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8-28-2020

Husserl's Phenomenological Method

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Dy, Manuel B. Jr, "Husserl's Phenomenological Method" (2020). *Magisterial Lectures*. 1.
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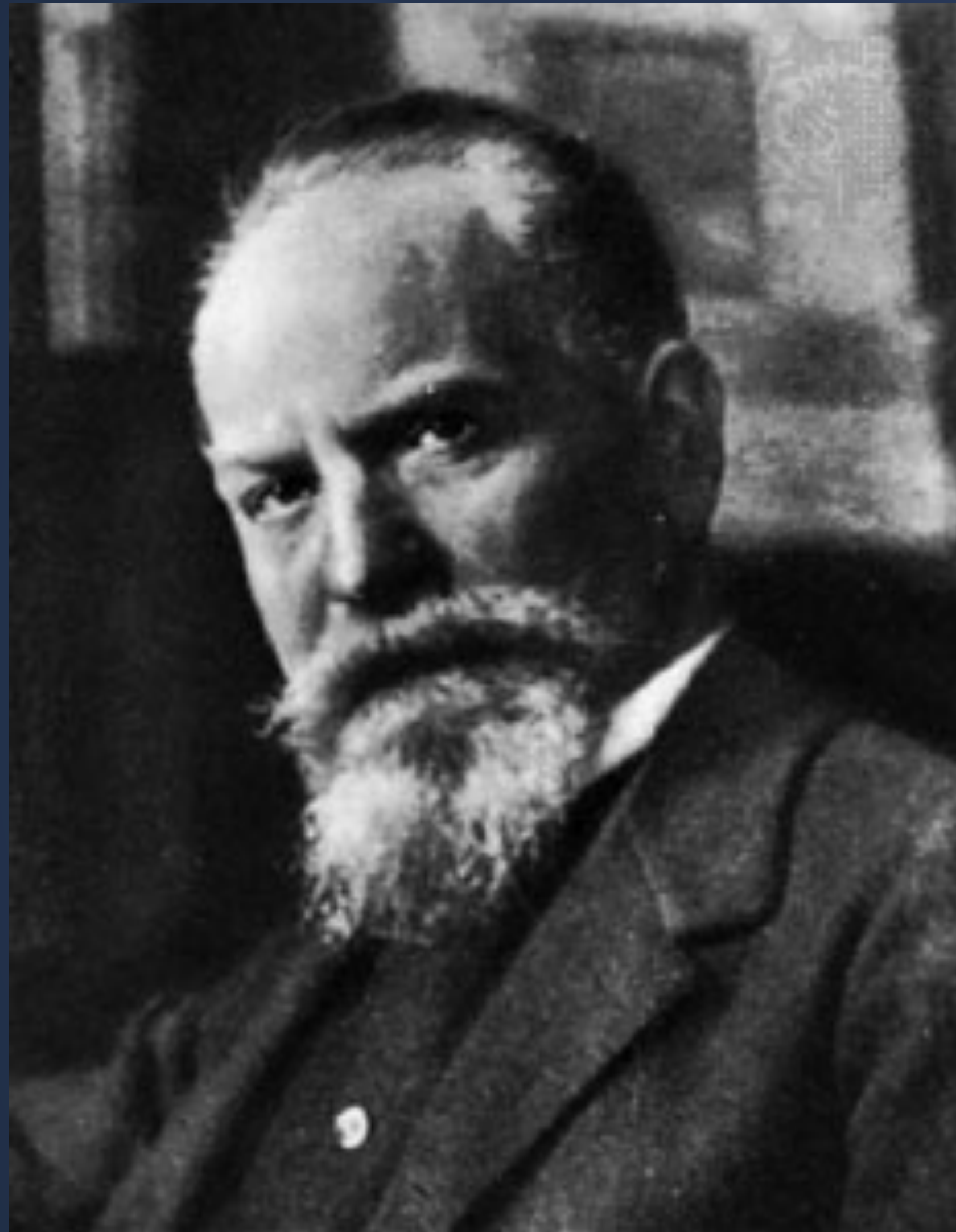
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HUSSERL'S
PHENOMENOLOGICAL
METHOD

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HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

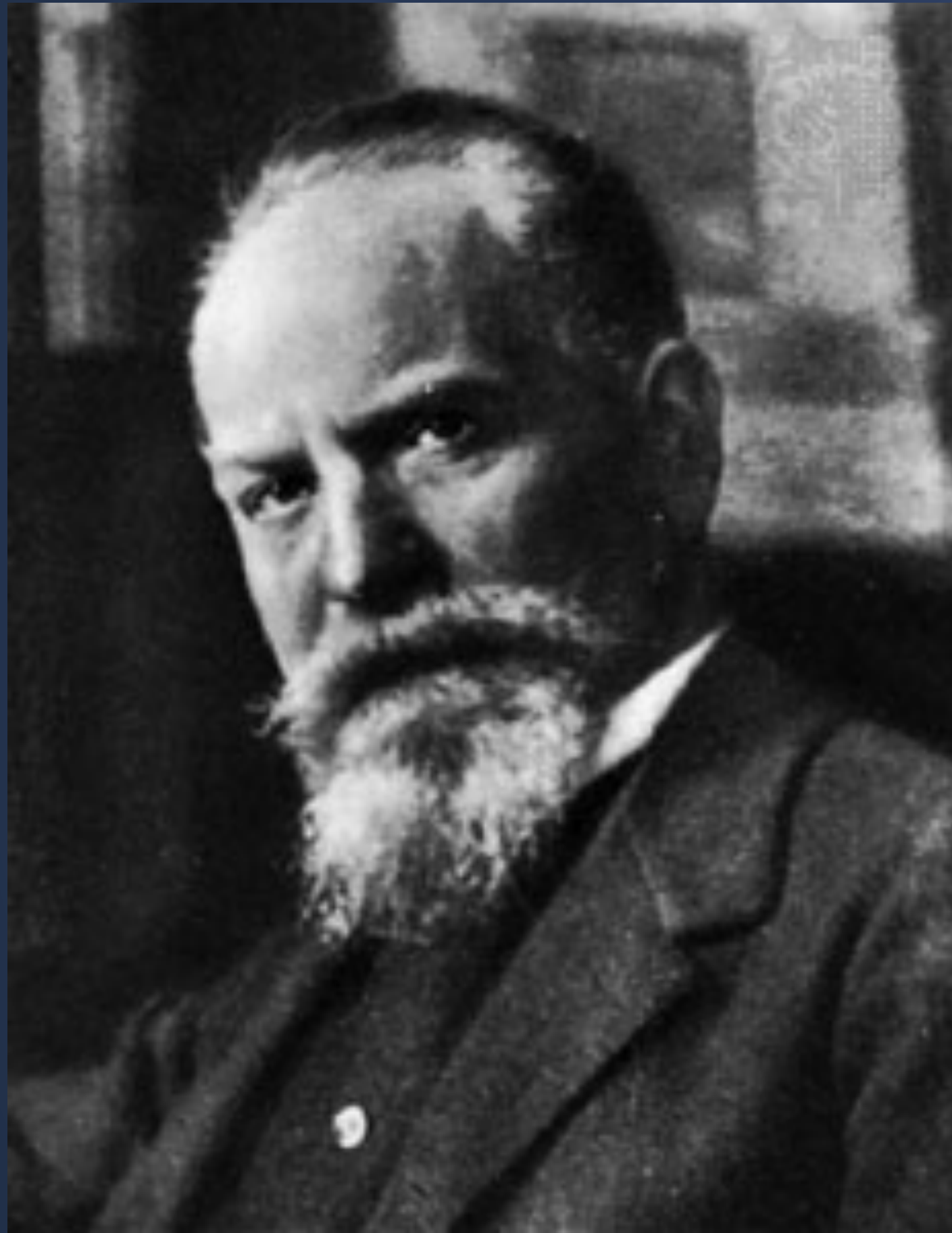
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I HAVE THREE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER IN THIS LECTURE:

1. Why Phenomenology?
2. What is the Phenomenological Attitude?
3. How is the Husserlian method applied?

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?



- Phenomenology was started by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) whose aim was to arrive at “philosophy as a rigorous science”
- By “philosophy as a rigorous science” Husserl meant a “presuppositionless philosophy,” philosophy with the least number of presuppositions

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- Unlike Descartes, Husserl was dissatisfied with the sciences of his time because they start with a complex of presuppositions.
- In particular, he was reacting against naturalistic psychology which treats mental activity as causally conditioned by events of nature, in terms of S-R relationship (stimulus-reaction). Presupposition here is that man is a mechanistic animal.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- So, Husserl wanted philosophy to be a “science of ultimate grounds” where the presuppositions are so basic and primary they cannot be reduced further.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- How does one arrive at that philosophy? By transcending the “natural attitude.”
- The natural attitude is the scientific attitude which was predominant in Husserl’s time and carried to the extreme to become scientificistic.
- The scientific attitude observes things, expresses their workings in singular judgments, then by induction and deduction, arrives at concrete results.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

But this attitude contains a number of assumptions:

1. It assumes that there is no need to ask how we know,
2. It assumes that the world (the object) is out there, existing and explainable in objective laws, while man the subject is pure consciousness, clear to itself, able to know the world as it is.
3. It takes for granted the world-totality.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- In short, the natural attitude looks at reality as things, a “fact world”.
- The way of knowing in the natural attitude is fragmented, partial, fixed, clear, precise, manipulative, and there is no room for mystery.
- It was moving away from the heart of things.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- So, the motto for Husserl and the phenomenologists was “back to things themselves!”
- By “back to things themselves” Husserl meant the entire field of original experience.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

e.g. Clear precise meaning of :
“desilya”: turn left, “demanano”: right.

- What is the original experience of these concepts?
- Hint: these are Spanish words, so back to Spanish times , the means of transportation was the kalesa, the original of which is in Cebu. The kutsero sits on the left and to turn right he has to put out his right hand (“mano” in Spanish) to signal.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

Phenomenology attempts to go back to the phenomenon, to that which presents itself to man, to see things as they really are, independent of any prejudice.

Thus phenomenology is the logos of the phenomenon.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- Here in the Ateneo, and perhaps in the whole country, the phenomenological approach was introduced in 1967, after my graduation.
- Before that was the scholastic approach.
- Scholastic philosophy is the commentary on the commentary on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.

A CONTRAST OF TWO APPROACHES

Scholastic vs. Phenomenological

Dualistic

Looks at man more as an
object, an animal

Proceeds from the external to
the internal.

Holistic

Describes man from what is
properly human

Proceeds from the internal to
the external.

WHY PHENOMENOLOGY?

- Also, problem with death in the dualistic approach of man as composite of body and soul.
- What happens after death? The soul is immortal but the body is mortal. So death is defined as the separation of body and soul.
- Will we become angels after death? Without bodies?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

1. The phenomenologist posits unity first before analyzing the parts or aspects of this unity .
 - By positing unity first, he is faithful to original experience because in original experience, we see no opposition between subject and object.
 - When he is interested in part, it is insofar as this lies in the context of the totality of human experience. e.g. language is not just a body of words but the embodiment of thought, of culture.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

e.g. A teacher asks a student a question, the student answers by saying “alam ko pero hindi ko masasabi.” Kung hindi mo masasabi, hindi mo talaga alam.

e.g. Ano ang “spiral staircase”?

Answer: bodily gestures. Body language is language.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

e.g. Ano ang Filipino sa “rice you plant?” “rice up harvest?” “rice that you cook?”. “rice that you eat” and “rice that you fry?”

We have different Tagalog words for these because we are a rice eating culture.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

2. The phenomenologist describes, explicates, unfolds what is already there.
 - Because reality is rich and inexhaustible, the description is never final.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

3. The phenomenologist is primarily concerned with experience and with man, with the world as lived by man.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

4. The phenomenologist uses “epoche,” the bracketing of the natural attitude.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

1. The phenomenologist posits unity first before analyzing the parts or aspects of this unity .
2. The phenomenologist describes, explicates, unfolds what is already there.
3. The phenomenologist is primarily concerned with experience and with man, with the world as lived by man.
4. The phenomenologist uses “epoche,” the bracketing of the natural attitude.

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

- Epoche literally means “bracketing” which Husserl borrowed from mathematics and applied to the natural attitudes.
- What I bracket in the epoche is my natural attitude towards the object I am investigating, my prejudice, my clear and conceptual knowledge of it that is unquestioned.

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

- When I bracket, I do not deny nor affirm but simply hold it in abeyance; I suspend judgment on it.
- Epoche is important in order to see the world with “new eyes” and return to the original experience from where our conceptual natural attitude was derived.

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

e.g. What is my natural attitude towards a religious, priest or nun? Very spiritual?

e.g. What is my natural attitude towards love?
 That love hurts? That love is a many-splendored thing?

I have to bracket all these, meaning suspend judgement towards them.

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

- Eidetic Reduction is one of the important reductions in the phenomenological method.
- “Reduction” is another mathematical term to refer to the procedure by which we are placed in the “transcendental sphere,” the sphere in which we can see things as they really are, independent of any prejudice.
- “Eidetic” is derived from “eidos” which means essence. in eidetic reduction I reduce the experience to its essence.

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

I arrive at the essence of the experience by starting out with an individual example, then finding out what changes can be made without it ceasing to be what it is. That which I cannot change making the object cease to be the thing it is, is the invariant, the *eidos*, of the experience.

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?



e. g. I want to arrive at the essence of a triangle. I start out with an individual example of a triangle.

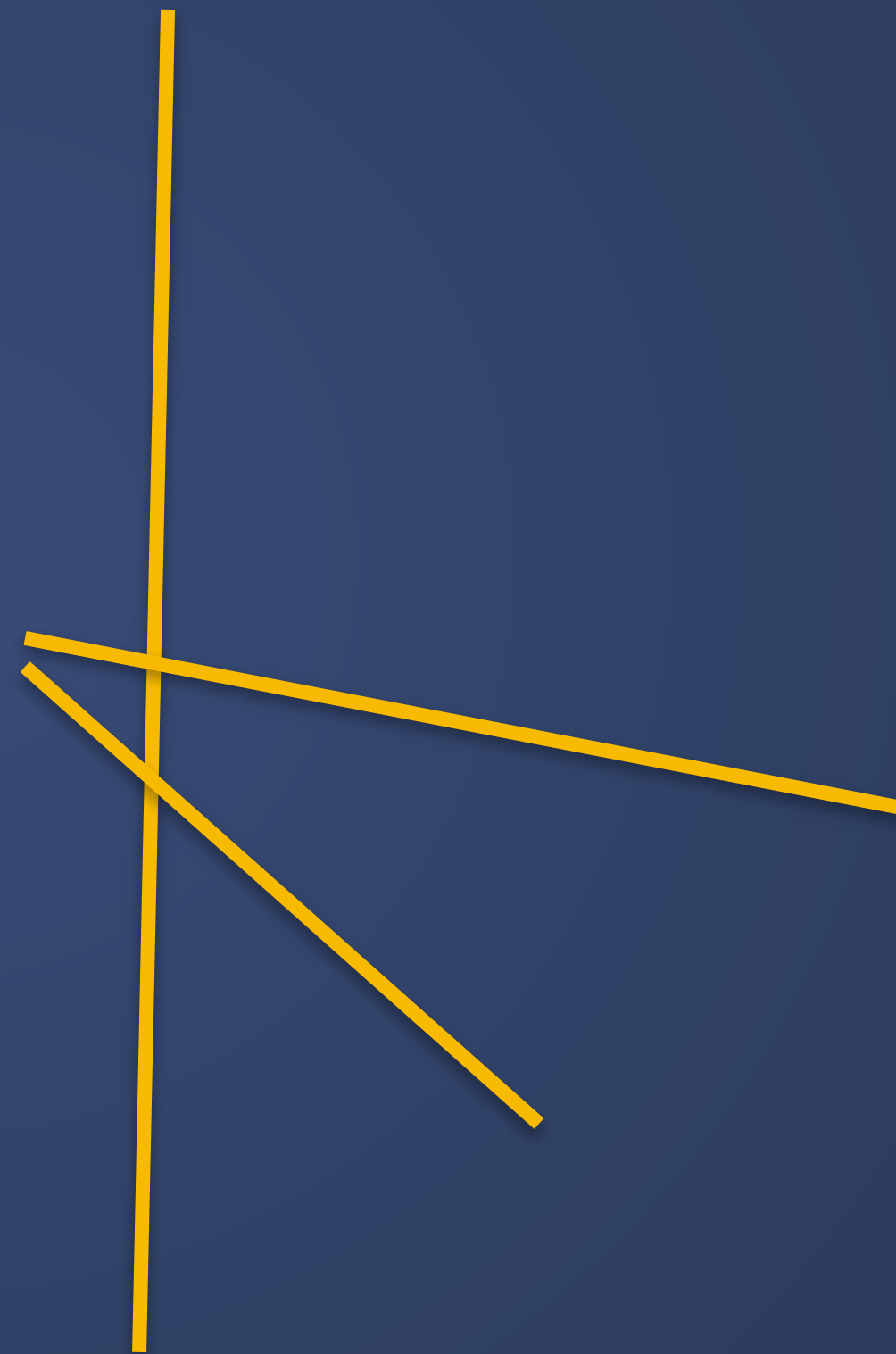
HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

I make changes of its size, angle, etc.



HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

Suppose I make this change:



HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

Do I have a triangle in the last change I made?

HOW IS THE METHOD APPLIED?

- For example, I am doing a phenomenology of love. I start by bracketing my biases on love. Then I reduce the object to the phenomenon of love. in eidetic reduction, I begin with an example of a relationship of love between two people. I change their age, race, social status, and all these do not matter in love. what is it I cannot change?
- Perhaps, the unconditional giving of self to the other as he is. This then forms part of the essence of love.

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

- Here, I now become conscious of the subject, the “I” who must decide on the validity of the object.
- I now become aware of the subjective aspects of the object when I inquire into the beliefs, feelings, desires which shape the experience.

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

- The object is seen in relation to the subject and the subject in relation to the object.
- In our example of love, maybe I see the essence of love as giving of oneself to the other because of my perspective as a lover. if I take the perspective of the beloved, maybe the essence is more receiving than giving. if I take the perspective of a religious, maybe love is seen as participation in God's love.

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

- Here I hit upon the main insight of phenomenology: the intentionality of consciousness.
- Consciousness is intentional: Consciousness is consciousness of something other than consciousness itself.
- Unity of noesis (consciousness) and noema (object of consciousness.)

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

- There is no subject (noesis) without an object (noema)
- In other worlds, there is no consciousness without a world that it is conscious of.
- In Cebuano, there is no kalibutan (consciousness) with out a kalibutan (world).

THE PARADOX OF HUSSERL

THE PARADOX OF HUSSERL

To be objective, you need to be subjective, and to be subjective, you need to be inter-subjective. The subjectivity of objectivity.

THE PARADOX OF HUSSERL

- The human being is created to be a co-creator of God, who creates from nothing.
- The human being creates from the not-thingness of his being.
- From his not-thingness. he makes being be, full of meaning.

THE PARADOX OF HUSSERL

Thus the subjectivity of objectivity, and the intersubjectivity of subjectivity.