

PROFESSOR FULTON'S VIEW OF PHENOMENOLOGY

by *Ramakrishna Puligandla*

It is well known that Husserl's investigations lead to constitutive analyses and therewith to transcendental idealism, a position unpalatable to many phenomenologists.¹ There has been considerable dispute as to how Husserlian idealism is to be understood and interpreted. Is it of the Platonic variety, the Berkeleyan variety, or the Hegelian variety? Whatever the answer to this question, one thing seems clear: Husserlian idealism is inextricably bound up with the problem of the circle of infinite reflexion and that of the transcendental ego. The circle of infinite reflexion has to be broken in order that the phenomenologist may bring his reductions and analyses to bear upon the world of natural attitude; otherwise, the phenomenological analyses, interesting and illuminating in themselves, do not seem to have any bearing on our everyday, as well as scientific, experience. As regards the transcendental ego (pure consciousness), one is not sure whether such a thing exists. What is more, the very concept of the transcendental ego raises the problem of ineffability, which seems to strike at the heart of phenomenology as the rational and presuppositionless science of essences. The two central problems of phenomenology, then, are: breaking out of the circle of infinite reflexion and dissolving the mystery of the ineffability associated with the transcendental ego.

As a student, I discussed these problems with Professor Street Fulton, and his solution (resolution?) seems to me to be pre-eminently Heideggerian. Husserl distinguishes between the transcendental ego (pure consciousness) and the human ego (world-immersed ego), and grants primary reality to the former as the ultimate residuum of transcendental reduction. Further, according to Husserl, the transcendental ego is the subject which is the source of all objectivity. On the other hand, the human ego is the human being in his involvement with the world. Husserl himself formulated and dealt extensively with the concept of *Lebenswelt* essential to understanding the human ego in its engagement with the world. For Husserl, however, the reduction which takes us from the cultural-scientific world to the *Lebenswelt* is merely a necessary guide for the more important phenomenological reductions and analyses. In other words, for Husserl the reduction to the *Lebenswelt* is not an end in itself, but only

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a necessary means to the all-important transcendental reduction and constitutive analyses. I have already pointed out that the constitutive analyses lead up to the transcendental ego and therewith to some form or other of idealism. It seems to me (I say this with considerable caution) that Professor Fulton, very much like Heidegger, rejects as untenable Husserl's concept of the transcendental ego and maintains that human existence is essentially in the world—Being-in-the-world is the fundamental structure of *Dasein* (being-there, a term Heidegger uses to designate Person). It needs to be emphasized again that this insight concerning human existence is to be found in Husserl himself:

human existence as such is always related consciously to an existent practical world as a surrounding world already endowed with humanly significant predicates. . . .²

To elaborate on this point, Husserl regarded Being as essential Being—the universals which by their inherence in particular objects and events, actual and possible, make them what they are. Naturally enough, investigation of Being in this sense required Husserl to ignore questions of existence and non-existence. Hence the phenomenological epoché (suspension of judgment and bracketing the world of natural attitude). If I understand Professor Fulton correctly, he, along with Heidegger, modified and broadened the scope of phenomenology to include questions of existence and non-existence. In other words, for Professor Fulton, phenomenology is no longer simply inquiry into essential Being but Being itself. Suspension of judgment is rejected and every phenomenon is now showing-itself-in-itself, in the most concrete manner. Phenomena are no longer cut away from Being but are Being itself. Phenomenology conducted in this manner is none other than what Heidegger calls "Fundamental ontology." This is an important point in that it marks the departure of Professor Fulton and Heidegger from Husserl: whereas for Husserl evidence is that which is grasped within the suspension of judgment, for Professor Fulton it is that which shows-itself-in-itself without any suspension. In a word, Husserlian phenomenology is essential phenomenology, whereas that of Professor Fulton and Heidegger is existential, concrete phenomenology.

The important question to ask now is: do phenomena show themselves in the same manner to everybody? If not, is not subjectivism an essential element of concrete phenomenology? The answer to the first question is clearly in the negative and consequently the second is answered affirmatively. There is no reason to believe that phenomena show themselves in the same manner to everybody; different persons may see one and the same thing differently; what is more, one and the same person may see something differently at different times and in different *Lebenswelt* situations. The reports of different concrete phenomenologists need not always agree. One should expect them to disagree more often than not. The significance of these observations to concrete phe-

nomenology is that the concept of the Person becomes central. This is simply another way of saying that there is an intrinsic connection between fundamental ontology and the Person. But it is important to note that "Person" here means something more basic and generic than its ordinary usage implies. I believe that Professor Fulton's explication of the concept is very similar to that of Heidegger.

Heidegger uses the term "*Dasein* (being-there)" to designate the Person.³ Person as *Dasein* is what discloses the world. That is, there can be no talk of Being in any sense other than that implied by *Dasein*. Person, then, is not something standing over and against Being; rather, it is that through which Being is revealed. The world is my world, as disclosed by me as *Dasein*. As such, there can be no question of suspension and bracketing and discovering Being as essences in the light of the transcendental ego. Being reveals itself through the *Dasein* in its throbbing concrete reality. It is worth remembering that all this is a direct consequence of rejecting Husserl's transcendental reduction and therewith the transcendental ego.

It is easy to see from the above that for Professor Fulton, as it is for Heidegger, *Existenz* is the essence of Person.⁴ It should be borne in mind that "*Existenz*" here is not to be understood in its ordinary traditional sense of being (existence) as the correlative of non-being (nonexistence). Heidegger uses the term "*existentia*" to convey this traditional sense. What is meant by saying that *Existenz* is the essence of Person? It simply means that Person is essentially related to what is other than itself. That is, Being, as it manifests itself through Person, is essentially related. More importantly, it can manifest itself in no other way.

One might ask now whether the existential phenomenologist's rejection of Husserl's transcendental reduction and along with it the transcendental ego entails the rejection of the entire concept of transcendence. The answer to this question is clearly in the negative. For, interestingly enough, the concept of transcendence is built into that of the Person. "*Existenz*" in the Heideggerian sense derives from the Latin *existere*, which means to stand forth, to arise.⁵ And since *Existenz* is the essence of the Person, it follows that the Person is always standing out from its being; in a word, human reality is always a *being toward*. This in turn means that human beings are capable of self-transcendence. In this manner, then, transcendence and in particular self-transcendence are integral to existential phenomenology. And in my judgment any philosophy which recognizes and fosters self-transcendence is worthy of its calling.

It follows from the concept of the Person that the Person is "no thing, no substance, no object."⁶ Nor is the Person pure consciousness (Husserl's pure ego). The Person is that which performs intentional acts. Thus the world is not a world of objects and events. It is world as involvement of Being in the Person—an aspect of the Person. Put differently, for the existential phenome-

nologist the world is not to be identified with the objective-scientific world nor any aspect thereof; rather, it is what gives itself to us immediately as our basic situation, namely, being-in-the-world. It is thus the world of possibilities. It is not a closed, fixed, unit; quite the contrary, it is the matrix of the possibilities of the Person as *Existenz*. Thus the world of the concrete phenomenologist is neither the scientific nor any other kind of *objectified* world of objects, events, properties, and relations. It is through and through the world of meaning and significance—the worldliness of the world.⁷

It is in this manner, then, I think, that Professor Fulton makes the transition from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology to concrete existential phenomenology. The problem of the circle of infinite reflexion as well as that of the transcendental ego simply vanishes as soon as one makes the *Lebenswelt* the proper concern of phenomenological inquiry. This does not mean, however, that the Husserlian kind of phenomenological investigation is abandoned altogether. Quite the contrary: it has its place in the investigation of essences of phenomena in an objective, scientific sense. Thus the move from transcendental phenomenology to existential phenomenology is fundamentally a shift in meaning, value, and significance. Man as being-in-the-world is the focus of concrete phenomenology. Exploration of the *Dasein* provides us with insights into the extraordinarily complex phenomenon of the human being and opens up vast vistas of inquiry into psychology, anthropology, history, religion, and myth. In this lies the great power and fecundity of existential phenomenology.

This view does justice to the best of scientific philosophy (for example the Whiteheadian) and to human reality as grasped through the rich and complex concepts of *Lebenswelt*, *Dasein*, and *Existenz* as the essence of the Person. Although there appears to be disagreement among Heidegger's interpreters about his appraisal of the importance of science, he does seem to underestimate the value of knowledge derived from the sciences. In Professor Fulton's vision there is no room for devaluing science. Science is assigned its proper place and its worth and validity are recognized in the appropriate domain of human experience. On the other hand, Professor Fulton never allowed science and scientific philosophy to cloud and dwarf our fundamental being-in-the-world, infinitely richer and immensely more complex than the scientific picture of man with its pet reductionist dogmas paraded as profound truth.

NOTES

1. See Marvin Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*, third edition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967), p. 541.

2. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, tr. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 25.
3. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, eighth edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1957), p. 13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
5. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, ed. Werner Brock (London: Vision Press, 1956), p. 396.
6. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 47.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 87.