

*Christopher Gutland & Alexander Nicolai Wendt*

# The Struggle to Distinguish Transcendental Phenomenology and Psychology

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Herausgegeben von: Alexander Nicolai Wendt,  
Ralph Schiller und James Morley

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# The Struggle to Distinguish Transcendental Phenomenology and Psychology

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## Summary

This article addresses Husserl's attempt to differentiate between transcendental phenomenology and eidetic psychology. The thesis is: The distinction remained problematic so that Husserl's analyses are often valuable contributions to psychology that, however, are mistaken to be epistemology. It is shown how and why the confusion of epistemological and psychological investigations harbors the danger of a psychologism. The article shows how becoming conscious of consciousness leads to a kind of reduplication of the world and why this led Husserl to give psychology an epistemological priority. On the other hand, it considers where and how the concern of epistemology and psychological investigations on the genesis of consciousness can be methodologically separated. Finally, it offers perspectives on how Husserl's psychological contributions can be made fruitful for the project of a phenomenological psychology.

*Keywords:* transcendental phenomenology, eidetic psychology, psychologism, Husserl, epistemology, consciousness, methodology

## Zusammenfassung

Die schwierige Scheidung von transzendentaler Phänomenologie und Psychologie  
Dieser Beitrag widmet sich Husserls Differenzierungsversuch von transzendentaler Phänomenologie und eidetischer Psychologie. Die These lautet: Die Unterscheidung blieb problematisch, sodass Husserls Analysen oftmals zwar wertvolle, aber als Erkenntnistheorie missverständene Beiträge zur Psychologie sind. Es wird aufgezeigt, inwiefern die Verwechslung von erkenntnistheoretischen und psychologischen Untersuchungen die Gefahr eines Psychologismus birgt. Der Beitrag zeigt, wie die Bewusstwerdung des Bewusstseins zu einer Art Reduplikation der Welt führt und warum dies Husserl veranlasste, der Psychologie einen auch epistemologischen Vorrang einzuräumen. Dagegen werden Überlegungen angestellt, wo und wie das Anliegen der Erkenntnistheorie und psychologische Untersuchungen

zur Bewusstseinsgenese methodologisch zu separieren sind. Abschließend wird erwogen, wie Husserls eigentlich psychologische Beiträge für das Anliegen einer phänomenologischen Psychologie fruchtbar zu machen sind.

*Schlüsselwörter:* transzendente Phänomenologie, eidetische Psychologie, Psychologismus, Husserl, Erkenntnistheorie, Bewusstsein, Methodologie

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the famed >psychologism dispute< (*Psychologismustreit*), which accompanied the methodological emancipation of experimental psychology from philosophy. Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* are frequently portrayed as the decisive turning point of this dispute, which separated the philosophical investigation of essences from the empirical investigation of facts. However, sociology of science demonstrates that telling the story of Husserl as the supreme victor of the dispute risks trivializing the scientific concern (see Kusch 1995; Rath 1994). Whilst it is true that the early phenomenologists created a third way beyond both logicism and psychologism, the epistemological root problem remains salient even today. Put differently, the relation between psychology and phenomenology is a constitutive problem within the phenomenological movement. It manifests in the works of many phenomenologists and especially in Husserl.

From the outset of the movement, phenomenology was influenced by psychology: As a key figure of the intellectual current, Husserl participated in classes with psychological content by Franz Brentano and Wilhelm Wundt, while Carl Stumpf supervised his habilitation. The impact was so strong on Husserl that his first commercially available publication, the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (Husserl Hua XII), was criticized by Frege (1984) for propagating a logical psychologism. One point of critique was that Husserl did not sufficiently distinguish between a number and its conscious appearance (*Vorstellung*) (Hartimo 2017, 53). Husserl admitted his early attempts were psychologistic and offered a fierce critique of psychologism in his *Prolegomena* (Husserl Hua XVIII). Nevertheless, Husserl's subsequent attempts were yet again criticized for being psychologistic. Although Husserl (Hua XIX/2, 535) rejected this critique, the issue remained relevant throughout his works. The goal here is investigating whether, how, and why the so-called >transcendental phenomenology< struggles with distinguishing itself from psychology. Making this issue visible not only helps avoid psychologizing epistemology but also reveals methodological avenues to clarify where phenomenology may integrate with psychology. In so doing, this article seeks to contribute to the goal of a phenomenological psychology.

The guiding question for this paper is whether it is possible to discern transcendental phenomenology from eidetic psychology. It shall be demonstrated that the fundamental problem Frege noticed in Husserl's early approach – not clearly distinguishing between an entity and its conscious appearance – remains problematic throughout. Based on these analyses, it becomes possible to address the relation to psychology as a foundational problem within the phenomenological movement and to learn from it for interdisciplinary work within phenomenological psychology.

## 1 The Difference between Psychology and Phenomenology According to Husserl

Regarding the relation between phenomenology and psychology, Husserl distinguished between (1) >empirical< or >inductive< psychology, (2) >pure<, >eidetic<, >a priori<, or >phenomenological< psychology, and (3) transcendental phenomenology. Given the multitude of terms for the second kind of psychology, it is here consistently called >eidetic psychology.< Husserl (Hua IX, 347) maintained that a path leads from the first through the second to the third. In the following, a basic outline of the general distinction is provided, which allows to address the difficulty in rigorously separating the plains of analysis. A detailed description of Husserl's development concerning the terminology and his relation to psychology can be found, for example, in Davidson (2021), Drüe (1963), or Staiti (2014).

### 1.1 Inductive Psychology

Husserl (1983, xx, Hua III/1, 6)<sup>2</sup> argues that the first kind of psychology – >empirical< or >inductive< psychology – treats the phenomena of consciousness as »matters of fact in David Hume's sense.« Put another way: It observes individual – as in tokens versus types – facts and then tries to induce generalities from such recurring observations. Husserl, however, saw prejudices stemming from the Cartesian dualism of *res extensa* and *res cogitans* at work in these attempts, leading to a biased attitude toward consciousness from the outset. However, Husserl's view on this kind of psychology is not the focus of this article. Suffice it to say that Husserl (1970b, 214–15, Hua VI, 218–19) criticizes it because

»souls [...] were seen as real annexes of their physical living bodies [...]; they are not *res extensae*, but they are still real in a sense similar to bodies, and [...] must also be investigated in a similar sense in terms of >causal laws<, i. e., through theories which are of the same

sort in principle as those of physics, which is taken as a model and at the same time as an underlying foundation. <

Thus, because *res extensae* were already the subject matter of physics, psychology needed to explore *res cogitans*, conceived of as the *leftovers* of what physics cannot investigate (Husserl Hua VI, 215–17). This, however, unwarrantedly implied that these leftovers are of a *unitary kind*.

Furthermore, although conceived as the *dualistic opposite of physical phenomena*, the *methodological* requirement counterintuitively was to explore *res cogitans like physical phenomena*. Husserl blames these incoherent assumptions for psychology's early problems in finding a successful methodology. For instance, this dualism arguably (Husserl Hua VI, 236–37) underlies Brentano's (1973, 16) suggestion to distinguish and investigate only physical and psychical<sup>3</sup> phenomena instead of their respective substances, thereby supporting Lange's (1887, 685) call for a psychology without soul. As Lohmar (1990, 180–83) illustrates, Husserl later criticized himself because he was influenced by Brentano's assumption of only two kinds of phenomena.

## 1.2 Eidetic Psychology

The second kind of psychology – eidetic psychology – does not indirectly induce generalities from *individual* mental facts. Instead, it experientially explores the *essential* – as in types versus tokens – structures that pervade individual experiences. Such essences are neither subject to temporal nor spatial changes, although they may bestow structure upon temporal or spatial events. As an example, Husserl (Hua XIX/1, 234–35) discusses Stumpf's claim that in consciousness, one cannot experience a color if this color has no extension. In this article, we use the terms >essence<, >idea<, and >concept< synonymously.<sup>4</sup>

Such essential structures underly and govern the structure and unfolding of individual facts, or, as Husserl (1977, 48, Hua IX, 65) puts it, they »give order to the concrete singularities of the world.« Although he mentions Carl Stumpf (Husserl Hua III/1, 199) and Hume (Husserl Hua IX, 246) as pioneers toward such an eidetic psychology, in general, Husserl (Hua IX, 221, 295) holds that it never came to the fore. In the tradition of phenomenological psychology, attempts have been undertaken to establish methodologies that do justice to the concept of eidetic psychology (e. g., Giorgi 2009; Wertz 2010). However, these approaches incorporate the epistemological struggle inherent to Husserl's perspective, and it is an ongoing controversy how to address the resulting complications (see Englander and Morley 2023).

An important question is how eidetic psychology *experientially* investigates essences. Husserl (1977, 148, Hua IX, 193) writes:

»Whoever wants pure psychology as a science of the disclosure of pure internality must first learn [...] a fully new attitude, a totally altered species of perception and thought [...] to disclose for the seeing eye of the mind, the >mothers<<sup>5</sup> of all knowledge, the >mothers< of all appearing objectivity. For the seeing eye: because we are not here to set up speculations concerning the >inner essence of the psyche< and to think up >metaphysical< substructions, but to bring about a psychology as experiential science. But also necessarily a psychology as eidetic science based on intuitive sources.«

The quote illustrates that, although eidetic psychology investigates essences, it neither does so speculatively nor by hypothesizing metaphysical substructions. Instead, Husserl sees it as an >experiential science.<

The method of this experiential investigation of essences is what Husserl calls >eidetic variation.< In his *Phenomenological Psychology*, he (Hua IX, 72–87) explains it in detail: One starts with an exemplary perceived or imagined object and then produces variations of it in imagination, thereby focusing on intuiting the non-sensory structure that remains the same in all variants. Obviously, this requires an extension of the words >empirical< or >experiential< to include this non-sensory intuition of essences.

Aware that such an extension is anything but scientifically established<sup>6</sup>, Husserl continuously tried to substantiate the possibility of intuiting essences. Even before using the term >essence< or >eidos<, he (2001, 318, Hua XIX/2, 732) criticized Kant for failing to achieve the »fundamental extension of the concepts of perception and intuition over the categorial realm.« He (1983, 42, Hua III/1, 48) maintained »that all human beings see >ideas<, >essences<, and see them, so to speak, continuously; they operate with them in their thinking, they also make eidetic judgments – except that from their epistemological standpoint they interpret them away.« Consequently, he (1969, 45, Hua XVII, 48) called for a »broadening of the concept of experience« to also include eidetic or ideal objects. To avoid ambiguity of the term >empirical<, henceforth, the first kind of psychology is called >inductive< instead of >empirical< psychology. Terminologically, this makes it possible to see eidetic psychology as >empirical<, for it proceeds based on experiencing essences. Since this special issue consults phenomenology »to shape the process of empirical research in psychology itself,« this extension of >empirical< would be a considerable contribution: Experientially investigating essences would provide a methodological foundation for empirical psychology.

However, despite the indubitable importance that essences and their >empirical< investigation had for Husserl, many contemporary phenomenologists draw a veil of silence on it. For instance, in the *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*, although the term >essence< appears on more than 30 pages, the index lists only three occurrences (Zahavi 2012, 610). One of these conspicuously refers to the claim that »Husserl became increasingly dissatisfied with [...] his essentialist generic account of epistemic common-

ality« and, drawing on the nowadays popular notion of intersubjectivity, »ends up in something closely resembling« [...] consensus theories of truth« (Schmid 2012, 405). It is altogether not uncommon to find contemporary phenomenologists paying no heed to the, as one might put it, essentiality that essences had for Husserl.

This predicament is in no way improved once one notices that there are few – if any – phenomenological publications where the authors explicitly base their own findings on eidetic variation. To be sure, it is not uncommon to find authors seeking to clarify or defend Husserl's eidetic variation as a feasible method (Lohmar 2005; Ni 1999, 175–87; Brudzińska 2017, 111–12; Sowa 2007). Yet one is bound to ask: If this is so, why is it not employed more often to confirm Husserl's claims or to explore strata of experience Husserl did not investigate?

The dichotomy of essences and matters of facts creates a substantial methodological challenge within the phenomenological movement. While some embrace the notion of essences by subscribing to idealism (Celms and Rozenvalds 1993), others transform the idea, for example, by drawing on the idea of structure (*Aufbau*), which has also inspired Aron Gurwitsch and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Finally, it is also possible to revise the basic concept, trying to establish phenomenological research without the conceptual divide. An example of this solution can be found in Max Scheler, who reconciles matters of fact and essences in his *Lehre von den drei Tatsachen* (Scheler 1957). Ultimately, the concern constitutes a foundational debate within the phenomenological movement which also affects its relation to psychology.

### 1.3 Transcendental Phenomenology

Like eidetic psychology, transcendental phenomenology uses eidetic variation to explore essential structures. Husserl (Hua IX, 343) thus asserts that both are eidetic sciences, and he (1983, 189–90, Hua III/1, 178) conceives of »eidetic psychology« as »intimately tied up with phenomenology.« This intimacy goes so far that »transcendental phenomenology has this characteristic, that every one of its propositions admits of being transformed into an a priori psychological proposition« (Husserl 1977, 32, Hua IX, 45). This statement is worth highlighting: *Every* transcendental phenomenological proposition is transformable this way, a claim Husserl (Hua III/1, 160, 1994, III/7:46) stressed more than once. Ströker (1981, 169) emphasized that this close link is due to both approaches exploring subjectivity. It follows that subjectivity is not the distinctive feature of transcendental phenomenology. Relatedly, Husserl (Hua IX, 343–44, 347) stresses that a refined psychology can also include the intersubjective dimension.

However, Husserl's works contain ambiguities regarding the separation and even separability of transcendental phenomenology and a priori psychology. On the last

pages of his last unfinished work, the *Crisis*, Husserl (Hua VI, 261, 263, 265) outright *identifies* transcendental phenomenology and what he there mostly calls >pure< psychology. Since this is Husserl's latest view, it may seem like his final viewpoint. However, at least three issues complicate this assessment. First, he there neither uses the word >eidetic< to characterize this psychology nor does he mention the method of eidetic variation. Instead, he there distinguishes ordinary and >pure< psychology relative to the method called >reduction< or >epoché.<<sup>7</sup> He elaborates several steps through which the reduction<sup>8</sup> focuses first on one's own psychical life, then its interrelatedness with that of other subjects, and lastly, the constitution of worldly sense (Husserl Hua VI, 205–68). Thus, caution is advised when equating the >pure< psychology there with what Husserl, in other works, called >eidetic< psychology.

The second issue relates to the *Crisis*'s abrupt end after these paragraphs. Did Husserl mean to state the identity so strongly, or might have relativized it in what was to follow? What makes the latter plausible is, thirdly, that in his draft for the continuation of the *Crisis*<sup>9</sup>, Husserl (Hua VI, 515, our translation) states that »there is no psychology that could remain psychology.« Furthermore, Husserl (Hua VI, 516) there maintains that psychology is but a thematically restricted part of phenomenology, while conversely stating that it nonetheless encompasses everything.

The following attempt to question the separation cannot solve these ambiguities related to the >pure< psychology in the *Crisis*. However, it picks up the separation as Husserl tried to achieve it in other works where he specifically focused on separating transcendental phenomenology from an eidetic psychology. As will become clear, these considerations throw some light on the conflicting claim that psychology encompasses everything while being a restricted part of phenomenology. Based on these considerations, it will also become evident that psychology has good reasons to claim as its proper field many analyses that Husserl in other works sought to characterize as non-psychological, instead calling them >transcendental.<

Where he explicitly separates eidetic psychology from transcendental phenomenology, Husserl (Hua IX, 262, 343) explains that a shift of attitude sets them apart. What is this shift? – It is the final step in the transcendental *epoché*. The *epoché*, in general, is a transitory bracketing of mundane existence which is possible thanks to an epistemic attitude that can be described as disinterest or neutrality towards questions of existence. One should not, however, confuse this disinterest with negating or doubting existence. In Husserl's (1983, 61) words: »I am *not negating* this >world< as though I were a sophist; I am *not doubting its factual being* as though I were a skeptic; rather I am exercising the >phenomenological< ἐποχή which also *completely shuts me off from any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being*.«

The reference to abstaining from judgments about factual being can illustrate to what extent eidetic psychology already practices *epoché*. After all, eidetic psychology

shifts its attention away from the matters of fact that inductive psychology investigates, instead turning it toward essences that have no existence akin to that of a sensed rock or a pain. Thus, eidetic psychology's focus is not on the factual existence of subjective experience or consciousness but on its essential structures. In Husserl's (1977, 55, Hua IX, 74) words: »A pure *eidos* treats the factual actuality of the single cases attained in the variation as completely irrelevant; an actuality is treated as a possibility among other possibilities.«

Nevertheless, eidetic psychology, in Husserl's eyes, does not go all the way regarding the *epoché*. Husserl (Hua IX, 290, our translation) claims: »What it wants to investigate are the souls and soul communities that occur in the world. [...] Even in eidetic research, it retains the sense of being of worldly existence, only in relation to possible real worlds.« Hence, eidetic psychology does not yet practice *epoché* of the *entire* world. It still indirectly presupposes humans and animals as we know them from the factual world (Husserl Hua IX, 272, Hua VI, 266). Cai (2013, 15) puts it another way: Eidetic psychology »remains >natural< to the extent that it unwittingly posits the mind as a region of being *in* the world.« Ströker (1983, 13) puts the flaw in eidetic psychology still treating the essences it investigates as those of matters of facts.

What changes when one extends the *epoché* to the entire world? – Once one does, one wholly overcomes what Husserl (1983, 57, Hua III/1, 61) calls the »natural attitude,« i.e., the usually unnoticed disposition that the »world is always there as an actuality.« This disentanglement from the customary focus makes room to notice something that usually escapes our awareness: That the world – thus far our primary habitual concern – is there for us only as the result of what Husserl calls the >transcendental constitution.< As long as we remain in the natural attitude, this transcendental constitution remains hidden (Husserl Hua IX, 344). Consequently, for Husserl (1977, 145, Hua IX, 189), the final step of the *epoché* »is an essential change of the way in which the object-consciousness, the perception, is executed, and in particular, of the way in which its belief is executed, the way in which its object is taken by us.« This ultimate extension of the *epoché* is one deciding factor that, for Husserl, sets apart transcendental phenomenology and eidetic psychology.<sup>10</sup>

With regard to eidetic structures, Breyer (2017, 159) importantly adds that in the fully-fledged *epoché*, they likewise reveal themselves to be correlates of the transcendental constitution. The difference here, thus, is that eidetic psychology – due to the still underlying natural attitude – views eidetic structures as something that exists in itself. Against this implicit assumption, Husserl (Hua IX, 292) held that even ideal objects like eidetic structures receive their sense only in and through the transcendental constitution. In Husserl's (1983, 54, Hua III/2, 483–84) words, »everything >ideal< >existing in itself< over against >us<« is actually »there for us as coming from spontaneities, as a product.«

The notion >for us< here points out that the constitution is not all we become aware of once we thoroughly perform the *epoché*. We also become privy to ourselves in an entirely new fashion. Husserl (Hua IX, 292, our translation) elaborates:

»The present (apperceived) I and We presuppose an (apperceived) I and We *for* which it is present, but which is not itself again present in the same sense. We have direct access to this transcendental subjectivity through a transcendental experience.«

Thus, we become aware not only of the way we appear to ourselves but furthermore of ourselves *as the entity experiencing this appearance of ourselves*.

To conclude: The concrete and direct experience of the transcendental subjectivity and the transcendental constitution is what sets apart transcendental phenomenology and eidetic psychology. Because transcendental phenomenology is not captivated by the existing world, including psychical life and eidetic structures conceived of as belonging to this world, it may purely study how the world comes about for us.

## 2 Systematic Issues Concerning the Relation between Phenomenology and Psychology

Based on Husserl's nomological division between the three methodological approaches, it is possible to understand pressing issues concerning the relations between the unequal perspectives. These matters occupy the phenomenological movement as a whole and not only Husserl. However, his teachings provide a problem exhibition.

### 2.1 The Ubiquitous Parallelism of the Unalike

Given how Husserl (Hua VI, 104) speaks of the direct transcendental experience as a hitherto hidden dimension, one may first wonder how every transcendental phenomenological finding is transferable into an eidetic psychological one. Add to this that Husserl (1970b, 211, Hua VI, 215) calls the transcendental dimension a »new thematic horizon« that »flows into psychic being and life.« How can this dimension be *thematically new* if every finding on it is also one of eidetic psychology?

Husserl answers that there is a thorough >parallelism< (Husserl Hua IX, 342–44) or >duplicity< (Husserl Hua IX, 292) of the two approaches and relatedly (Hua IX, 44) distinguishes between psychological and transcendental subjectivity. Nonetheless, he (Hua IX, 292) also claims that our psychological subjectivity, which we intend *as an object* among others within the natural attitude and thus as a part of the objective world,

is identical to the transcendental subjectivity *to which* it appears. This is questionable, however, for when I appear to myself *as an object*, I do not appear *within this object as I am experiencing this object*. If one claims both are identical, one may be referring to an identity somehow underlying both experiences, but it is not evident in them. Thus, even strong defenders of Husserl, like Ströker (1981, 182), concede that this identity remained problematic.<sup>11</sup>

Problematic is furthermore how the aforementioned *direct experience* of the transcendental constitution that Husserl calls a distinctive feature of transcendental phenomenology could be given within the natural attitude still present in eidetic psychology. After all, the impossibility of becoming aware of the transcendental constitution within the natural attitude is why Husserl (Hua IX, 272–73, 290, 335) repeatedly claims that eidetic psychology is transcendently naïve. Husserl (Hua IX, 343, our translation), for instance, claims eidetic psychology must fail to see that »the whole of positivity and specifically the psychological one is a noematic formation of transcendental constitution.« That means: Because it does not practice full *epoché*, for eidetic psychology to be able to investigate something, it must appear noematically, i.e., as an object of consciousness. The problem then, however, is: While the constitution gives rise to all noematic appearances, it cannot constitute an *adequate noematic appearance* of itself as a constituting *process*. One can only have a non-objective experience of the constitution. Hence, it is impossible to transform findings on the transcendental constitution into eidetic psychological ones.

Relatedly, the supposed thorough parallelism may make one wonder one more thing. Because of the naivety just mentioned, Husserl (Hua IX, 270) characterizes eidetic psychology as a merely pedagogical, lower, and false sense of what phenomenology is. Given these demeaning characterizations, one may ask: *Why would anyone bother to become an eidetic psychologist?* After all, an eidetic psychologist would be naïve in applying her methods, but all her findings would be identical to those that transcendental phenomenology uncovers. Eidetic psychology thus seems obsolete.

These observations may already inspire doubts about how Husserl did and did not separate the two approaches. These issues partly arise due to Husserl's view on the relationship between psychology and epistemology.

## 2.2 Eidetic Psychology as Epistemology or a Regional Ontology among Others?

Once one becomes – not conscious, but – *conscious of one's consciousness*, one has to deal with a peculiar reduplication of the world. In a way, this process lies at the heart of Husserl's phenomenology: The *epoché* requires one to be able to contrast worldly ex-

istence with worldly phenomena. This distinction is a challenge for phenomenological thinking. The question is: How to distinguish between *the features of an entity as such and those relating solely to what is required for it to become conscious for us?* Husserl frequently conflates the two, which leads to an abundance of conflicting statements about the difference and identity between the conscious *appearance of something* and this *something*. An example is the noema dispute, where some maintain that the »object-as-it-is-intended and the object-that-is-intended« are ontologically identical (Zahavi 2003, 59–60). Others instead maintain that the »>material< ontologies of nature and culture [...] play no role in the results of pure phenomenology« (Smith 2013, 281). Both sides provide ample evidence for their position within Husserl's writings.

The question to ask here is: Is phenomenology only to research the essential structures of consciousness or those of all ontologies, including the worldly ones of physics, biology, etc.? This question is far from trivial because not only do worldly things *have an appearance in consciousness, but we get to know them for what they are only through consciousness*. For instance, physicalists maintain that there is no reality to consciousness, and all its phenomena are reducible to physical reality. Husserl would likely counter that without consciousness, we would neither stand a chance to understand what the worldview of physicalism in itself is nor what it is about. That is why we are facing a peculiar reduplication of the world once we *become conscious of our consciousness of the world*. And this reduplication is intimately tied up with both: the question of what psychology is rightfully about and the danger of taking psychology too far in the form of an epistemological psychologism.

How is this evident in phenomenology? Husserl (Hua IX, 326) raises the question of whether eidetic psychology is just one eidetic science among others. He (Hua IX, 326, our translation) denies this, arguing:

»Regardless of how far the psychical appears as one of the other real components of the world, it still has the wonderful property – precisely that which is purely researched in phenomenology – of intentionally relating or allowing to be related to everything extra-psychical and everything imaginable.«

Usually, however, we pay no attention to how our psychological consciousness intentionally relates to the extra-psychological. Instead, Husserl (Hua IX, 279, our translation) claims that usually »in our view are exclusively the respective things, thoughts, values, goals, aids, but not the psychical experience itself, in which we are conscious of them as such. Only reflection makes it clear.« Consequently, Husserl conceives psychology as a unique eidetic science because it intentionally relates to *everything* intentionally conceivable. This notably includes all conceivable worlds, so that Husserl (Hua IX, 340, our translation) writes an eidetic psychologist »investi-

gates the *logos* of the psychical. His thematic ground is then a conceivable world in general. <

*Here* is where the danger of a psychologism lurks: If all knowledge about conceivable worlds and their ontologies is the product of a constitution that itself solely adheres to the psychical regional ontology, then one efficiently psychologizes all knowledge.

Opined like this, Husserl unsurprisingly assumes epistemology needs to be grounded in psychology. He (1977, 10, Hua IX, 15–16) writes:

»>knowledge< with all its particular forms traces back finally to the unity of the psychic nexus as the substratum of all cognitive processes. Theory of knowledge, then [...] is also traced back to a descriptive, analytic psychology as its basis. <

Husserl (1977, 13, Hua IX, 19) further stresses that inductive psychology is ill-suited to provide this epistemology, and instead, »a psychology which provides necessities is a desideratum.< Yet he (1977, 31, Hua IX, 44) adds that eidetic psychology is ill-suited as well, as »all [...] a priori sciences need a theory of knowledge<, which is why »no psychology, not even an a priori psychology, is so self-sufficient that it is capable on its own simultaneously to pose and to solve epistemological problems.< Husserl (Hua IX, 266) then proposes that only transcendental phenomenology is apt to deliver the required epistemology because it derives from a >transcendentalized< eidetic psychology, thereby becoming a *non-psychological* transcendental epistemology.

This line of argument entails a logical problem: First, epistemology must be founded in psychology, which needs to proceed eidetically or apriori. Secondly, however, this apriori psychology then needs epistemological footing. This circular and thus self-refuting foundationalism is where Husserl confronts but struggles to discern the mentioned reduplication of the world resulting from becoming conscious of consciousness.

Obviously, a distinction is required here. Nevertheless, this necessity for a clearer distinction is no triviality. For instance, Drummond (2008, 202) claims psychology explores only the regional ontology of the psychical while »transcendental reflection [...] encompasses all regions.< Similarly, Zahavi (2009, 257) holds that »whereas phenomenological psychology might be described as a so-called regional-ontological investigation which investigates consciousness for its own sake, transcendental phenomenology is a much more ambitious global enterprise.< Contrary to such claims, the quote above illustrated that Husserl (Hua IX, 340) at times understood investigating the *logos of the psychical* to contain exploring all conceivable worlds. Furthermore, he no less conversely claimed phenomenology to be one of many »material eidetic sciences< (Husserl 1983, 161, Hua III/1, 150), thus explicitly excluding phenomenological research on other material regions because their essences transcend pure consciousness (Husserl Hua III/1, 128–29).

Ströker (1983, 12) as well identifies the regional ontology of the psychical as the field of study of eidetic psychology. She (1983, 19) also mentions Husserl's request for epistemology to be grounded in eidetic psychology. However, while Ströker (1983, 19) first mentions epistemology over and above eidetic psychology and transcendental phenomenology, she subsequently discusses the foundational relations ignoring epistemology. She (1983, 19) maintains that one foundation refers to a way of discovering phenomenology and the other to the conditions of possibility of the respective sciences. However, neither of these two founding attempts can be equated with epistemology, which will become clearer in the next section.

How can one find a way out of this dilemma? How can one convincingly relate eidetic psychology to the world as it appears to us in consciousness?

### 3 An Attempt at a Solution

Ultimately, one needs clear methodological means of discerning: What about the subjectivity, the constitution, and the correlating noemata adheres to the laws eidetic psychology investigates and what to other eidetic laws? The remainder of this article aims to offer some pointers on this.

Approaching the problem this way implies that *not* everything about subjectivity, the constitution, and conscious phenomena can be explained psychologically, i. e., that there is a non-psychological surplus. Put another way: It is not safe to assume that a science exploring the constitution of consciousness yields findings that, in each case, can be transformed into an eidetic psychological result. Yet how to find where psychology ends and where other regional ontologies begin? A notion that methodologically obfuscates clearly distinguishing the aspects just mentioned in Husserl's phenomenology is that of >transcendentality.<

Husserl's ambivalent attitude to associations can illustrate the obfuscation caused by his notion. In Husserl's (1970b, 87, Hua VI, 90) view, Hume ascribed our ideas of necessity, identity, and objectivity, all to associations, reducing them to »a psychological fiction.« Because of this, Husserl (1970b, 88, Hua VI, 90) blames Hume for ending up in a solipsistic »bankruptcy of objective knowledge.« And yet Husserl (Hua IX, 246, our translation) elsewhere lauds Hume's philosophy as »the first draft of a pure psychology [...] carried out with almost pure consistency; but no less than the first attempt at a phenomenological transcendental philosophy.« Husserl (Hua IX, 286, our translation) even asks for a »rehabilitation of D. Hume's great preliminary discoveries« in the form of a »universal eidetic phenomenology of association« as the »a priori genesis, from which a real spatial world of habitual validity is constituted for a soul.« Thus, Husserl first deems explaining worldly objectivity in recourse to associa-

tions a bankruptcy, but then he seeks to explain the a priori genesis of the world by them.

Husserl (Hua IX, 254, 301) explains these contradictory stances by construing their transcendentalization as a >purification< of Hume's psychological teachings. Transcendentalism thus turns the solipsistic bankruptcy of pure psychology into the only successful epistemology. Given that transcendentalism is thus all that prevents phenomenology from being psychology, one can understand the common »hostility to psychology among transcendental philosophers« (Drüe 1963, 27, our translation). However, one can also understand why researchers who do not share Husserl's occasional depreciation for psychology put into question the »monarchist claim of philosophy« (Wendt 2022, 142) underlying views of transcendentalism like Husserl's.

After all, psychology was first denied independence by natural science (Drüe 1963, 25–26). Husserl's early analyses, drawing on Brentano, then promised a new way to conduct psychology scientifically and independently. But as was shown above, with his appeal to transcendentalism, Husserl efficiently nullified the *raison d'être* of an eidetic psychology, yet based on an unconvincing distinction. Discussing phenomenological psychology, Herzog (1992, 508) calls for the subject matter to determine the method. Husserl, however, has it the other way around, believing that a methodical shift transforms something essentially psychological, like association, into something non-psychological.

What is it, then, that gets unduly mixed up in the notion of transcendentalism? – The problematic status of associations just mentioned reveals two aspects concerning the fundamental issue with the notion of transcendentalism in Husserl's philosophy. First, in the development of consciousness, associations *temporally precede* critical and reflective epistemic awareness of things as they are. One cannot become an epistemologist without ever having associated something with something else. Yet it would be wrong to conclude that, *therefore*, associations are fundamental for epistemology. Here is a point where the high significance Husserl bestows on temporality is detrimental to his efforts at epistemology. If we assumed epistemology is only possible after having comprehensively clarified how consciousness originally comes about, we would lack sufficient self-awareness. For the question would then be: How can our investigations of the origination of consciousness produce true knowledge if we lack an epistemology until we are done with it?

To draw a comparison: A natural scientist must learn that physical events are not necessarily *causally* related just because they reliably appear in *temporal succession*. Similarly, a phenomenologist must learn that *earlier stages* in the development of consciousness are not necessarily *epistemologically more fundamental*. Doyon (2016, 124) gets dangerously close to this when stating, »passive experience opens up the possibility for grasping things >as such.<< This opening up of a possibility is true temporally, yet it becomes erroneous when understood to imply epistemological significance. Whether

we did grasp things as such is an epistemological question that needs not mind how we first associate in consciousness.

Consequently, although passive syntheses and associations necessarily *temporally precede* practicing epistemology, they are not *epistemological prerequisites* of true knowledge. Quite the contrary: Epistemology must identify and avoid merely passively occurring associations. It may only accept what those associations passively and blindly relate after investigating whether it is either factually or eidetically so related. However, epistemology is precisely about how to perform such an investigation, which is why this must be achieved first before it may assess the epistemic validity of associations.

The second issue derives from the *act* of associating and its adherence to eidetic laws. Acts of associating do follow eidetic laws, and the relevant regional ontology of these act types is very likely psychology. However, a category mistake would be made if we assume that, because the *act of associating* follows eidetic laws, therefore, *what we associate with what* is also *eidetically* so related. That would be an unwarranted extension of Husserl's (Hua VI, 161–70) correlational apriori between an act (noesis) and its object (noema). However, as Hoffmann (2001, 109–20, 160, 184) has demonstrated for various act types, Husserl frequently conflated the act and its object. The problem in the case of associations is that we can evidently come to associate non-essential features with an object just as well as fail to associate those essential to it. In either case, the eidetic psychical laws of *associating* hold. In the first case, however, they result in *non-eidetically* related features in the object. In the second case, we fail to imagine the object with eidetic features that belong to it. That is why epistemology must avoid or at least identify and check associations, but may never simply presuppose that they are correct.

Noticing the problematic status of associations reveals a shortcoming in the concept of eidetic variation: I can easily imagine ever more objects of a certain kind containing random features that I happen to *associate* with it. Running through imaginative variations here will neither delete the non-essential associations nor add the essential ones that I fail to associate. Instead of gaining insight into essential properties of the object in question, one thus merely varies one's own prejudices. Aware of this, Lohmar (2005, 85–87) relativizes the results of eidetic variation to one's cultural upbringing and the individual experience history of the varying subject, conceding that its results are not generally valid. This, however, means that the attribute >eidetic< is misleading, and one should instead speak of >associative variation< or >idiosyncratic variation.< This problem does not only concern eidetically varying the essence of cultural objects like tables or chairs, as Husserl (Hua I, 86–91) assumed such fluctuating types to also underly the analyses of consciousness.

Associations and passivity are examples where Husserl's shift to transcendental, instead of purifying psychology, becomes a psychologism. Husserl's (1960, 65, Hua I, 99) summarizes his general viewpoint as: »Objects exist for me, and are for me what

they are, only as objects of actual and possible consciousness.« From this, it seemingly follows that we must first understand how consciousness comes about before addressing the epistemological question of how we achieve veracious knowledge. However, Husserl's viewpoint here is not a simple judgment, but one heavily loaded with non-trivial pieces of knowledge. It does not precede epistemology; it presupposes it. Husserl uncritically assumes it to be true, and then mistakes epistemology to require an investigation of how consciousness and its objects come about. This is why even his supposedly pure transcendental phenomenology is psychologistic.

In order to avoid this psychologism, one must first set apart the epistemological question of how we obtain true knowledge from the largely psychological (but ultimately interdisciplinary) question of how consciousness comes about and develops. For instance, Husserl (Hua I, 108) correctly observes that consciousness unfolds through *eidetically* different stages, and that scientific theorizing only becomes possible quite late. These eidetically different developmental stages (and thus much of Husserl's so-called >genetic phenomenology<) would be prime examples of eidetic psychological research. They could nicely be contrasted with, for instance, Piaget's attempts at a developmental psychology. Their investigation and the project of an epistemology are methodologically different projects.

To sum up: Epistemology neither is nor presupposes the investigation of how consciousness originally comes about. On the other hand, psychology entails research on how consciousness develops and unfolds. Given the century-old struggles to obtain a working epistemology, one need not wait for it to practice psychology. Yet being mindful of their difference is advisable to avoid psychologism. Viewed against the reduction of the world and the noema dispute, one may say that the question of how the *appearance of* something eidetically comes about in consciousness heavily involves psychology. Psychology needs not, however, bother also investigating the ontology of this something. As Husserl (1983, 43, Hua III/1, 50) once realized, this is even true for essences: It is »not the *essence* which is generated but instead the consciousness *of* the essence.« This generation of the consciousness of the essence involves psychology. Understanding the *what* of essentiality is a separate matter (Gutland 2021). This matter is, of course, not entirely disconnected. Yet one should at first keep it apart to avoid psychologizing essences.

Husserl's analyses are predominantly psychological, yet they sometimes straddle the fence with other disciplines. An example is eidetic biology when Husserl (Hua XXXIX, 474–77) postulates that the transcendental ego comes originally bestowed with directed instincts. Yet instincts are no more epistemological prerequisites than associations are. Thus claims that instincts are the basis from which we need to explain all the intricacies of our cultural life, art, scientific achievements, and philosophy (Lee 1993, 188–89) should be treated with caution. To be sure: Some of Husserl's analyses are of

value for epistemology, such as his categorial intuition and the notions of evidence, adequacy, and apodicticity.

Breaking the spell of transcendentalism thus opens the possibility of reassessing Husserl's phenomenology for what it is. One can come to scientifically appreciate and welcome much of what Husserl did in its proper domain: psychology. Such an appreciation neither belittles Husserl's analyses as a scientific contribution nor does it bereave them of their truth. All it does is allow his analyses to find their proper regional ontological >home.< Viewed this way, Husserl contributed considerably to the field of psychology, not only concerning the subject matter but also methodologically, as his proceedings can be seen as a comparatively sophisticated, reliable, and stable introspection (Gutland 2018b).

#### 4 Lessons for Phenomenological Psychology

Post-Kantian philosophy has shown that it is not trivial to detach reflection from mundane experience or to enter transcendentalism leaving the empirical realm behind. Husserl has struggled with this relation, trying to do justice to the richness of experience when investigating the things themselves while also striving for rigor in science. The epistemological problems he encountered inspire the tradition of phenomenology to reach methodological clarity about the relation between empirical psychology and philosophy. Instead of a clear divide, it requires a cautious attitude towards what is given to maintain the authenticity of phenomena. The idea of monitoring the epistemic attitude that structures science, renders different modes of scientific research possible. Phenomenology entails the idea for a reform of psychological research in particular.

Husserl himself has already adumbrated the idea of reform when updating Wilhelm Dilthey's idea of a foundational science (*Grundwissenschaft*) (Ermarth 1987, 143–44). For Husserl, phenomenology can provide a foundation for psychology like geometry does for physics. However, just like Dilthey, Husserl was no empirical scientist. His foundationalist worldview, which makes psychology an *ancilla philosophiae*, overlooks the issues of positive sciences that emancipate from a deductive foundation. What psychology needs is not a patron, but a helping hand. Others, especially psychologists, have picked up the idea of phenomenological psychology to find a middle-ground that draws on phenomenological rigor without forfeiting the autonomy of empirical psychology.

Importantly, the problematic status of psychologism in phenomenology calls for cooperation with psychology. Transcendental phenomenology cannot provide an absolute safeguard for empirical investigations, but their relation has to be developed continuously. At the same time, this co-dependency requires empirical psychology to embrace its epistemological responsibility. Merely positivistic research, which relies on

the mathematical objectivity provided by statistics, will not contribute to an attempted solution to the problem of transcendental – which it does not necessarily have to because phenomenological psychology may be the discourse that attends to the matter.

Phenomenological psychology is not simply an application of a pre-established rationale to a fixed field of empirical events. What it can be is a theoretical psychology that discusses the conditions and possibilities of psychological research while at the same time translating psychological findings to the discourse of philosophical phenomenology. This way, it can be a theory of science while also informing philosophy by discovering the structure of empirical contexts. A pertinent example is Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception which offers a critique of the behaviorist paradigm of stimulus-response theory while also providing a philosophy of embodiment with structural insight into the psychopathology of, e.g., phantom limbs and anosognosia (Merleau-Ponty 2002).

A further step can be taken if phenomenological psychology systematically engages with the structures of thought to elucidate the preconditions of transcendental reflection. A classical example of this kind of psychology is the so-called psychology of thought (*Denkpsychologie*) from Würzburg. Amedeo Giorgi highlights that the experimental findings of the Würzburg school were connected with »certain phenomenological issues« (Giorgi 2010, 157; cf. Wendt 2019). These psychologists did not only try to describe and explain the empirical occurrence of thought, but they also tackled the very notion of thought. These efforts bear a strong parallel to Husserl's research which, as mentioned in the last section, can be discussed as a form of introspection.

Both forms of investigation have structural complementarity and thus elicit the discourse of phenomenological psychology. Still, Husserl, insisting on the transcendental segregation from psychology, rejected the attempts of Würzburgians, such as Karl Bühler or August Messer, to reunite their efforts. The door was shut for debatable reasons and has not been opened again since. Upon critical revision of Husserl's line of argument, lost opportunities like these can be recovered, strengthening the ties between phenomenology and psychology.

## Endnotes

- 1 Christopher Gutland contributed the analysis of problems in Husserl's attempts to distinguish between eidetic psychology and transcendental phenomenology. Alexander Wendt related these proceedings to ongoing discussions in psychology and, in the final section, based on this reread of Husserl, lays out methodological opportunities for the endeavor of a phenomenological psychology. We thank two anonymous reviewers for critical suggestions.
- 2 Since translations of Husserl into English have been critiqued, the respective pages in German are referenced throughout. However, whenever an English translation is quoted, the respective pages are listed first, followed by the reference to the German original.

- 3 In German, one may refer to the object of psychology by the noun *Psychisches* and the adjective *psychisch*. Since the English words ›psychic‹, ›psychological‹, and ›mentak‹ are misleading translations, the term ›psychical‹ is used instead.
- 4 Some claim essences differ from concepts, for instance, by drawing on the notion of ›types‹ (Lohmar 1998, 8). Gutland (2018a, 269–272, 419–425, 480–483) argues their core is the same.
- 5 The word ›mothers‹ alludes to Faust's journey to the mothers (Goethe 2001, verses 6211–6305).
- 6 Some continuity can be found with Bernard Bolzano's philosophy (Kaiser-el-Safti 2011).
- 7 Husserl uses the terms ›epoché‹ and ›reduction‹ interchangeably (Staiti 2009, 84; Depraz 1999, 100). And yet he describes different methodological steps when using these words, which led to different distinctions between these terms. We here use ›epoché‹ in the sense of a mere »gate of entry« (Husserl 1970b, 257, Hua VI, 260) to become aware of the constitution of consciousness. The ›reduction‹ would then consist in distinguishing the different levels of constitution and finding the descriptive tools to adequately describe them (Gutland 2018b, 8–9).
- 8 Throughout his work, Husserl has proposed different versions of the reduction as a method to alter the experientially given. Moreover, other scholars have also engaged with the concept of reduction, adding further refinements. For phenomenological psychology, the »phenomenological psychological reduction« (e. g., Morley, 2011) plays a specific role. It takes a proper discourse to engage with relating matters of methodology, which cannot be addressed on this occasion.
- 9 The original manuscript of this draft is lost; only Eugen Fink's typed down version of it remains (Husserl Hua VI, XIV–XV)
- 10 In the *Crisis*, however, Husserl (Hua VI, 242–60) counts even this universal *epoché* as belonging to what he there calls ›pure‹ psychology. Whether this is the sole reason for him identifying transcendental phenomenology and psychology in that work may remain open in the present context.
- 11 In the *Crisis*, Husserl (Hua VI, 205, 267–68) also mentions this identity. He there also still several times (Husserl Hua VI, 208, 210, 212) emphasizes that the soul as a constituted objectivity or a mere self-apperception remains transcendently problematic. And while he maintains *that* they are identical, he does not offer a concise description of *how* to experience this identity phenomenologically.

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