

Husserl is clear on what he means by the thesis of the natural orientation. In the natural orientation, according to Husserl, "I know of a world that is infinitely extended in space and infinitely become and becoming in time, I know it means above all that I find it there as immediately intuited, as existing, I experience it. Through seeing, hearing, tasting, etc., in the various modes, of sense perception, bodily things are simply there for me in particular spatial division; 'at hand' in verbal or pictured senses, whether I am particularly attentive to them or not."22 The general thesis of the world can be summed up as an orientation in which I continually find at hand a spatial-temporal actuality opposite myself to which I belong as do all other people equally related to it;23 the world as actuality is always there.24

It is this thesis which must be "bracketed," "put out of action," or "suspended." But what can possibly remain as a basis for a science if the entire world, including human beings, is suspended or placed in brackets? Or, better yet, what can be posited as being when the total world, the totality of reality, remains bracketed? Husserl answers that what is exhibited is what he designates as the "pure subjective process of experience" and its "pure ego."25

This position on the meaning of the term phenomenology is made explicit when Husserl states, "without having grasped the specific transcendental orientation, without actually appropriating the basis of pure phenomenology [i.e., the pure ego, etc.] we may indeed use the word phenomenology but we do not have the subject itself."26

The transcendental reduction has often been interpreted as a flight from the real world, a mystical adventure which results in a loss of the world itself. Husserl has often been accused of denying the world of common experience. He was well aware of the possibility of this misunderstanding. In spite of his emphatic denial that transcendental phenomenological reduction is a negation of the world, the criticism persists. Yet, his own understanding of reduction permits him to state, "If I do it [set the natural thesis out of action] then I do not negate this world."27

In other words, Husserl is arguing that just as the reductions in the natural and human sciences do not negate that aspect of the world placed in brackets in order to focus on the residue, so phenomenology

does not negate the natural orientation which it brackets. Reductions within the natural orientation are abstractions in that they suspend a part of the world from within the natural orientation itself. Or, in other words, the reduction is employed on a part of the world, on the mathematical, biological, psychological or sociological world. The phenomenological reduction, however, is total, concrete and employed from a different orientation.

The reduction to transcendental subjectivity, according to Husserl, provides us with a valid basis for grounding the world of facts. The key to the entrance into this mode of reflection is the notion of "intentionality." This is the second term which requires a brief explanation.

Intentionality is certainly a key concept in Husserl's thought. There is no doubt that he stressed the meaning of this term as "consciousness of something."28 The term itself, however, requires an extensive critical analysis in most interpretations of Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl considered intentionality to be the main theme of his phenomenology; it "characterizes consciousness in an exact sense and justifies the designation of the stream of consciousness as a stream of consciousness and at the same time as a unity of consciousness."29 Intentionality is the other side, or the bipolar term, of transcendental reduction. In itself, without the reduction, it has only psychological significance.30

As is usually the case, primary theoretical terms in a scholar's system are often the most problematic. Husserl was not unaware of this. "Consciousness of something", he wrote, "is something self-evident, yet at the same time highly misunderstood" and more explicitly, "The problematical title which encompasses all phenomenology is called intentionality."31

From the specific character of intentionality as consciousness of something, described within the structural correlation of "noesis" and "noema" in Ideen I, the term continues to develop in its complexity. By the time we reach his last writings, as found in Krisis, Husserl describes it in much more sophisticated terms. Here we find three words which designate the concept of intentionality. The three words are ego-cogito-cogitato, and an analysis of their interrelation is the focus of attention.