

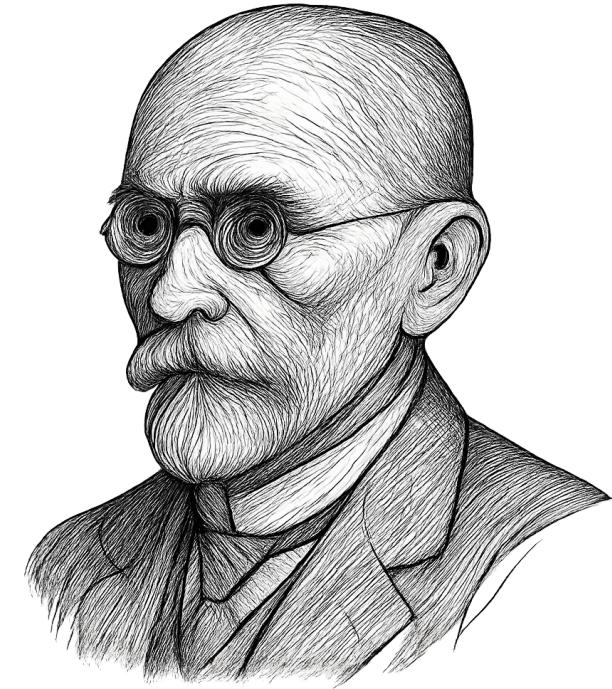
Why Phenomenology Now?

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Overview: Why Phenomenology Now?

- **Part 1 – Framing the Problem**
 - 1–10 ▶ Why phenomenology matters today
 - 11–20 ▶ What phenomenology is
- **Part 2 – Application and Implications**
 - 21–25 ▶ From Husserl to behavior and cognition
 - 26–30 ▶ Toward a new synthesis in science
-  **Goal:** To reframe core scientific and philosophical questions in light of phenomenological method — across perception, behavior, and cognition.



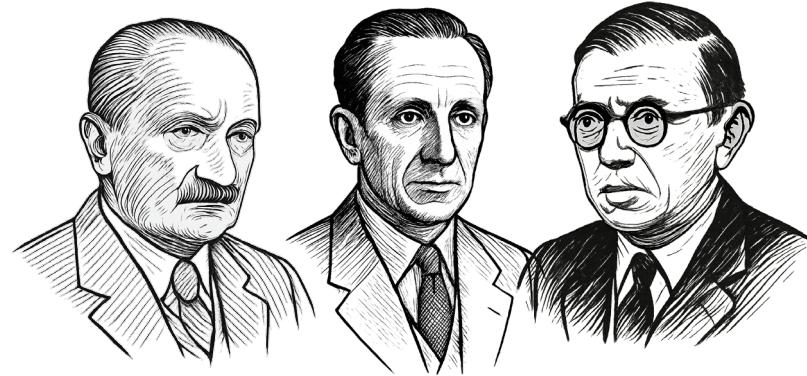
Husserl, Edmund (1859-1938)

Why Phenomenology Matters Today

- Key Concepts
 - - Modern science often overlooks subjective experience.
 - - Phenomenology provides a rigorous method for analyzing first-person lived experience.
 - - It complements, rather than opposes, natural science by grounding it in conscious experience.
 - - Influential in psychology, cognitive science, AI, ethics, and education.
 - - Revitalizes philosophy's role in the interdisciplinary landscape.
- Why It Matters
 - - 🔎 Investigates how meaning arises from experience.
 - - 🧠 Enhances understanding of consciousness beyond neural correlates.
 - - 🤝 Supports interdisciplinary bridges (e.g., neuroscience + philosophy).
 - - 🗣️ Informs theories of language and communication.
 - - 🌎 Contextualizes empirical data within the human world of meaning.

Zahavi, D. (2019). *Phenomenology: The Basics*. Routledge.

Husserl's Core Contribution



- Key Concepts
 - - Developed the method of phenomenological (or eidetic) reduction.
 - - Sought a rigorous foundation for all knowledge through first-person analysis.
 - - Challenged psychologism in logic and epistemology.
 - - Insisted on returning 'to the things themselves' (Zu den Sachen selbst).
- Why It Matters
 - - 📌 Epoché: suspension of presuppositions.
 - - 🌌 Intentionality: all consciousness is consciousness of something.
 - - 🎓 Focus on essence (**eidos**), not just empirical facts.
 - - 📚 Basis for subsequent phenomenological thinkers: Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre.

Husserl, E. (2008). *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Springer.

Intentionality — The Structure of Experience

- Key Concepts
- - Central concept in all phenomenological inquiry.
- - Refers to the directedness of consciousness toward objects.
- - Breaks with Cartesian dualism by making relation primary.
- - Shapes phenomenological views of perception, memory, and language.
- Why It Matters
- -  Experience is always *about* something.
- -  Perception is not passive reception but active structuring.
- -  Provides a model for connecting subjective and objective domains.
- -  Forms basis for phenomenological approaches to behavior and cognition.

Zahavi, D. (2003). Husserl's Phenomenology. Stanford University Press.

Embodiment and Perception

- Key Concepts
- - Phenomenology insists on the body as the subject of perception, not a passive object.
- - Merleau-Ponty emphasized the pre-reflective, bodily nature of experience.
- - Challenges representationalist models of mind.
- Foundational for embodied cognition theories.
- Why It Matters
- -  'I do not have a body, I am my body.'
- -  Perception and action are intertwined.
- -  Body schema vs. body image.
-  Supports non-dualistic understanding of sensorimotor processes.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). Phenomenology of Perception. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Language, Meaning, and the Other

- Key Concepts
 - - Language is not just a tool, but a mode of being-in-the-world.
 - - Phenomenology emphasizes dialogue and intersubjectivity.
 - - Meaning is shaped in context, not in isolation.
 - Language expresses our being and allows us to encounter others.
- Why It Matters
 - -  Language is experience-structured, not code-like.
 - -  Intersubjectivity is essential for understanding.
 - -  Speech acts shape reality and self-understanding.
 -  Relevance for animal behavior and the study of verbal conduct.

Waldenfels, B. (2002). Order in the Twilight. Ohio University Press.

Phenomenological Epoché

- ◆ Definition:

The 'epoché' refers to the bracketing or suspension of presuppositions about the external world to focus purely on how things are given in experience.

- ◆ Purpose:

This method clears the ground for describing phenomena without theoretical bias or metaphysical assumptions.

- ◆ Reference:

Sepp, H. R. (2010). **Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926–1935)**. Meiner.

Phenomenological Epoché

- ◆ Core Idea:

Consciousness is always consciousness **of** something — it is directed and relational.

- ◆ Implication:

This relation to objects structures all perception, thought, and feeling.

- ◆ Reference:

Husserl, E. (2014). **Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology**. Routledge.

The Lifeworld (Lebenswelt)

- ◆ Concept:

The lifeworld is the pre-theoretical, everyday world we live in before any scientific abstraction.

- ◆ Importance:

Phenomenology reorients inquiry to this world of lived experience, as it is the ground for all further knowledge.

- ◆ Reference:

Husserl, E. (1970). **The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology**. Northwestern University Press.

Phenomenology and Language

- ◆ Focus:

Phenomenology explores how language is rooted in lived experience and how it expresses intentional meaning.

- ◆ Contribution:

It challenges reductive theories of language by emphasizing meaning as experienced.

- ◆ Reference:

Waldenfels, B. (1962). **Phänomenologie als Sprache**

Phenomenology and Animal Behavior

- ◆ Expansion:

Recent work connects phenomenology with ethology by focusing on embodied cognition and meaningful interaction in animal behavior.

- ◆ Implication:

Phenomenology provides a conceptual vocabulary for discussing non-human forms of experience without anthropomorphism.

- ◆ Reference:

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003). **Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France**. Northwestern University Press.

Language and Experience

- Phenomenology shows how language emerges from lived experience, not just rules or representations.
- Words are not containers of meaning, but gestures within a shared world.
- This is crucial for analyzing both human and non-human communication.
-  Reference: Merleau-Ponty (1964), 'The Visible and the Invisible'.

Against Psychologism

- Phenomenology resists reducing thought to psychological mechanisms.
- Instead, it seeks structures of intentionality that make experience meaningful.
- This allows for a more principled analysis of cognition, beyond empirical generalizations.
-  Reference: Husserl (1900/1901), 'Logical Investigations'.

Sociality and Intersubjectivity

- Experience is not solitary: our perception and self-awareness are shaped by others.
- Phenomenology shows how social meaning arises pre-reflectively.
- This matters for language, cooperation, ethics, and social cognition.
-  Reference: Zahavi (2001), 'Beyond Empathy'.

Time Consciousness

- Phenomenology treats time as an internal structure of experience, not a measured quantity.
- This offers insights for memory, anticipation, and action.
- Important for understanding continuity in behavior and thought.
-  Reference: Husserl (1928), 'Lectures on the Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness'.

Behavior and Intentionality

- Phenomenology clarifies the distinction between behavior and mere movement.
- Behavior is meaningful, directed, and often normatively structured.
- This is vital for interdisciplinary work with ethology and cognitive science.
-  Reference: Buytendijk (1956), 'General Theory of Human Posture and Movement'.

From Description to Insight

- Phenomenology focuses on descriptive clarity—not causal explanation.
- Through precise description, it uncovers structures that shape experience.
- This descriptive work yields conceptual insights for other disciplines.
-  Reference: Sokolowski (2000), 'Introduction to Phenomenology'.

Animal Behavior and Meaning

- Animals exhibit structured, intentional behaviors—beyond stimulus-response.
- Phenomenology helps interpret these actions without anthropomorphism.
- Reveals continuities and discontinuities between species.
-  Reference: Portmann (1944), 'Die Tiergestalt'.

Gesture, Expression, Meaning

- Phenomenology treats gesture as expressive, not symbolic.
- Meaning is not added to behavior—it is enacted through it.
- This insight guides studies of language, emotion, and social interaction.
-  Reference: Merleau-Ponty (1945), 'Phenomenology of Perception'.

Conceptual Clarity across Disciplines

- Phenomenology sharpens conceptual distinctions—e.g., experience vs. interpretation.
- Helps avoid category errors in neuroscience, psychology, and linguistics.
- Supports interdisciplinary dialogue through clarification, not synthesis.
-  Reference: Gallagher & Zahavi (2008), 'The Phenomenological Mind'.

Language as World Disclosure

- Phenomenology sees language as disclosing the world—not just labeling it.
- Words open horizons of meaning that shape our reality.
- Essential for understanding science, culture, and ethics.
-  Reference: Heidegger (1927), 'Being and Time'.

Limits of Naturalism

- Phenomenology shows that natural science rests on unexamined assumptions.
- Perception, meaning, and normativity are not reducible to neural data.
- Calls for a complementary approach to experience.
-  Reference: Husserl (1936), 'The Crisis of European Sciences'.

Relevance to AI and Robotics

- Phenomenology informs debates about embodied cognition and artificial agents.
- Experience is situated and sensorimotor, not abstract computation.
- Important for designing socially responsive systems.
-  Reference: Dreyfus (1972), 'What Computers Can't Do'.

Foundations of Ethics

- Ethical life is grounded in intersubjectivity and responsivity.
- Phenomenology reveals how moral insight arises through lived experience.
- Contrasts with purely procedural or utilitarian models.
-  Reference: Levinas (1961), 'Totality and Infinity'.

Human Science vs. Natural Science

- Phenomenology bridges the gap between the Geisteswissenschaften and Naturwissenschaften.
- Allows rigorous study of meaning without objectification.
- A foundation for the human sciences rooted in lived experience.
-  Reference: Dilthey (1883), 'Introduction to the Human Sciences'.

Ongoing Relevance

- Phenomenology is not outdated—it evolves with interdisciplinary questions.
- Used today in cognitive science, ethics, education, and more.
- It offers irreplaceable tools for clarifying what it means to be human.
-  Reference: Zahavi (2019), 'Phenomenology: The Basics'.

Umwelt and Perception

“Animals Do Not Live in ‘Our’ World”

- Core Idea

- von Uexküll: each species inhabits its own Umwelt
- A subjectively structured world shaped by perception and meaning
- Rejects the notion of a single objective world
- Emphasizes species-specific intentionality

- Scientific Relevance

- Frames perception not as passive reception, but as active organization
- Influences ethology, ecology, and cognitive science
- Useful in understanding animal behavior on their own terms
- Connects phenomenology with comparative psychology

- von Uexküll, J. (1909). *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*
- De Waal, F. (2016). *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?*

Body Schema and Animal Cognition

“The Lived Body Extends Beyond Language”

- Phenomenological Insight
 - Merleau-Ponty: the body is not an object but a subject of experience
 - Animal behavior structured by motor intentionality
 - Cognition is enacted, not represented
 - Perception and action form a continuous loop
- Empirical Connection
 - Ethology confirms goal-directed behavior in non-human species
 - Implies bodily self-awareness and sensorimotor anticipation
 - Memory, planning, and play behavior can be phenomenologically interpreted
 - Suggests continuity between human and animal embodiment

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1999). *The Primacy of Movement*

War, Conflict, and the Limits of Behaviorism

“When the Cage Opens: Verbal Behavior and Social Aggression”

- Real-World Relevance
 - Language shapes not only thought, but action
 - - Group dynamics, dehumanization, political rhetoric—linked to speech
 - - Behaviorism alone cannot capture the existential stakes
 - - Phenomenology reveals pre-linguistic affectivity and tacit violence
 - De Waal, F. (1982). *Chimpanzee Politics*
 - Merleau-Ponty, M. (1973). *The Prose of the World*
- Implications
 - De Waal: chimpanzees exhibit political behavior
 - - Merleau-Ponty: meaning emerges in ambiguity, not fixed categories
 - - Language must be studied as action, not just symbol exchange
 - - Opens ethical dimensions of human-animal parallels

Limits of Measurement

“Not Everything That Counts Can Be Counted”

- Philosophical Challenge
 - Quantification is powerful—but not exhaustive
 - - Human and animal behavior involve meaning, not just magnitude
 - - Phenomenology articulates the qualitative structures of life
- Practical Takeaway
 - Measurement should follow conceptual clarity, not precede it
 - - Risk of reducing complex behaviors to mere outputs
 - - Calls for pluralism in scientific methodology
 - - Relevance in AI, neuroscience, behavioral economics

- Whitehead, A. N. (1929). *Process and Reality*
- Zahavi, D. (2021). *Phenomenology: The Basics*

Conclusion & Outlook

“Phenomenology as Integrative Framework”

- What We've Seen
 - Phenomenology links behavior, cognition, and embodiment
 - - Offers conceptual tools to describe experience and action
 - - Compatible with—but not reducible to—natural science
 - - Brings rigor to first-person and intersubjective perspectives
 - Zahavi, D. (2005). *Subjectivity and Selfhood*
 - Gallagher, S. & Zahavi, D. (2008). *The Phenomenological Mind*
- Looking Forward
 - Application in AI, animal cognition, and neuroethics
 - - Room for dialog with linguistics, biology, and philosophy of mind
 - - Not a relic of the past, but a living methodology
 - - Phenomenology still matters—now more than ever

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH!