

PHENOMENOLOGICAL SKEPTICISM

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I

Since every kind of philosophical reflection is concerned with “appearance”, insofar as it is intended to start from a foundation of experience, philosophy is necessarily phenomenology in a general sense. It describes the phenomena and seeks to find the *logos* behind them. One might see the motivation of all philosophical research in this. The various philosophical orientations manifest themselves in how philosophy understands itself in such a searching-behind. Among these orientations, phenomenology distinguishes itself as a philosophical school by concentrating on appearance *as such*, and thus it tries to reach beyond particular philosophical theories and to grasp their origin. It sees itself as a general methodological reflection on the *origins* of philosophy as ‘*prima philosophia*’. This is how Edmund Husserl understood phenomenology. In this context, phenomenology has its justification as a *method* in the original sense. Thus it is destined to be the fundamental discipline not only of philosophy but also of the particular sciences.

Phenomenology, however, necessarily becomes transcendental philosophy, insofar as that which appears can never be given without a subject, and therefore, in its description, requires a concrete “life-worldly” mediation. In this way, phenomenology stands in contrast to a naive objectivistic mode of thinking and strives to attain a critical comprehension of the structures of appearance in general. Thus it turns out to be an explication of the interdependence of subject and object, which can be understood in a genuinely dialectical sense. Phenomenology, therefore, becomes a transcendental analysis of “forms of constitution” of the totality of objects of experience. By attempting to grasp the subject–object relationship in terms of constitutional forms coordinated by transcendental subjectivity, it already exceeds that which is immediately “given”.

It was just the thinking through of the demand to go back “to the things themselves” which had brought Husserl to turn to the transcendental posture. For if we ask ourselves what the “given” actually is, it becomes immediately evident that it cannot be something existing isolated in a sphere of the

“in itself”. A phenomenon is in itself “given” if it is to be met in my consciousness as something perceived, sensed, or thought about. Husserl understands phenomenology throughout as a description of those elements given as the data of consciousness, as “objectivities”. And this givenness, which is the only thing that is real and immediate to the *ego* (the transcendent, which is not perceived, is, then, not given) – this givenness is, according to Husserl, to be exhibited in its internal structures. The various stages of the “reduction” serve this goal. Here the “transcendental” receives a central, systematic meaning. By such means, the decisive step toward ontological idealism is undertaken. With this stage of reduction, Husserl develops the Kantian transcendental subject into a form which is ontologically independent. This step, in my opinion, represents a decisive reorientation of the transcendental approach. It certainly represents a thoroughgoing epistemological insight that one can only proceed from what shows itself as perceived in consciousness. This is a methodological demand of scientific rationality. On the other hand, however, this “*ratio cognoscendi*” must not be expanded to a “*ratio essendi*”. For one cannot conclude, from the fact that I have to start from that which is immediately given in my sphere of subjectivity, that there is only one such sphere of subjectivity as the whole of reality. Yet, as far as the ontological implications of transcendental phenomenology are concerned, Husserl’s decisive reorientation of transcendental thought rests on just this conclusion, thus placing him in opposition to classic, transcendental philosophy. The concept of the “thing in itself” was eliminated from this kind of phenomenology as a meaningless concept. The “transcendent thing”, the sense of “transcendence” in the perception of objects, is, in this type of phenomenology, solely an invariance of different perspectival adumbrations presenting themselves in the perception of an object.

Thus the return to the “pure” transcendental subject develops into an absolute monism in the form of an intermonadic idealism, in which any kind of empirical objectivity is sublated (“*aufgehoben*”) within the all-encompassing totality of the “productive” subjectivity. Empirical facticity as such, however (in its character as opposing and confronting the spontaneous transcendental subject), is negated or rather transformed on the basis of an idealizing totalization. The concrete and factual is sacrificed in favor of an encompassing totality which knows itself as the subject, and only in which – as the all-encompassing subjectivity – everything obtains its “horizon of validity”, even its actual “being”.¹

We, in contrast, do not understand transcendental phenomenology in terms of an idealistic ontology. It is, rather, the consistent description of “appearance”, i.e., the knowledge of how the “thing itself” is mediated in the forms of subjectivity (within the horizon of a concrete life-world). Understood in this way, it is *skepticism* in its original sense. For skepticism is in fact nothing but a transcendental theory of experience, a system of the appearances of the thing itself and its subjective (i.e., transcendental) structures. This implies the recognition of the elusiveness of reality in the phenomena.

Transcendental phenomenology accepts the phenomena as such – for us as the only givenness. The *λόγος τῶν φαινόμενων* (*logos ton phainomenon*) is not to be found in that which is simply delimited and determined as to content, but rather in a transcendence, over and against the phenomenal level, which eludes [full] conceptualization. This *logos* is that which is hidden in the facticity of the phenomenal.

A skepticism understood in this way is compatible with a position of “transcendental realism”. By “realism” we mean to designate a philosophical position that recognizes in the objective encountering of the world, i.e., in every concrete experience, the element of transcendence which presents facticity, and that includes its evanescent characteristics in the systematic conceptualization. A realism of this kind is transcendental, therefore, because it includes the dialectical relationship of subject and object in the determination of the existent, i.e., is aware of the mediation of the in-itself in [and through] the structures of subjectivity. This implies a recognition of the dialectical relation of being-in-itself and consciousness, which forges our concrete being-in-the-world and stands in contradiction to an ontological idealism as maintained by Husserl.²

II

Now we want to describe more closely, as a basic philosophical principle, the skepticism consequent to a consistently carried out idea of phenomenology, and thereby to present the relationship between the transcendental–phenomenological conception and a thinking of being as a particular expression of the basic attitude of skepticism.

The concept of “skepticism” contains various different components of meaning which have to be clearly distinguished to avoid equivocation. Skepticism can be understood in a psychological as well as in a systematic sense. The concept can refer to an attitude with which certain problems are approached, but it can also imply a critical philosophical approach – as a presupposition of the acquisition of knowledge. On the other hand, “skepticism” can also be understood as a kind of systematic relevance. It is then an epistemological position, or – seen in its most general structure – a formal ontology. If the former is the case, this implies that an understanding of “reality as such” (if this concept is presupposed naively) is taken as being fundamentally impossible, since one cannot derive from the given, limited empirical experience (“experience of the world”) in a logically stringent or consistent way a recognition of a world “in-itself” (or of general laws within the perceived world). In the second case stated, “skepticism” is a formal ontology and thus a systematic position which gives expression to the fundamental distinction between “phenomenon” and “cause”, or rather between consciousness and being – an incompatibility between the sphere of the experienced and that which precedes experience which makes the

transposition of the structures of experience and thought onto being (reality “as such”) impossible. On this basis the concept of “transcendence” can be defined as a fundamental concept within a systematic skepticism, as defined above.

On the basis of this systematic ontological position, which precedes a theory of epistemology, a posture of epistemological skepticism, then, now follows. Between the two concerns of ontology and epistemology, there is a kind of interdependence which can easily lead to a confusion of the concepts of skepticism. An epistemological justification, and thus also a reflection on the epistemological faculties of the subject, is required in order to formulate an ontological statement “legitimately”. On the other hand, again, the ontological formulation of the indissolubility of the distinction between “phenomenon” and “cause” (already implied in the dialectical relationship between subject and object) is the presupposition and ground for a position of epistemological skepticism, which otherwise would have no legitimation to which it could refer. Thus even epistemology appears to require, in its basic principles, presuppositions as to [what we have termed the] systematic, since it must always find a base to which the process of reflection can direct itself. An abstract withdrawal of epistemology from ontology, or vice versa, seems therefore impossible. This is also of decisive importance for the two interpretations of skepticism. That is, skepticism as a determination about the duality of reality, and skepticism as a system of statements characterizing the impossibility in principle of knowledge of “being” in itself, are in the final analysis two aspects of one and the same problematic which can be formulated in epistemological terms in one connection or in ontological terms with regard to another.

These differences in the systematic concept of skepticism can be observed in many examples taken from the history of philosophy. The epistemological aspect was worked out predominantly within the context of the skepticism of the ancients as well as in the system of empiricism (e.g., in Hume). Here the principal problems – above all in recent empiricism – lay on the level of the generalization of the immediately given, that is, the working-out, considered epistemologically unrealizable, of general, nonempirical, and rule- or law-like structures (problem of induction). Within the experienced space–time continuum, no general validity presented itself, to which understanding as such could orient itself. To this extent, “skepticism” is the insight into the epistemological limitations of human existence, as far as knowledge within the space–time continuum is concerned.

On the other hand, the history of philosophy is essentially determined by the idea of skepticism in the second, ontological sense. Again and again, the existential insight of the difference between experience (appearance) and the “ground of being” became the basis for the development of universal systems, including the projection of an epistemology. The great dialecticians and mystics, not just of the West, provide express proof of this: Heraclitus, the Stoics, Pseudo-Dionysius, Plotinus, Cusanus at the end of the Middle Ages – they

all took this basic insight as a starting point for their various systems, irrespective of the unfolding of different methods and contents. The common element lies in the attempt to become conscious of the character of mystery or concealment in reality, without projecting [in response] an objectivistic metaphysics. Certainly, the concept of skepticism derived from the history of philosophy is not applicable to these positions. The basic content of skepticism that we have worked out (insight into the objective ungraspability of reality in itself due to the fundamental distinction between the world of transcendental subjectivity and “being as such” — connected with the epistemological consequence of the suspension of judgment concerning predications as to “being” which render it a “nonexistence” in respect of existing qualities) — this basic content of skepticism is nevertheless contained in a more original form in the philosophical conceptions mentioned than in some other positions conceived as systems of absolute doubt.

For this kind of skepticism, as it comes down to us in these systems, is not at all a destructive negation of any possible knowledge but rather a suspension of judgment as regards factual statements concerning areas lying beyond experience. In this sense, Kant was a skeptic — in the same way as were those already mentioned, as dialecticians or in some cases “mystics”, who did not refrain from using the most immediate symbols available to them to make explicit the incommensurability between the restricted spheres of our experience and the distinctiveness and originality of the actual foundation of being which even came to be experienced as “divine”.

This ontological difference in fact expresses the systematic sense of skepticism. The explication of the original relationship between phenomenon and ground, which includes a description of the epistemological consequences, makes this explicit. It can be shown that the approach of transcendental philosophy with its distinction between the “product” (the constituted) and the meta-phenomenal sphere (which may be coordinated with the pole of the subject or that of the object) leads in the direction of this fundamental relationship.

Skepticism in the sense in which we define it is systematically related to the approach of transcendental phenomenology, as it has developed from Kant to Husserl and, finally, Heidegger. As far as transcendental phenomenology explicates the duality of the perceiving subject and the substratum of perception, it is already itself a skeptical “position”. For the productive character of the subject does not imply that subjectivity as such is “creative of being”, but expresses rather the duality of that which is given to subjectivity and [versus] its transcendental structures which, however, cannot exist in abstract detachment from the experienced “world”. Transcendental phenomenology is fundamentally based on the experience of this duality; it is the systematic articulation of the split between subject and object. The structures of the “mediation” of reality are at the same time structures of its alienation. In this is expressed the insight that the experience of reality, even on the level of multiple reflection, is not capable of simply advancing without mediation

to a transcendence. “Skepticism” is nothing other than the recognition of this fact, unfolded systematically and presented in an epistemological context.

The multiplicity of the experience of reality, the multiple variety of its adumbrations, can be attributed to this fact – in correspondence to the multiplicity of transcendental horizons of subjective perception varying according to the historical and social conditions and related situational factors.

III

The transcendental epistemological approach is thus intrinsically connected with the concept of the ontological difference and a corresponding position of skepticism as a fundamental ontological stance of reflective consciousness. The dialectical opposition of subject and object, in which the finitude of human existence becomes manifest, shows that “experience” always presents a mediation of something which is not in itself experience. Consequently one necessarily operates, when one experiences reality, within the region of one’s own “subjective” sphere. The essence of skepticism is grounded in an insurmountable difference given in the polarity of subject and object. The transcendental subject cannot exceed the limits of its “products”. All that is experienced is formed by the subject – and to this extent is not “absolute reality” (unless one declared the sphere of experience to be the only region of reality). The ontological difference, the distinction between being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seienden*), rests precisely on the rationally comprehensible incommensurability of the region of experienced being (in the multiple forms of being-in-the-world) and the “being” which to a certain extent represents the deep structure of the experienced world. The insight into this “ontological difference” is a necessary consequence of the transcendental approach, which in the “productive” character of the subject confronts the subject with something transcendent. (Thus a realistic approach is already to be found in Kant’s transcendental philosophy. The same structure is proposed in the systematic conception of Heidegger.)

The epistemological consequence of this transcendental–phenomenological position expressed in the recognition of the ontological difference is, as we said, a skepticism which, at the same time, presents the structural model of an ontology. For, on the one hand, it represents a recognition of the fundamental limitations of human cognition and, on the other hand, it also makes a statement about the ontological fact of the distinction of regions of being, of being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seienden*), as it manifests itself in a reflection on our being-in-the-world.

A “skepticism” understood in this way manifests itself in its close connection with the idea of transcendental philosophy in general. Every “mediation” presupposes a difference, [so] the structures of experience of the subject are at the same time structures of transposition, and thereby also

of “alienation”. In this dialectic of experience (experience is always mediation in the twofold sense: communication and thereby already the transcendental—subjective formation of the communicated), the basic principle of the skeptical thinking of being is explicated. Every appearance of “being”, just because it is appearance (i.e., determined by the subject in its concrete being-in-the-world), is also self-effacing. This approach does not differ formally from the critical transcendental epistemology of Kant. The dichotomy between the “thing-in-itself” and appearance cannot in fact be overcome. This turns every kind of reflected philosophical position into one of skepticism in the original sense of the word. The dialectic connected to this, in the analysis of the underlying relationships of interdependence, presents the essential task of philosophy.

If “being” is experienced as the fundamental other (in the recognition that it cannot be “objectified” in the customary sense — which does not itself represent another experience added to the experience, but forms an insight into the fundamental character of this experience),³ then a new categorical level is opened to philosophical thought which can be circumscribed with the concept “transcendence”. From here the possible meaning of “skepticism” can also be determined, which, in so far as it is understood systematically, is built up on this formal ontological fundament.

A level has thereby been reached which exceeds in principle the systematic doubt applied to objects characteristic of the skepticism of empiricism. Only in the “openness toward mystery” of which Heidegger speaks,⁴ does it become clear that the “true problem” is “what we do not know and what, in so far as we know it *authentically*, namely *as a problem*, we know only *questioningly*”.⁵ Therein lies the dialectical element of skepticism, where the rudiments of ancient speculation are resumed in a critical fashion. By way of the familiarity of phenomenal reality, one reaches a recognition of the lack of knowledge concerning the meta-object[-]ive sphere, which does however represent the deep dimension of the phenomena in so far as it has a determining function.

If we speak of “knowledge” in this context, this can only be in a transferred sense. It is a matter of insight into the basic nature of our experience of reality — not a further element in our experience of reality, but a dimension of the details. A “docta ignorantia” comprehending itself in this way does not search for another reality behind things; it attempts to keep consciousness open to the mystery of the reality we encounter. A recognition of this mystery represents the essence of skepticism, which is not intended to imply the destruction of every kind of knowledge, but an opening of knowledge toward the mystery. With the reduction of uncritical objectifications, without, at the same time, a false mystification, a positive element of [skeptical] epistemology is emphasized. Through the skeptical attitude, knowledge of particular beings becomes more critical, more “founded”; in a certain sense, than it could be without knowledge of these limitations.

Thus it would be a misunderstanding of skeptical thought if one attempted

to apply an analytical method to approach this original “reality” step by step, as it were. This would imply a transposition of the experienced world onto reality as such – whereby the idea of the transcendental mediation of reality through the structures of historical subjectivity (individual and collective) would be rejected.

Only renouncing knowledge in the objectivistic sense brings understanding of the “real” being which “doesn’t exist”. Any “*analogia entis*” is thus precluded by a skepticism of this kind. Only in the renunciation of the demand for constantly available knowledge and comprehension in terms of technical production, with which we create a comprehensible world, do we find ourselves. The critical idea of transcendental philosophy, and consequently that of transcendental phenomenology as we have described it, culminates in this dialectic of a clarified skepticism which does not represent a polemical negation of understanding. I can constitute myself – as subject – only in the world of what can be experienced, the world of objects from which I can distinguish myself. I can only fully experience myself if I recognize by critical reflection that the objects I encounter are, in the form of their givenness, achievements of my transcendental subjectivity, that something underlies the experienced subject–object opposition which, to my empirical consciousness, is in a primordial sense something “other” than the world of phenomenal objects, since it is fundamentally transcendent over against every experience of the world. To consciously distinguish oneself in one’s concrete being-in-the-world from such an “opposite” yields a more radical dialectic than that between subject and object. In such a distinction from the “other”, the “being-oneself” becomes more conscious (if levels of gradation can in any way be adopted here). We designate the attitude in which this radical “other” is experienced as skepticism in the transcendental–phenomenological context. The “other” is only the expression of the fundamental restriction of our knowledge with regard to the problem of “reality as such”. It is not, as the term might suggest, a substance of its own in the sense of a world “behind” our experienced world [“*Hinterwelt*”]. For that would be to extend to this sphere the dogmatism of objectification, and the genuine experience of a transcendence would no longer be possible.

IV

Skepticism, particularly as it becomes clarified in Martin Heidegger’s thinking of being, attempts to recognize as such the [sphere of what is] not-recognizable.⁶ The concept “being”, on this level of the understanding of the problem, is no longer the reference to an entity, but rather expresses the aggregate of all reservations concerning an “ontology”. “Being” does not represent a new certainty which could be achieved by insight into the “essence” of things. The deep structure of reality is not another objectivity [object-ness]. The actual heuristic purpose of the word “being” in Heidegger’s

thinking is to express this in the context of transcendental phenomenology. As a transcendental concept, it is not the expression of a new mystical experience, to which a special sphere of reality with particular methods of approach corresponds, but a comprehensive expression of the epistemological problematic of "reality", with its corresponding formal—ontological "givennesses". (On the problem level reached by Heidegger, a material ontology is no longer possible; in the symbolic expressions of his later writing, it has only metaphorical meaning.) "Being" is above all, therefore, also a methodological concept, according to our interpretation, by which objectifying analogical inferences are to be averted. To a certain degree, this concept is the culmination of a critical phenomenological epistemology. In that it cannot be deduced from other philosophical concepts, "being" becomes the expression of the mysteriousness of reality which also enters into the way we consciously experience the world. For each particular phenomenon gains a new color, a new depth-dimension, in the manner of its givenness, if it is experienced anterior to the horizon of a reality "in itself". Every kind of reflection about the deep structure of our being-in-the-world registers the dialectic which, simply through distinction from the "other", enables a more immediate and conscious experience of individual phenomena. So the character of mysteriousness of being-in-the-world which finds its articulation in the concept of "being" enters by way of epistemological reflection into every individual experience. It is the task of philosophy to clarify this conceptually, and thereby to project an epistemologically justifiable formal ontology, from which a transcendence can be understood as "something beyond" yet also as forming our experience. Thus every kind of philosophical "clarification" of reality is necessarily a making-conscious of the "mystery", and thus a dialectical process which implies a clarification of the human situation through the recognition of "transcendence".

When one has reached this standpoint of abstraction, cultures (and, that is, the embedded individual experiences) meet one another across historical epochs. The *ἄπειρον* of Anaximander is fundamentally an anticipation of the nonobjectivizing idea in western thought, as also expressed in the conceptions of negative theology and the mysticism of transcendence of a Pseudo-Dionysius, for example — and as it was developed by Heidegger, who incorporated and reflected this tradition (in withdrawal from our present technological civilization).

If "reality" is accessible only in the structures of transcendental subjectivity, and is therefore always mediated, then the situational factors of a historical and social nature are of great significance even for a formal ontology. For one cannot speak in a naive fashion about reality without referring to the subject. The various social contexts, evaluations, and in general the practical and cultural self-understanding, the categorization schemas which a culture imparts always in specific ways, belong just as much to the subject as do his physiologically determined mechanisms of perception. One cannot "distance" oneself from these conditions of perception (experience). They determine

beforehand — as a material *a priori*, which nevertheless still can be questioned as to its origin — the possibility and the form of the experience of reality.

With such a concept of concrete being-in-the-world, Kant's formal transcendental approach can be continued in a comprehensive way, and at the same time it thereby becomes possible to display the inner correspondence of ontology and anthropology (as a consistently carried-out transcendental phenomenology). Thus it becomes evident that a "pure" experience of being is never possible. Rather, as has been pointed out, "being" is the culmination of reservations as to all objectifications of immediate or direct experience. Due to the multitude of perspectives revealed by transcendental analysis, an objectivized fixing proves to be illusory from the outset; a strictly bounded "Gestalt" effaces itself in the relativity of the horizon. The functional purpose of skepticism is to recognize this fact and give it systematic expression. What remains is only the formal idea of the "being itself", which "adumbrates" itself in concrete situations. Every fixing of a fully determinate form of manifestation leads back into a precritical metaphysics.

The undetermined can be experienced only as determined; this is possible, however, only if the *epoché* is executed with regard to all the "references of reality" of our horizon of consciousness.⁷ The consciousness of the mystery which remains is no empty formality, [since] it articulates itself in symbols which themselves arise in the context of a historical horizon. It is one thing to transpose the boundedness or limitation of a horizon concretely and objectivizingly onto reality "in itself". It is another thing, however, to formulate, starting out from a limited horizon, symbols of the nonlimitizability of reality. The manner of symbolic expression is not what forms the systematic content of the declaration about the renunciation of objectifications, of interpretations from a horizon, i.e., of the experience of "being", which is no substance but rather a "problem concept".

The experience described by Heidegger is a possible formulation of this insight, a specific kind of reaction to what is comprehended formally, allowing various material symbolizations. In connection with Heidegger's "thinking of being", as it manifests itself in the late writings, we must put the question: Has "skepticism" become a new faith? Is a cult of the mysterious unfolding, which establishes "the unknowable" as a new substance to which the now functionless properties of the divine, of absolute being, among others, are again attributed? The experience of "the proximity of the distant",⁸ which distinguishes the skepticism articulated by Heidegger and in which the dialectic of the experience of nonexperientibility is announced, can lead to a new mysticism of the experience of being, in which the merely possible, symbolic character of description gains [derelict] independence and objectivized existence. A cult of "the mysterious" could thereby unfold in which its character of mysteriousness becomes a fetish. Circum[-]scriptions of the experience of the unknowable then become — in a sudden conversion — manifestos about an ontological substance designated as "mystery" and which thereby gains an exclusive status. In such a manner, the argument

moves from an epistemological to an ontological level, without being able to provide a grounding for it. The development of a new, individual terminology which helps to promote the coherence of the school in the face of influences placing the system in question is one of the irrational consequences of such a cult of mystery.

This danger, which has manifested itself so frequently in the history of philosophy, also exists in Heidegger's path of thought. If the actual meaning of thinking for him, i.e., of thinking Dasein, is to "guard the mystery of being",⁹ then this already presents the starting point for a breaking out of the unknowability of being, out of the sphere of rationally testable description. The cult of mysteriousness leads to new objectifications, which permit the symbolic character of the argument to be forgotten. So the still purely rationally interpretable insight that in all dimensions of the question "the *enigma of being* . . . impels its [essential] being" ("das *Rätsel des Seins* . . . sein Wesen treibt")¹⁰ could in a sudden conversion lead to a fixation of the enigma for its own sake. Herein lies the dangerous, irrational element of a continuously repeated, skeptically motivated warning against objectification and analogous interpretation of the "ground of being". For the more the uncritical objectifying character of the "system" is sublimated, the more rational analysis allows a renunciation of securing generalizations, of the alleviating certitude of faith, to penetrate through; "the more fearfully snatches", as Schrödinger fittingly formulated it, "the weak and cheating human spirit after a wonderful support, even were it still so foolish".¹¹

Thus the striving after "authenticity" configures, unseen, into a new myth, which posits a new level of experience intended to go beyond the restrictions of transcendental reflection (of transcendental realism), but which in fact falls short of it. Again and again, this danger shines through Heidegger's figurative expressions; it lies in the nature of such formulations, which in the figurative character of the "square" seem already to lead back almost to the clarity of the naively experienced myths of Hölderlin.

If the dangers of a skeptical attitude based on reflection on the ontological difference become explicit even right in Heidegger's thinking, the "skepticism" we described must still be adhered to as an achievement of a transcendental-phenomenological reflection – in contrast to the idealistic development of phenomenology in Husserl and its ontological modification in Heidegger. Its "constructive" character could, if understood correctly, lie in the "destruction" through which experienced reality is released from the "distortion" of metaphysically objectivizing comprehension and led back to the simplicity of the "mystery". The reflecting subject gains thereby a final irony or ironic distance, even over against his own experience of certainty, which – also in the social sense of a tolerant attitude toward opposing experiences – is only what makes him actually "human". The overcoming of the belief in a definitive material ontology brings with it a receptivity to an attitude

adjustment which no longer tends toward the “availability” of reality as object-ivity [object-ness]. For the “contemplative reflection” of which Heidegger also speaks¹² does not *want* anything; it does not anticipate the result of its reflection through the intention arising from a striving after certainty. In it the *openness* of the human mind first registers itself in the strict sense: as *receptivity* toward the phenomenon, “as it gives itself” – and within the limits in which it “gives itself”.¹³ Such a consistently carried-out phenomenology is the fundamental prerequisite for a tolerant attitude as well toward epistemological subjects with differing horizons. Skeptical relativizing first opens one’s gaze to the variety which transcends individual experience. Such a “de-ideologized” position could be a precondition for a concurrence in social interaction also – in that, by making conscious the incommensurability of experience and reality (“transcendence”), beyond the variations of phenomenal experience, a communality or community of interest is experienced which is deeper than that which can be opened by a sociological–psychological examination: the community of the existential situation yielded by the split of subject and object, experienced being and being in-itself, and the individuals united “without discrimination” beyond oppositions of ideology.

This is what lets what we have described here as the “phenomenological”, i.e., phenomenologically founded, skepticism have a closer affinity to an existential philosophy than to the idealistic position of the founder of phenomenology.

NOTES*

1. Cf. the interpretation of the author: *Die Subjekt–Objekt Dialektik in der transzendentalen Phänomenologie* (Meisenheim a.G., 1974).
2. Cf. the author’s suggestions: *ibid.*, p. 185 ff.
3. Here we move onto a meta-level. If we still speak of “experience”, the similarity of the word must nevertheless not conceal the difference in categorial content. Everyday language contains many equivocations even in its accepted use. These must be reflected on, on a philosophical level.
4. *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen, 1959, 3rd edn.), p. 24.
5. *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Frankfurt a.M., 1966), p. 157.
6. Cf. the author’s publication: *Skepsis und Gesellschaftskritik im Denken Martin Heideggers* (Meisenheim a.G., 1978).
7. This step, however, should not be confused with Husserl’s *epoché*.
8. *Gelassenheit*, p. 68.
9. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, I (Pfullingen, 1967), p. 90.
10. *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1967), p. 392.
11. Erwin Schrödinger, *Meine Weltansicht* (Hamburg/Wien, 1961), p. 179.
12. *Gelassenheit*, p. 13.
13. Cf. Husserl’s definition of phenomenology: *Ideen . . . I*. Husserliana Bd. III (Den Haag, 1950), p. 52.

*Passages in brackets in the text are additions to the original that were made by the translator to achieve added clarity.