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## Is phenomenology metaphysics?

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Studia Philosophiae Christianae 47/2, 13-30

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2011

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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## IS PHENOMENOLOGY METAPHYSICS?

**Key words:** phenomenology, metaphysics, Husserl

1. Attempts to solve the problem. 2. Specificity of metaphysical cognition. 3. Phenomenology as first philosophy. 4. Conclusions.

The question whether phenomenology is metaphysics is an extremely difficult, and possibly unsolvable, problem. Both “phenomenology” and “metaphysics” signify objects of a special type, purely intentional objects, in other words objects that do not belong to the world of nature but to the world of culture, and whose source of being and endowment is in the conscious acts of the subject who created them. Today the term “phenomenology”<sup>1</sup> is mainly associated with the philosophical current initiated by Edmund Husserl in 1900. However, this current is not homogeneous. Although Husserl’s successors took his model of phenomenology as a point of reference, they conducted phenomenological research in different ways. The term “metaphysics”, modelled on Aristotle’s fourteen treatises on being, has become the name for a philosophical discipline whose methodological status has been chang-

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<sup>1</sup> For example J.W. Goethe and I. Kant applied the term to refer to certain physical phenomena; J. Robinson, W. Whewell, E. Mach, L. Boltzmann, E. Einstein, A. d’Abro, M. Planck, H. Margenau, W.T. Krug, R. Kuttners, K. Jarmer, J. Hillebrand, P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye and G. Van der Leeuw used the term to denote either the descriptive part of science in general, or its individual disciplines: physics, medicine, dentistry, psychology, or religiology. In philosophy, the term was used by F.Ch. Oetinger, J.H. Lambert, I. Kant, K. Reinhold, G.W.F. Hegel (in his monumental work *Phänomenologie des Geistes*), E. von Hartmann, W. Hamilton, Ch.S. Peirce. Cf. J. Krokos, *Fenomenologia Edmunda Husserla, Aleksandra Pfändera, Maxa Schelera*, MAG Warszawa 1992<sup>2</sup>, 6-11.

ing for centuries. Thus, it can be said that the terms “phenomenology” and “metaphysics” primarily refer to certain purely intentional objects, while their senses are secondarily determined by these objects, i.e. by their content<sup>2</sup>. And these objects are metaphysics and phenomenology, which are the result of the philosophical considerations of philosophizing subjects. Bearing this in mind, I will in answering the question whether phenomenology is metaphysics take into account Husserl’s phenomenology as laid out in his methodological declarations and works, and classical metaphysics, which is related in its methodological core to Aristotelian metaphysics.

### 1. ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Tackling the problem posed in the title, I will attempt not so much to solve it, as to (further) clarify it. It has been undertaken by many scholars<sup>3</sup>. In particular, special emphasis should be put on the now classic monograph on of the problem by Ludwig Landgrebe, who was Husserl’s student. Langrebe claimed that the phenomenological analysis of consciousness leads or may lead to phenomenological metaphysics, which is not a “new” metaphysics, but which undertakes anew the question of being which is an ever-present question in metaphysics. Phenomenological analytics is not a neutral method. If one acknowledges that the most important problem in metaphysics is the Absolute and cognition of the Absolute, then the full meaning of the phenomenological problem of the origin is not exhausted by the observation that subjectivity is the condition of the possibility of the cognition of ob-

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<sup>2</sup> An outline review of the metaphysical conceptions can be found in: W. Tomaszewska, *Metafizyczne i religijne. Problem subtematu w dziele literackim na przykładzie prozy kresowej Włodzimierza Odojewskiego*, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warszawa 2011, 34-50; Cf. T. Czeżowski, *O metafizyce, jej kierunkach i zagadnieniach*, Antyk Kęty 2004<sup>2</sup>; J. Disse, *Kleine Geschichte der abendländischen Metaphysik. Von Plato bis Hegel*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Other scholars who wrote on this subject include: G. Lijpen, *Phenomenology and Metaphysics*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg 1965; G. Funke, *Phänomenologie – Metaphysik oder Methode?*, H. Bouvier u. Co. Verlag, Bonn 1979<sup>3</sup>; A. Molinaro, *Fenomenologia e metafisica*, Roma 1980.

jects, but it is the condition of the possibility of the objects themselves, i.e. of the world as the common horizon of all possible objects<sup>4</sup>.

Dan Zahavi maintains that the descriptive phenomenology of the *Logische Untersuchungen* is metaphysically neutral, whereas transcendental phenomenology is not, because it undertakes the question of the relation between phenomenon and reality. Transcendental phenomenology is not a “direct metaphysical investigation of the real world”. As transcendental phenomenology engages “in a reflective exploration of the structures and conditions of worldly significance and appearance”, which do not belong to “some otherworldly mental realm”, it can no longer claim metaphysical neutrality. Thus, to notice the difference between meaning and being, appearance and reality, and also to think that transcendental phenomenology is concerned more with meaning than being, is to claim that it is metaphysically neutral. However, if one assumes that transcendental phenomenology has metaphysical implications, since it indeed has something to say about the existing reality, about being and objectivity, then it would be another kind of metaphysics (other than classical), something that Zahavi calls “a *post-critical* metaphysics”<sup>5</sup>.

Edmund Morawiec, who elaborated on the issue of the discovery of an existential version of classical metaphysics, recognized intuitionistic imetaphysics “in” Husserl’s metaphysics (the preposition “in” should be highlighted here)<sup>6</sup>. Citing Stanisław Kamiński<sup>7</sup>, Morawiec claimed that this metaphysics, as opposed to classical metaphysics, ex-

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<sup>4</sup> L. Landgrebe, *Phänomenologische Bewußtseinsanalyse und Metaphysik*, in: idem, *Der Weg der Phänomenologie. Das Problem einer ursprünglichen Erfahrung*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh 1963, 75-110.

<sup>5</sup> D. Zahavi, *Phenomenology and metaphysics*, in: D. Zahavi, S. Heinämaa, H. Ruin (eds.): *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation. Phenomenology in the Nordic Countries*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht-Boston-London. 2003, 18-19.

<sup>6</sup> E. Morawiec extended intuitionistic metaphysics over a part of William James’s philosophy and Henri Bergson’s philosophy. Cf. E. Morawiec, *Odkrycie egzystencjalnej wersji metafizyki klasycznej. Studium historyczno-analityczne*, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warszawa 2004, 209-218.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. S. Kamiński, *Filozofia i metoda*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1993, 71-72.

tends the notion of experience but does not provide means to reach the interior structure of being that is transcendent to the subject. It provides means to reach only the structure of being revealed in experience through the discovery of the transcendental structure of consciousness. By the same token, it does not allow the explanation of reality through reasons guaranteeing non-contradiction. It does however permit the description of reality as an intentional correlate, as phenomena that are given in consciousness. Morawiec dogmatically accepts the thesis that the subject of philosophy is consciousness related to things<sup>8</sup>. Intuitionistic phenomenological metaphysics, as Morawiec seems to claim, cannot accomplish the tasks that stand before classical metaphysics. And if so, then it is a metaphysics of a different kind. Nevertheless, phenomenology has received recognition among some representatives of the Thomistic current of classical philosophy, who used mostly phenomenological methods in developing realistic metaphysics<sup>9</sup>.

Stanisław Judycki raises the question whether Husserl's philosophy is metaphysics, and concludes that of five theses that identify classical metaphysics, transcendental phenomenology satisfies three of them: the universal cognition of what exists, the possibility of reaching the necessary and ultimate elements of reality, and confirmation of the contingency of being – of the world and consciousness. But the problem of the sufficient reason does not come up in transcendental phenomenology, nor in the thesis of ontic and epistemological realism. According to Judycki, Husserl indeed goes, in his argumentations, beyond mere description and formulates strong and universal theses about the ways of existence of individual spheres of being. In other words, he formulates metaphysical theses. Further, Husserl posed a question concerning being, whose partial solution is transcendental idealism. Moreover, if one takes into consideration that metaphysical theses are conditions of the possibility of explanatory philosophy, then if phenomenology aspires to be such a philosophy, it must be metaphysics to a certain degree. However, it is not classical metaphysics, but monadological

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<sup>8</sup> E. Morawiec, *Odkrycie egzystencjalnej wersji metafizyki klasycznej*, op. cit., 215.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, 266-275. Morawiec presents there some attempts to relate to phenomenology undertaken by the following Thomists: e.g. A. Forest, G. Söhngen, G. Rabreau.

metaphysics, transcendental teleology of history. The processual solutions used in phenomenology are not equivalent to the solutions of classical metaphysics. They are one level lower in the hierarchy. On the grounds of Husserl's metaphysics, it is impossible to formulate the question of the source of the existence of consciousness and of the world<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. SPECIFICITY OF METAPHYSICAL COGNITION

The above-mentioned views on whether Husserl's phenomenology is metaphysics reveal a conviction that the key to solving the dilemma may lie in a definition of metaphysics and conception of metaphysics as being as equivocal as possible, but there is no such thing. The most common expression used to refer to metaphysics as the fundamental philosophical science, concerned with being as being, originated in the first sentence of Book IV of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "There is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature"<sup>11</sup>. But here already arises the question of what being is, and how it should be studied. What decides that being is being? What determines the subject of metaphysical research? Should metaphysics study all being, or should it be limited only to real beings? Should it be a theory of real being existing in its necessary and essential aspects, or should it be a theory of all that exists in any way? Finally, should metaphysics be a science about the structure of our thinking about the world, which manifests itself in the ways in which the world's parts are spoken about, or should it consider what is extra-physical, extra-natural?<sup>12</sup>

All the above-mentioned problematic issues originate in the history of metaphysics, and its various declared and executed conceptions. However, it should be noted that all of them refer to Aristotle's

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<sup>10</sup> S. Judycki, *Fenomenologia a metafizyka w perspektywie rozważań Edmunda Husserla*, *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* (1988)3, 11-17.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003 b 20-21, transl. by W. D. Ross, eBooks@Adelaide 2007.

<sup>12</sup> J. Herbut, A. B. Stępień, *Metafizyka*, in: J. Herbut (ed.), *Leksykon filozofii klasycznej*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1997, 354-357.

*Metaphysics*, either affirming it, or – through criticism – modifying it. Those fourteen treatises, whose author is the Stagirite, or were, as some would have it, ascribed to him<sup>13</sup>, owe their name to Andronicus of Rhodes, who named them *ta meta ta physika*<sup>14</sup>, the writings after the *Physics*. As *Metaphysics* has become and still is the model for metaphysics and a prototypical reference point for various metaphysical conceptions, it is one of the greatest philosophical works. These treatises and their content determine the sense and the content of the name “metaphysics”, and above all, they determine and distinguish the issues known as “metaphysical”. The author of those treatises considers, for example, the first causes of things and the supreme principles of being, being qua being, substance, and, last but not least, God and super-sensible substance as the subject of his own investigations. By the same token he provides four definitions of metaphysics, which for him is synonymous with “wisdom”, “first philosophy” and “theological science”<sup>15</sup>. What is commonly called Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is a collection, if not “a powerful synthesis”<sup>16</sup> of previous philosophical speculations, from Thales to Plato. This synthesis should not be understood as a mere juxtaposition, or a logical compilation, of the views of the philosophers mentioned in *Metaphysics*, but rather as a presentation of the thesis shared by their doctrine: *syn-thesis*, a consideration common to the outstanding philosophers, and contrary to common opinion<sup>17</sup>, the consideration that it is possible to argue that we know every thing

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. Bigaj, *Zrozumieć metafizykę*, vol. 1, *Rozszyfrowanie dzieła zwanego »Metafizyką« Arystotelesa*, part 1, *Bibliofilski kompilacja i jej skutki*, Wydawnictwo Rolewski, Toruń 2004, passim, especially 305-314.

<sup>14</sup> According to K. Leśniak, M. H. Reiner claimed that the title *Metaphysics* was inspired by Aristotle himself, and was in use among the members of the first generation of the Lyceum. Cf. K. Leśniak, *Wstęp*, in: Arystoteles, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 2, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2003, 603.

<sup>15</sup> G. Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle*, ed. and transl. by J. R. Catan, State University of New York Press, Albany 1990, 265.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> A »thesis« is a supposition of some eminent philosopher that conflicts with the general opinion (...). Aristotle, *Topics* 104 b 19, transl. by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, eBooks@Adelaide 2007.

only when we believe we have known its first cause<sup>18</sup>. Thus, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* addresses the question of *arché* („beginning”), which – it seems – gave rise to European philosophy understood as a peculiar spiritual activity of man, to the demythologizing cognition that is aimed only at truth<sup>19</sup>. The philosophical sense of *arché* can be deduced from the explanations of the Greek philosophers, who regarded *arché* as “source”, “starting point”, “principle”, “first cause”, but also the meaning of the question itself. Though there were various explanations, and different understandings, of the term, the *Metaphysics* says: „It is common, then, to all beginnings to be the first point from which a thing either is or comes to be or is known (...)”<sup>20</sup>. It seems that Giovanni Reale is right in stating that the question of *arché* revealed the defining characteristics of ancient philosophy: (1) an attempt to explain everything, i.e. the totality of things, without the omission of any part or aspect of it; (2) an attempt to approach the task in (1) in a purely rational manner, and (3) an attempt to approach the task in (1) for a purely theoretical purpose (seeking the truth for its own sake)<sup>21</sup>. From this point of view, metaphysics undertakes the issue of *arché* in a significant way, ceases to be merely the doctrine that “follows” physics, and becomes a domain of knowledge, which fundamentally surpasses physics (here understood in the Aristotelian, not the contemporary, sense).

This surpassing of physics reveals itself in the metaphysical research procedure. Aristotle classified physics and mathematics as the same kind of sciences as metaphysics, namely theoretical, and regarded them as a part of philosophy<sup>22</sup>. He referred to physics as “second philosophy”

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<sup>18</sup> *Met.* 983 a 25: „we say we know each thing only when we think we recognize its first cause”.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983<sup>2</sup>, 90, 93-94, 98-99, 106, 108-109, 112; *Filozofia przedsokratejska. Studium krytyczne z wybranymi tekstami*, transl. by J. Lang, Warszawa 1999, 116-117.

<sup>20</sup> *Met.* 1012 b 34 -1013 a 23.

<sup>21</sup> G. Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy: From the origins to Socrates*, ed. and transl. by J. R. Catan, State University of New York Press, Albany 1987, 17-18.

<sup>22</sup> *Met.* 1025 b 26; 1026 a 6.

(*deutera philosophia*)<sup>23</sup>. Like metaphysics, physics surpasses empirical experience, goes beyond knowledge of results to knowledge of causes<sup>24</sup>. Aristotle claimed that the hallmark of scientific knowledge (*episteme*), i.e. absolutely certain knowledge, was the quest for the cause, for, as he put it, “We suppose ourselves to possess unqualified scientific knowledge of a thing, as opposed to knowing it in the accidental way in which the sophist knows, when we think that we know the cause on which the fact depends, as the cause of that fact and of no other, and, further, that the fact could not be other than it is”<sup>25</sup>. Also in Book VI of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle noted that “in general every science which is ratiocinative or at all involves reasoning deals with causes and principles, more or less precise”<sup>26</sup>. Whereas “all these sciences [including physics] mark off some particular being—some genus, and inquire into this”, metaphysics studies being *qua* being, its essence and the attributes which belong to it *qua* being. Unlike metaphysics, all these sciences do not “offer any discussion of the essence of the things of which they treat; but starting from the essence—some making it plain to the senses, others assuming it as a hypothesis—they then demonstrate, more or less cogently, the essential attributes of the genus with which they deal”<sup>27</sup>. Metaphysics as first philosophy „does not inquire about particular subjects in so far as each of them has some attribute or other, but speculates about being, in so far as each particular thing is (...). [F]or physics studies the attributes and the principles of the things that are, *qua* moving and not *qua* being (whereas the primary science,

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<sup>23</sup> *Met.* 1037 a 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Met.* 981 a 30. Cf.: „For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others [i.e. “those who have theory without experience”] know the »why« and the cause”. It should be pointed out, however, that this translation of Aristotle’s words is not precise. The text says that empiricists (i.e. men of experience) know the result (*to hoti* ‘knowledge of the mere fact’), but do not know the cause (*to dioti* ‘knowledge of “the reasoned fact”’), whereas theoreticians (i.e. “those who have theory without experience”) know both, the result and the cause.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 71 b, transl. by G. R. G. Mure, eBooks@Adelaide 2007.

<sup>26</sup> *Met.* 1025 b 4-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Met.* 1025 b 4-13.

we have said, deals with these, only in so far as the underlying subjects are existent, and not in virtue of any other character)”<sup>28</sup>. First philosophy, i.e. metaphysics, ought to be knowledge about the “eternal”, “immovable” and “separable”<sup>29</sup> about the ultimate first cause of all visible things, i.e. it ought to be theological science (*theologike*).

Thus, Aristotelian metaphysics surpasses physics and all other theoretical sciences in both its subject and its method of investigation. For the subject of metaphysics is being as being, i.e. each and every thing that exists, and not individual categories of beings, species and kinds. Metaphysics is not satisfied with finding secondary causes, but it is aimed at understanding, and understands, the ultimate causes, the first principles of all being. Mięczysław A. Krapiec expressed this in the following words: in the philosophical tradition, metaphysics was called a set of “fundamental problems concerning reality”, which is “the basic core of philosophy and the foundation of the sciences”<sup>30</sup>. “Metaphysics, therefore, is knowledge obtained by naturally transcendent reason (...) seeking the primary and unique factors of that which exists, the factors by virtue of which what exists does not imply a contradiction, the factors of what is given to us embryonically in our empirical intuition of the material world”<sup>31</sup>. Morawiec, who identifies classical philosophy, to a certain degree, with metaphysics, regards the latter as a theory of the world and man, which studies its subject rationally, in a necessary and general way, in the aspect of its ultimate conclusions<sup>32</sup>.

The subject and the aim of classical metaphysics determines the research procedure. Its starting point should be the direct apprehension of reality, accompanied by intellectual insight into the nature of reality. It seems that this type of inductive-analytical thinking, modelled on Aristotelian *epagoge*, permits the explanation of theorems concerning

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<sup>28</sup> *Met.* 1061 b 27.

<sup>29</sup> *Met.* 1026 a.

<sup>30</sup> M.A. Krapiec, *Metaphysics. An Outline of the History of Being*, transl. by Th. Sandok, Peter Lang, New York 1991, 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 36.

<sup>32</sup> E. Morawiec, *Odkrycie egzystencjalnej wersji metafizyki klasycznej*, op. cit., 26-27.

all being<sup>33</sup>. This thinking is driven by the fundamental metaphysical question about what it is that makes a being a being, about what necessarily constitutes being as being; in other words, by the question of the ultimate reason of being as being. The answer requires that the initial data be surpassed, but not that they be abandoned, for the specificity of metaphysical research is proportional to its subject and its aim. This is why classical metaphysics does not abandon its principles, does not justify them indirectly, but shows directly, with the help of elenctic reason, that they are justified<sup>34</sup>. The sophisticated method of metaphysical research<sup>35</sup> take into account, above all, direct apprehension of reality, in order to gain necessary knowledge about the existential side of reality<sup>36</sup>.

The later history of philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular, to the present day, is the history of a struggle for the ultimate explanation of reality and even the possibility of such an explanation, and thus of a struggle for the right understanding of what metaphysics is. This is also visible in the critical texts, for example in Kant's critique of metaphysics, which was not aimed at discrediting metaphysics, but at its validation. Kant realized that metaphysical questions are important and unavoidable, because they are posed by the nature of human reason itself, and he also pointed out that human reason, it seems, faces overwhelming obstacles when it tries to answer these questions, because – as he puts it – “It begins with principles, which cannot be dispensed with in the field of experience, and the truth and sufficiency of which are, at the same time, insured by experience. With these principles it rises, in obedience to the laws of its own nature, to ever

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. S. Kamiński, *Próba charakterystyki uzasadniania tez w metafizyce klasycznej*, in: M.A. Krapiec, S. Kamiński, *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki*, RW KUL, Lublin 1994<sup>3</sup>, 378.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. S. Kamiński, *O ostatecznych przesłankach w klasycznej filozofii bytu*, in: M.A. Krapiec, S. Kamiński, *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki*, RW KUL, Lublin 1994<sup>3</sup>, 327-339.

<sup>35</sup> The issue is further elaborated on in: E. Morawiec, P. Mazanka, *Metafizyka klasyczna wersji egzystencjalnej. Podstawowe zagadnienia z metafizyki*, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. S. Kamiński, *Próba charakterystyki*, op. cit., 377.

higher and more remote conditions. But it quickly discovers that, in this way, its labours must remain ever incomplete, because new questions never cease to present themselves; and thus it finds itself compelled to have recourse to principles, which transcend the region of experience, while they are regarded by common sense without distrust. It thus falls into confusion and contradictions, from which it conjectures the presence of latent errors, which, however, it is unable to discover, because the principles it employs, transcending the limits of experience, cannot be tested by that criterion". And further, he adds: „The arena of these endless contests is called Metaphysic"<sup>37</sup>. Kant's critique of previous metaphysics led him to a new metaphysical project, which enables reason to learn the ultimate cause of all things. This ultimate cause conditions all things but is itself not conditioned, and by the same token, is supersensual. However, this is not theoretical, but practical reason. Nevertheless, also in this case, the main interest lies in the world that needs rational explanation.

If then the question of what metaphysics is were to be answered - and I will not elaborate on this issue, since the main focus of the article is on the question of whether phenomenology is metaphysics- then it could be claimed that metaphysics is the first philosophy in the order of things, or in the order of being, that aims at studying, in a necessary and absolutely certain way, what is, being in its essential aspects, and that seeks the ultimate reasons of being. Is phenomenology such a philosophy?

### 3. PHENOMENOLOGY AS FIRST PHILOSOPHY

If Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is the model for metaphysics, so is Husserl's conception of phenomenology for phenomenology. It underwent several transformations, yet for Husserl it was, above all, a specific method and research approach, though he also referred to phenomenology as a science based on the phenomenological approach and using the phenomenological method. As such, phenomenology was supposed to be first philosophy, which is clearly declared in *Ideas Pertaining*

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<sup>37</sup> I. Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. by J. M. D. Meiklejohn, A VII-VIII, eBooks@Adelaide2009.

to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—First Book<sup>38</sup>, and then in the lectures delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1923/1924, titled *Erste Philosophie (First Philosophy)*<sup>39</sup>, where Husserl said that he had adopted the idea of first philosophy from Socrates, Plato and Descartes, and only the name from Aristotle. Therefore his conception of phenomenology as first philosophy is not related to the content of Aristotle's metaphysics. The sense of the term "first philosophy" is only a formal model for the theoretical aim that phenomenology should achieve, becoming a scientific discipline of the beginning. It would of intrinsic and inseparable necessity be the discipline leading other philosophical disciplines, and these disciplines would be grounded in phenomenology<sup>40</sup>.

Aristotelian "first philosophy" was supposed to precede "second philosophy", i.e. physics. Husserl's phenomenology, being a science about the essence of pure consciousness, was supposed to precede eidetic formal sciences (formal ontology, formal logic, and all the disciplines of formal *mathesis*: algebra, theory of numbers, theory of multiplicities, and so forth), eidetic material sciences including regional material ontologies, and all sciences concerning facts, together with metaphysics that grounds all sciences concerning actual reality. Thus, in his declarations, Husserl differentiated phenomenology, including transcendental phenomenology, from metaphysics. However, did the methodological status of phenomenology not mean that it became a metaphysics, or even classical metaphysics?

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<sup>38</sup> The original was published in 1913 as *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch* in: „Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung”. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy – First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1983 (= *Ideas I*).

<sup>39</sup> E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*. Erste Teil: *Kritische Ideengeschichte*, ed. R. Boehm, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1956; Zweiter Teil: *Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, ed. R. Boehm, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1959.

<sup>40</sup> E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*. Erste Teil, op. cit., 5.

Although there are claims in Husserl's texts that transcendental phenomenology actually covers the full scope of philosophical issues<sup>41</sup>, it does not seem that Husserl thought that transcendental phenomenology deals with all philosophical issues, that it is not only the first, but also the ultimate and unique philosophy. Rather, he thought that the systematic building of phenomenology as first philosophy, and the precise justification of phenomenology are necessary conditions for all valid, i.e. absolutely justified, philosophical research. He also thought that phenomenology is an indispensable condition for all metaphysics<sup>42</sup>. The latter thought is proved in the work issued towards the end of Husserl's life, *Méditations Cartésiennes (Cartesian Meditations)*<sup>43</sup>. The fifth *Meditation* ends with Husserl's indication that every analysis or theory of transcendental phenomenology, including the theory of transcendental constitution of an Objective world as a transcendental phenomenon (which should be emphasized), leads to building "a universal ontology of the Objective world", and further – taking monadology into consideration – to certain metaphysical results, if we call the ultimate cognition of being metaphysical. Nevertheless, to observe that phenomenological research leads to ontology and metaphysics is not to identify transcendental phenomenology with ontology or metaphysics. Husserl maintained that it is groundless to claim that transcendental phenomenology, leading to other subjectivity and to genuine Objectivity, abandons the transcendental attitude, the attitude of transcendental *epoché*, and replaces it with an unacknowledged metaphysics. Husserl writes: "Actually, therefore, phenomenological explication is nothing like 'metaphysical construction'; and it is neither overtly nor covertly a theorizing with adopted presuppositions or helpful thoughts drawn from the historical metaphysical tradition. It stands in sharpest contrast to all that, because it proceeds within the limits of pure 'intuition', or rather of pure sense-explication based

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<sup>41</sup> E. Husserl, *Nachwort zu meinen Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie*, Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung (1930)11.

<sup>42</sup> E. Husserl, *Ideas I*, 10.

<sup>43</sup> E. Husserl, *Méditations Cartésiennes. Introduction à la Phénoménologie*, Paris 1931; *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*, transl. by C. Cairns, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1987.

on a fulfilling givenness of the sense itself. Particularly in the case of the Objective world of realities (as well as in the case of each of the many ideal Objective worlds, which are the fields of the purely apriori sciences) and this cannot be emphasized often enough, phenomenological explication does nothing but explicate the sense this world has for us all, prior to any philosophizing, and obviously gets solely from our experience a sense which philosophy can uncover but never alter, and which, because of an essential necessity, not because of our weakness, entails (in the case of any actual experience) horizons that need fundamental clarification<sup>44</sup>.

The link between Aristotelian first philosophy, i.e. metaphysics, and Husserl's first philosophy, i.e. phenomenology, is the purely theoretical and systematic character of research aimed at revealing the realm of truth, while the logical structure of the research is determined by the things themselves, which is expressed in the Husserlian coinage "back to the things themselves"<sup>45</sup>. This slogan can be seen as a rule that says that in phenomenological studies it is the thing under investigation that should lead the research. By the same token, the rule says that formulating philosophical systems as closed theoretical units should be avoided, since such systems disregard the things under investigation. Moreover, phenomenology – similarly to classical metaphysics – seeks to realize the idea of absolute cognition, a universal cognition extending over everything, and is not satisfied with being the science, which is the sum of all possible cognitions<sup>46</sup>. Understood in this way, first philosophy ought to serve as its own total validation,<sup>47</sup> in other words, all that could be its philosophical starting point must be acquired by first philosophy itself<sup>48</sup>. It means that first philosophy ought to be independent of all other sciences, and yet ought to be a foundation for these sciences.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 150-151; cf. §§ 59-62.

<sup>45</sup> E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, Bd. 2, Teil 1, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen 1980<sup>6</sup>, 6.

<sup>46</sup> E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*. Erste Teil, op. cit., 305-306.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, 4.

<sup>48</sup> E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, op. cit., 13.

The task of grounding all sciences, which Husserl assigned to phenomenology, makes phenomenology a specific theory of knowledge or a theory of science. The phenomenology of knowledge and the object is regarded as the first and fundamental part of general phenomenology<sup>49</sup>. Husserl claimed that every transcendental philosophy could be called a theory of knowledge (*Theorie der Erkenntnis*)<sup>50</sup>. Phenomenology is aimed at delivering the general explanation of possibilities, and at delivering the full and appropriate sense of all cognitions as such, in particular all scientific cognitions. Phenomenology can do this only if it itself is absolutely grounded and fully justified. To realize this idea, phenomenology follows the principle of all principles, i.e. “*that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originally (so to speak, in its ‘personal’ actuality) offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there*”<sup>51</sup>. Husserl claimed that every kind of being (or object) has its own essential way of giving, and consequently, its own methods of knowing, for every domain and category of subject corresponds to a certain fundamental kind of primal presenting consciousness. Thus, the object of phenomenological research is a phenomenon, what is given within the limits of how it is given. A phenomenon is not a real statistical being, but a process of appearing and the appearing of what is appearing<sup>52</sup>. Phenomena, in the phenomenological sense, are “what we (or, to speak more precisely, what I, the one who is meditating) acquire by it is my pure living, with all the pure subjective processes making this up, and everything meant in them, purely as meant in them”<sup>53</sup>. The fundamental task of phenomenology is the direct cognition and description of the essential structures of the directly given. The transition from the direct cognition of a

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<sup>49</sup> E. Husserl, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Fünf Vorlesungen*, hrsg. W. Biemel, Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1958<sup>2</sup>, 23.

<sup>50</sup> E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*. Zweite Teil, op. cit., 119, 195.

<sup>51</sup> E. Husserl, *Ideas I*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> E. Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, hrsg. W. Szilasi, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1965<sup>2</sup>, 35-37.

<sup>53</sup> E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, op. cit., 20.

individual phenomenon to the grasping of its essence becomes possible by means of ideation. Transcendental reduction reveals pure consciousness and the universal noetic-noematic correlation. Constitutional investigations, on the other hand allows it to be shown, in very general terms, how objective units of sense of every domain and category are constituted in the consciousness. Husserl wrote: “Since, with its procedure, phenomenology has no already given actualities or concepts of actualities, but from the very beginning derives its concepts from the originariness of the constitutive performance (which is itself conceived in ordinary concepts), and since, owing to the necessity that all horizons be uncovered, it is also cognizant of all differences in range, all abstract relativities: therefore it must attain by itself the concept-systems that determine the fundamental sense of all scientific provinces”<sup>54</sup>.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Husserl’s remarks on paragraphs 40-41 of Martin Heidegger’s *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, mentioned by Iso Kern<sup>55</sup>, seem to solve the problem whether phenomenology is metaphysics. Husserl claimed that the question about the reason for being should not be the starting point in philosophy. In his opinion, the question that ought to form the introduction to philosophy is the question of how every sense is constituted in consciousness, in subjectivity, or in the subject. Thus, Husserl’s phenomenology, including transcendental phenomenology, is not metaphysics understood as the study of being qua being. Phenomenology does not look for ontic *ratio* of being, the reason of being as being, even if the object of metaphysical investigations is not limited to real being. Transcendental reduction, in a sense, solves this problem. As a particular research method, it is assigned to the objective which phenomenology at which phenomenology aims, the attainment of the absolutely certain starting point of all valid knowledge, full justification and absolute grounding of knowledge. Phenomenology

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<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, 154.

<sup>55</sup> I. Kern, *Husserl und Kant. Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus*, Martinus Nijhoff, the Haag 1964, 188; 1984<sup>2</sup>; cf. S. Judycki, op. cit., 11.

does not aspire to replace other sciences, nor to cover all philosophical problems, since it cannot do this because of its methodological status. Therefore, it does not ask about the *arché* of all being, but about the *arché* of all sense, including the sense of being. It is not a contemplation of being, but a meditation on the processes involved in consciousness, in which the sense of being is constituted. It does not mean that phenomenological investigations are of no use to metaphysics, nor that they are devoid of metaphysical theses, or theses that can be interpreted metaphysically. Nevertheless, methodological reasons should not obscure the fundamental differences between metaphysical and phenomenological investigations. The differences do not lie in the way in which the same object under investigation, in a particular aspect, is approached. The investigations are simply different.

Similar remarks can be found in Robert Sokolowski's paper delivered in April 2009 during a four-day conference on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edmund Husserl's birth, organised by the Husserl-Archives Leuven. He says, for example, "In Aristotle, first philosophy is defined as the theorizing of being as being. (...) The book in which Aristotle carries out this first philosophy was entitled *ta meta ta physika* by its editors. They called it the study of issues that are 'beyond' the physical things. (...) Metaphysics theorizes truth; it is the *theōria tēs alētheias*, and the human attainment of truth is an achievement that goes beyond any physical process. (...) when Aristotle turns to the examination of being as being, he also turns to the study of intellect as intellect or mind as mind. This is also what Husserl does. We could define his phenomenology as the study of intellect as intellect, mind as mind, or reason as reason. Perhaps it would be most appropriate to call it the study of truth as truth. In order to venture out on this study, Husserl needs to differentiate his inquiry from something less ultimate, just as Aristotle did. But Husserl does not distinguish his first philosophy from the study of physical things; in his day and age he needs especially to distinguish it from psychology, so a book containing Husserl's first philosophy could appropriately have been entitled *ta meta ta psychika* or the *Metaphysics*"<sup>56</sup>. Surpassing physics in the case

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<sup>56</sup> Sokolowski adds: „And just to round out this set of comparisons, we might also observe that Plato too moves into a first philosophy by contrasting it against a less ulti-

of Aristotelian metaphysics, and psychology in the case of Husserlian phenomenology, expresses well the differences in research approach between the two philosophers.

*Translated by Magdalena Tomaszewska*

## CZY FENOMENOLOGIA JEST METAFIZYKĄ?

### Streszczenie

Problem, czy *fenomenologia jest metafizyką*, jest trudny do rozstrzygnięcia. Najczęściej pojawia się określenie metafizyki jako podstawowej nauki filozoficznej, rozważającej byt jako byt. Metafizyka jest filozofią pierwszą w porządku rzeczowym i bytowym.

Arystotelesowska „filozofia pierwsza” wskazuje, że ma ona poprzedzać jakąś „filozofię drugą”, a mianowicie – fizykę. Fenomenologia Husserla jako nauka o istocie czystej świadomości miała poprzedzać eidetyczne nauki formalne, eidetyczne nauki materialne oraz wszystkie nauki o faktach, w tym metafizykę. W deklaracjach zatem Husserl odróżniał fenomenologię, w tym fenomenologię transcendentálną, od metafizyki.

Husserl zanegował pytanie o rację bytu jako wyjściowe pytanie filozofii. Według niego pytaniem, które winno wprowadzać w filozofię, jest pytanie o to, jak wszelki sens konstrytuje się w świadomości, w subiektywności czy też w podmiocie. A zatem fenomenologia Husserla, w tym fenomenologia transcendentálna, nie jest metafizyką pojmowaną jako badanie bytu jako bytu. Fenomenologia nie poszukuje bowiem bytowych racji bytu, nawet jeśli przedmiot badań metafizycznych nie ograniczymy do bytu realnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** fenomenologia, metafizyka, Husserl

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mate science, and in his case it is mathematics. Plato's first philosophy could appropriately have been called something like *ta meta ta mathēmatika* or the *Metamathematics*". R. Sokolowski, *Husserl on First Philosophy*, in: C. Ierna, H. Jacobs, F. Mattens (eds.) *Philosophy, Phenomenology, Sciences: Essays in Commemoration of Edmund Husserl*, Phaenomenologica 200; Springer, Dordrecht–Heidelberg–London–New York 2010, 5-6.