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3 Heidegger's Critique of Techno-science as a Critique of Husserl's Reductive Method

Christos Hadjioannou

The young Heidegger developed his own phenomenology against the backdrop of Husserlian phenomenology.¹ Specifically, Heidegger envisioned a phenomenology that would go beyond Husserl's theoretical/attitudinal phenomenology, and it is accordingly useful to read Heidegger's phenomenology through his critique of Husserl. This approach not only helps us in understanding Heidegger's early work, but also serves to clarify certain features of his later work, since this later work constitute a reworking of his earlier insights.

One of the most important philosophical contributions of Heidegger's late philosophy is his critique of the "essence of technology," which he calls "*das Gestell*." *Gestell* refers to the *essence* of technology (*Technik*): it is the way the world—nature—is *ordered* when we—humans—*exist* in the world in a modern technological way. Particularly, *Gestell* indicates the world is *reduced* to a store of resources for production and consumption.

It is useful to start by considering that the word Heidegger uses, *Technik*, is not the exact equivalent of "technology" in the everyday sense of the English word; rather it is a less specific notion that includes "the complete set of measures, arrangements, and procedures of putting knowledge . . . to useful purposes," as well as "particular methods or ways of proceeding,"² reminiscent of the word "technique." *Technik* is also about *methods of disclosure and disclosive (intentional) relations*. Thus, *Gestell* also concerns a methodological "reduction," which is already at work from the *very beginning* of any enquiry and philosophical act; this includes any new attempt at a philosophy of nature, or a science of phenomena, such as the phenomenological project initiated by Husserl.

Gelassenheit is, in some respects, "the answer" to *Gestell*, and *Gelassenheit* itself is also concerned with how phenomenology *begins*. *Gelassenheit* ought to be seen as a methodological notion that pertains to such a beginning; it is a comportment that determines how the world is given to us, as well as the way in which we understand ourselves within that world. It is a comportment that "lets the world be" and lets the world reveal itself as it is without reducing it to a supply of resources for production and consumption.

In this chapter, I argue that Heidegger's first invocations of *Gelassenheit*, primarily via linguistic cognates of *Gelassenheit*, come in the form of protestations at how the scientific method adopted by Husserl begins by *positing* [*stellt*] phenomena in a reductive way, via the *epoché* and the transcendental reduction. Heidegger's early invocations of *Gelassenheit* go hand in hand with his early reflections on *how* phenomenology ought to begin, how do we *become* phenomenological. The problem of beginning is a classical philosophical problem, posed since Plato and Aristotle, who grappled with the issue of how one begins to philosophize, or how one becomes virtuous; the importance of this methodological problem is paramount. I argue that Heidegger's early formulations of *Gelassenheit* are a product of an *encounter* with Husserl's way of doing phenomenology, challenging Husserl's *starting point* that calls for a *suspension* of the quotidian and the instituting of an eidetic reduction that involves a certain cognitive *ordering* and programmatic structuring of the world.

As I argue, Heidegger protests that Husserl remains caught up in a sort of formalism that stills the stream and is dependent on a method of "generalization," which involves a logical "ordering" that is *indifferent* to content, to the concrete. I point out how the analysis and arguments made later by Heidegger in relation to *Gestell* are, from a methodological perspective, similar to those arguments made against Husserl earlier on and are closely tied to the problem of beginning the practice of phenomenology.

In response, Heidegger reformulates phenomenology as an ontology of facticity that lets the "open region" manifest itself. Heidegger's early invocations of *Gelassenheit* (and its linguistic cognates) form the basis of what will later become *Gelassenheit*. *Gelassenheit* is eventually explicitly introduced as an alternative to the Husserlian methodological beginning in §22 of **the** *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*,³ where he calls for a deepening of phenomenological research contra Husserl. Heidegger says:

Now we can see for the first time what is decisive in all our methodological considerations. It is not a matter of concocting a region of lived experiences, of working our way into a stratum of interrelations of consciousness. We must precisely avoid losing ourselves in some particular sphere which has been artificially prepared or forced upon us by traditional perspectives that have ossified, instead of preserving and maintaining the immediacy of everyday *Dasein*. What is required is not the effort of working ourselves into a particular attitude, but the reverse: what is required is the *releasement* [*Gelassenheit*] of our free, everyday perspective—free from psychological and other theories of consciousness, of the stream of lived experience and suchlike.

(FCM 91)

In this chapter, I am not arguing that the concepts of *Gestell* and *Gelassenheit* are merely an internal phenomenological affair; I am saying that the concepts of *Gestell* and *Gelassenheit* are originally conceived as Heidegger's vision for a phenomenological beginning in contrast to Husserl's vision, and that there is something crucial at stake for phenomenology itself, namely, the extent to which phenomenology proceeds scientifically or can follow the scientific method.

The chapter is made up of six parts. In Part 1, I present textual evidence by virtue of which we are compelled to understand techné and techno-science as respective modes of revealing, that is, as different modes of relating to the world. I also explain how *Gestell* is a mode of revealing that *challenges-forth* phenomena to appear, identifying the revelatory mode's essential traits such as regulating and securing and its reductive indifference to matters themselves. In Part 2, I introduce *Gelassenheit*, which is Heidegger's antidote to *Gestell*, and show how it is intended to replace Husserl's *epoché*. In Part 3, I provide an overview of Heidegger's early musings on the "problem of beginning" and recount his expressed dissatisfaction with Husserl's methodology. I also look at Heidegger's own struggle to provide a non-theoretical, non-programmatic beginning that does not exclude temporal *Dasein*, as is the case with Husserl's *epoché* and the Principle of All Principles (PAP). In this context, I demonstrate how Heidegger often uses cognates of the verb *lassen* in order to express an act of a comportment that he will later explicitly call *Gelassenheit*. In Part 4, I offer a more nuanced examination of Heidegger's critical analysis of Husserl's method, showing that Heidegger finds Husserl's method to be an expression of "care about certainty" that takes over the task of securing knowledge and ordering phenomena in accordance with the *epoché* and PAP. In Part 5, I set out how Heidegger's discovery of "formal indication" goes hand in hand with his critique of the reductive formalism of the Husserlian method—a formalism it shares with techno-science—and his appeal for "letting" the phenomena stand as they are. Finally, I offer a short conclusion in Part 6.

1. Techné and Modern Techno-science: Modes of Revealing and Structures of Relations

In this part, I explain why Heidegger believes that the essence of technology—like science—is a mode of disclosure of the world. I present textual evidence by virtue of which we are compelled to understand techné and techno-science as respective modes of revealing, that is, as different modes of relating to the world. I also explain how *Gestell*—the essence of techno-science—is a mode of revealing that *challenges-forth* phenomena to appear, identifying the revelatory mode's essential traits such as regulating and securing and its reductive indifference to matters themselves. I deliberately focus on these aspects of *Gestell*, because

these characteristics, for Heidegger, are fundamental traits of Husserl's phenomenology.

In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger's challenge to the modern, reductive way of understanding technology does not just concern technological "things" and instruments; it reflects on the very way in which we understand the *manifestation of phenomena*. It is with this aim in mind that Heidegger speaks of techné in terms of *ἀληθεύειν*, that is, techné as a mode of revealing: "What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*] is grounded in revealing" (QT 12). And a few sentences further on: "Technology is . . . no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing" (QT 12) and "it is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that techné is a bringing-forth" (QT 13). Techné is a mode of *ἀληθεύειν* (QT 13). It is a way of bringing-forth, for it lets something to be brought into appearance; it "induces it to go forward [*Ver-Anlassen*]" (QT 9).

Heidegger distinguishes between techné and *modern technology* (*Gestell*). The distinction is not made by way of mechanical complexity, such as a comparison between the parts and function of a hammer and a super-computer—these would be ontic differences. The crucial distinction is made in terms of how they *reveal*: whereas techné's revealing is a *bringing-forth* [*Hervorbringen*], modern technological revealing takes place as a *challenging-forth* [*Herausfordern*]. As Heidegger writes, "the revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth" (QT 16). Modern technology "puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such" (QT 14).

All phenomenal relations, all "revealings," in *Gestell*, are challenged-forth. *Gestell* challenges revealing; the chief features of this challenging, Heidegger tells us, are "regulating [*Steuerung*] and securing [*Sicherung*]" (QT 16). Through challenging revealing, bringing-forth comes "under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order [*eines anders Be-stellens*] which *sets* upon nature [*das die Natur stellt*]" (QT 15). This setting-upon [*Stellen*] is an expediting [*Fördern*] of the process of revealing that aims at "maximum yield at the minimum expense" (QT 15).

What kind of revealing is this, then? Revealing is already challenged in such a way that "everywhere, everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it standing-reserve [*Bestand*]" (QT 17). This means that the essence of modern techno-science involves the *challenging* of nature, an artificial imposition on nature, and this involves a particular stance, a methodological *approach* that is already there *from the beginning* of the relation. It involves a stance that *challenges* that which is to be given, not letting it be given on its own terms, but rather imposing on it a strict value-order. Everything already becomes standing-reserve right

from the beginning; insofar as the methodological principles are in place, and a certain theoretical structure is imposed, whatever will be given, it will be given *as* standing-reserve.

Another problem with *Gestell*, according to Heidegger, is that it reduces our relation to nature to one of indifference. Our relation to nature is such that it concerns an order in which “everything slides into the basic trait of the *indifferent*” (BFL 24, my emphasis). Heidegger explains indifference in terms of a “distancelessness”—in standing-reserve, relations become “distanceless,” that is to say, there is no distance between a relating and a related (a subject and an object, or a *Dasein* and a ready-to-hand): “we are no longer approached concernfully by anything at all” (BFL 24). This means that in *Gestell*, everything merges into a *uniformity* in such a way that individual, concrete, entities lose their sense, and what remains is a form without content, a quantifiable value.

Heidegger is criticizing the way in which the natural sciences impose order in the same way that mathematics represent and order everything in terms of abstract form. As he says, “nature is represented as something actual, placed into measure and number” (BFL 39).

Gestell is not just about the formal, quantifiable, essence of entities; equally, it concerns the method by virtue of which entities are ordered in a particular way. *Gestell* is like an “application” that “positions *everything* in advance in such a manner that what is positioned follows upon a result” (BFL 25, my emphasis), which is calculable and measurable. It imposes upon everything an “equivalent form” in the equality of orderability (BFL 32). This formalism is also made evident in how machines are made of the same parts that have the character of *uniformity*, which provides “that one thing can be exchanged for the other without further ado” (BFL 35). As Heidegger writes in *The Question Concerning Technology*: “The fact that now, whenever we try to point to modern technology as the challenging revealing, the words ‘setting-upon’ [*stellen*], ‘ordering’ [*bestellen*], ‘standing reserve,’ [*Bestand*] obtrude and accumulate in a dry, *uniform* [*einförmige*] and therefore oppressive way” (QT 17).

2. *Gelassenheit*: A Non-Suspending, Free Relation to Phenomena

Having seen the problems that Heidegger identifies in *Gestell*, let us move on to the other fundamental concept pertinent to Heidegger’s critique of technology, namely, *Gestell*’s conceptual antipode: *Gelassenheit*. In this section, I introduce *Gelassenheit*, and, drawing from textual evidence, I explain why it is useful to see it as intended to replace Husserl’s *epoché*. I also show how it is conceptually connected to earlier notions in Heidegger’s phenomenology, hence illustrating that *Gelassenheit* is not entirely disconnected from Heidegger’s earlier conceptual concerns: the

methodological problem of entering phenomenology and the problem of non-objectifying description.

Heidegger's "answer" to *Gestell* is *Gelassenheit*. *Gelassenheit* is a comportment that does not impose any specific order on the disclosed world and its entities, and it does not demand or challenge the world to come forth in a *prearranged* way. Rather, it enables a free relation to the world, that is, a disclosing relation free from any sort of attitudinal presupposition. *Gelassenheit* is a way to *begin* and sustain a disclosing relation. *Gelassenheit* is a free, non-violent relation to beings. *Gestell* is an alternative to willful representation (*Vorstellen*), production (*Herstellen*), and ordering (*Bestellen*).

Heidegger expands on the notion of *stellen*, wanting to include in his critique not only the concept of *Ge-stell* in the sense of challenging, but also all other senses and cognates like producing and representing, *Herstellen* and *Darstellen* (QT 21). Even though Heidegger does not mention *Einstellen*, Heidegger's critique of *Gestell* has already incorporated the order of formalism involved in *Einstellen*, which is the concept Husserl uses in order to explain the *epoché* and which is the starting point of attitudinal phenomenology.

Gelassenheit is therefore associated with a kind of understanding and linguistic expression that is non-attitudinal (non-theoretical), non-propositional and non-representational; a type of logos that does not describe phenomena according to a pre-judged order.

It is difficult for Heidegger to positively and precisely describe *Gelassenheit*, and this is a general problem within Heidegger's phenomenology (albeit one that exceeds the scope of the present chapter). Indeed, Heidegger resorts to a *via negativa* in which he argues what *Gelassenheit* is *not*: e.g. it is *not a suspension* of any sort—a clear hint at Husserlian *epoché*, which *Gelassenheit* is meant to replace.

Gelassenheit, argues Heidegger, is "no suspension at all" (*kein Hängen*), and there are no "fixed hooks of yes and no, on and between which we are supposedly suspended (*aufgehängt sind*)" (CPC 77). *Gelassenheit* is a form of movement like "being on the way" (*Bewegung*): *Gelassenheit* is like a "waiting" (*das Warten*), which "is no restless suspension, but rather a restful resting," which neither affirms nor denies the "open region," but rather remains engaged (*eingelassen*) in it (CPC 80).

Indeed, *Gelassenheit* shares some characteristics with the *epoché*: they both serve a similar function—namely that of offering a way into phenomenology, a way of breaking away from the natural attitude so as to describe phenomena as they are phenomenologically given. But *Gelassenheit* differs from the *epoché* in the following respects: the *epoché* shuts out the factual and the temporal, which means that it is incapable of incorporating movement because it *disengages* from it; while the *epoché* reflects on phenomena, abstaining from metaphysical judgment, in doing so it *freezes* the living relation to them. As Heidegger says: "With this

'attitude' (*Einstellung*) the *living* relation to the object of knowledge has 'ceased' ('*eingestellt*')" (PRL 33). This is why Heidegger needs to clarify that *Gelassenheit* "remains engaged" and is dynamic in the sense that it does not still the stream but rather embraces movement, since it is "being on the way" (*Bewegung*).

Furthermore, the "waiting" of *Gelassenheit* is at the same time a "releasing of oneself from transcendental representing, [and] is in fact a refraining from the willing of a horizon. This refraining also no longer comes from a willing" (PRL 33). Again, in these sentences, Heidegger makes sure to contrast *Gelassenheit* with Husserlian "suspension" and associates the former with a non-static, pre-reflective conception of "waiting."

The allusions to his own earlier phenomenological work are significant in helping us to interpret the meaning of these concepts, and to recognize their continuity with earlier concepts. For example, "waiting" is the essence of the circumspective mode of grasp described in *Being and Time*, which "lets things be involved" [*Bewandenslassen*] and which makes up the existential structure of concern [*Besorgens*]; it is a means of grasping that does not impose anything artificial on care, nor does it try to grasp care by arresting it "thematically;" instead, it *lets it* manifest itself as is (BT 404/353). Heidegger's later notion of *Gelassenheit* and the notion of *Bewandenslassen* from *Being and Time* have a methodological consistency, in that they are both non-reflective notions that aim at overcoming the reflective, objectifying elements of phenomenology.

Despite the fact that *Gelassenheit*, as Heidegger is wont to emphasize, is no "answer" to a problem, it is nevertheless meant to *replace* the Husserlian way of beginning, which, in Heidegger's eyes, falls prey to the same tendencies that realize *Gestell*. Thus, in trying to articulate what *Gelassenheit* is, he contrasts it with Husserl's reflective, "programmatic beginning." The contrast is not simply circumstantial or opportunistic. When looking at the genealogy of *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger's corpus, it becomes clear that it is initiated in the context of thinking about the problem of beginning in phenomenology, and that it emerges out of Heidegger's dissatisfaction with Husserl's beginning. For this reason, we need to return to Heidegger's earlier invocations of *Gelassenheit* and his critique of Husserl on the problem of beginning.

3. The Young Heidegger on the Problem of Phenomenological Beginning

In this section, I return to Heidegger's early writings and show how the same problem of beginning, the problem of how to enter phenomenology, was a key issue he was grappling with. I show that his aim of re-launching phenomenology as an "*originary science*" was animated by his deep dissatisfaction with Husserl's methodology. In this context, I analyze some

of the problems Heidegger found in Husserl's method, specifically with the *epoché* and the Principle of All Principles. I also demonstrate how it is in this context that Heidegger's first uses cognates of the verb *lassen*, which he will later explicitly call *Gelassenheit*, take shape.

In his early Freiburg years, Heidegger's thought was undergoing a transformation that involved the dismissal of the *reflective* methodological character that Husserl employed in his transcendental reconfiguration of phenomenology, and the associated "theoretical Attitude," essential to the sciences. Heidegger would often complain that phenomenology must not emulate the "progressive character" of the other sciences. In this context, Heidegger explicitly mentions Husserl as being at fault in creating this illusion about phenomenology, foremost in terms of how Husserl formulates the issue in the essay "Philosophy as a Strict Science," where he exemplifies mathematical science as the ideal science to which other sciences should aspire.

Heidegger believed that Husserl's transcendental turn, after the *Logical Investigations*, came at a price, as Husserl's account for the beginning of phenomenology involved a certain reflection that moved away from the factual level of experience, from *Dasein* itself, and involved a certain abstraction that failed to make sense of life itself.

It is precisely the introduction of the reflective attitude of *Ideas I* with which Heidegger would take issue, and which would be crucial in breaking away from Husserl. As Denis McManus writes, the "notion [of the theoretical Attitude] . . . looms large in Heidegger's understanding of how he broke with Husserl—the latter supposedly remaining in that Attitude's grip" (McManus 2012, 17).

Commencing with *Ideas I*, Husserl reconfigured the phenomenological method via a transcendental turn. In articulating the way we "enter" into phenomenological analysis, he configured the "reductions" in terms of a change of attitude (*Einstellung*), involving a particular kind of ontological suspension, the so-called *epoché*. In §32 Husserl announces the phenomenological *epoché*, which establishes the criterion by virtue of which the phenomenological region is defined. In this context, the phenomenological region is defined precisely in terms of a "shutting out" of (*zeitliches*) *Dasein*, which entails the *suspension of the factual*.⁴

Husserl endeavored to establish a firm footing for the scientific method of phenomenology by establishing firm normative standards according to which all findings of phenomenology must be grounded in evidence. His aim was to ensure that the findings of phenomenology amount to justified knowledge; in this context, he put the *epoché* in place and devised the PAP, which determines the golden epistemological standard of apodictic certainty. In effect, the PAP purifies consciousness and guarantees that phenomenological reflection, i.e., originary intuition, provides *evidence* for transcendental knowledge.

This very same methodological beginning was also announced in the 1911 programmatic essay entitled “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” in which Husserl argues that phenomenology can recognize only essences and essential relations, and studies the “origin” of all *formal-logical* and *natural-logical* principles, that is, the origin of already formed scientific knowledge. In Heidegger’s words, genuine problems will not be solved by the invention of another system or worldview, or by starting from an already constituted idea of “science,” but rather “by letting the problems themselves become problematic in their factuality . . . and then pos[ing] radical problems of origin” (BPP 16). As *originary* science, then, phenomenology must study the motivations and tendencies that shape worldviews and sciences in general; studying the *tendencies* is the primary research task of phenomenology, which involves a *letting-open-up* [*ein Offen-Lassen*] of perspectives (BPP 21). Phenomenology opens up to the concrete; it concretizes “abstract” problems. It is through phenomenology that the concrete is enacted.

In this context, Husserl’s “beginning” of transcendental phenomenology becomes Heidegger’s object of criticism. Heidegger appeals to the *letting-open-up* in order to undermine Husserl’s PAP and the change of attitude that the *epoché* involves. “Indeed, we should not reflect on the beginning, but rather factually begin!” says Heidegger in the 1919 lecture course, just before he refers to this “letting-open-up” to this originary region that is the object of phenomenology (BPP 21). So, instead of a radical change of attitude (*Einstellung*), Heidegger proposes letting-open-up, which is the conceptual precursor to *Gelassenheit*.

4. Early Heidegger’s Critique of Husserlian Methodological Tendencies

In this section, I offer a more nuanced look into Heidegger’s early critique Husserl’s method. I show that according to Heidegger, Husserl’s promise of a phenomenological *science* succumbs to the Cartesian ideal of *certainty*; modern science is in fact an expression of what Heidegger calls “care for certainty,” and science’s task, including Husserl’s, is that of *securing*. Thus, Husserl’s phenomenology, as programmed by the *epoché* and the purifying transcendental reduction, undergoes a process of securing—a process not unlike the “regulating and securing” essence of *Gestell*. In fact, the Cartesian and Husserlian search for certainty will be found to be an expression of the same tendencies that mobilize the mathematical sciences and *Gestell*, the tendencies of regulating and securing.

Introduction to Phenomenological Research (IPR) is an early lecture course delivered in the winter semester 1923/24, in which Heidegger offers his most sustained and systematic critique of Husserl’s conception of phenomenology.⁵ Heidegger compares and contrasts Husserlian phenomenology with Cartesian philosophy, and zeroes in on what he sees as

the common tendency in their philosophical endeavors, what Heidegger calls the “care for certainty.” This tendency, which Husserl inherits from Descartes, is responsible for an array of characteristics that influence Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology vis-à-vis the conception of phenomenology as a techno-science.

IPR is ultimately dedicated to identifying what went wrong in Husserl’s “transcendental turn,” in Heidegger’s eyes, and preparing the ground for Heidegger’s own project. In this context, Heidegger says that the course is “supposed to be nothing less than a *proper preparation for the critical encounter with what is set forth as the thematic field in present-day phenomenology*” (IPR 198–199). Heidegger analyzes the ways in which the Husserlian promise of a phenomenological *science* ultimately succumbs to the Cartesian ideal of *certainty*, and shows that Husserl betrays his initial phenomenological discoveries as set out in *Logical Investigations*. Heidegger’s critical analysis here is mainly focused on *Ideas to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* and “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science.” For Heidegger,

a common character obtains [in Husserl’s and Descartes’ work] in spite of the difference in decisive connections, a common character such that it becomes apparent how Husserl, in spite of the difference, stands within the uniform, basic tendency of Cartesian research, in such a way that in him the care of knowledge is ultimately at work as *care about certainty*. (IPR 198–199)

Heidegger further argues that the “care about certainty” takes over the task of “securing” by turning towards “already known knowledge.” Despite the fact that, formally, it is expressed in the phrase “it aims at the matter itself” (IPR 44), it is a completely determined procedure, in which knowledge *serves* the purpose of securing. This also explains why the type of knowledge chosen is “already known,” that is, its scientific status is already presupposed. As regards Husserl specifically, Heidegger writes: “Insofar as Husserl emphasizes that the theme of his investigations is given in advance in the fact that there are sciences, particularly the mathematical natural sciences, his tendency in treating problems is exactly the same” (IPR 44). Modern science is an expression of the care for certainty, which has the task of *securing* not just knowledge but also existence and culture (IPR 44).

Let us recall here that “securing” is one of the chief characteristics of *Gestell*. Heidegger associates *Gestell* with the tendency for securing in various ways. For example, he says that it is *Gestell*’s tendency for securing that reaps things into the orderable standing reserve, “that reaps the thing . . . away into greater and greater neglect” (BFL, 45). And that *Gestell* lets the human “presence in planability and calculability . . . so that

he secures the beings that concern him as standing reserve for his planning and calculating" (*BFL*, 116) It is evident that Heidegger's critique of "securing" long predates his musings on technology, in the context of his critique of modern philosophy, and Descartes and Husserl in particular.

The same "care for certainty," operative in Husserl's phenomenology, allows for the prioritization of methodology over the matter itself: the idea of a definite sort of knowledge determines the theme, rather than vice versa (*IPR* 34). As a result, a procrustean method is imposed, which orders entities in accordance with a *unified* form. It is this methodological tendency that determines *consciousness* as the theme of Husserl's phenomenological research, and it is this methodological tendency that will prompt Husserl to set up the transcendental reduction and the *epoché*, because he will find that consciousness is in need of a further *purification* (*Reinigung*) (*IPR* 38).

Indeed, the rigor of the natural sciences serves as the ultimate example of rigorousness. But Husserl wants consciousness, which is the theme of his philosophy, to be further purified, so as to "bring the scientific bias to natural science radically to end" (*IPR* 53), because the scientific bias may make the acquisition of absolute certainty impossible (since all the claims of *natural* science may be doubted). It is just such purification that is achieved through the transcendental reduction (*IPR* 58). This purification, despite the opposition to the *natural sciences*, is not a turn away from the scientific tendency of securing; rather, it constitutes an amplification of the tendency for *ordering phenomena* according to the formal PAP and the *epoché*.

5. Husserl's Formalism and Heidegger's "formal indication"

In this section, I argue that Heidegger's discovery of the "formal indication" goes hand in hand with his critique of the reductive formalism of the Husserlian method—a formalism it shares with techno-science—and his appeal for "letting" the phenomena stand as they are. I explain why, according to Heidegger, Husserl's phenomenological formalization falls prey to *Gestell*, because it suffers from three important problems: (1) the problem of ordering phenomena; (2) the problem of prejudicing phenomenology, turning it into objectivizing theory; (3) the problem of indifference towards materiality/content of entities, which makes all things exchangeable, like standing-reserve.

While Heidegger never explicitly paired *Gelassenheit* with "formal indication," it is useful to think of the two in tandem, because both conceptually emerge in order to solve the same set of problems of objectification and ordering of phenomena. Heidegger's aim was to overcome science and the problems it created with respect to how it reduces knowledge of the world into a quantifiable uniformity, that is, how it formulates the

world in terms of objective values. “Science” is therefore a complex phenomenon, which involves not only a comportment, a disposition, toward phenomena (the theoretical attitude), but also a respective “language” that it speaks. It speaks the formal language of assertoric logic and of mathematical formulae, which comprise the scientific language, the language of objectivity. Husserl’s phenomenology, being scientific, assumes this attitude toward phenomena and speaks this language. *Gelassenheit* then is a non-theoretical comportment, and “formal indication” is the non-scientific, non-objectifying language it speaks. If we want to understand Heidegger’s early, indistinct version of *Gelassenheit*, we also need to identify and consider where Heidegger introduces the “formal indication.” In doing so, we will find the hermeneutic discovery of “formal indication” that results from a critical analysis of Husserl’s attitudinal phenomenology and its language of “formalization.”

Although Heidegger invoked the notion of “formal indication” several times in *Being and Time*, he stopped invoking the concept soon thereafter. It is a notion that remains rather obscure, insofar as he says little about it; however, if we want to get a better sense of what it is and what it is meant to do, we ought to look at *The Phenomenology of Religious Life (PRL)* and the *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research (PIA)*. In trying to articulate a new methodological beginning, Heidegger offers critical insights into the problems he saw as inherent in Husserl’s method, on the basis that the formal language it speaks imposes an *order of indifference* towards matter (like *Gestell*). In these analyses of Husserl’s formalism and his own “formal indication,” for the first time Heidegger offers a systematic argument against a method that “ceases” lived experience and a way out via the language of “formal indication”—the language of a non-theoretical comportment (like *Gelassenheit*)—that indicates phenomena in a non-objectifying, non-reductive way.

“Formal indication” was Heidegger’s response to the question of how phenomenology might attend to the stream of life without objectivizing it and, thus, without “stilling the stream,” a problem that Husserlian formalization failed to avoid. Heidegger thought that to see philosophy as a matter of attitude allowed for such criticisms to be raised as it involved a “cessation,” and because it made it impossible to turn towards the factual in a way that would not reduce it to a *region* of being that would be just one part of the totality of all beings. This is a metaphysical problem that beset Husserl’s phenomenology, since the way it formalized knowledge in terms of consciousness turned the latter into a region of being, the most general region of being, and, as such, subjected it to the regional consideration of transcendental phenomenology (*PRL* 39). A new way into the phenomenological was thus sought. In *PRL*, Heidegger tries to articulate a non-objectifying way of knowing something, of *relating* to something. To this end, he employs locutions such as “comporting”

(*verhalten*), rather than attitude.⁶ The notion of “formal indication” goes hand in hand with Heidegger’s rejection of a scientific understanding of philosophy. The very purpose of “formal indications” is, as Daniel O. Dahlstrom argues,

to avoid the sort of objectification characteristic of a theoretical or scientific thematization of things. If, indeed, “science” and “objectification” are synonymous, or, in other words, if science can thematize its subject matter only by objectifying the latter, that is to say, by regarding its subject matter only insofar as it can be considered present-at-hand, then given Heidegger’s understanding of philosophy, it is necessary for a philosophical thematization to distance itself from science.

(1994, 789)

Heidegger gives us an insight into his breakthrough into “formal indication” when he focuses his analysis on a distinction made by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*, namely the distinction between *generalization* and *formalization*. Husserl’s phenomenology ostensibly refrains from generalizing phenomena, and instead formalizes them. Both generalization and formalization are modes of *relation* (*Bezug*), that is to say, they are ways in which a subject can relate to an *object*. Both are, according to Heidegger, *attitudinal* relations, which means they are (directly or indirectly) absorbed in the material complex [*Sachzusammenhang*]. Generalization is a relation to the matter [*Sache*], which orders the matter in terms of stages of determinations (*PRL* 42): “Generalizing determinations are always determinations of an object according to its materiality from another [viewpoint], and indeed such that what determines, for its part, itself belongs in the material domain in which the determining ‘what’ lies” (*PRL* 42). This means that generalization presupposes what the matter (*Sache*) itself is and subjugates it to the categories it creates; it orders the matter in terms of general categories. Generalization is the categorization of experience and the subsequent ordering of the categories into a hierarchy. For example, joy is an affect, and affect is an experience (*PRL* 40). Husserl argues that his phenomenology does *not* generalize, but rather formalizes phenomena.

Formalization, on the other hand, is an attitude that is not bound to the materiality of things, but is free in terms of material contents. It *sees away* from the what-content [*Wasgehalt*] (*PRL* 40); it turns away from the materiality of the object (*PRL* 42). But, Heidegger argues, both formalization and generalization stand within the meaning of the “general” (*PRL* 40–41). Formalization produces relational meanings, in the form of formal categories; relational meaning produced by formalization is not directly an order or a region, like generalization, but rather it is so only

indirectly, “insofar as it is *formed out* [*ausgeformt*] into a formal object-category to which a ‘region’ corresponds” (PRL 42).

Formalization is, according to Heidegger, the origin of the theoretical. What is more, it constitutes the formal categories that *make possible the performance of mathematical operations* (PRL 42–43). It also makes possible the idea of *mathesis universalis* (knowledge of a universal order), “through which a theoretical region is posited as separate” (PRL 43). Hence, everything wrong about the theoretical attitude and science that has mathematics as the science *par excellence* is expressed in formalization.

Heidegger therefore identifies several problems within formalization, which he tries to overcome via the formal indication. I will analyze three such problems of formalization, which are more readily recognizable as essential characteristics of *Gestell*, and set out how Heidegger’s “formal indication” is meant to resolve them: (1) the problem of ordering phenomena; (2) the problem of prejudicing phenomenology (philosophy); (3) the problem of *indifference* towards materiality/content of objects.

For Heidegger, both generalization and formalization order phenomena according to a determinate hierarchy. And while formalization does not offer a clear order of things, it creates relational meanings that form out objective categories of relations. As a result, these relations impose a regional order of being over and against other regions of it—Husserl’s pure logic of objects is grounded in the realm of consciousness, which is imposed as the region of being *par excellence*. In other words, being is *reduced* to the order of consciousness. As Heidegger says: “In Husserl’s phenomenology, consciousness itself becomes a region, and is subordinate to a regional consideration; its lawfulness is not only in principle original, but also the most general. It expresses itself generally and originally in transcendental phenomenology” (PRL 39). The reductive tendency in operation, which chooses one area of being, in Husserl’s case “consciousness,” and formulates everything according to that area, is the same totalizing tendency that turns everything into stock, standing-reserve in the service of *Gestell*.

Furthermore, formalization—itsself motivated from an attitudinal relation [*Einstellungbezug*]—prejudices philosophy in the sense that it turns philosophy into a theoretical science (PRL 43). Indeed, this is Husserl’s vision for a science of phenomenology. Husserl envisions a phenomenology that stems from a changing of one attitude to another. An attitude, says Heidegger, is a type of comportment that is *absorbed in the material complex* (PRL 33). Heidegger points out the ambiguity in the very word *Einstellung*, which can also mean “to cease,” and starts to build a critique based on this double-meaning of *Einstellung*: “With this ‘attitude’ (*Einstellung*) the *living* relation to the object of knowledge has ‘ceased’ (*eingestellt*)” (PRL 33). Heidegger thus wants to distinguish phenomenological understanding from attitudinal understanding.

Finally, formalization proceeds on the basis of a particular direction towards materiality [*Sachlichkeit*]: a total *indifference* towards materiality. Formalization enframes entities in such a way that they are revealed in a one-sided way vis-à-vis content. In this regard, formalization is responsible for the oppressive authority of “objectivity” in the history of philosophy. As Heidegger argues, precisely because

the formal determination is entirely indifferent as to content, it is fatal for the relational- and enactment-aspect of the phenomenon—because it prescribes, or at least contributes to prescribing, a theoretical relational meaning. It hides the *enactment*-character [*das Vollzugmäßige*]—which is possibly still more fatal—and turns one-sidedly to the *content*. A glance at the history of philosophy shows that formal determination of the objective entirely dominates philosophy.

(PRL 43)

“Formal indication” is meant to “prevent oneself from taking it for granted that [a phenomenon’s] relational meaning is originally theoretical” (PRL 44). The formal indication is a “stance which is opposed to science in the highest degree. There is no insertion into a material domain, but rather the opposite: the formal indication is a defense [*Abwehr*], a *preliminary* securing, so that the enactment-character still remains free” (PRL 44, emphasis modified). Further on, Heidegger argues in respect of “formal indication”:

Formalization and generalization are thus attitudinally or theoretically motivated. Ordering occurs in their enactment: directly in generalization, indirectly in formalization. To the contrary, the “formal indication” does not concern an order. In the formal indication one stays away from any classification; everything is precisely kept open.

(PRL 44).⁷

So, formal indication *lets* everything stand as is, without interfering, without imposing on things any pre-judged order. By indicating phenomena, it unassumingly *releases* them into the open, allowing them to show themselves from themselves. Thus, with “formal indication,” Heidegger attempts to replace Husserlian phenomenological analysis with a hermeneutic praxis that does not objectify, that does not posit any sort of order or classification, that does not assume an indifferent stance towards the content of phenomena, hiding the enactmental character of the philosophical praxis, and that does not slip into an attitudinal/theoretical comportment. Rather, the “formal indication” is a practice that emanates from a non-positing, unobtrusive comportment, which, later in his career, he would come to call *Gelassenheit*.

Before concluding, it is worth noting that the closest the young Heidegger comes to explicitly associating his “formal indication” with an act of resistance to the *Gestell* of formalism is when, a few sentences later, he argues against “general-formal” schemas of temporality, such as Husserl’s analysis of time-consciousness. There, Heidegger says:

So long as the sense of “temporal” is undetermined, one could understand it as [something] not prejudicing; one could mean: insofar as each objecthood constitutes itself in consciousness, it is temporal, and with that one has won the fundamental schema of the temporal. But this “general-formal” determination of time is no foundation; rather it is a falsification of the problem. For with that a *framework* [ein *Rahmen*]⁸ for the time-phenomenon has been predelineated from out of the *theoretical*. Rather, the problem of time must be grasped in the way we originally experience temporality in factual experience—entirely irrespective of all pure consciousness and all pure time.

(PRL 44)

Heidegger says that precisely there lies the problem: because the formal determination is indifferent to the content, this is decisive for the way the formal relation is determined. *The fact that it is indifferent to the content hides the enactmental character which is more originary* (PRL 43).

6. Conclusion

As I have shown, Heidegger’s critique of techno-science and his proposed antidote, *Gelassenheit*, do not arise unexpectedly, as if disconnected from his earlier corpus, but rather develops from his earlier writings. Looking at his early writings, we find that the notion of *Gelassenheit* is originally conceived as an alternative to Husserlian *epoché*, that is, as an alternative methodological way of entering phenomenology. Following this thread, and going further back, we find that he regularly invokes the verb *lassen* and cognates, in order to describe how phenomenology ought to begin, as well as how we should *indicate* phenomena (that is, refer to them without categorizing them), instead of formalizing them. We also find that some of the arguments he uses against Husserl are based on the same logic as the arguments made against *Gestell*. With that said, the main argument here is not: “Husserlian phenomenology is techno-science,” but the point is to try to better understand the phenomenological essence of Heidegger’s critique of *Gestell*, whereby *Gestell* is an issue of relation, that is, an issue of referencing and revealing, rather than anything else. In order to properly understand this, it is crucial to get the context right. This is what this chapter aims at: to provide the phenomenological background out of which these concepts emerged.

Notes

1. For helpful comments on different parts and versions of this chapter, I am indebted to Aaron James Wendland, Mahon O'Brien, Dan Dahlstrom, Sacha Golob, Niall Keane, Tobias Keiling, and Denis McManus. I am also indebted to Thomas Arnold and Daniel-Pascal Zorn for some interpretive assistance on some German passages.
2. See Daniel O. Dahlstrom's chapter "Im-Position: Heidegger's Analysis of the Essence of Modern Technology" in this volume.
3. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995). Hereafter FCM.
4. Ideas I, §32: The phenomenological ἐποχή: "I am not negating the world or doubting its factual being [*zeitliches Dasein*], but I fully 'shut out' every judgment about temporal being".
5. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005). Hereafter IPR.
6. See Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Method: Philosophical Concepts as Formal Indications", *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (1994), p. 781.
7. The exact wording here is: "Man halt sich bei ihr fern von jeder Einordnung, man läßt gerade Alles dahingestellt". A more literal translation would be: "one leaves precisely everything standing", meaning one leaves it undecided, leaves it as it is, without further determination, without positing anything regarding its ontological status.
8. Although Heidegger does not say *Gestell* here, he does refer to *Rahmen* (a synonym of *Gestell*).

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