

martin

HEIDEGGER

Basic Problems of
Phenomenology

Winter Semester 1919/1920

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BASIC PROBLEMS OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Winter Semester 1919/1920

Martin Heidegger

Translated by Scott M. Campbell

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

This text is a translation of *GA 58 Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (1919/20)*, a lecture course that Martin Heidegger delivered at the University of Freiburg during the Winter Semester of 1919–20. The German edition was first published in 1993 by Vittorio Klostermann, edited by Hans-Helmuth Gander. The second, revised edition was published in 2010, and this translation is based on the second edition. According to the *Gesamtausgabe*, Heidegger delivered two lecture courses bearing almost exactly the same title. The first one is the current text from 1919–20. The second one, entitled *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, was delivered by Heidegger at the University of Marburg during the Summer Semester of 1927, and that text has already been translated, by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). In order to distinguish the two texts, which are based on two very different lecture courses, the title of this translation includes as a sub-title the semester in which the course was delivered, thus: *Basic Problems of Phenomenology: Winter Semester 1919/1920*.

When reading this lecture course, one would do well to keep in mind that it was delivered as a lecture and, thus, as a text that was spoken out loud. Heidegger will sometimes refer to situations and events that are happening either inside or outside the classroom: a truck passing by or what a particular student is wearing. In this translation, I have tried to retain the rhetorical resonance of the lecture, sometimes allowing a sentence to run-on, instead of breaking it apart with punctuation, when it seems clear that a particular point is being emphasized. Thus, the reader will be well advised to adopt the stance of a listener in the classroom when reading through this text, and thus not just reading it but trying to listen to it, in order to pick up Heidegger's points of emphasis and rhetorical flourishes. Of particular note are Heidegger's examples. He will often break off during the lecture course to describe everyday experiences in great and

vivid detail. He views these experiences as very much the stuff of philosophical inquiry and the place where philosophizing needs to begin. By reading these lectures in such a way that one hears them, one may better appreciate the vibrancy of those examples.

Heidegger adopts a highly specialized vocabulary in this lecture course, trying to develop terms that might capture the intensity and the immediacy of life without objectifying it. Three of the most important of his specialized terms are *Kenntnisnehmen*, *Zugespitztheit*, and *abheben*. It is not unwarranted to translate *Kenntnisnehmen* as “taking-cognizance”, but Heidegger is trying to grasp something subtler with this term than cognition or knowledge, as the root term *Kenntnis* may imply. I have opted for “taking-notice” in order to convey the sense of grasping an experience without making it into a cognized or objectified object. *Zugespitztheit* does not translate easily because it carries different nuances, a mixture of intensity and focus upon the self-world. Thus, I have opted for the cumbersome “intensifying-concentration,” so as not to lose these resonances. Lastly, *abheben* could quite easily be translated as “to lift up,” which I would have used if not for the variety of ways in which Heidegger employs the term. He will often use the adjective *abgehoben* or its opposite *unabgehoben*. To translate these terms as “uplifted” and “non-uplifted,” respectively, would give them an emotional resonance (i.e. an uplifting experience) that Heidegger does not intend. With *abgehoben*, he is not describing an uplifting experience, but rather an experience that has been raised up, highlighted, or made prominent. It implies a direction of attention and not an emotional lift. Thus, I translate *abheben* as “to make-prominent” and for *abgehoben* and *unabgehoben* I employ the terms “prominent” and “improminent”. For the constellation of terms related to *abheben*, such as *heben* and *herausheben*, I have maintained the sense of “lifting,” “lifting out,” or “raising up,” which do not convey the same emotional resonance.

To be sure, Heidegger takes liberties with language in his lecture courses, but they are not arbitrary ones. I have chosen to avoid smoothing over some of those terms that might strike the ear of the English reader as sounding, perhaps, a bit coarse. In particular, I have translated many of the plural forms of terms that, technically, do not take the plural. For example, Heidegger often uses the term *Bedeutsamkeiten*. The singular form of this term, *Bedeutsamkeit*, is a common German term for “meaningfulness.” The plural form is not used in German. It could reasonably be translated as “those things which are meaningful” or even as “that which is meaningful.” But since the plural form would be as unusual to the ear of a native German-speaker as it is to the ear of a native English-speaker, I have retained the plural form, odd as it may sound, in order to retain the

same peculiar resonance it would have had for the students listening to this course. Thus, I employ the following translations: *Bedeutsamkeiten* (meaningfulnesses), *Fraglichkeiten* (questionabilities), *Verfügbarkeiten* (availabilities), and *Verständlichkeiten* (intelligibilities), among others.

I employ a similar maxim with some of Heidegger's adjectives. He uses, for example, the terms *umweltzeitlich* and *sinngenetisch*. Again, these terms would sound puzzling to a native German speaker, and I have tried to maintain the starkness of the original, using the unwieldy "environmentally temporal" for *umweltzeitlich* and "sense-genetical" for *sinngenetisch*.

One of the most well-known words in Heidegger's philosophy is *Eigentlichkeit*, which is translated as "authenticity," and its variant *eigentlich* is translated as "authentic." In this lecture course, Heidegger often uses the term *eigentlich*, but he does not use *Eigentlichkeit*, and there is no sense of a fully-developed, or even a partially developed, notion of authenticity in this text. Thus, I usually translate *eigentlich* as "actual" or "proper" instead of as "authentic." Similarly, the term *historisch* is often translated as "historiological," in order to distinguish it from the term *geschichtlich*, which is translated as "historical." But in this lecture course, Heidegger does not make a sharp distinction between these two terms, so I translate both as "historical."

Since the focus of this course is on the notion of life, Heidegger talks to his students at length about experience and about contexts of experience. He uses two terms for experience, *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*, and he appears to use them interchangeably, so I translate both with the term "experience." He does, however, make a distinction between *Erfahrung* and *Erfahren* as well as between *Erlebnis* and *Erleben*. In both cases, I generally translate the first term with "experience" and the second term with "experiencing."

Some brackets "[...]" are in the original text of the lecture course. I have tried to interject translator's brackets as little as possible, so as not to interrupt the flow of the text. For the most part, I use these to indicate how Heidegger is employing German terms that share a common root that is not evident in the English translation, as, for example, with *Sachgebiet* and *Sachverhalt* ("subject-area" and "state-of-affairs"). I also use brackets, on occasion, to clarify certain uses of terms. The reader will find the page numbers from the original German text in brackets throughout the text. Given the exigencies of translation, it was sometimes necessary to put the first part of a German sentence toward the end of its English translation, so these page numbers should be viewed as close approximations of where a page of the German text begins. I should note, lastly, that the text of the translation includes references to other sections of the lecture course, including page numbers. Where this occurs, I include the page numbers

both for the original German text and for this English translation, with English pagination first and the German pagination following in brackets.

There are a number of Translator's Notes appended to the text as footnotes. Throughout the course of this translation, I maintained contact with Professor Ted Kisiel of Northern Illinois University. In our email exchange, he suggested that I add three footnotes to the printed edition of the translation. I believe that these footnotes provide important context for particular sections of the lecture course. Two of these footnotes can be found on page 22 [26] and the third is on page 85 [107].

With its acute sensitivity to the immediacy of life-experience, this is one of the most interesting of Heidegger's early lecture courses. Even though Heidegger will actually abandon many of the concepts from this lecture course, as such, we see here a systematic and concerted attempt to describe the intensity and the immediacy of life as a way of then uncovering the hidden depth of meaning that underlies the immediacy of life-experience. This is the main task of the primal science of phenomenology. In this course, Heidegger is trying to uncover the original region that is the domain of meaningfulness. This domain is never immediately given but must be brought to givenness by way of a hermeneutical phenomenological re-reduction that "leads back" to the realms and contexts of meaningfulness. These contexts form the original region. Thus, the re-reduction does not suspend meaningfulness. Rather, it suspends that which is not meaningful and then discerns the self in the full actualization of life. This discernment is a categorially charged apprehension of the meaningfulness of factual life. Although Heidegger could not be termed a life-philosopher in the traditional sense of life-philosophy, the concepts he uses and the examples that he gives in this lecture course testify to his conviction that philosophy needs a way to describe, not just life, but the meaningfulness of life in all of its richness and abundance. Under the influence of phenomenology, Heidegger appeals to life in its average everydayness, and he is trying to develop a science of life-experience, to the extent that phenomenology is a science. At the same time, he is struggling with the tendency in science toward objectification. Thus, there is clear evidence in this course of Heidegger's gifts as a phenomenologist, even as he recognizes the limits of any science to describe factual life. As the editor, Hans-Helmuth Gander, explains in the Afterword, this course is also important to Heidegger's philosophical development. Much of the conceptual framework in *Being and Time* can be found here in its nascence. It is important to note, though, that one does not find here the sense of fallenness and average everydayness that is so well-known from *Being and Time*. On the contrary, there is a markedly positive sense of everyday life, and even of trivialities, to be found in this lecture course. Thus, this is a fascinating text in its own right.

There are a number of people whom I would like to acknowledge for their help with this translation. Allow me to recognize first the team of editors at Bloomsbury, especially Rachel Eisenhauer, Colleen Coalter, and David Avital. I found them to be at all times highly professional, and I am grateful to them for helping to make this project happen. I would also like to specially recognize Bill Hopkins, Professor of German at Nazareth College. He helped me considerably as I attempted to navigate Heidegger's unique use of German terms and expressions. For help with the French translations in the text, and for insights into Heidegger's thinking, I am very grateful to Ed McGushin of Stonehill College; and for general help with understanding Heidegger's ideas, I would like to thank Paul Bruno from Framingham State University. Before embarking upon this project I spoke with Tracy Colony from the European College of Liberal Arts in Berlin, who translated another one of Heidegger's early lecture courses, *GA 59 Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression* (Continuum, 2010). He was helpful and encouraging, and he made available to me his Glossary, even while his translation was still in production. I am grateful for his help. My interpretation of Heidegger is deeply informed by the teachings of P. Christopher Smith and William J. Richardson. I owe them a debt of gratitude for helping me to understand Heidegger's work; it is a debt that I do not know how to repay. My wife, Marianne, comes from Braunschweig, Germany, and we talked often about Heidegger's use of German. For her love, support, and patience, I am profoundly grateful. In the last place, I would like to thank and recognize Ted Kisiel. One might say that he is the Dean of the early Heidegger delegation. His book on Heidegger's early work, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, opened up new paths of research not only into Heidegger's development but also into ideas in Heidegger that were hitherto unknown. At the Heidegger Circle conference in Cincinnati, OH in 2009, he asked me to undertake this project, and he subsequently referred me to the editors at Continuum. Moreover, he reviewed this translation and made available to me his knowledge of the early Heidegger. I am grateful for his guidance.

Scott M. Campbell
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May, 2012

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[1]

nous sommes d'ouvrir toujours
devant nous l'espace, de refermer
toujours derrière nous la durée

[we are always open
to the space before us, always
closed to the duration behind us]

**PRELIMINARY
CONSIDERATIONS
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
AS EXOTERIC
DETERMINATION
OF THE ESOTERIC
DISPOSITION OF THE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL
CONSCIOUSNESS OF
PROBLEMS**

§ 1. Pre-indication of phenomenology as the original science of life in itself

a) The meaning of the idea of original science

“Basic problems of phenomenology”—the most burning, most original, and ultimate basic problem of phenomenology, one which is never to be effaced, is *it itself* for itself.

It is *the* primal science, the science of the absolute *origin* of the spirit [*Geist*] in and for itself—“life in and for itself.” For the time being, empty words, which merely pretend to say something wholly definite, genuine, and absolutely identifiable—the word itself is “accidental” [*zufällig*]. Therefore, it falls back [*zurückfällt*], as a manifestation of itself, into its object, into itself. That is not a deficiency attaching to it, nor is that an impediment weighing it down. Rather, that is the specific character of the vitality, the “providence,” of its questions and modes of the answer—that is the advantage of the progressive form of its problematic.

This innermost, living calling, the destiny of philosophy, its idea, whose greatest manifestations we know [2] under the names of Plato, Kant, Hegel, needs to be brought to “life,” in an original and radical way, from out of a new basic situation. Understanding what that means is our next task.

The idea of *original* science (I) conveys the sense that it first arrives at an original understanding of itself through the generation of its task and through the genuine effectuation of its ownmost motives in the clarification and execution of that “task” by way of research. It is thereby shown, first of all, that phenomenology is *struggling* relentlessly with a *paradox*, which we will understand as the primal paradox of life in and for itself. But on the other hand, out of the idea of primal science arises the basic instruction: to reject ruthlessly every attempt to *con-ceive* original science itself and the mode of its vitalization in abstract conceptual constructions or to want to bring it to a standstill in formal, systematic concepts—objectivizing results; that is, to reject ruthlessly every attempt to place itself outside of the vital return to the origin and the vital emergence out of it (figuratively speaking). In other words, only the *genuine, concrete realization* and the actualization [*Vollzug*] (following) of the “tendencies” operating in original science lead to it itself and to its ownmost problem area, which only responds when it is taken into the basic tendency of phenomenology itself. It must genuinely *manifest* itself in order to understand itself manifestly as a manifestation.

The idea of original *science* (II) itself sketches out the mode of its concrete, vital realization; namely: this is taken into the idea of “science.” Cognition—there is in it—and in it originally—something like problems—methods. This means that it has to bring itself to understanding as primal science. As such, it may not let its primal-scientific problematic and method be imposed upon it from the outside, from something foreign to itself, from any of the special sciences. Rather, they must grow from the origin itself, out of the origin in original generation and in constantly renewing [3] preservation and evident fulfillment of its tendencies. That even extends to the idea of science—cognition—expression of the same—evidence—proof and the art of justification itself. It is not the case that, as it were, no particular, individual science is taken as an ideal type. Rather, a formalized or some other generalization is taken as the basis of the idea of science.

The word meanings are all still entirely formal, *nothing prejudicing*, only sounding a direction—without a fixed determination of it—, perhaps, so that it only serves to return on its way to the most original motives of life, which, to be sure, are not theoretical-scientific. Every one of its genuine questions of method is a “*substantive*” problem preserved within itself and leads, when genuinely followed, necessarily to the “origin.”

But what does “origin” mean? What is an “idea”? How should we understand: “placing under an idea,” “taking in a tendency”? What do “science” and “science of the life of the spirit” purport to say, anyway? What is meant by: “grasping” life “in concepts,” “concepts,” “clarifying meanings,” “expressing the clarified and the clarifying,” “bringing into words,” where the words as complete expressions should still be tailored to our environing-world, to space. Something spatial, spatial relations are also meant, which Bergson had already emphasized, magnificently, over 30 years ago, but which today one can advertise as incredibly new to the sophisticated European citizen in an extensive book¹, which promptly took people in—even among the faculty. It does have to do with genuine problems, and not with witticisms. This book presents spectrally illuminated material that has been bundled together with admirable diligence, and yet one finds, on every page, skepticism punching itself in the face.

[4]

b) The question of beginning

In the fundamental clarification of the questions being touched upon, which have only been hinted at, where should the beginning be made?

What does it mean “to begin” in a science and even in the supposed primal science? And all questioning related to phenomenology should itself be phenomenological and should be settled phenomenologically. Why, then, all these contrived detours, reminiscent of the notorious practices of the so-called epistemology, which constantly sharpen the knife without ever cutting anything? Are we not then importing into the sense of beginning the picture of an insertion at a point and progress *along a line*? Since we ourselves are standing on the line, it is not possible to set ourselves down at the first point from a point outside of it. Difficulties that come only from the objectivization of the beginning in objectivized time placed upon an objectivized, objectified what!

Indeed, we should not reflect on the beginning, but rather factually begin! But how? Can a genuine scientific method be easily taken up, as something detached from the object-character of science, as a technical means, as a hand tool that one becomes familiar with, practicing how to use it so that now one can work away at doing phenomenology in a new way?

c) The problem of method

One notices, on the side of phenomenology—or should we say: by those who call themselves that—not that genuine method always grows out of the basic character of a particular object-region and its problematic—as *Husserl* emphatically brought to consciousness. But—that is still just one side of things? What does this mean: the method grows out of a particular problematic of an object-region? What does problem mean? Do problems simply lie only in the relevant object-region, on the path, as it were, so that one can seize them and then fashion the method according to them! Or do not the problems themselves arise [5] first, and, indeed, according to the mode of questioning, in the method, based on the relevant object-region? Well, the circumstances are exactly reversed for us.

The methodology grows out of the problematic, and this is a method of basic questioning regarding an object-region to be treated. And this object-region? Does that simply lie there, so that one only needs to direct questions to it? Is it given, professed rough-and-ready? What does “given” mean? “*Givenness*”? This magic word of phenomenology and “thorn in the side” for others.

But it should not grow rampant in phenomenology: the “non-method of vengeance and excitement,” also not “the arbitrariness of prophetic speech,”² much less the homely bourgeois way of life and the airs of the

scientific day-laborers, but rather genuine, original, living, never stagnant problem-consciousness, always churning itself up anew from the ground—genuine science, which our era and the 19th century lost, which one cannot demonstrate to a newly dawning age, but which wants to be lived anew. A matter of living, personal *being and creating* (→ radicalism).

In the idea of original science and its genuine actualization lies the demand of the absolute radicalism of questioning and critique. Namely, genuine historical understanding, which grows out of phenomenology and makes possible for it a new assessment and evaluation of intellectual history, a new seeing of it. It must make phenomenology uncompromising over its achievements, in the sense that it lets itself profess (suggest) nothing unmediated and unexamined. This applies even more to the philosophy of the current, “accidental” present.

[6] But the radicalism of phenomenology needs to operate in the most radical way *against phenomenology itself and against everything* that speaks out as phenomenological cognition.

There is no *iurare in verba magistri* [swearing to the words of a master] within scientific research. The essence of a *genuine* generation of researchers and of subsequent generations lies in its not losing itself on the fringe of special questions, but rather to return in a new and genuine way to the primal sources of the problems, and to take them deeper.

With that, it is likewise implied that the continuity of phenomenological-philosophical research has a unique character and has nothing to do with imitating the forms of progress in the individual sciences, e.g. in mathematical natural science. Husserl’s essay, “Philosophy as a Strict Science”³ is generally misunderstood in this sense, which is much easier to do in that Husserl himself gladly and often exemplifies mathematical natural science.

§ 2. Standpoints, directions, systems of current philosophy

Since it is the intent of this lecture course to enter into critical debates that have been stimulated by the problematic itself, and to do so only at the most important places, a general idea should be given for it: some simple, preliminary considerations that have been historically established, in such a form, to be sure, that they allow the esoteric disposition of the phenomenological problem-consciousness to resound in an exoteric way.

The overview should consider: the philosophy of the present in its totality. All of that, however, only in the preliminary form of raw and obvious characteristics, without going [7] into the particular contents of its doctrines. We shall give, rather, more of an indication of its altogether characteristic availability and influence in the spiritual, philosophical life of the present. [If, therefore, I should not name the “system” of any Professor or *Privatdozent* in philosophy, then, to be sure, you should not grant it more than the briefest of time. Much less will I be giving time and attention to the “clumsy” forms of phenomenology.] In particular, then, we will be looking at what today passes under the label “phenomenology,” where genuine approaches and motives are alive, and where it merely seems “as though” that were happening.

In current philosophy, an orientation set to work under the guiding idea of scientifically philosophical research offers the following picture of standpoints, directions, and systems:

Initially, one notices the ever-increasing influence of the dull non-philosophy of critical realism, which—to use the phrase that best characterizes it—“enjoys all-around popularity,” above all by the representatives of the individual sciences (natural sciences and the humanities), which find in it a welcome and calming philosophical confirmation of their own activity. It is the standpoint of the misinterpreted Aristotle, the philosophy of sound common sense, the much-desired relay services carrying out what is today the totally run-down systematic theology of *both* confessions. It is the philosophy from which, somehow, all questions derive; or they return to the question of whether or not the external world now really exists, and it is the philosophy that supplies the perturbed citizen with ever new scientific proofs that the world “in deed and fact” exists. And so, as they say, an “epistemological” direction—among others. It is seen, thereby, that *epistemological* questioning characterizes philosophy today. That is connected with the manner in which the revival of philosophy in the latter third of the 19th Century [8] is motivated by a “return to Kant,” by a renewal of Kantian philosophy (neo-Kantianism—a designation that today is no longer entirely applicable in the same ways). The two main directions of neo-Kantianism are characterized by the Marburg School (Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer) and by Philosophy of Value (Windelband, Rickert, Lask). For years, both directions have been comprehended according to a reshuffling, which historically can be characterized as a return to Fichte and, above all, to Hegel. Among the younger representatives of both schools, a neo-Hegelianism is unmistakably in the offing. The motives for this are not everywhere the same. For those in Marburg, these are predominantly attempts at advancing and radically grounding logic. In philosophy of value, it is the problem of *history* and of *religion*.