

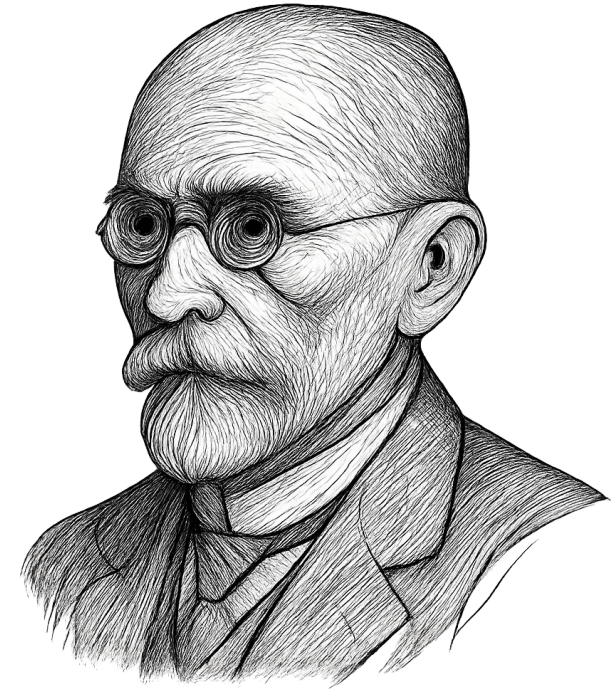
Why Phenomenology Now?

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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

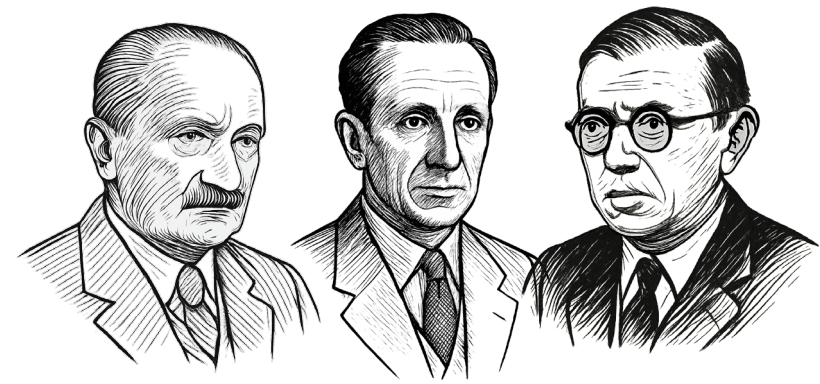
- Key Concepts

- - 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 (**eidōs**), 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 responsiveness.
- 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

- 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

- Zahavi, D. (2005). Subjectivity and Selfhood

- Gallagher, S. & Zahavi, D. (2008). The Phenomenological Mind

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH!