*The Context of the
Phenomenological Movement*

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To The Memory of
JOHN WILD
1902 – 1972
Pioneer of Existential Phenomenology
in America

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PREFACE

This is an unashamed collection of studies grown, but not planned beforehand, whose belated unity stems from an unconscious pattern of which I was not aware at the time of writing. I call it “unashamed” not only because I have made no effort to patch up this collection by completely new pieces, but also because there seems to me nothing shamefully wrong about following up some loose ends left dangling from my main study of the Phenomenological Movement which I had to cut off from the body of my account in order to preserve its unity and proportion.

This disclaimer does not mean that there is no connection among the pieces here assembled. They belong together, while not requiring consecutive reading, as attempts to establish common ground and lines of communication between the Phenomenological Movement and related enterprises in philosophy. They are not put together arbitrarily, but because of intrinsic affinities to phenomenology. This does not mean an attempt to blur its edges. But since they are growing edges, any boundaries cannot be drawn sharply without interfering with the phenomena. Nevertheless, in the end the figure of the Phenomenological Movement should stand out more distinctly as the text against its surrounding context, of which these studies are to provide some of the comparative and historical background. This is why I gave to this collection the title “The Context of the Phenomenological Movement” in contrast to the central “text” as contained in my historical introduction to this movement. In this sense this collection is a companion volume to *The Phenomenological Movement*, especially in its revised third edition, meant to enrich it without diverting from it.

Finally I hope that this collection will reinforce the case for one of my favorite historical theses: that the Phenomenological Movement proper is actually a set of waves superimposed upon a much vaster anti-reductionist and anti-constructionist groundswell that began in the nineteenth century.

Hardly any of the components of the collection have remained unchanged compared with their original versions. For here too the subject and even more my knowledge of it have kept growing. All the components have been checked, an operation in which I had in the end the invaluable aid of Karl Schuhmann, who also helped me with the proofreading. In fact, the most important tool in

updating my texts was Karl Schuhmann's *Husserl-Chronik* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977). In some cases there have been substantial additions, especially in the last essay on Wittgenstein's phenomenology. In such cases I have tried to put the changes into special Supplements, partly in order to facilitate easy identification of new information and insights.

I also want to express my special thanks to the editors of the series "Phaenomenologica," who again offered their hospitality to my work.

The New Pattern

The components of this collection fall roughly into two groups: (1) contemporary parallels and (2) historical explorations inside phenomenology. What they have in common is the intent to remove blinkers from the narrow provincialist perspective on the Phenomenological Movement in its often far from splendid isolation and from its preoccupation with its own latest phase.

In this spirit Part I deals largely with relations between central figures in phenomenology and those in other philosophies, where I found a special need for historical exploration. Husserl figures in the first four essays against the background of other earlier philosophies of intentionality, the native American phenomenology of Peirce and Sartre's existentialism. The comparison with Pfänder is concerned with an internal confrontation, but one whose bearing affects also the relation to the outside world in its puzzlement about the reduction. Pfänder figures even more prominently in the subsequent comparison with the "linguistic phenomenology" of John L. Austin.

As the common denominator for the "Historical Explorations" of Part II, I can suggest merely the lure of dark corners in my historical knowledge which had called for elucidation, mostly in connection with special occasions explained in each case. Again, Husserl is not the only target of these explorations. The best possible vindication of these studies I can suggest is the additional light they can provide in helping the figure of phenomenology to stand out more sharply against the ground of its origins. The case of Wittgenstein's phenomenology as it now emerges may help to promote more sympathetic mutual understanding without syncretism. Here I am much indebted to several Wittgenstein scholars for interest and help.

The Components

Some remarks about the circumstances of each of the pieces may be helpful for their full appraisal.

1. The comparative studies of the first part open with a study I had written in German before leaving the Continent. "'Intention' and 'Intentionality' in the Scholastics, Bentano and Husserl" was prepared in an atmosphere where

Husserl's conception of intentionality was widely considered a mere loan from the Scholastics and his phenomenology a new form, if not a corruption, of Scholasticism. My primary goal was to show the originality of both Brentano's and Husserl's transformations of the undeniable Scholastic stimulus and at the same time the complexity of the historical issues involved. But I wanted to do more than terminological history. I also wanted to prepare the ground for a terminological reform which would overcome the resulting confusion by going back to the original phenomena – and I still do. As far as I know, the survival of this overambitious enterprise is due to the unexpected interest taken by Roderick M. Chisholm, who listed the German title in his English bibliographies on intentionality. In a Supplement I comment on some of Ausonio Marras' criticisms of my views, although they refer mostly to my later condensed statement in *The Phenomenological Movement*.

2. The essay on "Husserl's and Peirce's Phenomenologies" was the result of an invitation by the program committee of the Peirce Society in 1955. At that time I knew much too little about Peirce and was struck by the parallels as well as by the differences I encountered, but also by the significance of the issue for the relation between Peirce and William James. As the Supplements will show, more details are now available, though they do not yet call for a rewriting of the entire article.

3. The piece on "Husserl's Phenomenology and Sartre's Existentialism" was part of a symposium on Phenomenology and Existentialism at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association at Madison, Wisconsin, in 1959. Here I wanted to draw the line between phenomenology and existentialism as sharply as possible, at a time when even in the States a thoughtless confusion of the two movements, separately originated but converging, was particularly widespread. In the printed version I left out the two initial paragraphs as no longer timely after the centennial of Husserl's birth in 1959 and suppressed the concluding pun as unnecessary and inappropriate, which became a target of my fellow-symposiast and friend Maurice Natanson; see J. J. Kockelmans (ed.) *Phenomenology*, New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1967, p. 347.

4. The essay on the Phenomenological Reduction in Husserl and Pfänder was a first attempt to alert the Anglo-American friends of phenomenology to my attempt to revive interest in Pfänder's alternative to Husserl's radical phenomenology. I had made this attempt first at the International Conference on "The Munich Phenomenology" on the occasion of the centennial of Pfänder's birth in Munich where some of the Pfänder tradition was still alive. I therefore began the German version of my paper (to be published in *Pfänder-Studien*) with Pfänder's conception of the phenomenological reduction before comparing it with Husserl's. But when the same year I had an occasion to present an English version of this paper at the Dublin Conference

“European Philosophy Today,” I reversed this order in view of the fact that in Britain only a first acquaintance with Husserl could be assumed and that the best way to introduce the practically unknown Pfänder was to show first the impasse in the final stage of Husserl’s reduction as a background for introducing Pfänder’s alternative. But except for this reversal in the order of presentation the two versions are substantially the same. My main point was to show Pfänder’s radical phenomenology as maintaining Husserl’s epoché but omitting his transcendental reduction with its presuppositions, thus salvaging the best of Husserl’s radicalism.

5. The paper on “Linguistic Phenomenology” tried to take advantage of a special occasion in the Ibero-American world at the XIIIth International Congress of Philosophy of 1963 in Mexico City, where Pfänder’s work was comparatively well known in Spanish translation. I wanted to show how Pfänder’s emphasis on the need of initial clarification of meaning prior to phenomenology proper fits in with the admittedly much more explicit emphasis on “linguistic” analysis in John L. Austin’s “linguistic phenomenology.” This attempt has now been backed strikingly by Paul Ricoeur’s plea for Pfänder’s hints about the need of a study of the language of the will in a paper he gave at the Conference on the Munich Phenomenology on ‘Phenomenology of Willing and Ordinary Language Approach,’ in 1971.

6. The second part of these Studies is devoted to more specific historical topics. My interest in Amiel and his phenomenology was a side-effect of Walter Biemel’s invitation to help him with the re-publication of Husserl’s *Tagebuchnotizen* of 1906 and 1907 in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, which contained a puzzling isolated reference to Amiel. Winthrop Bell’s surprised response to Husserl’s interest in Amiel aroused my curiosity, with very little immediate success as far as the reference was concerned. It was only when I began to explore Amiel for his own sake that the really fascinating information about his “new phenomenology,” certainly unknown to Husserl, emerged. The findings are quite preliminary, but were at least an encouragement for my own research on the experiential phenomenology of the self.

7. For the article on James and Husserl, undertaken in view of Aron Gurwitsch’s interest in the parallel between their study of consciousness, I would not claim for it more than the interest in a piece of historical detective work which to my mind establishes James’s innocence of antiphenomenologism and the importance of correspondences like Walter Pitkin’s as more trustworthy than his autobiography.

8. The piece on Brentano’s Husserl image also makes no phenomenological claim. Its real interest is to explore such perspectives on Husserl as Brentano’s in a case where pictorial material was available.

9. The paper on the correspondence between Brentano and Husserl was prepared at the invitation of the Brentano Foundation, read in part at the

Brentano Conference in Graz in September 1977 and published first in the *Grazer Philosophische Studien* vol. 5. My main point was to explore in greater detail than I could in the *Phenomenological Movement* the context for the samples I had used in my discussion of the Brentano-Husserl relation. I also wanted to make this correspondence a test case for the importance of such exchanges as sources for understanding the philosophical dialogue between major thinkers.

10. "Husserl in England: Facts and Lessons," written for the first issue of the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* is the result of my protracted search for the early history of phenomenology in a country where its fortunes have been rather uneven. I hoped that my findings could provide some lessons at a point when its chances seemed to be surprisingly improved. The most important evidence turned up when I had already submitted my article and Karl Schuhmann drew my attention to the Freiburg Diary of W. R. Boyce Gibson, which had just arrived at the Louvain Archives. Partly for the sake of the story I left this evidence, mostly about the Cambridge phase of Husserl's visit, in the original Postscript. Further details might still emerge from a more thorough examination of the Husserl correspondence, especially the family correspondence.²

11. The related but still incomplete story of Husserl's invitation to write the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article "Phenomenology" for its 13th edition was the result of my shock after comparing the English article with the German original published by Walter Biemel in *Husserliana* IX, revealing that the text was anything but a "free translation" by an expert. When Richard Palmer volunteered to provide a new translation of the entire text for the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, I agreed to use the occasion for putting together the remaining scraps of the story still available, largely as a warning against the continued use of the truncated Husserl text.

12. My interest in the Boyce Gibson Diary of 1928 was not spontaneous. At the time I still harbored a prejudice against him on the basis of his problematic translation of Husserl's *Ideen*. The find of the diary revealed a very different picture and a philosopher worth knowing for his own sake. Besides, to my knowledge, none of the closer witnesses with inside knowledge has supplied anything comparable about this phase of Freiburg philosophy.

13. The stimulus for exploring the Husserl-Welch correspondence was again completely accidental, beginning with a piece of information about a nine-page letter by Husserl in the files of the University of Southern California picked up at the Mexico Congress of 1963. It turned out that Husserl saw in his correspondent an important American philosopher capable of helping his favorite American student Dorion Cairns. It included an interesting self-appraisal of Husserl's own earlier work in 1933 and a directive of how he

thought an American student should go about studying the latest phase of his phenomenology.

14. The review of Wolfgang Köhler's William James lectures of 1934 goes back to my first American years at Swarthmore College, where Köhler had just published their book edition under the title *The Place of Value in a World of Facts*. For me it was a special occasion for studying the place of phenomenology in Gestalt psychology, which Köhler and his associates had stressed especially after their transplantation to the United States.

15. The study of Wittgenstein's *Phänomenologie* was a result of my casual reading in his first Cambridge book with its surprising use of phenomenological terminology. Since at the same time Paul Ricoeur and others were interested in pointing out parallels between the two Austrian thinkers, the exploration of this puzzling episode in Wittgenstein's development seemed worth starting. Since the publication of my article in the *American Philosophical Quarterly* in 1968, a good deal of additional information about Wittgenstein's stake in his peculiar phenomenology has emerged, which I first hoped to contain within the framework of a Supplement. But the latest evidence in the shape of a developed chapter on Phenomenology in the still unpublished *Big Typescript* (# 213) has shown me that what is really needed is a complete rewriting of this article. However, this plan is not yet practicable. I therefore have to leave it at giving simply a preview of the significance of this central text in a way which allows a first hypothesis about the significance of phenomenology for Wittgenstein's entire development. Even this hypothesis, as far as it can be confirmed or refuted, will not enable us to solve all the puzzles I raised, for instance the one about the origins of his conception prior to his return to England in 1929. But it should make it possible to assess more definitely the place of Wittgenstein's phenomenology in relation to the Phenomenological Movement in general.

NOTES

¹ See Paul Ricoeur, "Phänomenologie des Wollens und Ordinary Language Approach," *Die Münchener Phänomenologie*, The Hague: 1975, pp. 105–124.

² The need for this precaution has just been demonstrated strikingly by the appearance of Husserl's communications to Winthrop Bell, which made the addition of a last-minute supplement (see Appendix, p. 229) imperative.