



BRILL

JOURNAL OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
PSYCHOLOGY 48 (2017) 39–62



brill.com/jpp

# Interiority, Exteriority and the Realm of Intentionality

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## Abstract

The realm of intentionality is definitive of phenomenology as a reflective methodology. Yet it is precisely the focus on the intentional *given* that has been condemned recently. *Speculative realism* (e.g. Meillassoux, 2008/2006) argues that phenomenology is unsatisfactory since the reduction to the intentional realm excludes the ‘external’, i.e. reality independent of consciousness. This criticism allows me to clarify the nature of intentionality. *Material phenomenology* finds, in contrast, that the intentional realm excludes the ‘inner’ (‘auto-affective life’—Henry, 1973/1963). This criticism allows me to discuss the way in which *ipseity* enters as an element of experience. Intentionality, viewed psychologically, is rightly the distinct arena of phenomenological psychology. However, there is no doubting the difficulty of maintaining a research focus precisely on the realm of intentionality; there are *aporias* of the reduction. I discuss some of the difficulties.

## Keywords

Intentionality – speculative realism – Quentin Meillassoux – material phenomenology – Michel Henry

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\* My thanks are due to Professor John Milbank (Nottingham University, UK) for introducing me to the work of Quentin Meillassoux, and to him and Dr Samuel Kimbriel (also at Nottingham) for discussion of Michel Henry. To Professor Amedeo Giorgi (Saybrook University, USA) my general indebtedness is profound, and in this paper I am grateful for his comments on William James’ psychologist’s fallacy.

## Introduction: Appearance

Phenomenology is precisely about the region of *appearance*, and so the question of externality and internality has always been an issue. In this paper I note two recent lines of work within ‘continental’ philosophy that attack the phenomenological solution to this question from different directions. Quentin Meillassoux (2008/2006), an especially clear writer within the speculative realist tendency, dismisses phenomenology for its inability to envisage an *externality*, independent of human consciousness. Michel Henry (1973/1963) in stark contrast argues that the exclusive focus on intentionality commits the phenomenologist to an external reference, and leads to an inability to envisage *internality*.

These apparently contrary lines of critique of classical phenomenology arise from a similar frustration with what are seen to be limitations of the most definitive feature of the reflective methodology of phenomenology: the intentional realm. For Husserl (e.g. 1983/1913) insisted that to scrutinize an *experience purely as experience* (that is, as intentional) an *epochē* is required, a setting aside of the presuppositions with which we approach experience. Such an *epochē* has the function of ‘reducing’ attention to what is given in intentionality. The reduction is away from experience embedded in day-to-day activities, for the taken-for-granted which are entailed in daily living must be open to scrutiny.

Phenomenology works within the reduction, meaning that it knows nothing other than that which is given in intentionality. Husserl (1983/1913: 44, §24) laid down as the ‘principle of all principles’ that cognition is legitimized by acceptance of ‘what it is presented as being, only within the limits of what is presented there.’ In Henry’s view this means that phenomenology is too late to capture pre-reflective experience, which is lived through rather than reflected on: the internal in its internality, so to speak. In the opinion of Meillassoux, the principle of all principles excludes much—most—of what there is, since we have no conscious access to the external in what we may regard as its full externality.

To be sure, phenomena can be regarded as compounded, as it were, of an internal element and an external element. But such designations are far too crude. For the external of intentionality is never pure externality, it is *noema*, the experienced object in its appearing. The internal is never pure internality. It is *noesis*, the act of experiencing—with the appropriate *noetic* mode for the specific *noema*; maybe grasping the intentional object as a perception, and perhaps at the same time as something remembered, and as something imaginary, and something with emotional force. So an object as it appears

is always ‘correlated’ with the mode of consciousness by which it is grasped. The relationship is unbreakable; neither can exist without the other. I grasp an intentional object such as a past joyful moment (*noema*) in imaginative memory (*noesis*), and the nature of memory is affected by what the remembered moment is, and the remembered moment is affected by the way I deploy memorial consciousness. It is this inseparability of *noema* and *noesis* in the constitution of the intentional realm—the world as it is for a subjectivity, and the subject as immersed in the world—that both Meillassoux and Henry campaign against. ‘Campaign’ is not too strong a word.

In what follows, I outline briefly the positions of the two authors on phenomenological philosophy and the specific implications of each author’s thought for phenomenological psychology. I counter the authors’ criticisms at least for phenomenological *psychology*, to the extent of arguing that their concerns can be set aside, for intentionality is indeed the realm of the science. The paper concludes with discussion of some difficulties for psychologists of entering into and maintaining attention within the reduction.

Phenomenological psychology does not aim at discoveries of precisely the kind experimental psychology seeks. Experimental psychology uncovers the causal conditions of human behaviour, where the individual is seen as an intrinsic part of the objective system of mechanisms of the natural world. Phenomenological psychology, instead, aims to reveal the taken-for-granted meanings by which our experience is constituted. The intentional realm is the only appropriate venue for precisely this form of investigation.

## 1 Intentionality and Externality: the ‘Great Outdoors’

The recent development of speculative realism (or speculative materialism, or object-oriented philosophy—see Bryant, Srnicek and Harman, 2011; Bryant, 2011; Dolphijn and Tuin, 2012) is largely motivated, as I have indicated, by frustration with ‘correlationism’. This is the term Meillassoux uses to refer to the structure of *noema* and *noesis* that constitutes intentionality. (He criticises in the same way all philosophy—and he believes it is indeed all post-Kantian philosophy—which adopts the view—roughly—that truth is reality *for a subject*, whether ‘reality as experienced’, or ‘reality as languaged’.) For phenomenology, his aim is to escape from what he regards as our confinement, which correlationism imposes, within the ‘merely phenomenal being of the transcendent’ (Husserl, 1983/1913: §44, 94). Meillassoux (2008/2006: 7) wishes to affirm the ‘great outdoors’.

The question of how to understand intentionality, and its relation to ‘external reality’, is a longstanding one in phenomenology, and it is as well to rehearse something of this history before moving to a discussion of Meillassoux’s position and its consequences for phenomenological psychology.

It was, of course, Brentano for whom intentionality was the definitive feature of conscious life. Though he (Brentano, 1995/1874: 88, footnote) had firmly set aside the presupposition that the object of awareness had ‘a real existence outside the mind’, Husserl believed that intentionality as defined by Brentano could nevertheless be misunderstood as picturing the world as divided into internal and external realities. In *Ideas 1*, Husserl wrote:

... [I]t should be well heeded that *here we are not speaking of a relation between some psychological occurrence—called a mental process—and another real factual existence—called an object—nor of a psychological connection taking place in Objective actuality between one and the other.* (Husserl, 1983/1913: §36, 73; his emphases)

Both the ‘mode of consciousness’ (*noesis*) and the ‘object of this consciousness’ (*noema*) are within personal experience. In elaboration of the meaning of intentionality, the contributors to the book edited by Drummond and Embree (1992) all insist on the importance of the question of how to distinguish the ‘object as it is intended’ (that is the thing ‘in’ consciousness) from ‘the object that is intended’ (in case there might be an ‘external thing’). Though Husserl regarded the object that is intended as subject to the *epochē*, nevertheless the relationship is a matter of debate, for there is a sense in which Husserl was not quite free of a kind of background dualism. The primary aim of Husserl was to shift the attitude of the researcher from such-and-such a feature of the everyday world in which that feature is a taken-for-granted aspect of unreflective activity, to the contemplation of that feature as it appears as a phenomenon of conscious awareness (i.e. to perform the *epochē* and thereby achieve the ‘reduction’). However, somehow, he makes a concession to objectivity simply by his emphasis on the ‘interiority’ of the phenomenon. Though the dualism of consciousness and the world is put out of play by the *epochē*, the very fact of wanting to put it out of play suggests there *is* a separately-describable objective world. This hint of dualism can, without care, be effectively replicated in the distinction between *noema* and *noesis*.

Such a concern underlies part of the deviation from Husserl shown in the work of Martin Heidegger (see Ashworth, 2006). It is hard to pinpoint the nature of appearance in its appearing that we have in Heidegger’s corpus. We can certainly say that Heidegger collapses any distinction between the ‘objective’

*it is* and the 'subjective' *it seems*, and this logically entails a new understanding of the reduction. As Hart (1992: 114) puts it:

... it makes no sense to ask whether a true being *corresponds* to the *noema*. . . . This is not a referring to something existing independently but is the being itself.

Taking this further, Heidegger considers that for one existing in the human way,

the Dasein's [his *term of art* for self] comportments have an *intentional character* and . . . on the basis of this intentionality the subject already stands in relation to things that it itself is not. (Heidegger, 1988/1927: §15, 155)

Intentionality is not now 'mental'. The human being as an embodied agent is in intentional relation with the world: Dasein's *comportments* are intentional. The explicitness of this move from the 'interior' (though this is not quite what Husserl meant) to being-in-the-world is of great significance. Heidegger wants to say that our existence is built on our already being in a world:

... [B]efore the experiencing of beings as extant, world is already understood; that is, we, the Dasein, in apprehending beings, are always already in a world. Being-in-the-world itself belongs to the determination of our own being. . . . [The world] has Dasein's mode of being. (Heidegger, 1988/1927: §15, 166)

So the existence of Dasein is being-in-the-world. But does this mean that the world is, in each instance, subjective and relative to the individual, or does it mean that individual existence is determined by external objectivity? This is Heidegger's response:

The world is something 'subjective,' presupposing that we correspondingly define subjectivity with regard to this phenomenon of world. To say that the world is subjective is to say that it belongs to Dasein so far as this being is a mode of being-in-the-world. The world is something which the 'subject' 'projects outward,' as it were, from within itself. But are we permitted to speak here of an inner and an outer? What can this projection mean? . . . So far as the Dasein exists a world is cast-forth with Dasein's being. . . . Two things are to be established: (1) being-in-the-world

belongs to the concept of existence; (2) factually existent Dasein, factual being-in-the-world, is always already being-with intraworldly beings. (Heidegger, 1988/1927: §15(c), 168)

It seems that Heidegger wants to say that to exist in the human way (Dasein) is to already find oneself as within the structure of meaning designated by 'world.' This means that, in apprehending something, that thing is apprehended as meaningful within the world. (Heidegger, 1988/1927, §15(c), 170.)

It is plain that Heidegger is now committed to a phenomenological approach in which *noema* and *noesis* may be separable for the purposes of analysis but they are inextricable as bodily lived experience. Heidegger also emphasised that the meaning of the phenomenon is embedded in its rich context—the world. This leads to a new perspective on the Husserlian insistence on the immanence of the *noema*, and his setting aside in phenomenological description of the question of reality. As we have seen, such a description of the phenomenological approach could be regarded as encouraging a certain misunderstanding. In fact, as Heidegger saw—and surely Husserl would not disagree—there is no access to 'reality' that is impersonal. Indeed, the notion 'objective, impersonal reality' is a fanciful one. The world *is* our lifeworld. If in the *epochē*, Husserl could be understood as implicitly conceding the possibility of a non-existential way of getting in touch with what is, for Heideggerian phenomenology this is a misunderstanding and the world is the lifeworld and Dasein is understandable only as being-in-the-world. Any dualism of the physical world and the mental world is not viable. The call of phenomenology is to seize afresh the world as our habitation.

The fullest and richest development of the concept of intentionality, deriving from both Husserl and Heidegger, is certainly that of the Merleau-Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968/1964). His earlier statements concerning intentionality, such as the affirmation that I am 'a subject destined to the world' (1962/1945: xi), re-affirm what is in effect the Heideggerian position ('all comportment is within and towards a world'). Developing this, Merleau-Ponty provides an unswerving phenomenological account (that is, it is within the reduction) of the 'nature' of that world for us. He points out that we have a primordial 'perceptual faith' (1968/1964: 4–5) in the being of the world. Our embodiment entails a 'membership' of the world which engages us with it, or makes us part of it. Immensely importantly, this world in which we are enmeshed is a world infused with our meanings and projects: it is our lifeworld. It is not alien but *flesh of our flesh*.

Let us take this as the general understanding of the realm of intentionality, at least in current existential phenomenology. The 'correlationism' of *noema*

and *noesis* remains an abstraction which might suggest the pretence that the external and internal can be prised apart in intentionality, whereas we have seen that the distinction is dangerous, and may only be used analytically.

The aspect of the 'correlation' which Meillassoux rails against is precisely the understanding that the world is nothing other than the world for consciousness, the lifeworld. He wishes to be able to say something about putative entities that are independent of, or may be discussed independently of, any mention of the human agent.

Meillassoux (2008/2006) begins by drawing our attention to certain supposed entities or events which, he is sure, all informed people would agree in regarding as realities, but which he denies are approachable by the phenomenological method. So, for example, we may take the sequence of events in which the universe in a very dense state exploded and began its process of formation. We take such events as true but they cannot be addressed as *phenomena* because consciousness was *not there*: no such event could be an intentional object. Meillassoux seems to be ignoring modes of intentionality such as imagination and reasoning can be brought into play; and he apparently implies that perceptual presence is necessary. But this is only apparent. What he is most fundamentally criticising is this move of phenomenologists: (a) The 'big bang' really occurred as the beginning of the universe. (b) But such an event of reality cannot be envisaged within a philosophy for which the realm of intentionality is all. (c) What can be envisaged is the 'big bang' *for us*. This, Meillassoux rejects most insistently. Even though not phenomenologically grounded, philosophy has to accept the legitimacy of ('ancestral') statements such as

... 'event X occurred at such-and-such a time *prior to* the existence of thought' and not ... 'event X occurred prior to the existence of thought *for thought*'. ... [i.e.] thought *can think* that event X *can actually have occurred* prior to all thought, and indifferently to it. (Meillassoux, 2008/2006: 121–122)

Meillassoux wants to be able to envisage an externality that is not dependent on the subjective gaze. Surprisingly, however, he does not do this by dismissing intentionality out of hand. Rather, he argues that, if intentionality and other forms of correlationalism are not to devolve to absolute idealism, they must accept the possibility of entities and events outside the realm of human awareness. Indeed, more than this, Meillassoux demands that correlationalism must add a further move to those just listed. (d) It is absolutely true that there may be states-of-affairs such as the 'big bang' outside the correlation of thought and world, *noema* and *noesis*.

The only way for Correlationalism to remain different from Idealism is to replace the absolute status of the thought-world correlate, not with finitude and ignorance about the otherness of the world, but with absolute knowledge that the world might be other than we think. (Harman, 2015: 27, 28)

In my view, and in Meillassoux's, this line departs from phenomenology. Speculative realism is not phenomenological. In fact he (2008/2006: 127) asserts:

[E]very mathematical statement describes an entity which is essentially contingent, yet capable of existing in a world devoid of humanity—regardless of whether this entity is a world, a law, or an object.

Indeed, as an instance, Meillassoux argues, harking back to 'an incredibly obsolete philosophical past' (2008/2006: 1), that primary and secondary qualities can be distinguished, in that

all those aspects of the object that can be formulated in mathematical terms can be meaningfully conceived as properties of the object in itself. . . . [Such primary qualities] can be meaningfully turned into properties of the thing not only as it is with me, but also as it is without me. (Meillassoux, 2008/2006: 3)

Thus Meillassoux wishes to establish the right of philosophy (contra the tradition from Descartes and Kant) to envisage entities without paying attention to their relevance for, or relatedness to the human envisaging them.

It ought to be mentioned—though the significance of this aspect of his philosophy is not significant for our present purposes—that Meillassoux adds to the list which I have been building up a most controversial final point. (e) The 'great outside' is not bound by the law of sufficient reason, by which every effect has a cause. The laws put forward by the sciences which lay down regularities, are not to be assumed. All is contingent. The uncompleted task for Meillassoux is to show how it is that there nevertheless *are* regularities. In fact he does work on the basis of the lawfulness of events, despite holding the view that the laws that govern the events can alter. (The subtitle of his most significant work, *After Finitude* is *The necessity of contingency*, reflecting the thought mentioned in (d) and (e) in the list above.)

Taking the central argument of Meillassoux as I have stated it, the stance is avowedly anti-phenomenological in that it absolutely refuses to accept the



determinative role of intentionality. However, to move to phenomenological *psychology*, I wish to make three points about Meillassoux's emphasis on non-human externality:

If accepted as a viable critique of phenomenological *philosophy* (about which one might be dubious on epistemological grounds) it nevertheless does not undermine the work of phenomenological *psychology*, which must be absolutely committed to intentionality. Whether philosophy should be able to speak of externality independently of human perception and agency or not, phenomenological psychology as such has nothing to say about the 'great outdoors' in Meillassoux's sense, for its realm is specifically appearance in its appearing *for a person*—the intentional, with its lifeworld of variegated phenomena—viewed psychologically.

Putting on one side the question of its adequacy as a critique of phenomenological philosophy, Meillassoux's thinking does helpfully highlight a distinction (which we make, possibly in the face of Meillassoux's own purposes) between phenomenological psychology and experimental psychology. As is well known, there is a strong contemporary movement seeking to draw on 'phenomenological findings' as a resource for cognitive psychology (e.g. Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008). But the necessity of maintaining a distinction between cognitive psychology and phenomenological psychology is well brought out by considering Meillassoux's position. Cognitive psychology takes an external, 'objective' standpoint and approaches psychology precisely in the spirit of the mathematicised sciences of the 'great outdoors'. The attempt to *naturalise* phenomenological psychology would be to disconnect the phenomenological discipline from its role of describing the first-person lifeworld, reversing the reduction, and casting those very 'findings' adrift from their moorings in the *epochē* (see Moran, 2013). Phenomenological psychology and cognitive psychology must be preserved as separate enterprises.

To return to Meillassoux's argument as a challenge to phenomenological philosophy—if the critique were accepted, it would certainly subvert the idea that phenomenological psychology can be founded in Husserl's larger project of developing phenomenology as 'first philosophy', providing the conceptual underpinnings of the special sciences (e.g. Husserl, 1977/1962). Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty already moved in a direction that denied foundationalism. Without a foundation in phenomenology as first philosophy, phenomenological psychology becomes more obviously postmodern. We can remain agnostic on the viability of Meillassoux's critique of phenomenological philosophy for it does not seem to me to affect the scientific discipline.

In response to Meillassoux, then, the particular problematic of phenomenological psychology does not interest itself in the 'outdoors'. But it may be

appropriate to distinguish more firmly between phenomenology as first philosophy and phenomenological psychology—accepting the possibility of phenomenological psychology as ‘unfounded’, and to make plain the distinction between phenomenological psychology and the aims of experimental psychology.

## 2 Intentionality and Interiority: *ipseity*

If Meillassoux’s frustration with a philosophy whose area of concern is nothing other than the intentional realm, is due to its apparent inability to address externality—the great outdoors—Michel Henry in contrast expresses great dissatisfaction with what he takes to be phenomenology’s lack of access to the *internal*. By the internal, Henry means in particular that sense of self which is distinct from the self-as-object manifested in intentionality. This non-intentional sense of self is entailed in the *mineness* of experience. It is intrinsically *affective*. And it does not, Henry insists, refer to ‘externality’. It has a mode of manifestation that is quite different from intentionality.

For classical phenomenology, the self as that which has *characteristics* is only accessible as an intentional object. In contrast, Henry wishes to establish the truth of the self as an immediacy. Let us label this immediate self as *ipseity*. Take, as an extreme example of what Henry disavows, Sartre’s jubilant assertion that apparently celebrates the transcendence (externality) of the self:

[There] is no longer an ‘inner life’ . . . because there is no longer anything which is an *object* and which can at the same time partake of the intimacy of consciousness. Doubt, remorse, the so-called ‘mental crises of conscience’, etc.—in short, all the content of intimate diaries—become sheer *performance*. (Sartre, 1957/1937: 93–94, his italics)

So the key to Henry’s standpoint, the necessity of radical immanence, is the question of the mode by which we can be conscious (of) *self*. Merleau-Ponty states the situation of selfhood as it appears in the phenomenology of intentionality: ‘There is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself,’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1945: xi) and, ‘Where in the body are we to put the seer, since evidently there is in the body only “shadows stuffed with organs”, that is, more of the visible.’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964: 138).

(These externalising statements are emphatic: the self is an intentional object. However, we will note below that the existentialists do seem to recognise the minimalist presence to itself, or mineness, of consciousness.)

Henry, wishing to establish our *direct access* to selfhood, ipseity, introduced a second mode of manifestation in addition to intentionality. A mode of manifestation other than intentionality is required, not just in order to provide a mode by which phenomenology may acknowledge *ipseity*, but also because intentionality as such lacks foundation. Phenomenology is, according to Henry, not primarily aimed at the production of detailed and insightful descriptions of specific phenomena such as the phenomenology of hope, or the phenomenology of imagination. Rather, it is most fundamentally concerned with the very process of manifestation—phenomenality (Henry, 2008/1990: 2) or the question of appearance in its appearing. If so, the phenomenality of intentionality as such is in question, and there is an immediate problem. If we are to address intentionality as itself a phenomenon, it becomes the *noema* within a further intentionality, and so on—an infinite regress (see Protevi, 2013).

*Auto-affective life* provides a way of solving this problem. This is a mode of manifestation that has no exteriority, it is a mode of consciousness which is not reflective, and not representational (so there is no structure of the type *noema/noesis*); it is in fact the foundation of intentional consciousness. In putting forward auto-affectivity as a solution to the problem of infinite regress, it has been said that Henry is allied with those philosophers committed to the proposition that experience is necessarily owned (Alweiss, 2009), and that ‘ownership’ requires demonstration. If so, the claim that auto-affective life is a mode of manifestation essentially entailing ownership of experience is weighty. A hazard here is that one would expect that such a demonstration would be a manifestation to *self*. It would seem that we are in danger of another infinite regress. But in his account of self-enclosed, ‘invisible’ auto-affective life Henry circumvents the problem of the dative of manifestation—it is not a presentation *to* a self. Auto-affective life is selfhood in its private *ipseity*, and as such it is indubitable, ‘[Life] always means that which I may not doubt because it is what I am, the radical passivity of sentience itself in all its various tonalities.’ (Jarvis, 2009: 363). I would take the view that the *ipseity* of experience is simply the intrinsic *mineness* of experience. Neither the implication that there is a presentation ‘to me’ (this would be an intentionality), nor that the mineness brings with it personal characteristics (for *ipseity* is anonymous) are entailed.

Henry relates auto-affectivity to Husserl’s own discussion of *hylē*, the unstructured, pre-reflective and non-intentional ‘stuff’ which will become an intentional object (e.g. Husserl, 1983/1913: §85, 246–250; see Whitehead, 2015). This *impression* is the event of a non-intentional mode of manifestation. *Hylē* is not constituted by an act of consciousness but is purely given. So the problem of the foundation of intentionality is solved by the prior event of non-intentional, hyletic ‘revelation’. This distinct mode of manifestation is purely

*immanent*—since it is not intentional it does not ‘refer’—and it provides, as it were, the matter for intentional phenomenality. Hyletic (or material) phenomenology is immediate, immanent *self-awareness*. It is also essentially *affective*.

Zahavi (2005: 23, 65–72; 231) emphasises the commitment of Husserl (in tension with the theory of intentionality) to the idea of a flow of consciousness in a mode of which we are *not* intentionally aware. Pre-reflective experience is certainly recognised by Husserl, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty as well as Henry. However, phenomenology is reflection on the pre-reflective, and it would only be in intentional experience that *hylē*, the pre-reflective, or auto-affective life could come to be thematised, subjected to scientific consideration, described.

*Ipseity* and affectivity will be treated to detailed consideration below, but we ought to weigh at this stage the viability of Henry’s (and Husserl’s) account of *hylē*. For there is a significant question regarding the phenomenology of this ‘stuff’ and the claim that it is unstructured. Dermot Moran (2005: 114) points out that, in fact, the world is always a highly structured set of sensory perceivings: ‘There is a certain ‘affectedness’ of the senses in a way that predisposes the object to appear in a certain way’. So the idea of *hylē* is problematical. Merleau-Ponty does indeed question it both at the beginning and at the end of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962/1948: 3–5, 405).

Pure sensation will be the experience of an undifferentiated, instantaneous, dotlike impact. . . . [T]his notion corresponds to nothing in our experience . . . (p. 3)

[E]lementary perception is therefore already charged with meaning . . . (p. 4)

He goes on to argue that it is false to assume that there is an unstructured flow of sensation that becomes meaningful after having been somehow ‘worked on’ cognitively.

The fact is that experience offers nothing like this, and we shall never, using the [conception of the world as meaningless] as our starting-point, understand what a *field of vision* is (p. 5).

Work within the psychology of perception has more than substantiated Merleau-Ponty’s criticism of the notion of *hylē*. In particular, James Gibson argues for the abandonment of the notion of sensory input. The idea of raw sensation leading to refined perception (and therefore the parallel view that material phenomenology provides the stuff which becomes intentional

phenomenology's noematic correlate) is a misconception. Gibson points to such things as the complex relationship between voluntary movement and the world as a perceptual array. Thus, in *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*:

[T]he inputs available for **perception** may not be the same as the inputs available for **sensation**. There are inputs for perception, and also for the control of performance, that have no discoverable sensations to correspond. The haptic system ['grabbing'—the use of several sensory and motor modes to acquire perceptual information]... is an apparatus by which the individual gets information about both the environment and his body. He feels an object relative to the body and the body relative to an object. It is the perceptual system by which animals and men are literally in touch with the environment. (Gibson, 1966: 97, 98, his emphasis)

The world is not meaningless sensation; as it is dwelt in, it provides informative 'affordances'. The idea of unstructured *hylē*, then, indicative of a material phenomenology *temporally* prior to intentionality seems unsupported. This seems to threaten Henry's project. But it is threatened only if one maintains a cognitivist view that *hylē* becomes *noema* in temporal sequence. Instead, affectivity, the mineness of experience (Fasching, 2009) and the other features of material phenomenology may be regarded as *concomitants* of intentionality as two parallel modes of manifestation, auto-affectivity silently accompanying intentionality. James G. Hart (1999: 187) has a view close to this.

To take up again the notion of immanent *ipseity*, Henry sees his uncompromising rejection of the centrality of intentionality as allowing the manifestation of *ipseity* as auto-affective life. Right at the start of *The Essence of Manifestation* we have this negative statement:

This book was born of a refusal, the refusal of the very philosophy from which it had sprung... What I want to say is that, regardless of the degree of adequacy in its theoretical formulation... the ecstatic becoming-present of Being allows its most intimate essence, i.e. that which makes it life and each of us living beings, to escape it. (Henry, 1973/1963: ix)

The vehemence of Henry's critique of classical phenomenology may be puzzling, because we have seen that Husserl himself also wished to emphasise the interiority of intentionality. The intentional object is manifested to the conscious ego; the connection with any world outside consciousness is subject

to the *epochē*. Why, then, does Henry dissent from Husserl? Partly, of course, it is because of the existentialist development initiated by Heidegger. As we have seen, in Heidegger's thinking there is a refusal to accept the meaningfulness of the distinction between the immanent object of consciousness and the transcendent object (once it is understood that the world is my lifeworld). For Henry, this more explicit exteriorization is an expulsion of 'that which makes it life and each of us living beings,' in favour of the 'becoming-present of Being'—the *representation* of the 'external object' to consciousness, and a correlative inaccessibility to consciousness of its own selfhood.

Externalisation indeed, but we need care here. For 'externalised' selfhood is not regarded by existential phenomenology as lacking personal reference. Heidegger points out that we find our *selves* in the world (the world speaks of my interests and concerns), and it is this world to which comportment is directed. So the intentional object is transcendent but *mine* because the world is my lifeworld. However, for Henry, even if my lifeworld does tell of my interests, cares, and sedimented history, this is *not* mineness in the sense of carrying the flavour, the self-awareness of immanent 'life'.

Affectivity is the essence of auto-affection . . . it is the manner in which the essence [i.e. roughly consciousness as such] receives itself, feels itself, in such a way that this 'self-feeling' as 'self-feeling by self', presupposed by the essence and constituting it, discovers itself in it, in affectivity, as an effective self-feeling by self, namely, as feeling. (Henry, 1973/1963: 462, all originally italicized)

Note that Henry (1973/1963: 465) continues by insisting we should not expect to see the full gamut of emotions in auto-affectivity. (At least, in my view this is the most defensible reading of his view of *pathos*, but see his discussion of psychoanalysis, Henry, 1993/1985.) *Pathos*, or suffering/enjoyment, is beyond positivity or negativity (Henry, 2007: 255–256). It is foundational affect, is not characterizable more specifically. In fact, in contrast to the assumption in phenomenology generally, *pathos* is independent of the events of the lifeworld, being simply the tonus of self-awareness, the mineness of existence. Yet it is the ground of particular emotions and feelings, including the feeling tone of thought. The significance of affect for Henry's project of a phenomenology of pre-reflective life, aware of itself in its mineness, is clear. *Pathos* founds the way in which experience *matters* to the living individual.

Auto-affective life is immanently self-aware. But it should be recognised that the self of auto-affectivity is quite close to the non-thetic *awareness of itself* of consciousness acknowledged by existential phenomenology (Kelly,

2004: 266). For Sartre, subjectivity is precisely the pre-reflective self-awareness of *not being* the object of intentionality (see Zahavi's, 2007, discussion), and consciousness is definitively present to itself.

It is important to emphasise that auto-affective life, since it does not *refer*, is not connected to the events of the lifeworld, it cannot carry worldly meaning, it cannot relate to any notion of agency, and the intimate, indeed inextricably unified, elements of immanence do not seem to permit any form of selfhood that is *personal*; it is anonymous. The mineness of experience does not entail the characteristics associated with the social or personal identity of the experiencer. The distinction between auto-affective mineness and the personal selfhood which may be an intentional object is central.

Finally, even though we *are* it as consciousnesses, auto-affective life can only reach reflection and lifeworldly meaning when it enters the intentional realm. If *ipseity* and *pathos* are defensible as definitive of what we most intimately are as existing, nevertheless, Henry's sometimes emphatic downplaying of intentionality is, in my view, unsupportable. The lifeworld is our habitation, and is where our anonymous *ipseity* reaches description as selfhood and our *pathos* may motivate agency.

What, then, are the implications for phenomenological psychology of Henry's radical interiority?

As psychologists, we may note the critique of intentionality in which Henry argues that this mode of manifestation is lacking philosophical foundation. If intentionality is the sole mode of manifestation for phenomenology, it must be founded through becoming the intentional object of a further intentionality. This would mean entering an infinite regress. Auto-affectivity as a non-intentional mode of manifestation may be postulated as foundational of intentionality. However, in my opinion, phenomenological *psychology* does not need, for its own scientific purposes, any guarantee of a foundational sort. As we saw with Meillassoux, phenomenological psychology may be pursued without philosophical security.

Much more interesting is Henry's demand that we pay attention to the *ipseity* and *pathos* that constitute auto-affective life. His understanding of interiority points to immediate, non-intentional selfhood and emotional tonus, and this can be acknowledged as basic to subjectivity. *Ipseity* is about our subjectivity as such, and is anonymous. Similarly *pathos* does not specify some specific emotion or set of emotions. *Pathos* is about the emotional fact that experience 'matters'.

The non-intentional nature of auto-affective life means that the way in which this 'I' relates to the lifeworld can only be through the manifestation of intentionality. The identification Henry forges between auto-affective life and

a non-worldly *hyle* is problematical. Auto-affective life can only register as psychologically meaningful (a) insofar as it shown phenomenologically to be the necessary condition of that which is unfolded in intentionality and (b) when in reflection it becomes itself the stuff of intentionality.

To be more specific, *in phenomenological psychology, auto-affective life has an equivalent status to 'the great outdoors'*. It is a kind of 'objective' selfhood. But *ipseity* and *pathos* must become 'what I seem to be' in intentional manifestation for it to enter imagination, perception, reflection, etc. It is this 'what I seem to be' that has phenomenal being. Phenomenological psychology will describe identity, the person's sense of agency, their feeling of their own presence and voice in the situation, etc. as these *appear*.

However, very importantly, if *ipseity* and *pathos* are shown to be necessary conditions for a meaningful human lifeworld, this constitutes an obstacle to the naturalisation of phenomenology. If the description of a phenomenon has as a central feature, a paramount essence, the engagement of *my* affective-selfhood in any lifeworldly event at all, this cannot be naturalised.

In summary of this situation, Henry can be accorded significant praise for drawing attention to the *ipseity* and *pathos* of immediate self-awareness. However, this is of significance for phenomenological psychology in the context of a re-emphasis on the centrality of intentionality. Intentionality must be given its due in Henry's phenomenology.

### 3 Phenomenological Psychology

Let us summarise, and consider the lessons which study of Meillassoux and Henry have taught. Recall:

Phenomenological psychology does not aim at discoveries of precisely the kind experimental psychology seeks. Experimental psychology uncovers the causal conditions of human behaviour, where the individual is seen as an intrinsic part of the objective system of mechanisms of the natural world. Phenomenological psychology, instead, aims to reveal the taken-for-granted meanings by which our experience is constituted.

Within this definition of phenomenological psychology, aided by the discussion of the two recent thinkers we must clarify intentionality as the realm of investigation of the science, and clarify the reduction to the realm of intentionality which is the principle methodological move of phenomenological psychology.



Study of the criticisms of phenomenology by Henry and Meillassoux reinforce the following three observations. Firstly, the ‘great outdoors’ detached from any consciousness is not of concern to phenomenological psychology. The idea of a reality distinct from experience does not play a part in the realm of intentionality, which is the area of investigation of phenomenological psychology. The world is my lifeworld. *It is* and *it seems* are not distinguishable. Secondly, *ipseity* and *pathos* are similarly of concern to phenomenological psychology only insofar as they are implicated in the phenomena manifested by intentionality (specifically, in the mineness and the emotional tonus of the lifeworld). The world is precisely *my* lifeworld. Thirdly, phenomenological psychology *presupposes neither* that the intentional world is part of the natural world, *nor* that the intentional world is pervaded by *ipseity* and *pathos*. If these come to light, they do so as part of the meaning of what is apparent in its appearing in the intentional realm. This statement should not be seen as in any way downplaying the meaning *from the viewpoint of consciousness* of the world. As was said repeatedly by Merleau-Ponty (e.g. 1962/ 1945: vii), from the start the world exists and has meaning for me. Nor should it be seen as downplaying the fact that the lifeworld has significance as mine—again, *from the viewpoint of consciousness*.

We may also note that there is no need to seek a philosophical foundation for phenomenological psychology. It is sufficiently specified by the reduction to the lifeworld. If this foundationlessness draws phenomenological psychology away from Husserl’s project, this does not affect the focus or weight of the discipline.

So let us consider the reduction, intentionality, and its phenomena.

The reduction, and the *epochē* by which it is attained, are badly specified if they are simply seen as a set of self-denials whereby the researcher sets aside certain possible assumptions. This bracketing is involved, but it is motivated by the aim of attaining access to the lifeworld. Perhaps ‘bridling’ (Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nyström, 2001: 121) is a better metaphor because the direction of the ‘horse’ is toward the lifeworld. By actioning the *epochē*, the investigator turns from the natural attitude, in which our awareness of things is not attended to, but is built into our ordinary activities with the implicit function of realising our day-to-day projects, to a focal interest on the awareness of phenomena as given in consciousness. To define *epochē* as bracketing reality or suspending the question of the reality of the object is correct but misleading because it neglects the positive function of the move. Though Zahavi (2007: 30) elides ‘reality’ and *noema* in the following, if we understand ‘reality’ within the reduction he makes an important point about the meaning of the methodological move entailed in the *epochē*.

The purpose of the *epochē* and reduction is not to doubt, neglect, abandon, or exclude reality from consideration . . . [but] to suspend a certain dogmatic *attitude* towards reality, thereby allowing us to focus more narrowly and directly on reality just as it is given.

The reduction brings afresh the lifeworld and its phenomena to awareness. It is as if there were a ‘real world’ which required a re-orientation of attention: what is done in the reduction is a seizing again of the world as our habitation: flesh of our flesh.

An individual’s experience of a phenomenon is not free-floating or abstract, but is set in that person’s specific lifeworld. Research will seek the essential ‘conditions of possibility’ of such-and-such an experience—the features without which the experience would not be one of *this* kind. But in any particular personal instance, the experience will be thoroughly linked with other aspects of the individual’s lifeworld. Research therefore alternates between the idiographic understanding of an individual’s experience within the lifeworld, and the description of the essential features of a specific experience.

It can be argued that there is an extra problem in approaching the lifeworld of *another* in phenomenological psychology. To turn attention to phenomena in their appearing in one’s own experience is one thing. To attempt to describe someone else’s experience under the reduction is said to be more problematical (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; Langdridge, 2007: 107). I would dispute this. The mistake is to think that access to one’s own experience as a matter of contemplative description is straightforward. In fact detachment from the natural attitude, in which experience is bound up with one’s own concerns such that phenomena as such are submerged within projects of daily life, is a difficult process. The assistance of an interlocutor, who has a different lifeworld, in a research process in which one’s taken-for-granted perceptions, imaginings and emotions can be held up to the light and subjected to more intense imaginative variation, may lead to a more rigorous and profound description.

The task of developing a description within the realm of intentionality is not straightforward, then. Firstly, there are *aporias*—points of puzzlement—of the reduction and of the *epochē*. Take as examples the following: (a) a researcher (whether describing their own experience or that of another) has of course to begin, at least, with habitual categories normally embedded in the language, and (b) the change in one’s attitude from immersion in a personal project to the phenomenological attitude can hardly be a pure switch: one remains the same person, and ‘to do phenomenology’ is a project. Such *aporias* are not, however, vicious. Descriptions of a lifeworld and its phenomena require

self-critical scrutiny. Does our language describe what it is like? Attempts to perform the *epochē* are continually in danger sliding away from a commitment to the reduction.

Too concerned with such *aporias* and insufficiently aware that the reduction, the sphere of intentionality, is the definitive arena of phenomenology, some researchers (e.g. Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) argue that, if the *epochē* cannot be consistently achieved, an interpretative moment is inevitable. However, there is a need, not always noted, to control interpretation so as to elucidate, rather than direct the interrogation, of intentionality.

A candid methodological account by Heidegger of his approach to interpretation may be seen as a warning by phenomenological psychologists:

Every exposition must of course not only draw upon the substance of the text; it must also . . . imperceptibly give to the text something out of its own substance. This part that is added is what the layman, judging on the basis of what he holds to be the content of the text, constantly perceives as a meaning read in, and with the right that he claims for himself criticises as an arbitrary imposition. Still, while a right elucidation never understands the text better than the author understood it, it does surely understand it differently. Yet this difference must be of such a kind as to touch upon the Same toward which the elucidated text is thinking. (Heidegger, 1977/1952: 58)

Philipse (1998: 49) points out that Heidegger's openness about 'adding extra' is astonishing in that he recommends that the interpretative surplus is introduced without differentiating it: it is to be introduced covertly. Moreover, surplus meaning derives from the interests of the interpreter. Philipse (1998: 49) argues that an interpreter who is properly conscientious should make plain the difference between any interpretative hypothesis and the text under consideration. Maybe Heidegger's viewpoint on interpretation could be defended in terms of the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1972/1927: 188) or by Gadamer's (1989/1960: 277) discussion of the role of prejudice. But Philipse's alarm means that we cannot take interpretation lightly. Nor can we simply say that our phenomenology is interpretative without ensuring that it *remains within the reduction*. (Heidegger's reference to 'the Same' cannot be taken as conceding this necessity—it refers to his view that interpretation brings to light concealed thought relating to the philosophy of Being).

We may assume that interpretation in the sense used by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) in their 'interpretive phenomenological analysis', remains within

the realm of intentionality and is not directed by other concerns (as Heidegger seems to be proposing). The test is this: *Whose world is being portrayed* by the research? To remain within the realm of intentionality is the ongoing methodological challenge of phenomenological psychology.

The question of remaining within the reduction in phenomenological-psychological research is brought to the fore in William James' detailed development of the idea that researchers have a tendency to project their scientific or personal view onto the conscious experience of the research participant, rather than paying attention to the experience itself, in its own terms, as experienced. He called this error the 'psychologist's fallacy' (Ashworth, 2009; Giorgi, 1981; Bird, 1986; Reed, 1996, and Wilshire, 1968).

James's account of the fallacy in *The Principles of Psychology* begins like this:

The *great* snare of the psychologist is the *confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact* about which he is making his report. I shall hereafter call this the 'psychologist's fallacy' *par excellence*. . . . The psychologist . . . stands outside of the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its object are objects for him. Now when it is a *cognitive* state (percept, thought, concept, etc.), he ordinarily has no other way of naming it than as the thought, percept, etc., *of that object*. He himself meanwhile, knowing the self-same object in *his* way, gets easily led to suppose that the thought which is *of* it, knows it in the same way in which he knows it, although this is often very far from being the case. (James, 1950/1890, vol 1: 196. James's emphases.)

So the researcher, without reflection, can assume that the research participant is experiencing as they would from the research perspective. James is warning that this sharing of standpoint is a false presupposition. Effectively it is a loss of footing in the epochē. A number of forms of the psychologist's fallacy can be listed (Ashworth, 2009). They are all ways in which the researcher can inadvertently move from a focus on the intentional realm, the lived experience of the research participant.

### Conclusion

I have outlined the thought of two 'continental' philosophers who share a profound resistance to the definitive characteristic of phenomenology, its focus on intentionality as its realm. Phenomenology knows nothing outside the reduction to appearance in or for consciousness.

Meillassoux points to features of the world which he would regard as independent of any conscious knowing—the ‘great outdoors’—and demands that philosophy be permitted to address these (contingent) entities. Henry argues that the intentional realm requires as foundation a distinct mode of manifestation, auto-affective life, out of which come both *ipseity* as the mineness of experience, and the affective weight of such selfhood (*pathos*). Whatever the validity of these lines of criticism for phenomenological *philosophy*, I have argued that they do not undermine the phenomenological *psychological* endeavour. The ‘great outdoors’ is not of concern to our science insofar as *is* and *seem* are the same in description of lifeworlds and of phenomena under the reduction. *Ipseity* and *pathos* matter to phenomenological psychology insofar as that the mineness of experience and its affective weight appear, presented within the structure of intentionality.

These arguments add moment to the claim that phenomenological psychology and experimental psychology must be regarded as separate enterprises, for *ipseity* as a feature of the lifeworld is certainly not implicated in the ‘great outdoors’, whereas experimental psychology is precisely the venture aimed at showing that human behaviour and experience is part and parcel of the impersonal causal system of the ‘objective world’, ideally mathematicisable.

Having established again in the face of the attacks of Meillassoux and Henry that, at least for phenomenological psychology, the realm of intentionality is exactly the arena of research and that clarification of experience under the reduction is the aim of the discipline, it is plain that this faces important challenges. I insist that the methodological move that takes the researcher into the reduction, the *epochē*, is essential. The reduction is where the lifeworld and its phenomena are found. However, the *epochē* is not straightforward.

Recent psychological approaches (such as those of Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) have noted certain *aporias* of the reduction, but have not apparently seen that great caution needs to be observed when trying to develop psychological findings by moving to an interpretative mode. Heidegger (1977/1952) appeared happy to apply interpretation to texts *because* it enabled him to ‘show’ that they had certain characteristics of interest to the philosophy of Being. In phenomenological psychology, since—as we have seen—everything depends on remaining within the reduction, interpretative work is justified just so far as it can be seen to stay with and illuminate lived experience. It then escapes the psychologist’s fallacy of William James, where the intentional realm is missed or subverted by inadequacy in continual attention to the *epochē*. Research within the reduction is definitive of phenomenological psychology. This is true whether the research participant is the researcher themselves, or one or several others.

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