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THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION  
TO MODERN CHRISTIAN  
THOUGHT

*Edited by*  
*Chad Meister and James Beilby*

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# PHENOMENOLOGY

*Dermot Moran*

Phenomenology is undoubtedly the most influential movement in twentieth-century European philosophy. Because of its emphasis on first-person point of view and on the full range of subjective experiences (including emotions), it continues to have a powerful presence in twenty-first-century discussions, especially those concerned with consciousness, intentionality, embodiment, personhood, the experience of other subjects (empathy) and intersubjectivity, the experience of otherness (laterite), the meaning of culture, including phenomena associated with religious experience. Phenomenology can be understood both as a collection of methods and approaches and as a broader “movement” (Moran 2000). As a method it was inaugurated by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), building on the insight into intentionality found in the work of Franz Brentano (1838–1917). As Paul Ricoeur has aptly put it, phenomenology as a movement may be understood as “both the sum of Husserl’s work and the heresies issuing from it” (Ricoeur 1967: 4).

The term “phenomenology” itself has a long history in German philosophy, dating from the eighteenth century. It appears in Lambert and Kant, and most notably in the title of Hegel’s 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But phenomenology as it is understood in contemporary philosophy has its origins in the work of Franz Brentano, especially his 1889 lectures on *Descriptive Psychology* (Brentano 1982/1995), where he refers to his procedure of a priori description of the essential features of psychic life as “phenomenology.”

Phenomenology, no matter how it is practiced, is primarily a *descriptive* science; it aims to attend carefully to “phenomena” of all kinds. It also seeks to gain essential–eidetic knowledge, that is, to understand the essential nature of these phenomena. The concept of “phenomenon” has to be understood in the widest sense possible in phenomenology. First, it means any thing, process, or event that can appear or manifest itself in any way to consciousness (Luft and Overgaard 2011). Second, the phenomena must not be thought of as opposed to some “things in themselves” (e.g., in the Kantian sense) that do not appear and that supposedly might lie “behind” the phenomena. The phenomena *are* the “things themselves.” It is often said that phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or *first-person* point of view. This is true, but it must not be thought, on the basis of this emphasis on first-person experience, that phenomenology attends only to *subjective* experience. Phenomenology is indeed a science of subjectivity, but it is just as much

the study of how objectivity manifests itself, how objectivity is, so to speak, "constituted" in and through subjective acts and experiences. The basic insight of phenomenology is that every object has the kind of being, sense and value that it has, only as correlated to certain constituting acts of human subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Although Husserl often proposes (as in his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl 1931/1960) to begin his phenomenological analyses in emulation of Descartes' method from the point of view of the individual subject and his or her conscious experiences, in fact the mature Husserl equally stresses that subjectivity can be considered only as abstracted from the more usually encountered intersubjective social and cultural life. Transcendental subjectivity is always an intersubjectivity, as Merleau-Ponty also rightly emphasizes (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962).

Phenomenology as a method was inaugurated and systematized by Brentano's student, Edmund Husserl. Brentano's descriptive psychology aimed to describe mental acts and their essential parts. His account emphasized an intentional structure whereby acts are in intentional relations to objects. Brentano spoke ambiguously of the "content" or the "object" of the intentional act. Brentano's students – Kazimierz Twardowski (1866–1938), Alois Höfler (1853–1928) and Alexius Meinong (1853–1920) – all went on to distinguish between the *real* psychological content of the mental act understood as the actual mental process occurring in time, and the *irreal* or *ideal* meaning-content instantiated in the act which could remain the same across different acts intending it. Edmund Husserl, who had spent several years studying with Brentano, sought to clarify the exact status of the ideal senses or meanings intended in the mental acts. This led him to his extensive critique of psychologism (the view that logical concepts and operations are reducible to human psychological processes) in volume 1 of his *Logical Investigations* (1900) (Husserl 1900–1901/2001). This critique in turn led to the founding of phenomenology as a science separate from both psychology and logic which aimed at clarifying the central concepts of logic and epistemology.

Husserl announced "phenomenology" as a method for the descriptive clarification of logical and psychological acts and their objects in the Introduction to volume 2 of the *Logical Investigations* (1901). In the *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 1900–1901/2001) he lays stress on phenomenology as a presuppositionless science which aims at identifying the essential features of phenomena using a method of intuition. Husserl defends a broader sense of intuition – to include the intuition not just of particulars but of universals and essences ("eidetic intuition") and what he called "categorical intuition," i.e., the intuition that something is the case, the intuition of "states of affairs." Phenomenology was to be a science of essences, and, as such, it was a pure, a priori discipline, attending to the nature of things as given in this "essential seeing" (*Wesensschau*). Phenomenology, then, in the work of Edmund Husserl, is to be understood as a radical, unprejudiced way of approaching and describing human conscious experiences and their objects.

Phenomenology may be said to begin from the notion of intentionality. Intentionality is the doctrine that every mental act is related to some object, which may or may not exist. In *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*, Brentano states:

Every mental phenomenon is characterised by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object [*die*

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*intentionale (auch wohl mentale) Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes*], and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not here to be understood as meaning a thing) [*die Beziehung auf einen Inhalt, die Richtung auf ein Objekt (worunter hier nicht eine Realität zu verstehen ist)*] or immanent objectivity [*oder die immanente Gegenständlichkeit*]. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

(Brentano 1973/1995: 88)

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Husserl seized on this insight of Brentano's to develop an entirely new approach to the scientific description of conscious life. *Intentionality* in Husserl expresses the central insight that things manifest themselves in experience in specific forms, whose peculiar senses have to be attributed at least in part to the kinds of intensive attention that consciousness brings to bear on them as well as the kind of “phenomenality” or “givenness” that the things themselves manifest. For Husserl, the products of intentionality are visible, but its workings are hidden and can only be revealed under the exercise of the *epoché*. Husserl chose the Greek term *epochē*, literally “suspension” or “abstention,” to refer to the process whereby the phenomenologist considers the intentional sense of the experience without reference to its actual occurrence in the real world. By invoking the *epochē* the phenomenologist can focus on the sense constituting processes and is not distracted by the manner in which things are presented in the natural attitude, the normal everyday attitude we take towards our experiences. Especially in his mature works, he regarded the natural experience of the world as masking the achievements of functioning subjectivity. This natural world is experienced through the human primordial attitude which he calls “the natural attitude.”

Husserl soon came to the conclusion that the new discipline of phenomenology as he envisaged it could not be adequately captured by the older notion of “descriptive psychology” and, especially after 1907, he began to characterize phenomenology as a transcendental exploration of “pure” consciousness and its objects as given under the procedures of *epochē* and reduction, terms he introduced in his 1907 lectures on *The Idea of Phenomenology* (Husserl 1907/1999) and in print in *Ideas I* (Husserl 1977/1983). In his mature work he concentrated more on the manner in which the world is given in “the natural attitude” (*die natürliche Einstellung*) and on what he called the “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) in his *Crisis of European Sciences* (Husserl 1962/1970), which provides the unsurpassable backdrop, ground and horizon for all human experience.

Husserl constantly sought to refine the methodology of phenomenology in programmatic publications such as *Ideas I* (Husserl 1977/1983) and *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1931/1960). Perhaps the most succinct formulation of Husserl's phenomenological approach is that given by Husserl himself when he articulates what he calls his “principle of principles;” in *Ideas I*: In *Ideas I* Section 24 Husserl writes:

Enough now of absurd theories. No conceivable theory can make us err with respect to the *principle of all principles: that every originary presentive*

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DERMOT MORAN

*intuition is a legitimizing source [Rechtsquelle] of cognition, that everything originally (so to speak in its "personal" actuality) offered to us in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.*

(Husserl 1977/1983: 44/43; italics in original)

Many commentators, including most recently the French phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion (b. 1946), have commented on this enigmatic formulation. The central concepts of phenomenology are condensed in this phrase: the appeal to origin and to original sources, the recognition of "giving" or "self-presentive" intuition (*gebende Anschauung*), as the source of cognition, and the admonition to accept what is given precisely "as what it is presented as being" and "only within the limits in which it is presented. The young Martin Heidegger, in his 1919 lecture course (Heidegger 1987/2000), reconstructed this "principle of principles" as support of his own understanding of phenomenology as a kind of lived relationship with life, a living along with experience that remained faithful to it.

Husserl himself sought to develop the "phenomenological movement," a term he himself repeatedly invoked (Spiegelberg 1994). He also sought to broaden phenomenology in many ways by relating it to all aspects of philosophy, as is evident from the range of phenomenological work published in his *Yearbook for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1913–31). This *Yearbook* published studies by Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad Martius, and Martin Heidegger. Perhaps, most famously, it included Husserl's own *Ideas I*, published in *Yearbook* Volume I (1913) and Heidegger's *Being and Time*, published in *Yearbook* Volume VIII in 1927 (Heidegger 1927/1962).

After 1907 Husserl's increasing application of the *epoché*, and especially the *transcendental* reduction (with its Fichtean overtones and reduction of all "sense and validity" (*Sinn und Geltung*) and "sense of being" (*Seinssinn*) to the transcendental ego, albeit one living in intersubjective harmony in a "monadology" – a term Husserl borrowed from Leibniz – of communicating other egos) alienated many of his more realist followers. Edith Stein (1891–1942) and Roman Ingarden (1893–1970) – as well as Heidegger – criticized this transcendental turn for its embrace of *idealism* (see Ingarden 1975). In his mature writings Husserl devoted considerable attention to the discussion of *empathy* (*Einfühlung*), to *intersubjectivity*, and to the experience of what is other (*das Andere*), foreign, or strange (*das Fremde*), i.e., *Fremderfahrung*. His discussion of these topics in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation especially, however, only serves to confirm the view that he was a Cartesian solipsist whose main concern was to establish or constitute the "other" within one's own self-experience. Indeed, Husserl himself will say, in his *Intersubjectivity* writings (Husserl 1973), that – in the initial constituting of myself as a lived-body (*Leib*) – I am constituting a "solipsistic world," whereas, in order to constitute an intersubjective world, I must employ empathy.

Especially after his retirement, from 1929 onwards, Husserl embarked on a series of responses to the challenge presented by Heidegger's radical reinterpretation of phenomenology and implicit criticisms of his own programme, culminating in Husserl's 1936 essays later collected in the *Crisis of the European Sciences* (Husserl 1962/1970), where the concept of the "life-world" is given its most extensive discussion. The

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life-world, as Husserl characterizes it – and he acknowledges the influence of Richard Avenarius' conception of the "pre-found" world – is the world of the pre-given, familiar, present, available surrounding world, including both "nature" and "culture" (however they may be defined), that envelops us and is always there as taken for granted. The life-world also provides a set of horizons for all human activity. The life-world is, in Husserl's terms, the "fundament" for all human meaning and purposive activity. Husserl's young Freiburg assistant, Eugen Fink (1905–75), also sought, in his 1933 *Kant-Studien* article "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism" (Fink 1933/2000), which Husserl himself explicitly endorsed, to defend Husserl's phenomenology against its critics, especially the accusation that with *Ideas I* Husserl had drawn closer to Neo-Kantianism. Despite the efforts of Husserl and Fink, however, German phenomenology in the early 1930s shifted decisively in favor of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, which was seen to have a more existential orientation.

Many aspects of Husserl's original formulation of phenomenology endure as central themes, including his catch cry "back to the things themselves" (*Zu den Sachen selbst*), which expressed the idea of the avoidance of metaphysical speculation, the attempt to gain a presuppositionless starting-point, the use of description rather than causal explanation, and the attempt to gain insight into the *essences* of all kinds of phenomena. It is generally acknowledged that phenomenology needs to overcome the naïve understanding of the world in the "natural attitude" in order to understand the workings of pure consciousness and the transcendental ego. To carry out this change of attitude Husserl always emphasized the importance of the *epochê* and the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, but even his own students found this emphasis on the *epochê* and reduction very challenging and were often alienated by Husserl's embrace of transcendental idealism. Husserlian phenomenology seeks to apply a set of exclusions (*epochê*) and "reductions" to grasp the essence of the experience. Husserl insisted that the initial phenomenon should be stripped of its character of "actuality" and conceived of in its pure essential possibility. His aim was to achieve eidetic insight into the necessary features that the essence of the phenomenon possessed. In this regard he advocated a technique of free imaginative variation – which involved various ways of imagining the phenomenon without some of its properties until only those which were "invariant" and hence necessary remained. Husserl always insists that the *epochê* and reduction (understood as a kind of "leading-back" to the core of the phenomenon stripped of all distorting features) were central to phenomenology. However, he did not envisage the *epochê* and reduction primarily in terms of method; rather, the term "reduction" emphasized a particularly philosophical form of reflective vigilance and interrogation. Husserl thought of this as an exercise in stripping away presuppositions and "prejudices" in order to lay hold of the phenomenon. He also thought of the reduction as leading back to transcendental subjectivity.

Phenomenology has often been accused of introspectionism, and Husserl's invocation of Descartes has often been seen to confirm the view that it practices "methodological solipsism." Certainly both Brentano and the early Husserl lay stress on the importance of "inner perception" and claim that mental states are apprehended just as they are (their *esse* is *percipi*, both Brentano and Husserl attest) unlike physical

objects which are always grasped from a particular perspective and exhibiting a particular partial “profile” or “adumbration” (*Abschattung*). But in fact phenomenology is not based on direct apprehension of one’s own psychic states and their contents. Phenomenology proceeds through a methodological reflection on experiences, and indeed it reflects not on experiences as actually occurring or having occurred but on what such experiences may be like. Thus, for Husserl, for instance, the essence of perception could be explored not just by beginning from an actual perception, but from a pure envisaged or imagined perception, e.g., a perception as it occurred in a dream.

Although in his early works Husserl took an almost Humean attitude towards the flow of conscious experiences and initially avoided analyzing the notion of an ego, after 1907 he came to recognize the importance of the “pure” or “transcendental ego” as present in a peculiar way in all experiences. Furthermore, especially in the second volume of his *Ideas* (Husserl 1952/1989), Husserl places strong emphasis on human embodiment or *incarnation* (*Leiblichkeit*). Human beings are essentially embodied, situated, finite human beings, already in the world and for whom the world has a given, taken-for-granted, “natural” status. All experiences occur in the here and now for a being situated in space and time. Husserl’s later philosophy in particular focuses on how it is that the lived world comes to have this “taken-for-grantedness” or “obviousness” (*Selbstverständlichkeit*) and *self-giveness* in the natural attitude. Of course, this situatedness and locatedness went on to become the theme of “being in the world” (*in-der-Welt-sein* in Heidegger or *être-au-monde* in Merleau-Ponty). In the *Crisis*, for instance, Husserl stresses the “communalization” (*Vergemeinschaftung*) of our experience, paralleling Heidegger’s discussion of “being-with-others” (*Mitsein*) in *Being and Time*. He speaks here of the essential human characteristic of “living-with-one-another” (*Miteinanderleben*) and speaks of humans cooperating and living in a world as “co-subjects” (*Mitsubjekte*), who belong together in a “co-humanity” (*Mitmenschheit*). He speaks more generally a collective shared intentionality or “we subjectivity” (*Wir-subjektivität*, Husserl 1962/1970 § 28), a topic that has again become a matter of interest in philosophy of mind (Schmid 2009). For Husserl, the priority of the personal, cultural world is emphasized over and above the natural world (and especially the naturalistic world as determined by the exact physical sciences) in *Ideas II* and thereafter. Husserl thus thinks of human beings as primarily social beings, embedded in culture and tradition. In the *Crisis*, Husserl writes not just about subjects having a shared sense of a common world, but also of grasping this world as formed by *tradition* (even if that tradition consists entirely of erroneous beliefs, as Husserl comments, 1962/1970: 326; VI 305). People live in a world formed of sedimented practices and habits – a “traditional world.”

Husserl’s position here directly inspired the writings of Alfred Schutz (1899–1959) on social phenomenology (Schutz 1932/1967). Schutz writes about various dimensions of the social world, including the world of our contemporaries (*Mitwelt*), the world of predecessors (*Vorwelt*) and the world of our successors (*Folgewelt*), all of which worlds we experience in their own particular ways.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), largely through his exposure to Wilhelm Dilthey, rejected the Husserlian ideal of a pure, presuppositionless descriptive philosophy of essences. Heidegger adopted from theology the methodology of hermeneutics, the

art of interpretative understanding on the basis of certain texts. The hermeneutic is a way of understanding (Verstehen) through interpretation (Auslegung). All texts and are over time distort under “destruction” (Destruktion). In order to break through the concepts to world, “destruction of the world.” For Heidegger, truth is the life process itself and way. Already in with what he calls towards the hermeneutic.

Heidegger’s philosophy (from 1925 to 1927) new themes which those works which and the manner of city. Heidegger rooted in Cartesian intentionality, hermeneutical, truth which he characterizes is primarily its existence as an For Heidegger, *being* tory, and with his temporality of human Furthermore, which monuments, do (Heidegger 1927/1962) of the ecstatic truth concerned about talk of human being practical rather than their being available we step back from things become some kind of detached

By 1929 Husserl had become estranged and *Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* disgust, criticized

art of interpretation, which emphasized that all understanding was possible only on the basis of certain presuppositions, "prejudgement" (*Vorurteil*) and presumptions. The hermeneutic approach understands human activity as essentially interpretative understanding (*Verstehen*). There is no escaping interpretation and there is no end to interpretation. All cultural and philosophical concepts are embedded in their contexts and are overlain with sedimented meanings which allow for and at the same time distort understanding. Heidegger therefore believes that an exercise of creative "destruction" (*Destruktion*) or "deconstruction" (*Abbau*) has to be implemented in order to break the hold which certain traditions have on concepts and allow the concepts to work in a more open manner. Heidegger himself advocates the "destruction of the history of philosophy" in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1927/1962). For Heidegger, true phenomenological meaning apprehension goes along with the life process itself and grasps the essential "worldliness" of experience in a non-falsifying way. Already in 1919, Heidegger claims that phenomenology essentially operates with what he calls "hermeneutical intuition" (Heidegger 1987/2000), already pointing towards the hermeneutical reconceptualizing of phenomenology.

Heidegger's phenomenology, especially as found in his Marburg lecture courses (from 1925 to 1928) and in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1927/1962), introduces many new themes which had not been given prominence in Husserl's writings (at least in those works which had appeared in print). These themes include historicity, finitude and the manner of our existential existence in terms of authenticity and inauthenticity. Heidegger regards Husserl's talk of "intentionality" and "consciousness" as too rooted in Cartesian metaphysical presuppositions to be helpful. He therefore drops intentionality, consciousness, the *epoché* and reduction, and focuses on offering a hermeneutical, transcendental phenomenological approach to human existence, which he characterizes simply as "existence" (*Dasein*). For Heidegger, human existence is primarily experienced in its "average everydayness," where the self lives out its existence as anyone does, as the "one" (*das Man*) or the "they-self" (*Man-Selbt*). For Heidegger, *being historical*, i.e., being the kind of entity who lives through history, and with historical consciousness, depends first and foremost on the intrinsic temporality of human existence, of human life stretched between birth and death. Furthermore, what is primarily historical is not the things from the past (ruins, monuments, documents and so on) but, rather, human existence (*Dasein*) itself (Heidegger 1927/1962 § 73). Instead of talking about intentionality, Heidegger speaks of the ecstatic transcendence of *Dasein*. *Dasein* is always running ahead of itself, concerned about its future, anticipating and projecting itself. Heidegger prefers to talk of human behaviour or "comportment" (*Verhalten*) in the world as primarily practical rather than theoretical. Our immediate experience with things is in terms of their being available for use, being "ready-to-hand" (*zuhanden*). It is only when we step back from engaging with them in a practical and absorbed capacity that the things become simply there for inspection, open to theoretical contemplation – the kind of detached contemplation that has given rise to science.

By 1929 Husserl and Heidegger, the leaders of the phenomenological movement, had become estranged from one another. In an influential book entitled *Life-Philosophy and Phenomenology*, Georg Misch (1878–1965), a follower of Dilthey, much to Husserl's disgust, criticized Husserlian phenomenology and praised the turn to hermeneutic

philosophy and life philosophy as found in Heidegger as a corrective to the more sterile Husserlian philosophy of consciousness (Misch 1930). Phenomenology in Germany was dominated by the work of Husserl and Heidegger and their students, including Edith Stein and Roman Ingarden, among many others. Max Scheler was an independent and somewhat maverick philosopher who maintained links with phenomenology. Scheler's phenomenology focused on the "apprehension of value" (*Wertnehmen*). We have an immediate non-cognitive grasp of values such as truth, goodness, beauty and so on, through a special kind of feeling.

Phenomenology in France was initially stimulated by Emmanuel Levinas (Levinas 1930/1973), who had spent a year in Freiburg in 1928 as a student of both Husserl and Heidegger. It was Levinas who helped to arrange for Husserl's Paris lectures of 1929 and assisted in the French translation of those lectures, published as *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1931/1960). In his mature work *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas was critical of Husserl's attempt to constitute the other on the basis of self-experience and developed a phenomenology which he preferred to characterize as an "ethics" which recognized the primacy of the other (Levinas 1961/1969). French phenomenology is primarily associated with the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61), who both saw themselves as phenomenologists and made efforts to correct problems which they saw in Husserl's approach. In his later work in particular, Merleau-Ponty was deeply influenced by Heidegger's writings on language.

In his early *Transcendence of the Ego*, Jean-Paul Sartre accepts Husserl's account of a constituting transcendental consciousness, but he rejects the idea that we need to make this into an ego (Sartre 1936/1972). Sartre agrees with Husserl that the ego is transcendent to consciousness. It should not be seen as something within consciousness, this would be a doubling up and indeed a falsification of consciousness itself. Consciousness is essentially a kind of self-emptying or self-negating ("nihilating") process. It can never become an object. Consciousness has a kind of immediate self-awareness but this "self" should not be reified into an "ego" or "self." Indeed, intentionality, for Sartre, is the doctrine of the self-transcendence of consciousness. In his *Psychology of Imagination*, Sartre takes issue with Husserl's account of imagining as a kind of representative consciousness that is dependent on perception (Sartre 1940/2004). For Sartre, imagination is an independent type of consciousness, not derivative from or reducible to perception, one whose acts generate objects of a unique and new kind. Imagining is a central feature of consciousness and plays the crucial role of *constituting* the world as such. Furthermore, for Sartre, imagination is unthinkable without freedom; it is because humans possess the ability to think of things *as they are not*, that they are able to exercise freedom. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre expands on the notion of consciousness as a negating or "nihilating" (*néantisant*) force that founds human freedom (Sartre 1943/1995). Consciousness is a kind of "nothingness" or "gratuitousness" in the world; it is always "for itself" (*pour soi*). For Sartre, consciousness is always oriented to and supported by what is not itself, namely being in-itself, *en-soi*. *Being and Nothingness* includes a long chapter on the body which was extremely influential for Merleau-Ponty's formulation of the concept of one's own body (*le corps propre*) in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962). Sartre treats of the body under three headings: "the body as being for-itself: facticity," "the body-for-others," and "the third ontological dimension of the

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body." Sartre places emphasis on intersubjective intercorporeity, the relations among embodied subjects in experiences such as a caress, a kiss and so on. Sartre also introduces the notion of "flesh" (*la chair*), now more usually associated with Merleau-Ponty, as a way of characterizing what Husserl calls the "living body" (*Leib*) as opposed to the inanimate body (*Körper*). Our deep sense of ourselves, for Sartre, is as a non-thingly living flesh, neither pure object nor pure consciousness. Moreover, for Sartre, it is the experience of this flesh precisely in its sheer irrational contingency that gives rise to the peculiar existential dis-ease that Sartre calls "nausea" (*la nausée*) and which he had previously explored in his novel *Nausea* (Sartre 1938/1965).

Merleau-Ponty himself was active in the critique and redescription of phenomenology. In his Preface to the *Phenomenology of Perception* he criticizes Husserl's conception of reduction and claims that what the reduction teaches is the impossibility of the complete reduction:

There is probably no question over which Husserl has spent more time – or to which he has more often returned, since the "problematic of reduction" occupies an important place in his unpublished work. For a long time, and even in recent texts, the reduction is presented as the return to a transcendental consciousness before which the world is spread out and completely transparent, quickened through and through by a series of apperceptions which it is the philosopher's task to reconstitute on the basis of their outcome.

(Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962: xi/v)

One of Merleau-Ponty's main contributions is to emphasize that, due to the embodied, historical, and temporally finite nature of human beings, there can be no reduction to absolute consciousness. The real challenge of phenomenology is to permanently renegotiate the relation between the *natural* attitude and *transcendental* consciousness. Merleau-Ponty does not abandon the transcendental attitude, but he makes it permanently problematic, especially as he discusses it in his famous 1959 essay on Husserl "The Philosopher and His Shadow," published posthumously in *Signs* (Merleau-Ponty 1960/1964). In his later writings, Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of "interlacing" (*l'interlacs*) to express the manner in which bodily awareness is both unified and, in a certain sense, doubled and even reversed in special cases such as one hand touching the other. For Merleau-Ponty, and here he departs from Husserl, who makes "double sensation" a unique characteristic of touch alone, reversibility and doubling of sensation are characteristic of all five sensory modalities and precisely illustrate what he variously calls the "chiasm" (*le chiasme*), "overlapping" or "encroachment," and even the "metamorphosis" of the flesh (*la chair*, see Merleau-Ponty 1964/1968).

By the mid-1960s, phenomenology in France was regarded as old fashioned and was being challenged by structuralism and deconstruction, although the foremost advocate of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), was deeply influenced by Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies.

Almost from the beginning, phenomenology was applied to the understanding of the religious outlook. Phenomenology's inclusive approach to phenomena led to its

being particularly used for the exploration of religious phenomena (see Van der Leeuw 1963). Phenomenology focuses on givenness and on the intrinsic or “immanent” meaningfulness of experiences, and this was a great assistance to the understanding of religious belief. There were of course other philosophers who were interested in religious phenomena and sought an appropriate language in which to articulate them. Early in the twentieth century, William James’s *Varieties of the Religious Experience* (James 1902), Emile Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Durkheim 2001) and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s studies of the primitive mind all addressed the phenomenon of religion (Husserl 2008; Lévy-Bruhl 1935/1983). Quite a number of Husserl’s own students themselves made religious conversions, including Adolf Reinach (1883–1917) and Edith Stein. Before his death in the Great War in 1917, Reinach had written a sketch for an essay on “the Absolute,” on which Heidegger himself draws in his 1918–21 notes for his *Phenomenology of Religious Life* lectures (Heidegger 2004). Husserl, who was in the habit of assigning regions of inquiry to his students and followers, initially regarded Heidegger as ideally suited to pursuing the phenomenology of religion, and clearly Heidegger himself was initially interested – perhaps inspired by Kierkegaard – in the phenomenology of the religiously lived life. In fact, in January 1919, immediately after returning from the Great War, Heidegger wrote a letter to his friend the Catholic priest Father Krebs rejecting Catholicism as a *system* but still expressing high appreciation for the values and religious outlook of the Catholic Middle Ages (Sheehan 1993: 71–72). In this letter, he also states that he is carrying out research in the phenomenology of religion. Similarly, he wrote to his friend Elizabeth Blochmann in May 1919 that he was making preparations towards a “phenomenology of religious consciousness” (Heidegger 1990: 16). Inspired by his reading of Kierkegaard and Dilthey, Heidegger was planning to apply phenomenology to the existential phenomena of actual life, hitherto the exclusive preserve of religious and theological modes of thinking. Having initially taken Heidegger for a rather dogmatic Catholic philosopher, Husserl, in a letter to Natorp on February 11, 1920, expressed some relief that the young Heidegger had freed himself from dogmatic Catholicism. Indeed, Husserl marvelled that his influence on his students was such that Catholics became Protestants and vice versa (e.g., Edith Stein became Catholic).

At Marburg Heidegger had close contacts with prominent Protestant theologians, including Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), who were interested in “demythologizing” Christianity and restoring the original sense of the Gospel texts. Already in Freiburg, in preparation for his first lecture course in 1919, Heidegger was also influenced by Rudolf Otto’s attempt to describe the essence of “the holy” (*das Heilige*) in his 1917 book of that name (a popular work that went through four editions by 1920, see Otto 1917/1923). Otto was a Neo-Kantian who proposed the holy as an irreducible a priori category. He spoke of the experience of the “numinous” and the idea of encountering something mysteriously frightening but at the same time fascinating “*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.” The moment of the “mysterious” is the experience of the “wholly other” (*das ganz Andere*). Heidegger expressed interest in the phenomenology of religion expressed in his own research plans. Sometimes this is articulated as an interest in Christian mystical writings where religious experience was described, as in his abandoned lecture course of 1918/19 on “The Philosophical

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Another of Husserl’s students, Edith Stein, lived in the house of her mother in Breslau (Stein 1966). Edith Stein was a philosopher of empathy. She studied in Göttingen from 1905 to 1910, and then returned to their home in Breslau. In 1911 she became a nun in the St. Theresa of Avila convent in Cologne. This was a transformation towards she converted to Catholicism. Hedwig Conrad-Martius was her mother and married in 1912, she broke off all relations with her mother in 1925 when she moved to Göttingen. Her correspondence resided in Göttingen. Dietrich von Hildebrand and Martin Heidegger. Scheler. He later became a philosopher. He wrote a number of books on phenomenology and psychology. Several studies of his work have been published.

Since the 1930s, phenomenology has been especially in France, without religious or theological French philosophy. “theological turn” and as a scholar of phenomenology. Heidegger’s *The Idea of the Origin of the Work of Art* which he translated into English. The phenomenology of the Marburg School. Husserl is that *Given*, Marion (1997/2002). In the given, rather than givenness that logical reduction to reduction to origin with Heidegger is attending to “saturated phenomena for Henry has developed that he sees as Henry 1996/2002

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Foundations of Medieval Mysticism," where he states that his focus is on the phenomenology of religion. To both Husserl and Heidegger, it seemed clear that phenomenology provided the best mode of access to religious experience.

Another of Husserl's students, Edith Stein, experienced a religious conversion in the house of her friend and fellow phenomenologist Hedwig Conrad-Martius (1888–1966). Edith Stein had written her doctoral thesis with Husserl on the problem of empathy. She had also come under the spell of Scheler, who had lectured in Göttingen from 1911–13. While visiting Hedwig Conrad-Martius and her husband at their home in Bergzabern in the summer of 1921, she came across a copy of St. Theresa of Avila's autobiography, which she spent the whole night reading. This was a transformative event. She felt that she had found the truth. Very soon afterwards she converted to Catholicism, in 1921, and was baptized on January 1, 1922, with Hedwig Conrad-Martius as her godmother. Her conversion deeply disappointed her mother and many of her Jewish friends, including Fritz Kaufmann (1891–1958), who broke off all relations with her at that time, although they renewed their friendship in 1925 when she wrote to him on the occasion of his mother's illness and their correspondence resumed. He even visited her in her convent. Another phenomenologist, Dietrich von Hildebrand, converted to Catholicism in 1914 under the influence of Scheler. He later distinguished himself in his heroic opposition to National Socialism. He wrote a number of devotional works. Working quite independently on the phenomenology of religion was the Romanian thinker Mircea Eliade, who published several studies on the meaning of sacred space and time (see Eliade 1958, 1963).

Since the 1970s there has been a strong revival of phenomenology of religion, especially in France, associated with Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida ("religion without religion"), Jean-Luc Marion and Michel Henry (1922–2002). Indeed the French philosopher Dominique Janicaud (Janicaud 1991/2000) has even spoken of a "theological turn" in French philosophy. Marion, trained both in phenomenology and as a scholar of Descartes, first came to notice with a critique of onto-theology entitled *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies* (Marion 1977/2001). Marion maintains that the original claim of phenomenology is its attention to "givenness" (*Gegebenheit*), which he translates as "donation." He maintains that this was at issue in the philosophy of the Neo-Kantians as well as in Meinong and others. His main critique of Husserl is that he thought of all phenomenality in terms of objectivity. In *Being Given*, Marion identifies problems in the Husserlian principle of principles (Marion 1997/2002). Indeed, for him, there is the danger of intuition itself defining what is given, rather than what Husserl really intends, namely, that there are forms of givenness that exceed a fulfilling intuition. For Marion, a number of phenomenological reductions need to be performed. He sees the first reduction as the Husserlian reduction to objectivity. The second reduction is the reduction to Being (associated with Heidegger) and the third reduction, which Marion himself is proposing, is attending to phenomena that are neither objects nor being. Marion speaks of "saturated phenomena" that resist reduction to objectivity. These are the key phenomena for phenomenology and need a new language to describe them. Michel Henry has developed a phenomenology of the nature of human life and embodiment that he sees as leading to new insights about what Christianity considers as truth (see Henry 1996/2002 and Henry 2000).

See also Immanuel Kant (Chapter 1), Søren Kierkegaard (Chapter 7), Rudolf Bultmann (Chapter 12), Existentialism (Chapter 26), Vatican II (Chapter 32).

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**Further reading**

- Janicaud, D. (2000) *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, New York: Fordham. (An excellent sourcebook containing the main contributions to the debate as to whether the so-called "theological turn" in recent French phenomenology is a welcome development, focusing on Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Michel Henry.)

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- Moran, D. (2000) *Introduction to Phenomenology*, London and New York: Routledge. (A standard reference work on the main figures in phenomenology with explanations of key phenomenological concepts written in clear non-technical language.)
- Spiegelberg, H. (1994) with K. Schuhmann. *The Phenomenological Movement. A Historical Introduction*, 3rd edn, Dordrecht: Kluwer. (This is an outstanding, well-researched reference work on the history of the phenomenological movement, particularly strong on the Munich school [e.g., Lipps, Pfänder, Scheler].)
- Twiss, Sumner B. and Walter H. Conser (eds) (1992) *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion*, Hanover, NH: Brown University Press. (Useful classical and contemporary readings in the phenomenology of religion, including Rudolf Otto, Max Scheler, Mircea Eliade, Paul Ricoeur, and Louis Dupré.)
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