

**PHENOMENOLOGY WITHOUT 'PHENOMENON'
– ERNST CASSIRER'S CASE**

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FILOZOFIA 64, 2009, No 3, p. 262

Ernst Cassirer's place in the 20th century philosophy is quite puzzling. Is it an appropriation of Kant's transcendental philosophy for inclusion of relativity theory and quantum physics? Is it a Hegelian type of philosophy of culture and spirit? Or, at the face value, is it a direct heritage and application of the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism initiated by Hermann Cohen? It is very surprising to hear Cassirer's confession that he is also influenced by Edmund Husserl's *phenomenology*: whereas the basic idea of phenomenology is to do away with all theoretical constructions and start anew from the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon, all the 'constructivist' heritage in Cassirer's philosophy resists such an idea of philosophizing the *immediately pre-given*. Then, how should we understand the 'phenomenology' Cassirer himself professes? Re-examining the idea of phenomenology for Husserl, we discover that both Husserl and Cassirer are carrying out the same kind of 'phenomenology,' phenomenology as transcendental philosophy *par excellence*.

Keywords: Ernst Cassirer – Marburg neo-Kantianism – Phenomenology – The Meaning of Phenomenology for Husserl Revisited – Phenomenology Different from Other Sciences – Cassirer's Use of the Term 'Phenomenology'

I. Ernst Cassirer, Marburg neo-Kantianism, Phenomenology. There is no doubt that Ernst Cassirer presents one of the most obscure figures on the intellectual scene of the 20th century. This is not only due to his tragic life of exile where he could not educate his students and raise his successors, but also due to his philosophy itself with extremely vast scope covering all histories of science, art, literature etc. One interprets Cassirer's philosophy as a widening of Kant's Newtonian transcendental philosophy to that of relativity theory and quantum physics¹, whereas another interprets Cassirer as a philosopher of culture and spirit synthesizing Kant and Hegel.² Still another takes Cassirer as a true heir to Hermann Cohen's philosophy by lining him up on the chronicle of Marburg neo-Kantianism with Hermann Cohen as initiator.³ Granting that all these various interpretations are saying some truth about Cassirer's philosophy, how should we understand that

¹ Schmitz-Rigal, C. *Die Kunst des offenen Wissens*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. 2002. p. 81, 235-238.

² Verene, D. "Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer: The Origins of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms", *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol. XXX. 1969. Jan.-Mar. p. 33-46. Also cf. Lipton, D. *Ernst Cassirer: The Dilemma of a Liberal Intellectual in Germany 1914-33*. Toronto/London: Univ. of Toronto Press. 1978. p. 70-82.

³ Sieg, U. *Aufstieg und Niedergang des Marburger Neukantianismus. Die Geschichte einer philosophischen Schulgemeinschaft*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann. 1994. p. 329, 339-342.

Cassirer himself professes his philosophy to be ‘phenomenology’?⁴ On the one hand Cassirer explicitly relates to the Hegelian phenomenology “encompass[ing] the totality of cultural forms [...] in the transitions from one form to another.”⁵ Cassirer, on the other hand, gives a comment in a small footnote that his own philosophical method is inspired by Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology that “apprehend[s...] in a purely ideational analysis.”⁶

Regardless of the unbridgeable gulf between two kinds of phenomenology, namely the Husserlian and the Hegelian one, we are now at a loss how to reconcile the Husserlian phenomenology with Cassirer’s constructivist philosophy under the influence of Kant, Hegel and Marburg neo-Kantianism. Husserl’s phenomenology puts absolute emphasis on the primitively given/seen *Sachen selbst*, namely the *Eidos*, and is designed to criticize all void constructivist philosophies from Kant and Hegel to contemporary neo-Kantianism.⁷ The difficulty in reconciling Husserl’s phenomenology with Cassirer’s philosophy becomes more acute when we think Cassirer in the Marburg neo-Kantian heritage: how should we make sense out of the obvious contradiction between Cassirer the neo-Kantian philosopher from Marburg, the ‘enemy of phenomenology’—in the same line of Kant and Hegel⁸—and Cassirer the ‘phenomenologist,’ the philosopher studying the *immediately pre-given* intuition (*Vorgegebenheit*) in the Husserlian strain? Phenomenology is a transcendental philosophy of the *immediately pre-given* phenomena. And the ideal or unreal objects (as in mathematics) as well as formal logic should be validated by intuitive pure seeing or at least originate from it with validity step-by-step intuited. Marburg neo-Kantianism, on the other hand, is a philosophy of transcendental *logic*. Every object of possible experience should be a *logical construction* and even the most primitive percep-

⁴ Cassirer, E. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen Erster Teil: Die Sprache*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft. 1994. p. VI; *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken*. p. IX-X; *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen Dritter Teil: Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*. p. VI-VII. Although Cassirer applies the term ‘phenomenology’ for the first time in his *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923, 1925, 1929), we should not make such mistakes as to think that Cassirer’s writings before *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* contain no phenomenology at all. As Cassirer himself acknowledges, phenomenology in *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* is a continuation of the philosophical work laid out in *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* (1910) and it only expands its scope formerly restricted on natural sciences now vastly to all human sciences and their fundamentals. For English translations of *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* we are using Cassirer, E. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 1: Language*. (trans. R. Manheim) New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press. 1955; *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 2: Mythical Thought; The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 3: The Phenomenology of Knowledge*. 1957.

⁵ Cassirer, E. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 3: The Phenomenology of Knowledge*. New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press. 1957. p. xiv.

⁶ Cassirer, E. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 2: Mythical Thought*. New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press. 1955. p. 12. (footnote 7).

⁷ Husserl, E. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. (Husserliana 6) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1954. p. 116-118 (§30), 201-207 (§57).

⁸ Rejecting Hegelian metaphysics, the neo-Kantians claimed ‘back to Kant!’ and tried to expand, but very solidly like Kant, the transcendental categories to cover new scientific developments at that time. However, to expand the transcendental categories and thereby to count as transcendentals all that contribute to cognition (like Cohen) meant, once and again, Hegelianism by all means. Concerning Hegel’s influence in Marburg neo-Kantianism cf. Krois, J. “Cassirer, Neo-Kantianism and Metaphysics”, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. 4. 1992. p. 437-453, esp. 437-440.

tion, not to say of intuition, is itself the result of a highly intellectual (logical) work. The argument upon ‘intuition’ in phenomenology is nothing but a mere mysticism⁹ from the neo-Kantian perspective. According to Hermann Cohen, the initiator of Marburg neo-Kantianism, intuition (*Anschauung*) itself is possible only through the synthesis of understanding.¹⁰

Paul Natorp, the second runner of Marburg neo-Kantianism, also criticizes phenomenology on the point of *immediately pre-given* phenomena, namely intuition.

Unfortunately, however, this *givenness* is not understandable at all. We cannot be satisfied with this and the question repeats itself again and again. What does this ‘givenness’ mean? Being determined *in a way or another*. The peculiarity of ‘givenness’ requires, therefore, a *supporting foundation*. [...] To let the [logical] principles stand upon the immediately pre-given is, therefore, a sheer contradiction because [logical] principles first formulate the methods and conditions through all of which we finally get to the ‘given.’¹¹

In his *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* (1910) Cassirer criticizes all kinds of substance-conception in theories of knowledge and in sciences—in arithmetic, geometry, physics and chemistry—and he tries to establish a relation- and function-conception of mathematical and scientific knowledge. Not only ideal concepts (like mathematical numbers) but also concepts of immediate intuition (as in geometry) and of reality (as in physics) are in fact *constructions* out of certain functional *relations* with each other. Those concepts are *never* substantial entities. Various logical principles in the network of relations and functions are what make concepts possible at all. In this way Cassirer denounces the so-called ‘substance’ of intuition (*Anschauungsbestand*) as well as the ‘substance’ of transcendental consciousness¹² in the Husserlian phenomenology. After all, those seeming ‘substances’ are relational and functional constructions in various theories. Moreover, the three volumes of *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923, 1925, 1929) are nothing but a case study applying those relation- and function-conceptions not only to mathema-

⁹ Natorp, P. “Husserl’s ‘Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie’”, *Logos*. VII. 1917/18. p. 224-230.

¹⁰ Cohen, H. *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*. (Werke Band 1 Teil 1.1) Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag. 1987. p. 531. “Denn bewiesen werden soll der Kernpunkt, dass die Anschauung selbst nur möglich sei durch die Synthesis des Verstandes. Es wird hierzu gar nicht das Ergebnis der transzendentalen Aesthetik vorausgesetzt; sondern nur die Grundlehre derselben, dass Raum und Zeit die notwendigen Formen unserer Anschauung seien. Diese Formen sind nichts Fertiges; sie fordern vielmehr eine Synthesis“.

¹¹ Husserl, E. *Briefwechsel Band V. Die Neukantianer*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1994. p. 58. (translation mine).

¹² Cassirer, E. *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft. 1994. p. 31-34. Also cf. Husserl, E. *Erste Philosophie (1923/24) Zweiter Teil*. (Husserliana 8) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1959. p. 212-218 (Ergänzende Texte: Idee der vollen Ontologie). In this essay, for example, Husserl tries to develop his transcendental phenomenology as universal ontology, insofar as transcendental phenomenology deals with transcendental consciousness that constitutes all regions of ‘being.’ Husserl refers to his universal ontology as ‘transcendental’ ontology of a radically new, unknown kind. However, this is the very thing that Cassirer harshly criticizes. Any kinds of ‘ontological’ positing, however absolute or transcendental, presuppose relational/functional interconnection (logic) in order to be possible at all.

tics and natural sciences, but also to all human-cultural dimensions such as language, art, myth etc. Language, art, myth, technology, science etc.—those dimensions of human culture turn out to be a vast network of various relations and functions interconnected as a totality.

Now, how should we understand Cassirer's own name-tagging to his philosophy as 'phenomenology'—a philosophy pertaining to the *immediately pre-given* intuition (*noema*) and its correlate 'transcendental consciousness'—when his philosophy of a neo-Kantian strain is meant to be exactly the contrary?

II. The Meaning of Phenomenology for Husserl Revisited. It is a well-known fact that the opening of the 20th century philosophy as well as its aftermath stands under the shadow of Husserl's phenomenology, as we can see in the examples of Scheler, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, even structuralism and post-modernism. After we have made clear, towards the end of our paper, in what sense Cassirer refers to his philosophy as 'phenomenology,' we could understand the truly profound insight and its wide-ranging impact that Husserl's phenomenology brought to 20th century philosophy.

The basic objective of Husserl's phenomenology is to reach at the *immediately pre-given*, immediately accessible phenomena (intuition) and thereby to reject unclear and abstract theoretical constructions, re-consider and evaluate those existing theories by means of the absolutely pre-given intuition. The idea of phenomenology, therefore, can be best summarized by the motto *Zu den Sachen selbst* (Back to the things themselves!).¹³ This motto applies to all phenomenologists, but the shape of their phenomenology varies wide and steep depending on different interpretations of this simple but mysterious motto *Zu den Sachen selbst*, namely what actually the *immediately pre-given* phenomena mean.

In order to figure out what the *immediately pre-given* phenomena mean at least for Husserl, here we make a phenomenological experiment with a simple 'thing' near at hand. We grab a 'thing' and raise it above; we move it up and down, we turn it right and left, round and round; we can also thrust it or bump it in any way possible. Then, what is the *immediately pre-given, authentic* phenomenon of this simple thing? First of all, we discover that the 'thing' never shows itself in its totality. In other words, the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon of the 'thing' is always the frontal side that is seen, not the hind side. The 'thing' shows itself only one-sidedly. However, we cannot say that the hind or unseen sides of the 'thing' are *absolutely* out of sight; those unseen sides and aspects of the 'thing' are, if not as vividly as the seen side, vaguely implicated centering on the seen part—perhaps in an immediate passing or in an immediate expectation. Now we come to a first conclusion that the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon of a 'thing' is nothing but an original phenomenon always showing itself (frontal side), laden with by and large possible implications (hind side, etc.): the phenomenon of a 'thing' has open *horizons*.¹⁴

Second of all, on our way to grasp the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon of a 'thing,' we discover once more a *temporal* character of the 'thing'-phenomenon. The phenomenon 'thing'—the always-standing original phenomenon with its open horizons—

¹³ Martin Heidegger, for example, defines the basic idea of phenomenology as carrying out the motto *Zu den Sachen selbst*. Heidegger, M. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. 1927¹ 1953. p. 34.

¹⁴ Husserl, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie Erstes Buch*. (Husserliana 3/1) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1976. p. 91, 185-186.

turns out to be a ‘temporal cluster’ of the always-standing now-point with its immediate passing and immediate expectation. The so-called ‘horizons’ are nothing but the immediate passing and the immediate expectation, in other words, retention and protention centering on the always-standing now-point. The *immediately pre-given, authentic* (immanent) phenomenon of the ‘thing’ is, therefore, *temporally* constituted in this manner.¹⁵



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Thirdly, we come to discover that what always and actually remains the immediately accessible, authentic phenomenon is the phenomenon of the ‘thing’ in the *always-standing live presence* (*lebendige Gegenwart*).¹⁶ All the immediate passing and immediate expectation, retention and protention are only ‘traces’ in the ever-lasting *live presence*. The ‘timeless’ live presence turns out to be the very immediate and authentic phenomenon and it *cannot* be called ‘reality.’ This means that the live presence cannot be understood as ‘reality’ in a traditional sense, namely as ‘reality’ in space and time. Let’s look at our example of the phenomenon ‘thing’ once again: as we move and turn the ‘thing’ around, we come to see that the immediate past never exists because it is *already* past and the immediately expected never exists because it has *not yet* come. The phenomenon ‘thing’ in the live presence is never

about real existence in reality, but rather about the so-called ‘real existence’ and ‘reality’ dissected and analyzed into their *immediately pre-given* components. Any thing in reality is, phenomenologically speaking, grounded in the *unreal* phenomenon ‘thing’ in the live presence having the dynamics of ‘already’ (retention) and ‘not-yet’ (protention). Otherwise it turns out that, when we presuppose reality in a traditional sense, the immediate passing and immediate expectation as *immediately pre-given* phenomena are those that never become accessible for us. *The more we try to approach the immediately pre-given phenomena, the farther we leave the floor of reality. And the very acquisition of the immediately pre-given phenomena precludes any presupposition of reality.*

When we refer to reality in a traditional sense, we mean reality in factual space and time. The live presence as the immediately pre-given phenomenon *par excellence*, however, is not in space and time; but rather the ‘factual’ space and time should be understood (constituted) anew from the immediate phenomenon of the live presence. ‘Reality’ in ‘real’ space and time is nothing but an outcome of phenomenological constitution out of

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 180-185; cf. Husserl, E. *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1893-1917). (Husserliana 10) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1966. p. 24-25; cf. *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*. (Husserliana 11) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1966. p. 318-319.

¹⁶ Husserl, E. *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1893-1917). (Husserliana 10) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1966. p. 24-25.

the ever-standing live presence. In this way, Husserl's phenomenology attempts to *understand* 'objectivity' ('reality') rather than dogmatically secure it as traditional philosophy has done so far.¹⁷

On our way to grasp the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon, we discovered the closer we reach at the *pre-given* phenomenon, the farther 'reality' retreats and it turns out to be an outcome of phenomenological constitution out of the *immediately pre-given* live presence—constitution out of open horizons and, furthermore, *temporal* constitution out of retention and protention. That is to say, 'reality' as the subject-matter of our knowledge does not lie independently before us, but it is in any case a result of our involvement with it¹⁸, namely a result of phenomenological constitution on the ground of the immediately pre-given live presence *for us*. It is now understandable that phenomenology should be a *transcendental philosophy*. To philosophize the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon means, as we have observed so far, nothing other than philosophizing *transcendentally*. With the transcendental dimension of the live presence now opened up, the subject-matter of our phenomenological investigation is transcendental time (temporality with retention and protention) instead of factual (real) time, transcendental history of all-constituting consciousness instead of factual (real) history. Husserl's self-avowedly inevitable transition from ontological to transcendental phenomenology is also understandable following the thread of the idea of phenomenology: in order to acquire the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon, we have to literally 'drain' reality and bring even the vaguest pre-given to transcendental immediacy—this process Husserl calls *transcendental-phenomenological reduction*—, otherwise, how can we possibly explain that we get in contact with the 'real' objects, how does our knowing 'encounter' reality over there?¹⁹

Now, the subject-matter of transcendental phenomenology is nothing else than the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon of the live presence and we call it the *noema*.²⁰ A different name of the absolutely pre-given live presence is *transcendental subjectivity* and, therefore, we can refer to transcendental subjectivity also as the subject-matter of

¹⁷ Husserl, E. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. (Husserliana 6) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1954. p. 193 (§55).

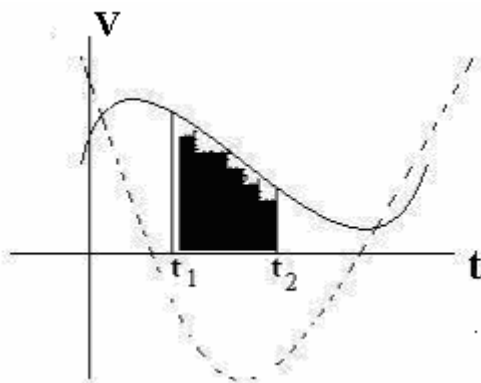
¹⁸ KrV B XIII-XIV, B26/A13.

¹⁹ Husserl, E. *Die Idee der Phänomenologie (fünf Vorlesungen)*. (Husserliana 2) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1950. p. 3, 30. On our way to grasp the absolutely *immediately pre-given* phenomenon, we finally reached at the *transcendental* immediacy of the live presence. However, just one step before we reach at the transcendental immediacy of the live presence, it is also presumable that we can think of the phenomenon 'thing' as a *psychological* phenomenon. But the phenomenon 'thing' considered to be psychological is certainly not yet absolutely *immediately pre-given*. With such 'thing'-phenomenon psychologically considered, we are still habitually presupposing the 'factual' world in which the psychological subjects (e.g. souls) factually occur. (Husserl, E. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1954. p. 140) Moreover, those psychological subjects (souls), together with 'things' and 'objects' as phenomena, are not grasped in their absolute pre-givenness but rather in a certain degree of detachment and abstraction, consequently flitting from one soul to another, etc. (Ibid. p. 259-260) Only starting from the transcendental immediacy of the live presence can and should be those 'psychological' subjects fundamentally and essentially enlightened—that is, starting from *one and the same absolute transcendental ego* through the phenomenological constitution of intersubjectivity. (Ibid. p. 260)

²⁰ Husserl, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie Erstes Buch*. (Husserliana 3/1) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1976. p. 203-205.

transcendental-phenomenological investigation.²¹ As transcendental subjectivity and the live presence go inseparably hand in hand, we refer to both of them as the noetic-noematic correlation.²² Transcendental phenomenology, as the ‘science’ of the timeless live presence, differentiates itself from all other factual sciences; it would be a sheer nonsense to apply to transcendental phenomenology any methods of research from factual sciences. The *eidetic method* is the so-called ‘method of research’ in transcendental phenomenology: by means of pure intuition and free thought-experiment we determine the essential laws of noematic ‘things’ of the transcendental live presence in their absolute universality.²³ In this sense phenomenology is surely *transcendental idealism*. But it is also a kind of ‘empiricism’ *par excellence* in the sense that it can make any object its subject-matter of investigation: it can take any object in the world for investigation, reduce its worldly reality to its transcendental immediacy, bring it down on the absolute live presence and analyze its *pre-given* phenomenon through pure eidetic method. Then, what we analyze is not factual and individual objects but *the object at all* in its unconditional universality. In this way, Husserl argues that phenomenology as ‘empiricism’ is more rigorous and wide-ranging than all other kinds of factual empiricism so far.²⁴

III. Phenomenology Different from Other Sciences. Husserl’s phenomenology is, therefore, qualitatively or *radically* different from any other sciences that strive to be universal. No matter how universal they might strive to be, they are still factual sciences *about* the world. Modern physics and chemistry strive to be universal sciences about ‘matter’; modern biology a universal science about ‘life.’ But all these sciences are still about the world in factual space and time. Even the most ‘universal’ laws of physics and their calculations are involved not only with factual space (three- or four-dimensional as it might be) but also remarkably with factual time of reality. Supposing we have measured the velocity of a moving object at a certain flow of time, we can draw the following graph:



The wave-like graph denotes the measure of velocity (**V**) at any given point of time

²¹ Ibid. p. 100-103.

²² Ibid. p. 210-214.

²³ Husserl, E. *Phänomenologische Psychologie (Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925)*. (Husserliana 9) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1962. p. 72-84.

²⁴ Husserl, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie Erstes Buch*. (Husserliana 3/1) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1976. p. 41-45.

(**t**) and the velocity is changing as time flows; when we calculate its differentials and obtain the dotted graph, it means acceleration at any given point of time (**t**). In other words, the dotted graph denotes the *tangential* of the original wave-like graph at any given point of time (**t**), namely dv/dt . When we, on the other hand, calculate the *integrals* of the wave-like graph from the time-point t_1 to the time-point t_2 , it means rather the distance, not velocity or acceleration, of movement in such a time-span (the shaded area). The integral of velocity corresponds, in this way, to the all-too-familiar formula **D** (distance) = **V** (velocity) \times **t** (time). Time, distance, velocity (not speed!) and acceleration seem to be universally regulated by ‘pure’ mathematics of calculus. However, as we see in these examples of differential and integral calculations, those seemingly universal and ‘pure’ concepts and laws, which strike us as the least involved with factual locality and space, are in fact necessarily involved with factual time in reality—measurable ‘time’ flowing point-like from moment to moment. The laws of physics, therefore, cannot claim such *absolute* universality and validity that grounds on the very *immediately pre-given* phenomenon that cannot be brought otherwise than summoning the live presence, namely ‘reducing’ reality to timeless pure phenomenon. Logic and mathematics, which is considered to be universally and ‘timelessly’ valid, can be re-examined by the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon of the live presence, namely by the transcendental dynamics of the pre-given phenomenon ‘thing.’²⁵

Husserl’s phenomenology is no physics, chemistry, or biology. All these sciences are in a way or another *about* the world in time and space. But Husserl’s phenomenology ‘brackets out’ the world and its reality. In this way becomes remarkably clear Husserl’s foremost project of the *phenomenological reduction* of our ubiquitous general thesis “Die Welt ist da (there is the world).”²⁶

Also obvious in this sense is the possibility of a science of ‘matter’ other than physics, a science of ‘life’ other than biology, and a science of ‘culture’ other than common cultural studies and humanities. Those new radical sciences are phenomenology of ‘matter’ (physical world), phenomenology of ‘life’ (animal world) and phenomenology of ‘culture’ (personal world). These phenomenological sciences deal with the *immediately pre-given* phenomena ‘matter,’ ‘life’ and ‘culture’ *per se* and, therefore, they are fundamental sciences—in a transcendental-philosophical sense—before factual sciences of physics, biology, cultural sciences etc. could be possible at all. Those phenomenological sciences are in fact not separate, but they are essentially interconnected and backing each other up (*Fundierung*) in the live presence of one and the same transcendental phenomenology. Husserl’s posthumously edited work *Ideen II (1952)*²⁷ contains such phenomenological investigations of different material regions and worlds still in the framework of one and the same transcendental phenomenology propounded in *Ideen I (1913)*.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 272; also cf. Husserl, E. *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*. Hamburg: Claassen und Goverts. 1948. p. 19-20, 36-37. Literally, the entire book *Erfahrung und Urteil* is devoted to the investigation of logic from the immediately pre-given phenomenon of the live presence (the life-world).

²⁶ Ibid. p. 60-66; cf. Husserl, E. *Erste Philosophie Zweiter Teil (1923/24)*. (Husserliana 8) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1959. p. 44-50, 69-81.

²⁷ Husserl, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie Zweites Buch*. (Husserliana 4) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1952.

The misunderstanding of phenomenology as a psychology of immediate sensation and perception is thereby also excluded. Immediate ‘sensation’ and ‘perception’ still belong to reality, because they occur at any rate in time and space. Sensation and perception should be ‘reduced,’ namely brought to the live presence of the *immediately pre-given* phenomena and questioned for their transcendental possibility.²⁸

IV. Understanding Cassirer’s Use of the Term ‘Phenomenology’. Now we can understand ‘phenomenology’ proclaimed in Cassirer’s *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*. ‘Phenomenology’ proclaimed therein is traced back to *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* and also effective in later works. It is already acknowledged that in his entire Oeuvre Cassirer puts epistemo-critical emphasis on (transcendental) relational/functional interconnectedness (logic) in a variety of cultural activities, not on intuitively/immediately pre-given phenomenality. This is surely against Husserl and quite anti-phenomenological; this is also a continuation of his philosophical investigation in *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, which was then carried out with mathematical and scientific knowledge. However, in a more essentially phenomenological sense, we come to understand that Cassirer’s transcendental ‘phenomenology’ is neither about reality in time and space nor about the history of any given subject-matter, but rather about the ‘phenomenon’ of the given subject-matter *per se* or the given subject-matter *at all*—although the concept of ‘phenomenon’ in Cassirer’s case would be never an intuitively pre-given phenomenality but a cluster or an agglomerate of timeless relational/functional interconnections (logic). The three volumes of *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* are nothing but Cassirer’s phenomenological case studies on three subject-matters of language, myth and science—the phenomenon of language *per se* or language *at all*, the phenomenon of myth *per se*, or science *per se*—if they are to be *a priori* possible at all.

Cassirer’s ‘historical’ enumeration of countless theories on language, myth and science etc. provokes a suspicion that Cassirer’s philosophy could be nothing but a work on intellectual history. But those theories are in fact phenomenological ‘pieces’ in the ‘live presence’ of Cassirerian transcendental philosophy and again, phenomenologically speaking, they are immediately accessible for us as such ‘pieces.’ All those ‘historical’ theories on language, myth and science contribute to the characterizing of language, myth and science *at all* in the totality of timeless relational/functional network or, borrowing from Husserl’s terms again, in the transcendental-phenomenological ‘live presence.’ From a phenomenologically primordial perspective, history is none other than ‘historical’ con-

²⁸ The status of so-called ‘sensation’ in Husserl’s phenomenology changes, as his analysis of ‘sensation’ deepens from *Ideen I* to *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*. ‘Sensation’ was first considered, as a boundary concept, to be the raw material or intentional $\omega\lambda\eta$ for phenomenological constitution of the immediately pre-given phenomena at all. (Husserl, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie Erstes Buch*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1976. p. 191-196) ‘Sensation’ in this sense lies ‘outside of’ the immediately pre-given live presence. But the raw ‘sensation’ lying ‘outside of’ the live presence (transcendental subjectivity) turns out to be a nonsense; the seemingly raw ‘sensations’ are something always/already constituted, something always in a way or another determined. There is no such thing like bare ‘sensation,’ but the seeming sensation is always something mediated through horizons and temporality of the live presence. Aguirre made a good argument and summary on this point from Husserl’s texts and manuscripts. (cf. Aguirre, A. *Genetische Phänomenologie und Reduktion*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1970. p. 166-173)

struction out of the live presence; for Cassirer as well, history is a transcendental (relational/functional) construct, a certain interconnection, being a part of the totality of relational and functional network.²⁹

As we have already seen with Husserl in the phenomenological experiment with a 'thing,' the truly *immediately pre-given* phenomenon excludes the past and the future (factual time) and the 'over there' (factual space); in other words, it reduces reality to transcendental immanence of the truly *immediately pre-given* live presence. Factual time, factual space and reality should be clarified, on the contrary, from the immediately pre-given live presence. Cassirer's phenomenology can be understood in the same line of thought. Cassirer's phenomenology of 'myth,' for example, is no ethnology, no anthropology, no collective psychology which are all reality-bound (locally, regionally, historically etc.), but a transcendental-philosophical investigation of laws and regulations of 'myth' *per se*, if myth is to be *a priori* possible at all.³⁰ Cassirer's phenomenology of 'language' is another example. Cassirer argues three modalities of the phenomenon of 'language,' namely primitive 'expression,' objective 'representation' and pure 'meaning.' However, they indicate no developmental anthropology or historiography of language; they indicate timeless modalities of 'language' essentially interconnected through transcendental conditioning, if language is to be *a priori* possible at all.³¹ Therefore Cassirer's phenomenology is, like Husserl's, no historiography or factual investigation of reality, as it might seem at first glance. Husserl's and Cassirer's philosophy are doing transcendental philosophy in their own respective ways, taking distance from Kant, however. Thereby, unlike Kant, they try to cope with all possible subject-matters of investigation, namely 'phenomena,' and pivotally ground them in a modulated transcendental-philosophical way. Therefore, as a certain type of transcendental 'phenomenology' respectively, they share a common epistemological and critical interest with themselves after all.³²

Here, quite interestingly, we can also confound Cassirer's relational/functional tran-

²⁹ For Husserl, 'history' is a many-leveled *intuitive* construction, namely 'historical' intuition through empathy, fiction and fantasy presentations etc. Cf. Lembeck, K.-H. *Gegenstand Geschichte. Geschichtswissenschaftstheorie in Husserls Phänomenologie*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Verlag. 1988. esp. Kapitel IV. V. However, for Cassirer who does not accept intuition and *noema* in the Husserlian sense, 'history' is neither something factually past nor intuitive-phenomenological construction but rather, from the perspective of critical epistemology, a pure relation or a *modality* of such relation in the relational and functional totality of humanity (*Geist*). For example, astrology and alchemy, Renaissance natural philosophy, modern mechanics, contemporary physics of relativity etc. are ideally and timelessly interconnected through pure relational/functional principles in the totality of humanity. Cf. Choi, K.-S. *Im Dialog mit den Wissenschaften. Phänomenologische und neukantianische Wissenschaftsphilosophie bei Husserl und Cassirer*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann. 2007. p. 49-62, 131-136. In this sense Cassirer understands 'history' as an essential modality of humanity and calls it a *symbolic form* like many other symbolic forms like 'language,' 'art,' 'myth,' 'science' etc. Cf. Cassirer, E. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press. 1944. p. 171-206 (Chapter X. History).

³⁰ Cassirer, E. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft. 1994. p. VII-XII.

³¹ Cassirer, E. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen Erster Teil: Die Sprache*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft. 1994. p. 124-212; cf. Paetzold, H. *Die Realität der symbolischen Formen*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft. 1994. p. 22-32.

³² Husserl, E. *Briefwechsel. Band V: Die Neukantianer*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1994. p. 7.

scendental phenomenology, say, of ‘language’ with a variety of factual linguistics, which also try to discover universal and timeless laws of language (phonetics, syntactics etc.). Then, what is the essential difference between those two kinds of investigation of language?

All factual linguistics try to apply to the phenomenon of ‘language’ either factually (historically) developed rules and regulations (e.g. those of psychology, sociology etc.) or categorically mistaken laws and principles that have nothing to do with language *per se* (e.g. those of mathematics). But Cassirer’s phenomenology of ‘language,’ or of ‘myth’ for instance, is a pure thought experiment on ‘language’ and ‘myth’ *at all* concerning their fundamental relational/functional principles. For Cassirer, as for Husserl, reality is reduced and investigation is transcendently carried out. Cassirer himself acknowledges his indebtedness to Husserl’s phenomenological and *eidetic* method³³ of investigation:

Husserl’s own development [...] makes it increasingly clear that the task of phenomenology, as Husserl sees it, is not exhausted in the analysis of cognition but calls for an investigation of the structures of entirely different objective spheres, according to what they “signify” and without concern for the “reality” of their objects. Such an investigation should include the mythical “world,” not in order to derive its specific actuality by induction from the manifold of ethnological and ethnic-psychological experience, but in order to apprehend it in a purely ideational analysis.³⁴

In spite of their difference in emphasis of investigation—on immediately pre-given *intuition* or on relational/functional *interconnectedness*—Husserl and Cassirer share basically the same idea of *phenomenological* and *eidetic* method of investigation. As Cassirer writes in his letter to Husserl, “between the tasks which phenomenology takes to itself and the basic perspectives of critical philosophy exists a profound similarity: both philosophies deal with what you [Husserl] called in your letter ‘the science of the transcendental, so far radically carried out and to be carried out to infinity.’”³⁵

Husserl and Cassirer now match quite well in their philosophical terminology also. Husserl’s all-constituting ‘transcendental subjectivity’ corresponds to the ‘Spirit’ (*Geist*) with its relation-forming spiritual activity (*beziehendes geistiges Tun*).³⁶ Both philosophies are certainly idealism; depending on respectively different emphasis in investigation, however, one is specifically speaking *phenomenological idealism* (emphasis on in-

³³ Husserl, E. *Phänomenologische Psychologie*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff. 1962. p. 72-74. Herein is spelled out Husserl’s eidetic method free of all prejudices and arbitrary constructions. It is carried out not only by pure thought experiment but, in addition to that, also by free fantasy variation in order to even more purify phenomenology’s intuitive and ideal character. All in all, however, Husserl’s eidetic method puts emphasis on the *immediately pre-given* phenomenon and its intuition, whereas Cassirer tries to investigate non-intuitive, logical principles of ideal relations and functions also free of prejudices and arbitrary constructions.

³⁴ Cassirer, E. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume Two: Mythical Thought*. (trans. R. Manheim) New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press. 1955. p. 12.

³⁵ Husserl, E. *Briefwechsel. Band V: Die Neukantianer*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1994. p. 7 (translation mine).

³⁶ Cassirer, E. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen Erster Teil: Die Sprache*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft. 1994. p. 11.

tuition) and the other is *logical*³⁷ (*critical*³⁸) *idealism* (emphasis on relation). ‘Empiricism’ in Husserl’s phenomenology is now *logical empiricism*³⁹ for Cassirer, when the emphasis of ‘phenomenological’ investigation is now on a variety of relational/functional interconnectedness (logic) in any given subject-matter.

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³⁷ Michael Friedman takes the entire Marburg School including Cassirer to be ‘logical idealism’ for their complete “‘logicization’ of the object of empirical knowledge.” (Friedman, M. “A Turning Point in Philosophy: Carnap-Cassirer-Heidegger”, Parrini, P. et al. (ed.) *Logical Empiricism. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press. 2003. p. 18)

³⁸ In this sense criticism also means for Cassirer “the dissolution of any »given existence« into its pure functions of knowledge.” (Cassirer, E. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit Zweiter Band*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. 1999. p. 638) “[d]ie Auflösung des »Gegebenen« in die reinen Funktionen der Erkenntnis” (translation mine)

³⁹ The primacy of logic and logical relation over any substantial (or even mystical) ‘existence’ in Cassirer’s philosophy, together with its ubiquitous possibility of logical characterization and logical construction of *any* aspect and scope of knowledge and culture, leads many scholars to compare Cassirer’s philosophy to logical empiricism such as Carnap’s. (cf. Friedman, M. “A Turning Point in Philosophy: Carnap-Cassirer-Heidegger” p. 13-29) Einstein’s theory of general relativity, upon the same rank with Newton’s mechanics and many other physical theories, is also interpreted as a pure logical construction while those seeming ‘substantial’ concepts like ‘object’ and ‘mass’ are falling out. (Ryckman, T. “Two Roads from Kant: Cassirer, Reichenbach, and General Relativity”, Parrini, P. et al. (ed.) *Logical Empiricism. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press. 2003. p. 180-187)

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