

A vertical, black and white, high-contrast portrait of Edmund Husserl, showing his eyes, glasses, and a full beard, positioned on the left side of the cover.

THE **HUSSERLIAN** MIND
EDITED BY HANNE JACOBS

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THE HUSSERLIAN MIND

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is widely regarded as the principal founder of phenomenology, one of the most important movements in twentieth-century philosophy. His work inspired subsequent figures such as Martin Heidegger, his most renowned pupil, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, all of whom engaged with and developed his insights in significant ways. His work on fundamental problems such as intentionality, consciousness, and subjectivity continues to animate philosophical research and argument.

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PHENOMENOLOGY, TELEOLOGY, AND THEOLOGY

Emiliano Trizio

Theology is the most important part and the overarching theme of what Husserl systematically referred to as the highest and ultimate questions (*höchsten und letzten Fragen*) along with the closely connected problems of immortality, freedom, the sense of history, and the possibility of a happy and meaningful human existence. These themes, in turn, jointly provide the object of a specific philosophical discipline belonging to phenomenological philosophy, namely, metaphysics in the strict and preeminent sense, which, for Husserl, follows (and presupposes) metaphysics as the result of the philosophical elucidation of the positive sciences. Husserl's personal religious affiliation is well known and so is his belief that an autonomous philosophy necessarily leads to teleology and theology as an "unconfessional way to God" (Husserl 2013, 259). His philosophical reflections on religion as a cultural phenomenon and the place of religion within the overall historical development of European civilization have also garnered some attention (Hart 1994) as well as have his sparse and rough attempts to give phenomenological dignity to religious experience itself (Steinbock 2012). One can also add that Husserl's ideas on these matters have not always been met with sympathy. Notwithstanding Husserl's sincere Evangelical faith, Christian thinkers have found too little proximity between Husserl's conception of God and the God of revealed religion (Housset 2010), while post-Husserlian phenomenologists, starting with Levinas, have regarded it as still ensnared by traditional ontology and metaphysics (Levinas 1974, 48). Neither the broader issues concerning the history and philosophy of religion, nor these criticisms arising within phenomenological theology will be addressed in the following pages.

My aim will be limited to a discussion of how theology fits within Husserl's conception of the task and method of philosophy, i.e., how it relates to his project of developing philosophy as a universal science of being that is grounded in phenomenology and able to overcome the objectivism of traditional metaphysics. In particular, in the first section, I will show that God constitutes a necessary theme of phenomenological philosophy. The second section will situate theology within the system of disciplines that phenomenological philosophy comprises, and in the final section, I will outline Husserl's program of a non-objectivist theology and its specificity within the metaphysical tradition.

God as a necessary scientific theme of phenomenological philosophy

Husserl never concealed his interest for traditional and broad metaphysical issues, nor did he hesitate to outline his project of turning philosophy into a rigorous discipline capable of bringing these issues within the purview of a genuinely scientific investigation. His early, almost exclusive focus on metaphysical problems connected to the positive sciences and on traditional metaphysical views concerning the relation between the subject and the world are motivated by the proximity of these problems to the theory of knowledge, which, for him, holds the role of being the foundational discipline for any future metaphysics (see Trizio 2019). In other words, within Husserl's project of a philosophy built from below (Husserl 1987, 41), the ethico-religious problems are to be addressed at a later stage, once the preliminary elucidation of factual reality by means of a radical theory of science (*Wissenschaftslehre*) is acquired. The effect of the transcendental turn was not to broaden the scope of Husserl's philosophical program, but to finally bring forth a method and a terminology apt to recast the highest metaphysical questions, i.e., the questions that are specifically metaphysical. Already in 1906–1907, Husserl, when describing “the world of phenomena” disclosed by the epoché, i.e., the domain of absolute givenness pertaining to the phenomenological theory of knowledge, mentions the three thematic spheres of the classic special metaphysics (*metaphysica specialis*): nature, soul, and God as correlates of the respective sciences (Husserl 2008, 190–191). While in 1907, he affirms that the absolute data of consciousness provide the field for all scientific investigations including the one concerning God (Husserl 1999, 7). These claims do not merely express Husserl's optimism about the scope of phenomenological philosophy or about whether its method can be stretched (or twisted) to fit the problem of the nature and existence of God. Rather, what is at stake is the thesis that the science of transcendental subjectivity is what decides about all possibilities of sense and non-sense, in all conceivable domains. In particular, as Husserl says in a text written in 1908:

It is also clear that behind absolute consciousness there can be no other being and that everything of which we should be able to say meaningfully and rightfully, “it is,” must be something that constitutes itself in consciousness or is attained by means of abstraction in relation to what is constituted.

Husserl 2003, 72, my translation

Here Husserl adds – in a way that appears to be incidental, but, as we shall see, is far from it – that this also holds for general objects and ideas (in the “Kantian” sense). They both imply a relation to possible consciousness, which in turn refers back to actual consciousness. In sum, if there is a God, “[i]t must be something to be established (*Begründendes*) and in some way extracted (*Entnehmendes*) from absolute consciousness, and it must be rooted (*Wurzelndes*) in it” (Husserl 2003, 72). Here Husserl adds the further important remark that nature and spirit (*Geist*), intended as correlates of consciousness, provide the only and necessary basis for the knowledge of whatever might exist “beyond” them. Furthermore, given that if something exists, be it God or any other conceivable entity, it must be the object of a possible genuine science (Husserl 1959, 322), the possibility of a scientific theology appears as a theme that transcendental phenomenology can in no way elude. This task is eloquently formulated in a famous passage of *Cartesian Meditations*, where Husserl, summing up his renewed, non-objectivistic ideal of universal philosophy, states that the ethico-religious problems must be addressed on the only ground on which everything that can have a sense for us can be investigated, that is, the factual monadic sphere (Husserl 1977, 156–157).¹

In conclusion, rather than looking with suspicion or even contempt at Husserl's writing on these topics, or regarding them as a superfluous or even a misleading appendix to his philosophy, one should acknowledge that a critical examination of theological notions is necessary by virtue of the very essence of phenomenological philosophy. As we are about to see, Husserl did attempt to find rational foundations for the religious belief that he professed since his early conversion to Protestantism under the influence of Tomáš Masarik. Still, the last thing that one could expect from phenomenology, is to not address these problems at all. They pose a challenge that a universal philosophy must meet in one way or another. Indeed, also attempting to dismiss all theological concepts, by exposing their absurdity and by committing the very idea of an absolute being, a "creator of all things," to the flames of nonsense, could be a legitimate endeavor, but, in keeping with spirit of phenomenological philosophy, it would require doing so on rigorous scientific grounds.²

The place of theology within phenomenological philosophy

In the surviving parts of the *Vorlesung über die Grundprobleme der Ethik und Wertlehre* (Lectures on Foundational Issues in Ethics and Theory of Value) of 1911, Husserl develops an account of the different philosophical disciplines that jointly make up philosophy as grounded in phenomenology. A point of interest of this account lies in the fact that Husserl presents this "system" of philosophical disciplines as an inevitable consequence of the development of the lowest level of "pure theoretical interest" (Husserl 1988, 163, my translation). Pure theoretical interest appears inhabited by a tendency (*Tendenz*) or a *teleology* that, at first implicitly, in a hidden way, and, subsequently, explicitly, leads to the striving towards a universal form of knowledge that is perfect (or complete [*vollkommen*]) in all respects. The difference between the initial hidden tendency and the following self-conscious striving marks precisely the ascent to philosophy proper, which makes explicit the ideal of perfect knowledge, articulated in different disciplines connected by relations of foundation of different kinds. The perfection or completeness in question concerns both the full extent of rationally meaningful problems and the clarification of the intellectual endeavors aiming to solve them. In other words, it concerns the disclosure of all the thematic provinces of theoretical investigation as well the elucidation of the forms of rationality they require, i.e., their *ultimate foundation*. On the one hand, philosophy aims at an extensive theoretical universality, and, on the other, at an intensive rational transparency of the theoretical accomplishments themselves, which makes possible the establishment of a universal science *in an absolute sense*, i.e., one in which the essential correlation between reason and being is completely elucidated.³

In §4 ("A priori philosophy and metaphysics"), Husserl details this idea of philosophy, which, in an altogether classical way, rests upon the cardinal distinction between a posteriori and a priori. To appreciate the interplay of these two levels in the ideal of a perfect knowledge of the world, one must stress that the truths of our judgments, and specifically of those that are based on different forms of experience, as well as the logical connection of such truths into theories, are not the highest cognitive values (Husserl 1988, 178). Rather, a perfect knowledge requires the elucidation of such truths in light of the disciplines that Husserl referred to as pertaining to the theory of science (*wissenschaftstheoretisch*): in the first place, the formal theory of being provided by formal ontology and extended into the *mathesis universalis*, but also the different regional ontologies that work out the a priori of the corresponding regions of being. Ultimately, there is the noetic a priori that concerns acts of knowledge (see also Cavallaro, Chapter 33 in this volume). In short, all these sciences have a function pertaining to the theory of science in so far as they are concerned only with possible being and its correlation to possible

acts of knowledge. Indeed, in appendix 6 (*Beilage VI*, which supplements §4), Husserl says that the ensemble of all these disciplines belongs to “a pure philosophy as a theory of ideas” (*reine Philosophie als Ideenlehre*) (Husserl 1988, 229). However, these disciplines do not even amount to the totality of the a priori part of philosophy:

Yet, the absolute theory of being comprises not only knowledge of real being, knowledge of the factual psycho-physical reality subject to the philosophical regulation of the epistemological [*wissenschaftstheoretisch*] doctrines of principles; rather, it includes also the consideration of nature, nature in the narrower sense and in the broader sense with respect to value, thus under the philosophical regulation of the axiological-practical doctrines of principles, and, ultimately, also under the unifying teleological, or we could also say, theological ideals.

Husserl 1988, 180

Belonging to the sphere of the pure a priori are the a priori axiological and ethical disciplines, the disciplines investigating the a priori idea of teleology, and, in close connection to the latter, the a priori pertaining to the idea of God. The passage just cited seems to restrict this level of philosophical investigation to nature in the broadest sense, as does the following claim that the “philosophy of nature as theoretical philosophy of nature is not philosophy of nature in the highest and ultimate sense” (Husserl 1988, 180). However, Husserl immediately clarifies that the totality of worldly reality, including what pertains to the idea of spirit (*Geist*), is subjected to the same kind of higher order considerations (*ibid.*). The phenomenological source of this extension of the “problems of reality” (*Wirklichkeitsprobleme*) (*ibid.*) beyond the elucidation of empirical knowledge in light of the disciplines that pertain specifically to the theory of science, lies in the fundamental distinction between theoretical, axiological, and practical acts, and, consequently, between theoretical, axiological, and practical reason. This consideration or, more precisely, reconsideration of reality leads to the problem of its conformity to the highest ideals of being and life (*ibid.*), and, ultimately to the notions of God and creation (Husserl 1988, 181). At this stage, these kinds of investigations also remain at the a priori level, and indeed Husserl speaks of a “pure philosophical theology and teleology” (Husserl 1988, 182). The other fundamental part of philosophy, the a posteriori part, is required, to answer questions that concern matters of fact. Husserl calls this a posteriori part “metaphysics.”

Husserl, in the aforementioned appendix (*Beilage VI*), specifies that the a posteriori part of philosophy includes three different types of disciplines: 1) The ultimate theoretical completion (*Vollendung*) of the sciences of nature and the sciences of spirit in light of the disciplines pertaining to the theory of science. This type of metaphysics corresponds to “entire unity of being, where this term is understood as excluding any concerns for value predicates” (Husserl 1988, 230); 2) The a posteriori disciplines that, instead, consider factual reality with a specific interest for its axiological and practical predicates, such as aesthetics, ethics, pedagogy, and politics. The disciplines here in question are in their applied form when they take into consideration specific matters of fact belonging to the world. Furthermore, they too play a role here only insofar as they are informed by the corresponding a priori disciplines, which they presuppose if they are to be intended as part of philosophy; 3) The a posteriori discipline “empirical teleology and theology” (*ibid.*) which would arise out of a philosophical completion or out of a more radical reshaping (*Neuausbildung; Neubegründung*) of what Husserl calls “naturally developed teleology and theology” in light of the already mentioned corresponding pure disciplines. It is clear that Husserl’s characterization of the relation between this third level of metaphysics and the existing forms of corresponding investigations differs from the previous

two. This, however, is a consequence of the fact that these three parts of a posteriori philosophy result from the integration within the system of a priori truths of empirical investigations whose pre-existing degree of scientificity decreases from the first to the last. Husserl is presumably referring to the fact that, while the empirical sciences of nature and spirit are by and large established as positive sciences (although not as genuine, philosophical ones) and while normative sciences such as aesthetics and ethics are at least at the center of a wide philosophical foundational effort, teleology and theology appear rather as motives bequeathed to us by metaphysical and religious traditions that nowadays enjoy little credit. In spite of this, Husserl does not hesitate to claim that empirical teleology and theology is the “highest science of reality,” encompassing reality as considered from the standpoint of all types of rationality (i.e., theoretical, axiological, and practical). As such, it presupposes all previous levels of the sciences of reality as well as their philosophical completion through the corresponding a priori disciplines.⁴

Let us draw some conclusions from this quick survey of Husserl’s 1911 formulation of the idea of philosophy. Two cardinal distinctions have surfaced, which are of fundamental importance to the context of this study. The first is the cardinal distinction between pure a priori theory of being and a posteriori theory of factual reality. Within the system of sciences that emerges from a systematic unfolding of this distinction, we can also notice a second cardinal distinction, that between sciences of pure being (here, “Dasein”), i.e., being considered as simple correlate of theoretical reason, excluding any axiological and practical predicates, and being considered not only as the correlate of theoretical reason, but also as the correlate of axiological and practical reason. It is at the second level, which by necessity is founded on the first level, that teleological and theological considerations play their role. Such considerations, in turn, hinge on the fundamental notion of God conceived as the most perfect being, creator of both the natural and the spiritual world. A powerful description of the idea of God is in appendix 4 (*Beilage IV*) which is annexed to §3:

God as idea, as idea of the most perfect being; as idea of the most perfect life in which the most perfect “world” constitutes itself, which from itself creatively develops the most perfect spiritual world in relation to a most perfect nature. Philosophy as idea as the correlate of the idea of God, as absolute science of the absolute being, as science of the pure idea of God and as science of absolutely existing being.

Husserl 1988, 225–226

In this passage, the traditional ideal of God as “most perfect being” is seen specifically through the lenses of the phenomenological correlation between world and transcendental life. The most perfect world, i.e., one in which a cultural historical life develops towards perfection, in relation to a nature that is itself “most perfect,” constitutes itself in divine life. However, this notion of “constitution,” appears immediately in conjunction with the idea of “creation.” This passage does not just state that the idea of a “perfect transcendental subject” corresponds to the idea of perfect cultural and natural world as its constitutive performance because it contains the idea of a “creative development,” which does not simply express the ideally perfect/complete character of the transcendental life in question. In other words, the problem is not merely to define an ideal with respect to which any factually existing transcendental life, along with its constitutive correlates, represent only an imperfect, lower stage of development because this idea must account for the very existence of the lower levels of such a “finite,” lower level, transcendental life. The problem thus regards the conceivability of additionally attributing to this ideal of a most perfect life a “realizing” force (Husserl 1988, 180–181), i.e., to make sense of the idea of creation from within phenomenological philosophy. Husserl does not hesitate to

define the problem of creation as “the ultimate ontological problem” (*letztes Seinsproblem*) and develops a famous parallel with Plato’s form of the good (see Trizio 2020b). In the following line of the passage just quoted, we realize that the idea of God is not just a theme that a universal philosophy must, by definition, address, but that it also encompasses in itself the totality of the themes of such a philosophy. In other words, the idea of God would be implicit in the very telos of philosophy, i.e., to become “an absolute science of absolute being” (Husserl 1988, 226). The following lines of the text outlines, in the form of questions, what the main theological themes are that Husserl will evoke time and again throughout his work (Husserl 1988, 226). In the next section, I will try to present an outline of the desired non-objectivist theology grounded in transcendental phenomenology.

Outline of a non-objectivist theology

According to Husserl, traditional metaphysics in general and modern rationalistic metaphysics in particular rest on the fatal mistake he calls “objectivism.” By objectivism, which appears in different guises, Husserl understands the conception that the being of the world or other entities deemed ontologically superior to it (as is the case, for instance of Plato’s forms) exists independently from constituting consciousness. Only the discovery of the transcendental correlation makes it possible to overcome the objectivism of the Western tradition and the crisis of philosophy resulting from it, paving the way to a genuinely scientific philosophy. Paradigmatically, in a philosophy such as Descartes’, the soul, the world, and God, have been replaced by metaphysical substructions, which in turn find a fixed position within the unity of a demonstrative, rational system (Husserl 1970, §§18–20). Starting with the cogito conceived as an axiom, Descartes sets out to prove the existence of God and, from there, that of the external world, which is nothing but the objectivistic interpretation of the mathematical nature of modern physics (see Trizio 2020a). The game is not fundamentally different if, following one or the other version of the so-called cosmological or design arguments, the existence of the world is presupposed in order to infer the existence of a first cause or a sublime maker respectively. Descartes’s so-called causal proof of the existence of God (in the *Third Meditation*), begins with the existence of the mind/soul and of its representational content (the ideas); in the other aforementioned a posteriori arguments, it is the contingent existence of the world or its likewise contingent teleological order that are presupposed. In all such cases, phenomenologically speaking, God is a transcendence arrived at starting from another transcendence via some kind of inference (even Descartes’ soul is, by all means, a transcendence because it is just a part of the human, mundane subject).⁵ Understandably, Husserl credits Berkeley with proposing an “immanent species of teleological proof” (Husserl 2019, 157). Within Berkeley’s immaterialist metaphysics, which preserves a substantialist/objectivist interpretation of the soul and of God, while dissolving the objectivity of the world in immanent sensations inhering in such spiritual substances, God is introduced to explain not the harmonious structure of a substantial, material world, ultimately described by mathematical physics, but the harmonious ordering of the immanent data of sensation allowing the appearance of a coherent and intersubjective world of experience. In other words, inasmuch as Berkeley’s psychologistic dissolution of physical objectivity prefigures the correct subjectivation of the being of the world operated by the theory of constitution, it also anticipates that, rather than the objective order of the world *per se*, it is the objective order of the lived experiences that can point to an ultimate teleological source. To be sure, Berkeley not only operates with transcendences such as the soul, but also absurdly introduces God as the transcendent *cause* of the immanent data of sensations (Husserl 2019, 429n). Thus, he, too, operates with transcendences such as the soul and causation, and

God remains the point of arrival of an inference. Phenomenology, instead, promotes a radically different approach to the problem of God, one that presupposes the suspension of the natural attitude and the adoption of the transcendental attitude.

The question on the part of the human being in the natural attitude as to the ground of the *factum* of this world becomes, in the transcendental attitude of interiority, the question as to the ground of the being of these factual subjectivities and of the constitution of the world which takes place in them.

Husserl 2019, 402

This passage introduces the way in which transcendental phenomenology allows a non-objectivist reformulation of the traditional theological questions. The world is now the correlate of the constitutive life of the subject, and nothing else beyond it. Its being can in no way be conceived outside of this correlation. In the transcendental attitude, the factual course of constituting life is what replaces the “fact of the world” of the objectivists. This different position of the problem is outlined, but not developed in detail, in a famous and oft-quoted passage of *Ideas I*, in which “God” is evoked in connection with the contingent character of the stream of lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*):

Reduction of the natural world to the absolute of consciousness yields *factual* concatenations of mental processes of consciousness of certain kinds with distinctive regular orders in which a *morphologically ordered* world in the sphere of empirical intuition becomes constituted as their intentional correlate, i.e., a world concerning which there can be classifying and describing sciences. At the same time precisely this world, with respect to the material lower level, admits of becoming determined in the theoretical thinking of the mathematical natural sciences as the “appearance” of a *Nature as determined by physics*, subject to laws of Nature which are exact. In all this, since the *rationality* made actual by the fact is not a rationality demanded by the essence, there is a marvelous *teleology*.

Husserl 1983, 134⁶

What is really interesting about this passage is that it spells out a form of contingency that can be highlighted only within the transcendental attitude. Objectivistic theology, too, is able to acknowledge that the existence of the world along with its lawful and harmonious structure is contingent. As is well-known, it could also acknowledge, as Descartes did, that the fact of the existence of the world is renewed at each instant and does not concern only a supposedly initial act of creation. However, only the theory of constitution highlights the teleology inbuilt in the constant and harmonious unfolding of the different constitutive layers of the world. In this passage, Husserl points out the contingency of the fact that the concatenations of lived experiences are such that a scientifically cognizable world can appear. Furthermore, they allow in principle two subsequent levels of scientific knowledge: the purely morphological characteristic of descriptive science such as zoology and botany, and the ultimate exact cognition characteristic of the mathematical sciences of nature. In other terms, that the second type of knowledge is possible, i.e., that the world is not only morphologically coherent, but that the morphological structure is such that it allows the manifestation of a mathematical “in-itself,” is by no means an eidetic necessity. As Husserl argues while introducing the thought experiment of the annihilation of the world (*Weltvernichtung*), a world that is morphologically coherent, but that lacks a physical in-itself is a possible correlate of transcendental consciousness (Husserl

1983, §49). Needless to say, a modern objectivist could never make sense of such a possibility because, by definition, the “external world” is conceived as a nature mathematized in itself, existing beyond the perceptions, which in turn exist only in the mind. If we suppress the *res extensa*, no external world at all exists.⁷ For the objectivist, the enduring existence of the world (instant after instant) requires an explanation; however, for phenomenology, what requires an explanation is the coherence of our lived experiences, whose correlate is a constantly confirmed and yet always a presumptive morphological world with its likewise constantly confirmed and likewise always presumptive infinite, scientifically determinable character.

Thus, one could say that transcendental subjectivity is the place in which we witness and observe the contingency of the world in its different facets and levels. The critical step that we need to take, however, is the one indicated in the previous section. The teleological and theological level of analysis is reached only by reconsidering the natural and the cultural (spiritual) world from the standpoint of axiological and practical principles. In what way are we to assign a value to the well-ordered world just described? The answer resides precisely in the nature of the spiritual (both individual and collective) life that a certain natural world coordinated with it makes possible. The problem is that the world must be rational for humanity to be able to develop its own rationality. For instance, a world that is not at all scientifically cognizable or that does not make the technical reshaping of the environment possible would have less value than a world that does because it would not make possible the flourishing of scientific and technical civilization. When the axiological character of the different possible worlds “as correlates of consciousness” is taken into account, then it becomes possible to ask the question as to whether its teleological order points to a creator God. Husserl also mentions here the fact that the factually existent world presents its, so-called, “internal teleology,” which runs through the evolution of the animal species up to mankind and the subsequent cultural evolution up to the present stage. In other words, the world that the life of consciousness factually constitutes presents the character of a constant realization of higher and higher values.⁸ And, once more:

Not the fact as such, but the fact as source of endlessly increasing value-possibilities and values-actualities forces the question into one about the “ground” – which naturally does not have the sense of a physical-causal reason.

Husserl, 1983, 134

This passage introduces the next series of considerations. The invoked ground or reason of this well-ordered concatenation of lived experiences cannot be intended as a physical cause, because any consideration of causality presupposes the constituted world itself. Husserl’s God, thus, can only be, as Husserl sometimes says, a “teleological cause,” that is the origin of a “moral demand” that brings about a certain concatenation of consciousness.

The upshot of this analysis is that God must be intended as “responsible” for the constitution that takes place within the transcendental monadic sphere. Now, as we have seen in the previous section, this God is not another ontological region that would stand over and beyond nature and spirit and would admit of an independent form of intuitive givenness. Furthermore, God is not a determinative stratum of nature and spirit, in the sense in which the mathematical concepts of physics are with respect to material nature. In other words, God is not substructured to determine the world and complete its objectivity. Finally, God is not another member of the community of transcendental subjects, not even a special and superior one. This would of course require God to have a body and to share a world with us by being objectified in it

(Husserl 1989, 90–91). The solution is that God is found, so to speak, within the life of the inter-monic community itself, as the telos of its inner development: “God is not the monadic totality itself, but the entelechy that lies in it, as idea of the infinite telos of the development of humankind from absolute reason” (Husserl 1973a, 610, my translation).

Now we can appreciate how Husserl tried to develop the original insight that God must be an idea, precisely the idea of a perfect subjective life that carries within itself a perfect world and a perfect nature, while at the same time having the realizing force (*realisierende Kraft*) necessary to bring about the constituting life without which this world would not exist. The resulting picture is that of a God that endlessly self-realizes itself in the historical development of the monadic totality, a God that is at the same time the Good in itself and a will-to-Good that can be actual only within the life of finite subjects (Husserl 2013, 68). This applies to the perceptual life that originally brings about a coherent and rational world making possible a rational life and the progressive development of a personal and collective ethical life.

Here Husserl’s considerations enter the dangerous territory of a radical form of theodicy, of an account of individual and collective vicissitudes, in which evil is only an instrument for the realization of a greater Good, in other words, an instrument for the self-realization of God itself.⁹ Furthermore, here Husserl faces the most difficult challenge for this non-demonstrative, non-objectivist theology, the one concerning the real nature of the intuitive evidence that the existence of such a God can ever have in this world, but also in any conceivable one. In connection with this, we find the more specific problem of how creation itself can be understood in phenomenological terms, since it is difficult to see how the notion of creation can be intuitively elucidated based on the phenomenological fact of transcendental constitution. Indeed, the power of creating the life of consciousness, thus keeping the world in constant creation, is in no way something a finite subject can have, not even in a minimal form. In this respect, God does not appear as the entelechy of the monadic totality, but as something separated from it by an unbridgeable ontological abyss.¹⁰ However, such problems would require a separate study and cannot be discussed here.

The aim of this chapter has been to show that Husserl’s reflections on God were demanded by his general philosophical outlook. The outlined considerations exhibit how Husserl succeeded at least in framing the very problem of God in an original, non-objectivist way. To be sure, what has been shown is also that it is by all means impossible to dismiss these investigations as if they did not belong to the most genuine core of his philosophy, just as it is impossible to underplay their significance for a correct understanding of some of his most well-known theses.

Notes

- 1 See also Husserl 1973b, 193, for a clear formulation of the ideal of phenomenological philosophy in contrast with the Cartesian ideal.
- 2 One should also not object that theological notions are just part of a traditional legacy that a rigorous rationalism should set aside. Such an objection contains a lack of understanding of both the method and spirit of Husserl’s philosophy.
- 3 As Husserl writes: “Philosophy is the science in which the tendency grounded in the essence of all knowledge towards absolute knowledge, towards the most perfect knowledge conceivable, has become the consciously guiding goal. This means, though: philosophy is thematically directed towards the ‘ideal’ of a knowledge that is systematic, theoretically as well as factually all-embracing, and also, to be sure, completely justified and most perfect” (Husserl 1988, 171).
- 4 Husserl writes: “Clearly it, as the highest science of reality, which concerns itself with the unity of reality insofar as it is considered in light of all rational points of view, presupposes the completion of the previously mentioned sciences of reality and their philosophical completion” (Husserl 1988, 230).

- 5 I will not consider here any form of ontological argument because phenomenology rejects from the outset the possibility that any claim about the real existence of an entity could be grounded a priori, on pure ideas.
- 6 See Held 2010 on this point.
- 7 It is easily comprehensible that Berkeley's denial of the existence of the matter of modern science ended up in a radical form of psychological idealism.
- 8 In Trizio 2018, I have argued that according to Husserl, if the world has a past in which there was no intelligent life, then, the world must contain, out of eidetic necessity, a development leading to intelligent life. However, this does not mean that any world must contain an endlessly increasing development towards higher and higher forms of biological or cultural life. From an eidetic point of view, I am not even sure whether I can exclude the possibility of a world in which intelligent life has always existed but has had the tendency to slowly decline. In other words, constant progress as such appears to be contingent, and thus, for Husserl, it points to a teleological source.
- 9 For a severe criticism of this point see De Palma 2019.
- 10 I do not believe that Housset's dismissive considerations about the real ontological significance of Husserl's "transcendental notion" of creation are convincing (Housset 2010, 186). What is required is an account of why this particular world exists and not others.

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