WHAT DO THE CARTESIAN MEDITATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE *EPOCHÉ*?
A Close Reading of the First and the Second Meditations of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*

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Introduction

Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* is one of his most-read works. Entitled 'an introduction to phenomenology,' it attracts numerous readers; some, with little or no prior acquaintance with Husserl's transcendental phenomenological tradition. In this work, Husserl identifies the term *epoché* with 'inhibiting,' 'putting out of play' and 'parenthesizing of all position-takings towards an already-given Objective world.'[1] While one clearly understands these expressions as referring to a particular philosophical technique, in which the philosopher disregards (in his philosophizing) the natural tendency to posit existence of the external world, a beginner in Husserl's philosophical thought would hardly recognize the centrality of the notion of the *epoché* in his entire philosophy. This is partly because the *epoché* only comes to be explicitly discussed towards the end of the first meditation and partly because in this work, Husserl neither deeply explains the *epoché* nor elaborates its further qualified usages, distinguished by the terms 'phenomenological *epoché,'* 'transcendental *epoché*,' 'transcendental-phenomenological reduction' and 'universal *epoché.'*

It is the interest of this paper, therefore, to investigate Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* for an elaborate articulation and understanding of his notion of the *epoché.* Focusing on the first and the second meditations, I will attempt to outline the precise nature, meaning and functions of the *epoché* in Husserl's Philosophy (transcendental phenomenology). To accomplish this, I will provide an in-depth reading of the *epoché* in relation to Husserl's understanding of Descartes' turn into subjectivity as presented in these two meditations. I will argue that while the *epoché* ideally remains a single methodological tool by means of which Husserl attempted to transform the traditional philosophy into a strict science of self-evident truths, the first two meditations could be

[1] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960), 20.

best understood as presenting it in distinct levels of technical application. They are, namely 'philosophical *epoché*,' 'phenomenological *epoché,'* 'transcendental-phenomenological *epoché'* and 'transcendental-phenomenological reduction' progressively. I will further argue that this process of radicalization culminates in Husserl's novel insight of 'transcendental experience' (the purely subjective experience of the self as the antecedent subject of his thoughts). I will show that transcendental experience not only indicates that the central achievement of the *epoché* entails in bringing to fruition Descartes' failed but noble attempt to attain absolute certainty of truth in transcendental consciousness, but also that in it, Husserl provides a new idea of grounding of knowledge (the transcendental grounding).

In the first section of the paper, I will distinguish the philosophical *epoché* as a peculiar aspect of Husserl's notion of the *epoché,* identifiable with his reference to Descartes' initial turn into subjectivity. I will argue that it functions to produce the philosophical *attitude* of 'genuineness,' in which the 'genuine philosopher' undertakes 'genuine philosophy' as 'a personal affair,' 'first philosophy' and 'presuppositionless philosophy.' I will consequently argue that philosophical *epoché* expresses Husserl's 'idea of philosophy' as a never-ending strive for the ideal of self-evident truths and that it reveals Husserl's implicit claim, that transcendental phenomenology is a perfect exemplar of the 'genuine philosophy.'

In the second section, I will discuss the phenomenological *epoché,* which I will identify with Husserl's reference to Descartes' second-level turn into subjectivity, whereby he discovers the *ego-cogito* as a necessary existent, even if the world were to be non-existent. I will argue that this aspect of the *epoché* functions to induce the 'phenomenological attitude,' by means of which the 'genuine philosopher' clearly distinguishes the sphere of philosophical life from the sphere of non-philosophical life. I will explicate Husserl's novel insight, that in order for philosophy to obtain absolute certainty of knowledge, it ought to radically adhere to the 'first methodological principle' of evidence, which necessitates 'parenthesizing' of the 'natural attitude thesis' (positing existence of the natural world). I will, therefore, argue that Husserl's phenomenological attitude exposes Descartes and the philosophers after him as entangled in 'naïve metaphysics' (propounding philosophical ideas based on a fundamental conception of the world as an autonomously existing entity due to the unnoticed influence of the natural attitude thesis) of the traditional philosophy.

In the third section, I will explicate Husserl's notions of 'transcendental-phenomenological *epoché'* as a 'universal *epoché'* (open criticism of transcendental knowledge) and 'transcendental-phenomenological reduction' (methodological restriction of philosophical investigations to the field of the transcendental experience) in light of his claim that making the 'transcendental turn' entails the 'gate-way' to transcendental subjectivity. Accordingly, I will illustrate that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology stands in distinction to Descartes' 'ingenuine transcendental philosophy.' To do so, I will discuss Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological reduction (in light of the transcendental-phenomenological ego), as functioning to establish the transcendental experience as the ultimate and sole field of transcendental-phenomenological research. Further investigating Husserl's claim that transcendental phenomenology is profoundly distinct from pure psychology of consciousness, I will illustrate that the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* as a universal *epoché* effects in us the 'transcendental attitude' as the only means through which we recognize objective cognition. I will show that transcendental phenomenology clearly distinguishes objectivity of cognition as knowledge of 'things themselves' (original intuition, in which things are self-given in consciousness) from mere modalities of being, such as facticity (which pure psychology of consciousness and the positive sciences take for knowledge). I will, therefore, conclude that the *epoché* not only renders transcendental phenomenology as the science of ultimate objectivity of cognition, but also manifests it as the philosophy that provides for 'transcendental grounding of knowledge.'

1. *EPOCHÉ* AND THE QUEST FOR GENUINE PHILOSOPHY AS GROUNDING OF KNOWLEDGE

Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* reflects his profound determination, to grasp the deepest foundations of human cognition and to demonstrate its purest structures and ultimate principles. From the first and the second meditations, it is evident that Husserl remains a thorough-going scientific philosopher, whose motivation is to discover the ideal truth (which will be clarified later, as self-evident truth). He is convinced that this task could only be accomplished by developing a method whose radicality goes beyond the usual principles of traditional philosophy. We can confidently say that the first two meditations present Husserl's general philosophical thesis; namely, an implicit claim that philosophizing in a rationally unquestionable method is the only means through which philosophy would be assured of accomplishing its most fundamental tasks.

Husserl's notion of the *epoché*, therefore, arises from this motivation as a methodological procedure in which philosophical prejudices (unwarranted presuppositions) are identified and eliminated.[2] It could be functionally described as Husserl's scientific tool for transforming traditional philosophy in view of achieving the said ideal tasks. In other words, Husserl tries to make philosophy primarily concerned with the clarity of its fundamental goals and with the objectivity of its procedures of attaining them. Husserl's notion of the *epoché*, therefore, links us to the question of grounding of knowledge as the fundamental philosophical theme around which the first two meditations are centred, and about which Husserl intends to invite the reader to consider taking part in, as a philosophical debate.

This philosophical theme is noticeable not only in the *Cartesian Meditations* but also in Husserl's earlier and later works. In his introduction to *Logical Investigations*, Husserl confesses to have initially shared in the prevailing view that psychology was the foundational science upon which logic and mathematics could be philosophically explained.[3] However, he furthers claims that having given psychology a large part in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, psychological foundations for certain principles of mathematics and logic did not satisfy him, leading him to further epistemological reflections on pure logic, upon which he had made initial break-through insights.[4] This claim reveals Husserl's underlying motivation; namely, to draw a clear distinction between philosophy and other sciences by radically establishing that philosophy is the foundation of all sciences. In his work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (hereafter, *The Crisis*) published posthumously, Husserl further develops the idea of philosophy as a foundation of knowledge to the idea that, it is only by the discovery of 'genuine philosophy' (radical philosophy) that we can comprehensively diagnose and treat the problems facing European rational culture and civilization.[5] In this book, he regards social and cultural problems as consequences of philosophy's failure to provide a firm grounding of modern sciences. Terming

[2] Stressing on the fundamental character of philosophy as 'critique of cognition,' Husserl sharply distinguishes philosophical knowledge from natural knowledge and the knowledge pertaining to the natural sciences. He emphasizes that this critique of knowledge must employ a 'radically new method' of *epoché*, not simply as a doubt of all cognition, but firstly, as an elimination of the presupposition that philosophy is meant to take-up and continue with knowledge-project of the natural life and the natural sciences. See Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1973), 20-22.

[3] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 42.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 12.

this situation as a 'crisis of lack of genuine philosophy' he writes, "Thus the crisis of philosophy implies the crisis of all modern sciences as members of the philosophical universe and by extension, crisis of European humanity."[6]

It is not by coincidence, therefore, that *Cartesian Meditations* starts with an explicit expression of the motif of radical transformation of philosophy (which ultimately, is to be methodically achieved through the *epoché*). Husserl acknowledges that Descartes' *Meditations* had a direct influence in his philosophizing. He writes, "… their study acted quite directly on the transformation of an already developing phenomenology, into a new kind of transcendental philosophy."[7] Besides this claim, Husserl interprets Descartes' philosophical project as, "…a complete reforming of philosophy into a science grounded on an absolute foundation."[8] It is clear, therefore, that Husserl finds in Descartes a noble philosophical project similar to his own; namely, orienting philosophy towards providing the most foundational principles of knowledge. For Husserl, Descartes' project of 'radical reformation of philosophy' entailed a reformation of all the sciences too. In Husserl's view, Descartes considers the sciences as 'non-self-sufficient members' of philosophy, whereby philosophy is viewed as 'one all-inclusive science.'[9]

Occupation with the desire to radically reform philosophy into a scientific discipline of ultimate grounding of all knowledge implies that both Husserl and Descartes regard philosophy as a universal discipline of genuineness of knowledge. Broadly speaking, 'genuine knowledge' refers to absolute objectivity of knowledge-claims. In a strict sense, it refers to self-justifying knowledge or put in the words of the *Cartesian Meditations*, "…complete and ultimate grounding on the basis of absolute insights, insights behind which one cannot go back any further."[10] From this description, it is clear that the said absolute grounding of knowledge is being sought from a reductive and subjective approach; a regressive orientation in philosophizing as opposed to the speculative methods of traditional philosophy. Engagement in such a radically new method of philosophizing already suggests a sort of 'shedding-away' or at least, 'keeping-a-distance' from what is conventionally regarded as philosophical knowledge. Since this new method is intended to function as a guide in the search for 'absolute insights,' it implies an underlying dissatisfaction

[6] Ibid.
[7] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 1.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 2.

with the established philosophical doctrines and suggests a fundamental critique of conventional philosophical insights.[11] It therefore indicates a divergent view of knowledge as such and an implicit claim for possibility of more foundational insights into the very nature of philosophy as a discipline of knowledge.

In his *Discourse on Method,* Descartes confesses that having studied literature in expectation of 'obtaining clear and certain knowledge regarding all matters useful for life,' at the end of the course, he found himself confronted by numerous errors, doubts and feelings of utter ignorance.[12] He maintains that not even the sciences or philosophy of the time could provide real knowledge. He writes:

> Most of all was I delighted with Mathematics because of the certainty of its demonstrations and the evidence of its reasoning; but I did not yet understand its true use, and, believing that it was of service only in the mechanical arts, I was astonished that, seeing how firm and solid was its basis, no loftier edifice had been reached thereupon… I shall not say anything about philosophy, but that, seeing that it has been cultivated for many centuries by the best minds that ever lived, and that nevertheless no single thing is to be found in it which is not subject of dispute, and in consequence which is not dubious… Then as to the other sciences, inasmuch as they derive their principles from philosophy, I judged that one could have built nothing solid on foundations so far from firm.[13]

From such statements, it is clear that Descartes considers philosophy as the mother of all sciences. He believes that its lack of stability necessarily amounts to the collapsing of knowledge as a whole and consequently, of an entire education system. In the introduction to Husserl's *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy,* Quentin Lauer comments that Husserl views Descartes as responding to a long-standing deficiency in the tradition of philosophy; namely, the lack of a truly scientific orientation, something about which Husserl himself was obviously concerned. Lauer argues that Husserl had remained deadly against the notion that philosophy's failure to develop into a rigorous science was an indication that it was essentially non-scientific, and consequently, it ought to abandon its 'misguided efforts to become scientific.' Lauer further observes that for Husserl, if there is any possibility for a rigorous science in any domain, this possibility is only in philosophy,

[11] Husserl, *The Crisis of European sciences*, 76.
[12] René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason," in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 85-86.
[13] Ibid.

since only philosophy can ultimately guarantee genuine scientific character of any particular science. [14] This, therefore, confirms that Husserl, just like Descartes, believes that philosophy ought to be essentially scientific in order to be truly foundational and that traditional philosophy had not lived up to this ideal.

Husserl describes Descartes' methodological regression into subjectivity as "…a radical rebuilding that satisfies the idea of philosophy."[15] David Smith reads Husserl's 'idea of philosophy' in the Kantian sense of 'a regulative idea'; an ideal goal that motivates philosophizing yet as an ideal, always remains at the horizons.[16] According to Smith, Husserl notices that philosophy as a discipline of apodictic (self-evident) truth is in some degree noticeable within classical Greek philosophy (for instance, in the 'clarificatory self-reflection' method of Socratic philosophy). However, he observes that for Husserl, it is only in Descartes that we find an explicit demand for philosophical insights to be absolutely justified and a radicalization of philosophy in a manner aimed at actually producing such self-evident insights. In other words, Husserl sees philosophy previous to Descartes as characterized by a certain naivete which Descartes' philosophy was aimed at overcoming. [17] We could broadly describe the naivete in question as; an inadequate conception of the true nature of philosophy itself and subsequently, unclarified ideals that ought to motivate philosophizing ('vague idea of philosophy'). Such an interpretation of Descartes' aim in philosophizing indicates Husserl's implicit argument for the *epoché* as the ultimate means of overcoming the said naivete. It is a claim for a method which would not only make philosophy scientific, but also prove it to be so (a science of apodictic truth by necessity).

Husserl, having been trained in mathematics from his youth, obviously carries with him a scientific perspective of knowledge. We would expect therefore, that his philosophical concerns bear a scientific orientation, which indeed is the case. In his view, philosophy has suffered the said naivete because it has not embraced a scientific method right from its beginning. Philosophy, being an intellectual vehicle of knowledge, certainly ought to solve Husserl's scientific-epistemological questions. However, knowledge as we know it is not always scientific in nature. It entails various

[14] Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 8-9.
[15] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 2.
[16] A.D. Smith, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.
[17] Ibid., 11-12.

aspects of human aspirations and searches for deeper meaning of existence. One might argue therefore, that Husserl seemingly reduces all knowledge to scientific knowledge or at least, that he gives science priority in knowledge, expecting the same from philosophy in claiming that it ought to be essentially scientific in its methodology. However, 'scientific method of philosophy' as conceived by Husserl should not be construed in terms of 'methods of science' but in reference to a well-structured method of proceeding, which assures knowledge so evidently, that it would be irrational to contend it. About this method, Husserl writes in *The Crisis*:

> But to every primal establishment … essentially belongs a final establishment … assigned as a task to the historical process. This final establishment is accomplished when the task is brought to consummate clarity and thus to an apodictic method which, in every step of achievement, is a constant avenue to new steps having the character of absolute success, i.e., the character of apodictic steps. At this point philosophy, as an infinite task, would have arrived at its apodictic beginning, its horizon of apodictic forward movement. (It would, of course, be completely wrong to confuse the sense of the apodictic which is indicated here, and which is the most fundamental sense, with the usual sense taken from traditional mathematics).[18]

In my view, this argument entails one of Husserl's most novel philosophical insights. If we consider Husserl's argument here in respect to the nature of philosophy as a discipline of critical thinking, we realize that he means to say that philosophy must now proceed in a self-critical methodology. Thus, philosophy must shift its focus from traditional themes such as the Cosmos, God and man (around which it has developed ontological doctrines) to a reassessment of the objectivity of its methods of reasoning and consequently, of its knowledge-claims. In other words, self-critique ought to be the deepest motivation of philosophy.[19] It has to begin with the philosopher, asking himself whether what he considers to be knowledge is indeed so in the finest degree. For Husserl, therefore, self-critique is an attitude in philosophizing which must be

[18] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 72.

[19] Husserl traces the ground-breaking Platonic (and Socratic) dialectics to Plato's critique-form of response to the Sophists' universal scepticism. He maintains that the purpose and motivation of the contentious philosophical reflections between Plato and the Sophists (possibility versus impossibility of cognition of the objective truth respectively) was ultimately concerned with justification or general critical reflection, which he connects to different modes of judging. This sort of critical reflection on our judgments of our inner experiences is what Husserl believes, should be the ideal motivation of our philosophizing today. See Edmund Husserl, *First Philosophy: Lectures 1923/24 And Related Texts from the Manuscripts (1920-1925),* ed. Julia Jansen, trans. Sebastian Luft and Thane M. Naberhaus (Dordrecht: Springer Nature B.V., 2019), 34-35.

sustained from the beginning to the end in order to guarantee an authentic progress of philosophy as a truly foundational discipline of knowledge.

In Husserl's view, philosophy ought to keep alive its original dynamism (what he calls 'teleological beginning'). For him, as in its primal establishment in Greek tradition philosophy grew to influence the original birth of the European rational culture, present-day philosophers must maintain this dynamic character by means of a self-evaluating philosophical method.[20] This is the only sure way in which philosophy can reflect an ever-developing human civilization, based on an ever-growing and self-refining rationality. In his evaluation, however, while this dynamic development of philosophy ought to have continued, it was gradually fading away. To reverse the situation, the present-day philosopher must endeavour to stop 'sedimentation of philosophy' by liberating himself from the tendency to unreflectively inherit philosophical doctrines as knowledge, because this obscures genuine philosophizing.[21] In other words, to reawaken and sustain its original dynamism, philosophy must entail a 'reliving of insight' concretely and permanently by developing an strictly scientific method.[22] This method is the *epoché*; for it, Husserl implicitly argues in the *Logos Article*, claiming that there is need for a new revolution in philosophy; that philosophy has to develop a new 'system.' He describes this 'system' as one that, "…begins from the ground up with a foundation free of doubt and rises up like any skilful construction, wherein stone is set upon stone, each as solid as the other, in accord with directive insights…"[23]

While one may contend Husserl's position that philosophy must assume a scientific method in order to develop itself genuinely, no philosopher would contend the fact that by this very argument, Husserl establishes a central philosophical problem. Precisely, his argument suggests that the most foundational philosophical questions have never been satisfactorily answered. Even more strikingly, it seems to me, that Husserl means to say that the question, 'what is philosophy?' is yet to be answered; not simply as a quest for definitions, but as a philosophical problem, drawing us into a philosophy of philosophy. Husserl seems to argue that, while we repeatedly define

[20] Ibid., 71.
[21] Ibid., 72.
[22] Smith argues that while philosophy begins with insight, it often sediments into handed down-doctrines and loses the original clarity, without our reliving of the experience of insights in which truths were brought into being. See Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 7.
[23] Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, 76.

philosophy as 'love of wisdom,' we often do so merely at the level of pronouncing a dictum; we rarely examine the philosophical implications of that definition. He implicitly invites us, not only to a critical reflection on the meaning of wisdom (as cognition), but also to a reassessment of our philosophical views regarding the nature of its ultimate foundations and principles. I find Husserl's own argument for a strictly scientific method of philosophizing, as a daring attempt not only to readdress the basic question ('what is philosophy?'), but also to provide an answer to it. In my view, only in light of this fundamental question can one obtain the right lenses through which to read Husserl's philosophical arguments in general and his notion of the *epoché* in particular.

1.1 The Philosophical *Epoché*

Husserl reads Descartes' turn into the philosophizing self, as consisting of two distinct levels. The first-level turn, according to Husserl, entails a withdrawal consonant with the idea that philosophy is a 'philosopher's personal affair.'[24] It is a generic turn to the self, characteristic of every genuine philosopher. About this idea, Husserl writes, "… anyone who seriously intends to become a philosopher must 'once in his life' withdraw into himself and attempt, within himself to overthrow and build anew all the sciences that, up to then, he has been accepting."[25] At a second level, Husserl argues that Descartes' turn entails a regression to the philosophizing ego's very activity of philosophizing. He writes, "… we find a regress to the philosophizing ego in a second and deeper sense: the ego as subject of his pure *cogitationes*."[26] We will consider the first-level turn as philosophical *epoché* and the second-level turn as phenomenological *epoché.*[27] For now, we will restrict ourselves to the discussion of the notion of *epoché* as a first-level turn into the philosophizing subject (the philosophical *epoché*).

Clearly, Descartes' first-level turn into subjectivity not only points us towards the ideal essence of philosophy but also exemplifies the nature of a genuine philosopher. For Husserl, genuine philosophy (broadly speaking) primarily entails the practice of the philosophical *epoché* as a scientific means of orienting itself towards genuinely acquired insights. In this perspective,

[24] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 2.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Although Husserl does not make any reference to the expression 'philosophical *epoché,'* I agree with Smith's coinage of this term in reference to Husserl's notion of the *epoché* as beginning with the most superficial form of bracketing; the putting out of play of preconceived opinions as did Descartes. See Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 16.

genuineness of the philosopher entails in holding insights which proceed from independent philosophizing as opposed to an aggregation of received doctrines. In other words, philosophy must entail insights that one can adequately defend because one has produced them himself. Accordingly, genuine philosophy is essentially one's 'own wisdom'; an element without which it would remain, as Descartes described, 'other peoples' opinions' or in Husserl's terminology, 'prejudices' whose authenticity one cannot rightly demonstrate.[28]

As Smith observes, Descartes' initial turn into subjectivity prefigures Husserl's idea that philosophy entails an infinite task of 'putting out of play' or 'stoppage' of all conventionally accepted insights, such as everyday-life knowledge, pre-existing scientific theories and philosophical doctrines, in order to make way for genuinely acquired self-evidencing insights.[29] Husserl writes, "… if I distinguish insight gained through rational thought, precisely as 'insight,' as 'self-evidence,' as *episteme,* from blind opinion, from mere *doxa,* and prefer the former, then I of course remain within the confines of my subjectivity."[30] This means that for Husserl, philosophy only becomes genuine through the radical desire from the part of the philosophizing subject, to eliminate the prejudice that inherited ideas are identical to knowledge. In this perspective, therefore, we can say that philosophical *epoché* not only reforms philosophy in terms of reorienting it towards the ideal of being scientific but also stands out as a *conditio sine qua non* for any genuine philosophy. It therefore means that philosophical *epoché* not only spells the deficiency that has clung to philosophy since its origins, but also promises to dispel it eventually.

Philosophical *epoché*, is not a one-time exercise, rather it is a permanent decision and practice of the genuine philosopher, in pursuit of apodictic knowledge which 'tends towards universality.'[31] The notion of genuine philosophy as 'tending towards universality' further reveals Husserl's idea of philosophy as gradually developing in a sure and secure way, thus becoming a discipline that is acceptable to any rational being, on account of its clarity of ideas. For this reason, philosophical *epoché* is a tool by means of which Husserl aims at transforming traditional philosophy into a truly universal science. We need, however, to explore the sense in which Husserl

[28] Ibid., 5.
[29] Ibid., 16.
[30] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 61.
[31] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 2.

thinks that from philosophers' independent philosophizing, perfection and clarity of philosophical insights are possible, and that universality of philosophical knowledge is achievable.

1.2 First Philosophy as the Genuine Philosophy

We notice in the first meditation, a sustained theme of 'beginning philosophy radically,' presented in a manner that suggests a corrective response to an established philosophy, apparently viewed as unsatisfying. Husserl deplores a situation of fragmentation of philosophy. He writes, "Instead of a unitary living philosophy, we have a philosophical literature growing beyond all bounds and almost without coherence."[32] Further, Husserl argues that this situation is fuelled by a lack of collaboration among philosophers and claims that there are as many philosophies as there are philosophers.[33] This argument is further connected to the 'Cartesian overthrow' in a tone that seemingly suggests a total abandonment of the existing philosophies and a subsequent replacement with a new philosophy) through philosophers who wish to 'begin radically.'[34] But having outlined in the preceding paragraphs that Husserl's conception of the genuine philosopher entails personal and independent philosophizing, one wonders whether Husserl, in debating for a radically new philosophy and a new beginning in philosophizing, is not further perpetrating fragmentation of philosophy. In fact, one would question the value of the philosophical *epoché* in the face of the whole project of transforming philosophy, not only towards the ideal of universality of knowledge, but also towards the ideal of ultimately making philosophy a unified grounding of all knowledge.

However, we soon realize that Husserl's theme of 'beginning philosophy radically' points towards an insight significantly different from Descartes' idea of 'overthrow.' Rather than to the idea that we are to abandon existing philosophy, this theme alludes to idea that the very essence of the ideal philosophy is nothing but non-conclusiveness. This is so because the philosophical *epoché*, demanding that philosophy be self-critical, it necessarily renders it a regressive discipline

[32] Ibid., 5.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Husserl compares the disarray of the philosophy of his time with the one Descartes describes in his *Meditations* and further describes his own aim of re-establishing sanity in philosophizing as a '*new meditations de prima philosophia.*' See Ibid., 5-6.

whereby every acquired insight becomes a subject of critique. According to Joseph Kockelmans, Husserl's notion of 'first philosophy' refers to a "…truly universal science which gives itself an absolute foundation, because it begins in and proceeds from a really absolute starting point."[35] Smith, however, emphasizes that 'first philosophy' is closely tied to Husserl's philosophizing as a project and motivation towards making a radical rejuvenation of the 'original vital spirit of philosophy.'[36] Smith further argues that Husserl's notion of 'first philosophy' bears a connection to his conviction that transcendental phenomenology was meant to be a realization of the 'genuine philosophy.' He writes, "Husserl regarded transcendental phenomenology as a 'first breakthrough' of a true and genuine first philosophy'; and 'first philosophy' is 'a philosophy of beginnings,' a 'scientific discipline of the beginning' of philosophy …"[37] From these two views, it is clear that Husserl's notion of 'first philosophy' entails a strong bearing towards the function of the philosophical *epoché* in transforming philosophy into a radically foundational and scientific discipline. Consider the following argument, taken from Husserl's lectures:

> The name 'First Philosophy' would then point towards a scientific discipline of beginnings. We would expect that, for the beginning, or for a closed domain of beginnings, philosophy's highest purposive idea would demand a proper, self-contained discipline, with its own problematic of beginnings developed in accordance with spiritual preparation, an exact framing of the problem, and then a scientific solution. By inner, inescapable necessity this discipline would have to precede all other philosophical disciplines, grounding them both methodologically and theoretically.[38]

Clearly, Husserl's claim here, suggests that philosophy is termed as 'first' in respect to a systematic methodology, through which it radically renews itself as a discipline of foundational problematics. It follows, therefore, that philosophy is naturally a universal discipline, and thus acceptable by all because it necessarily concerns itself with the most foundational principles of knowledge as a whole. Accordingly, it follows that while the notion of 'first philosophy' alludes to an envisaged 'ideal philosophy,' it however, remains in continuation with the previous philosophy in order to

[35] Joseph J. Kockelmans, *A First Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*, (Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1967), 64.
[36] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 8.
[37] Ibid., 4.
[38] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 4-5.

renew and radicalize it into the most ideal or original meaning and essence of philosophy. In other words, Husserl does not imply a total abandonment of traditional philosophy.

From a Cartesian perspective, however, 'first philosophy' entails the idea of total abandonment or denial of traditional philosophy. Descartes begins his *Meditations* with the following:

> It is now some years since I detected how many were the false beliefs that I had from my earliest youth admitted as true, and how doubtful was everything I had since constructed on this basis; and from that time I was convinced that I must once for all seriously undertake to rid myself of all the opinions which I had formerly accepted and commence to build anew from the foundation, if I wanted to establish any firm and permanent structure in the sciences.[39]

Descartes, therefore, sees an actual need for a fundamentally new beginning of philosophy (an originally new philosophy, having rejected the pre-existing one). In the second meditation, Descartes writes; "… I shall proceed by setting aside all that in which the least doubt could be supposed to exist, just as if I had discovered that it was absolutely false; and I shall ever follow in this road until I have met with something which is certain…"[40] While Descartes clearly does not aim at demolishing the whole system of public education (though he describes it as being in the verge of crumbling), he however, seeks to uphold integrity of knowledge and honesty in what he personally claims to know. He commits himself into completely demolishing the whole set of what he (as an individual) has previously held as knowledge until he has personally attested absolute indubitability of every bit of it, as the standard measure for re-accepting it.[41] For Descartes, therefore, an insight would be considered as valid only if it stands the test of this radical sceptical doubt. The philosophical *epoché*, on the contrary, involves no such an assumption regarding the mode of being of any object of knowledge or of knowledge itself. Instead, it demands that one simply 'suspends' previously accepted knowledge; 'treating it as questionable' other than making any claim regarding its being doubtable or undoubtable, true or false.[42] Here, we notice that while

[39] René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 144.
[40] Ibid., 149.
[41] Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason," 89.
[42] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 24.

Descartes' idea of 'beginning of philosophy' entails discontinuity with previous philosophy, Husserl's entails continuity.

But consider Husserl's claim that Descartes' *Meditations* are necessary for any philosopher and that he himself sees a practical need to begin with them as a means to solve the 'crisis of philosophy' of his time.[43] If the notion of 'first philosophy' in Husserl's interpretation bears similarity with Descartes,' then to draw an adequate understanding of the philosophical *epoché* entailed in Husserl's first meditation requires a careful reading. Consider Husserl's statement, "In a quasi-Cartesian fashion we intend, as radically beginning philosophers, to carry out meditations with the utmost critical precaution and a readiness for any- even the most far-reaching – transformation of the old-Cartesian meditations."[44] Surely, Husserl's intention is not to make his philosophy a mere analysis or repetition of Descartes' philosophy, but an appropriation of his philosophical radicalness in order to successfully achieve complete transformation of the tradition of philosophy.

The very turn into the self, as a critique of what one unquestionably accepted before (as knowledge) is what is of importance to Husserl. That too, ought to be the approach of every genuine philosopher. In the spirit of the philosophical *epoché,* we too ought to draw this necessary philosophical insight; namely, to embrace the radical turn into our philosophizing selves, and in a 'quasi-Cartesian fashion,' stretch our philosophical reflection, aiming at progressing the philosophy of our days. Husserl, connecting the idea of beginning from an 'absolute lack of knowledge' to Descartes' turn to the self, argues that it is not meant to be 'merely private concern for the philosopher Descartes' and that consequently, his resultant philosophy (*Meditations*) "…draw the prototype for any beginning philosopher's necessary meditations, the meditations out of which alone a philosophy can grow originally."[45] One may, however, ask if Husserl's philosophical *epoché* entails 'suspension' of all previously accepted knowledge, how does he ever consider Descartes' turn in to the subject as an important philosophical idea? Why does he not include it among the 'suspended' pre-existing knowledge? Smith observes that for Husserl, since 'genuine philosophy' is a 'personal affair,' the turn into the self is unavoidable; even 'philosophical beginners in the ordinary sense of the word, must be led to reproduce (from within themselves),

[43] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 5.
[44] Ibid., 6.
[45] Ibid., 2.

already discovered philosophical insights as their own insights,' thereby 'reproducing a true beginner of philosophy in themselves.'[46] For this reason, we now understand that Husserl's notion of the *epoché* as first-level turn into subjectivity (philosophical *epoché*) consists of a necessary step in genuine philosophizing; it is not a philosophical doctrine borrowed from Descartes.

Philosophical *epoché,* in the perspective of Husserl's idea of 'absolute beginning' of philosophy or 'beginning from absolute poverty'[47] is in reference to an ideal attitude; namely, the decision to embrace philosophy as a personal way of life, attuning oneself towards the search of the ideal truth other than ascribing oneself to a certain school of philosophy. Philosophical *epoché,* therefore, functions to develop in us the aptitude of intellectual honesty and independence, by which one becomes a genuine philosopher. The genuine philosopher never merely recites received truths, but strives for what is absolutely true. However, what is absolutely true as we know, is always an ideal; it remains never completely achieved, but the genuine philosopher keeps getting closer to it by the practice of the philosophical *epoché.*

Philosophical *epoché,* therefore, reflects the ideal of engaging in philosophy for its own sake (purity of intention in philosophizing), which engenders an unnatural perspective (a view of reality that disregards conventional knowledge, in pursuit of the ideal truth). Husserl, therefore, views Descartes as an 'iconic figure of beginning philosophy' in the sense of inaugurating a new way of exercising philosophy; namely, introducing transcendental philosophy through his radical turn into subjectivity. In this sense of 'beginning philosophy', Husserl considers Descartes as only second to Socrates and Plato, who originally introduced philosophy as a 'true and genuine science.'[48] Husserl wants to revive and radicalize this original character of philosophy, which he believes that Descartes inaugurated but did not fully succeed in achieving. In the perspective of this radicality, Husserl implicitly presents transcendental phenomenology as a 'genuine philosophy,' since, fulfilling the requirements of the philosophical *epoché*; it aims at the absolute truth by way of endlessly attempting to refine its insights. He writes, "…I have made attempts to give phenomenology the developmental form demanded by the idea of First Philosophy, i.e., the form of a philosophy of beginnings that gives shape to itself in the most radical philosophical self-

[46] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 5.
[47] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 2.
[48] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 7-8.

consciousness and in absolute methodological necessity."[49] For Husserl, therefore, the discovery of a philosophical insight is not an end but a beginning for yet deeper reflections. This, for him, is the ultimate meaning of philosophy, which makes it a foundation for all knowledge, in accordance to the requirements of the philosophical *epoché*. About this conviction Husserl writes in his introduction to Logical Investigations, "My *Logical Investigations* were my 'breakthrough,' not an end but rather a beginning…"[50] This is the sense in which philosophical *epoché* makes transcendental phenomenology a rigorous science of never-ending beginnings, regressively propelling philosophical reflections towards the ultimate foundations of truth.

1.2.1 Husserl's Criticism of the Sciences and Philosophies of the Nineteenth Century

In light of his conception of philosophy as a rigorous science, Husserl viewed the sciences and philosophies of his time as marred by severe lack of genuineness. As long as the positive sciences of the modern period claimed autonomy, rejecting their ultimate foundation in philosophy, they lacked scientific genuineness.[51] In other words, natural sciences cannot account for the ultimate truth (most foundational and self-evidencing truth) they always aspired for because such is a task beyond their proper domain. It is a domain proper to philosophy as a discipline of foundational principles of knowledge, achievable only through philosophical reflection and not through the methods of natural sciences. Husserl is certainly not claiming that positive sciences do not possess knowledge at all, rather that the nature of knowledge they are capable of acquiring remains fundamentally dependent on principles that only philosophy can provide. In Husserl's view, as Smith observes, even though knowledge is universal, it is not wholly accessible to the positive sciences. In systematic enquiry into knowledge, universally valid truths bear priority (the domain of philosophy); thus, any positive science is just but a 'regional application of this philosophical perspective to a particular area of reality.'[52] This is the perspective from which Husserl judges the positive sciences of the modern period as lacking scientific genuineness; their claims to autonomy is just but mere prejudice. It is clear, therefore, that Husserl's desire to make philosophy scientific bears a historical background, and so too the *epoché*, as means to the solution of this historical problem.

[49] Ibid., 6.
[50] Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 43.
[51] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 2.
[52] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 8.

Reflecting on the actual practice of philosophy during his time, Husserl was even more concerned. In his evaluation, the philosophers of his time equally lacked genuineness. He describes the philosophy of his time as 'splintering' with 'perplexed activity,'[53] an expression indicating worry over the state of decadence of the Western philosophical tradition, having gradually lost its originality on account irresponsibility from the part of philosophers. For Husserl, the philosophers of his day expressed nothing but sheer mediocrity; their philosophizing was merely a 'pseudo-reporting' and a 'pseudo-criticizing,' which actually was disintegrating philosophy into 'philosophies'.[54] Such philosophers betray the spirit of philosophy. They are an expression of progression of the very naivete that Descartes laboured to overcome. Accordingly, the said philosophies could not be considered as foundation of knowledge. We can, therefore, say that Husserl sees the philosophers of his time as more prejudiced than the scientists were, for ignoring to carry through the original spirit of philosophy already revived by Descartes before them and instead, engaging themselves in producing 'immense literature,' only aimed at 'making an effect.'[55]

Such a low opinion of the sciences and philosophies of the nineteenth century is not simply meant for a mere critique, rather, it also carries within it an implicit claim that in transcendental phenomenology one could clearly trace the points of convergence and divergence between philosophy and the positive sciences. In other words, by this critique, Husserl also wants to emphasize that while genuine philosophy and genuine positive science aim at attaining the same truth (other than seeking for popularity), transcendental phenomenology is essentially eidetic while positive sciences remain factual, as we shall see.

1.2.2 First Philosophy as a Presuppositionless Philosophy

Husserl connects the idea of genuineness of philosophy with the ideal of striving for absolute indubitability (characteristic mark of the 'absolutely grounded science') as "…a legitimate final idea, the possible aim of some possible practice."[56] This idea alludes to the philosophical *epoché* as an act of purifying philosophy from non-rational presuppositions, especially those that take the form of deriving legitimacy and certainty of knowledge from established principles of the positive

[53] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 4-5.
[54] Ibid., 5.
[55] Ibid., 6.
[56] Ibid., 7.

sciences. As such, philosophical *epoché* amounts to a form of an ethical prohibition; that whose apodicticity (indubitability) has not been personally ascertained as self-evident shall not be admissible as a genuine philosophical truth but a mere presupposition or prejudgment. It follows, therefore, that legitimacy and certainty of knowledge must emerge out of its own accord, within strictly subjective philosophical labour. Accordingly, the resultant knowledge will necessarily be genuine and self-responsible, since it can only access self-justifying truths. About this, Husserl writes, "Must not the demand for a philosophy aiming at the ultimate conceivable freedom from prejudice, shaping itself with actual autonomy according to ultimate evidences it has itself produced and therefore absolutely self-responsible…must not this demand…be part of the fundamental sense of genuine philosophy"[57]

Attig William, however, distinguishes several other forms of presuppositions about which he thinks that Husserl's 'genuine philosophy' endeavours to eliminate. They are; 'material presuppositions' (involve claims about the existence of material or extended things and a concrete world), 'cognitive presuppositions' (involve 'ability to know' by means of cognitive faculties such as perception and memory), 'formal presuppositions' (involve systematic connections among concepts as in the case of geometrical formulae), 'logical presuppositions' (involve claims to know through principles of logic) and 'general presuppositions' which include influences from one's social or historical beliefs.[58] According to William, while one may accuse Husserl of absurdity in calling for a philosophy that starts from absolute presuppositionless-ness to the extent of eliminating language and logic, Husserl only requires that one be extremely careful and accept to critique one's own beliefs in order that one avoids unclarified and unevaluated assumptions.[59] Marvin Ferber, stressing on the theme of presuppositionless-ness, argues that for Husserl, it was an 'acid test' of a truly critical philosophy; that a scientific investigation in the theory of knowledge must satisfy the ideal of presuppositionless-ness as "…the strict exclusion of all assertions which could not be completely realized phenomenologically."[60]

[57] Ibid., 6.
[58] Attig Thomas William, "Cartesianism, Certainty and the 'Cogito' in Husserl's Cartesian Meditations," (PhD diss., Washington University, 1973), 88-89.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Marvin Farber, "The Ideal of a Presuppositionless philosophy," in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin Farber (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 54.

Even though William and Ferber do not consider the theme of presuppositionless-ness at distinguished levels of the *epoché*, but just treat the ideal of presuppositionless-ness in Husserl's philosophy simply in the framework of phenomenological *epoché*, it could be best understood in the light of a qualified sense of the *epoché*. At distinguished levels of the *epoché*, we could say that presuppositionless-ness is the fruit of performing the philosophical *epoché* yet, a preparatory step for the performance of the phenomenological *epoché*. The philosophical *epoché* demands presuppositionless-ness in the sense of genuineness of the philosopher; the radical decision never to claim any knowledge unless it has been grasped within one's own philosophical reflection. When the philosopher effects the turn into subjectivity by means of suspending previously accepted knowledge (without claiming its validity or invalidity), he is necessarily left without anything (knowledge) to affirmatively posit; he automatically finds himself in the state of presuppositionless-ness. Philosophical *epoché* therefore brings the philosopher to a state of poverty of knowledge[61]; whereby he has no pre-established philosophical sources to turn to, except to himself. He is brought to an absolute beginning point; at a step similar to the one in which the original Greek philosophers found themselves; caught-up between the grips of consciousness of their ignorance on the one hand, yet overwhelmed by the desire to know the reality in its purity (indubitable truth) on the other hand.

This is a radical philosophical step, in the sense that presuppositionless-ness is a consciously self-chosen state. It requires self-dissociation, not only from highly developed scientific knowledge, but also from well-established schools of philosophical thought. Husserl, describes the radicalness involved in this *epoché* as a 'renaissance.' He writes:

> Must not the only fruitful renaissance be the one that reawakens the impulse of the Cartesian *Meditations*: not to adopt their content but, in not doing so, to renew with greater intensity the radicalness of their spirit; the radicalness of self-responsibility, to the last degree…"[62]

We can, therefore, say that philosophical *epoché*, being Husserl's renewal of Descartes' radicality as expressed in his first-level turn into subjectivity, results in producing the 'genuine philosopher' as a perpetual-beginner-philosopher, marked by the philosophical attitude of presuppositionless-

[61] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 2.
[62] Ibid., 6.

ness. Only in this philosophical attitude, can a philosopher manage to free himself from the prejudice of holding second-hand opinions as true knowledge.[63] In this attitude, he not only becomes a strictly scientific philosopher (one guided by a strictly systematic method of philosophizing), but also a collaborator in genuine philosophy as a universal discipline of foundational knowledge, as opposed to being a philosopher, ascribed to a particular school of philosophy.

2. PHENOMENOLOGICAL *EPOCHÉ* AS GUIDE TO THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

As we have mentioned in the preceding section, we will consider the phenomenological *epoché* parallel to Descartes' second-level turn into the philosophizing self. While there is only a thin boundary between the two aspects of the *epoché*, we shall in this section, see their distinction in terms of meaning and application. However, we must consider phenomenological *epoché* as building upon a foundation already established by the philosophical *epoché*. Viewing the two as complementary parts of the same method, we will be able to appreciate how their interplay leads us to the achievement of the 'phenomenological attitude,' a fundamental philosophical orientation, without which, one cannot philosophize in the transcendental phenomenological way.

2.1 The Phenomenological *Epoché* and the Necessary Existence of the Ego

The second-level turn, as Husserl observes, is not only strange (to traditional philosophy) but also explicates in a deeper sense, the very necessity of turning into subjectivity. It is the only means to the discovery of the very first apodictic truth; namely, the philosophizing subject as philosophizing (Descartes' *ego-cogito)*. Husserl writes, "…the meditator keeps only himself, qua pure ego of his *cogitationes*, as having an absolutely indubitable existence, as something that cannot be done away with, something that would exist even though this world were non-existent."[64] Thus, philosophy is radically directed to reflect on the self as the subject of its own consciousness (Descartes' 'I' becomes philosophy's ultimate subject-matter).[65] This was, for Husserl, a land-mark discovery; it was the major influential insight on account of which he viewed transcendental phenomenology

[63] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 16.
[64] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 3.
[65] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 12.

as a 'Neo-Cartesianism.'[66] For Husserl, this discovery was made precisely by the merits of Descartes' turn into subjectivity, characterized by his *methodic doubt*, which he refers to as 'the Cartesian *epoché.'* Husserl writes, in *The Crisis*:

> But how is this epoché supposed to accomplish this? If it puts out of play, with one blow, all knowledge of the world, in all its forms, including those of the straightforward experience of the world, and thus loses its grasp on the being of the world, how is it that precisely through the epoché a primal ground of immediate and apodictic self-evidences should be exhibited? The answer is: If I refrain from taking any position on the being or nonbeing of the world, if I deny myself every ontic validity related to the world, not every ontic validity is prohibited for me within this epoché. I, the ego carrying out the epoché, am not included in its realm of objects but rather – am excluded in principle. I am necessary as the one carrying it out. It is precisely herein that I find just the apodictic ground I was seeking, the one which absolutely excludes every possible doubt. No matter how far I may push my doubt, and even if I try to think that everything is dubious or even in truth does not exist, it is absolutely self-evident that I, after all, would still exist as the doubter and negator of everything. [67]

While in the previous section we have highlighted that Descartes' *methodic doubt* entails a significant difference from Husserl's *epoché* in general, it is explicit from the above quotation that Husserl nonetheless, regarded Descartes' method with high esteem, on account of the discovery it had led to and the novelty it consequently brought to the history of philosophy. Smith claims that for Husserl, "Descartes managed to uncover… for the first time the genuine sense of the necessary regress to the ego, and consequently to overcome the hidden but already felt naivete of earlier philosophizing."[68] This points to a further elaboration of the nature of traditional philosophy's naivete; it was not only a failure to seek for absolutely apodictic insights (as we have seen in the preceding section), but most importantly, a presupposition that truth or reality was encamped in a world outside of the philosopher (what Husserl terms as 'Objective world'). For this reason, Husserl finds Descartes' *Meditations* as 'epoch-making' in the history of philosophy. Emphasizing this fact, he writes, "Descartes, in fact, inaugurates an entirely new kind of philosophy. Changing

[66] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1.
[67] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 77.
[68] Smith seemingly gives all credit to Descartes for discovery of the ego as the subject of consciousness, in his claim that this discovery entailed the whole sense of turning into subjectivity. See Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 12. It is to be noted, however, that Husserl does not give Descartes the whole credit for this. He actually means that transcendental phenomenology, remaining in strict adherence to the *epoché* will discover the genuine sense of the turn into subjectivity, the only means through which the naivete of earlier philosophizing will be for the first time, fully uncovered and overcome. See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 6.

its total style, philosophy takes a radical turn: from naïve Objectivism to transcendental subjectivism…"[69]

In terms of the two aspects of the *epoché*, we can say that the phenomenological *epoché* finally brings to fruition the endeavour of the philosophical *epoché* to restrict the philosopher to his very self in the attitude of presuppositionless-ness. Having suspended all previously accepted knowledge regardless of its sources, thereby eliminating the prejudice that received doctrines are identical to real knowledge (which is the function of the philosophical *epoché*), the phenomenological *epoché* reveals the very foundational and genuinely produced knowledge; the self-evident philosophizing ego qua philosophizing in contradistinction to the existence of the natural world. In other words, the phenomenological *epoché* reveals to us that the philosophizing ego's existence is apodictic and necessary, while the existence of the natural world is not.

The central insight of the phenomenological *epoché,* as Smith notices, is the fact that it clearly illustrates what apodicticity means. Smith writes, "Something is apodictic if its non-being, its non-existence, is inconceivable."[70] It is now clear, that the phenomenological *epoché* has a distinct area of operation. It is a sieve that allows us to draw knowledge of what is apodictically existential. The philosophical *epoché,* though epistemological in nature, is general in operation; it neither precisely articulates the sort of knowledge it is out to suspend nor its sources. The phenomenological *epoche* on the other hand, is particular and precise; it inhibits the philosopher from making unwarranted judgments regarding the existence of the natural world on the bases of sensual experience. We can, therefore, say that the phenomenological *epoché,* though equally epistemological, it is of a metaphysical orientation because it precisely deals with the ontological value of knowledge. Husserl, making this emphasis in the *Cartesian Meditations* writes, "When this method is followed, the certainty of sensuous experience, the certainty with which the world is given in natural living, does not withstand criticism; accordingly, the being of world must remain unaccepted at this initial stage."[71]

Descartes' second-level turn into subjectivity does not intend the ego in terms of a physical man in the world, rather it implies a self-reflecting self (identifiable with Husserl's description,

[69] Ibid., 4.
[70] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 18.
[71] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 3.

'subject of his pure *cogitationes'*). The common man (the non-philosophical person) may never grasp this sense of the self. The ego is so understood, therefore, only in the realm of philosophical reflection. Husserl explains *'cogitationes'* as 'complexes of the many different changing spontaneities of my consciousness' by means of which I relate to the world; for instance, theorizing consciousness such as observing, explicating, conceptualizing, comparing, presupposing and inferring. He also describes *cogitationes* as 'multifaceted acts and states of mind and willing' such as being pleased or displeased, enjoying or worrying, desiring, willing, fearing, hoping and acting among others.[72] Husserl argues that 'Descartes' *cogito* encompasses all of these acts and states of consciousness,' including the simple acts of the ego by which I turn to the world in the process of comprehending it.[73] William rightly observes, that Descartes' claim for the necessary existence of the ego (*cogito ego sum*) is based on an ontological principle; namely, that in order to think, it is necessary to be (what he calls '*cogito*-argument').[74] He further thinks that the *cogito*-argument could have been as a result of an intuition, whereby it is "…grasped by a simple act of mental vision."[75] Regardless of the question whether Descartes arrives at the *cogito*-argument from the said ontological principle or from intuition, it is clear that the kind of existential judgement he makes about the ego, is intended to be of a theoretical nature and can, therefore, be termed as an eidetic existential judgment since it does not entail any dependence on the concrete world.[76] Indeed, the ego discovered through the 'Cartesian *epoché,'* as Husserl further observes, presents a 'sphere of being' which is in principle, prior to any other conceivable being.[77] This means, that for Descartes, as well as for Husserl, the ego of the *epoché* stands on itself, transcending every other being (it bears existential and ontological transcendence). Smith observes, that for Husserl, the field of consciousness presented by the conscious self as 'pure self' and 'pure thoughts' (untainted by any prejudice concerning reality of the non-apodictic world), is what Husserl considers as

[72] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Daniel O. Dhalstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 50.
[73] Ibid.
[74] William, "Cartesianism, Certainty and the Cogito," 42.
[75] Ibid.
[76] I depend on Tavuzzi's distinction between various sorts of existential judgments. See Michael M. Tavuzzi, *Existential Judgment and Transcendental Reduction: A Critical Analysis of Edmund Husserl's Phaenomenologische Fundamentalbetrachtung* (Rome: Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas Press, 1982), 18.
[77] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 78.

transcendental consciousness.[78] In this perspective, therefore, this transcendental ego is the only authentic being that the 'genuine philosophy' is left with to study.

The phenomenological *epoché,* however, seemingly puts us in a philosophical jail of idealism (what William refers to as 'withdrawal to the circle of ideas).'[79] About this fact, Husserl notices that Descartes' method leads to 'a kind of solipsistic philosophizing' in which, the philosopher 'seeks apodictically certain ways' by means of which an 'Objective outwardness' could be deduced from 'pure inwardness.'[80] Husserl observes that, to get out of this solipsism, Descartes posited the existence of God and veracity, through which he deduced 'Objective Nature' and concrete things and consequently, metaphysics and the positive sciences as distinct studies which, following principles innate in the ego, help in making sense of the worldly and non-worldly realities.[81] Kockelmans notices that for Descartes, philosophy was like a tree, with metaphysics as the root (entailing principal attributes of God and of immortality of the soul with its innate ideas), physics as the trunk (entailing study of the universe and its bodies) and other positive sciences as branches (studying the properties of the natural earthly bodies).[82] Kockelmans, however, emphasizes that Husserl interprets Descartes' conception of philosophy as flawed, since it assumes that philosophy is necessarily designed to follow the deductive method of mathematics.[83]

In *The Crisis,* Husserl argues that although Descartes' *Meditations* exhibit primitiveness in wrong proofs of God's existence among other obscurities and ambiguities, there is good reason to extract from them what Descartes became conscious of from what was concealed from him and what was smuggled into his ideas on account of 'very natural things taken for granted.'[84] In fact, for Husserl, in as far as Descartes conceived a philosophy that radically concerns itself with the apodicticity of the ego and its pure thoughts, he had already discovered the unprecedented transcendental perspective (the sole concern of transcendental phenomenology).[85] On the one hand, Husserl sees Descartes as an iconic figure; he recognizes naïve dogmatism in philosophical Objectivism in as far as he strenuously works for a philosophy centred around the philosophizing

[78] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 19.
[79] William, "Cartesianism, Certainty and the Cogito,"27.
[80] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 3.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Kockelmans, *A First Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology,* 42.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences,* 77.
[85] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 19-20.

subject. On the other hand, Husserl however, accuses Descartes of failing to completely disentangle himself from traditional philosophy's dogmatic metaphysical conception of the extended world. Husserl writes:

> To be sure, we also found it necessary to reproach Descartes for the fact that, despite having hit upon the transcendental problem of cognition, he failed to see it – misunderstood it – which was why his project of radically grounded universal science or philosophy had to fail. Instead of [developing] a transcendental Egology and the genuine transcendental theory of cognition contained within it, he goes down the erroneous path of a theological epistemology and a dogmatic metaphysics.[86]

According to Husserl, Descartes' flawed conception of philosophy as an ideal science, ultimately determined by the 'ideal approximated by geometry and mathematical natural science,' [87] was expressive of his falling back to the very naivete of earlier philosophizing. In other words, he shared in the 'scholastic prejudice,' which limited philosophy to a deductive system of the structural order of geometry, only that Descartes claimed the ego's absolute certainty as an axiom which together with axiomatic principles innate in the ego, provided a deeper foundation than that of geometry.[88] For Husserl, on account of this 'fateful prejudice,' Descartes misinterpreted the philosophical value of the apodictic ego he had discovered, by engaging himself into 'nonsensical proofs' of the external world from this ego.[89] In so doing, he renders his first and second turns into subjectivity meaningless. His claim that the ideal science must be deductive implies a return to traditional philosophy (which he had previously overthrown in the first-level turn). Further, his deduction of the 'Objective Nature' from pure subjectivity implies an absurd return to the very Objectivist perspective of traditional philosophy; an abandonment of the *ego-cogito* as the only apodictic truth as discovered in his second-level turn into subjectivity.

Therefore, much as Descartes' second-level turn into subjectivity structurally matches Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* to some extent, we also notice an enormous diversity of views between the two thinkers; not only with regard to the nature of the ego and its philosophical functions, but also with regard to their resultant philosophical stances.[90] In the perspective of the

[86] Husserl, *First Philosophy,* 80-81.
[87] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 7.
[88] Ibid., 7-8.
[89] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 19.
[90] Ibid., 21.

differences between the two thinkers, we could say that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology not only exposes the above described *Cartesian naivete* but also dispels it through radical application of the phenomenological *epoché* as we shall see.

2.2 Phenomenological *Epoché* and the Idea of Science

Having discovered the necessary existence of the ego, and having noted Descartes' unwarranted presupposition of a deductive ideal science, phenomenological *epoché* leaves us in a practical difficulty regarding the possibility of making an actual first-step of philosophising genuinely. Husserl, sticking to the general principle of *epoché* writes, "Everything that makes a philosophical beginning possible we must first acquire by ourselves."[91] While seemingly we are left in the very solipsism that Descartes found himself, questioning the philosophical use of the ego, Husserl finds, in the ego itself a genuine way out; namely, that the apodictic existence of the ego should become, as Smith puts it, the benchmark of apodicticity (inconceivability of error) for every other thing or insight to be accepted by the scientific philosopher.[92]

Husserl considers the general aim of grounding science absolutely as a genuine concern for philosophy. In a situation of 'breakdown of sciences,' Husserl believes that in tracing the sciences of nature from their beginnings and critically considering their development, we are able to single out their original meaning vis-à-vis their present 'shift of meaning' and 'misplaced self-interpretation' which has had negative implications to modern philosophy and consequently, to modern European culture.[93] Since Husserl's philosophical and phenomenological forms of the *epoché* entail merely a 'parenthesizing' in the sense of disregard of pre-existing knowledge (in philosophizing), he (unlike Descartes, whose method entails negation or total denial of previously accepted knowledge) can consistently refer back to the sciences, merely as 'alleged sciences' and to their general final idea as 'mere supposition.'[94] In the spirit of the already effected philosophical *epoché*, Husserl argues that we can consider the concept of a 'genuine science' as 'fluid generality' (without making reference to any particular sciences and without taking any position regarding validity of their theories).[95] Just as Husserl understands the 'idea of philosophy' as an implicit

[91] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 13.
[92] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 13.
[93] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 58.
[94] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 8.
[95] Ibid., 9.

ideal that motivates philosophizing, so too does his argument here suggest that there is an underlying 'idea of science' (also not explicitly determined); an ideal that motivates all genuine striving for scientific knowledge. He therefore sees no contravention of the philosophical *epoché* in 'immersing ourselves' into the 'scientific striving,' targeting to see whether this ideal of 'genuine science' being aimed at by the scientists is really achieved or not.[96] In fact, in so doing, he is radically in the practise of the philosophical *epoché*. As Smith argues, Husserl believes that as historically situated scientific philosophers, we cannot be contented by the fact that there are scientists around us, rather we have to 'immerse ourselves into their scientific doing,' making their concerns our own, in order to grasp concretely, not only the 'idea of science,' but also its constituent parts.[97]

According to Husserl's observation, natural scientists intend not only to make meaningful judgements about an 'affair or state-of-affairs,' but also strive to ground their judgments upon 'immutable and repeatable principles,' as 'justification for the truth and universality of their judgments.' For Husserl, this implies that scientific cognition is dependent on a 'pre-eminent judicative meaning' or an 'already executed grounding,' which possesses the affair or state-of-affairs 'itself,' against which particular scientific judgments immediately show themselves as correct or incorrect. Husserl refers to this 'pre-eminent judicative having' of the affair or state-of-affairs itself as 'evidence' and emphasizes that it is possessed by the 'judger himself' (within the scientist himself). Every singular scientific judgement is therefore a 'mere claim' or 'mere supposition' which if correct, becomes 'consciously converted' into corresponding evidence in a process he calls 'fulfilment' or 'synthesis' whereby, what is merely meant (content of scientific judgments) 'coincides' and 'agrees' with what is evidently possessed (the pre-eminent judicative meaning). In this perspective, Husserl terms evidence (in a broad sense) as 'mental seeing'; an intuitive kind of experiencing in which one grasps something in the mode of 'itself.' Husserl further notices that while evidence includes experiencing in the usual sense (sensual experience) and in the narrower sense ('mental seeing'), it can vary in perfection. 'Perfect evidence' would refer to 'pure' and 'genuine knowledge' which for Husserl, is the ideal that motivates scientific striving, while 'imperfect evidence' would refer to 'changing' or 'relative evidences' that guide the everyday life (common man's knowledge of the world). But the positive sciences, emphasizes

[96] Ibid.
[97] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 17-18.

Husserl, aim at objective truths with universal validity, thus they require a verification 'carried through to the end,' on account of which, they are 'obliged to modify their truths' perpetually in order to keep getting closer to the absolute truth, which implies that the said sciences do not actualize a 'system of truths' even though they may claim its actualization.[98]

In this short and rather preliminary account of evidence, Husserl observes that the scientist like the philosopher, aims at universality of knowledge, which necessarily demands an explicit and demonstrable procedure of inquiry. About this, he writes, "…the idea of science and philosophy involves an order of cognition, proceeding from intrinsically earlier to intrinsically later cognitions; ultimately, then, a beginning and a line of advance that are not to be chosen arbitrarily but have their basis in the nature of things themselves."[99] While it is clear that the physical thing remains the primary object of knowledge for the scientist, Husserl notices that the scientist desires to know things, not in the ordinary everyday sense where flux and relativity is admissible. The scientist instead, aims at objectively grasping the fixed properties of the thing in question and at making theoretical expressions which demonstrate his knowledge. For this reason, he does not rest with relative evidences and relative judging of the everyday life, but he seeks absolute evidences. It is clear, for Husserl therefore, that the sciences as they have developed, are guided by the 'idea of a genuine science' even though this very idea is not achieved in any of them. The idea of a 'genuine science' matches the idea of a 'genuine philosophy' in the sense that it contains within itself, a systematic ordering of knowledge, in which not only absolute truth is aimed at, but also more foundational elements of knowledge are given priority over the less foundational ones. For instance, in the scientific procedure of acquiring knowledge, although the scientist begins from everyday knowledge (sensual observation of concrete things) he seeks more foundational knowledge than just what is apparent. He repeatedly subjects the concrete thing into systematic experimentations and proceeding to make further analytical data, deduces general properties that are characteristic of not only the particular thing in question, but of a whole class of similar things. In so doing, he not only confirms the certainty of the scientific principles involved in the experimentation, but also acquires by means of them, a new kind of knowledge regarding the specimen and its class, and values the newly acquired knowledge as more foundational than the

[98] For the whole of this paragraph, I broadly paraphrase Husserl's explication of the concept of evidence in relation to his 'idea of science.' See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 9-12.
[99] Ibid., 12.

preceding everyday knowledge of it. In this scheme, it is clear that while for the unscientific man, the everyday knowledge of things comes first and is found sufficing, for the scientist however, the basic scientific principles are prioritized, subsequent scientific findings are ranked second and everyday knowledge is ranked last, even though it was crucial for discovery of the basic scientific principles and of all subsequent scientific findings.

Considered from the perspective of the phenomenological *epoché*, this broad sense of the idea of science outlines Husserl's novel argument; namely, that in 'immersing ourselves into the scientific striving,' one discovers that the concept of evidence in the sense of intuition is the ultimate criterion of all scientific cognition of things themselves (which is only achievable in philosophical transcendental phenomenology).[100] Husserl's emphasis on evidence is a further expression of his desire to be a strict scientific philosopher, demonstrating that genuine philosophical insights must exhibit the highest level of universality; they are to be absolutely self-evidencing, they ought to originate from unquestionable sources (pure subjectivity) and must proceed through an explicit and systematic methodology. With such radical views regarding scientific knowledge, Husserl claims to have provided for the first unprejudiced step of genuine philosophizing. As Kockelmans observes, Husserl wants to demonstrate that allowing the 'idea of genuine science' to be the first step of genuine philosophizing differs from Descartes' 'deductive ideal science' in the sense that it does not presuppose anything; not even a determinate conception of philosophy itself.[101] Kockelmans, however, sees an inconsistency in Husserl's general argumentation for philosophy as a genuine science. According to Kockelmans' evaluation, this inconsistency remains at the root of Husserl's entire philosophy. About it, he writes, "On the one hand, Husserl vigorously objects any form of naturalism and scientism, claiming repeatedly that there is an essential difference between philosophy and science. On the other hand, he argues over and over again that a philosophy which is not a rigorous science will never be able to fulfil its vital task."[102]

While I agree with Kockelmans, that indeed, Husserl seemingly deals with the 'idea of philosophy' in close juxtaposition with the 'idea of science,' one must not be eluded into thinking

[100] Husserl's 'first methodological principle' emphasizes that genuine science must not accept anything as scientific unless it has been derived from evidence as an 'experience' ('mental seeing') in which the affairs or affair complexes are presented in the mode of 'they themselves.' See Ibid., 13.
[101] Kockelmans, *A First Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology,* 108.
[102] Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1994), 12.

that by emphasizing on philosophy as a science, Husserl refers to the concept 'science' on the same plane as entailed in the concept 'positive sciences.' We must notice however, that Husserl's philosophical project aims at unearthing those foundational scientific aspects of philosophy that ground the positive sciences, yet historically, they have remained buried beneath unjustified knowledge-claims by positive scientists. In the perspective of the concept of evidence, the phenomenological *epoché* reveals that although the positive sciences in their genuineness aim at absolute truths and strive to demonstrate validity of their so-called knowledge upon self-evident and fixed principles, those very principles that natural scientists consider as foundational, are themselves deficient (they are not self-sufficient). To be completely and genuinely standing as pillars for scientific knowledge, they have to be founded upon deeper foundational principles of knowledge which only philosophy can scientifically provide. In this sense, phenomenological *epoché* will demonstrate that philosophy (transcendental phenomenology) is the only 'genuine science' in the strictest sense of the term. It will establish that transcendental phenomenology is the only science that has for its subject matter, what can be considered as genuinely objective principles of truth. Precisely, it will demonstrate that transcendental phenomenology is the only science, whose basic principles are self-determining and not mediated as in the case of the principles of all positive sciences.

2.2.1 The First Methodological Principle

In Husserl's account of 'first methodological principle,' we grasp at a deeper level, his idea of evidence and clearly see the fundamental necessity for performing the phenomenological *epoché*, in a way that further draws essential distinction between philosophy and the positive sciences. Husserl radicalizes the ideal of evidence, in the judicative process of 'genuine scientific striving.' He writes, "It is plain that I, as someone beginning philosophically, since I am striving towards the presumptive end, genuine science, must neither make nor go on accepting any judgment as scientific that I have not derived from evidence, from 'experiences' in which the affairs and affair-complexes in question are present to me as 'they themselves'."[103] This phrase constitutes what Husserl considered as the 'first methodological principle.' It is clear, that this concept entails a close link between the phenomenological *epoché* and Husserl's notion of evidence. Having highlighted Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* not only as revealing the necessary existence of

[103] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 13.

the ego, but also as giving it priority of philosophical consideration, it would not be absurd of us, to expect from him a connection between this ego's unprecedented existence and the concept of genuine cognition. However, the most important aspect that we have to investigate in this connection, is the way in which genuine cognition is to result from this ego, within the framework of the principle of evidence. It would also be of our interest, to see how Husserl's account of ideal cognition ('genuine philosophy') would differ from Descartes' account, as a result of the phenomenological *epoché* and the 'first methodological principle.' Emphasizing the central place occupied by the concept of evidence in Husserl's entire philosophy, Smith clarifies that evidence must be understood as 'self-giving intuition' or 'evidentness.' He writes, "something is 'self-evident' if and only if it is *originarily* presented to you in a self-giving intuition." [104]

Husserl notices that the positive sciences in their judgments or claims to knowledge, make predicative propositions that are intended to express completely what is being claimed ('what is held pre-predicatively').[105] It is obviously clear, therefore, that for Husserl, the positive sciences are prejudiced in making such predicative propositions; for if they do not achieve the ideal of 'genuine science' but can only keep approximating it, their attempt towards complete predications can never be justified. [106] Those predications, can at best remain as mere claims and the sciences themselves as purported sciences. But philosophy, being a scientific discipline of utter genuineness, must explicitly show its distinctiveness from the positive sciences with regard to its judicative propositions. It must at least, exhibit some degree of achieving the absolute truth and entail justified predications of the truth it achieves. According to Husserl, the genuine philosopher must examine the 'range' and 'perfection' of evidence and accordingly, must limit his predicative expressions to only what is evidently self-given.[107]

For Husserl, therefore, genuine scientific philosophy requires as part of its normative principle, beginning from cognitions that are not only apodictic, but also necessarily 'first in themselves.' He describes them as, "...recognizable as preceding all other imaginable

[104] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 50.
[105] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 13.
[106] Husserl maintains that de facto sciences must ultimately see that they do not attain actualization of a system of absolute truths and that they are obliged to remain in infinite approximations that tend towards the idea of absolute or scientifically genuine truth. See Ibid., 12.
[107] Ibid., 13.

evidences."[108] In light of the phenomenological *epoché*, we should say, that for philosophy to be really genuine knowledge, it must proof itself to be making judgments that are completely 'fulfilled'; it must seek for evidences that are perfect in their self-giving and therefore, necessarily first in themselves and preceding all other possible evidences.[109] This is the sense in which, the 'first methodological principle' is a practical application of the demands of the phenomenological *epoché* and a sure method by means of which philosophy unlike the positive sciences, will not only base itself upon self-supporting principles of knowledge, but also will grasp the things as they really are (in Husserl's terminology, 'grasping a thing in the mode of 'it itself).'[110] By the guidance of the 'first methodological principle,' as Kockelmans observes, Husserl aims at an ultimate foundation of all philosophical assertions in an immediate vision or original intuition, in which his famous phrase 'going back to the things themselves' can be well understood.[111]

How phenomenological *epoché* is to lead us 'back to the things themselves' obviously sets stage for a wide philosophical debate regarding cognition. It arouses reconsideration of our usual processes of acquiring knowledge as well as the content of knowledge itself. One cannot ignore the natural provocation to contented against this dictum ('back to the things themselves') initially. In fact, one spontaneously asks the question, whether Husserl wants to suggest that prior to performance of the phenomenological *epoché*, the knowledge we possess about things is wrong or we do not possess knowledge of things themselves at all. At first, one finds Husserl's argument rather strange; wondering if it is not awkward to disconcert as 'non-knowledge' of things themselves, the very usual way in which everyone operates physical things for daily needs and always finds them responding as expected of them. Further, one is drawn to accuse Husserl of an awkward disregard for scientific knowledge and disrespect for today's numerous ground-breaking scientific discoveries with their resultant strides of success in the fields of health, agriculture, energy and infrastructure among many others. While these concerns apparently pose legitimate questions regarding Husserl's above mentioned dictum, on a deeper evaluation of its relation to the notion of the phenomenological *epoché*, one realizes that Husserl possesses a philosophical

[108] Ibid., 15.
[109] Ibid., 16.
[110] Ibid., 15.
[111] Kockelmans, *Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology,* 13-14.

radicality that meets them with an overwhelming measure of opposition, thereby opening up a uniquely genuine critique of what we regard to as knowledge of things.

2.2.3 Phenomenological *Epoché* and the Natural Attitude Thesis

Husserl's notion of phenomenological *epoché* doubtlessly confirms him as a far-sighted scientific philosopher. He not only exposes an existential prejudice that has always accompanied what we refer to as knowledge in the everyday sense, but also what we consider as scientific knowledge. He also uncovers a uniquely fundamental insight, which indeed points us towards the direction of achieving 'pure knowledge' or 'unprejudiced knowledge.' Husserl notices that while in our human desire to know, we are always directed towards actual things, we do so in the prejudice that the things in question are doubtlessly independent existents since we consider the extended world as an explicit justification for their being. Further, Husserl recognizes that such a perspective, reveals that we have developed an obvious belief that the natural world itself is an apodictically autonomous existent. Consequently, in as far as our knowledge is based upon this belief, we unquestionably consider it as certain and objective. Describing this belief, Husserl writes:

> I am conscious of a world, endlessly spread out in space, endlessly becoming and having become in time. I am conscious of it, and that means above all that I immediately find it intuitively, I experience it. Through seeing, touching, hearing, and so forth, in the various manners of sensory perception, corporeal things in some sort of spatial distribution are *simply there for me*; in the literal or figurative sense of the word they are *"on hand,"* whether or not I am particularly attentive to them and engaged with them… Animals, including humans, are also immediately there for me…[112]

Husserl refers to this belief in a world that is 'out there' as 'natural attitude.'[113] In the natural attitude, the world is conceived as an entity that subsists in itself regardless of our knowledge of it. In the perspective of this belief therefore, the world would continue to exist, whether we take notice of it or not. In this attitude, the world is considered as a totality of factual things; we could say, that we and everything else, come to it when we are born and depart from it when we die. Thus, it would be, at best, an object of our knowledge if we come to make sense of it or it would still 'remain there as an unknown reality' in the event that we did not make sense of it. It is in this

[112] Husserl, *Ideas I,* 48.
[113] Ibid.

sense, that Husserl repeatedly refers to this world of the natural attitude as 'Objective world.' Husserl's philosophical novelty lies in his noticing of that the natural attitude characterizes not only our day-to-day life, but also remains as an underlying conviction of the natural sciences and even of philosophy prior to transcendental phenomenology. In the perspective of Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* as an attempt to 'go back to the things themselves,' we could say that insofar as the natural attitude dominates scientific and philosophical research, our cognition of things themselves remains elusive and consequently, our claims for objectivity of cognition remains erroneous (prejudice).

Husserl, highlighting the difficulty involved in realizing the naivete inherent in the natural attitude and in disentangling ourselves from its grips writes the following:

> The question of evidences that are first in themselves can apparently be answered without any trouble. Does not the *existence of the world* present itself forthwith as such an evidence? The life of everyday action relates to the world. All the sciences relate to it: the sciences of matters of fact relate to it immediately; the a priori sciences, mediately, as instruments of scientific method. More than anything else the being of the world is obvious. It is so very obvious that no one would think of asserting it expressly in a proposition. After all, we have our continuous experience in which this world incessantly stands before our eyes, as existing without question.[114]

Without consideration of the phenomenological *epoché* in the perspective of the demand prescribed by the 'first methodological principle,' one would easily think that in the statements quoted above, Husserl affirms the extended world as an apodictic evidence upon which our philosophical knowledge is to be founded, as it is in the case of the sciences he mentions. On the contrary, Husserl's statements here aim at ironically presenting the naivete involved in the natural belief in an 'Objective world.' He wants to explicate the demand for performance of the phenomenological *epoché* as a challenge to the reader, to realize the crucial need to break ties with this natural belief while in the exercise of philosophizing.

From the perspective of Husserl's phenomenological *epoché*, particularly from the angle of the 'first methodological principle,' Husserl's criticism of the natural attitude thesis implicitly poses a fundamental philosophical question; namely, whether we can rationally demonstrate that

[114] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 17.

the external world is indeed, apodictically existent as we posit it to be in the everyday-life as well as in the natural sciences. Secondly, assuming that the natural world is an apodictic ground upon which our day-to-day knowledge and that of the natural sciences is founded, to what extent can we genuinely demonstrate that such an evidence is first in itself and that it precedes all other imaginable evidences? Further, to what extent can we rely upon sense-media for objectivity of knowledge regarding this 'Objective world' which we posit in the natural attitude? In Husserl's implicit attempt to pose and answer these questions, we not only find ourselves agreeing with his position, but also feel obliged to perform the phenomenological *epoché* ourselves, as means to overcome this natural attitude in our pursuit for genuinely objective philosophical knowledge.

Husserl maintains that the being of extended world, regardless of its apparent continual givenness, cannot be philosophically considered as apodictic and that our sensuous experience of the physical world cannot be acclaimed as the 'absolute primary evidence' (the evidence preceding all other evidences), regardless of its straightforward access to the physical world. He notices that through sensual experience, we develop a 'continual experiencedness of the world,' which can later proof to be an illusion or a 'coherent dream.'[115] Husserl, we could say, means to argue that our natural belief in a self-existent world and in its extended things is based on our 'conditioned-reflex' sort of relation to it. We, like Pavlov's experimental dogs, have made a connection between totally unrelated matters (data of sensuous experience on the one hand, and existence of the experienced world on the other hand) thereby, developing an irrational belief in a real world, existing independently from us. As a result, it becomes quite difficult to accept any critique of this particular conditioning. But on a critical reflection on this belief, we realize that it has led us into a philosophically erroneous conception of the world and consequently, to philosophically untenable knowledge-claims (which affirming its being as an independent entity). Contrary to this belief, Husserl, besides suggesting that 'a non-being of the world is conceivable,' he states that "…the evidence of world-experience would, at all events, need to be criticized with regard to its validity and range, before it could be used for the purpose of a radical grounding of science, and that therefore, we must not take that evidence to be, without question, immediately apodictic."[116] Although Husserl does not give a detailed explanation of this statement, it is indeed a ground-breaking one. It remains key to the understanding of his subsequent philosophical arguments in

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 17-18.

the *Cartesian Meditations*. We can, in fact say, that this statement entails in a nutshell, the whole sense of the phenomenological *epoché*.

Consider for instance, the reaction of a man, who while walking in the park, at once picks the top cover of a mobile phone, having thought that someone must have had lost his or her mobile phone, only to realize that he had mistaken the phone-cover for the mobile phone, simply because he could not see the rear part of the cover. He would not only feel cheated by his own sense of sight, but also would now begin to appreciate the fact that the world of sensual experience cannot be absolutely relied upon. While he would have no alternative but to continue living by making use of his physical senses as before, he would doubtlessly begin to limit the trust he continually accorded to his physical senses. Reflecting on this example, we can quite easily begin to digest Husserl's radical statement that, "Not only can a particular experienced thing suffer devaluation as an illusion of the senses; the whole unitary surveyable nexus, experienced throughout a period of time, can prove to be an illusion, a coherent dream."[117] Here, Husserl deduces far-reaching philosophical consequences in relation to the possibility of interruption of knowledge based on sensuous experience. For him, the very possibility of fallibility of judgment in relation to sensuous experience would philosophically imply that the 'experiential-world' is only 'something that claims being' and consequently, all the sciences that accord the status of 'real existence' to the physical world, not only suffer from 'naïve acceptance of the world' but also entail 'inadmissible prejudice.'[118]

This, therefore, means that we must admit a sharp distinction between our philosophical life and our non-philosophical life. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that in our non-philosophical life (ordinary daily-life as well as our social and cultural life; the totality of which Husserl calls 'life-world'),[119] all the meanings we ascribe to things, all the judgments we make about them, all our valuing and validating acts, as well as all our decisions are largely shaped by the belief in real existence of the physical world, which we acquire through habitual reliance on sensuous experience. This spontaneous disposition towards the world given to us by the senses and the subsequent ascription of the status of real existence to it regardless of the uncertainties related

[117] Ibid., 17.
[118] Ibid., 18.
[119] Husserl describes life-world in terms of our 'concrete surrounding'; not only consisting of corporeal Nature, but also all formations pertaining to sociality and culture. See Ibid., 19.

to it as we have described in the example above, is what amounts to Husserl's 'natural attitude.' It is 'natural attitude' precisely because it is the contrary of the 'unnatural attitude' characteristic of transcendental phenomenology, in which 'transcendental perspective' as we shall see, becomes the sole guiding attitude.[120] For Husserl, even the sciences of nature ('sciences of facts' or 'sciences of experience') belong to the category of 'non-philosophical life' in as far as their domain of research is based upon this worldview whereby, 'experiencing provides justification.'[121]

Having explicated elsewhere that Husserl's philosophical project entailed a desire to emancipate philosophy from undue subjugation to modern sciences, by restressing the fact that absolute truth is only possible in philosophy as a radically strict science, we have to rationally demonstrate with him, that transcendental subjectivity (which is a domain proper to philosophy alone) is as he puts it, "…the ultimate and apodictically certain basis for judgements…"[122] This argument for precedence of philosophy (strictly, as transcendental phenomenology) over all other sciences is agreeable to me. It brings spells the never-fading relevance of philosophy, regardless of the loftiness of any scientific discoveries. Alluding to this fact Husserl writes:

> So long as cognizing subjectivity, which must be conceived along with all actual and possible cognitions and sciences as an essential correlate, has not been examined, so long as a general and pure science of every possible cognizing consciousness, a science in which all true being reveals itself as a subjective achievement, has not been founded, no science, no matter how rational it may otherwise be, is fully and in every sense rational.[123]

For Husserl, such a scientific philosophy is only possible if the philosopher assumes and radically remains in the aforementioned philosophical attitude, which we will consider as 'phenomenological attitude,' entailing a crucial moment, which Husserl terms as 'the great reversal.'[124]

2.2.4 The Phenomenological Attitude

[120] Smith argues that the *epoché* gives us a new unnatural perspective; the transcendental perspective, and that to reverse the *epoché* would amount to retuning to the natural attitude. See Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 27.
[121] Husserl, *Ideas I,* 18.
[122] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 18.
[123] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 58.
[124] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 18.

Phenomenological attitude refers to a sustained philosophical perspective in which we become aware that while we do obtain conscious knowledge even in the natural attitude, the knowledge in question is only relevant for our non-philosophical life. In other words, we are continuously aware that this knowledge is founded upon an experiential-world whose existence, though affirmatively asserted in the non-philosophical life, is philosophically untenable. Such a continuous awareness is an obvious indication that the philosopher has permanently undertaken a paradigm shift regarding his philosophical approach to the world. Phenomenological attitude, therefore, results from the practice of phenomenological *epoché* having been universalized; the conscious attempt to always disregard (while philosophizing) all meanings and judgements pertaining to the world, allegedly asserted as existent. Husserl, emphasizing on the this radicalization of the phenomenological *epoché* writes, "This universal depriving of acceptance, this 'inhibiting' or 'putting out of play' of all positions taken regarding the already given 'Objective world' and, in the first place, all existential positions (those concerning being, illusion, possible being, being likely, probable, etc.)…"[125] It now becomes clear to us that phenomenological attitude as a radical philosophical perspective, not only reflects the practice of phenomenological *epoché* as merely 'suspending' our natural positing of existence of the 'Objective world,' but also of all other secondary claims arising from this basic presupposition. In this connection, therefore, Husserl, convinced that radical philosophical subjectivity would lead us to the ultimate source of cognition, maintains that it must not make use of the data of sensuous experience to reach its conclusions.[126]

For Husserl, in this deeper realm of subjective philosophizing, we must consider every bit of afore knowledge, which 'anchors upon corporeal Nature and the life-world,' as mere phenomenon of being instead of something that is.[127] It involves the realization that while our conviction in a spatiotemporal world persistently remains in us when we are in the non-philosophical life, and that we continuously relate to ourselves, to others and to the world in the natural attitude, we can, however, freely choose to stand unaffected by this worldview and actually assuming an observer's attitude, philosophically reflect upon ourselves as the very condition of possibility for our very operation in such a worldview. Therefore, on the one hand, we are not stopping the pre-conceptions that we have in the non-philosophical life; if anything, we require

[125] Ibid., 20.
[126] Ibid., 17.
[127] Ibid., 19.

them in order to continue living our everyday life, which forms part of the object of our philosophical reflection. On the other hand, we do not require, in the process of philosophizing, the input of those pre-conceptions. On the contrary, as philosophers, we distance ourselves from their influence in order to recognize them precisely as pre-conceptions characteristic of the natural attitude. Husserl explicitly acknowledges that the phenomenological *epoché,* does not stop our living in the natural attitude. He writes, "…we do not give up the thesis that we have posited, we alter nothing in our conviction …while it continues to remain in itself what it is, we place it as it were 'out of action,' we 'suspend it,' we 'bracket it.'[128]

Phenomenological attitude therefore, consists of assuming a state of attentive passivity. Here, the philosopher neither interferes with the straightforward sensuous experiencing of the world nor inhibits himself from accepting the existence of the experiential-world, in as far as this acceptance pertains to his non-philosophical life. However, in his philosophical life, he methodologically inhibits himself from the influence of such world-experiencing processes and their resultant world-acceptances; he treats them as myths of the senses. As a result, he is capable of distinguishing the experiential-world as an 'accepted phenomenon' and of realizing that such a world, exists and can only exist for himself;[129] it has no existential validity without the experiencing and accepting subject. Similarly, the philosopher is able to recognize all the meanings and judgements proceeding from the experiential-world. He does not inhibit the process of their production in his natural believing characteristic of the non-philosophical life, but he, as Husserl observes, regards them precisely as mere 'position-takings'.[130]

In the phenomenological attitude, therefore, the philosopher orients himself towards a perpetual practice of the phenomenological *epoché;* aiming at making a clear distinction between the world of non-philosophical life and the world of philosophical life. He inhibits himself from importing into his philosophical life, the 'position-takings' pertaining to his unstopping non-philosophical living. Husserl, capturing this fact writes, "…everything meant in such accepting or positing processes of consciousness (the meant judgement, theory, value, end, or whatever it is) is still retained completely – but with the acceptance-modification, 'mere phenomenon'."[131] At this

[128] Husserl, *Ideas I,* 54.
[129] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 26.
[130] Ibid., 20.
[131] Ibid.

point, it becomes clear, how Husserl and Descartes differ with regard their views on the natural world. While Descartes' *methodic doubt* leads to total denial or negation of the natural world, Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* as 'bracketing' or 'putting out of play' or 'suspending' of the natural world, having been viewed as an 'accepted phenomena,' 'leaves everything as it is.'[132] For Husserl, Descartes' doubt, as observes Smith, amounts to holding a certain position with regard to the existence of something, just as one would do in the positive sense (affirming) or in the negative sense (negating).[133] In embracing the *methodic doubt*, Descartes, we would say on behalf of Husserl, fails to recognize the sensuous world as it is (an 'accepted phenomenon') and consequently, instead of 'bracketing it' in his philosophizing, he denies it. Descartes' second-level turn into subjectivity therefore, fails to produce the fruit of the phenomenological attitude. Descartes fails to recognize the sensuous world as a constitute of a naïve belief in the existence of the physical world. Consequently, he remains entangled (in his philosophizing) within this very naivete; he continues to view the extended world as having existential and ontological autonomy.

We realize that Husserl's phenomenological attitude entails unique insights, leading to a remarkable stride in the epistemological debate inaugurated by Descartes and which had kept famous philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thinking, but without providing a substantive and consistent response. While the insights of philosophers such as John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume and Emmanuel Kant expressed significant attempts to respond to this epistemological debate, the objectivity of their philosophical accounts concerning human cognition remained inadequate. Husserl writes:

> If we now follow the lines of development which proceeded from Descartes, one, the 'rationalistic,' leads through Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, and the Wolff school to Kant, the turning point… Of greater interest for us, however, because of its immense effect on psychology and the theory of knowledge, is Locke's critique of the understanding, together with its subsequent continuations in Berkeley and Hume. This line of development is especially significant in that it is an essential segment of the historical path on which the psychologically adulterated transcendentalism of Descartes …seeks, through unfolding its consequences, to work its way through to the realization of its untenability…[134]

[132] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 23.
[133] Ibid., 21.
[134]Husserl views Descartes as the starting point of two lines of philosophical development; namely, rationalism and empiricism. However, in making this claim, he mainly wants to emphasize that Descartes' unnoticed influence of the natural attitude thesis (characteristic of the scholastic philosophy) is continued in the philosophers after him. See Husserl, *The Crisis*, 83-84.

The above statements show clearly that for Husserl, insofar as the philosophers mentioned failed to recognize their presuppositions characteristic of the non-philosophical life (as did Descartes), they were bound to import them into their philosophizing and consequently, end-up in philosophical inconsistencies, regardless of the great philosophical traditions they established.

Consider for instance, John Locke who, while rejecting the doctrine of innate ideas (as held by Descartes), maintained that human mind was originally a 'white paper' upon which all knowledge was supplied from experience (in form of sensations or 'simple ideas' and in form of reflection or 'operations of the mind'). This position, leading him to the difficulty of accounting for ideas of pure thought, pushed him to the conclusion that only sensitive knowledge (which he viewed as product of real things outside of us, but acting upon us through the external senses) was certain. For him, any claim of certainty of knowledge resulting from pure ideas was a mere fiction. Berkeley, noticing Locke's difficulty, maintained that existential validity of things lies in their being perceived. Thus, denying existence of matter, he maintained that the world was only a sequence of ideas in the mind, while at the same time, a series of real things, which on account of God's act of perceiving them, remained only as perceived. David Hume's take on the debate took a psychological turn. Hume was convinced that in examining the nature of human mind, we could discover the actual processes through which, what we call 'knowledge' comes about. For Hume, all we have are impressions, out of which ideas are formed and arranged either in a fixed sequence in the faculty of memory or arranged in any order in the faculty of imagination. Hume, therefore, concluded that humans cannot know anything about the universe. For him, that what we call knowledge is mere association of ideas, derived from impressions that repeatedly occurred in the past with succession, but without any necessary connection, yet on account of our mental customs or habits, we infer necessary connections between them. [135]

From Husserl's perspective, we could say that these philosophers result in such 'absurd' conclusions simply because they, like Descartes, lack the sense of phenomenological attitude. They are unable to recognize that belief in the existence of an 'Objective world' is a presupposition

[135] For the whole of this paragraph, I depend on Popkin and Avrum's presentation of the theory of knowledge in the history of western philosophy. See Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1993), 206-235.

characteristic of the natural attitude. Consequently, instead of treating it (in their philosophizing) as an 'accepted phenomenon' they end up in constructing theories of knowledge characterized by further 'position-takings.' Husserl nevertheless, reads from these philosophers' insights, a deeply felt but not explicitly articulated need to question the ontological validity of the spatial-temporal world. He sees in them, an attempt to turn into subjectivity in search of an objective account of knowledge (regarding the world), but notices that their attachment to 'Objectivist' view of the world characteristic of traditional metaphysics hinders their success. He writes:

> Was there not, here, in spite of the absurdity which may have been due to particular aspects of the presuppositions, a hidden and unavoidable truth felt? Was this not the revelation of a completely new way of assessing the objectivity of the world and its whole ontic meaning and, correlatively, that of the objective science, a way which did not attack their own validity but did attack their philosophical or metaphysical claim, that of absolute truth? Now at last it was possible and necessary to become aware of the fact – which had remained completely unconsidered in these sciences – that the life of consciousness is a life of accomplishment.[136]

Even more passionately, Husserl admires Kant's transcendental philosophy. While accusing him of 'so many presuppositions' characteristic of 'rationalism extending from Descartes through Leibniz and Wolff' and of 'lack of radicalism in his philosophizing', Husserl considers Kant's philosophy with high regard. He refers to it as 'transcendental subjectivism' on account of its scientific construction, as a systematic inquiry into the 'ultimate sources of knowledge formation,' whereby the 'knower reflects upon himself and his knowing life.'[137]

At this point, it becomes clear that Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* bears a revolutionary philosophical implication; namely, a paradigm shift from what we could term as 'naïve metaphysics' (in which the world is conceived as an autonomously existing entity, and thus, prioritized as an object of philosophical inquiry) to a 'radical metaphysics,' whereby having 'bracketed' all principles and categories pertaining to such naïve metaphysics, priority of philosophical reflection is instead directed towards the knowing subject and the subjective structures of cognition. Husserl clearly notices the attempt by Descartes and the philosophers after him, to make this critical shift and points out their failure to embrace the phenomenological attitude

[136] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 90.
[137] Ibid., 97-100.

as the reason behind their inability to successfully do so, since without it, they do not notice the philosophical prejudices inherent in their theories. We will now investigate the ways in which, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is a 'pure transcendental subjectivity' and consequently, a 'new idea of grounding of knowledge.'[138]

3. TRANSCENDENTAL *EPOCHÉ* AS THE 'GATEWAY' TO THE REALM OF TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY AND TRANSCENDETAL GROUNDING OF KNOWLEDGE

In the previous sections, we have seen that while Husserl agrees with Descartes that in the discovery of the philosophizing ego, we obtain a first self-evident truth, he however disagrees with his interpretation of this ego. He sees Descartes' ego as devoid of any philosophical utility, on account of his misinterpretations of it, resulting from the failure to recognize his own deep-seated 'scholastic prejudice' in which, geometry and mathematics were unquestionably regarded as almost absolute sciences, yet as positive sciences, they entailed the naïve belief in the existence of the 'Objective world.' Having thus demonstrated the inadequacy of Descartes' theory of knowledge (and by extension, those of the philosophers after him), we will in this section, dwell on Husserl's establishment of transcendental phenomenology as a 'genuine' theory of knowledge. We will investigate the philosophical implications of Husserl's radical self-restriction to the phenomenological *epoché* and accordingly, outline those resultant elements (in methodology and content) that render philosophical transcendental phenomenology an outstanding subjective science of genuine cognition of things themselves.

3.1 The Phenomenological Ego and Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction

As Smith observes, the radical newness of Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* was in its discovery of 'a new realm of being,' together with 'a new method of inquiry into this field.' According to Smith, considering that Husserl's audience for the 1928 lectures (from which his *Cartesian Meditations* is published) comprised of the philosophical elites of France, Husserl's repeated emphasis on 'beginning philosophers' ultimately alludes to 'transcendental

[138] Smith emphasizes that Husserl implicitly rejects the idea that transcendental subjectivity is meant to be (in the usual sense) the knowledge upon which all objective knowledge is grounded, rather viewing it as 'a new idea of the grounding of knowledge.' See Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 27.

consciousness' as a new field of inquiry, in relation to which all of us, Husserl included, are beginners. [139]

Accordingly, we notice that the first and central achievement of Husserl's radical application of the phenomenological *epoché* within the philosophical perspective of phenomenological attitude, is the discovery of the transcendental-phenomenological ego. This is the discovery of the self, as the primary basis of all cognitional processes and content. This self is termed as 'phenomenological ego' precisely because it is an ego who appears to himself only in the philosophical perspective of phenomenological attitude. In other words, it is only upon the philosophizing ego's self-reflection after bracketing all existential presuppositions of an 'Objective world,' that a new ego ('new realm of being' absolutely untainted by these presuppositions) emerges to himself, as the very primal condition, without which, any cognitional claims (genuine or not) cannot take place (in which sense, the emergent ego is 'transcendental'). Accordingly, Husserl emphasizes that this ego not only reveals himself, but also the whole scope of his cognizing life; a fact which is accessible to the philosophizing subject only if he fully embraces the phenomenological *epoché* and radically restricts himself to what this method reveals. He writes:

> Phenomenological *epoché* and parenthesizing of the Objective world – therefore does not leave us confronting nothing…what I, the one who is meditating acquire by it is my pure living, with all the pure subjective processes making this up…The *epoché* can also be said to be the radical and universal method by which I apprehend myself purely: as Ego, and with my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire Objective world exist for me and is precisely as it is for me.[140]

It is now clear, that the transcendental-phenomenological ego results from a pure self-experiencing experience (which Husserl terms as '*transcendental-phenomenological self-experience'*).[141] Here, the various experiences accessible to the phenomenological ego, with their specific data of experience and the 'position-takings' (as interpretations accompanying such data) are noticed, but having been 'bracketed,' do not influence the self-experiencing of this ego.

[139] Ibid., 3.
[140] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 20-21.
[141] Ibid., 26.

We now see, the necessity of switching to a first-person-singular approach (as Husserl does) in order for us to adequately grasp the insight of the phenomenological ego and to appropriately discuss it. I the philosophizing ego, having suspended all assertions about an existent 'Objective world' in my philosophizing, yet not interfering with such positing in my non-philosophical life, acquire a new realization of myself as a being of pure acts of consciousness with corresponding pure objects. For instance, I grasp myself as the subject of my now-made-conscious acts of straightforwardly seeing or hearing or touching, as well as of the specific object of sight, object of hearing and object of touching. Further, I grasp myself as the subject of my now-made-conscious acts of spontaneously interpreting the data of sight, of hearing and of touching, and subsequently, executing the acts of making various judgments regarding the data of these experiences, in terms of my natural belief in existence of the natural world. I also grasp myself as the philosophizing subject, with my reflective acts of bracketing these particular interpretations and judgments because I do experience my conscious reflective acts of deeming them as prejudices. In the phenomenological experience, therefore, I do not acquire myself as a static ego, but as an ego with numerous experienceable acts of consciousness (some of which are straightforwardly executed while others are reflectively executed). Husserl describes this ego as 'my pure ego, with the pure stream of my *cogitationes*.'[142]

Notably, while I (the phenomenological ego) remain the subject of my own conscious acts, I am able to give a pure account of this ego (myself) as the self-experiencing subject, who stands unaffected by his own straightforward acceptance of the natural world and its corresponding spontaneous presuppositions, characteristic of the natural attitude. In other words, I am able to demonstrate that such a straightforwardly accepted world and the presuppositions related to it, result from the various acts my own consciousness, executed while in my non-philosophical life. Husserl emphasizes that such realizations imply primacy of being of the phenomenological ego over the being we naturally accord to any extended entity. For him, natural existence (say, that of the extended world) is secondary to the existence of the ego; any assertion of such natural existence necessarily presupposes the ego as transcendental being.[143] Having seen that the ego remains the foundational core of any conception or misconception of existence, we can therefore acknowledge Husserl's claim for the phenomenological ego's essential transcendence in existence. For Husserl,

[142] Ibid., 21.
[143] Ibid.

therefore, since the phenomenological *epoché* leads us to the realization of the transcendental ego, it is referred to as 'transcendental-phenomenological *epoché*' and since as a method, it restricts us to the realm of the transcendental-phenomenological ego, it is referred to as 'transcendental-phenomenological reduction.'[144]

While Husserl might seem to be making a trivial exchange of terms (from phenomenological *epoché* to transcendental-phenomenological reduction), on a deeper reflection, we realize that in so doing, he not only inaugurates a whole science, but also spells a vast field of research as its subject matter and a radically strict scientific method for its proceeding. While phenomenological *epoché* functioned as a methodological tool for noticing and 'bracketing' prejudices related to the natural-attitude thesis, its philosophical utility would be limited to effecting in us the phenomenological attitude, with which we would at best, remain critiquing others' philosophical accounts of cognition but without our own. However, since this *epoché* as transcendental-phenomenological reduction restricts our philosophical reflections to the transcendental phenomenological ego (the subject of his own unlimited and ever-changing conscious activities), it introduces a new field of study and accordingly, a new scientific philosophy. Husserl describes this new science as, "…an entirely different science of subjectivity based on pure 'inner experience,' an eidetic science of the Ego as such, of possible pure consciousness as such, of possible objects of consciousness as such, in which all facticity is suspended and is only included within the range of pure possibilities as one such possibility."[145] Husserl's argument here, is therefore that transcendental-phenomenological reduction presents the transcendental ego as a new field of research concerning cognition. This field entails research into the cognizing subject as pure consciousness, his cognizing processes as pure acts of consciousness and the objects of his cognition as pure cognitional content. The concept of 'pure' here, is in reference to being free from the already bracketed acceptance of the Objective world and its facticity. This is precisely the meaning of Husserl's reference to 'newness' when he refers to 'being of a new kind', 'new science' and 'new idea of grounding of knowledge' (transcendental grounding of knowledge).[146]

[144] Ibid.
[145] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 143.
[146] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 27.

3.2 Transcendental Phenomenology as the Science of Transcendental Grounding of Knowledge

Husserl's second meditation generally demonstrates that transcendental phenomenology is the sole science of pure cognition, since it consists of radical faithfulness to the central demand of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction; namely, self-restriction to the study of the pure field of transcendental experience and accordingly, faithful explication of only what is legitimately self-given in consciousness. To grasp Husserl's insight here, we would need to pay attention to his critique of Descartes' failure to make the 'transcendental turn,' which he considers as the 'gateway to transcendental philosophy.'[147] Having discussed in the previous section, that the first methodological principle prohibits the radical philosopher from positing anything that does not proceed from evidence as 'self-giving intuition,' we can only agree with Husserl's critique of Descartes' conception of the ego as a 'thinking substance' from whose innate ideas the rest of the world could be deduced following the principle of causality.[148]

Clearly, even from Descartes' own standards, given the indubitability of the thinking ego who appears to himself as necessarily existing after the validity of the experiential world has been denied due to possibility of doubt, his claims for the ego's innate ideas and the principle of causality, by which he accounts for the existence of the world, cannot be accorded the same indubitability. From this argument, we clearly see how Descartes, lacking the sense of the phenomenological attitude, not only adulterated the purity of the *ego cogito* (by naïvely interpreting it as a substantial entity), but also wondered away from the methodological radicalness with which he had begun his second-level turn into the philosophizing subject. Therefore, Husserl rightly observes that Descartes' ego, though apodictic, remained a 'little tag-end of the world'; lacking phenomenological purity from natural-world-prejudices such as facticity and accordingly, his philosophical conclusions (which Husserl refers to as 'absurdity of transcendental realism') reflect his consequent methodologically unwarranted activity of inferring an externally existing world from pure subjectivity (the *ego cogito*).[149]

[147] Ibid., 25.
[148] Ibid., 24.
[149] Ibid.

Having discussed Husserl's insight of 'bracketing' and the resultant philosophical perspective which we called 'phenomenological attitude' as the first major divergence from Descartes' subjectivity, here we come across to yet another major divergence. Husserl grasps a second fundamental philosophical insight that escapes Descartes; namely, the 'transcendental experience' and the resultant philosophical perspective; namely, 'transcendental attitude' in which the transcendental ego is viewed as an infinite field of research, other than a substantial entity as in the case of Descartes' 'mind' or 'intellectual soul.'[150] Husserl, unlike Descartes, remaining radically faithful to his method of the *epoché* as transcendental-phenomenological reduction, realizes that his task as a philosopher solely entails in further regressive enquiry into the fundamental nature of the transcendental sphere of the ego; of the pure acts of consciousness (pure thoughts) by the virtue of which, the ego remains the transcendental ground of anything we claim to know, including the external world.

The fundamental insight obtained from reflection into the field of transcendental experience, consists in the fact that for whatever act of consciousness (*cogitationes*) that I the philosophizing ego would choose to direct my reflective attention to, there is always a corresponding 'act-object' (*cogitatum*) which is intuited in its fulness. Demonstrating this fact, Husserl writes, "… the reflection upon a perception, for instance that of a house, yields as its subjective [correlate] not something like a mere I-perceive, but instead an I-perceive-this-house."[151] For Husserl, therefore, transcendental experience reveals that consciousness is always an intentional directedness towards something, regardless whether the 'something' in question pertains to pure acts of consciousness or to those acts of consciousness that belong to naïve acceptance of the world.[152] For instance, in the transcendental experience, I am able to distinguish between the straightforwardly executed act of seeing the house and its correlate act-object; namely, the straightforwardly seen house on the one hand, and on the other hand, the pure act of perception and its correlate act-object; namely, house of sight-perception. For Husserl, therefore, transcendental experience reveals a universal structure of consciousness, by which we gain pure subjective cognition of the entire life of the ego as intentional life.[153] In other words, in my newly gained transcendental perspective, I could as well pay attention to my entire life as a life of a

[150] Ibid., 25-27.
[151] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 358.
[152] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 32-33.
[153] Ibid., 28.

multitude of such acts of consciousness with their correlate intended act-objects. In fact, transcendental phenomenology is for Husserl, nothing but 'intentional analysis' through and through. The intentional analysis of the straightforwardly executed act of consciousness we called 'seeing,' necessitates intentional analysis of 'perception,' which in turn necessitates intentional analysis of 'memory' as 'having perceived,' as well as of other connected acts of consciousness such as 'recollection,' and 'retention.'[154] For Husserl, therefore, transcendental phenomenology is an enquiry into the modes of subjective manners of givenness of the world, in contrast to the factual sciences' inquiry (interest in the spatiotemporal continuous pre-givenness of the world).[155] Accordingly, it is a universal investigation into actual and possible acts of consciousness (what Husserl terms as 'investigation into the open and implicit intentionalities') and in any temporal mode; present, past or future .[156]

Husserl, however, is not blind to the demands of apodicticity while making such claims. In fact, aware that only the ego's necessary existence is grasped with adequate apodicticity, he talks of possibility of critique of the field of transcendental experience, precisely because as a philosophical insight, it is grasped as a singular object of thought (pertaining to a single reflective act of consciousness) but in meaning-content, it covers a plurality of acts of consciousness, some of which are already executed in the past while others are not yet executed, but are executable; in which cases, adequacy of apodicticity is not achieved.[157] But as Smith observes, this very critique of transcendental experience plays a central role in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology; namely, reemphasizing apodictic certainty of the ego as the 'ideal benchmark for transcendental knowledge,' without which we labour in 'transcendental naivete.'[158] Emphasizing the fact, that 'adequacy and apodicticity of evidence need not go hand in hand,' Husserl refers us to the fact that transcendental experience is grasped with apodicticity (presented in a self-giving intuition), the range covered by this apodicticity with regard to the ego's past and future notwithstanding.[159] As a matter of sincere fact, even though one may not grasp the content of past experiences with apodicticity, the fact that transcendental experience apodictically reveals that one has a past is

[154] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences,* 160.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 22-23.
[158] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 62.
[159] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 22-23.

indubitable. As Husserl puts it, to deny such a fact would be 'shutting one's eyes to it.'[160] Husserl, further claiming that transcendental experience can reveal something with regard to the future writes:

> Thus, it becomes plain that the past life is positable without in the least presupposing its intentional surrounding…it exists in the manner that it is a priori unnecessary to posit any existence of what is posited in it … If I now do the same for the future stretch of my life, posited as anticipated in my present, then I gain my entire pure life as a stream of life absolutely encapsulated within itself; it may be as it may with the being or non-being of the universal world, which ever existed for me, exists or will exist.[161]

It now becomes clear to us, that in establishing transcendental phenomenology as a subjective science of cognition, Husserl envisages a purely theoretical science. His sole interest is the study of the ego as pure consciousness. Emphasizing the theoretical nature of transcendental phenomenology, Husserl writes, "Now, however, we are envisaging a science that is, so to speak, absolutely subjective, whose thematic object exists whether or not the world exists."[162] Being a study in which all ontological validities and meanings of being are considered as resulting from acts of consciousness (world-constituting acts), it necessarily has to be a purely eidetic science and accordingly, a purely philosophical-transcendental subjectivity (what Husserl terms as 'pure egology').[163] Having explicated the universal *epoché* as the characteristic mark that distinguishes transcendental phenomenology from all positive sciences, we notice Husserl's endeavour to make further distinction between transcendental phenomenology and other subjective sciences, especially psychology.

Husserl maintains that psychology remains within the bounds of the natural attitude, even at its highest level (pure psychology of consciousness) because it is essentially a science restricted to the world of actualities or facticity.[164] In other words, while Husserl admits that the psychologist is able to study consciousness at a highly abstract level, thereby analysing non-physical cognitive processes such as perception, memory, retention and recollection, he insists that the psychologist's consideration of them as processes of the mind pertaining to the physical human being, announces

[160] Ibid., 22.
[161] Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 361.
[162] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 30.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid., 32.

a radical drift between psychology and transcendental phenomenology. For Husserl, pure descriptive psychology could be termed as 'a precise parallel to transcendental phenomenology of consciousness' in as far as it entails the study of such inner cognitive processes, but it should not be construed as philosophical transcendental phenomenology, since it has no sense of transcendental phenomenological reduction.[165] Here, we clearly see the central importance of Husserl's universal *epoché* in distinguishing the outstanding nature of transcendental phenomenology as a pure subjective philosophical science of cognition. Clarity of this distinction is achievable only if we endeavour to watch out for what Husserl described as, "…those seemingly trivial nuances that make a decisive difference between right and wrong paths of philosophy."[166] Applying the insights we have already gained from Husserl's notion of the *epoché*, we could adequately point out these nuances and demonstrate how transcendental phenomenology stands out in distinction to psychology.

From the perspective of the phenomenological attitude, we are able to identify descriptive psychology precisely as a science belonging to the non-philosophical life. It studies the human mind in reference to the physical human being who exists and knows objects of the spatiotemporal world. Transcendental phenomenology on the contrary, is as Husserl puts it, 'delivered from this footing of the world, already given as existing' (through the universal *epoché*).[167] Further, from the transcendental attitude, we are able to clearly demonstrate that a descriptive psychologist is not a transcendental phenomenologist regardless of his access to non-physical processes of intentional life. In as far as the psychologist's analysis of these processes aims at establishing how the mind makes sense of an already existing world, it means to say that for the psychologist, the world in question exists independently of mind and therefore, the psychologist's consciousness cannot be termed as 'transcendental' or 'world constituting.'[168] In other words, what the transcendental phenomenologist would consider as unacceptable prejudices (unwarranted presuppositions of existence or facticity of an external world) is what serves as standard measure of objectivity for the psychologist's knowledge.

[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., 34.
[168] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations,* 45.

Husserl's emphasis on 'the right path of philosophy'[169] therefore, alludes to an implicit claim that transcendental phenomenology is the sole science of ultimate objectivity of knowledge. In other words, Husserl wants to establish that transcendental phenomenology calls us to the realization that making reference to facticity or actuality of the natural world or even to its ontological validity and meanings in order to determine objectivity of knowledge is a misguided idea. For him, these are only alleged standard-measures of objectivity. Precisely, they are nothing but intentional objects of various intentional acts (constituted objects pertaining to various constituting acts).[170] For Husserl, therefore, objectivity of knowledge is obtained in radical description of the field of transcendental experience, whereby the philosopher, assuming the transcendental attitude of a 'disinterested onlooker' firstly aims at tracing each of these intentional objects to its correlate intentional act and secondly, to explicate in the clearest manner possible, the exact modalities in which this correlation occurs in consciousness (what Husserl terms as *cogito-cogitatum qua cogitatum*).[171] Husserl, emphasizing on the purity of this description writes, "…the Ego's sole remaining interest being to see and to describe adequately what he sees; purely as seen, as what is seen and seen in such and such a manner."[172] From this correlational description, Husserl discovers the two-sidedness of consciousness; namely, the *noematic* side (one in which we can generally categorize all descriptions pertaining to intentional objects) and the *noetic* side (one in which we can generally categorize all descriptions pertaining to intentional acts).[173] Reflecting on this structure of consciousness, we recognize the fact that each noematic description reveals an exact manner in which any object of thought is a constitution of a correlating act of consciousness (described in the noetic side).

Instead of busying itself with actualities or non-actualities, facticity or non-facticity, existence or non-existence of the natural world, transcendental phenomenology engages itself in the infinite task of unpacking the numerous, simple and complex correlations characteristic of the transcendental ego's intentional and accomplishing life, until (for each set of interwovenness of correlations) we arrive at the most original correlation or self-giving intuition, in which 'things

[169] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 32.
[170] Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 100-101.
[171] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 36.
[172] Ibid., 35.
[173] Ibid., 36.

themselves' are given in consciousness. [174] Upon achievement of the original self-giving intuition, we realize that in transcendental phenomenology, we are finally not left dealing with some imaginary things or with an imaginary world, but that we are achieving knowledge of 'things themselves.' In other words, we do not confuse 'things themselves' (as given in the original self-giving intuition, now accessible to us) with mere modalities of being; such as appearance, existence or facticity (the confusion characteristic of scientism and psychologism). In Husserl's perspective, we obtain on the *noematic* side, 'things themselves' as fully and purely meant. They are in this sense, 'transcendent' because their being at this level is not dependent on the existence of the world. We obtain on the correlate *noetic* side, our pure consciousness ('unity of consciousness' or unity of world-constituting acts, therefore, 'transcendental ego).'[175] As Husserl emphasizes, we therefore, realize that even in our natural attitude (non-philosophical life) we are still a transcendental ego, only that we cannot recognize it unless we have acquired the 'new attitude'; namely, the 'transcendental attitude,' which only comes with performance of the phenomenological reduction.[176]

Here, we draw the conclusion that, ultimate objectivity of knowledge is therefore transcendental knowledge and that it is identical to transcendental self-experience. In other words, all I know and all I can ever know ultimately refers to the sense in which I the transcendental ego am the sole knowledge-basis of anything knowable. This insight is only achievable in philosophical transcendental phenomenology, precisely because unlike the pure psychology of consciousness, it is a purely eidetic science of transcendental experience, and remains in radical adherence to the transcendental demands of the principle of evidence (what Husserl refers to as 'universal criticism of consciousness').[177] This, therefore, means that with the discovery of the transcendental self-experience, the *epoché* has not brought us to a philosophical destination or conclusiveness. On the contrary, by emphasizing on the infinite task of transcendental analysis and description, it alludes to the ideal of a 'first philosophy,' in which the character of 'unending beginnings' is reflected in transcendental knowledge.

[174] Smith, *Husserl and Cartesian Meditations,* 101.
[175] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 37.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

Conclusion

We started our investigations of the first two meditations of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* with the aim of grasping and articulating their contribution to our understanding of Husserl's notion of the *epoché*. We have found and highlighted that the *epoché* generally refers to Husserl's radical method of philosophizing, aimed at transforming the traditional philosophy into a strictly scientific discipline of self-evident truths. We have emphasized that while we essentially have only one *epoché,* it entails various levels of technical application. Reading 'philosophical *epoche'* as a parallel of Descartes' first-level turn into subjectivity, we have underlined that it effects the philosophical attitude of 'genuineness' of the philosopher and of philosophy itself. However, we have emphasized that while Descartes' first-level turn entails denial of pre-existing knowledge, philosophical *epoché* as 'bracketing' only requires that the philosopher wilfully inhibits himself from utilizing any pre-existing knowledge as premises for his philosophizing. In light of the philosophical *epoché*, we have established Husserl's implicit claim for transcendental phenomenology as the 'genuine philosophy,' in connection to his arguments for the *epoché* as a philosophical demand for the elements of 'first philosophy,' 'one's own wisdom' and 'presuppositionless-ness' for legitimacy of philosophy.

We have distinguished 'phenomenological *epoché*' as a parallel of Descartes' second-level turn into subjectivity. We have emphasized that it functions to effect the 'phenomenological attitude,' through which the transcendental phenomenologist 'brackets' the 'natural attitude thesis' in his philosophizing without changing anything of it in his non-philosophical life. Here, we have learnt that Husserl's *epoché* reveals that Descartes, on account of his *methodic doubt* and eventual denial of the natural world fails to embrace the 'phenomenological attitude.' Consequently, he loses track of his methodological radicality, and failing to grasp the real meaning of his great discovery of the *ego-cogito*, he ends up interpreting it in relation to the existence of the natural world, thereby falling into the very naivete of traditional philosophy, which he had originally attempted to eliminate in his philosophizing.

Distinguishing the radical consistency of Husserl's method of the *epoché,* we have highlighted its 'principle of evidence,' in which demand is made for 'self-evident truths.' We have established that Husserl, sticking to this demand develops the 'transcendental attitude,' by means of which he discovers the 'transcendental experience' as an infinite field of phenomenological

research, to which he restricts himself by the *epoché* as 'transcendental-phenomenological reduction.' In the practice of this reduction, we have shown that Husserl discovers the 'transcendental-phenomenological ego' as a 'new realm of being.' In light of this 'new realm of being,' we have highlighted Husserl's discovery that 'transcendental analysis' remains the sole aim of transcendental phenomenology. Precisely, we have established that the *epoché* as transcendental reduction renders transcendental phenomenology as an infinite exercise of unpacking simple and complex interwovenness of the numerous *noematic-noetic* correlations of consciousness, until the most 'original intuition' in which something is 'given in consciousness' is reached. In this sense, we have demonstrated that the *epoché* distinguishes transcendental phenomenology as a purely eidetic science of objectivity of cognition (knowledge of 'things themselves' as self-evident or 'given' in transcendental consciousness). Thus, we have distinguished it from positive sciences and from psychology of consciousness (disciplines tied to the facticity of the natural world). We have, therefore, concluded that by the virtue of the *epoché,* Husserl provides a 'new grounding of knowledge'; namely, 'the transcendental grounding.'

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