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# On the *Epoché* in Phenomenological Psychology: A Schutzian Response to Zahavi

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## Abstract

Dan Zahavi has questioned whether the use of a transcendental phenomenological *epoché* is essential for phenomenological psychology. He criticizes the views of Amedeo Giorgi by asserting that Husserl did not view the transcendental reduction as needed for an entrance into phenomenological psychology and that, if one thinks so, phenomenological psychology would be in danger of being absorbed within transcendental phenomenology. Thirdly, rather than envisioning transcendental phenomenology as a purification for phenomenological psychology, Zahavi recommends a dialogue between transcendental phenomenologists and psychologists. However, the two disciplines are closer for Husserl who also conceives phenomenological psychology as a self-standing science, and Giorgi is not as rigid on the necessity of transcendental phenomenology for phenomenological psychology. Alfred Schutz, following Husserl's "Nachwort," develops his own distinctive phenomenological psychology that appreciates disciplinary convergences and respects boundaries, while also articulating a wider understanding of *epoché* as an anthropological fact operative beyond the limits of transcendental phenomenology.

## Keywords

phenomenology – *epoché* – phenomenological psychology – phenomenological philosophy – theoretical province of meaning – transcendental phenomenology

## 1 Introduction

Dan Zahavi has upset the current field of phenomenological psychology by two recent papers. The first paper, more tententiously entitled, "Getting it Quite Wrong: Van Manen and Smith on Phenomenology," begins by attacking

J. A. Smith's Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for reducing phenomenology merely to: the concentration on the first person perspective of the subjects investigated or nothing more than the examination of experiences in their own terms instead of in terms of other predefined categories or simply the sharing or articulating of a subject's sense-making. When questioned as to whether there is more to phenomenology than this, Smith has replied that philosophy does not own phenomenology, and, hence, Zahavi believes he is willing to accept any definition of phenomenology rather than specify in any way what rules to be observed for research to achieve phenomenological status, thereby belittling the actual contributions of great phenomenological philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger (Zahavi, 2019b). While Zahavi is sympathetic with Max van Manen's criticisms of Smith and his insistence that phenomenological psychologists be familiar with the writings of leading phenomenologists, he takes exception to van Manen's own description of phenomenology (Zahavi, 2019b). When van Manen presents phenomenology as basically trying to determine what lived experience is like, he neglects how the great phenomenologists undertook their descriptions for the sake of systematic ambitions, such as Heidegger's account of boredom aiming at a deeper grasp of ontological questions (Zahavi, 2019b). In addition, van Manen envisions the *epoché* and reduction as seeking to comprehend human experience, as opposed to Husserl's purposes for these procedures, namely to free us from naturalistic dogmatism so that we can see our own subjective accomplishments and contributions through which worldly objects appear (Zahavi, 2019b). Finally, Zahavi rejects van Manen's belief that phenomenology strives to dwell "inceptually" in experiences for which we lack the proper words, prior to classification and taxonomies (Zahavi, 2019b), instead of disclosing and articulating the structures present in pre-reflective experience (Zahavi, 2019b). For Zahavi, the problem with thinkers like Smith and van Manen is that their definitions of what phenomenology is are vague and oversimplified, betraying a lack of understanding of philosophical phenomenology and familiarity with the writings of the great *philosophical* phenomenologists (Zahavi, 2019b). In a sense, they conflate transcendental phenomenology with their practice of phenomenological psychology and would have done better to recognize the distinctiveness of phenomenological philosophy and explored its depth. Besides deepening their familiarity with the philosophical literature, phenomenological psychologists could also make this distinctiveness stand out by not concentrating (in their psychological investigations) on the *epoché* and reduction, which are basic to Husserl's project of transcendental *philosophy* to which they permit entry (Zahavi, 2019b). Instead, qualitative researchers would do well to draw on central phenomenological concepts such as the

lifeworld, intentionality, *empathy*, and the lived body rather than trying to enact some form of the *epoché*, which is appropriate for transcendental *philosophy* (Zahavi, 2019b).

## 2 The Critique of Giorgi: The Psychological-Phenomenological Epoché and Phenomenological Psychology

In another paper, in which Zahavi targets the phenomenological psychology of Amedeo Giorgi, he entitles that paper, less antagonistically, “Applied Phenomenology: Why it is Safe to Ignore the *Epoché*,” and one might speculate that Zahavi does so because he is more sympathetic to Giorgi who better than Smith or van Manen separates the psychological phenomenological reduction from the transcendental-phenomenological reduction and phenomenological psychology from transcendental phenomenology (Zahavi, 2019a; Giorgi, 2012). Nevertheless, Giorgi also insists that psychological researchers assume “the attitude of the phenomenological reduction” by which one resists positing as existing whatever objects present themselves to ensure a critical examination of them, by which one refuses to impose non-given past knowledge on the object of a present investigation, and by which one strives to manifest a special sensitivity to the phenomenon being researched (Giorgi, 2012; Zahavi, 2019a). After spelling out these requirements, Giorgi, however, seems immediately to backtrack a bit, asserting that the reduction utilized in scientific psychological research is *not* the transcendental phenomenological reduction but what Husserl calls the “psychological phenomenological reduction” (Giorgi, 2012). But the only difference he seems to find between these reductions is that the psychological phenomenological reduction reduces only the objects of consciousness but not the acts, upon which presumably phenomenological psychology will focus (Giorgi, 2012). As a consequence, one should probably assume that the exigencies of the transcendental phenomenological reduction mentioned above are at work, perhaps implicitly, within the psychological phenomenological reduction.

Despite evidence in Husserl’s writings that might seem to support Giorgi’s idea that a version of the transcendental philosophical reduction has to be employed for the effective practice of phenomenological psychology (Zahavi, 2019a), Zahavi through two strategies seeks to counteract Giorgi’s view that phenomenological psychology requires execution of some variant of the transcendental philosophical reduction and *epoché* (Zahavi, 2019a). First, Zahavi explains how the psychological phenomenological *epoché* and reduction that Husserl speaks of (and that Giorgi thinks to appropriate for his own work)

actually have little in common with their transcendental-phenomenological counterparts except the name (thereby demonstrating that the one can carry on a legitimate phenomenological psychology without making any use of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction and *epoché*). Secondly, Zahavi argues that if one commences with psychological phenomenological reduction and *epoché*, the need for a radical foundation for a strictly scientific psychology will eventually lead one eventually to make the transcendental turn. In that case, the preeminence of the transcendental phenomenological *epoché* and reduction will replace the psychological phenomenological *epoché* and reduction, and phenomenological psychology will be absorbed into transcendental phenomenology, as if it were, as a result, nothing but an unstable waystation on the way to such a higher-level phenomenology (Zahavi, 2019a).

Zahavi's first strategy makes the case that the *epoché* a psychologist undertakes, according to Husserl, consists in a "abstractive attitude" (Zahavi, 2019a), that is, a resolution to focus on the psychic domain and to exclude themes irrelevant to that domain. The phenomenological psychologist then directs attention to the psychical being of both human and animal reality, that is, to the "psychic in its pure and proper essentialness" (Husserl, 1997; Zahavi, 2019a). Zahavi proceeds to contrast this psychological reduction and *epoché*, which involves only narrowing one's investigative field, with the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, which does not ignore or leave out anything. Situated above one's own natural being and the natural world, the transcendental phenomenologist loses nothing of their being or objective truths (Zahavi, 2019a). Further, a "pure," or phenomenological, psychology works within and on the basis of the natural attitude, and it scrutinizes only the worldly facts of "a preexisting and taken for granted world" that a more comprehensive transcendental phenomenology, however, does not leave unexamined (Zahavi, 2019a; Husserl, 1997). Zahavi concludes that the psychological-phenomenological *epoché* and reduction have "little in common" (Zahavi, 2019a) with the correlative transcendental-phenomenological procedures, other than the same name, thereby showing that one can carry on phenomenological psychology without any need for the transcendental phenomenological reduction.

In considering Volume 34 of *Husserliana*, *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926–1935)*, to which Zahavi (2019a) does not make reference (despite extensive references to other Husserlian texts), one finds confirmation of Zahavi's view that Husserl envisioned the psychological *epoché* as a matter of thematic abstraction that leaves intact one's concrete world experience, just as one would do if one engaged in the abstraction that might pertain to biophysical zoology (Husserl, 2002). In implementing such a biological abstraction, likewise constricting one's attention, only in

this case to the biological side of an organism and leaving out the psyche, one would nevertheless open up infinite accompanying fields of experience and investigation (Husserl, 2002). Similarly, the manifold natural sciences put in place a similar abstraction, taking for their domain physical nature and not taking account of psychic aspects (Husserl 2002). Husserl goes further in indicating that one executing the psychological *epoché* would be caught up in a paradox, insofar as one would stand and remain on the natural ground of the world taken for granted (insofar as one does not execute the transcendental reduction) and yet one would be striving to maintain a narrowed, but intensive reflective concentration on one's and others' pure psyche (Husserl, 2002). One can see how such a phenomenological psychology could already be conceived as oriented toward a self-reflective culmination in transcendental phenomenology.

However, Husserl does not limit his understanding of this psychological phenomenological *epoché* to being only a matter of thematic abstraction. He insists three times, for example, in what amounts to an eleven-page treatment of the psychological *epoché* within *Husserliana* 34, that the phenomenological psychologist must take up the attitude of a non-participating observer of the psyche – of a universally non-participating observer, an “unbeteiligter Zuschauer” (Husserl, 2002). This non-participation, Husserl clarifies, requires that one set aside the convictions, which one naturally lives in and continually operates with, and shift one's attitude away from naïve experiencing in order that that that experiencing itself might become the theme of one's psychological investigation (Husserl, 2002). Moreover, Husserl acknowledges that on the basis of this attitude, to which the psychological *epoché* gives birth, one would be able to unveil all the possibilities and horizons of possibilities in which all psychic actualities are arranged (Husserl, 2002). Additionally, even though phenomenological psychologists may find themselves beset by the paradox of being partially reflective in a confined direction, but not as comprehensively reflective as they would be called to be within the transcendental *epoché* and reduction, still, the very basis of the paradox demands that the psychologist must aspire to move at least to some degree beyond everyday naivete (Husserl, 2002). For Husserl, the point of reaching beyond this naivete is to attain pure and universal description (Husserl, 2002), even if one does not surpass one's naivete to the extent that the transcendental *epoché* makes possible, as Zahavi rightly and repeatedly points out (Husserl, 2002; Zahavi, 2019a). In addition, although the higher-level transcendental sphere situates one on a plane from whose height one is enabled to explain the paradox in which the psychological *epoché* entangles one (Husserl, 2002), Husserl still asserts that phenomenological psychology (whose parameters are set by the psychological-phenomenological

*epoché*) pursues an evidently legitimate undertaking (“*Das ist doch eine evident rechtmässige Aufgabe*”) (Husserl, 2002). In the light of Husserl’s articulation of these features of psychological phenomenological *epoché* – that one must be a non-participating observer of the realm of the psyche, seeking to arrive at pure and universal descriptions, setting oneself off from the lived convictions in which one lives, altering one’s focus by pulling out of one’s naïve immersion in order to make that immersion itself thematic, and plunging into a vast field of investigation that deserves the effort – one would have to question the completeness of Zahavi’s characterization of that *epoché* as merely a matter of thematic abstraction.

Furthermore, it is not merely the case that Zahavi’s account curtails the fullness of Husserl’s presentation of the phenomenological psychological *epoché* of Husserl as just a thematic abstraction. In fact, many of the features that Husserl depicts as belonging to the phenomenological psychological *epoché* in addition to its thematic direction are precisely the kinds of methodological features that one would also find in transcendental phenomenological philosophy as initiated by the transcendental philosophical reduction. For instance, Husserl describes the transcendental *epoché* as creating a context in which one becomes a non-participating observer of all that one in the present and past has taken for valid (Husserl, 2002), and, as a non-participating observer, one becomes in effect a phenomenologizing ego (Husserl, 2002). Such a non-participating observer progresses through a typical consideration of individual experiences, perceptions, and perceptual syntheses toward a universal totality and describes the intentionality correlative to them (Husserl, 2002), continually correcting her understanding of the world through actual being (Husserl, 2002). The detached observer struggles to be free of the “accustomedness” of everyday life that governs pre-given apperceptive tendencies and inclines one to unquestioned beliefs that one takes to be valid (Husserl, 2002). She resists succumbing to naivete (Husserl, 2002); releases herself from naïve position-takings (Husserl, 2002); even deracinates herself from them (Husserl, 2002); refuses to be shaped uncritically by past motivations, future anticipations, or present verifications (Husserl, 2002); and puts out of play the pre-givenness of the world (Husserl, 2002) – in such a way that her experience resembles that of one having blinders removed (Husserl, 2002). The *epoché* launches one on a quest for a universal knowledge, for world-knowledge (Husserl, 2002), and it is no wonder that Husserl compares one executing the reduction to an explorer who disembarks upon a new continent or sets foot upon a hitherto undiscovered landscape of such vastness that it will have to wait for a generation of subsequent explorers to traverse and carefully map out (Husserl, 1971).

When Zahavi suggests that the psychological *epoché* has “next to nothing” (Zahavi, 2019a) or “little in common” (Zahavi, 2019a) with the philosophical phenomenological *epoché*, he is not taking account of these many parallels and analogies between Husserl’s descriptions of both *epochés*, despite their never-to-be-overlooked differences. These parallels also suggest that perhaps Giorgi’s quick slide from the phenomenological philosophical *epoché*, which requires various restraints and fosters sensitivity toward the phenomena being investigated, to the psychological phenomenological *epoché*, which seems to differ only in reducing the objects but not the acts examined, indicates an implicit cognizance of these parallels (Giorgi, 2012). Husserl’s descriptions themselves suggest that perhaps his own understanding of the psychological phenomenological *epoché* has been already shaped in part by his experience of working out and often inhabiting the framework of the philosophical phenomenological *epoché* – a shaping which Zahavi’s more minimalist account of the psychological phenomenological *epoché* may obscure.

Another source for the proper understanding of phenomenological psychology can be found in Husserl’s 1930 “Nachwort zu meinen ‘Ideen,’” in which Husserl explains the value of his *Ideas 1* and to which Alfred Schutz referred in articulating the phenomenological method he employed in his own book-length “phenomenological psychology,” *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Schutz, 1967). There again one finds that same features that Zahavi’s stripped-down account of the psychological *epoché* delineate: phenomenological psychology zeroes in on human beings in their psychic aspect as a theme, focusing on “inner experience,” and pulling back from all human bodiliness in relation to psychophysical questions (Husserl, 1971). In addition, from the start of this essay to its end, Husserl, who only in the first page of section three of the seven-section essay discusses in depth the procedures of phenomenological psychology, spends most of his time speaking of the importance of transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology investigates the possibilities of science that precede any concrete sciences, but the dignity of its achievement is much higher than other investigations into the possibility of science (Husserl, 1971), and it holds the rank of the fundamental philosophical science (Husserl, 1971). Hence, while Husserl praises those phenomenological psychologists who have surpassed an outer, naturalistic psychology to develop an inner-psychology, an authentic psychology of intentionality (which he dubs “a constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude”), he also reiterates that they nevertheless fall short of the (transcendental) reflection on the ego of *Ideas 1*, on which the “Nachwort” comments (Husserl, 1971). Indeed, pure inner psychology leads beyond itself to transcendental phenomenology, grounded in ultimate self-responsibility (Husserl, 1971), not taking for granted even those

presuppositions that a phenomenological psychology does not question insofar as it leaves unexamined problems having to do with other dimensions than those of the psychic aspects of humanity (Husserl, 1971). Husserl in his *Crisis* precisely identifies these dual viewpoints as demonstrating the paradoxical fact that we belong to the taken-for-granted world of natural life, part of the world, and yet we, as transcendental philosophers, make that very taken-for-grantedness thematic and see how we “have” (Husserl 1970) that world as a transcendental accomplishment (Husserl, 1970).

Nevertheless, in his brief treatment of the psychological phenomenological *epoché* in the “Nachwort,” Husserl’s endorsement of phenomenological psychology’s thematic abstraction depends on what its circumscribed attention to inner experience achieves: an original (*ursprüngliche*, because one is perceptually oriented toward one’s *own* experience) and purely descriptive knowledge of the psychic aspects of human beings. He observes further that such descriptions, which purely and truly bind themselves to what is given in intuition, are commonly named “phenomenological,” with the result that this entire endeavor should be denominated a “phenomenological psychology” (Husserl, 1971). The psychological phenomenological reduction, then, entails not only a thematic abstraction, but it also mandates that one bind oneself to describing accurately what is given in intuition – and one is reminded of Giorgi’s view, which intimately conjoins the transcendental phenomenological reduction with the psychological phenomenological one and mandates a “special sensitivity to the phenomena investigated” and the avoidance of obscuring what is given by imposing past preconceptions on it. In brief, the psychological phenomenological reduction mandates descriptive accuracy (Giorgi, 2012).

While the above considerations place in question Zahavi’s first strategy against Giorgi, namely that for Husserl the psychological phenomenological *epoché* represents only a thematic abstraction that has little to do with the transcendental phenomenological reduction, the “Nachwort” conveys something of a response to Zahavi’s second strategy. According to that strategy, if one grants Giorgi’s position that phenomenological psychology relies on the execution of the transcendental phenomenological reduction, the primacy of that reduction, that is, the thoroughness with which it questions presuppositions and its status as the terminal point to which less thorough variants of reduction are ordered, implies that to clarify phenomena most effectively, one would do best to abandon the psychological phenomenological *epoché*, with the result the phenomenological psychology would ultimately be swallowed up within transcendental phenomenology. Thus, one would concede Giorgi’s point that one cannot do phenomenological psychology without the transcendental reduction, but only at the price of the disappearance of



phenomenological psychology itself. In Husserl's "Nachwort," however, one finds an appreciation for the independence and value-in-its-own right of phenomenological psychology instead of its being merely a way-station en route to transcendental phenomenology. For instance, in his discussion of the methodology of phenomenological psychology, he envisions it as not only producing important typifying and classificatory descriptions but as also constituting "a great self-standing (*einständige*) science" (Husserl, 1971), a science of essences of a community of psychic life according to its a priori structures (Husserl, 1971) – features that Schutz appropriates and applies to his own well-regarded phenomenological psychology (Schutz, 1967).

Later, in section 6, of the "Nachwort," Husserl expresses esteem for an autonomous phenomenological psychology by discussing a history of this subdiscipline, rather than its methodology. He remarks that those opposing transcendental phenomenology have often identified with Franz Brentano's psychology of intentionality for which Husserl feels admiration and gratitude, and he even goes on to applaud the way Brentano transformed Scholastic intentionality into a ground concept of psychology – a great discovery without which phenomenology itself would not have been possible. While Husserl again insists that phenomenological psychology does not reach the level of transcendental phenomenology, he classifies the predecessors of Brentano's psychology in a "phenomenological school" that includes the likes of Locke, Mill, Berkeley, and Hume (although Husserl characterizes Hume as actually engaging more in transcendental phenomenology!) (Husserl, 1971). Husserl continues to note that even those who might reject transcendental phenomenology in order to remain within a psychological standpoint have failed to grasp the importance of the phenomenological version of psychology, which, as an intentional constitutive phenomenology, has opposed natural, outer psychology in favor of pure inner psychology and has thereby established a "constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude" – the name by which Schutz characterizes his own master work of phenomenological psychology (Husserl, 1971). While Husserl reiterates that the self-examination of the ego of such a psychology still does not ascend to the level of self-examination carried out in *Ideas I* (Husserl, 1971), his treatment of the method and history of phenomenological psychology in the "Nachwort" seems to mark out its legitimate prerogative in way that seems to challenge Zahavi's second strategy above that for Husserl phenomenological psychology would amount to nothing more than an evanescent phenomenon to be superseded by a more rigorous transcendental phenomenology.

At the same time, Zahavi could argue that this very history of phenomenological psychology in the "Nachwort" actually proves his point against Giorgi

insofar as Husserl acknowledges that philosophers from Locke to Brentano, who have been engaging in a phenomenological psychology, of high quality and without the distortions that result from hidden prejudices, did not make any use of the transcendental phenomenological *epoché*, which only came to light in *Ideas 1* – which is the point Husserl is making in the “Nachwort” (Zahavi, 2019a; Husserl, 1971). In this regard, it is of interest that Husserl suggests that Hume was engaging in a brand of transcendental phenomenology even though he could not have been formally implementing the transcendental phenomenological reduction, which Husserl himself only discovered two centuries later. Husserl, in fact, seems adept at finding traces of the rigor of the transcendental reduction – dwelling in lived presuppositions, trying to ensure the accuracy of one’s description, or being a detached observer – even in those who do not explicitly effectuate that reduction, including those who put into practice the psychological phenomenological reduction, as Husserl himself conceives it.

However, Zahavi seems to think that Giorgi and his followers *require* the explicit enactment of the transcendental phenomenological reduction as a prelude to phenomenological psychology. This charge and the impracticality and even danger of requiring of it of all phenomenological psychologists serves as the basis for Zahavi’s final criticism of Giorgi, namely that one ought to purify oneself in the transcendental sphere before reverting to the natural attitude to produce phenomenological psychology. This criticism, paralleling his criticism of van Manen above, leads Zahavi to recommend that phenomenological psychologists abandon efforts to put in place first the transcendental phenomenological-*philosophical epoché* or reduction and that they instead focus on other insights and concepts available in the phenomenological tradition, such as intentionality, horizons, or corporeality – all of which would be profitably employed for their psychological investigations. Maybe, though, the question boils down to the degree of explicitness in the implementation of the transcendental phenomenological reduction that Giorgi and his companions expect as a condition for effective phenomenological psychology, as we shall see.

### 3 The Transformational Purification and the Psychological-Phenomenological *Epoché*

Just as one was able to bring forward Husserlian texts in support of the previous two defenses of the phenomenological psychology opened up by the psychological phenomenological *epoché* that Giorgi delineates, so when it

comes to the third defense of the psychological phenomenological *epoché*, which Zahavi dubs the “transformational purification” defense and which he opposes, Zahavi begins by lining up Husserl texts that seem to support this defense. This third defense, by arguing that one needs to establish a strong phenomenological foundation before returning to the natural attitude to set up one’s phenomenological psychology, affords an alternative way to demonstrate that one can only engage in quality phenomenological psychology if one does so in conjunction with the transcendental phenomenological reduction (Zahavi, 2019a). After bringing forward this Husserlian textual evidence favorable to the third defense, Zahavi takes up the view of Larry Davidson and Lisa Cosgrove who argue that a transcendently purified phenomenological psychology would be characterized by a first-person way of proceeding, attentive to intentional structures and the lived experience of its subjects as opposed to physical causes (Zahavi, 2019a). One can find echoes of this notion of transcendental purification within other supportive texts from Husserl to which Zahavi does not refer but in which Husserl remarks, for example, on how psychological reform is a hidden implication of the transcendental reform (Husserl, 1971); how the practice of transcendental philosophy can reform the sciences of the natural attitude (Husserl, 2002, 84); how the turning back (*Rückkehr*) to everyday life (just as one must do to care for one’s children) can make worldly what one has discovered transcendently (Husserl, 2002); and on how transcendental insights are “psychologized” when one returns to the natural attitude that itself undergoes correction through such discoveries (Husserl, 2002).

However, instead of now supporting his rejection of this transformational purification perspective through a battery of alternative Husserlian texts that counter it, as occurred in his opposition to the previous two defenses (that he also resisted), Zahavi now directly rebuffs Davidson and Cosgrove’s account. According to their account, one has to leave the natural attitude to access the personal attitude (although they overlook that Husserl’s personal or personalistic attitude is actually to be found within the natural attitude), but Zahavi objects that, since the personal attitude is *already* one’s starting point in the natural attitude, there is no need for some sophisticated phenomenological methodology to gain access to it, such as an *epoché* or reduction (Zahavi, 2019a). Basically, without appealing to Husserl, Zahavi simply argues that it appears unreasonable to assume that no one can perform valuable qualitative research unless one has first executed the transcendental phenomenological reduction (Zahavi, 2019a). Likewise, he rejects the related position of James Morley, who finds it hard to comprehend how one could mindfully employ the psychological phenomenological reduction without appreciating its derivation from the “hyper-reflective position of transcendental reduction” (Morley,

2010; Zahavi, 2019a). Zahavi additionally disputes the necessity for any kind of transformational purification by pointing out that various attempts by psychologists to achieve such a transformational purification often ends up entrapping these psychologists in intricate “methodological metareflections” (Zahavi, 2019a) and even misinterpretations. Besides, it simply is not necessary for one to implement the transcendental reduction and *epoché* so that one might be able to attend carefully to inner experience, to set aside distortional prejudices, to achieve accurate descriptions, to get closer to things themselves, to become cognizant of experiences one did not realize one was having, or to directly intuit essences (Zahavi, 2019a). These are the kinds of methodological procedures one can put in place just by striving to be reflective. Hence, instead of phenomenological psychologists making the *epoché* or the reduction central, Zahavi recommends a dialogue between phenomenology and other disciplines in which those disciplines might make use of different concepts and insights within the phenomenological tradition, as did Jaspers, Minkowski, and Katz (Zahavi, 2019a). The work of these and other classical phenomenological psychologists exhibited many of the features of inquiry that are already spelled out in the *Logical Investigations* (before Husserl’s discovery of the reduction and *epoché* appropriate for transcendental *philosophy*) and that Zahavi lists, such as carefully attending to phenomena in their full concreteness, producing unprejudiced descriptions, and avoiding the distortion of phenomena because one imposes unrecognized theoretical presuppositions on them (Zahavi, 2019a). In the end, Zahavi asks whether one will be more likely to arrive at impressive, innovative, and influential results if one follows the heterodox methodology of these “classical phenomenological psychologists and psychiatrists or the more recent and more orthodox approach of Giorgi and colleagues” (Zahavi, 2019a).

#### 4 Conclusion: Is It Necessary (or Salutary) to Implement the Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction to Do Effective Phenomenological Psychology?

Throughout this paper, it has become clear throughout a variety of Husserl’s texts that the fundamental methodological attitude of phenomenological psychology, initiated by an *epoché* that is more than thematic abstraction, is suffused with methodological features (e.g., non-participant observation, reflectivity toward the naivete in which one had just been immersed, etc.) that parallel or resemble those to be found with transcendental phenomenological philosophy, introduced by its distinctive *epoché*, which shares more than

a mere name with its psychological counterpart. Husserl was generous in recognizing the operation of phenomenological methods even apart from the transcendental phenomenological reduction. For instance, he quite willingly accepted the commonsense assignment of the title “phenomenological” to descriptions that bind themselves to what is given in intuition, even though no formal *epoché* has been enacted, just as he admitted the debt transcendental phenomenology owed to Brentano’s phenomenological psychology and just as he was even willing to denominate the empiricist philosophers as a “phenomenological school” and Hume as a transcendental phenomenologist, long before he explicitly developed the idea of *epoché*. No doubt Zahavi would concur that the features typical of the methodology found at its most exemplary in transcendental phenomenological philosophy can be found in disciplinary practices in which one has not explicitly adopted the phenomenological reduction, as he was able to detect in the heterodox classical phenomenological psychologists or even in the *Logic Investigations* before *Ideas 1*. Zahavi’s critique of Giorgi, most basically, then, is that he is too orthodox in insisting that one must formally implement the transcendental phenomenological philosophical *epoché* in order to perform phenomenological psychology adequately (Zahavi, 2019a).

And yet, one can inquire if Giorgi is quite so insistently formal as Zahavi’s charge of orthodoxy imputes. To be sure in his essay “Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method,” Giorgi claims that one “*has to* assume the attitude of phenomenological reduction” (Giorgi, 2012, my italics), which he cashes out in terms of wariness about affirming that the way things present themselves is the way that they are and about imposing past understandings on present data, and, positively, in terms of exhibiting special sensitivity to the phenomena at hand. Husserl, though, appears to be less prescriptive than Giorgi insofar as he detects these kinds of features in a phenomenological psychology that presupposed no prior implementation of the transcendental phenomenological reduction.

However, one could wonder if Giorgi is that much of a methodological purist just by considering carefully the very pages in “Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method,” where he insists that one has to assume the attitude of the phenomenological reduction. In that section, he provides almost no detail at all about the mechanics of implementing the transcendental phenomenological reduction, in contrast with Husserl’s usually more extensive treatment of the steps one needs to take (Husserl, 1960). Furthermore, Giorgi concentrates more on the methodological attitude toward the phenomena to which his methodology is directed than the specific procedures of the methodology itself. Finally, when Giorgi swiftly passes *in the very next paragraph* to

the psychological phenomenological reduction, it suggests that, rather than conceiving the transcendental phenomenological reduction as an absolute requirement, he takes it more as means for investigators to adjust their attitude in a way that will facilitate them getting it right with the phenomena studied.

His 2009 book *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology* does not clearly require that phenomenological psychologists first implement the transcendental phenomenological *epoché*. After describing the philosophical phenomenological method, Giorgi (2009) calls for two attitudinal changes for the scientific, psychological phenomenological method: that one operate at a psychological rather than a philosophical level and that one be psychologically sensitive but not philosophically so. It could be that Giorgi is simply describing how phenomenological psychology as an approach to knowing ought to work and how it differs from transcendental phenomenology and not insisting that any individual psychologist must first implement the transcendental phenomenological reduction. In addition, later he argues that any phenomenological analysis has to assume the attitude of the phenomenological reduction, but he immediately distinguishes different levels of the reduction, avoiding any conflation of the transcendental phenomenological reduction with the scientific phenomenological reduction needed for phenomenological psychology (Giorgi 2009).

This interpretation of Giorgi finds further confirmation when he concludes his essay “Phenomenology and the Practice of Science” by asserting that “to apply phenomenological method correctly one has to have at least a *minimum* understanding of phenomenological philosophy” (Giorgi, 2010, the italics are mine) – a demand that seems to fall short of an exigency for a prior, rigorous enactment of the transcendental phenomenological reduction. In addition, in his essay “A Phenomenological Perspective on Certain Qualitative Research Methods,” Giorgi acknowledges that contemporary researchers run into difficulties with the phenomenological reduction often because they misunderstand it as a method that must be practiced “at its ideal limit” (Giorgi, 1994). He also expresses the belief that researchers might find the method more amenable if they could see that the very practice of science itself “often involves analogous steps” (Giorgi, 1994). Giorgi also runs through a wide variety of qualitative, phenomenologically-informed investigators, such as J. van Manen, C. Moustakas, J. M. Dabbs, E. Straus, and J. Martin, whose diverse methodologies seem to have executed “analogous reductions.” He concludes his essay with a comment, flexible and widely tolerant of diverse methodologies, all of which can be taken to exemplify the reduction: “Thus, while there is resistance to the reduction stated directly, abstractly, and ‘generically,’ researchers working with concrete problems

recommend the same steps under different names” (Giorgi, 1994). Thus, Giorgi extols a wide variety of phenomenological psychological approaches without certifying whether any of them first formally adopted the stance of the transcendental phenomenological reduction – indeed he even seems to think that even those who may be positively hostile to such a reduction could be seen to be proceeding analogously to those who take it up.

As he did with Giorgi, Zahavi would no doubt place Morley in the “orthodox” camp, and indeed his comment that one cannot mindfully apply the psychological reduction independently of “the hyper-reflective” position of transcendental reduction might warrant such a placement. But Morley’s full comment is more nuanced and even could be said to betray a reluctance to require the transcendental phenomenological reduction as a condition for engaging in an effective phenomenological psychology, “I must say, however, that I find it hard to understand how one could mindfully apply the psychological reduction without first grasping its full context from within the hyper-reflective position of transcendental reduction” (Morley, 2010). To reconcile Giorgi’s and Morley’s persistence on the need for the transcendental reduction as a condition for carrying out phenomenological psychology with their flexibility and diffidence in regard to establishing it as an unconditional standard, one might speculate that both Giorgi and Morley are fully familiar with phenomenological philosophy and that they have thereby developed a deep appreciation for its rigor, disinterestedness, and attention to what is given. This familiarity has so imbued their own psychological research and so enhanced and perfected their investigative skills that they feel impelled to require all other researching phenomenological psychologists to commence their research by implementing the transcendental phenomenological reduction. At the same time, they are wary of absolutizing the reduction and hence manifest some hesitancy (“I find it hard to understand ...”) and flexibility. Perhaps one might say that the very endeavor to make the transcendental phenomenological reduction indispensable reflects and springs from a deeper recognition, perhaps less imperial and less bent on orthodoxy, of how salutary such familiarity with transcendental phenomenological philosophy and its reduction might be for the conduct of phenomenological psychology. If so, then Giorgi and Morley’s views share some of the values apparent in the transcendental purification defense and in Husserl’s own recognition of how the transition beyond phenomenological psychology to transcendental phenomenology effectively radicalizes, strengthens, and intensifies methodological tendencies already implicit within phenomenological psychology. In fact, the endeavor to criticize diluted understandings of phenomenology, seen for instance in van Manen’s and Zahavi’s criticism of Smith, may in fact reflect a desire not to lose the rigor and accuracy

that familiarity with transcendental phenomenology can bring to those undertaking phenomenological psychology.

But Zahavi ends his treatment of van Manen and Smith by emphasizing that the *epoché* and reduction are especially important for transcendental phenomenological philosophy, however, he doubts that those applying phenomenology need to bear them in mind and recommends instead informing their research with “central phenomenological concepts such as the lifeworld, intentionality, empathy, pre-reflective experience, horizon, historicity, and the lived body” (Zahavi, 2019b; Zahavi, 2019a). Phenomenological psychological researchers should just “forget about the *epoché*,” whose implementation is crucial for phenomenological philosophy to break from the natural attitude, but not for phenomenological psychological investigations (Zahavi, 2019b). Zahavi’s emphasis, his attempt to shift phenomenological psychologist away from the reduction and *epoché*, seems perfectly appropriate in an essay in which he criticizes Smith’s and van Manen’s appropriation of phenomenology. In that essay, Zahavi illustrates how their portrayals of philosophical phenomenology fail to present it accurately and end up being reductionistic, oversimplifying, and indicative of “poor understanding” (Zahavi, 2019b) depicting a mere “picture-book phenomenology” (Zahavi, 2019b). Hence, instead of conflating phenomenological philosophy with their phenomenological psychology, it would have been better to distinguish clearly phenomenological philosophy; and a strategy to achieve this differentiation would be to consign the *epoché* and reduction to secondary topics in phenomenological psychology. At the same time, Zahavi concurs with van Manen’s sincere recommendation that phenomenological psychologists read and familiarize themselves with the literature of leading phenomenologists and contemporary phenomenological philosophy, and Zahavi’s encouragement that those promoting procedures called phenomenological “should be familiar with phenomenological theory and with its philosophical origins” (Zahavi, 2019b) seems to converge with Giorgi’s less rigoristic enjoinder that phenomenological psychologists ought to have “at least a minimum understanding of phenomenological philosophy” (Giorgi, 2010). In a sense, Zahavi’s preoccupation, particularly in relationship to Smith and van Manen, about separating out phenomenological philosophy with its rigor and thoroughness from phenomenological psychology, is not one that should bother him with regard to Giorgi and his followers, who seem to acknowledge the distinctiveness and loftiness of transcendental phenomenological philosophy and who seek to elevate phenomenological psychology to its level, although Zahavi sees the need for a certain disconnection of the two and hence battles against Giorgi’s prescriptive conjunction of the two. But if



Giorgi and his followers are talking more about a salutary rather than a mandated linkage, as I have suggested, then one might speak of phenomenological philosophy as being for them, as Zahavi expresses it, “an important source of inspiration” (Zahavi, 2019a). In addition, if Giorgi recognizes the philosophy/psychology difference and does not tend to dilute the philosophy, as Zahavi accuses Smith and van Manen of doing, it is not necessary to divert Giorgi and his followers away from considering the *epoché* and reduction that are more pertinent to transcendental phenomenological philosophy, provided Giorgi does not tie them too tightly to phenomenological psychology. The phenomenological philosophical *epoché* and reduction might just function then as an “inspiration” for the particular attitude of responsibility, evidence-basedness, and fidelity to the objects studied that might guide one’s pursuit of phenomenological psychology and that might include applying central concepts like intentionality and the life-world. It does not seem necessary, then, to rule out the philosophical *epoché* and reduction as possible sources of inspiration and only focus on the concepts especially since these concepts themselves were originally discovered by taking up the philosophical *epoché* and reduction (or their variants) and since adopting an attitude analogous to them in phenomenological psychology can assist psychologists in seeing how those concepts can find application.

## 5 Schutzian Afterthoughts: Phenomenological Psychology and the *Epoché* as Anthropological Fact

Finally, Alfred Schutz provides an outstanding example of what phenomenological psychology might be in his *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, whose appended methodological note at the end of the first chapter, defines the work itself as a stand-alone phenomenological psychology following the parameters laid out in “Nachwort zu meinen *Ideen*” (Schutz, 1967). This phenomenological psychology then focuses on the inner appearance of the psychic but also examines the a priori, eidetic structures of a society of minds, making only a limited use of the transcendental phenomenological reduction and then dispensing with it, in order to build up a “constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude” (Schutz, 1967). Schutz makes a profitable, flexible, and temporary use of the transcendental phenomenological reduction to articulate the temporal structure of consciousness. In addition, instead of modeling his position on the intentional structure of perception, as Husserl often does, Schutz develops an intentional theory of motivation and action.

He does this, for the kind of “systematic purposes” that Zahavi thinks guide all the great phenomenologists (Zahavi, 2019b), namely, to present a philosophical foundation, a picture of social reality appropriate for social scientists who interpret a world of actors already interpreting their own world, in contrast to natural scientists who investigate the world of nature, of molecules and electrons, in which the natural scientists are the only interpreters (Schutz, 1962a, 58–59). Schutz’s philosophical foundation supports the Weberian *verstehende Soziologie* and is able to explain through an account of action based on human intentionality what the meanings of actions are for the actors undertaking them. Schutz not only abides by his eidetic analysis, but his phenomenological psychology underpins two pieces of empirical work, in which he constructs types and depicts what the world means for actors, that is, what purposes, in-order-to motives, and interpretive frameworks pertain to the Stranger and the Homecomer (Schutz, 1964a, 1964b). One finds in his work a well-balanced, independent phenomenological psychology that follows almost to a tee the prescriptions for phenomenological psychology that Husserl spells out in his “Nachwort”; that makes use of the transcendental phenomenological reduction and exhibits in a psychology the strengths of transcendental phenomenology, as Giorgi might hope for; and that deploys the reduction flexibly and creatively wields other Husserlian concepts to make creative empirical contributions, as did the classical phenomenological psychologists that Zahavi admires.

But there is another side to Schutz’s thought that encompasses the utter fluidity of the notion of *epoché* itself. Here a second notion of *epoché*, which Schutz develops in his phenomenological-psychological essay “On Multiple Realities,” is of relevance. In that essay Schutz argues that various non-pragmatic finite provinces of meaning (e.g., phantasy, play, dreams, literature) break off from the province of pragmatic everyday life bent on mastery of the world and they do so via distinctive kinds of *epochés*. Schutz articulates how each of these provinces of meaning exhibits six cognitive features that constitute a rather comprehensive transformation of the person who embarks upon them in contrast with one immersed in pragmatic everyday life (which realizes the six cognitive features in its own way). For instance, one’s form of spontaneity differs from everyday life’s pragmatic endeavor to realize a practical, pre-designed project through bodily movement. One’s tension of consciousness is more relaxed (e.g. in phantasy and dreaming), one’s experience of one’s self is less unified as one straddles both everyday life and a non-pragmatic province of meaning (watching a dramatic performance while capable of reengaging pragmatic everyday life should a fire break out), and one experiences time and sociality differently. Above all, though, one separates oneself from pragmatic

everyday life through various versions of the *epoché*, each of which bears a resemblance to the transcendental phenomenological reduction, particularly insofar as through them one disconnects and yet gains access to novel domains of experience, as one might do, for instance, when the curtain of the dramatic performance opens. One such province of meaning, for instance, is the world of scientific theory, whose fundamental orientation is “not to master the world but to observe and possibly understand it” (Schutz 1962b).

Paradoxically, while the transcendental phenomenological *epoché* provides the paradigm for these various analogous *epochés* that lie at the root of multiple realities such as phantasy, play, and religious experience, one could say that transcendental phenomenology, with its own distinctive *epoché*, here becomes only one of many possible ways of executing the *epoché* of theoretical science and one possible exemplification of the theoretical province of meaning, alongside, for example, the natural and social sciences and other theoretical possibilities. Furthermore, the theoretical province is one among many other provinces of meaning, alongside reading literature, appreciating art, or immersing oneself in a musical concert, for instance. While this might seem to relativize the place of transcendental phenomenology and its *epoché*, Schutz's purpose seems more aimed at asserting an anthropological fact – namely that we human beings possess the marvelous capacity to disconnect from everyday life and its intent on pragmatic mastery of that life's details and that we are able to alter and transform our attitudes in such a way that we gain access to whole new worlds or see this world in a wholly new light, creatively, as we may have never seen it before. It is to the credit of transcendental phenomenology and its highly distinctive *epoché*, which Schutz never denies even as he works to accommodate its theoretical demands in his flexibly deployed phenomenological psychology, that it has given perhaps the most clear and thorough expression of what such a capacity to disengage and to see anew and with novelty is. For that reason, Schutz takes the transcendental phenomenological *epoché* as paradigmatic for all the finite provinces of meaning. But the anthropological fact it captures and expresses far exceeds transcendental phenomenological philosophy, and that fact can be found operative way beyond the boundaries of transcendental phenomenology itself – for instance, in art, music, and play; in science; in the work of Brentano, Hume, Jaspers, Minkowski, and Katz; and even in the case of Smith and others, however faulty their grasp of such phenomenology might be, and in those many figures who, as Giorgi ironically indicates, resist the phenomenological reduction in its generality even as they follow analogously its steps.

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