur independently of or prior to our world-disclosure it is simply crucial to

remember that this world-disclosure contains a dimension of self from the very start and that it as well cannot occur independently of or prior to a disclosure of self.¹³

Insofar as the self is present to itself precisely, and indeed only, when worldly engaged, a certain difficulty arises. Factic life-experience is not only world-immersed; it also has a tendency to interpret itself in terms of worldly being. But the self-understanding thereby obtained is both inadequate and inauthentic. In the lecture course *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* Heidegger contrasts life's tendency towards self-illumination and self-interpretation, which he calls its *Reluzenz*, with its tendency towards self-forgetfulness, which he calls its *Ruinanz* or falling (GA 61: 119, 121). The existence of the latter tendency, which must be seen as an unavoidable existential predicament – life has an inherent tendency to objectify and cover itself up – obviously complicates the entire picture, and ultimately questions Heidegger's earlier account of the hermeneutical enterprise. If factic life-experience has a tendency to cover that up which needs to be brought to light, the articulation of the fundamental structures of life will no longer be able to rely on a mere going along with life's own tendencies, will no longer be able to be described in terms of a simple continuation of life's own inherent self-understanding. Rather, it might be more correct to describe philosophy as a counterruinant movement (GA 61:153). Or, to be more specific, phenomenology is the struggle against factual ruinance, it is the bringing of factic life to genuine self-giveness. This is probably why Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* will write that the existential analytic has a certain *violence* to it, since the disclosure of Dasein's own primordial being can only be won in direct confrontation with Dasein's own tendency to cover things up. In fact, it must be wrested and captured from Dasein (Heidegger 1986, 311).¹⁴ At the same time, the existence of both tendencies permits a clarification of the conditions of philosophizing. It has hardly been better put, than in the following passage by Gethmann: "Philosophizing is only possible *and* necessary, if life *on the one hand* is not transparent to itself, hazy, opaque (opacity), and *on the other* is not anonymous for itself, is not turned away from itself, but is self-related, reflected (relucence [Reluzenz]). Opacity and relucence are the conditions of possibility *and* necessity of philosophizing [...]"(Gethmann 1986-87, 48).

3. Heidegger, Husserl, and von Herrmann

It is not difficult to read Heidegger's analysis of the objectifying nature of reflection as a criticism of Husserl's reflective phenomenology. In Heidegger's early writings this criticism is rarely voiced openly, but in a recent book entitled *Hermeneutik und Reflexion* Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann remedies this restraint by articulating the criticism in no uncertain manner.

As the title of the book indicates, von Herrmann operates with a distinction between hermeneutical phenomenology and reflective phenomenology. Reflective phenomenology is a theoretical enterprise whereas hermeneutical phenomenology is a-theoretical, and as a consequence a-reflective (von Herrmann 2000, 11). In contrast to reflection, which can be described as an objectifying intuition, hermeneutical understanding must be understood as an a-theoretical, non-objectifying, and merely accentuating type of intuition or understanding (von Herrmann 2000, 23). Reflection does not remain within factic life-experience, rather it withdraws from it in order to gain the distance that is required if the intentional gaze is to bend backwards and turn the experience into an object of reflection. But whereas the act of reflection interrupts and stills the living stream, whereas it deprives the experience reflected upon from what is its own, namely its lived "Vollzugshaftigkeit", the hermeneutical understanding remains within and accompanies factic life, and simply raises and accentuates it into a new level of transparency and expressibility. According to von Herrmann, this is exactly why the hermeneutical understanding is able to grasp the experiences in their non-theoretical immediacy; this is why it can interpret the structures of life in a non-violating and non-objectifying manner (von Herrmann 2000, 32, 58, 79). As von Herrmann writes: "Hermeneutical phenomenology does not interrupt the primal intention of life and experience in order to objectivate it reflectively; rather it grasps this primal intention in order to make it phenomenologically transparent and articulate."(von Herrmann 2000, 92). The decisive difference between the reflective and the a-reflective method is precisely that the a-reflective method accentuates the experience while remaining within it; it does not stand opposed to it in an objectifying manner (von Herrmann 2000, 24). Although Husserl's reflective

phenomenology claims to be true to the phenomena, this is not at all the case. Being so dependent upon a reflective methodology as it is, it has been prevented from accessing and disclosing the a-theoretical being of the experiential dimension (von Herrmann 2000, 20). In contrast, the a-theoretical, hermeneutical understanding provides us with a completely new type of access to the experiences; an access that for the first time allows them to reveal themselves as they truly are (von Herrmann 2000, 50). In fact, the phenomenological dictum "back to the things themselves" is only fully realized the moment we avoid objectifying the experiences reflectively and instead understandingly extract their structures (von Herrmann 2000, 26). In contrast to reflection, this truly phenomenological understanding can be variously described as a being immersed in life, or being in sympathy with life. Ultimately, von Herrmann takes the word "Lebenssympathie" as the hermeneutical term of choice, as the alternative to the term "reflection" (von Herrmann 2000, 92).

4. Reflective vs. hermeneutical phenomenology

According to von Herrmann, Heidegger rejects Husserl's reflective phenomenology and offers his own non-reflective alternative. But is this really true? Although Heidegger to a large extent does seem to accept Natorp's criticism of reflective phenomenology, this does not prove that his own hermeneutical alternative really is non-reflective. On the contrary, there are good reasons to believe that Heidegger's hermeneutical intuition is in fact nothing but a non-objectifying type of reflection.

Allow me to make a brief digression at this point. Like Natorp and Heidegger, Sartre has also argued that the process of reflection entails a distorting transformation of its subject-matter. Sartre's best-known criticism of reflection is to be found in his defense of a non-egological theory of consciousness. According to Sartre, pre-reflective consciousness has no egological structure. As long as we are absorbed in the experience, *living* it, no ego will appear. This only happens when we adopt a distancing and objectifying attitude to the experience in question, that is, when we reflect upon it. When reflected upon, the original non-egological experience is submitted to an egological interpretation and thereby provided with extraneous and transcendent elements. What are the implications of this stance? Does Sartre thereby exclude the possibility of a reflective phenomenological description of lived consciousness? No, rather Sartre's criticism must be seen in the context of an attempt to distinguish between two very different types of reflection, the *pure* and the *impure*. The impure reflection is the kind of reflection which we encounter daily. It operates with an epistemic duality, and must be classified as a type of knowledge. It is called impure because it transcends the given and interprets the reflected in an objectifying manner, thus giving rise to the psychic unity that we know under the name *ego* (Sartre 1943, 194, 199, 201). In contrast, pure reflection presents us with a pure (unfalsifying) *thematization* of the reflected. It is the ideal form of reflection, but it is much harder to attain since it never emerges by itself, but must be won by a sort of purifying *catharsis*. In pure reflection, reflected consciousness does not appear as an object and is not given perspectively as a transcendent entity existing *outside* reflecting consciousness. In pure reflection everything is given at once in a sort of absolute proximity (Sartre 1943, 195). Quite in keeping with this, Sartre claims that pure reflection never learns or discovers anything new; it simply discloses and thematizes that which it was already familiar with, namely, the original non-substantial streaming of prereflective consciousness (Sartre 1943, 197, Sartre 1936, 48).¹⁵

Nobody is denying that there are forms of reflection which are indeed reifying, but ultimately the question is whether it might not also be appropriate to acknowledge the existence of a form of reflection that is nothing but a higher form of *wakefulness*, nothing but a simple "*schauendes Hinnehmen*". It is tempting to follow Fink, when he claims that reflection, rather than being an explicit self-reification, is simply a more articulate and intense form of self-awareness (Fink 1992, 116-117, 128). In short, why not simply understand phenomenological reflection as a special form of *attention*?¹⁶

In a passage from *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* Husserl writes that the experience to which we turn attentively in reflection acquires a new mode of being. It becomes accentuated (*herausgehoben*), and he claims that this accentuation is nothing other

than its being-grasped (Hua X, 129). Thus, rather than being a reification, a reflection might be nothing but an intensification or accentuation of the primary experience. Husserl also speaks of reflection as a process that discloses, disentangles, explicates, and articulates all those components and structures which were contained implicitly in the lived experience (Hua X, 128, Hua XI, 205, 236, Hua XXIV, 244). Thus, one should not confuse the fluctuating unity of our lived experiences with a formlessness or lack of structure. On the contrary, our lived experiences possess a morphological structure and internal differentiation, and it is ultimately this that makes them accessible to reflection and conceptual articulation. And this articulation is not necessarily imposed from without, is not necessarily foreign to the experience in question. In fact, rather than representing a distortion, it might constitute a consummation of the experience (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 207). As Husserl puts it, in the beginning we are confronted with a dumb experience, which must then – through reflection – be made to articulate its *own* sense (Hua I, 77).

As we have seen, Heidegger distinguishes between an objectifying reflection and a non-objectifying hermeneutical thematization and articulation. A number of other phenomenologists would basically make the same distinction, but would insist that it is a distinction between two different types of reflection, a distorting and objectifying type and a non-objectifying and merely accentuating type. In my view, it is reasonable to claim that what Heidegger has really done is to describe the latter in detail. Thus, contrary to what von Herrmann is claiming, Heidegger's real contribution might be taken to consist in an analysis of this special type of non-objectifying reflection; a type of reflection that can exactly provide us with an access to lived subjectivity that is not vulnerable to the objections posed by Natorp.

Perhaps it could be objected that it is misleading and confusing to operate with different notions of reflection, but then again, this is exactly what Heidegger himself was also doing in the passage from *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* quoted earlier (GA 24: 226, see also GA 61: 95). When all is said and done, hermeneutical phenomenology seeks to thematize and articulate experiential structures, it seeks to make us pay heed to something that we normally live through but fail to notice due to our absorption in the surrounding world. In so far as this is what hermeneutical phenomenology does, it remains a reflective enterprise, as long as we simply operate with a sufficiently broad notion of reflection.¹⁷

The fact that Heidegger himself does not describe the hermeneutical intuition *expressis verbis* as a kind of non-objectifying reflection should not be a cause for undue concern. To some extent, Heidegger's silence is only to be expected. Had he in fact described his own method in reflective terms, he would have had a harder time making the case that his own hermeneutical phenomenology really was a new form of phenomenology, and Heidegger was always anxious to emphasize his own originality vis-à-vis his old mentor. To put it differently, it wouldn't be the first time that Heidegger would be employing a Husserlian methodology without acknowledging it.

If one accepts this conclusion, the really pertinent question is of course whether *reflective phenomenology* and *hermeneutical phenomenology* are really two radically different types of phenomenology. To put it differently, should the distinction between a *reflective phenomenology* and a *hermeneutical phenomenology* be preserved or rather be abandoned? Given how they have been defined above, given that the distinction is taken to rest solely upon the methodological use of reflection, I would argue that it is utterly artificial. But, of course, frequently the distinction is taken to touch upon quite different issues as well, including the status of subjectivity, the role of the epoché, and the more general stance towards transcendental philosophy. Frequently the distinction is actually taken to be a distinction between a pure and transcendental type of phenomenology on the one hand, and an existential and hermeneutical kind on the other. Whether this distinction is artificial as well, whether it to a large extent is based upon something approaching a serious misunderstanding of what Husserl's transcendental turn amounts to, is something I have discussed elsewhere.¹⁸

NOTES:

¹ Let me anticipate a critical rejoinder. Is it not true that one of Heidegger's aims is to overcome the traditional philosophy of subjectivity and that he for that very reason has no interest in the question of how to investigate subjectivity? However, in contrast to this widespread reading, I

would defend the view that Heidegger's own notion of Dasein must be interpreted as an ontologically clarified concept of subjectivity. Thus, what Heidegger is opposed to is exactly the *traditional* concept of subjectivity, in the sense of a worldless self-contained substance, and not the notion of subjectivity as such. This interpretation can find support in for instance *Sein und Zeit*, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (1927), *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, and *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. In these works, Heidegger calls for an analysis of the Being of the subject, and writes that it is necessary to commence a phenomenological investigation of the subjectivity of the finite subject. He also argues that his own thematization of the ontology of Dasein equals an ontological analysis of the subjectivity of the subject, and that an ontological comprehension of the subject will lead us to the existing Dasein (Heidegger 1986, 24, 366, 382; Heidegger 1991, 87, 219; GA 24: 207, 220; GA 27: 72, 115). For an extensive discussion of the role of subjectivity in *Sein und Zeit*, cf. Øverenget (1998).

² One of Heidegger's most extensive discussions of Natorp can be found in the lecture course *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks* from 1920. The first section of the second part of the lecture, which covers more than 50 pages, is entitled "Die destruierende Betrachtung der Natorpschen Position."

³ It is worth mentioning that it was Natorp who in *Allgemeine Psychologie* introduced the famous distinction between a *static* and a *genetic* investigation (Natorp 1912, 285) that was later to become so important to Husserl. (Husserl carefully read *Allgemeine Psychologie* in September 1918). Ultimately, it might be asked whether Natorp's reconstructive method is all that different from Husserl's genetic phenomenology and from Husserl's notion of "Abbaureduktion". And if they are similar, wouldn't Husserl himself then become vulnerable to a phenomenological criticism of Natorp? To investigate the relation between Husserl and Natorp in detail would lead too far, but let me just point out that there is a decisive difference between arguing for the value of a reconstructive (or genetic) method, and arguing that such a method provides the only kind of access to lived subjectivity. Husserl would never defend the latter view. In fact, as Husserl remarks in one of his research manuscripts after having summarized Natorp's reconstructive method: "I really cannot approve of this. The true task will be lost of sight." (Quoted in Kern 1964, 367-368). For an extensive discussion of Husserl's appraisal of Natorp, cf. Kern (1964, 326-373).

⁴ One finds a related criticism in Husserl. Husserl argues that any skeptical claim to the effect that reflection falsifies the lived experiences and that they consequently elude it completely is self-refuting, since this very claim presupposes knowledge of those very same lived experiences, and how should one obtain that except through reflection (Hua III/1, 174)?

⁵ In Cassirer's *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* one can find a brief but acute criticism of Natorp that proceeds along similar lines. Cassirer argues that the linguistic and conceptual form does not stand opposed to the life-experience, but that it rather has to be regarded as the latter's completion. When subjectivity expresses itself, when it externalizes itself in words and deeds, we are not necessarily faced with perdition, but rather with an articulation, with a "sich-selbstfindens", or "sich-selbst-bestimmens" (Cassirer 1954, 43-47). As Cassirer puts it: "Life cannot apprehend itself by remaining absolutely within itself. It must give itself form; for it is precisely by this 'otherness' of form that it gains its 'visibility,' if not its reality." (Cassirer 1954, 46). Cassirer consequently accuses Natorp of operating with a too narrow understanding of both conceptualization and language. Natorp has focused exclusively on the theoretical, objectifying, and reifying side of language. But has he not thereby failed to appreciate the protean character of language. Does language not have a multiplicity of forms; does it not possess a force and mobility that enables it to seize the subjective without necessarily violating it in the process (Cassirer 1954, 62-67)? It is an irony of fate that Natorp in *Allgemeine Psychologie* spends considerable time discussing the work of Bergson, ultimately criticizing Bergson for operating with an unacceptable contrast between the concepts that are viewed as absolutely static, fixed and immobile, and the experiences that are seen as boundlessly streaming and variable (Natorp 1912, 323). Natorp fails to realize that his own position is vulnerable to the very same criticism.

⁶ It is significant that Heidegger can pursue such a scientific endeavor while at the same time arguing for the necessity of countering the predominance of the theoretical. However, Heidegger obviously envisages his "Ursprungswissenschaft" as a pretheoretical or perhaps rather atheoretical science.

⁷ It is interesting to compare Heidegger's stance with Husserl's. As Husserl writes in the early lecture course *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie* from 1906-7: "If consciousness ceases to be a human or some other empirical consciousness, then the word loses all psychological meaning, and ultimately one is *led back to something absolute that is neither physical nor psychical being in a natural scientific sense*. However, in the phenomenological perspective this is the case throughout the field of givenness. It is precisely the apparently so obvious thought, that everything given is either physical or psychical that must be abandoned." (Hua XXIV, 242).

⁸ Cf. Dilthey (1905, 326). For an interesting and rather polemic attack on views found in both Dilthey and Heidegger cf. Rickert (1922).

⁹ Heidegger introduces the notion of *formal indication* [formale Anzeige] exactly in order to point to the unique phenomenological or hermeneutical conceptuality that runs counter to the theoretical and objectifying way in which normal concepts function. As Heidegger argues, the concepts found in phenomenology are of an altogether different kind than the objectifying, ordering concepts found in and utilized by the positive sciences (GA 58: 262-263). Phenomenological concepts cannot communicate their full content, but only indicate it, and it is up to the phenomenologizing individual to actualize the concepts and their content. The final determination is not to be given in the definition, but to be realized in the phenomenological activity itself. What is given purely formally in a definition only becomes authentically given through the concrete enactment of the interpreter, i.e., in application (cf. Granberg 2003).

¹⁰ In a rather unique passage at the end of the lecture course *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* from 1919/1920, Heidegger delineates in further details the different steps involved in a phenomenological understanding of life: 1. The first stage simply consists in an unprejudiced selection of and reference to a specific sphere of factic life. 2. Then follows what Heidegger calls the gaining of a foothold in the lived experience. This entails neither a seizing of the life nor a stalling of its stream, but simply a going along with, or rather a being carried along with the very stream of life. 3. The third stage involves a "vorschauen", a "vorauspringen" in the horizons and tendencies of the lived experience itself. 4. Then follows an articulation and accentuation of the different moments of the phenomenon. 5. The fifth step consists in an interpretation hereof. 6. And finally follows a unification of what has been phenomenologically intuited. A bringing together of that which has been torn through the articulation. Heidegger also describes these stages as the different moments of the phenomenological method, and it is interesting to notice that he explicitly mentions that the articulation involves a critical *destruction* of the objectifications that are distorting the phenomenon (GA 59: 254-255).

¹¹ Heidegger would later express a certain dissatisfaction with this tripartition as well as with what he took to be an undue emphasis on the self-world (cf. GA 20: 333, GA 58: 197-198).

¹² The English translation has been corrected so that it now corresponds to the amended German text (cf. Kisiel 1995, 378, 546).

¹³ As Stolzenberg has subsequently argued, however, although Heidegger might have acknowledged the existence of an immediate prereflective self-acquaintance, he apparently also considered it to be so fundamental that he never attempted to analyze its inner structure any further (Stolzenberg 1995, 293).

¹⁴ The change of language is striking, and Heidegger's choice of words in *Sein und Zeit* makes one wonder whether he does after all recognize the methodological need for some kind of phenomenological epoché. It would lead too far to investigate this question in any detail here, but for some interesting reflections cf. Tugendhat (1970, 262-264), Caputo (1992) and in particular Courtine (1990, 207-247).

¹⁵ Although one might ultimately criticize Sartre's definition and methodological use of the pure reflection, it clearly demonstrates that it might be appropriate to distinguish several different types of reflection. For more on Sartre's concept of pure reflection, cf. Zahavi (1999) and Monnin (2002).

¹⁶ It must be emphasized that this suggestion by no means entails that the phenomenological reflection can make do without a preliminary effectuation of the phenomenological epoché and reduction.

¹⁷ Recently, Crowell has made the same point, and he has argued that the hermeneutical intuition

is “a reappropriation, rather than a rejection, of the genuinely phenomenological concept of reflection.”(Crowell 2001, 137. Cf. Crowell 2001, 124-126, 131). See also Rinofner-Kreidl (2001).¹⁸ Cf. Zahavi (2001, 2002, and 2003). I am indebted to Jim Hart, Shaun Gallagher, and Sebastian Luft for comments to an earlier version of the article. This study was funded by the Danish National Research Foundation.

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