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Subjectivity Is No Object: Can Subject-Object Dualism Be Reconciled through Phenomenology?

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Transpersonal psychology has at times critiqued the broader psychology field for perpetrating a somewhat arbitrary Cartesian subject-object divide. Some phenomenologists claim that reframing this purported divide as an experienced phenomenon can defuse its philosophical impact. If subjective experiences are viewed as continuous with the lifeworld out of which objective phenomena are abstracted, the divide between these is revealed as a somewhat arbitrary, if useful, construction. This, in turn, challenges psychology to engage with subjective phenomena in a more substantive way. In this paper based on excerpts from a protracted email conversation held on the American Psychological Association's Humanistic Psychology (Division 32) listserv, two academic psychologists with transpersonal interests explore this extraordinary claim of phenomenology, one being a proponent and the other being a skeptic of the claim. Two other academic psychologists with transpersonal interests who participated in this dialogue comment on its relevance for transpersonal psychology. The conversation focuses on the ideas of Husserl and Heidegger, and emphasizes how phenomenology might reconcile the subject-object divide through exploring intentionality, the meaning of noetic/noema, and thinking itself, while the discussion serves as an example of an adversarial collaboration in which disagreeing parties seek deeper understanding through dialogue.

Keywords: *adversarial collaboration, phenomenology, transpersonal, philosophy of science, Heidegger, Husserl, subject/object dualism, Cartesian dualism, noetic/noema, Dasein, thinking*

The listserv for the Society of Humanistic Psychology (also known as the American Psychological Association Humanistic Psychology Division 32) had a history of producing protracted, often intense, dialogues at the intersection of complex issues within psychology and related fields, such as philosophy. One of these previous conversations (Franco, Friedman, & Arons, 2008) was reformatted for academic publication because of the depth of its examination of the qualitative-quantitative methodological

divide within humanistic research. This allowed for differing views to be aired back-and-forth as a type of adversarial collaboration, providing opportunities for generating common ground among the participants and observers of these conversations. Another one of these "epic" collaborations on the same listserv occurred between Brent Dean Robbins (B. D. R.) and Harris L. Friedman (H. L. F.), with Chad V. Johnson (C. V. J.) and Zeno Franco (Z. F.) participating (along with lesser involvement by some others) during the years 2009 and 2010).

It focused on the claim that phenomenology can reconcile the dualism involving the Cartesian subject-object divide, which could be of great interest to many transpersonal scholars not familiar with the complex approach of phenomenology in this area. Over these two years, we explored the claim made by Husserl and Heidegger that phenomenology is foundational to all scientific endeavors, and that it can transcend the troubling subject-object dualism found in post-positivistic science. This position that it does this successfully is championed by B. D. R., but is challenged by H. L. F. in a series of deep interchanges. Although heavily edited with many deletions for brevity, many of B. D. R. and H. L. F.'s interchanges are captured verbatim, providing a vivid glimpse of a sincere yet agonistic dialogue (Tannen, 2002) in which two seasoned academic psychologists with transpersonal interests debated and argued their way to a deeper understanding. C. V. J. and Z. F., primarily in observer roles throughout this exchange, offer their initial and concluding thoughts to frame this discussion, and served as the primary arbiters of what portions of the interchanges would be removed or retained.

We start with introductory statements from Z. F. and C. V. J. Then we plunge into the dialogue with B. D. R. taking the opening move.

Setting the Context for the Dialogue

Of interest to me (Z. F.) was the unfolding sense of understanding of B. D. R.'s position throughout the intense questioning by H. L. F., who often pushed to have the difficult-to-comprehend portions of Heidegger's and Husserl's work expressed in common language—in effect holding B. D. R.'s “feet to the fire” to describe these concepts in terms everyone on the list would find approachable. H. L. F. also provided a deeply skeptical view of subjectivity, while B. D. R. held to “privileging the inner, experience, over the outer, objective reality.” By default, I find myself favoring H. L. F.'s bias toward the external, the publically accessible, and the “objective.” However, B. D. R.'s recitations and exemplars pointing toward the idea of *das Verliegende*, or “letting lie forward,” were compelling and, for a brief moment in re-reading the manuscript, I no longer saw B. D. R.'s arguments

as a tautology, but instead suspected that he might just be right.

In contrast, at the time of this exchange, I (C. V. J.) was fascinated with and lacked fluency in phenomenology. The in-depth study of lived experience and the search for “the things in themselves” appealed to me, as did claims that phenomenology successfully addressed the vexing problem of Cartesian dualism. I was interested in its place in humanistic, existential, and transpersonal psychologies, as well as its overall relevance for science. I had been trained in qualitative research and supported its role in the human sciences, but was mostly familiar with other methodologies like grounded theory. I wondered what kind of philosophy (and research methodology) it was, how it was practiced, and what it offered the human sciences and transpersonal psychology with its emphasis on consciousness and an interconnected unity of phenomena. Were its claims defensible? Was it worth the time and effort to learn its philosophy and methodology? What did it offer me as a transpersonal psychologist, a researcher, a human being? Why was it held in such high esteem among some in humanistic, existential, and transpersonal psychology? I found this exchange a wonderful introduction to phenomenology and philosophy of science, yet also quite erudite and worthwhile for those more experienced with these issues. Concomitantly, I studied phenomenological literature to learn more and ascertain who was more correct: B. D. R., with his admirable command of phenomenology and qualitative research, and ability to clearly communicate its concepts, which many find mystifying and enigmatic; or H. L. F., whose knowledge of the philosophy of science, training in quantitative research methods, and deeply skeptical and wily mind pushed ideas and thinkers to their limits? Each time I read this exchange, I reached a different conclusion. It is truly up to readers to decide for themselves.

Is Phenomenology Foundational?

B D R (1)

Just as a preliminary reflection on these questions, I would say that I do not presume that science should always be about prediction and

control. Prediction and control exist in the realm of explanation but explanation ultimately is grounded in description, and description is necessarily qualitative in nature. We need to define what it is we are studying—what it means—before we can begin to even imagine how to predict what will happen to it in the future. This process of categorizing things has, for example, metaphysical assumptions at its roots. This means whether we realize it or not, science is always already a metaphysics. A radical science attempts to bracket those assumptions and question radically the meaning of what it is we are studying. That is why I think phenomenology is foundational for all of science.

H L F (1)

B. D. R. stated, "phenomenology is foundational for all of science," but I think this is only partially true, supported by the notion that empiricism rests on perceived phenomena, but perhaps contradicted by the notion that phenomena present themselves independently of a perceiver and, hence, the phenomena (or perhaps the *noumena* presenting to us as phenomena) are equally foundational in and of themselves. So this framing of phenomenology as foundational seems wedded to a Cartesian divide of inner vs. outer, if I am understanding it correctly, and one privileging the inner, subjective experience, over the outer, "objective" reality. In a similar fashion, paraphrasing Feynman, "physics and phenomenology are both foundational to all science" (Sands, 2011).

I was thinking about this after reading Craig's (2007) incredibly erudite introductory paper in *The Humanistic Psychologist*. His discussions of *Dasein* point in this direction in a clearer fashion than I have previously read (or maybe I am now more able to hear the message). On the other end of the spectrum, ecological psychology (e.g., Gibson & Gibson, 1955) and the more recent work of Scott Kelso (1995) in dynamic systems theory support the growing possibility of a more widespread transcending of this annoying Cartesian divide by "objective" science. In this sense, I think to claim phenomenology as foundational to science is a limited view, privileging one perspective over another. Am I missing something, B. D. R.?

Understanding Phenomenology and *Dasein*

B D R (2)

Thanks for your questions and willingness to engage me on these issues, H. L. F. The key point you make is that by stating that phenomenology is foundational for all of science, I am therefore "wedded to a Cartesian divide of inner vs. outer" and "privileging the inner, experience, over the outer, objective reality." If I thought phenomenology was the study of subjectivity, then, yes, my statement would amount to as much as you state. However, phenomenology as I understand it is not merely the investigation of subjectivity. If phenomenology was description of subjectivity and nothing more, then I would not endorse the statement that phenomenology is the foundation of all science.

If phenomenology is not the description of subjectivity, then what is it? To put it as succinctly as possible, I will say that phenomenology is a "step back" from the epistemological assumptions that give rise to the categories of "subjectivity" and "objectivity" and, therefore, amounts to a radical return to the phenomena as they appear prior to such metaphysical claims. More radically, the phenomenologist inquires into the very conditions of possibility for such questions in the first place.

In Husserlian language, we can say that categories of subjectivity and objectivity are a function of the *natural attitude*—a certain habitual and ingrained way of distinguishing between "types" of phenomena based on a manner of thinking which has not radically questioned its meaning and ground (Husserl, 1913/2012; see also Luft, 1998). The phenomenological reduction places those assumptions in abeyance and begins by a return "to the things themselves" prior to preconceptions about what is subjective or objective (Husserl, 1913/2012; see also Schmitt, 1959).

Within transcendental phenomenology, the process moves from this level of description to what is called the *eidetic reduction* or the search for what is essential, or better put, the conditions of possibility for *being-in-the-world*. By articulating the meaning and ground of being-in-the-world, phenomenology is articulating the meaning and ground for any inquiry whatsoever, including the

conditions that open the possibility for any science, whether human or natural in terms of its content.

Ultimately, this Husserlian project is what led Heidegger (1927/2008) to the insights articulated in *Being and Time*, for example, where *Dasein* is understood by the existential analytic as having the structure of care. This care structure is the grounds for any kind of meaningful investigation or any human project for that matter. And *Dasein* is a non-dualistic concept, a radical description of world *disclosedness*, the characteristic of *Being* prior to any metaphysical distinction between subject and object, inner or outer, etc. *Dasein* is literally translated as "there-being"—the clearing in which we reside in-the-world with others and alongside things. What in *Dasein* is "inner" or "outer"? Where is the "subject" of *Dasein*? These terms are meaningless within Heidegger's *Daseinanalytic*. They become irrelevant and antiquated concepts of a Cartesian metaphysics that is surpassed by phenomenology. And ultimately phenomenology reveals that Cartesian metaphysics—actually a worldview pre-figured prior to Descartes in, for example, Galileo's physics and linear perspective art—is a kind of nihilism, most famously announced in the form of a madman by Nietzsche (1883/2016) in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Phenomenology, in turn, is an answer to that nihilism—a response to it and, arguably, the means to overcome it.

H L F (2)

I greatly appreciate your explanation and I agree that the intent of the notion of *Dasein*, as promulgated by Heidegger, was explicitly to overcome the Cartesian divide, even attempting to go beyond Husserl's call to "a radical return to the phenomena as they appear prior to . . . metaphysical claims." But I wonder how well Heidegger really does this? And, of course, we are talking about differentiating the earlier from the later writings of Heidegger, as his presentation of *Dasein* is acknowledged by scholars to have shifted considerably in his later writings—and I am only really familiar with his early *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/2008). And I can't go too deeply into this, as it has been years since I have read Heidegger and, even then, I found his writings abstruse (as most do), despite my diligence in

attempting to understand him. With that said, I don't want to be too tied to Heidegger as an authority in any discussion of how phenomenology might or might not offer a cogent way to transcend the Cartesian divide.

So where is my critique of your using the term "phenomenology as foundational," as opposed to seeing physics as also foundational? It seems to me that *Dasein* is unavoidably anthropocentric, at least as I understand Heidegger's use of it. Perhaps it endeavors to be more than subjectivistic and attempts to move into the world to see things as they are in some pre-linguistic and non-categorically mediated way, but even this is always limited to a human seeing, hence is tinged with subjectivity, even if a broadened species-shared "we" form of subjectivity—if that were to be possible.

Presumably a foundational physics, however, could be entertained across species, even into strangely alien cultures. I am thinking of the use of icons, such as depicting pi in various ways scribed onto some of our human transplanetary exploration vessels now heading into the unknown with hopes of contacting alien consciousnesses. Here is where physics, and its accompanying mathematics, might better transcend anthropocentrism and, in that sense, be just as foundational as phenomenology or, perhaps, even more so. So to privilege phenomenology as foundational seems limited and, alternatively, it seems better to consider both foundational. I note I took this on in an analogous way recently, suggesting in a paper that such dualisms (focusing on transcendence and immanence) could best be resolved dialectically by positing complementary, but seemingly incommensurate, positions to be held simultaneously, since neither or both could be seen as foundational or amenable, at least by me, to a decent synthesis (Friedman & Pappas, 2006).

I fear that the *Dasein* project attempted by Heidegger failed and, worse, I fear that the abstruse language in which it was clothed has deluded some into thinking it successful, since pontifical obfuscation can bamboozle those who read more with hope for confirmation than with the open-minded but skeptical willingness to reject critically when flaws are revealed. Part of why I hold this fear

is Heidegger's own life course and, although I hate to criticize *ad hominem*, he seemed to abandon his own project, first to Nazism and later to a return to Shopenhauer's grand theorizing (at least as I recall from reading some Heideggerian critics years ago, since I have no first-reading knowledge of this) and as a mystic delving into Eastern traditions. Ultimately, to share my deeper interest, I want to write on the difference between "knowing" and "knowledge" and our present discussion is in one of the germane areas to this topic where I feel quite confused.

B D R (3)

The correspondence view of truth is one of those implicit presuppositions—one of those metaphysical assumptions I mentioned earlier—that comes under scrutiny once we engage in the phenomenological reduction. Heidegger's (1927/2008) *Being and Time* questioned the grounds for the correspondence theory of truth, and arrived at (what Heidegger claimed is) a more primordial understanding of truth as a revealing-concealing advent of Being (*aletheia*).

For a nice outline of this problem, see Robert Cavalier's (2017) notes on "The Problem of Truth." The upshot basically is that what we understand to be "natural science," for example, Newtonian physics, is based on a particular understanding of truth that *does reveal* things, but at the same time it *conceals* other ways of understanding things in the more primordial *disclosedness* that is truth in its more basic (implicitly) lived meaning.

Phenomenology and Physics as Foundational to Knowing

H L F (3)

In dealing with these extreme counter-examples, I am merely showing ways a physics could exist and even develop without a phenomenology—in that sense it is foundational (i.e., it would not be reducible to phenomenology and would be its own foundation). I also think a phenomenology could exist without a physics (i.e., it would not be reducible to physics), such as consciousness during *locked-in syndrome* (*pseudocoma*) with a person devoid of all sensory input, as well as motor output. But can either be "comprehensive" without the other? This is

where I think the both/and makes the most sense, and seeing phenomenology as more foundational or primary than physics appears somewhat lacking.

Again, however, this leads to a dilemma that I cannot reconcile, except by willingness to posit both sides of the divide simultaneously as a both/and. As Robbins and Craig (2007) have pointed out, the concept of *Dasein* is an attempt to transcend this divide, but I have never understood how it could successfully do this (and I've tried, but couldn't grasp it), and now I suspect it is more aspirational than *fait accompli*. And there are some parallel attempts, as I've mentioned, using physical notions (e.g., complex systems theory) that go far in a similar direction from an opposite starting place but, I also suspect, they do not work very well either in giving a full accounting. I fear I can only offer more questions than answers, but maybe I misunderstand *Dasein*, since I surely do not claim to understand it well. This is where I hope you might show how phenomenology is fundamental to science in a way that physics is not, as I am more questioning that claim than making any coherent claim of my own.

B D R (4)

I would say that (most) physics is more anthropocentric than Heidegger's conception of *Dasein*. The reason for this is because physics, which is a human activity of attempting to explain the physical world in terms that will permit prediction and control of it, and essentially to map it for human purposes, is usually confused with the physical world in itself (see, e.g., Merchant, 1990). The map, in effect, is confused with the countryside (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In contrast, Heidegger's existential analytic, and the formulation of *Dasein* and the care structure, is actually the explication of the limits of human understanding—human finitude—rather than an attempt to reduce reality to human understanding.

Anthropocentrism in phenomenology could, however, be applied to Sartre, for example, who was chastised by Heidegger (1977/1993) in his "Letter on Humanism" for being too anthropocentric in his interpretation of his work. One can understand and appreciate physics (and its limits) via Heidegger and other forms of phenomenology, but one cannot

appreciate the existential analytic via physics. This is a one-way street.

Second, it is important when reading Heidegger, and most other phenomenologists, to avoid any temptation to read phenomenology as an attempt to identify a pre-linguistic or non-categorical world. Your transpersonal background might pre-dispose you to identify Heidegger with Zen Buddhism or certain mystical traditions that are all about accessing a kind of unmediated connection to the Divine or Nature that is in principle ineffable. But that is not what Heidegger is doing, as far as I understand his project. No question, Heidegger was influenced by some of these mystical traditions—and probably most especially Meister Eckart, not to mention Aquinas, who was not quite a mystic—but, nevertheless, I think it is important to read Heidegger as up to something different than the mystics.

He does not deny that language is essential to the human condition—it is an equiprimordial constituent of *Dasein's* existential structure—but, as any good phenomenologist would do, he radically interrogates the question of what language is in the first place. For example, in several of his essays he identifies a particular way of understanding language in our current age which is configured by a technological way of understanding things and is thus contingent and, by implication, does not adequately capture what is essential about the meaning of language (Caputo, 1982, 1986).

In any case, as long as one reduces phenomenology to that of a description of subjectivity, one will not understand just how radical phenomenology is, and how physics is already guided by a set of implicit assumptions that only phenomenology can identify. The point is that physics is often ahead of itself in its understanding of what the world is all about. Even though it is guided by implicit meanings, these are not explicit to the practice of physics but unconscious, in a certain manner of speaking. Phenomenology does the work of identifying what physics has to assume in order to even get started, and by doing this, phenomenology questions radically the meaning and ground of the project of physics—not to say that physics is wrong or incorrect within its own framework of understanding, but rather to make that framework

explicit as a particular framework of meaning that could have been otherwise—that is, in essence, contingent. And in that sense phenomenology is foundational for physics and any science, for that matter. It is the only method (I know of) that can retrieve what would otherwise remain the meaning and ground of science—not to mention any other human activity.

I anticipate that some would return the favor and say that physics studies the physical world that is the condition of possibility for human existence (and knowing) and, therefore, also for phenomenological thinking. In a certain manner of speaking, yes, of course it does, and it would be silly to deny it. But it is not in this sense that I say phenomenology is the foundation of physics.

When I say phenomenology is foundational for all of science, including physics, I mean that phenomenology is foundational to the human activity of physics, not the physical world itself. But there are a wide variety of ways to disclose the meaning of the physical world, and physics is only one—which does not diminish the science of physics in the least bit, but simply puts it in its place.

H L F (4)

I am glad you acknowledge that both share anthropocentrism, but you claim physics to be more so. I still am unclear why one would be more so than the other.

Most good physicists would not confound the map with the territory, so this seems a specious argument against physics. And doesn't phenomenology try to explain in human terms also, as well as predict to some degree, just as does physics? And neither is invested necessarily in control, such as illustrated by astrophysics, where there is no intention to control the stars—at least any time soon.

Interesting, human finitude understood through *Dasein* as a formulation of the limit of human understanding vs. the finitude of physical existence as the ground of any human understanding—now why is one primary over the other? And is physics necessarily concerned with human knowing as much as generating knowledge? I think of Feynman's oft quoted remarks, "I think I can safely say that no

one understands quantum mechanics" (as cited in Carroll, 2011, para. 3).

So, if physics is concerned with knowledge, not knowing per se, doesn't that make it primary to phenomenology regarding knowledge, but perhaps phenomenology is prior to physics for knowing. And, if so, what is foundational to science becomes equally split between knowing and knowledge, both equally foundational if both are equally germane to science. And, if phenomenology is more primary to knowing and knowing is privileged over knowledge as germane to science, it seems that puts phenomenology back into being more subjectivistic, defeating the attempt of *Dasein* to integrate subject/object and throwing it back into privileging subjectivity.

To quote you, B. D. R.: "One can understand and appreciate physics (and its limits) via Heidegger and other forms of phenomenology, but one cannot appreciate the existential analytic via physics. This is a one-way street." This is the crux of the argument—is one more irreducible to the other? And I would argue still, that one perhaps can only fully understand the existential analytic by knowledge of physical existence, which is the ground for all existential understanding. So both still seem equally foundational to me.

B. D. R., you said: "In any case, as long as one reduces phenomenology to that of a description of subjectivity." I am willing to entertain this idea as the intent of the concept of *Dasein*, though I doubt it ever achieves its attempt to fully escape subjectivity, which is why I see it as more aspiration than actual. Are you familiar with the Gibsons' (1955, 1979) work on ecological psychology that "throws" (to use Heidegger's term) consciousness (i.e., perception) into the world without any dualisms or homunculi? And Kelso's (1995) and others' dynamic systems theory (e.g., see Thelen, 1995), which makes minimal assumptions and relies on self-organizing, rather than a-priori imposed assumptions (or at least minimizes such assumptions)?

I think you underestimate the astuteness of many physicists, perhaps confusing them with engineers? And physicists, who vary assumptions to explore their differential implications, seem overall freer from such constraints than phenomenologists,

who acknowledge the limitations of any attempts to bracket. So, can a physics get started as a human enterprise and, through that process, proceed in ways that rapidly veer from human limitations (e.g., through radically extending human perceptual limitations and using mathematics and other extrapolations to discover that which the more purposefully naïve phenomenological stance could never accomplish) and perhaps accomplish the ultimate bracketing (e.g., having an artificial intelligence [AI] process devoid of human bias, at least once launched from a human initiative)? Yes, just what I was thinking in considering both as equally foundation and both with similar, complementary, limits.

So here is the crux. Does physics only reveal a socially-constructed map of the territory or is there some revealing of the territory provided by physics that is not just anthropocentric and that places physics not just as one revelation among many (the postmodern relativistic leveling of all truth claims, equating the worth of the view of physics with that of even the biblical view), but something more substantial, touching toward the real or perhaps, phenomenologically speaking, the essence? In other words, is physics discovering something objectively true about external reality or merely relatively true limited by human perception and interpretation thus constructing a distorted, anthropocentric reality? I think physics is discovering something externally valid, but what are your thoughts?

B D R (5)

I would want to be careful about taking too seriously any claims that physics is "socially-constructed," because I think this term comes with a lot of epistemological and ontological baggage that I would not want to claim for phenomenology. I'd rather say that physics is indeed disclosing a truth about the world. But it is not the only way of disclosing truth about the physical world. By clarifying the way of revealing truth (in the Greek sense of *aletheia*) as it occurs in physics, and contrasting and comparing it with other types of disclosing, this helps us recognize the limits of physics without having to throw out the field as we know it. Now, how would we go about interrogating the meaning of "truth" in ways that get at something essential that can accompany

not only the kind of disclosure of truth that happens in physics but also, say, engineering as you mentioned, or art, poetry, theology, or ethics? That's a job for phenomenology—not phenomenological psychology, but phenomenological philosophy. This is what is meant by the correspondence theory of truth—a way of understanding truth that is implicit in modern science, but also a very short-sighted way of understanding truth. In other words, the essence of truth has to be at least assumed before we can even begin to ask whether physics gets at an essential truth about the physical world. The latter question is necessarily preliminary to the former.

Secondly, I disagree that phenomenology results in a leveling-down of truth claims. Actually, I would say that the modern tendency to level-down truth-claims—and the correlative modern relativism—is actually a by-product of the same worldview that gives rise to modern science. Modernism and post-modernism are like Siamese twins, tied at the hip. In both cases, the question of what truth claim is more valuable than another truth claim hinges on the ontology of values, which in the modern worldview is subordinated to fact. The fact-value dichotomy is a result of the same subject-object dichotomy that phenomenology seeks to radically question and overcome. When facts are split-off from values, then it literally becomes impossible to determine which facts are more valuable than others. Values actually just creep in implicitly without being acknowledged and so become a kind of unconscious dynamic operating below the surface of any science, guiding its activity, but all the while denied. It's easy to see this in psychology—the examples of the DSM and positive psychology are obvious ones—but more difficult to see in physics. But look at the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962), for example, and we can see a similar dynamics going on in the history of physics. The drama behind what facts get counted and which ones get discounted is not unlike a soap opera, guided by sets of competing values about what gets to count as a fact and what does not, about what methods get to count as legitimate methods, and so on.

I think phenomenology provides the means of overcoming the fact-value dichotomy and the

subject-object dualism that gives rise to it; therefore, it provides a foundation in which different ways of disclosing truth can be identified: variously, as more important or less important, more legitimate and/or less legitimate than others, but in a way that is systematic and in the final analysis, demonstrable. That is at least my hope because I do not believe that phenomenology has accomplished this task yet, though I believe in principle that phenomenology is capable of doing this. I do not believe physics is capable of doing it. However, I think the study of physics and the examination of how the science of physics is conducted—that is, how truth is (implicitly) understood in physics as well as in other fields—is very important for that project.

What is Thinking?

Furthermore, one of Heidegger's (1954/1968) most important works—and the most important work, according to Heidegger himself—is translated as "What is Called Thinking?" In that work, Heidegger suggests that what *calls-to-be-thought* is what we call thinking. Thinking itself is calling to be thought about more deeply, more radically. The intentional ambiguity in Heidegger's title, in the German, lends itself to two interpretations. On the one hand, "what is called thinking" can be interpreted to mean asking about what thinking is. On the other hand, Heidegger is pointing toward a different type of thinking that has been neglected, a type of meditative thought that patiently waits for what calls to be thought about. Whereas, rationality in Enlightenment-era, modern thought has become comparatively violent, imposing a kind of will-to-power on the world, in a technological way. For example, Hubert Dreyfus (1992), through the influence of Heidegger, was able to show how the project of AI would fail because it had not considered the way human thought is integrally related to feeling, perception, and embodiment.

Imaginative variation was not Heidegger's notion, but Husserl's (see Spiegelberg, 1982; see also Giorgi, 2012). And I would not put imaginative variation in a box with "thinking," because many cognitive operations that go by the name "thinking" are not anything like what Husserl (1913/2012) meant by imaginative variation. Imaginative variation is

much more specifically a process of varying the constituents of a phenomenon and systematically eliminating those variations which are not essential to the phenomenon until, in principle, one is left only with what cannot be varied without the phenomenon ceasing to be what it is in its essence (Giorgi, 2012).

Now, there is a certain sense that one must already understand what the essence of a phenomenon is if one is to "know" one has arrived at the essence, once the analysis is complete. That's the hermeneutic circle at play in the work—a catching sight of how one always already understands the phenomenon, but implicitly rather than explicitly (Packer & Addison, 1989). Giorgi's (2009) approach, in my opinion, did not acknowledge the hermeneutic, interpretative dimensions of any description but makes a distinction between interpretation and description that is a false dichotomy (see Hein & Austin, 2001). I see some of your remarks as speaking to a similar concern although you seem to often speak of psychic facts as if they were of the same nature as factual things in the world, and that is to confuse the noetic with the *noematic* structures of consciousness, in my view.

H L F (5)

First, I am glad you and I agree that the "distinction between interpretation and description . . . is a false dichotomy." (B. D. R., 5). I understand this is one of the differences between Heidegger and Husserl's thought, so Giorgi appears aligned with Husserl on this while we appear more to be Heideggerian, though I approach my position from a totally different tradition than phenomenology.

Second, you stated that "Heidegger suggests that what calls to be thought is what we call thinking. Thinking itself is calling to be thought about more deeply, more radically." I must admit I find this type of phraseology to be tortuous. In some ways, the phrasing appeals to me, stirring some interesting reflections, but overall it makes me want to flee from such twists and turns. In what sense does thinking, a process of mentation, call "to be thought about more deeply, more radically?" Is that not attributing an anthropomorphic act, calling, to a limited cognitive process, thinking? And is it not just simpler

to say, "one can think more deeply about thinking, since that process involves many complexities and even mysteries?" And why is Husserl's imaginative variation not a type of thinking? I can acknowledge it is not equal to all the myriad possibilities of how thought can operate, as you say, "because many cognitive operations that go by the name 'thinking' are not anything like what Husserl meant by imaginative variation."

But isn't "a process of varying the constituents of a phenomenon, and systematically eliminating those variations that are not essential to the phenomenon until, in principle, one is left only with what cannot be varied without the phenomenon ceasing to be what it is in its essence" a systematic thought process, albeit just one among many possible thought processes (which is my protest, since I prefer my own idiosyncratic thought processes to be more unconstrained as I cogitate on stuff), as well as I think doomed to failure since I do not believe in Husserl's notion of essences, at least as I understand his position on that: although Husserl appeared to deny being an idealist, I believe his notion of essences places him in this camp as he privileges pure consciousness and deals with phenomena as presented to consciousness rather than as ontologically real. Thus, I interpret his attempt to grasp essences as a movement away from the phenomena as ontologically real and toward idealism privileging subjectivity. Heidegger, in this regard, seems to have made some advances over Husserl, though I still have difficulty with many of his positions.

In addition, you claim that I "seem to often speak of psychic facts as if they were of the same nature as factual things in the world, and that is to confuse the noetic with the noematic structures of consciousness." I hope you can tell me where I made this supposed error and we can discuss it. We learn from our errors and I hope you can provide a learning opportunity for me, although there is a possibility that the learning could be reversed and perhaps it is your error? Let's see and not as a win-lose contest, but as a mutual exploration for our common betterment.

Although I might preface this request to explore a supposed confusion with the observation

that I find the distinction between *noesis* and *noema* abstruse, so these probably need to be explicated from your point of view before we can talk about whether or not I am confused. If you interpret these simply as subject/experience/meaning and object/experienced/meant respectively, as some do, I would simply question why use such uncommon language, if not to obfuscate, and suggest we talk in more common terms. But, if you use these terms in a more complex and specified way, perhaps invoking these terms may be useful and I can learn to converse in this language, unless they violate my sense of proper order (if so, maybe we could then create some new language that would be more mutually satisfying). From Husserl's perspective, and grant that I am working from memory dating back over 4 decades since I last read Husserl, *noema* are not ontologically real, but more akin to Platonic forms and therefore not "factual."

One reason I am engaging in this discussion is I want to understand the possible potential of phenomenological thought/language to bridge various dualities for which I have no language to express now. One possible solution to my quest might be in Husserl's correlation of noetic/noematic, as well as in a deeper understanding of *Dasein* as a holistic expression of unity. However, where I am really befuddled on this topic is putting phenomenology into action, as in research. I see phenomenological studies as not solving the problems of dualisms with which I struggle, but only working the more subjective side of dualities. In that regard, I appreciate their potential to dialectically complement more quantitative studies working the more objective side—and, using both can give a more comprehensive understanding. I think your mixed methods paper in *The Humanistic Psychologist* did this marvelously (Robbins & Vandree, 2009). But how this approach could possibly bridge these dualities alone, such as through correlating noetic/noematic and approaching an understanding of *Dasein*, in practice eludes me. Is that possible and, if so, how?

B D R (6)

Yes, traditionally, Husserl and Heidegger have been commented upon as differing in their projects.

Can Subject-Object Dualism Be Reconciled?

Husserl, founder of transcendental phenomenology, sought to arrive at a de-contextualized, neo-Platonic essence. Heidegger, founder of hermeneutic phenomenology, aimed to explicate what is always already understood as being lived through as being-in-the-world. At the same time, Husserl's thinking was dynamic and changed considerably over the course of his life and I think as his work evolved over time it was moving in the same direction as Heidegger's insights (see, e.g., Crowell, 2001; Barua, 2007; Overgaard, 2004).

As for Heidegger's turn of phrase, "What is Called Thinking? (*Was heisst denken?*)" it is a pun, a play on words, and does not translate into English well; hence, the reason it seems "tortured" in English. Maybe it seems tortured in German too, I don't know. But the pun is what matters here. The question can be interpreted as either "What is called thinking?" or "What calls for thinking?" If we phrased it differently, it would lose the word-play Heidegger is engaged in here. The key to the text, and the key to understand what Heidegger means by what he sometimes calls "meditative thinking" (as opposed to "calculative thinking") is to understand the importance of the play between the two questions implied in the ambiguous title.

The key passage in this text is the following: "Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking" (Heidegger, 1954/1968, p. 6). As Stark (1998) has suggested, this passage can be understood best by analyzing the three major components of the sentence: "most thought provoking," "in our thought provoking time," and "we are still not thinking." What does Heidegger mean by saying "most thought provoking" in the above passage? By asking what is *most* thought provoking, surely, Heidegger is implying that to begin thinking at all, one must always already be engaged with something that provokes thought. To think, that is, is already to think *about* that which *most* calls for thinking. Indeed, Heidegger is saying as well that one is *not* thinking if one has not *already* considered thinking of that which is *worthy* of thought. With that said, we can clarify the ambiguity of Heidegger's title. Heidegger means to playfully demonstrate that even to begin addressing the question of *what thinking is called*, one must

also answer at the same time the question of *what calls for thinking* (see Robbins, 2014).

Heidegger's point, as subtle or tortured as it may be, is quite revolutionary in that it contradicts most contemporary theories of rationality. Such theories of rationality typically consider thinking to be a matter of following the correct method. In other words, thinking becomes reduced to a "rationality" that is a means to an end: thinking, that is, is reduced to instrumental or calculative reason. Yet such a calculative reason is oblivious to the all-important question (for Heidegger) that asks *what one's thinking should be about*. The about-ness of calculative rationality is taken for granted (note: Look at how similar this insight is to Husserl's notion of intentionality).

The calculative rationalizing philosopher is *thoughtless* with regard to what is most worthy of thought. To put it in the terms of Max Weber (1922/1978), we can translate Heidegger to be saying that instrumental rationality as a means to an end always already implies a substantive rational end to the instrumental method. But instrumental rationality remains oblivious of and thoughtless in regard to what it is calculating about. In essence, such a calculative rationality would inevitably degenerate into a vicious circle of calculations merely for the sake of calculations. Indeed, it is just such a calculative circularity that is the descriptive of what Heidegger calls the *Gestell*, the technological world that orders merely for the sake of further ordering and in which things and persons are disclosed merely as resources standing by awaiting further ordering (Heidegger, 1971b). Sounds like most 20th century psychology, doesn't it? But Heidegger's text reveals that there are other ways to understand what it means to think—and he aims to recover a Greek sense of thinking—and an attending to Being—that he believes has been lost to us, at our own detriment. He will make a distinction, for example, between thinking as speaking and thinking as gathering (see Robbins, 2014)—but that would take some time to lay out, so I will leave it for now.

Whether imaginative variation is a type of "thinking" depends on what one means by the term "thinking." If one is prone to make a distinction between thinking and perceiving, for example, then

I would say it is more than a type of thinking — it is a type of imaginative perception. When one is engaged in imaginative variation, the variations are experientially varied. One is varying the phenomenon's possibilities with the aim to identify which of those possibilities are essential to the phenomenon's identity.

Is this an impossible task once one is no longer engaged in transcendental phenomenology? It can still be done, and the task is still a worthy one, in my opinion, because the essence is not a Platonic essence, but a situated essence. The "essence" in this sense is an explicit articulation of an implicitly understood phenomenon as it is lived out pre-thematically within a life-world context. The essence is situated, contextual, and not universal or eternal (yet, at the same time, not arbitrary). So, one has to keep in mind that the term "essence," if retained within a hermeneutic process, has to take on a very different meaning. And if that is confusing, perhaps a better word is in order, and I have not come up with one that really works. The term "archetype" has the same import as "essence," and so does not solve the problem. I somewhat like Goethe's term "Ur-phenomenon" (see Robbins, 2006).

With regard to the noesis/noema: this distinction between noesis and noema does not map onto the subject-object duality as we use "subjective" and "objective" conventionally. It is, on the contrary, an attempt like Heidegger's being-in-the-world to transcend that dualism. This is difficult to define in the abstract, because it is best understood in the practice of phenomenology. Nothing in the English language does it justice. A key to understanding the noesis/noema distinction is to understand Husserl's notion of *intentionality* (Husserl, 1913/2012; see also Drummond, 2012; Duranti, 1999; Føllesdal, 1969; Sartre, 1939/2014; Smith & McIntyre, 1982; Zahavi, 2004). Intentionality is the term Husserl uses to designate an essential structure of consciousness—that it is always *about* something. Consciousness is never just consciousness and nothing else. It is always consciousness *of* something. This is very similar to Heidegger's reflections on thinking, no? Thinking is always already about something. Thinking doesn't become radical until it questions the very grounds for thinking about anything. That's

Heidegger's point, and his point is roughly the same sentiment as Husserl's, as I understand it.

Thus, given that intentionality is the structure of consciousness, then we can say that anything that is given to consciousness is going to involve (a) that which is being disclosed to consciousness (e.g. the perceptual field), and also (b) the activity of consciousness by which the former is disclosed. That which is being disclosed to consciousness, (a), is the noema, and the acts of consciousness by which the former is disclosed, (b), is the noesis. The noesis is only disclosed indirectly via a special attitude toward the noema (the phenomenological reduction, or in other words, the bracketing of the natural attitude).

Let's take embarrassment as a case in point (Robbins & Vandree, 2009). When I am embarrassed, the noema is the appearance of one's self through the eyes of the other as exposed or revealed in a way that is unwanted. This is the "life-world" of embarrassment. It is the noema of embarrassment: that which is disclosed to consciousness when one is embarrassed. By describing this life-world of embarrassment, we can then indirectly identify the conditions necessary for consciousness to be able to disclose this kind of life-world. For example, we can identify through the life-world of embarrassment how consciousness includes the capacity to constitute itself through the imaginative projection into another person's point-of-view. In other words, consciousness has the noetic capacity for empathy and this empathic ability is a necessary condition for embarrassment. This can be corroborated by developmental research that shows that empathy and embarrassment appear at about the same age developmentally in children (Bischof-Kohler, 1991; Eisenberg, 2000; Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger, & Weiss, 1989).

It is easy to confuse noesis and noema. Where I see confusion in this conversation is, for example, when there is discussion of language (or other contextual factors) acting as a "mediator" between the scientist/investigator and the structure of consciousness. In phenomenology, there is no "mediator" between the noesis and the noema, because they are two sides of the same coin—this is not a causal relationship. It is not that we

have consciousness or subjectivity and then objectivity, and the things are mediating the relationship between the two. If anything, both noesis and noema would be situated on the side of "subjectivity." But of course saying this would put us into the problem of solipsism, because clearly noema is not merely subjective, it is also revealing of things that transcend consciousness. To perform phenomenology adequately, therefore, one must begin by suspending any judgment about what is or is not subjective or objective and instead attend to how the noema can inform us about the noetic acts of consciousness. What transcends consciousness is not at issue as much as the structure of consciousness itself in Husserlian phenomenology. The problem of language is tricky, but for now, suffice it to say that within the context of the phenomenological reduction, language is part of the noetic acts of consciousness by which the noema is able to appear as it does, and so is not a mediator as much as a medium by which consciousness does what it does in the process of disclosing a world.

H L F (6)

Reading these guys puts Occam's razor to shame, as one needs a heavy samurai sword, not a mere razor, to cut through these Gordian knots. It seems, at least on the surface, that there are some tautologies in this strand of reasoning. If the answer is implied in the question, as Socrates demonstrated in Plato's *Meno* (but through leading questions), then the hare can indeed never catch the tortoise, per *Meno's* paradox. Yet we know this paradox is invalid. Cannot thinking lead to new knowledge and be serendipitous, as opposed to being pre-ordained toward an object without exception—as in non-directed meditation or contemplation?

You said, for example, "But instrumental rationality remains oblivious of and thoughtless in regard to what it is calculating about. . . . Sounds like most 20th century psychology, doesn't it?" (B. D. R., 6). Not really. I can see value in distinguishing calculative rationality, as in what a computer can perform, from other sorts of thinking. But Heidegger's notion of thinking seems quite different from modern cognitive approaches, which offer great insight not yet known in Heidegger's day. You

said, "But Heidegger's text reveals that there are other ways to understand what it means to think . . . He will make a distinction, for example, between thinking as speaking and thinking as gathering" (B. D. R., 6). You also said: "imaginative variation . . . is varying the phenomenon's possibilities with the aim to identify which of those possibilities are essential to the phenomenon's identity" (B. D. R., 6). Ah, now here is something I can bite into. Simply put, I consider perception to be part of thinking, as in selective perception requiring some implicit, if not conscious, thought. But I do not want to go too far into this now.

You said, "Is this an impossible task once one is no longer engaged in transcendental phenomenology? . . . I sort of like Goethe's term, 'Ur-phenomenon'" (B. D. R., 6). Now if we are going to define essence in a non-platonic way, I will have to think about what it might mean. And Goethe's term helps me not at all. Could we discuss in simpler ways, such as you telling me what you think essence means in this Heideggerian fashion.

You said, the "distinction between noesis and noema does not map onto the subject-object duality as we use "subjective" and "objective" conventionally" (B. D. R., 6). I do note that many define noesis/noema as reflecting the perceiving subject and the perceived object, so you are obviously using it in a special phenomenological way. You said, "It is, on the contrary, an attempt, like Heidegger's being-in-the-world, to transcend that dualism" (B. D. R., 6). Now we are getting closer to where I want to explore. You said, "This is difficult to define in the abstract, because it is best understood in the practice of phenomenology. Nothing in the English language does it justice" (B. D. R., 6). Yikes! We can't talk about this in English? What about the notion that all natural languages are fluid enough to express any thought that can be expressed in any natural language. And German, through different from English, isn't that different. It's not like translating a word from Hopi to English, after all. I must concede, this is why I attempted to read these guys in German years ago, since I hit this semantic wall. Reading the German did not help. Maybe I should rely on secondary sources, but I rarely trust them. You said, "A key to understanding the noesis/noema distinction

is to understand Husserl's notion of *intentionality*. . . . It is always consciousness of something" (B. D. R., 6). I can go with this, though I am not sure there is no pure consciousness (as in lucid deep dreamless sleep or certain meditative states). You said, "Thinking is always already about something. Thinking doesn't become radical until it questions the very grounds for thinking about anything" (B. D. R., 6). I do not see that as radical, just another topic for thought. You said, "That which is being disclosed to consciousness, (a), is the noema, and the acts of consciousness by which the former is disclosed, (b), is the noesis" (B. D. R., 6). How is this not simply the object of experience and the subjectivity as a process of the experiencer, respectively?

You said, "The noesis is only disclosed indirectly via . . . the bracketing of the natural attitude" (B. D. R., 6). Becoming aware of how we process our experience seems knowable, but only to some degree in my opinion—as much occurs in deep biological ways that do not seem amenable to any conscious knowing. Also, this seems different from how I've understood the phenomenological reduction, which is as a reduction of the object to its essence (whatever that is?). And not involving the subjective process, but I have heard of a distinction between transcendent and non-transcendent phenomenology, so you must be talking here about only one version of this. In addition, we are learning so much now on how thinking occurs through scientific advances, such as in neuroscience, that it seems any bracketing to get to this is possibly futile (e.g., some unconscious processes occur much quicker than consciousness can follow).

You said, "When I am embarrassed, the noema is the appearance of one's self through the eyes of the other as exposed in a way that is unwanted. This is the "life-world" of embarrassment" (B. D. R., 6). It makes sense to talk about a person's life-world, but does an experience, like embarrassment, have a life-world? That makes me uncomfortable. You said, "It is the noema of embarrassment This can be corroborated by developmental research which shows that empathy and embarrassment appear at about the same age developmentally in children" (B. D. R., 6). Now this is another concept to which I can relate, as so-called objective research on the

development of empathy can be used to show that it occurs at the same time as embarrassment begins to be experienced—yes, I know some of these studies. So imaginative projection might lead to entertaining notions shown by development research. Just some good old-fashioned theorizing, as is abundant in the embarrassment vs. shame literature—much of it psychoanalytic, which arrived at these notions in a simpler way. What does phenomenology offer that these do not? You said, "It is easy to confuse noesis and noema. . . . there is no 'mediator' between the noesis and the noema, because they are two sides of the same coin—this is not a causal relationship" (B. D. R., 6). My claim for mediation here is not to claim causation, but only reciprocal relatedness—and this does not contradict that these are inextricably inter-related, only they use more dualistic language. But noesis/noema together are also dualistic, so what advantage is gained by their use? Actually, I see one advantage, but it is not one I like, namely that by denying the noema any ontological reality, there can be a consistent idealism without having to proffer inner/outer dualities, as it all can be held as inner or subjective. As much as I dislike mind-body dualisms, I dislike all idealisms and all materialisms even more. Am I missing something big here?

Last here, is this a confusion on my part or simply our attempt to communicate using different concepts/languages and underlying assumptions? I reckon that neither of us are to the point of being confused more than the other, but both are likely in a state of partial knowing of the other's thoughts. And I am discovering my own thoughts better as we explore. You said, "It is not that we have consciousness or subjectivity and then objectivity . . . both noesis and noema would be situated on the side of 'subjectivity'" (B. D. R., 6). Yes—and this may be an advantage in terms of consistency, but not in terms of veridicality with an outside world seen as also real and requiring engagement. You said, "But of course saying this would put us into the problem of solipsism, because clearly noema is not merely subjective, it is also revealing of things that transcend consciousness" (B. D. R., 6). Ah, here is a rub! How is it revealing of the world if it is, after all, just appearance within consciousness and contact is never "substantial"? You said, "To

perform phenomenology adequately, therefore, one must . . . attend to how the noema can inform us about the noetic acts of consciousness" (B. D. R., 6). But what does the noema have to say about the external world, not just noetic acts? You said, "What transcends consciousness is not at issue as much as the structure of consciousness itself, in Husserlian phenomenology." Ah, for Husserl, the world is less important. But then why did Giorgi (2009) go to pains to argue that there are essences in learning to ride a bicycle?

You said, "The problem of language is tricky . . . a medium by which consciousness does what it does in the process of disclosing a world" (B. D. R., 6). I'll have to chew on this distinction between language as mediator v. medium. But language, it seems, would only be a medium in trying to know another who also uses language—for knowing a non-linguistic being, it seems it would be a cognitive tool or mediator. And, just as I am hampered in understanding Heidegger by not being fluent in German and missing his jokes, my language is quite a problem in terms of getting to any noetic acts of consciousness if it does not include these concepts. Perhaps I can only do phenomenology if I already know how to do phenomenology? Meanwhile, you never addressed my practical question directly: "How this approach could possibly bridge these dualities . . . through correlating noetic/noematic and approaching an understanding of *Dasein* . . . Is that possible and, if so, how?" (H. L. F., 5). Could you take this on?

The Importance of Being to Thought

B D R (7)

It requires a certain degree of masochism to read Husserl and Heidegger. But also, yes, their work is tricky because there is a certain degree of circularity. But it is not a vicious circle—rather a hermeneutic one. I think of phenomenology as more like a Chinese finger trap. When one relaxes into the correct attitude, the cuff slips off with ease. Or it's like a fly in a bottle. The bottle keeps trying to go sideways and no matter which way he turns, he bounces off the glass. But all he has to do is go straight up and out the bottle he goes (thanks, Wittgenstein).

In one sense, all of Western epistemology has been, in one form or another, a (failed) attempt to resolve Zeno's (not our co-author Z. F.) paradox. That's the fly bottle referred to above. Heidegger, I think, is pointing up and saying, "Hey, look up there at that hole." It sounds like tautology, but it's a way out of the traditional tautologies through entering the circularity in the right way, hermeneutically via phenomenology.

Heidegger is not saying we are "pre-ordained toward an object without exception" and in fact is saying quite the contrary. He's pointing out that our understanding of things is contingent and has changed with history and not in a good way. He thinks there is a special danger in our technological age—a danger of losing our ability to truly think what is most worthy of thought—the question of Being. For this reason, Heidegger (1954/1968) spends the last several lectures of his *Was Heisst Denken?* addressing a single fragment of text written by the pre-Socratic Greek thinker Parmenides. The fragment reads, "One should both say and think that Being is" (p. 168). Clearly, the fragment indicates an intimate connection between thinking and Being, a notion that carries over (not without some loss of clarity) into the thought of Plato and Aristotle.

In that same essay, Heidegger (1954/1968) refers to Socrates as "the purest thinker of the West" (p. 17) for his sense that thinking (if it is to be genuine thinking) is already directed towards order, goodness, beauty, truth and Being. In like manner, with Aristotle we find a thinking that understands the world as teleologically striving towards the ideal. Human beings as thinkers strive toward the excellence of the highest being by thinking about thinking. The Greeks thought that for human beings, thinking is most thought-worthy. But, in our age, what is most thought-provoking, says Heidegger, is that we are *not* thinking.

So, when Heidegger (1954/1968) wrote "in our thought-provoking time" (p. 6), he was referring not just to the current events of the day, but to our age as the epoch of the *Gestell*. In our time, we are still not thinking and, in this context, Heidegger refers to Nietzsche's (1883/2016) diagnosis of our age as a time of nihilism: "The wasteland grows." If it is Being that most calls for thought, what most calls

to be thought about in our age is the forgetting or withdrawal of Being and it is due to the withdrawal of Being that we are still not thinking. In contrast to Hegel's notion of history, Heidegger's is a history wherein we find ourselves increasingly fallen from and more distant from Being. Being withdraws in our technological age as the experience of thinking is reduced to calculative rationality. "Thinking" has become the experience of using rationality as a device to operate on a world of things already reified into a network of pre-defined ends—and so, ironically, is tautologous because it always finds what it has already calculated it will find in advance since that is what thinking has been reduced to. In our age, says Heidegger, *ratio* has trumped *legein*. The thoughtlessness of calculative rationality threatens to obliterate the possibility for *being-thoughtful*.

When Heidegger (1954/1968) wrote that "we are still not thinking" (p. 6) he meant that humans are not thinking upon that which is most thought-worthy, namely Being. He argued as well that humans shall continue to miss what is thought-worthy if they continue to use thinking as a technological device rather than thinking of thinking as thoughtful *dwelling*. Unless our thinking is rooted in the being-thoughtful of dwelling, then our thinking remains homeless. What it means to dwell as being-thoughtful Heidegger attempted to illuminate by tracing what was lost in translation when the Greek word for thinking, *legein*, was translated into the Latin, *ratio*. He found that two significations for *legein* are not found in *ratio*: a) thinking as speaking and b) thinking as gathering.

Thinking as speaking is a speaking and thinking which is attuned to how Being calls for thinking in language. The address or language of Being is historical, not historiological, in that it arises out of the sending of Being. So when *legein* is translated into *ratio* and when *ratio*, for instance, is taken up as *Vernunft* and *Grund* (Reason and Being?) in history, no human being made such decisions per se, but rather "language itself is speaking to us," (Caputo, 1986, p. 73). Philosophy and hence thinking have historically been translated into the language of "reason" which covers over the more fundamental sense of what serves as its primal source. In the Latin *ratio*, there is no obvious connection between

thinking and Being. Yet, when *ratio* is traced back to *legein*, from which *Logos* is derived, Heidegger (1957/1974) found that it means “to collect together,” “to lay one thing beside another,” and “to arrange one thing after another” (p. 178). Thus, one finds that second meaning of *legein* as a gathering.

Heidegger (1957/1974) wrote, “*Legein* and *logos* are the letting lie forward of a thing which comes to presence in its presence,” (p. 179). What for the Greek is *that-which-comes-to-presence-in-its-presence*? It is the being in its Being; thus, “*logos* means Being” (p. 179). Thinking as gathering, then, is the gathering of Being. Heidegger (1959/1971a) wrote, “Thinking cuts furrows into the soil of Being” (p. 70). What calls for thinking then tells us what is called thinking: thinking is called a gathering for it gathers what is called to be gathered. What calls to be gathered? Being-thoughtful!

Yes, of course, all of this sounds as though it is circular logic going nowhere, but with proper reflection one can see how Heidegger meditatively deepened what it means to think and in that sense performed the process of thinking. Heidegger showed how to think even as he showed how thinking is a showing, a presence or gathering of what calls to be thought. Heidegger demonstrated how being-thoughtful is not a matter of performing a method of mental activity that is applied to get from point A to point B. On the contrary, he showed how being-thoughtful is an encounter with Being.

As mentioned above, *legein* and *logos* are the “letting lie forward of the thing which comes to presence in the presence” (Heidegger, 1957/1974, p. 17). Regarding that which lies forward (*das Verliegende*), it is the *upon-which* that forms the basis for “properties” and the *about-which* that one may speak. In this sense, *logos* also means “ground.” Hence, when one says *logos* in the Greek sense, one speaks in the same breath of Being and ground. Thus, Heraclitus said, “If you have heard not me, but the *logos*, then it is wise to say accordingly: all is one” (as cited in Caputo, 1986, p. 79). But this early Greek understanding of the belonging together of Being and ground becomes, in time, corrupted. Historically, the belonging together of Being and ground was forgotten. As Caputo (1986) explained:

Instead of being thought together with Being, ground becomes a determination of the being, and the search is undertaken to find the ground of one being in another. Thus, there is born the whole enterprise of “onto-theological,” of “metaphysics,” of philosophy itself as a rational inquiry into the cause of things. Things now must be founded upon the solid and firm foundation of a causal explanation. The self-evidence validity of this rational search for causes rests upon the now no longer heard ringing together of the unity of Being and ground in the Greek word *logos*. (p. 79; see also Goff, 1972)

In short, philosophy “as a thing of reason” is the consequence of the fall from the original early Greek sense that “the thing lies forth of itself, that it rises up and stands before us on its own grounds” (Caputo, 1986, p. 79). Take Nietzsche, for example, whose *will-to-power* has its roots in this oblivion, by which the history of Western thought becomes an attempt to submit things to human reason for certifying its existence.

In contrast to the calculative reason that derives from the severance of Being from its grounds in Western thought, meditative thinking is a thinking that leaves metaphysics alone. It is a thinking that, instead, is called to think upon that which lies forth of itself without why—that is, without grounds. As Heidegger (1957/1974) wrote: “Insofar as Being it, it itself has no ground. Yet this is not so because it is self-grounded, but rather because every form of grounding, even and precisely that [which occurs] through itself, remains inappropriate to Being as ground” (p. 185).

Being, that is, cannot be explained upon grounds outside of itself. On the contrary to thinking, one must let Being be: let it lie forth (*legein*) and emerge of itself (*physis*).

You said, “I’m not sure I buy this.” I am not sure what you are not buying. You say this in the context of the discussion of calculative reason’s inability to think its own ground in Being. In response to the claim that the calculative rationalizing philosopher is thoughtless about what is most worthy of thought: Well, they are not thoughtful but in a specific sense—not in the sense of *thinking* that

Heidegger re-claimed from the Greeks. Philosophy is thoughtless in the sense that it is without *legein*. Here is a very revealing passage from Heidegger's (1977/1993) "The Origin of the Work of Art":

Occasionally, we still have the feeling that violence has long been done to the thingly [sic] element of things and that thought has played a part in this violence, for which reason people disavow thought instead of taking pains to make it more thoughtful. But in defining the essence of the thing, what is the use of a feeling, however certain, if thought alone has the right to speak here? Perhaps, however, what we call feeling or mood, here and in similar instances, is more reasonable—that is, more intelligently perceptible—because more open to Being than all that reason which, having meanwhile become ratio, was misinterpreted as being rational. The hankering after the irrational, as abortive offspring of the unthought rational, therewith performed a curious service. To be sure, the current thing-concept always fits each thing. Nevertheless, it does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it. (pp. 150-151)

H. L. F., you said: "Now if we are going to define essence in a non-platonic way, I will have to think about what it might mean. . . . in this Heideggerian fashion" (H. L. F., 6). In response to your questions about a non-Platonic essence, here Heidegger meant the condition of possibility for a phenomenon's *givenness*, or being. For example, the essence of truth is the revealing-concealing advent of Being. *Dasein's* essence is Being-in-the-world, etc. Sure we can talk about this in English. The point is that one learns phenomenology primarily by doing it. Until the language of phenomenology is put into practice, the words retain an essential obscurity, like any new vocabulary. In response to your question about consciousness, for Husserl there is no pure consciousness. Consciousness is, in its essence, directional, relational, about something. One can of course argue otherwise, although I think it would be a difficult case to make.

What I mean when I say "radical" is that it gets to the roots or ground of something. The

term radical is derived from the Latin, *radix*, "root." Thinking about thinking is more radical than thinking about something other than thinking, because in the case of the former thinking is undergoing an inquiry into its own ground, or roots, or origins. But it is also "radical" in the sense that, per Heidegger, thinking does not typically think about its own grounds, Being. So, it is also radical in the sense of a dramatic change from the status quo – since if Heidegger is correct, thinking as *legein* and *logos* has been forgotten and Being, therefore, has been lost to thought. To reverse that trend of history is to engage in radical philosophy (or so Heidegger claims).

You seem to treat consciousness as if it were a thing, in ways that are contrary to the phenomenological reduction of Husserl and the being-in-the-world of Heidegger. Phenomenologically speaking—within the phenomenological reduction and when bracketing the natural attitude—the noetic pole of consciousness is not given directly in experience in the way biological processes are given. There is no way that one can discover noetic acts of consciousness by looking at someone's MRI, for example. It can only be discovered through the first-person experience of a conscious being and in that case it appears indirectly through the givenness of the world and the *world-horizon* within which the world is disclosed. *Dasein* is its disclosedness and (within the framework of phenomenology) this disclosedness cannot be reduced to biological processes because biological processes have their being by virtue of their givenness as they are disclosed through *Dasein*.

Historically, there have been cultures in which the human soul and experience was thought to originate with the heart rather than the brain. This is another way to illustrate how the brain is not given as a noetic act of consciousness in the act of living out some experience. The brain is given as a source of consciousness only as a noematic content of consciousness. Otherwise, it would be self-evident that the brain is the source of experience and yet it is not given as such (see Robbins, 2013; Robbins & Gordon, 2014).

Likewise, when you said that "neuroscience" can get to "unconscious processes [that] occur much

quicker than consciousness can follow," this is not something of great concern to phenomenology, as I understand it. The noetic pole of consciousness is not an objective datum, it is a condition of possibility for any "objective datum" to be what it is in its givenness as something that matters and is of concern enough to think and be concerned about. Phenomenology can appreciate that human beings are embodied and that human bodies have biological processes that can be discovered through a peculiar style of disclosing biological entities and processes, which we all know through our education. Phenomenology simply recognizes that these biological processes are not noetic acts of consciousness that can be discovered using the phenomenological method. Although, the noetic structure of consciousness as it is revealed through phenomenology is essential if we are to (a) have any science, including neuroscience, and (b) understanding the meaning of findings in neuroscience in ways that do not depend too heavily on the messy speculations of folk wisdom.

You stated with regard to my discussion of embarrassment that you were uncomfortable with the idea that an experience (i.e., embarrassment) might have a life-world. This was a way of saying that within a certain cultural context, and within certain conventions of the use of the term "embarrassment" as it is implicitly understood by naive reporters, embarrassment can be understood as the disclosure of a particular world of significance, with a structural regularity that can be seen across a wide variety of people. This is revealed not by explicit definitions given by participants, but is disclosed indirectly (noematically) in their descriptive narratives of personal experiences of embarrassment written from a first-person perspective. The phenomenologist, in examining this data, has the task of identifying the noetic structures that are revealed indirectly through these various narrative descriptions. Embarrassment, then, has both a noetic aspect (the acts of consciousness that make embarrassment possible) and a noematic aspect (a certain style by which the world is disclosed through these acts of consciousness we call embarrassment). Phenomenology need not assume singularity either (e.g., your suggestion that I was looking at embarrassment as a unitary structure); although in Giorgi's (2009) method the

idea is to assimilate any singularities into a general structure that can accommodate all varieties of a phenomenon under one general category. This is not always possible or desirable.

My point was simply to illustrate noesis and noema, using embarrassment as an example. What is new is the noema and noesis concepts, which are not there in developmental research nor dynamic theories of embarrassment. No one knows what an emotion or mood is, especially the developmental psychologists, and the psychodynamic theories are not much better off. Yes, they define emotions and moods, but they are superficial definitions and do not get at the roots of what an emotion is. Phenomenology has an answer to what they cannot explain. You wrote: "My claim for mediation here is not to claim causation, but only reciprocal relatedness—and this does not contradict these are inextricably inter-related, only they use more dualistic language" (H. L. F., 6). The term "mediator" suggests otherwise to me. I understand this term to mean a variable that is directly related to two variables that are also related to one another, but not directly. The mediator explains the relationship. For example, there is a positive relationship between sexually transmitted illness and phone sex. But these variables are not directly related; their relationship is mediated by a third variable: sexual motivation.

In Husserlian phenomenology, we're not dealing with consciousness and its objects as "variables," as if they are separate events that can be related. Rather, consciousness as an activity is revealed through that which is given to consciousness as a world, and even what is transcendent of consciousness is revealed as transcendent by an act of consciousness. This is not solipsism. Things are revealed as being other than consciousness by virtue of the way they are given to consciousness—for example, as always given from a perspective and as always in the process of being revealed partially rather than completely within the world horizon, etc.

You asked: "But noesis/noema are also dualistic, so what advantage is gained by their use?" They are not a classic duality, because noesis and noema are not separate events or entities. The acts of consciousness (noetic structures) are given to

consciousness indirectly through the manner in which these acts are revealed through the appearance of the world in its givenness (noematic structure). You also said, "I see one advantage, but it is not one I like . . . by denying the noema any ontological reality, there can be a consistent idealism . . . as it all can be held as inner or subjective" (H. L. F., 6). This is a misunderstanding. Noema and noesis cannot be reduced to subjectivity nor to objectivity. As I stated before, these terms do not map onto the subject-object duality. Let me try a different example. Let's take an ambiguous figure, such as the well-known duck-rabbit illusion image ("Kaninchen und Ente", n.d.).

When you see the rabbit, then the rabbit is the noematic content of consciousness. But this content is also revealed against a background—a horizon that recedes into the background as the image emerges into the foreground of perception. Then, I see the duck. Now, the duck is the noematic *content of consciousness*. Now I can switch back and forth. Duck, rabbit, duck, rabbit, etc. The act of switching between duck and rabbit is an *act of consciousness*—it is noetic. But as an aspect of the noesis, it is not directly given in the duck-rabbit display, but revealed in the way the duck-rabbit figure shows itself, through the switching back and forth at will from duck to rabbit and back again.

The noesis is not some object over and against the duck-rabbit ambiguous figure. It is the acts by which the duck-rabbit image can appear as it does to awareness in the very way that it appears. The duck-rabbit is also revealed as having a transcendent being that is not reducible to "my consciousness," because, for example, I cannot change its appearance at will beyond the two ambiguously held figures of duck and rabbit. I hold out for the possibility that it could be seen, potentially, in ways other than as a duck or rabbit. For example, when constituted as such, it can come to appear more like the map of a park seen from above, or a patch of wood behind a white wall's broken plaster.

Conclusion

In this dialogue, B. D. R. and H. L. F. have attempted to elucidate phenomenology's claims that it should be foundational to scientific investi-

gation and offers a phenomenological solution to the thorny problem of subject/object dualism plaguing transpersonal psychology and beyond. The interlocutors challenge each other and the readers to examine the fundamental concepts of phenomenology, such as noesis and noema, and their relevance to transpersonal psychology and science as a whole. B. D. R. proposes and defends the proposition that phenomenology is foundational to science and knowing. Phenomenology provides a means to describe and understand the implicit assumptions and parameters of any field of study or way of knowing. That is, it provides a means to radically interrogate the essential meaning of a thing by making its assumptions and framework explicit. Without clarifying these, any truth endeavor, whether in physics or psychology, may be limited and misled by faulty preconceptions and unexamined assumptions thus challenging the validity and quality of its knowledge. B.D.R. argues that phenomenology provides an approach for seeking the essential meaning structures of science and any of its subfields such as physics, psychology, and the transpersonal. Moreover, phenomenology seeks a solid grasp of what the object or experience under investigation truly is and truly means. That is, what makes it this certain type of thing and not another thing? What are the essential elements and attributes of this phenomenon? For the transpersonal psychologists, what distinguishes the transpersonal (or the spiritual, transcendent, etc.) from some other type of experience? Phenomenology provides the researcher with tools to describe and understand the limitations, extent, and meaning of phenomena such as altered states of consciousness, near-death experiences, and the like. This in-depth critical analysis is how phenomenology is foundational to scientific endeavor and is what so often gets ignored or dismissed in the pursuit of knowledge.

B. D. R. also addresses several common misconceptions of phenomenology such as the idea that phenomenology is the study of subjective experiences. He also attempts to clarify Heidegger's proposition that phenomenology is a unique and important type of thinking—an approach that precedes calculative or rational thinking by illuminating what is worthy of contemplation. H. L.

F. provides an important and useful inquiry that helps elucidate these significant and often misunderstood qualities of phenomenology. In the end, he holds to his skepticism about this solution.

In sum, this dialogue has explored how some of the basic concepts of phenomenology might provide an important foundation to scientific studies and indeed to all knowing in human experience, including transpersonal studies. This dialogue also highlights how phenomenology offers a solution to the subject/object dualism that transpersonal investigators often find vexing but difficult to surmount. B. D. R. provides important clarifications and explications regarding phenomenology's potential import and contributions to science. H. L. F. provides an important counterpoint and skepticism that carries the dialogue forward and encourages these significant insights to surface.

How successful B. D. R. and H. L. F. have been at clarifying these concepts is up to the reader to decide but, if nothing else, this protracted debate illustrates an adversarial collaboration which serves as a bridge between differing worldviews (Tannen, 2002), relating to one meaning of the prefix "trans" in transpersonal—that is, bridging. For transpersonal psychologists, phenomenology provides a tool and a challenge. It supplies a tool for radically investigating the qualities that make the field "transpersonal" to begin with as well as for closely describing the essential features of the transpersonal objects and experiences under investigation. It also challenges transpersonal psychologists to closely examine and make explicit the assumptions inherent in the noetic/noema life-world of the researcher, participants, and beyond.

Notes

1. Parts of this discussion have been previously published in Robbins (2014).
2. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Harris L. Friedman at harrisfriedman@hotmail.com. This paper was developed from the transcripts of email correspondence between several regular contributors to the Society for Humanistic Psychology (American Psychological Association [APA], Division 32) listserv. Several

other individuals contributed to the overall dialogue; however, for clarity and brevity, the dialogue as presented here has been edited, as well as limited to the contributions of the authors. In addition, because these quotes are from transcripts of an interactive conversation, some of the usual expectations in APA writing style may seem to not be consistently met; however, exceptions are allowed with quotes to retain the integrity of the source.

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