

POSTULATE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR SCIENCE AND OUR WORLDVIEW

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Abstract

This work offers an interpretation of phenomenological ontology by formulating its fundamental propositions in order to explain their significance for science and our personal worldview. In the paper, phenomenology is understood as the proper method of ontology or the “science of being” as the most general philosophical discipline. This embodies the idea of a “first philosophy” that is free from all prejudice and that rejects or criticizes metaphysics, the subject-object dualism, empiricism, rationalism, realism, idealism, materialism, skepticism and relativism. The paper dismisses ontological objectivism as a methodological fallacy and seeks to reach a clear understanding of science, as well as of ourselves and our relation to the world. As such, it represents an introductory part of the methodology of scientific work, as well as an alternative perspective on the issues of existentialism, religion and spiritualism.

KEYWORDS: consciousness, existence, phenomenological ontology, science, worldview

Introduction

This work offers an interpretation of phenomenological ontology by way of formulating its fundamental propositions with the goal of analyzing and explaining their significance for science and our personal worldview. Ontology or the “science of being” is the most general and fundamental philosophical discipline. It has this status because it describes “being” as the most general phenomenon of scientific consideration. The word “being” in this context is a noun, often spelled with a capital “B”. It is foremost used to denote that which exists, and which is therefore the subject of scientific consideration.

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In order to properly understand other sciences and science in general, ontology and its subject must be clarified.

Ontology is usually treated as a part of philosophy. However, such a perspective arises only in the context of the social division of labor within the field of science and education, in this case, in the context of academic philosophy. In this paper, the proper understanding of philosophy implies that philosophy is understood as the most general science and the unity of all sciences. On the other hand, ontology as the fundamental philosophical discipline is not an individual discipline or science among other disciplines or sciences, but the general aspect of philosophy or science. Other philosophical disciplines and sciences are always based on a certain ontology or ontological understanding of their subject.

Being has been the subject of philosophy since its beginnings. In the western philosophical tradition, ontology first appears in the 6th century BC and, understandably, in its beginnings, has the rudimentary form of cosmogony, or the theory about the world, or nature, and its creation. These realistic and materialistic attempts of interpreting being were subsequently developed by certain philosophers, while being criticized by other philosophers who developed various idealistic and formalistic ontologies or expressed a skeptical or relativistic attitude towards being. However, these historical interpretations exceed the scope of this work.

The paper will focus on presenting phenomenology as a modern philosophical movement initiated by Edmund Husserl, and on the basis of a specific interpretation of phenomenology, it will conceive a proper method for considering being. Therefore, it will interpret being from the phenomenological aspect, which will result in a phenomenological ontology, which is similar to how Martin Heidegger envisioned the relationship between phenomenology and ontology. In this interpretation, phenomenology is a method of ontology. This work, however, offers a specific interpretation of the syntagms “phenomenological method” and “phenomenological ontology”, that differs from previous concepts and interpretations, and it does not blindly accept nor advocate any previous phenomenological or some other philosophical tradition. Rather, the paper seeks to present an original understanding of ontology and phenomenology as its method, since the philosophical approaches that are most similar to the approach used in this work belong to the phenomenological tradition.

Phenomenology expresses the idea of a “first philosophy” which is free from all prejudice and which rejects or criticizes metaphysics, the subject-object dualism, empiricism, rationalism, realism, idealism, materialism, skepticism and relativism. Husserl’s idea of a “first philosophy” implies a position without presumptions; it is not built upon any philosophical tradition, nor is it based on an uncritical acceptance of any previous philosophi-

cal position. Even though he recognizes precursors of phenomenology in Plato and other philosophers of antiquity, as well as a modern precursor in Descartes and later philosophers, Husserl does not see an adequate beginning of phenomenology in previous philosophies, nor does he believe that he has, in his own works, presented a definitive form of phenomenology. Nevertheless, he believes that phenomenology has the task of exposing such a philosophical beginning and for this reason, it has to be conceived as a “first philosophy”. Such a philosophy would then be a rigorous science which precedes all other philosophical disciplines and particular sciences, and which has the goal of properly founding all of our cognitions. Husserl was convinced that his concept of transcendental phenomenology was precisely what was needed in order to reach the true and genuine “first philosophy”, the goal of which would be to encompass the entire theory of rational life including the phenomena of cognitive, evaluative and practical reason (see: Husserl 2019, 3–7).

Having this in mind, when it comes to the present interpretation of phenomenology, a proper postulate of phenomenological ontology will be significant for understanding the form and subject of all sciences, as well as for understanding ourselves, our lives and our relation to the world. As we are dealing with the highest level of generality, such a task cannot be achieved by discussions between particular viewpoints, but rather, only by a postulate or an axiomatic deduction of ontology, starting from the most general propositions. Elementary propositions which are believed to be indubitably true are called “axioms” or “postulates”. The truth of such propositions cannot be proven using other propositions. They are simply accepted as true and indubitable, and as such, they make up the elementary propositions of a deductive science. In order to define postulates or axioms, we must first have a proper understanding of being or consciousness as the most general phenomenon of scientific consideration, and on the basis of such an understanding, we must define these postulates or axioms, which have the function of being the most general descriptions of being or consciousness.

The phenomenological ontology conceived in this work deals with being or the content of one’s own consciousness. Such a redirection of attention towards our own consciousness enables phenomenology to show that perfect “objectivity” in science is impossible, since what we call “objective” is just a part of our own conscious experience or a model based on this experience. As all experience appears in the form of phenomena of our consciousness, science must assume the phenomenological position as its starting point. This means that science, which begins with a representation of an objective world in which our consciousness is just an extension of our physical organism or just an object among other objects in the world, does not truthfully describe what foremost appears in our conscious experience.

We must therefore abandon the objectivist method of considering our experience, which falsely leads us into general beliefs and judgements on being that can be called “ontological objectivism”.

Contrary to the objectivist approach, by emphasizing our original and authentic conscious life, phenomenology has determined the study of consciousness as its beginning point, which therefore invalidates ontological objectivism, exposing it as an illusion or a methodological fallacy. Furthermore, the objectivist misstep in considering our experience has led to a multitude of methodological and worldview problems which arose from the forgetting of the original subjectivity and the blind focus on empirical research of objects. Even after so many objections to ontological objectivism, this approach persists within the academic community, influencing the opinions of intellectuals and the general public in various ways. On the other hand, even though in science there exists no indubitable objective standpoint, this does not prevent communication, understanding and cooperation between scientists, nor does it prevent the development of a science which we tend to call “objective science”. This also implies that the present postulate of phenomenological ontology will have to be interpreted and verified by each individual reader, who will be comparing it to his or her own experience, and there is no way around this methodological problem.

The postulate of phenomenological ontology presented in this work will clarify philosophy as the most general science, ontology as its most general discipline, the phenomenological method as its methodical procedure, the relationship between language and science, the form and the subject of particular sciences and science in general, the form of transcendences such as the “objective world” as well as the individual worldview implications of phenomenological ontology.

The short version of the following postulate of phenomenological ontology is present in the work *Svijest, osjećaji i ponašanje (Consciousness, Feelings and Behavior)* (Kosatica 2020), in which such an approach is utilized with the goal of properly formulating a theory on feelings and behavior. This paper approaches the subject from a broader perspective, also including aspects of philosophy of language and the history of phenomenology and ontology. Parallels of such an approach can be traced within Berkeley’s (1999) subjective idealism, Hume’s (1888) phenomenalist empiricism, Kant’s (1998) transcendental aesthetics, Mill’s (1979) classical phenomenism, Mach’s (1914) phenomenism, which was significantly influenced by Avenarius, the logical positivism of authors such as Russell (2010), Wittgenstein (1974), Schlick (1974), and Carnap (1969), as well as in other similar approaches to philosophical matters. Relying on such a perspective, this work also presents an analysis of the implications of the postulate of phenomenological ontology for science and our worldview. It is, therefore, valuable for having

the function of an introductory part of the methodology of scientific work as well as having the function of presenting an alternative perspective on issues of existentialism, religion and spiritualism.

1. *Postulate of Phenomenological Ontology*

In order to postulate phenomenological ontology, we first need to understand the relationship between the subject and the language of science. A detailed analysis of such an understanding, however, exceeds the scope of this work. It is sufficient to say that the function of signs can be called “designation”, “description”, “denotation”, “symbolization”, “expression”, “showing”, “communicating”, etc. For the purposes of this work, it is presupposed that description is the original function of each kind of language (ordinary, scientific, logical, mathematical, etc.). Therefore, it is presupposed that the form and function of scientific language were derived from ordinary language, and this also includes the peculiar logical and mathematical language.

The postulate of phenomenological ontology requires perfect clarity in description, and here we can refer to the idea of a perfectly clear and precise language as an inspiration for achieving the basic goal of phenomenological ontology. A perfect language is based on using clear and precise signs. According to the criterion of the perfect language, a sign is considered “precise” if a simple sign leads the interpreter of that sign to a simple phenomenon of consciousness, and it is considered „imprecise“ if a simple sign leads the interpreter to a complex phenomenon of consciousness, which creates the need for new signs, each of which would describe a single simple phenomenon of consciousness.

With such an interpretation of the function of language, we can present the idea of phenomenology conceived by Edmund Husserl who is the originator of phenomenology as a modern philosophical movement. As the goal of this paper is to present a specific interpretation of phenomenology and ontology in the form of a correct postulate of phenomenological ontology, it would be useful to first present a brief history of the idea of phenomenology and then, a clarification of the phenomenological method and phenomenological ontology.

In this paper, the traditional meanings of the terms such as phenomenon, being, consciousness, science, etc., will be changed and will deviate to a certain degree from the meanings they had in different philosophical and other contexts. The term “phenomenology” was derived from two Greek words — “φαινόμενον“, which means appearance, and “λόγος“, which means science. In its primary and broadest sense, phenomenology is the science of phenomena, and as phenomena appear in consciousness, it is the science of consciousness. It is a purely descriptive science of conscious phenomena

treated as true and absolute being. Since what we call the “empirical world”, “empirical reality”, or “empirical being” also appears as a part of our consciousness, or appears as a transcendent correlate in relation to our conscious experience, empirical sciences can be treated as parts of phenomenology. In the subsequent analysis, this paper will show that the word “phenomenon”, or “appearance”, has a very specific meaning within phenomenology and should not be understood in the context of its ordinary meaning. For now, it is sufficient to say that in phenomenology, the immanent phenomena of consciousness are treated as the true and absolute being, while the meaning of phenomenology is expressed in Husserl’s famous statement, “We must go back to the ‘things themselves.’” (Husserl 2001a, 168)

Phenomenology is not just a philosophical movement, but also the name for a method used by various representatives of phenomenology. However, there are major differences between members of the phenomenological movement when it comes to interpreting the phenomenological method, and it is often said that each phenomenologist had his own opinion on what “phenomenology” truly is. Merleau-Ponty (1962, vii) thought that even half a century after Husserl’s first works, it was still unclear what phenomenology is. Also, phenomenology was not something new that emerged with Husserl. In his work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl himself notices that precursors of the method of phenomenology were present long ago in the philosophy of sophists who advocated skepticism, as well as in many subsequent philosophies all the way to the 20th century (Husserl 1970). Merleau-Ponty states that, even though Husserl was the first to explicitly draw attention to it, the phenomenological method as a manner or style of thinking was already present in earlier thinkers such as Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud (Merleau-Ponty 1962, viii).

Husserl envisioned phenomenology as a philosophical method whose goal is to overcome the objectivistic and naturalistic attitude that characterizes modern science. This attitude understands the human being as a natural being, existing in the world, and being causally connected to it. Even its thinking is considered to be a result of the natural development of the world. Husserl considered this common-sense belief to be naive, mistaken and based on prejudice, since it always rests upon certain presuppositions which are taken for granted, hiding their true problematic nature. In his view, this creates a multitude of methodological and worldview problems which are reinforced by the existing philosophical tradition and objective science, leading to confusion and alienation, both in the world of science and our everyday life.

In order to overcome this view, Husserl conceived the phenomenological attitude, which we take up by implementing the phenomenological

method. He also called this attitude the “phenomenological reduction”, and in his works, Husserl spoke of different kinds and different levels of “reduction” which lead us towards pure phenomenology. His first mention of this methodical procedure is in his work *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 2001a; 2001b), in which he criticized psychologism in the field of logic, trying to conceive a proper method for dealing with the problems of logic. This methodical procedure is present in all of his later works, in which he provides additional clarification of his basic philosophical position. Husserl considered phenomenology to be the “first philosophy”, which starts from the most general — analyzing and describing consciousness within the phenomenological attitude. For this reason, in every subsequent work, he started from the beginning, seeking to elucidate the most fundamental aspects of his philosophical position, and he always considered himself to be a beginner. The following interpretation of his concept of the phenomenological method is mostly based on his work *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Husserl 1983). However, we must note that Husserl later further developed his views and that in a more advanced and detailed study of his approach at least his *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl, 1960) and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Husserl, 1970) would have to be taken into account.

In Husserl’s (1983) view, the method of phenomenology is a procedure through which the whole objective world, understood from the objectivistic or naturalistic point of view which he calls the “natural attitude”, has to be “suspended”, “inhibited”, “put out of action”, “bracketed” or “not taken into account”. This implies effecting the phenomenological reduction in which the world is understood from the “phenomenological attitude”, which means that it is only a correlate of intentional acts of consciousness. Assuming this attitude, we deal only with the phenomena of consciousness, and we treat the “objective world” as something that is transcendent in relation to our consciousness. Therefore, the phenomenological attitude implies that we take into consideration the pure phenomena which make up our consciousness, and that we differentiate and describe them, without any kind of *positing* of the “objective world”. However, Husserl emphasizes that at first, such an attitude which considers the foundations of one’s own conscious life, might seem to be unnatural to those who are used to observing the world from an objectivistic or naturalistic point of view.

In order to implement the phenomenological method, a certain skepticism is needed, similar to Descartes’ (2008) universal skepticism. For Husserl (1983), this implies a universal suspension of all judgments on the objective, natural or physical world, including all axiological, aesthetic, technical, practical and cultural objects, as well as of judgments about other people and ourselves understood as a biological organism and a psychologi-

cal “soul”, “ego” or “person”, which is treated as a part of this biological organism. It also implies a suspension of all judgments about society, customs, laws, religion, the state, etc., including judgments about all natural and social sciences based on the natural attitude. In phenomenology, unlike the immanent phenomena of consciousness, the “objective” or “natural” world is not something that is indubitable, but something that is merely *presupposed*, and as such, it is treated as a transcendence. In his work “The Idea of Phenomenology”, Husserl clarified the subject area of phenomenology in the following sentence:

“We speak then of just those things that are absolutely given; if they happen also to refer intentionally to objective reality, then that referring is a characteristic that resides in them, while nothing is thereby assumed concerning the *existence or non-existence of reality*.” (Husserl 1999, 34).

For Husserl (1983), the suspension of judgment characteristic of the phenomenological method should not be considered as a sort of sophistry, nor as something that negates the world or leads to absolute skepticism concerning its existence. It is rather a methodical suspension of judgments about the world, which means that all propositions about this world expressed by the objective or natural sciences are suspended. What remains when taking up the phenomenological attitude is “pure consciousness” or “pure mental processes”, which Husserl treats as absolute being. On the other hand, what we call the “objective world”, which transcends our consciousness, is just a correlate of intentional acts of consciousness which are directed towards the *presupposed* objective world. This implies that the subject of phenomenology as a descriptive science are the phenomena which make up “pure consciousness” or “pure mental processes”, and in Husserl’s mind, only they are indubitable. The resulting phenomenological attitude leads us to a novel way of observing, understanding and describing what we have previously called the “objective world”. What remains after effecting the phenomenological reduction is the meditating “transcendental ego” (see: Husserl 1960, 65–88) as the *residuum* of the reduction which is the source of all meaning that characterizes our consciousness. In this context, Husserl also speaks of the “transcendental reduction” in which the focus of the study are the processes of intentional constitution of the world through conscious acts that give meaning to our experience. It is important to note, however, that the previous suspensions of judgment which were effected by implementing the phenomenological method, did not negate the world, nor have they lead us to a skeptical doubt about its existence. In the phenomenological attitude, when we redirect attention from the naively understood objective world to the immanent phenomena of consciousness, nothing is lost, because all objects dealt with by the objectivistic sciences become *converted* in a way specific for phenomenology. For Husserl, this implies an “eidetic reduction” in

which we do not deal with the naively apprehended objects, but rather, our focus is on the pure essence of phenomena as they appear in our consciousness and as they are constituted through intentional acts of consciousness. This means that the objects dealt with by the objectivistic sciences become the subject of phenomenology as a description of the phenomenal form of these presupposed objects, as well as of the way in which transcendent objects are intentionally *constituted* in our consciousness.

The phenomenological concept of consciousness always refers to my own consciousness. What we call the “perceived objective world” is just another name for the phenomena of my own consciousness, while the presuppositions of the objective world as a transcendence, also appear only in the form of the phenomena of my own consciousness. Phenomenology describes consciousness from the first-person perspective and also describes my first-person experience of the third-person perspective on my own consciousness, as well as of that which we call the “consciousness of other living beings”. For Merleau-Ponty (1962), phenomenology represents a truthful and rigorous first-person description of one’s own pre-reflective and pre-predicative conscious experience, which offers an account of our first-person experience of space, time and the world. It describes this experience directly, without taking into account its psychological origin or the causal explanations which could be provided by a scientist, a historian or a sociologist. In Merleau-Ponty’s view, I am not just a part of the world in the sense of being a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation, since all of my knowledge of the world has been gained from my own particular point of view. Therefore, we must become aware of this basic experience of the world, of which science is just a second-order expression. In order to clarify the phenomenological method, Merleau-Ponty offers the following metaphor:

Scientific points of view according to which my existence is a moment of the world’s, are always both naive and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks* and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, ix).

Another way of clarifying the concept of phenomenological method is through an etymological analysis. The best analysis of this kind was performed by Heidegger in his work *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1985, 49–63) which significantly improved the quality of his interpretation of phenomenology. For Heidegger, phenomenology is primarily a methodical term. In his view, phenomenology is the method of ontology as the fundamental

philosophical discipline and its purpose is to study being itself, before any kind of biology, anthropology or psychology. He analyzes the syntagm “phenomenological method” from the etymological or hermeneutical standpoint, indicating that the word “phenomenology” is of Greek origin and consists of two words — “φαινόμενον” and “λόγος”. The Greek term “φαινόμενον” is derived from the verb which means “to show itself”, and therefore, Heidegger interprets the meaning of the word phenomenon as *that which shows itself in itself*, or the “manifest”, and which the Greeks have sometimes simply identified with the term “entity” (Heidegger 1985, 51). Such an interpretation of the meaning of the word “phenomenon” has nothing to do with what is called an “appearance” or a “mere appearance”, in the sense of something which indicates something else (for example, symptoms as an appearance of disease). Therefore, phenomena or entities can never be something *behind which* exists some true being. However, for Heidegger, we are most often prevented from having such an understanding of being and therefore we need phenomenology (Heidegger 1985, 60). Having in mind Husserl’s idea of phenomenology, this paper interprets Heidegger’s etymological analysis in the sense that the word “phenomenon” or “entity” signifies the immediate content of our consciousness. On the other hand, for Heidegger, the word “λόγος” originally signified speech which makes obvious that which is spoken of, both to the speaker and to the listener. In his interpretation, the function of speech is not to correspond with an outer physical object, which also means that Heidegger rejects the constructed concept of truth as an “agreement” in the sense of a correspondence (Heidegger 1985, 56). Contrary to the idealist and realist concepts of truth, Heidegger accepts the original Greek meaning of the word truth as an ordinary sensuous perception of something, which is always true in the phenomenological sense of phenomena showing themselves in themselves. He conceives phenomenology as the method of ontology which allows that which shows itself in itself, to be seen as what it is, which for Heidegger expresses the meaning of Husserl’s return “To the things themselves!” (Cited by: Heidegger 1985, 58). Having in mind Heidegger’s approach, in this paper, we will interpret phenomenological ontology as primarily a descriptive science of immediate phenomena of consciousness or of being. In his subsequent work called *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Heidegger 1988, 19–23), he interpreted phenomenology as the method of ontology which consists of three basic components — reduction, construction and destruction. The phenomenological reduction was treated as a purely negative methodical step, which implied a procedure of redirecting attention from a naively apprehended being to the understanding of the being of that being. The second component of the phenomenological method is the phenomenological construction which represents a positive methodical step and implies a projection of the previously given being upon

its being and the structures of that being. However, the method of phenomenology also has to implement its third component which Heidegger calls the “phenomenological destruction”. The purpose of this “destruction” is to eliminate the historical circumstances and philosophical tradition which prevents us from properly understanding being. This is not a negation or devaluation of the philosophical and scientific tradition, but its reaffirmation in the form of a rigorous critique of traditional concepts which, despite being necessary in the beginning, have to be de-constructed in the process of clarifying being and the concept of philosophy in general.

As we can see, different representatives of the phenomenological movement in philosophy have had different interpretations of phenomenology and its method. Rather than deal with these differences, controversies, and confrontations between different philosophers (see for example: Husserl 1997), in this work we will focus on the complementary aspects of various interpretations of phenomenology and in doing so, we will foremost endorse Husserl’s idea that phenomenology should be conceived in the form of a “first philosophy”. This philosophy must be free of all prejudice and, as such, in Husserl’s opinion, it represents the methodological basis of particular sciences, first of all, of empirical psychology (Husserl 1983, 190). In his interpretation, phenomenology is a descriptive science which deals with phenomena of one’s own consciousness from the first-person perspective. However, according to Husserl (1983; 1999), phenomenology does not limit itself to a description of an individual’s consciousness, but also seeks to explain our knowledge about things which transcend our consciousness and make up what we call the “objective world”. In the context of analyzing the biological nature, this also includes the explanation of how we know the peculiar kind of transcendence related to other living beings, which we call the “consciousness of other living beings”. Within such considerations, phenomenology also elucidates our understanding of our own consciousness from a third-person perspective and explains the phenomenon of intersubjectivity, which is of fundamental importance for psychology and various social sciences. Husserl particularly dealt with these problems in his work *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960), in which he presents the multitude of cognitive steps which comprise our experience of intersubjectivity. Other phenomenologists have also dealt with these problems, agreeing or disagreeing with particular aspects of Husserl’s phenomenology. However, a detailed presentation of the history of the phenomenological movement would require a work of much larger scope, while this paper will limit itself to briefly presenting the phenomenological approach to these basic philosophical problems. Such a presentation is based on the work *Svijest, osjećaji i ponašanje* (Kosatica 2020) and it has the form of a postulate of phenomenological ontology, supplemented by certain clarifications. This book deals

with the highest level of generality and shows that the traditional problems of humanistic and social sciences, as well as of certain natural sciences, rest upon an imprecise description of their phenomena. It relies on the phenomenological method to accurately specify the subject of philosophy as the most general science, as well as to clarify the relation between its subject, method and language. In this book, being is interpreted as the “present of consciousness”, and it is the most general phenomenon of scientific consideration. The description of the present of consciousness is ontology which is conceived as the most general atemporal science. It rests upon the hypothesis that it is possible to describe the present of consciousness. This description of the present of consciousness has the form of seven axioms or indubitable propositions (Kosatica 2020:27):

1. The present of consciousness is all that exists.
 - 1.1. The present of consciousness is the totality of phenomena.
 - 1.1.1. A phenomenon is determined by the unity of its *quality* (the kind of — color, tone, touch, smell, taste, feeling, etc.) and *quantity* (the size of — color, tone, touch, smell, taste, feeling, etc.).
 - 1.1.1.1. All phenomena (perceptual and imaginary) are determined by *some* quality and quantity.
 - 1.1.2. Phenomena are mutually differentiated on basis of their quality and quantity.
 - 1.1.3. The number of phenomena is limited.
 - 1.2. There exists nothing *more* than the present of consciousness.

This axiomatic description needs to be further clarified (Kosatica 2020:30–32). Since the present of consciousness is obviously all that exists, what we call the “world” or “reality” is then just another name for the phenomena of the present of consciousness. On the other hand, when it comes to the metaphysical dualism of subject and object, it is obviously untenable, as there is no cognitive subject, the object of which would be the present of consciousness. That which is called the “metaphysical” or “epistemological” subject is not a correlate of the present of consciousness, but a part of the present of consciousness. This means that the division of phenomena into those which are called the “subject” and those which are called the “object” is arbitrary, while the concept of a “metaphysical” or “epistemological” “subject” which would be the correlate of the present of consciousness as the supposed “object”, is the result of an inaccurate description of the phenomena of the present of consciousness. On the other hand, a “metaphysical” or “epistemological” “subject” for which we presuppose that it exists “*outside of the present of consciousness*” is a fiction. This also means that linguistic statements such as “reason”, “mind”, “spirit”, “soul”, or “psyche” also

represent inaccurate, inadequate or fictitious descriptions of phenomena of consciousness, and for that reason, “psychology” has an inadequate name.

A phenomenon is the basic element of the present of consciousness. It is determined by the unity of its quality and quantity, and as such, it cannot be subsequently dissected. It is the basic element of our experience. In the description of the present of consciousness, the word phenomenon is used in the narrowest sense, signifying only the elementary phenomena of the present of consciousness, but it can also be used in a broader sense to signify complexes of elementary phenomena such as the present of consciousness as the most general “phenomenon”, a moment of consciousness, a thing, an object, etc. “Things” and “objects” are just different names for certain phenomena of consciousness. When we speak of the “quantity” of a phenomenon, this word refers to its size, extension or spatiality, not to its countability. What we call “space” is made up of the quantity of phenomena. This also refers to that which we call “empty space”, since it too is made up of phenomena of consciousness determined by their quality and quantity. Every space has a certain quality (for example, color). The phenomena of the monocular and binocular visual field are two-dimensional, while the form of the “third dimension” (depth) is made up of a specific quality (sharpness) of elementary two-dimensional phenomena of the visual field.

However, such a description of the immanent phenomena of consciousness creates the problem of our understanding of what we call “transcendences” or “phenomena *outside of the present of consciousness*”, such as the objective world, objective reality, physical matter and energy, object or thing-in-itself, the third dimension, metaphysical space, physical space, physical time, physical space-time, the past, the future, consciousness of other living beings, God, immortal soul, beings from myth and fantasy, etc. Transcendences do not exist. Only their *presuppositions* and models within the present of consciousness exist. The *presupposition* of transcendences or referring to transcendences, has its phenomenal form within the present of consciousness — feelings of tension. Tension directs the body towards a *presupposed* transcendence. Husserl’s term “intentionality” (Husserl 1999, 34 and elsewhere), cannot describe anything other than the feeling of tension (just as hardness makes up the quality and quantity of the phenomena of touch, so the feeling of tension appears as an intra-bodily hardness). Other feelings caused by phenomena of consciousness (emotional reactions) can also exist even when those phenomena are not a part of the present of consciousness, but are *presupposed* as transcendent. Therefore, feelings of tension and other feelings caused by phenomena of consciousness (emotional reactions) which refer to the *presupposed* transcendences, make up that which is called “consciousness of transcendences” or “knowledge of transcendences”. On the other hand, models of the *presupposed* transcendent-

ences (perceptual or imaginary) and signs for the *presupposed* transcendences, are not transcendences, but phenomena of the present of consciousness. It is also clear that nothing in the present of consciousness implies the possibility of the existence of the “unconscious”, the “subconscious” or “nothingness”. These are just imprecise descriptions of phenomena of consciousness.

After such a description of the present of consciousness, we must clarify the transcendences which we call the “past”, the “future” or “time”. Since the present is all that exists, the past and the future are not indubitable phenomena of the present of consciousness, but only have a hypothetical existence. Therefore, the analysis of the past and the future of consciousness has the form of a hypothesis on the past and the future of consciousness. It follows the description of the present of consciousness and consists of eight axioms (Kosatica 2020:27):

2. The totality of past and future moments of consciousness makes up the whole of past and future of consciousness.
 - 2.1. A moment of consciousness is a whole of simultaneous phenomena.
 - 2.2. Moments of consciousness are mutually differentiated on basis of the difference in the wholes of their phenomena.
 - 2.3. The number of past and future moments of consciousness is limited.
 - 2.3.1. The totality of past moments of consciousness makes up the whole of past experience.
 - 2.3.2. The totality of future moments of consciousness makes up the whole of future experience.
 - 2.4. The hypothesis on the past and the future of consciousness presupposes all past and future moments of consciousness as wholes of simultaneous phenomena.
 - 2.4.1. There cannot subsequently be found any past and future phenomena for consideration.

This hypothesis on the past and the future of consciousness needs to be further clarified (Kosatica 2020:32–34). The hypothesis is such that within it, the past and the future of consciousness are *presupposed* in the form of a totality of past and future moments of consciousness. Our beliefs that we have experienced the past, and that we will experience the future are not indubitable but are mere hypotheses. As was previously ascertained, the present of consciousness is all that exists. This means that the past and the future of consciousness do not exist, but that only their *presuppositions* and models within the present of consciousness exist. That which we call the *presupposition* of the past and the future of consciousness has its phe-

nomenal form within the present of consciousness — feelings of tension. Husserl (1983, 195) refers to such feelings of tension as “retentions” and “protentions”. These kinds of tension direct the body towards the *presupposed* past or future of consciousness, while other feelings caused by phenomena of consciousness (emotional reactions) can also exist even when those phenomena are not a part of the present of consciousness but make up a part of the *presupposed* past or future of consciousness. Feelings of tension and other feelings caused by phenomena of consciousness (emotional reactions) which refer to the *presupposed* past and future of consciousness, make up that which is called “consciousness of the past and future of consciousness” or “knowledge of the past and future of consciousness”. Models of the *presupposed* past and future of consciousness (perceptual or imaginary) and signs for the *presupposed* past and future of consciousness, are not transcendences, but phenomena of the present of consciousness. Therefore, whenever we speak of time, the past and the future, we are always referring to transcendences whose existence is not indubitable, but merely *presupposed*. This implies a specific understanding of what we call “duration”, since when we speak of a “duration” of a phenomenon, we presuppose the continuity of the phenomenon that we treat as being the “same” phenomenon in a succession of different moments of consciousness, in relation to which, other phenomena appear to “change” or “move”. However, if the present of consciousness is the most general phenomenon, or if we speak of a *presupposed* moment of consciousness as a whole of simultaneous phenomena, then they cannot be characterized by a „duration“, because there exists no phenomenon that is correlative to them, whose „changing“ or „moving“ would allow us to determine the ‘duration’ of the present of consciousness or a *presupposed* moment of consciousness. For that reason, the present of consciousness or some *presupposed* moment of consciousness is referred to as being something that is static.

Such an understanding of the past and the future also implies that what we call “time” is made up of successions of *presupposed* moments of consciousness. This implies that a *presupposed* moment of consciousness is the basic element of “time” and that it cannot subsequently be temporally dissected. This understanding of time also has specific implications when it comes to understanding the totality of our life and the phenomena of life and death. Within the hypothesis on the past and future of consciousness, the totality of the *presupposed* moments of consciousness makes up life. We do not experience our own “coming into the world” (“birth”) and “leaving the world” (“death”). These are not events in life, as such concepts imply an experience whose form would be different from any other experience in life. An inexistence of the present of consciousness is difficult to comprehend, and can only be *presupposed* and not modeled, since we cannot create a

perceptual or imaginary model as a phenomenon for which we *presuppose* that it precedes “birth” or is caused by “death”. If they do not designate the *presupposed* afterlife, the words “one’s own death” have meaning only as a name for the *presupposed* future moment of dying or for the imagination of one’s own dead body.

The postulated phenomenological ontology represents a first-person description of my own conscious experience. However, phenomenology has also dealt with the problem of cognition of the consciousness of other living beings, that is, the problem of intersubjectivity, as well as the problem of the relationship between the consciousness and the body. In order to clarify these problems, we will use the term “consciousness-in-body” to designate the hypothetical consciousness which belongs to a certain living body. When we believe that a certain living body has a consciousness, we *presuppose* this consciousness in the form of a present of consciousness-in-body, as well as a past and a future of consciousness-in-body of the observed living body. This hypothesis also refers to my own consciousness and body, which means that the present of consciousness and the hypothetical past and future of consciousness are *presupposed* as belonging to my body, and as identical to the consciousness-in-body of my body. All theories which concern human intersubjectivity usually *presuppose* that the phenomena of my own consciousness have the same form as the phenomena of consciousness of other living human beings. However, the hypothesis that the observed living human body has a present of its consciousness-in-body, as well as a past and a future of its consciousness-in-body can always be incorrect, and the *presupposed* content of the consciousness-in-body of the observed living human body can also always be incorrect. Within this hypothesis, it is also *presupposed* that any living human body *presupposes* the past and the future of its own consciousness-in-body, and that such a *presupposition* can also, always be incorrect. In any case, within the present of consciousness and the hypothesis on the past and future of consciousness, there exists no consciousness of another living human body as a phenomenon. I never have a direct access to the consciousness of another living human body. The consciousness-in-body of another living human body is just an empty anticipation of a consciousness. I *presuppose* that the content of the consciousness-in-body of another living human body is shown by the position of that body, the expression of its face, its gesticulations, tone of voice, different symbols, as well as all objects of culture. On the basis of that, the content of the consciousness-in-body of another living human body can be *presupposed* or modeled in the form of phenomena of my own consciousness.

These clarifications of the postulate of phenomenological ontology outline the traditional problems of philosophy and its relation towards par-

ticular sciences. Dealing with these fundamental problems of philosophy and their scientific implications, phenomenological ontology has not only exerted influence on the world of science, but has also impacted the everyday human life, particularly regarding the questions of worldview, religion, spirituality, etc.

2. *The Significance of Phenomenological Ontology for Science*

The postulated phenomenological ontology has great significance for science and scientific work. As each science is determined by its subject, method and language, a postulate of phenomenological ontology is important as it enables a clear presentation of the relationship between the subject, method and language of philosophy as the most general science and the unity of all sciences. By properly postulating phenomenological ontology, we gain a better understanding of the relationship between philosophy and particular sciences. Since phenomenological ontology is the general aspect of philosophy or the general aspect of science, it is useful in analyzing the form, subject and interrelations of particular sciences. This is especially important when it comes to the various philosophical disciplines that require a fundamental clarification of their form and subject. In the aforementioned work (Kosatica 2020), the phenomenological method allowed for the clarification of the form and subject of sciences such as ontology, epistemology, gnoseology, logic, mathematics, axiology, aesthetics, ethics, the science of law, the science of behavior, etc. Such an approach also allowed for the clarification of the meaning of the metaphysical terms such as “space”, “time”, “world”, etc., as well as the meaning of epistemological and methodological terms such as “correlation”, “cause”, “effect”, “explanation”, “prediction”, etc., which is important for understanding the subject of many sciences. This enables us to derive the methodology of scientific work from phenomenological ontology, providing a clear and gradual introduction to the methodology of scientific work for scholars in all academic fields. Such an introduction enables us to understand the possibility of scientific thinking and of science in general by clarifying the form of science, its goals, methods, techniques and instruments, thereby clarifying the way in which science achieves its results. Therefore, phenomenological ontology represents the introductory part of methodology of scientific work and as such, it is the basis for modern empirical sciences. However, a detailed process of deriving methodology of scientific work from phenomenological ontology exceeds the scope of this paper and would require a more extensive study.

Phenomenology also represents a style of thinking based on the phenomenological method which can be beneficial when dealing with various problems of theoretical character. This foremost refers to its methodological

function in the process of properly understanding the phenomena of our consciousness, as well as the process of perfecting descriptions and classifications, allowing us to reach a higher degree of clarity in science, as well as a higher degree of efficiency in solving theoretical problems. Because of this, Husserl (1983) has emphasized that phenomenology is the methodological basis for empirical psychology, as it allows a proper ontological characterization of that which is called the “psyche” or “soul”, allowing us to accurately describe the phenomena which make up our “psychical” or “emotional” life. It also enables us to clarify the relation between consciousness and body as well as between the bodily and the personal aspect of an individual, which is especially important for sciences on human behavior. The phenomenological method eliminates the fallacy of ontological objectivism in all sciences, and it allows us to conceive a theory on human behavior which eliminates the fragmentary character of causal chains in sciences on human behavior, that is, in social sciences, present in the biological approaches to human behavior, as well as in the sociological approaches to human behavior that rest upon some sort of ontological collectivism. With such an approach, we can clarify the concepts of “rational”, “irrational”, “moral” and “immoral” behavior, as well as many other currently vague and unclear concepts within humanistic and social sciences. This leads us to improving the methodological and theoretical aspects of the sciences that deal with intersubjectivity, human motives, behavior, communication, culture, social groups, institutions, legal, economic and political systems, etc. This practical importance of phenomenology was emphasized by Heidegger who first started the hermeneutical turn within phenomenology, which was further developed by Gadamer (2004) and others who have analyzed the temporal and historical peculiarities of phenomenology as a philosophical movement, seeking to determine the proper role of philosophy in our scientific endeavors and everyday life. One of the first philosophers to recognize the significance of phenomenology for social sciences was Alfred Schütz who believed that a phenomenological approach is required for solving the fundamental methodological problems of social sciences, while he also noticed that this task was already being performed by phenomenological psychology (see: Schütz 1967; Šic 2012).

These developments of phenomenology confirmed Husserl’s assumptions about its practical importance, and they consequently led to the progress of many scientific disciplines. Viewed historically, phenomenology appeared as a reaction to traditional philosophical debates and to what representatives of the phenomenological movement consider to be mistaken concepts, such as the subject–object dualism and the dualisms which exist between the concepts of realism and idealism as well as between the concepts of rationalism and empiricism (more in: Damnjanović 1975, 21–23).

Filipović (1965, 131) thinks that phenomenology played an important role in the debates against naive realism, positivism, constructivism, speculation and formalism, and that it sought to eliminate prejudice and naiveness by assuming a rigorous and critical attitude. Husserl himself emphasized that phenomenology needed to assume the highest degree of self-criticism if it sought to establish itself as a rigorous science which is free of all prejudice (Husserl 1965).

In Husserl's view, phenomenology appeared in a situation of a "crisis of science", which was at the same time a "crisis of European mankind", where the objectivist fanaticism had lead people to forget the source of science and culture in general, which according to Husserl, can be found in the pre-categorical experience of the "lifeworld". He envisioned transcendental phenomenology as a philosophy which was capable of overcoming this crisis, since it had the potential to unify all sciences and represent the lost unity of philosophy and the particular sciences. Husserl's understanding of philosophy was inspired by the classical Greek understanding of philosophy which was holistic and implied a methodical and broad education of philosophers. Criticizing the falling apart of the unity of philosophy and particular sciences due to the increasing specialization of sciences, Husserl envisioned philosophy as the unity of all sciences and the most general science. It is this approach to philosophy that he wanted to restore in order to develop a universal contemporary philosophy which he considered to be the solution to the "crisis of science". In his view, the falling apart of philosophy and particular sciences began in the period of Renaissance and continues into our time. This process intensified with the development of particular sciences in the second half of the 19th century, which is when the "crisis of European sciences" erupted, affecting the whole world of culture too. Despite their theoretical and practical progress, Husserl believes that these sciences resulted in the dominance of the naturalistic and objectivistic attitude which created a multitude of methodological and worldview problems. Criticizing such a development of science, he emphasizes that there is no division between classical philosophy and classical science, medieval philosophy and medieval science, nor modern philosophy and modern science. However, he notices that contemporary trends are such that particular sciences are, due to increased specialization, gaining more and more independence from philosophy. Such trends lead to questions regarding the character of philosophy, the relation between philosophy and particular sciences, the relations between particular sciences, as well as the problem of interdisciplinarity in the sense of a temporary integration of particular sciences. For Husserl, these issues represent pseudoproblems which could only have arisen with the forgetting of the common basis of all knowledge and science. For that reason, he believes that transcendental phenomenology is the proper path

to restoring the original unity of philosophy and particular sciences, since it rests upon understanding sciences from the phenomenological standpoint. This standpoint implies studying the phenomena of one's own consciousness, which enables the founding of sciences on one's own pre-categorical experience of the lifeworld and this is where Husserl sees the solution to the problem of the crisis in science (more in: Husserl 1970; Damnjanović 1975). Therefore, the final goal of Husserl's phenomenology was to establish philosophy in the form of an all-encompassing rigorous science characterized by a strict and critical attitude (Husserl 1965). In his view, this would resolve the aforementioned "crisis of science" that resulted with the falling apart of philosophy which was, and which should be, the unity and common basis of all sciences.

In the beginning, Husserl was primarily focused on problems within the field of mathematics, logic and epistemology. However, in time, alongside his followers, he implemented the phenomenological method to studying the broad structures of consciousness such as the affective, volitional, evaluative, practical, aesthetic, religious, political, legal and other forms of consciousness (Moran, in: Husserl 2001a, xxv). Therefore, such a development of phenomenology has led to significant contributions, not only to the modern philosophical thought, but also to a multitude of particular sciences such as psychology, psychiatry, linguistics, aesthetics, sociology, mathematics, physics, biology and other sciences (Damnjanović 1975, 47).

3. *The Significance of Phenomenological Ontology for One's Worldview*

The crisis of which Husserl speaks influenced not only science but the whole world of culture as well, including our own worldview, that is, the worldview of contemporary individuals living in the technologically developed part of the world. This is not only the consequence of the predominant objectivistic and naturalistic attitude in science but also of the inaccuracies of many scientific descriptions and classifications which phenomenology seeks to correct. There exist various kinds of distortions of our worldview which alienate us from the original, authentic and truthful experience of the world.

On the one hand, the philosophical tradition has resulted in a multitude of worldviews with regard to truth and science, such as various metaphysical dualisms (subject-object, realism-idealism, empiricism-rationalism, etc.), various forms of skepticism and relativism, as well as various worldview and lifestyle suggestions which arose from these and other philosophical positions such as hedonism, utilitarianism, stoicism, asceticism, aestheticism, moralism, philanthropy, misanthropy, etc. In these cases, phenomenology is

useful in questioning the ontological, epistemological and methodological basis for these worldviews and lifestyles, while aesthetics, ethics, psychology and other social sciences are useful in questioning the theoretical validity, explanatory value and predictive power of theories which express such lifestyle suggestions.

On the other hand, the modern scientific tradition with its objectivistic and naturalistic presuppositions, which were popularized by the progress of the scientific and technical world, also contributes to the forgetting of the original personal perspective of the world which phenomenology seeks to clarify. For Husserl, this crisis of modern science endangers the foundations of our entire culture and leads to a certain kind of alienation, which is the result of a distorted worldview based on prejudice, naiveness, and a mistaken view of things. Such a distortion of our perception of the “lifeworld” as the everyday world of morality, tradition and personal life, also falsely eliminates the questions about the meaning of life, including all of the so called “final questions of man”, which are discarded as being metaphysical (Damjanović 1975, 41–43). Therefore, in Husserl’s view, phenomenology as a revelation of our original transcendental subjectivity implies a complete personal transformation, which he compares to a religious conversion, considering it to be the greatest possible existential transformation of an individual and the whole of mankind (Husserl 1970, 137).

When it comes to the relationship between phenomenology and religion, Husserl’s position implies a suspension of judgment on any kind of transcendences, including transcendences which we call “God”, “immortal soul”, “afterlife”, etc. However, such a suspension of judgment does not necessarily imply atheism, since phenomenology is not concerned with the existence or non-existence of these presupposed transcendences, but rather, only with their proper methodological consideration. For this reason, phenomenology has also influenced the development of theology and various other perspectives on religion and spirituality, including the so called “philosophies of existence”. In fact, some of the first worldviews that arose out of the phenomenological movement were the 20th century philosophical reflections on existence — Heidegger (1985), Sartre (1978; 2007), Jaspers (1971) and others.

When it comes to the relation of the postulate of phenomenological ontology presented in this work towards worldview matters, this paper has used the term “existence” to denote what is usually called “immanence” or “givenness”, and it has also claimed that transcendences do not “exist”, but are presupposed as possibilities. Since the phenomenological ontology postulated in this paper acknowledges the possibility of existing transcendences, it does not imply nihilism, atheism, solipsism or any other similar worldview that is limited to the sphere of immanence. The word “existence”

is used in this work synonymously with the word “immanence” with the goal of highlighting that towards which we have to direct our attention in order to have an authentic experience of life.

As we have said earlier, phenomenology is not something that appears with Husserl, but it represents a style of thinking which was present long before he had explicitly drawn attention to it. This style of thinking was not only present in philosophy but also in other sciences, as well as in art and various other parts of human culture. Husserl himself had noticed the existence of various philosophical, scientific and artistic endeavors to elucidate the “lifeworld” or reach the things themselves, which represents the main goal of phenomenology (Damnjanović 1975, 18). By achieving this goal and providing accurate descriptions of the basic aesthetic, ethical and psychological phenomena, phenomenology can lead us to an authentic experience of the everyday emotional, axiological, aesthetic, social and ethical dimension of life. This function of phenomenology results in an authentic perspective on the issues of existence, immanence, transcendence, religion, and spirituality, which in their various forms make up a fundamental aspect of our culture and everyday life. Therefore, phenomenology has the task not only of restoring the original perspective in philosophy and science but also in the whole world of culture.

Conclusion

The postulate of phenomenological ontology presented in this work has relied on the phenomenological movement in philosophy in order to give an axiomatic presentation of its fundamental propositions. Their purpose was to accurately determine the subject and form of ontology as the science of being, as well as of phenomenology, which was interpreted as the method of ontology. This enabled us to describe being as the most general phenomenon of scientific consideration, which makes ontology the most general philosophical discipline, or rather, the general part of philosophy as the most general science.

Such an understanding of being and ontology surpasses the traditional approaches to this subject which were based on various cosmogonies or theories about the world and its creation. It also implies abandoning various realistic and materialistic ontologies as well as idealistic and formalistic ontologies, which have expressed a skeptical and relativistic attitude towards being.

The paper presented phenomenology as a modern philosophical movement which was initiated by Edmund Husserl and, similarly to the work of Martin Heidegger, it interpreted phenomenology as the method of ontology, resulting in a phenomenological ontology as the general philosophical discipline. Such a philosophy reflects the idea of a “first philosophy”, which

is free from all prejudice and which rejects or criticizes metaphysics, the subject–object dualism, empiricism, rationalism, realism, idealism, materialism, skepticism, and relativism. Such an interpretation of philosophy has assumed the form of a postulate of phenomenological ontology which is important for understanding the form and subject of all sciences, as well as for understanding ourselves, our lives and our relation to the world. The work will achieve its practical purpose if it encourages the reader to improve his or her understanding of consciousness and its various phenomena, and if it enables us to conceive better descriptions and classifications of these phenomena. Therefore, the postulate and its further elaboration had the goal of providing a valuable introduction to the methodology of scientific work as well as an alternative perspective on the issues of existentialism, religion and spiritualism.

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*Sažetak***POSTULAT FENOMENOLOŠKE ONTOLOGIJE I NJEGOV
ZNAČAJ ZA ZNANOST I NAŠ SVJETONAZOR**

DEMIJAN KOSATICA

Ovaj rad nudi tumačenje fenomenološke ontologije putem razrade njenih temeljnih stavova, kako bi objasnio njihov značaj za znanost i naš osobni svjetonazor. U radu je fenomenologija shvaćena kao ispravna metoda ontologije ili „znanosti o bitku” kao najopćenitije filozofijske discipline. Ovo utjelovljuje ideju „prve filozofije” koja je slobodna od svih predrasuda i koja odbacuje ili kritizira metafiziku, dualizam subjekt–objekt, empirizam, racionalizam, realizam, idealizam, materijalizam, skepticizam i relativizam. Članak odbacuje ontološki objektivizam kao metodološku zabludu i nastoji dosegnuti jasno razumijevanje znanosti te nas samih i našeg odnosa prema svijetu. Kao takav, on predstavlja uvodni dio u metodologiju znanstvenog rada te alternativnu perspektivu na probleme egzistencijalizma, religije i duhovnosti.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: svijest, egzistencija, fenomenološka ontologija, znanost, svjetonazor

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