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# PHAINOMENA

Revija za fenomenologijo in hermenevtiko  
Journal of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

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## PHAINOMENA

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHENOMENON IN IMMANUEL KANT'S AND EDMUND HUSSERL'S TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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## *Abstract*

The article explores the concept of the phenomenon in the transcendental philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl, arguing for the intricate connections and divergences between their philosophical frameworks. Kant's transcendental idealism, rooted in the a priori knowledge and the conditions for human cognition, marks a pivotal shift from previous rationalist beliefs in non-empirical knowledge. By emphasizing phenomena as the ultimate objects of human cognition



and asserting that the conditions for experience are inherent in the human mind, Kant lays the groundwork for a critical analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. In contrast, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology introduces a methodical approach to uncovering the essence of consciousness and phenomena. Central to Husserl's transcendental idealism is the concept of intentionality, which serves as a bridge between consciousness and objects of knowledge. Unlike metaphysical idealism, Husserl's transcendental idealism focuses on the correlation between phenomena and consciousness rather than solely on internal cognitive operations. The article navigates the evolution from Kant's critical idealism to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, highlighting their shared emphasis on phenomena as the focal point of human cognition.

*Keywords:* phenomenon, Kant, Husserl, transcendental idealism, human cognition.

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## **Pomen fenomena v transcendentalni filozofiji Immanuela Kanta in Edmunda Husserla**

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*Povzetek*

Članek razpravlja o pojmu fenomena znotraj transcendentalne filozofije Immanuela Kanta in Edmunda Husserla, pri čemer izpostavlja zapletene povezave in divergence med njunima filozofskima okvirjema. Kantov transcendentalni idealizem, ki je zakoreninjen v apriornem védenju in pogojih človeškega spoznanja, zaznamuje pomemben premik glede na prejšnja racionalistična prepričanja o neempirični vednosti. S tem ko poudari fenomene kot poslednje objekte človeškega spoznanja in zatrdi, da so pogoji izkustva inherentni človeškemu umu, Kant predloži temeljno osnovo za kritično analizo razmerja med subjektivnostjo in objektivnostjo. V nasprotju s tem Husserlova transcendentalna fenomenologija vpelje metodični pristop za razkrivanje bistva zavesti in fenomenov. Osrednji pojem Husserlovega transcendentalnega idealizma je intencionalnost, ki služi kot most med zavestjo in objekti védenja. V nasprotju z metafizičnim idealizmom se Husserlov transcendentalni idealizem osredotoča na korelacijo med fenomeni in zavestjo in ne toliko na notranje kognitivne operacije. Članek sledi razvoju od Kantovega kritičnega idealizma do Husserlove transcendentalne fenomenologije in posebno pozornost podarja njunemu skupnemu poudarjanju fenomenov kot središčni točki človeškega spoznanja.

*Ključne besede:* fenomen, Kant, Husserl, transcendentalni idealizem, človeško spoznanje.

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## Introduction

Central to Husserl's philosophical trajectory is the crucial role of the phenomenon. He introduces various phenomenological methods, including *epoché* and phenomenological-transcendental reductions, aimed at attaining pure consciousness. The ultimate goal of this consciousness is the cognition of phenomena. It is paramount to note that, in Husserl's transcendental idealism, phenomena, as objects of knowledge, exist in a state of dependence upon consciousness. This dependence, however, diverges from metaphysical idealism, such as subjective idealism, which posits that objects of cognition arise solely from the internal operations of consciousness. In contrast, Husserl's transcendental idealism elucidates the cognition of an object only in its correlation to consciousness, and in order to establish this correlation, he introduces the crucial concept of intentionality.

The usage of the term "transcendental" marks a pivotal turning point in Husserl's philosophical journey, notably between the *Logical Investigations* and his later works. Commentators often interpret this transition as transcendental phenomenology, transcendental idealism, or simply transcendental philosophy. Each of these labels inherently involves a reference to the notion of the transcendental, which, in turn, is intertwined with the concept of a subject or a transcendental ego. This transcendental ego serves as the origin for the analysis of objects within consciousness.

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Husserl contends that the fundamental structure of objectivity can be traced back to the structure of subjectivity or consciousness. This assertion aligns closely with Kant's foundational principles in transcendental philosophy. The commonality between Kant's transcendental philosophy and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology suggests that the term "transcendental" holds a comparable significance for both philosophers. However, despite these similarities, differences emerge in their respective uses of the term "transcendental," giving rise to two distinct philosophical systems for the examination of phenomena—Kant's transcendental idealism and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

Kant's conception of transcendental philosophy forms the historical backdrop for understanding Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. In

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his work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl emphasizes the essential relationship between his phenomenological project and Kant's transcendental idealism, stating that "transcendental philosophy must attempt a radicalization of the truth hidden in Kant" (Husserl 1970, 118). These words underscore the continuity and discrepancy between the two philosophical frameworks, setting the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the notion of the phenomenon in both Kant's as well as Husserl's transcendental philosophies.

### **The transcendental philosophy of Kant**

30 As we approach Kant's transcendental philosophy, the term "transcendental" refers to metaphysical and a priori knowledge. Prior to Kant, rationalists held the belief that it was possible to attain a priori knowledge in the metaphysical realm, specifically concerning transcendent objects. Initially, Kant dismisses the idea of non-empirical knowledge and endeavors to demonstrate how a specific type of knowledge is attainable. This knowledge pertains to the human experience of natural and non-transcendent objects rather than the metaphysical realm and transcendent objects. Kant employs the term "phenomenon" to differentiate a non-transcendent object from those that came before him.

Kant's utilization of the term "transcendental" not only departs from previous philosophical thought, but also fundamentally reshapes the concept, establishing the foundation for all subsequent philosophical inquiries related to it. In order to sort out the historical roots of the transcendental notion, the following text in the "Transcendental Logic" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is instructive:

Not every kind of knowledge a priori should be called transcendental, but that only by which we know that—and how—certain representations (intuitions or concepts) can be employed or are possible purely a priori. The term "transcendental," that is to say, signifies such knowledge as concerns the a priori possibility of knowledge or its a priori employment. (Kant 1958, 96.)

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Since the inception of transcendental philosophy, the term “transcendental” has been used to explain how an a priori concept or “a structure of subjectivity serves as the prerequisite for experiencing an object. This concept also helps to elucidate certain essential characteristics of the object, particularly from the perspective of the knowing subject.” (Nenon 2008, 429.) Therefore, Kant’s critical philosophy is primarily concerned with acquiring *transzendentaler Erkenntnis* (“transcendental knowledge”). Hence, the collection of propositions and judgments that articulate various examples of transcendental knowledge forms the framework of transcendental philosophy.

Due to the departure from previous philosophical thought, Kant explicitly differentiates between the terms “transcendental” and “transcendent.” The former pertains to the circumstances, under which experience is possible, while the latter denotes that, which lies outside the realm of possible experience. Kant emphasizes the importance of not conflating this differentiation, in order to grasp the essence of transcendental philosophy as a whole and transcendental idealism specifically. Following this reason is why Kant, in *Prolegomena*, writes:

[T]he word transcendental, the meaning of which is so often explained by me, but not once grasped by my reviewer (so carelessly has he regarded everything), does not signify something passing beyond all experience, but something that indeed precedes it *a priori*, but that is intended simply to make cognition of experience possible. If these conceptions overstep experience, their employment is termed “transcendent,” a word which must be distinguished from transcendental, the latter being limited to the immanent use, that is, to experience. (Kant 1933, 128.)

Kant juxtaposes his philosophical methodology with the dogmatic tendencies of rationalists and the skeptical tendencies of empiricists. The methodology of rationalists is based on the examination of ideas that are characterized by clarity and distinctness or the application of the principle of sufficient reason. It is based entirely on unquestioned assertions about the world’s nature. Kant dismisses this approach due to its failure to rigorously scrutinize our cognitive capacity, which, as Kant argues in his *Critique*, operates within the confines of sensory perception. Conversely, empiricists

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adopt a methodology known as the “anatomy of sense experience” (Gardner 1999, 45). In other words, empiricists, or more accurately skeptics, attribute all knowledge to sensory impressions, completely disregarding the influence of human reason. In the preface of the initial edition of his *Critique*, John Locke’s approach was characterized by Kant as simply the “physiology of the human understanding” (Kant 1958, 8). What Kant proposes as his transcendental philosophy is that it involves identifying the necessary conditions or those conditions that are transcendental. These conditions refer to the prerequisites for experiencing something or what Kant occasionally refers to as the prerequisites for objects of understanding, namely, appearances. Furthermore, these “conditions must be met prior to establishing an epistemic connection between the subject and an object” (Gardner 1999, 45). In his *Critique*, Kant endeavors to reveal and examine these conditions. If these conditions need to be fulfilled before the subject has a connection with an object based on *episteme*, it then becomes clear that these conditions must be a priori. The arguments employed to examine these conditions are based on transcendental evidence. Thus, an understanding of the manner, in which objects conform to the pattern of human cognition, can be reached. The transcendental approach of Kant diverges from pre-critical philosophy by rejecting the notion that the constitution of objects is independent of the mind. As per Kant, if objects were considered in this way, they would be understood in and of themselves rather than as they appear to us, which are mere appearances. Kant’s approach aims to reveal this constitution of the object as inherently present within the human intellect. That, which is transcendental in transcendental idealism, encapsulates the functions and procedures of the human mind that form the basis for metaphysical and epistemological inquiries. The subject’s formation of objects does not imply that objects are brought into existence by representations, as the “causing of objects through representations is a type of knowledge that can only be attributed to God” (Gardner 1999, 43). From a humanistic standpoint, there is a blend of passivity and activity defining the relationship between representation and object. By employing rational intuition, individuals passively acquire information that they actively incorporate into their minds based on pre-existing a priori principles. Kant defines the term “transcendental” in his *Prolegomena* as “pertaining to our understanding,

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specifically in relation to our cognitive abilities rather than external objects” (Kant 1933, 42). Transcendental inquiry refers to the investigation of how the cognitive makeup of the knowing subject determines the way objects can be known. With respect to this characterization, Kant’s transcendental approach is idealistic. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant addresses the misinterpretation and disapproval of transcendental idealism directed towards the initial edition of the *Critique*, referring to it as formal, or more accurately, critical idealism. He distinguishes his idealism from that of the Berkeleyan or Cartesian variety. The latter forms of idealism focuses on the empirical understanding of the contents of consciousness (Allison 2004, 26). Kant’s transcendental idealism is significant due to its foundation in his critical agenda, which involves the analysis of what is a priori and the critique of human cognitive faculties. This analysis, critical in nature, explores the cognitive abilities that Kant refers to as appearances as well as their limitations. Kant’s ultimate conclusion is the exclusion of transcendent metaphysics in favor of advocating the metaphysics ruled by experience. Metaphysics then focuses on something inherent to human experience, rather than speculating about entities like God and the soul that exist beyond human perception. This ultimate conclusion of Kant’s is reflected in the “Transcendental Aesthetic” and “Transcendental Analytic,” as he establishes the feasibility of an immanent metaphysics, one that is rooted within human experience, and in the “Transcendental Dialectic,” where he argues for the infeasibility of transcendent metaphysics, which lies outside the realm of sensory experience. Kant’s transcendental philosophy establishes a novel framework for investigating metaphysical questions. In his letter to Marcus Herz, penned on February 21, 1772, Kant sheds emphasis on the problem of metaphysics: the issue of determining the basis of the connection between our mental representations and the objects they represent (Kant 1902, 130–131). In this instance, Kant introduces the critical problem by discussing the connection between representation and object. The issue of reality and the potential for metaphysics is closely linked to this crucial problem. As Gardener articulates, a “broader form of the critical problem mentioned in Kant’s letter to Herz is that of reality. Now, this conceptualization of reality elucidates the manner in which objects of experience and thought become feasible for us.” (Gardner 1999, 33.) According to Kant, this objective fulfillment can only

be attained through transcendental philosophy. The goal of transcendental philosophy is to construct a comprehensive framework of ideas that reveals the conditions, through which we establish connections between abstract or intellectual concepts and physical objects. By doing this, reason engages in self-examination and reveals its origins and boundaries. The “*Critique of Kant* is then recognized as a propaedeutic discipline within the framework of transcendental philosophy” (Hanssen 2002). In the introduction to his work, a methodical stance is taken by Kant to present this issue by examining the potential for synthetic a priori judgments. In addition, Kant argues that all the basic statements of metaphysics, natural sciences, and mathematics (including geometry) are made up of synthetic a priori judgments.

In the *Critique*, Kant uses the word transcendental both with knowledge and philosophy:

I entitled transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori. A system of such concepts might be entitled transcendental philosophy. (Kant 1958, 59.)

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This means that transcendental knowledge alludes to a specific type of knowledge. Its objective is to determine the conditions, under which a priori knowledge of objects is possible. Kant argues that, in order to understand the conditions that make knowledge possible for us, it is necessary to examine our cognitive abilities critically. Therefore, “critique itself is an integral component of transcendental philosophy” (Hanssen 2002). Transcendental philosophy is a comprehensive framework, encompassing all the concepts that enable us to have knowledge of objects and are therefore based on priori reasoning. Kant’s transcendental philosophy supplants the conventional metaphysical framework, which limited the possibility of objects to their mode of representation. Kant affirms the independent ontological status of objects and reality, as denying it would result in subjective idealism akin to Berkeley’s philosophy. Kant’s assertion is that this mode of depiction is the act of imposition by the human intellect. The way, in which objects are depicted as their spatiotemporal or causally linked entities, can only be attributed to their appearances rather than to their intrinsic nature. The central principle in the *Critique* is that the way, in

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which objects can be perceived, “should be based on the cognitive structure of the human mind rather than the inherent nature of the object itself” (Allison 2004, 27). Kant explores the method of representing objects in the chapters “Transcendental Aesthetic” and “Transcendental Analytic.” In the former, this method of representing objects is defined by their spatiotemporal nature, while in the latter, it is defined by their classification under the pure concepts of understanding, known as categories. Kant refers to the arguments that reveal the conditions necessary for the representation of objects as transcendental proof. The transcendental proof is unique in that it “transforms a potential outcome into an inevitable outcome” (Gardner 1999, 45). The statement aims to demonstrate that the “conditions required for objects to exist are essential for us to have any experience of objects” (Gardner 1999, 45). These conditions are considered a priori, because they are necessary conditions according to Kant’s specific language in the *Critique*. This term can also be extended to the subdivisions of the *Critique*. The “aesthetic” is “transcendental,” as it establishes the inherent nature of sensibility a priori. The “analytic” is “transcendental,” as it seeks to determine the a priori nature of understanding. The “dialectic” is “transcendental,” as it examines a priori assertions that traditional philosophy erroneously made about metaphysics. Transcendental inquiry is a result of the Copernican Revolution in metaphysics, which views the subject as influencing the world. In contrast, transcendental inquiry explores the shape of the world that is already present within the cognitive subject. According to Kant, this shape refers to the cognitive subject’s structure that objects must adhere to, in order to be considered objects of knowledge. Transcendental inquiry explores the correlation between the depiction of something and the actual object, without considering the concept of realism. In a way, it is an investigation into the potential existence of objects, “without making any assumptions about their independent reality” (Gardner 1999, 49). The constitution of this inquiry is attributed to the cognizant subject, thereby rendering the inquiry inherently idealistic.

The fate of metaphysics depends on resolving the transcendental philosophy conundrum, which had been introduced in the letter to Herz, was further developed through the Copernican analogy, and culminated in its logical form as a potentiality related to synthetic a priori judgments. Kant argues in

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the *Critique* that transcendental philosophy's feasibility relies on the idea that objects of knowledge are manifestations rather than independent entities. In other words, transcendental idealism provides the resolution to the problem of transcendental philosophy. Kant's transcendental philosophy defines the phenomenon as the ultimate subject of human understanding.

Despite not addressing transcendent objects, Kant's transcendental philosophy remains non-empirical. This is not because it pertains to non-empirical objects, but rather because it focuses on the essential conditions that enable the experience of empirical objects. Kant's transcendental philosophy establishes the boundaries of human knowledge. Human knowledge is limited to phenomena.

### **The transcendental philosophy of Husserl**

36 The Kantian transformation of the term "transcendental" completely changed the meaning of transcendental philosophy. Now, transcendental philosophy is that, which tries to trace the origin of objectivity in subjective thinking. As far as the general themes of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology are concerned, like constitutive phenomenology, genetic phenomenology, and the constitution of *Lebenswelt* (life-world), his work is compatible with such an interpretation of transcendental philosophy. In addition to this, Husserl's phenomenology also regards the phenomenon as the ultimate object of human cognition. However, for Husserl, the attainment of the phenomenon requires different philosophical procedures, thereby disagreeing with the basic tenets of Kant's philosophy. Husserl's disagreements with Kant led to the development of a new science for the study of phenomena called transcendental phenomenology. Like Kant, Husserl also distinguishes between the terms "transcendental" and "transcendent." Unlike Kant, Husserl's interpretation of this distinction does not pertain to the differentiation between sense objects and supra-sensible entities. Husserl differentiates between the immediate awareness of consciousness towards itself and the existence of external objects, emphasizing the internal nature of consciousness (self-awareness) and its experiences as *Erlebnisse* (the plural of the German word *Erlebnis*, which means experience) as well as spatiotemporal entities. This shift can be construed as "a shift from the issue of transcendence

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as an ontological distinction to transcendence as an issue that is approached at least primarily from an epistemological perspective” (Nenon 2008, 433). Both Kant and Husserl attempt to develop a conception of knowledge that transcends the limits of the empirical realm; however, both take different routes to achieve this task. Kant attempted to identify universal and necessary features of all possible objects of empirical experience. In deduction, Kant provided a detailed justification for how these universal and necessary features are indispensable for the cognition of any object whatsoever. Five years after the publication of *Logische Untersuchungen*, Husserl elucidates transcendental knowledge by asserting that all contents of mental life are directly presented to pure consciousness as they manifest themselves. In this way, Husserl achieves the Kantian ideal of attaining philosophical knowledge that goes beyond contingency and transcends the limits of facticity. The notion of “transcendental,” for both Husserl and Kant, implies something different from transcendent. In Kant’s philosophy, both the terms “transcendent” and “transcendental” refer to entities that are non-empirical. The former concerns transfinite objects (objects outside the realm of human experience), while the latter concerns necessary and, thus, a priori conditions for the possibility of the cognition of finite objects (objects immanent to human experience). Husserl rejects this way of distinguishing between “transcendent” and “transcendental.” For Husserl, “transcendent” does not imply entities that exist outside the realm of the spatiotemporal world, but rather that, which transcends what is precisely immanently given to pure consciousness. In order to get rid of the limitations of sense experience and factual knowledge, Husserl’s methodology does not focus on the objects directly, but on the manner, in which these objects are given to pure consciousness in the first place. Husserl calls this moving back to pure consciousness “phenomenological reduction.” For Husserl, consciousness is not akin to the objects in a spatiotemporal world. Pure consciousness gives rise to a new field for the cognition of *phenomena* called the science of phenomenology:

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Consciousness possesses a distinct essence that remains unaffected by phenomenological exclusion. Hence, it remains behind as the *phenomenological residual*, as a matter of principle, is a unique region of being that can indeed be the field for a new science—namely phenomenology. (Husserl 1950, 59.)

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In the first book of *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Husserl interprets pure consciousness and its contents in close connection to Kant's conception of transcendental philosophy:

Important motives that are grounded in the issues of epistemology provide justification for us also to call the "pure" consciousness [...] transcendental consciousness and the operation by which it is achieved transcendental *epoche*. Methodologically, this operation will be broken up into different steps of "excluding," "bracketing," and so our method will take on the character of a step-by-step reduction. For that reason, we will speak primarily about phenomenological reductions (or rather look at it in a unified way as a whole about phenomenological reduction) but also from the epistemological standpoint about transcendental reductions. (Husserl 1950, 59–60.)

38 Since Descartes, the fundamental epistemological problem of modern philosophy has been the relationship between the knower and the known, that is, subject and object. In order to solve this epistemological problem, Husserl construes phenomenological reduction as a way for one to attain pure consciousness as transcendental. Husserl's phenomenological method attempts to solve the problem of transcendence by working out conditions for the possibility of knowing transcendent objects. From Brentano, Husserl learns that intentionality is the most primordial trait of consciousness and all mental life. Consciousness's intentional nature resolves the epistemological issue—the relation between the subject (knower) and the object (known). Husserl proposes the transcendental method, in order to solve the modern epistemological problem about the transcendence of the object and philosophical conditions, by virtue of which such transcendent objects can be known. The transcendental character of Husserl's thought gives rise to the idea of transcendental philosophy, which explains how one can acquire knowledge of transcendent objects. Here, "transcendent" does not signify non-natural objects existing beyond the realm of human experience as Kant holds, but rather, it refers to objects existing beyond the realm of the immanence of pure consciousness. Transcendental reduction results in the attainment of

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transcendental ego, where the direct awareness of consciousness to itself is absolutely and immanently given:

Each of us, as Cartesian mediators, has been led back by means of the method of phenomenological reduction to his or her own transcendental ego, and of course with its own specific concrete-monadic content as this factual, and as the one and only absolute ego. (Husserl 1960, 69.)

In his research manuscripts, the so-called “Seefeldler Blätter” (1905), Husserl takes a transcendental turning by employing the terms “phenomenological” and “transcendental reduction.” In these manuscripts, which appeared in his lectures *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie*, Husserl conceptualizes phenomenology, which was understood as descriptive psychology in *Logische Untersuchungen*, as a pure and a priori transcendental discipline, thereby as the way into transcendental philosophy. The discovery of transcendental reduction opens up a new way to solve the problem of modern epistemology, that is, the constitution of objectivity by subjectivity. Transcendental reduction renders consciousness not akin to an object in nature (*Bestandstück*), but as a realm of pure noetic acts. Later on, Husserl situates all noetic acts in the transcendental ego. Since consciousness is intrinsically intentional, all noetic acts in the transcendental ego are directed towards objects, which Husserl calls noema. The discovery of the transcendental reduction and the phenomenological *epoché* characterizes phenomenology as a descriptive eidetic science. For Husserl, transcendental consciousness is absolutely primary because “all meaning and being are conceived as productions or accomplishments of transcendental subjectivity” (Moran 2002, 48). Objectivity as an accomplishment of subjectivity does not merely solve the modern epistemological problem, but also turns Husserl into a transcendental philosopher. Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology expresses the essence of transcendental philosophy, because it raises the most fundamental and radical questions about its own possibility and validity. It complies with his project of philosophy as a rigorous science, which Husserl inaugurated in *Logische Untersuchungen*. True philosophy can never become true knowledge if it remains within the realm of transcendental naïveté. Thus, for Husserl, a transcendental turn, which is only attainable on the premise of transcendental and phenomenological reductions, is inevitable,

if philosophy has to become a rigorous science. From 1905 onwards, Husserl construed transcendental philosophy in terms of idealism in close affinity with German idealism, especially the one of Kant and Fichte. Husserl claims that “all objectivity has its source in phenomenological ideality” (Husserl 1984, 340). This commitment to idealism is the logical outcome of transcendental reduction and phenomenological *epoché*: “Fundamentally, there lies indicated already in advance in the phenomenological reduction, correctly understood, the route into transcendental idealism, as the whole of phenomenology is nothing other than the first, strictly scientific form of this idealism.” (Husserl 1950, 181.) For Husserl, the genuine transcendental philosophy encapsulates both the Kantian and the Cartesian projects through the articulation of a necessary correlation between subjectivity and objectivity. Indeed, Husserl construes transcendental phenomenology in relation to the evolution of modern philosophy. In *Crisis*, Husserl regards his project of phenomenology as “the final form of transcendental philosophy” (Husserl 1970, 70). He goes further in identifying his phenomenology as the very essence of genuine philosophy. In the first part of his lectures on *First Philosophy* entitled *Kritische Ideengeschichte*, Husserl develops his perspective of transcendental philosophy through close readings of Descartes, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Husserl considers Descartes not only the “epoch-making awakener of the transcendental problematic” (Moran 2002, 57), but also “a precursor of transcendental philosophy” (Moran 2002, 57). The seeds of transcendental philosophy can be found in Descartes’s methodic doubt. Through methodic doubt, he tried to uncover the realm of transcendental subjectivity, but due to certain metaphysical presumptions, he failed to reach the true essence of transcendental subjectivity and its accomplishments. Long before Kant, Descartes had already started the project of transcendental philosophy, as Husserl writes:

The word “transcendental philosophy” has become common usage since Kant and is furthermore a general title for universal philosophies whose concept is oriented on a Kantian type. I myself use the word “transcendental” in the broadest sense for the original motif that Descartes has established the sense and increasing awareness of in all of them striving to gain a pure and genuine form of the task and take a systematic form. It is the motif of questioning back to the ultimate

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source of all knowledge, of a knower's reflecting back upon himself and his cognitive life in which all of the scientific constructions that are valid for him take place in a purposeful way, are maintained as acquisitions and have become freely available. (Husserl 1970, 97–98.)

Husserl rethinks Descartes's philosophical project, thus offering a kind of neo-Cartesianism. Specifically, Husserl takes over the following five notions from Descartes's philosophy:

- 1) Radicalism: a complete reform of the discipline of philosophy.
- 2) The idea of presuppositionless knowledge.
- 3) The notion of suspending all world-positing judgments.
- 4) The determination of truth in relation to evidence.
- 5) The ideal of scientific knowledge grounded on the absolute justification that validity can only be accorded to those judgments, which are apodictically evident.

Husserl radically transforms Descartes's philosophy, in order to discover the science of transcendental phenomenology. As he puts it:

The deepest sense of the Cartesian turn of modern philosophy is, I dare to say, revealed, and the necessity of an absolutely self-enclosed eidetic science of pure consciousness, in general, is cogently demonstrated—that is, however, in relation to all correlations grounded in the essence of consciousness, to its possible really immanent moments and to its noemata and objectivities intentionally-ideally determined therein. (Husserl 1956, 234.)

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The Cartesian methodic doubt not only leads us to imagine the possible non-being of the world, but also makes visible the transcendental subjectivity along with the indubitability of the pure *cogito*. For Descartes, whatever appears as immune to doubt is necessarily certain. For Husserl, there are two levels of certainty, namely natural certainty and apodictic certainty. Descartes did not distinguish between these two levels, and thus failed to understand the real apodictic nature of the pure ego. Husserl's phenomenological method goes beyond all kinds of empirical evidence to secure apodictic certainty. Husserl's employment of the *epoché* is an improvement of the Cartesian methodic doubt. Husserl interprets Descartes's philosophical position as misleading in insisting that the "I am, I exist is true whenever it is put forward by me and conceived

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by my mind” (Descartes 1984). That is to say, one cannot immediately infer about the givenness of the pure ego from the mere certainty of the “I think.” “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes 1984), is an illegitimate move. Contrary to Descartes’s methodic doubt, Husserl’s phenomenological *epoché* renders the givenness of the transcendental ego as the only apodictic mode and, consequently, does not construe it as a thing or substance akin to real objects within the spatiotemporal world.

42 While recognizing the significance of Descartes, Husserl also recognizes the close affinity between his concept of phenomenology and Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Husserl often speaks of his philosophical approach as a radical reinvestigation of Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Husserl tries to interpret the Kantian notion of a priori independent of subjectivism and anthropologism. In his “Prolegomena” to *Logische Untersuchungen*, Husserl pursues a transcendental inquiry, in the Kantian manner, for the determination of those conditions, which make objective knowledge possible: “We are plainly concerned with a quite necessary generalization of the question as to the conditions of the possibility of truth [Bedingungen der Möglichkeit von Wahrheit].” (Husserl 1975, 239.) Husserl poses the epistemological problem: how is objectivity possible? Kant’s approach fails to answer this question, Husserl claims, because he tries to reach objectivity through subjective representations (Kant 1902, 130–131), which is a sort of representationalism and, thus, skepticism. Husserl says:

The genuine transcendental philosophy [...] is not like the Humean and neither overtly nor covertly a skeptical decomposition of the world cognition and of the world itself into fictions, that is to say, in modern terms, a “philosophy of *As-If*.” Least of all is it a “dissolution [Auflösung]” of the world into “merely subjective appearances,” which in some still meaningful sense would have something to do with illusion. It does not occur to transcendental philosophy to dispute the world of experience in the least. (Husserl 1956, 246–247.)

Moreover, Husserl argues that Kant’s conception of experience is very limited, because it is merely confined to sensuous intuition. Husserl’s conception of experience is a broad one, because it also includes categorial

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intuition. He purifies Kant's philosophical efforts by radicalizing them via his phenomenological procedures like *epoché* and phenomenological-transcendental reductions. Husserl's phenomenology brings transcendental subjectivity in an intimate relation to pure intuition. In Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, experience is always related to a subject, which in his jargon means that there is always a correlation between the noetic and the noematic in all acts of knowledge. That is to say, the possibility of knowledge of an object is necessarily immanently in correlation to a subject. This way of considering the relation between the world and subjectivity turns Husserl's phenomenology into transcendental idealism. As Roman Ingarden explicates:

The existence of what is perceived (the perceived as such) is nothing "in itself" but only something "for somebody" for the experiencing ego. "Streichen wir das reine Bewusstsein, so streichen wir die Welt" ("If we exclude pure consciousness, then we exclude the world") is the famous thesis of Husserlian transcendental idealism, which he was already constantly repeating in lectures during his Göttingen period. (Ingarden and Hannibalsson 1977, 21.)

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It means that it is impossible to think of being without its immanent correlation to transcendental subjectivity. Moreover, Husserl's transcendental idealism assigns an ontological-transcendental primacy to subjectivity. Husserl's transcendental idealism radically breaks with all forms of traditional idealism because of the confinement of the latter within the natural attitude. Husserl warns us not to confuse this form of transcendental idealism with phenomenism. Phenomenism reduces all intentional objects to mere sensations. Husserl is not relegating the reality of the world to mental contents:

It is the fundamental defect of phenomenistic theories that they draw no distinction between appearance [Erscheinung] as intentional experience and the apparent object (the subject of the objective predicates) and, therefore, identify the experienced complex of sensations with the complex of objective features. (Husserl 1950, 371.)

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For Husserl, reality is not the collection of different states of affairs that exist on their own, independent of the experiencing subject, but a systematic framework of meanings that requires subjectivity for its articulation. It is just in this sense that Husserl contends that reality is dependent on subjectivity.

44 From a metaphysical point of view, such a relationship between subjectivity and objectivity represents a specific kind of idealism that Husserl calls transcendental idealism. In *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl reduces all problems of phenomenology to problems concerning the constitution of the objects of consciousness. In the same text, he characterizes phenomenology as the transcendental theory of knowledge. For Husserl, one who is merely confined to the natural attitude cannot pose transcendental questions, and thus cannot attain the realm of pure consciousness and its achievements. The primordial problematic of traditional epistemology concerns the question of how knowledge, whose origin lies within the realm of the immanence of consciousness, becomes objective for the world that exists outside of consciousness. That is to say, transcendence has been the fundamental problem of traditional epistemology. The existence of the external world has been regarded as transcending human experience, which presumes a realist ontology regarding the existence of the world: the spatiotemporal world exists in its own right independent of our experience. From the outset, Husserl rejects this transcendent realm: “The attempt to conceive the universe of true being as something lying outside the universe of possible consciousness, possible knowledge, possible evidence, the two being merely related externally by a rigid law, is nonsensical,” (Husserl 1960, 84.) Husserl’s phenomenology does not posit an independent realm beyond our experience. For Husserl, every transcendent object is necessarily an object for a subject. Husserl regards his transcendental idealism as the solution to all epistemological problems. Furthermore, Husserl argues that, in order to get rid of the epistemological problem, we need to attain the realm of the transcendental, which can only be opened up by phenomenological *epoché* and transcendental reduction. The realm of the transcendental makes transcendental subjectivity available as the only field of experience, and whatever appears to it in the manner of its appearance is a phenomenon. Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology is a systematic attempt, not only to study a phenomenon, but also to study those

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conditions that make cognition of a phenomenon possible in the first place.

Later, Husserl regards the whole enterprise of his transcendental phenomenology as a form of transcendental idealism. In *Cartesian Meditations*, he says that “phenomenology is *eo ipso* ‘transcendental idealism,’ though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense” (Husserl 1960, 86). Moreover: “The proof of this idealism is, therefore, phenomenology itself. Only someone who misunderstands either the deepest sense of intentional method, or that of transcendental reduction, or perhaps both, can attempt to separate phenomenology from transcendental idealism.” (Husserl 1960, 86.)

The doctrine of transcendental idealism is, therefore, the final outcome of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. Husserl asserts the primacy of consciousness and conceives of our knowledge of the world in correlation to consciousness. In his *Amsterdam Lectures*, Husserl construes his phenomenology as taking a “Copernican 180 degree turn” by bracketing the existence of the pre-given world. After performing the phenomenological *epoché* and phenomenological-transcendental reductions, one is elevated from one’s natural being and the natural world. The world becomes a phenomenon to be cognized by transcendental subjectivity. Indeed, the concept of transcendental idealism asserts the correlation between transcendental subjectivity and the phenomenon as the only genuine epistemological relation. Husserl’s transcendental philosophy in general and transcendental idealism in particular renders the phenomenon as the proper object of human knowledge.

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Thus, both Kant and Husserl consider transcendental idealism as the only solution of transcendental philosophy. Moreover, for both philosophers, the phenomenon is the ultimate object of human cognition. Apart from these common interests, however, both offer different philosophical methods for the attainment of the phenomenon.

### **Concluding remarks**

The comparative exposition in this article underscores the shared belief of both philosophers that transcendental idealism is the ultimate solution for transcendental philosophy. The emphasis is on the mutual recognition of the phenomenon as the ultimate object of human cognition. However, it is crucial

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to acknowledge that despite these commonalities, Kant and Husserl present distinct philosophical methods for attaining the phenomenon.

46 Kant's transcendental philosophy is grounded in the notion of a priori knowledge, which he argues is necessary for the experience of empirical objects. He rejects the rationalist belief in non-empirical knowledge, and instead demonstrates how a priori knowledge is possible in the realm of experience. For Kant, the phenomenon is the ultimate object of human cognition, and his transcendental idealism asserts that the conditions of possibility for experience are inherent in the human mind. However, Kant's transcendental idealism is often criticized for its limitations in accounting for the relationship between the subject and the object, as well as for its inability to provide a satisfactory account of the nature of the self. Husserl's transcendental philosophy, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of understanding the conditions of possibility, or transcendental conditions, to be fulfilled for the subject to be epistemically related to an object. He employs phenomenological methods like *epoché* and phenomenological-transcendental reductions to attain pure consciousness, devoid of external influences and solely focused on the object as it appears in consciousness. Husserl's transcendental idealism is rooted in the immanent metaphysics of experience, in contrast to the speculative nature of metaphysical idealism. However, his transcendental idealism has also been criticized for its reliance on the notion of a transcendental ego, which some argue is a problematic concept that cannot be adequately justified.

Despite their differences, both Kant and Husserl share the conviction that transcendental idealism provides the ultimate solution for transcendental philosophy. Their philosophical contributions open room for critical reflection and analysis, shaping the discourse of transcendental philosophy.

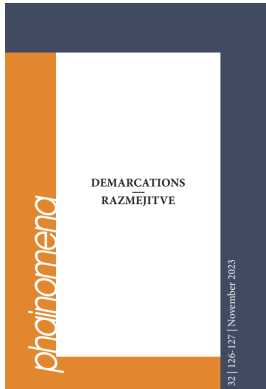
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# phainomena

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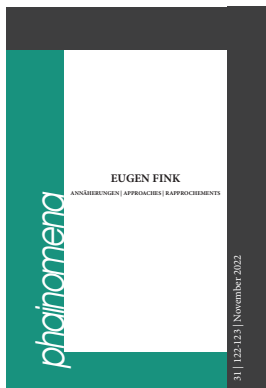
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