Phenomenology

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Phenomenology refers to both a tradition of Continental philosophy and a methodology of research that employs many principles and insights from that tradition. Most broadly construed, phenomenology attempts to provide a science of lived-through experience, and, in doing so, it seeks to reveal not only the essential or invariant characteristics of consciousness and all phenomena, but, also, to undercut the false dichotomy implied by the so-called "subject–object split." It exposes problematic assumptions embedded within notions of mind-independent reality just as it seeks to uncover how consciousness itself, including the consciousness of others, is indigenous to the lifeworld. In their diversity, range, and thick ambiguity, the processes of consciousness emerge from that very world for which they were made—a world to which they were always already destined to return (Anton, 2001).

Edmund Husserl, easily identified as the father of modern phenomenology, sought to fulfill the Cartesian quest for apodictic truth. He attempted, in voluminous detail, to describe the essential features of consciousness and to lay them bare in such a way as to make possible a rigorous eidetic science. Three early thinkers to be heavily influenced by Husserl—Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty—extended and advanced his project in such different directions and worked out such complex and famously difficult-to-read philosophical systems that phenomenology is, as a whole, exceptionally labyrinthine. These three thinkers moved Husserl's mainly transcendental phenomenology to fundamental ontology and existential philosophy, and they generated dense, intricate prose, often filled with strange-sounding neologisms. As two brief illustrations, Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962) and Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1956) nearly demand readers learn a new language. Heidegger, for example, offers a "fundamental ontology" by way of an "existential analytic of Dasein," one that reveals Dasein, that "being whose being is in question"—the being that we ourselves are—as "being-in-the-world." As Heidegger writes, "*Dasein is its disclosure* … the existential statement that 'Dasein is its disclosure' means at the same time that the being about which these beings are concerned in their being is to be their 'there'" (1997, p. 125). Sartre well illustrates his nearly impenetrable prose by defining consciousness throughout the work as "not being what it is and being what it is not." He also suggests that "being-in-itself," as if attempting to remove contingency from its being and to found itself, perpetually collapses, negates its being, and lapses into pockets of "being-for-itself" (i.e., consciousness, which is a kind of nothingness). Thus, consciousness haunts the world as a lack, a fissure in being, a room-making emptiness, a freedom condemned to responsibility. These kinds of

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abstruse statements, veritable tips of the iceberg, hopefully well illustrate some of the difficulty in summarizing phenomenology in a neat and tidy fashion.

Most generally depicted, the phenomenological tradition effectively sets aside quandaries associated with the purported separation between "reality" and "appearances." It merges "extreme objectivity" and "extreme subjectivity," and, accordingly, it removes skeptical doubt, or at least successfully sets it aside for methodological purposes. Consider, for example, how people sometimes reframe a dream upon waking up by saying, "Oh, that was not real. It was only a dream." This is said despite a sweaty forehead and a racing heart. Or consider too when people say, "Oh, that's not actual reality. It was only your experience." When people relegate experiences to the status of being "not real" and think of reality as somehow behind, beneath, or beyond any experience, they may be missing something too obvious to recognize. Phenomenology, in significant contrast, begins with concern over *whatever shows itself in its manner of showing itself*. By appreciating how any and all appearances are some kind of phenomenon in their own right, phenomenologists have shown how the distinction between reality and appearance dissolves, or, at a minimum, needs to be radically refigured. When we think of the world "as it is beyond our experience of it," we are only turning to a different kind of experience, a certain kind of thinking about things—or imagining them—rather than directly perceiving them.

In some respects, then, it makes no sense to speak of "the world" independent of our means of access to it; any world that can be postulated "as it is independent of any knowing about it" always already includes reference back to consciousness, at least as an implied horizon of intelligibility. Even if we grant our ability to make statements about a reality beyond the one directly perceived (as in historical science or in theoretical sciences of various sorts), we should understand that all experiences of reality are part of reality itself. Moreover, the wild diversity of experience reveals much that is other than direct, perceptual experience as well as intimates much that always remains beyond experience. When pushed to extremes, modes of thinking permit us to think about the limits of thought itself. So, if people imagine the Earth prior to the emergence of life, or if they think about how bodies might be impacted by future space travel, they never find anything like "mind-independent reality" (whatever that expression would mean). Instead, they simply document the different manners by which "whatever is" shows itself. People thus can make some sense of the idea that there was (is and always remains) something independent of experience, but whatever is thought about and imagined as independent of experience remains intelligible and meaningful only as part of consciousness; this is precisely how such objects are meant.

Phenomenology, therefore, should not be reduced to "empiricism" or "phenomenalism," nor, on the other hand, should it be understood as a species of "idealism" and/or "subjectivism." Edmund Husserl, despite his attempts to go beyond the idealist tradition, admittedly might have been caught within it at least a bit. But the robust traditions opened in his wake—particularly by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty—advance well outside the categories of "realism" and "idealism."

Phenomenology is a highly difficult area to summarize not only because of the unique and exceptionally challenging nature of the language of its canonical texts, but also because there have been numerous contestations and revisions within

the tradition and many more different kinds of advances inspired by it. At a bare minimum, phenomenologists study phenomena. Historically reviewed, transcendental phenomenology first expanded into forms of existential philosophy and philosophical hermeneutics, and, eventually, other salient traditions emerged, including experimental phenomenology, semiotic phenomenology, and diachronic phenomenology. In addition, several significant movements directly inspired by phenomenology stretch well beyond it, including deconstruction, heterophenomenology, communicology, object-oriented philosophy, and postphenomenology.

Methodological orientations

The main methodologies of phenomenology include careful and detailed description, various forms of "bracketing" or "reductions" or "*epoche*," techniques of "free variation," analyses of part-to-whole and whole-to-part relations, intuiting of essences, and various types of existential and hermeneutic analyses.

Regarding phenomenology as a methodology, one oversimplification to be countered at the outset is the depiction of phenomenology as a kind of ethnographic thick description or as a form of auto-ethnographic writing. From this vantage, a view sometimes exported into the social sciences, phenomenology seems reducible to careful and systematic description, one that attempts to document—in a largely theory-free way—someone's first-person, lived-through experiences. Admittedly, phenomenology often moves out from first-person descriptions, but the goal is not so much to encapsulate subjective experiences as it is to lay bare the *essential* structures of consciousness and/or the *essential* characteristics of those experiences. In some cases, phenomenological investigations reveal experiences that are private or not shared ("qualia," toothaches, tastes, experiences of the color "red," etc.). Moreover, there is never an experience wholly in the abstract, "somehow, somewhere 'out there,'" but rather we always everywhere find *someone's* experience of *something*, and so it is easy to see how phenomenology might be misconstrued as a kind of methodological tool for exploring subjective states or an individual's psychology. But, perhaps obviously, not all objects of consciousness are private or subjective. In fact, some of the most stable and "objective" objects of consciousness are not directly perceivable. For example, people can intuit mathematical essences such as geometric shapes and numbers.

An important methodological component of phenomenology is known by various expressions, including "bracketing," or kinds of "reductions," or forms of "*epoche*." By bracketing, phenomenologists attempt to remove and suspend assumptions, prejudices, or other theoretical impositions that could occlude a phenomenon from showing itself as it is. This is partly why phenomenology is sometimes called the "philosophy of the perpetual beginner." The task is to learn to approach all phenomena with the orientation of a radical apprentice, to encounter without the overlay of guiding suppositions and/or closeted beliefs.

Phenomenologists refrain from theoretical imposition and try to present meticulous descriptions of well-selected phenomena, but these are not the ultimate objectives of phenomenology. The main ambition, as already mentioned, is to reveal *essential*

structures or *invariant* aspects that can be disclosed by careful description and the use of free variation. Phenomenological methods are therefore employed when scholars carefully describe the manner in which a given phenomenon shows itself and, all along, they attempt to intuit its essence and render the essence explicit. One of Husserl's best-known examples concerns the visual perception of a cube. When holding the cube and rotating it before our eyes, we can see only three sides of it at any given time. If it is small enough, someone might be able to touch all sides at once, but no matter how it is rotated or how someone moves to view it, only three are visible at once. Such free variation, as a basic methodological technique in phenomenology, looks for invariance across adumbrated profiles and attempts to demonstrate, or "prove," the essential parts of a phenomenon in question. Such "proving of essences" often demands more than perceptual variation; it requires "imaginative free variation." Robert Sokolowski, summarizing both Husserl's orientation on "how to intuit an essence" and some of the methodological practices central to phenomenology, suggests that we not only can recognize the invariant moments across profiles that make up the content of an essence, but we can also appreciate how the removal of a certain moment of a variation destroys the invariant. He writes,

> As long as the removal leaves our imagined object intact as still a variant of our paradigm and still an instance of the eidos we are concerned with, we know we have not displaced anything essential. But if removal of a certain part destroys the imagined object as an instance of such a kind—or destroys it entirely as a being—we realize we have tried to separate something inseparable, a moment of the essence. If we try to imagine a material thing without causality or extension, we no longer have a material thing … If we try to imagine a nontemporal melody the same would be true; temporality is of the essence of music … If our variation stayed within perception it would reach only an empirical generality and not eidetic necessity. (1974, p. 81)

By moving attention from the invariant aspects of the perceived object to what shows itself as invariant when the object is imagined, phenomenologists register something more than consistent perceptual patterns or aspects. They attempt to methodologically disclose the essential features of select phenomena.

Phenomenological writing often proceeds on a case-by-case basis, sometimes advancing descriptions by carefully walking through one or two well-selected exemplars. Once a phenomenon's invariant structure has been revealed, additional cases are needed only for further clarification or as means of differentiating similar but different phenomena. Hence, by carefully choosing exemplar items from different classes and then engaging in different modes of free variation while searching for invariance across the different profiles, phenomenologists attempt to isolate, delineate, and explore the essential features of the phenomena under investigation.

Existential and hermeneutic analyses also have been incorporated into careful description of essences. Here scholars shift to much larger phenomena of concern such as finitude, embodiment, sexuality, the senses, textuality, anxiety, alienation, and death, to name only a few. During such analyses, the methodological tasks are primarily to capture essences through careful descriptions of "part-to-whole" and "whole-to-part" relations. This methodology also commonly focuses on the difference between component "pieces" of a phenomenon, which can be isolated without changing the nature of

the phenomenon in question, and the existential "moments" of a phenomenon, which cannot be separated without hermeneutic violence and/or destroying the essence of the phenomenon. These latter methodologies can be seen throughout Heidegger's *Being and Time*, where he walks through an existential analytic of Dasein and reveals the constituent moments of that being who is being-in-the-world.

Key concepts

Arguably, the most fundamental idea within phenomenology concerns the intentionality of consciousness, and it is aptly summarized by the expression, "All consciousness is consciousness of something." As part of the early motivation for Husserl's dictum "Back to the things themselves!" the notion of intentionality entails the following: To perceive is to perceive something. To feel is to feel something. To imagine is to imagine something. To think is to think about something. To judge is to make a judgment about something. To speak is to speak about something.

Across all these cases, what appear consistently are two ends of an intentional relation, an *intentio* and an *intentum*, or, stated otherwise, a conscious act (i.e., a meaning-bearing act) as well as an object of consciousness (i.e., an object as meant). But intentional acts, and this must be underscored, need not be "filled" to be operative; some operate though they remain "empty." Different phenomena have their own style of coming to presence and/or of being meant emptily, and accordingly, each can call for its own phenomenological analysis of the moments involved. Here are a few illustrative and comparative cases: (1) clearly, vividly, and in good detail remembering an event that happened last weekend (filled) versus unsuccessfully trying to recall where you left your car keys (empty); (2) vaguely thinking about some upcoming dinner, holding it in mind very generally (empty) versus seeing, smelling, and tasting the meal anticipated (filled); (3) talking about some possible moves within a sporting event (empty) versus actually attempting to execute those activities during the sporting event (filled). Not only are different kinds of intentional acts variously filled with—or empty of—their meant object, but, moreover, attention routinely passes over intentional acts and does not necessarily focus on intended objects in an explicit way.

Accordingly, a second set of key concepts addresses the extent to which intentional activities and/or their objects receive explicit and thematic focused attention. In everyday life, we normally attend to various objects of consciousness rather than to their constitutive processes. In such cases, we attend to the objects in a mostly nonthematic manner. For example, when looking out upon some athletes competing on a playing field, one might never once attend to the fact that one's eyes are seeing or the fact that one's ears are hearing, or to the ways one's body is positioned or how animated it is. On the contrary, one's body mostly recedes from awareness as it gives way to the situation; it effaces itself for the disclosure of certain selected items of conscious attention. Conscious attention bobbles around between things seen, heard, felt, and thought about, and it does so in a somewhat vague and inexplicit way. Regarding the various items or aspects of the athletic competition that have been selectively attended to, we need to be very precise in describing their manner of showing themselves. This

description includes the degree to which they explicitly appear or not, the extent to which they themselves are wholly within the realm of perception, and/or whether they become taken up by imaginative and symbolic intentionalities that are, in their own manner, a form of consciousness. Lived-though experience moves out from and always retains an underbelly of prereflective operations. But the lived-body also holds ever-present resources for distanciation, reflection, and critical judgment (see Schrag, 1986).

Phenomenologists have revealed, broadly, two main modes of prereflective (or prethetic) intentionality. The first is captured nicely by the term "focal disappearance," which addresses the transparency implicated in the operative modes of any intentional process. The second, termed "background disappearance," refers to all of those items that remain crowded out of awareness by those other items that do happen to occupy current attention (see Leder, 1990). Hence, within any intentional act, the *intentio* (meaning-bearing activity) remains mostly tacit and/or is transcended while making room for the *intentum* (object of consciousness, object as meant), which, in contrast, predominantly occupies attention. The background, too, is also chiefly transparent, unless or until parts of it are selected out and reflected upon.

Whereas prereflective (prethetic) forms of intentionality operate in a mainly holistic and spontaneous manner, modes of reflection naturally separate and divide experience into explicit and isolatable units. In phenomenology, at least four different and recurrent reflective (or thetic) modes of intentionality can be distinguished. The first occurs during moments of "breakdown," such as sickness, pain, mechanical or technical failure, when a tool breaks, or when words are mispronounced or misspelled. In such cases, what had been under "focal" and/or "background disappearance" suddenly undergoes a "dys-appearance" (see Leder, 1990). During such moments of breakdown, people experience increasing degrees of explicitness and fragmentation. The flow of time can constrict quite suddenly and/or get pulverized into isolated bits; experience becomes thrown back upon itself and is increasingly subject to forms of thematic, analytic reflection. When practices bog down or tools fail to operate, our "mindless everyday coping" (Dreyfus, 1991) gets transformed from its largely holistic character into an increasingly explicit and reflective one. A second mode of reflection occurs when the body—a multimodal network of sensory, affective, imaginative, and symbolic intentionalities—uses one mode of intentionality to inspect and analyze the operations or objects of another mode. Upon encountering something novel, people can rub their eyes, can listen to something that they tap, can use one hand to touch another, can talk about something that they saw or felt, can make plans and/or drawings to help build something, and so forth. A third mode of reflection happens during aesthetic experiences where particular intentional activities and/or operations are not so much focally absent as dually attended to along with the *intentum*. Hence, some forms of consciousness polythetically align to the aesthetic contours within an *intentio* that slightly or subtly bear into the *intentum*, laminating it with a particular artistic light (see Anton, 2001). Performing arts and poetry exemplify this mode of reflection, but it appears in other contexts as well, such as anytime someone appreciates the phraseology of an expressed idea. A fourth mode of reflection, the most narrow and specific, occurs within the realm of predicative discourse. During moments of denotative utterance, people subtly enact a discernment

between the content stated in a proposition and what that proposition is about; both the statement itself and the talked-about state of affairs become reflected-upon objects rather than remaining mindlessly lived-through horizons of meaning.

Main themes

Some important themes that have emerged within phenomenology include the meaning of being; temporality and its relation to finitude; the nature of embodiment; the distinctive spatiotemporal bearings of the senses; essential links between and among perception, affect, imagination, thought, and language; existential relations between self, other, and community; and the key dynamics between agency, anxiety, and responsibility, to name only a few. Discussed here are four themes: being and ontology, the phenomenological account of temporality, the meaning of embodiment, and some of the critical differences between the senses.

The works of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty effectively displaced the "problem" of the subject–object dichotomy. Instead of asking something like "How can people 'get out of' their subjectivity and apprehend the order of the world?" or "How does the world's order 'get into' a person's mind?" these phenomenologists asked how it was originally possible for body and world to appear as separate. If one's body is thickly of the world, through and through continuous with it, then the problem to be addressed is: How are distances, spatial or temporal, possible at all? From where comes the gap, the space, the room, for the world to be "over-there" while the body is "over-here," for the present to not be the past or the future? For Husserl, all phenomena can be traced back to various intentional activities and these activities are tied back, ultimately, to a "transcendental ego." For Heidegger, phenomena reveal themselves in accordance with the ways that temporality temporalizes itself. Only in the stretched clearing of a thrown-and-projected finitude could the hermeneutic field of "subjects" and "objects" show themselves. Discursive utterances, including predicative statements, are possibilities grown to fruition only in and through temporality. For Sartre, intentionality reveals itself not as tied back to a transcendental ego, but rather as the perpetually failing attempts of "being-in-itself" to found itself and/or to remove contingency from its being. Intentionality is thus intentional through and through, meaning that it is nothing but a room-making clearing for what it is not. Moreover, by offering a tri-part ontology of "being-in-itself," "being-for-itself," and "being-for-others," Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* manages to disclose how part of one's being flees from oneself, meaning that aspects of oneself, of one's face and voice, come into being only through others. For Merleau-Ponty, world and body fundamentally intertwine, existing as a peculiar kind of "flesh." He writes:

> What there is then is not things first identical with themselves, which would offer themselves to the seer, nor is there a seer who is first empty and who, afterward, would open himself to them—but something to which we could not be closer than by palpating it with our look, things we could not dream of seeing "all naked" because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh. (1968, p. 131)

Together, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty have advanced Husserl's phenomenology well beyond the eidetic realm and have moved phenomenology from concern with a transcendental ego into concern over historicity, fundamental ontology, and existential philosophy.

Another main theme within phenomenological inquiry addresses the meaning of temporality and how it differs from popular notions of "time." Within prereflective experience, temporality unfolds holistically, mainly as an unbroken unity. It is not, as it appears in reflection, a linear succession of "nows," whereby one moment is replaced by the next in an ongoing series. On the contrary, consciousness, as lived-through temporality, is fundamentally characterized by "longitudinal intentionalities," meaning that "retentions" and "protentions" naturally carry experience beyond any isolated or atomic fragment of "now" (see Husserl, 1964). Lived-temporality is an integrated "stretching-itself-along," a retaining that awaits its own completion. Even a phenomenon such as "understanding" reveals more than a mental representation of an existing state of affairs. It requires a particular kind of temporal underbelly: the capacity to "project possibilities." The best-known exemplar, perhaps, is Heidegger's case of the broken hammer. Within a workshop, when looking down and seeing a hairline crack, anticipating the unserviceability of the tool to the task, a worker might use the expression, "The hammer is broken." Here, the word "is" does not function by predicating a substance, as in traditional logic where one understands something by identifying the substance and then specifying its properties. "Brokenness" is not a property of the hammer but even less is it a mental representation of a property. It refers to the unserviceability of the hammer, to its inability to be "prereflectively or mindlessly incorporated" into everyday dealings, and such unserviceability discloses itself only because understanding has, essentially, the temporal dimension of projecting possibilities.

Embodiment is another main theme of phenomenology. One of the reasons it receives so much attention is because the body— as it is lived or as flesh—is so different than the body as an object or the body as a cadaver. As it is lived, the body is a multisensory conscious network of intentional fibers. For the most part, it is not something directly experienced so much as it is part of the very capacity for experience. Rather than being one more item simply "contained within" the world, it is that peculiar place and moment of the world that, as a decussation, opens the world to itself. The body, by integrating the various contributions of the different senses, opens up space and time in its own way. It is not that there is a single meaningful domain called "space," as if it were a purely visible geometric space within which a body is suspended and which that body merely represents. On the contrary, a living body is continuous with space, thickly "of" it, not merely "in" it. Without the room-making capacities of the body, countless profiles of the world (including various distances) would remain unable to show themselves. The lived-body is the original and perennial site of worlding; the world worlds through the lived-body's self-effacing nature.

Finally, each sensory organ, as a kind of consciousness, opens its own field of space and time. The time and space of the hand, eye, and ear are significantly different, even if the lived-body prereflectively coordinates and integrates their varied contributions. Consider briefly some of the essential differences between the auditory realm and the visual one. Vision opens to simultaneous colored surfaces and their relations,

and it routinely allows for a wandering gaze to return to objects present in that field. Entities seen with the eyes are always seen from a certain point of view, and we almost always have some kind of disclosure of the intervening distance between what is seen and the eyes. The auditory world, in significant contrast, is eventful through and through. There are no colors or visible surfaces to sounds. Moreover, sounds separate from their sources, which also means that they commonly cover over the intervening distances between sources and listeners. This can make the source of a given sound difficult to locate but also implies that sounds are always intimately near, never "over there" like things seen. As sounds are symptoms of activity or movement, the auditory realm unmistakably conveys dynamic evanescence, and, moreover, hearing, especially hearing speech sounds, grants access to interiorities in ways that looking at surfaces simply cannot match (Ong, 1967).

Exemplars in communication

Modes of both prereflective and reflective intentionality play out in significant ways within everyday life and the world of communication. Consequently, phenomenology offers much to communication theory and research. Signs, images, and other human expressive creations become incorporated into the lived-body's intentional capacities; they are not, for the most part, something separate and something of which we are conscious. On the contrary, they are *extensions* of the lived-body, and we predominantly attend to what they make manifest (McLuhan, 2003). Once incorporated into the lived-body, media forms and communication technologies are not simply pieces added to a person. They are moments that refigure and reconstitute the whole. The materiality of signs and of media technologies becomes part of various *intentio*s rather than just one more *intentum*.

A basic example is how speech sounds prereflectively self-efface, and, in their place, meaning manifests itself. Native speakers do not routinely hear both "the sounds" and then "the meaning," but rather the sounds are so situated within horizons of meaning that native speakers basically cannot hear their speech sounds as mere sounds (i.e., as not already drenched in meaning). Were it not for encountering foreign words or the experience of unknown tongues, people might hardly notice the "noisiness" to their own speech. Even after exposure to foreign tongues, it remains nearly impossible to hear one's native tongue as one hears a foreign tongue. The actual, momentary, once-occurring, particular events of sound-making give way to abstract and repeatable meaningful objects: discrete and identifiable words. For the most part, then, we attend "past and beyond" the sounds and concern ourselves not exactly with the words themselves, but rather with what the words are about; only in modes of reflection can we attempt to tease apart a word, its sounds, and its meanings. This also suggests that the basic units of spoken language (i.e., phonemes) are themselves meaningless oppositions or *moments* within the whole of speech. They are not merely *pieces* of language, even though literate people now can reflect upon them as visible, self-standing objects.

But words, spoken and even written, are not, for the most part, objects of which we are directly conscious. Nor are they ever merely pieces within a representational

system. On the contrary, they are moments of the world of meaning and of the modern world of thought. And words carry out their fuller and most potent capacities in the life of thought by operating, largely and to various degrees, as "empty intentions." This means that words commonly enable reference or allusion to objects whose nature or characteristics remain uncertain or indeterminate. Someone can ask a question such as "What item in your house is the most expensive item you have?" The sheer generality of the word "item," coupled with an interrogatory mode, allows its referent to remain unspecified yet still be fully intelligible. Most words, as highly abstract and categorical, routinely function in this way, but we find this capacity carried out potently in metalinguistic words. For example, someone can "*say*" they will "*tell*" you about what someone else "*said*" and yet all along leave what is to be "*talked about*" as of yet "*unmentioned*."

Perhaps obviously, reading and writing play a critical role in learning how to take a reflective attitude toward one's own speech. But literacy, integrated into the lived-body's intentional capacities, refers essentially to an ongoing condition rather than to isolatable acts of reading and writing. It is more than perceptual; the condition of literacy somewhat "sentences" people to imagining spoken utterances—and to think abstractly about them—as if they were comprised of visible objects. Moreover, reading is not an entirely or exclusively reflective process, and it consists of more than attending solely "to" the words on the page. Consider the experiential differences between being "lost" in a well-written novel and proofreading one's own writing. While lost in the novel, the words and phrases themselves remain focally absent. We look through and beyond them. Learning to read, as Alphonso Lingis (1994) would say, is largely learning how "to vaporize the material substrate." Words can *be* words only by being self-negating modes of transcendence. Attention is directed not "to" the words per se but to the ideas, concepts, and overall situations they disclose. On the other hand, as we proofread a text, we must try to limit the focus of attention to the individual written words, one by one; we mainly attempt to balance the reflective act of looking "*to*" them and prereflective modes of attending "*from*" them. Yet, to the extent that people can, and commonly do, overlook typos despite their best efforts to catch them, we find considerable evidence for the prereflective tendency of self-effacing incorporation within intentional capacities.

When we watch someone do an impersonation, whether it be a comedian portraying a well-known politician, an actor performing a fictional character on stage, or simply a friend comically lampooning a general type of person, the publicly available perceptual material is taken up as part of the *intentio* by which the *intentum*, the impersonated, can be meant (see Sartre, 1991). The expressive material does not limit itself to itself. It becomes a flight beyond itself by offering up an imitation of "someone else." Spectators who witness the impersonation can experience much more than the impersonator's costumes, gestures, voice, and words. They can envision that otherwise absent other, however vague or familiar. From the performer's perspective, it is nearly impossible to imitate another's voice without also imitating the other's expressive gestures and comportments, real or imagined. Hence, when performers attempt to mimic someone and offer a good impression of that person, even if it is only the voice they are trying to imitate, they basically need to comport their body as the other does. They need to mimetically enact the other's embodied style of expression.

As a final example, consider how photographs, drawings, and various kinds of technologies are not merely objects of consciousness. They are consciousness, and as such, they bear their own modes of intentionality. When people look at a magazine photograph of a celebrity, for example, their gaze terminates not in the photograph per se but in the celebrity. The celebrity is meant by way of the photograph, and in this way a photograph is more than merely an object perceived in the immediate environment; it is part of the way that items of the larger world show themselves. Photographs, like all media, are modes of consciousness; they are self-effacing sources of transcendence, one of the ways by which "what is" can be revealed.

SEE ALSO: Alterity; Constructivism; Dialogue Theory; Ethnomethodology; Experience; Heidegger, Martin; Hermeneutics; Incommunicability; Literacy; McLuhan, Marshall; Meaning; Media Ecology; Medium; Memory; Merleau-Ponty, Maurice; Objectivity and Subjectivity; Ontology; Orality; Performance; Performativity; Philosophy; Pragmatism; Schütz, Alfred; Semiotics; Social Construction of Reality

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