

CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I

Thus for we have been following the thoughts and ideas of Edmund Husserl in an interpretive and expository mode with special reference to relevant texts and now when we are at our journey's end we propose to look back and do a bit of comparative enterprise to see if certain ideas and concepts could be found in consonance with the ideas and notions that went to constitute the world of Husserl's thought. But prior to our proposed project, it will be worth recalling certain features about Husserl.

Husserl studied mathematics at Leipzig, Berlin and Vienna, where he attended lectures by Brentano, and later he taught philosophy at Halle, Göttingen and Freiburg. Husserl set out to develop the doctrine of phenomenology into a pure non-empirical science. He criticized psychologism and naturalism, claiming that a study of the meaningful use of words must rest on insight, not generalizations from experience. Again, later he presented a programme for the systematic investigation of consciousness (the fundamental undeniable existent) and its objects. It is of the essence of objects to be corrective to states of mind. No distinction can be made between what is perceived and the perception of it. Experience is not limited to apprehension through the senses but includes whatever can be object of thought, e.g., mathematical entities, moods, desires, etc.

Phenomenology is a method of doing philosophy, that is, to get a direct access to objects of thought. Conscious thought is characterized by intentionality, but in spite of the directedness of thought towards its object, our naturalistic inclinations intervene in between, and the object is overlaid with associations and projections from areas of culture, religion and habitual judgements. These require to be set aside in order to have a clear view of the essence behind the appearance. In point of fact, this is a perennial predicament that visits us in most of our serious engagements with truth. There is the classic prayer for the removal of the variegated mask from over the face of the truth in the *Īsopaniṣad*; the Mahāyāna Buddhism as propounded by Nagarjuna holds the twin aspects of truth, the *Samvṛiti* that covers the ultimate or *pāramārthika* truth, which repels all thought constructions or *vikalpas* projected by a dualistic mode of thinking.¹ The distinction between *samsāra* (the naturalistic apprehensions of life and existence) and *Nirvāna* is a false one, and the *advaya* or non-duality of the two will have to be achieved at the highest reaches of human aspiration. The Vedānta of Saṅkara polarizes the view that all predicates or *Upādhis* are ultimately void of significance if projected into the Ultimate Ontic existent, i.e. the *brahman*.² It would be harmless to suggest in and through these ways of thinking assumes some sort of phenomenological stance, and suggest a mode of bracketing till the goal is attained. We may avail ourselves of Gramsci's telling phrase, 'archeology of thought'. Just an archeologist clears the rubbles and debris of the site of an archeological ruin, before he discovers the original plan and structure of the edifice, in such a manner the philosopher of phenomenological persuasions goes on bracketing the non-essential accretions only if the essences are dis-closed. Heidegger used the term in Greek, *alethia*, meaning dis-closing. Truth is *alethia* or a disclosure.

The method of bracketing is the *sine qua non* of phenomenology. But what is significant is the element of disbelief, if not doubting involved in accepting the given along with its appearance. The point is that the skeptical attitude is the mark of nature philosophical thinking all over the world, from the *Īśopaniṣad*, through Nagarjuna and Sankara, Descartes to Husserl. The logic of the word or verb 'to doubt' implies not the assertion of any contrary, but to suspend any judgement whatsoever, till the final disclosure. When Othello doubts that Desdemona is chaste it suggests *not* that she is unchaste, but that no judgement is going to be made. The point about bracketing is to postpone any hasty ontological commitment, in respect of the wavering natures of the appearances of the given. It is indeed a move at the level of thinking natural properties or empiricism is not rejected or denied, but its claims are hold in abeyance. This is philosophic caution in the face of the lure of the appearances; Plato's disbelief of the senses had run deep into western philosophy. From the *Theatetus* to Descartes" *Meditations* to Husserl's phenomenology the subterranean flow has remained unchecked.

In recent times studies have been undertaken to know a bridge across Indian philosophic thought and phenomenology of Husserl. Many a cadence of affinities have been instituted. And the studies have gone a long way in bringing the two together. But comparative philosophy has its own problematic. Every philosophical thinking arises out of the intellectual crisis in a given specific space, time and culture. This is equally true of the Indian thinkers as well as those in Europe who have contributed to the philosophical movement, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. The culture and the source of crisis that they had to negotiate was altogether different from the culture and challenges that the

thinkers of India faced. Hence, how far and how effectively we may or can abstract a method from its cultural background is itself a project of uneasy prospect. In the days of post-modern sensitivity the generalized parallelism are usually suspect. To aver that Husserlian type of phenomenology is available in this part of the world is something that sounds too thick. Yet human thinking has some global or universal dimensions. There may be pleasant surprises to find something at one end which is known under brands marketed for away elsewhere. Whatever be the case, it is seldom noticed and established that amongst recent Indian thinkers, J. Krishnamurti, in his dialogues and discourses, employs the phenomenological method to the fullest extent. Krishnamurti asks questions, goes on bracketing empirical and natural, cultural and religious predilections that obfuscates the real nature of the concepts in everyday currency.

If we take Husserl's method of reduction seriously, we find that he wants the essences to be the results of descriptive analysis. It is a contemporary vogue to call one's philosophy descriptive and empirical to get for it a kind of prestige. But if man wants to uncover the roots of his being, a descriptive, empirical method will not be enough. The roots of my being are deep down beyond my empirical consciousness. Even the structure of my personality, which is my finite I, as this individual looking around, cannot be present to me as an objective chart, but is discovered bit by bit through analysis of my cognitive and active life. Husserl's example is of grasping the essence of the house by turning it round and round and up and down in mind. They can be helps, but do not give the essence of the nature of the universal. Husserl's method of reduction has its forerunner in experiments by Superman and Aveling

perceptions of objects into forms, assimilable to active universals. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika mistakenly thought that the transformation of the present into the passive form in a new kind of sense-object contact. The understanding of the epistemological mechanism by this school is naïve. The answer to the question, why should there be any conformity between the process of active intellect and those of the passive, is that they are not really two different intellects or realities, but one and the same. The active belongs to my transcendental being, and the passive to my empirical being; or in other words, they are in an important sense, my own transcendental and empirical beings, which are the same continuous beings and which, so far as continuity is concerned, are like my waking I-am and the dreaming I-am. They are my apperceptions. We may distinguish between the higher and lower apperception, the higher being the *Logos*. When we remove from the universals as forces their popular misconceptions that they are lifeless abstractions, we can understand the great role they play in constituting the world. For the purpose, we have completely to revise Husserl's purely phenomenological doctrine of essences, for there can be no real essence without existence. To ask me to bracket out my existence and the existence of the object for fixing the structure of essences is to ask for the impossible, for every time I do something with an essence on for obtaining an essence, I do so as existing. I am always with my existence. I cannot abstract myself from myself, or turn myself into an abstract essence. This is not merely an intellectual objection. One who thinks that it is so, may try the abstraction in his experience and see whether it is possible. The I that does the bracketing, which is holding something in suspense cannot be kept out of the bracketing.

II

In this section we intend to place Husserl's phenomenology within the phenomenological tradition itself. We have pointed out in course of our work that Husserl is acknowledged on all hands to be the founder of phenomenology. We also mentioned that phenomenology is associated with a number of influential "existentialist thinkers" who claim to employ the phenomenological method. In this connection the names which come to our mind are Sartre, Marcel, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty among others. In what follows we shall try to trace the relationship of some of them to Husserl's phenomenology. We begin with Martin Heidegger,

1. Martin Heidegger: Heidegger was Husserl's assistant from 1919-23. He dedicated his *Being and Time* to Husserl. What he does in this work is widely divergent from Husserl's phenomenology. The question he poses at the outset of *Being and Time* is "the question of the meaning of Being". It may be recalled that Husserl also raised the question of being. Being for him is simply the intentional correlate of consciousness: to be is to be an actual or possible object of consciousness. All being is relative to the transcendental ego excepting the being of the transcendental ego itself which is absolute being. For Heidegger the pure ego as subject of consciousness is an empty abstraction. The only real I exists in a world. The real I is in the world which is transcendent to him and in which he finds himself. Hence, Heidegger rejects Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and the transcendental ego. He characterizes ego as Dasein, being-there "*da-sein*". Naturally, he rejects the phenomenological projects of Husserl such as Husserl's ideal of presuppositionlessness, his programme to ground knowledge on absolutely certain foundations, his

phenomenological standpoint, etc. Phenomenology, as Heidegger understands it,

... does not subscribe to a 'standpoint' or represent any special 'direction'... the expression phenomenology ... signifies primarily a methodological conception. This expression does not characterize the *what* of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter, but rather the *how* of that research ... [it] is removed from what we call 'technical devices', though there are many such devices even in the theoretical disciplines.³

The above passage shows Heidegger's departure from Husserl on a number of crucial issues. These crucial issues involve Husserl's positing of the transcendental ego and transcendental experience; Husserl's adoption of a special phenomenological technique, namely, the *epoché* or phenomenological reduction, and Husserl's view that phenomenology escapably leads to transcendental idealism. To be precise, even when Heidegger seems to agree with Husserl, the agreement conceals profound differences. Heidegger rejects Husserl's 'transcendent ego', 'transcendent experience' and 'pure essences' as intellectual abstractions. Heideggerian phenomenology is not transcendent, but , rather existential. It is the careful analysis of the concretely existing human being. In other words, phenomenology is concerned with elucidating concrete existence. We encounter objects in pragmatic engagements of or compartments with the environment. It is only because I encounter something environmentally and pre-conceptually that I am later able to make it the focus of

theoretical objectification. Husserl was wrong in privileging theoretical activities over lived engagements. Husserl had become pre-occupied with methods for gaining access to the transcendental sphere of the apriori structures of consciousness.

To treat the meaning of Being phenomenology has to start from our own experience of Being. That does not mean to look inside our own minds nor to separate our consciousness from objects. Our own Being is Being-in-the-world. We are, however, a particular part of the world by virtue of the fact that we are *conscious* of it. This human mode of Being Heidegger calls Dasein - "being there". We experience the world, not as detached subjects or as pure reason, but as actual human beings who exist at a particular time and place, and who interact with their surrounding world from that position in space and time. This explains the definition of phenomenology as letting the world or Being speak for itself.

Dermot Moran⁴ has pointed out Heidegger's almost total disregard of Husserl's theory of intentionality. Husserl has made a detailed examination of intentionality which pervades almost the entire corpus of his phenomenology. Given the fundamental role of it in Husserl's thought, it becomes a shock that Heidegger *Being and Time*, while explicitly claiming to be a phenomenological treatise, contains only two brief references to intentionality⁵. Heidegger criticizes and rethinks it in his later works⁶. According to him, intentionality must be understood in terms of the structural features of the Dasein, specially Dasein's *transcendence*, that is, the fact that Dasein is already somehow beyond itself, already dwelling in the world and not locked up in the privacy of its own consciousness. The intentional relation must instead be founded

on the 'being-with' or 'being-by' of Dasein, i.e., intentionality is a form of 'ontic' transcendence which can only be understood if Dasein's more basic 'ontological' transcendence is understood. The radical interpretation of intentionality in terms of transcendence leads Heidegger to the understanding of Dasein as nothing other than the very possibility of Being's gaining entry to the world, having world-entry.

Heidegger abandons intentionality altogether, in favour of the nature of our dwelling in the linguistic and significative domain (being-in-the-world). Heidegger's emphasis on transcendence has been understood by commentators as being opposed to Husserl's supposedly subjectivist account of intentionality. Yet as Dermot Moran says;

'...as early as *Logical Investigations* Husserl used the notion of transcendence to characterize the object in its relation to the consciousness. intentional object is never a *reell* part of the act; all objects of consciousness are transcendent – from actual 'external' things to objects such as 'God' or 'square circle'.⁷

Heidegger regards *temporality* as the meaning of the Being of Dasein. Temporality is an integral element of Heidegger's phenomenology. We may point out that time or temporality is a concern of Husserl too. From the early 1900s Husserl had clearly identified the link between transcendence and time. No perception of a physical object is entirely rooted in the present. The very structure of a perceptual act involves time in the retention of the past and protension to the future. It is

temporal through and through as every act grasps a 'profile', 'adumbration' or 'aspect' which changes with a change in our perspective. Any act looks beyond itself to these other profiles and assumes them in grasping the object. So objects are never given to consciousness in their fullness. The object spills over what is given to consciousness. This is a limiting feature of both the objecthood as much as a feature of consciousness. This is hardly the position of a radical subjectivist.

The world for Heidegger is the world of significations. Husserl also acknowledges the concept of the 'world' in his phenomenology and emphasizes it in the natural attitude.

But what about Heidegger's criticism of Husserl that he had prioritized the cognitive over the practical in his account of intentionality? So the question we ourselves pose is: Does Husserl overstress the cognitive dimension and ignore the practical? It is undoubtedly true that Husserl focused more on elucidating acts of consciousness rather than human actions. Yet it is not difficult to find in his writings detailed descriptions of our ordinary dealings with things in the natural attitude. But there is always the possibility of a shift in perspective, the possibility of one attitude giving way to the other – the practical attitude giving way to the theoretical. The theoretical attitude is to be valued in itself as one possible outcome of our lived engagement with things. Moreover, as Husserl's manuscripts continue to be published, they tend to reveal a greater-willingness to accommodate the practical than is evident during his lifetime. In his *Ideas II* the detailed description of our ordinary dealings with the things of the natural world is very close

to Heidegger's account of the practical intentionality. Dermot Moran has even claimed that the two philosophers' argument on the kind of encounter with things prevalent in the natural attitude is so close that it may be said that Heidegger has taken over from Husserl.

Moran has drawn our attention to a passage in *Ideas II* where Husserl characterizes the world of things discovered in the natural attitude as 'on hand' (*Vorhanden*). "I may also be concerned with things in their use. Things can offer themselves in our apprehension ' food as a means of nutrition, or as of use of objects of various sorts; heating materials, choppers, hammers, etc. For instance, I see coal as heating material; I recognize it and recognize it as useful and as used for heating ... it is burnable'". Husserl here uses the very example of the hammer employed later to such effect in *Being and Time*.

In support of his interpretation Moran quotes from an unpublished manuscript of Husserl labeled "*gegen Heidegger*" written in 1931. There Husserl emphasizes that "the 'theoretical interest is motivated, like the artistic, by a desire to play freed from concerns of the necessities of life, and this theoretical curiosity is by no means a deficient mode of the practical as Heidegger had claimed.'"⁸

From the above we may conclude that Husserl does see that we do encounter the occurrent, the present-at-hand in our everyday awareness, and not just as a matter removed from the practical. This, we believe, will put Husserl in the proper perspective.

2. Jean-Paul Sartre: Sartre became acquainted with Husserl's phenomenology through reading Emmanuel Levinas' book, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. In his first published article, "Transcendence of the Ego"⁹ Sartre accepts Husserl's view of phenomenology as the search for essences as eidetic analysis but he never separated those essences from the world of facts, and in that sense, was already leading phenomenology in an existential direction. He rejected much of Husserl's methodological apparatus, including the *epoché*, the reduction, Husserl's account of the noema and the intentional object and his account of ego.

Yet his *Being and Nothingness*¹⁰ which he characterizes in the subtitle as "An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology" indicates that the method is that of "descriptive phenomenology" and the orientation is chiefly metaphysical, as in Heidegger. Like Husserl, Sartre will study being by studying consciousness, the "locus" of appearing. From his studies of imagination he sees that it is essential to consciousness but its object is absent. He came to the conclusion that consciousness is opposite of objectivity and opposite of being; which is to say that it is non-being. Unlike Husserl Sartre considers consciousness as the source of negativity or "nihilation". In that light we can understand Sartre's interpretation of Husserl's notion of intentionality, which because it is non-real is non-being. The being of consciousness is to negate reality and hence the determination which consciousness contributes is negativity, and this for Sartre is existence. Since by nihilation intelligibility is conferred, negativity is prominent in Sartre's thought. Freedom is also negative, since it cannot be a power to negate being-in-itself.

Sartre's brilliant phenomenological-psychological analysis of "bad faith is interpreted as an attempt on the part of subjectivity to be "in-itself," making it equivalently a denial of freedom. Sartre's very original development of the theme of the other may be compared to Husserl's thoughts on the experience of the other which, according to some, is not a very satisfactory account. Sartre's treatment seems to go in the direction of the other as an "intolerable person", "invasion of subjectivity". It is nothing completely different from Husserl's constitutive analysis of intersubjectivity. His thoughts have crossed the boundary of phenomenology and at the same time it is testimony to the possibility of broadening the field of phenomenological investigations.

3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a French phenomenologist. Phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty sees it, combines a form of subjectivism with a form of objectivism. It is subjectivist in that it recognizes that all experience is *someone's* experience, that 'how things appear' means 'how they appear to a particular 'subject'. A description of phenomena, that is, of how things appear, must thus necessarily be a description of *subjective experience*. But, since the being of subjects is being-in-the-world, that is, since experience consists in being 'involved with the world', a description of subjective experience is not a description of something purely 'inner', but of our involvement with the world which exists independently of our experience of it. The world, Merleau-Ponty says, is not something we merely think about, but the place in which will live our lives, the world we act in, have feelings and hopes about, as well as the world we try to know about.

Merleau-Ponty's relation to Husserl is less of an antagonism and more of clarification.¹¹ He continues to develop Husserl's basic idea of philosophy as a radical, rigorous science, distinct from the empirical sciences. He criticizes different aspects of Husserl's theory but it is not a relation of simple opposition. He questions the possibility of phenomenological reductions. In that context, he does not suggest that we should give up the reduction but rather that we should assume that the endpoint of the interrogative project is in the form of a solution or an explication. He does not deny that we should retain some of our claims, judgments and beliefs, scientific or commonsensical, but argues that all such attitudes – as well as suspensions of them – are based on a non-propositional, non-thetic connection, a different kind of bodily intentionality. Instead of rejecting Husserl's reductions, he wants to study their starting points. The nature and possibility of this study is the central and recurrent problem of his philosophy.

So, it is misleading to say that Merleau-Ponty gives up the suspension of the thesis. Rather he asks about the conditions of possibility of the idea of suspension itself. His answer is that it presupposes a pre-reflective, pre-thetic connection to the world, a connection that does not have the structure of a position. The doxic thetic attitude presupposes other kinds of relation to the world. The world is not encountered primarily as an object of belief but as an expressing gesture, a face or a figure.¹² The primordial attitudes or postures are affective attitudes, sensations, sense-perceptions and emotions. This is what he calls the primacy of perception. They have an original intentionality which differ from belief attitude. They do not allow reduction in the sense of suspension of the thesis. This is for the simple reason that the experience

is not yet structured as a thesis. Both the thesis and its suspension presuppose – as their condition of possibility – the affective bonds that tie us to the world.¹³ Merleau-Ponty points out that it is Husserl who led him to realize the autonomy and primacy of non-thetic experience. He had the occasion to go through Husserl's manuscripts at Leuven. He points out that the natural attitude turns into a thesis only in "naturalist" thinking. Suspending the thesis is not an operation performed in the natural attitude as such but an operation performed on the naturalist interpretation of their attitude.¹⁴

The question then becomes what can be done, if we still want to practice philosophy in the phenomenological sense of the word. Merleau-Ponty claims that Husserl himself approached the notion of the pre-reflective when developing the concept of *operative intentionality*. According to him, Husserl uncovered in his manuscripts and later publications the operative intentionality of desires, affective perceptions, and emotional evaluations which "furnishes the text which our knowledge tries to translate in passive language."¹⁵ According to him, Husserl's originality lies beyond the notion of intentionality. Beneath the intentionality of representations, there is a deeper intentionality which others have called existence. But his treatment of intentionalities of passions, affections, etc., was restricted by his intellectualist interests. Thus Merleau-Ponty's position is sometimes summarized by saying that he rejected Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and set out to describe experiences and phenomena in all their particularity and plurality.

CHAPTER V

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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