Phenomenological Reduction and Yogic Meditation
Author(s): R. Puligandla
Published by: University of Hawai'i Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1397657
Accessed: 06/03/2014 16:58

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East and West.
R. Puligandla  Phenomenological reduction and yogic meditation

The title of this paper will certainly strike some readers as strange and absurd, especially those who naively believe that it is a far cry from the Western rational philosophies to the Eastern mystical musings. But those who are familiar with both know that the former are no more entirely rational than the latter are entirely mystical. It is not my purpose here, however, to undertake a comparative evaluation of Eastern and Western modes of thought for their respective rational, irrational, and nonrational components. My immediate task is rather less ambitious and more limited: to examine on the one hand Husserl’s phenomenological reduction and on the other yogic meditation as expounded by Patañjali,¹ and to show that there are indeed some parallels between the two. On doing this, it becomes clear that Patañjali provides clear-cut procedures for performing the epoče and other phenomenological reductions. In contrast, it may be remarked that phenomenologists, of all stripes and shades, here and abroad, while emphasizing the centrality of the techniques of reduction to the whole phenomenological enterprise, never tell, besides the clichés of bracketing and ideating, how exactly to perform the reductions. I shall then point out the inconsistency between phenomenological reduction as a technique and the goal of phenomenology as providing the firm foundations of knowledge. This inconsistency, however, is not serious and can be eliminated by interpreting phenomenological reduction as the vitarka (discriminatory) stage of Patañjali’s yogic meditation. It should be made clear that in all this I take no partisan position. It is not my desire to parade the phenomenologists as yogis or vice versa. I leave them both in peace to fight their own battles with their own weapons.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

There are three basic stages in phenomenological reduction: (1) the epoče, (2) the eidetic reduction, and (3) the transcendental reduction. The epoče stage consists of setting aside (bracketing) all the beliefs, theories, and attitudes about oneself and the world which have so far been taken for granted. Thus the belief in an independently existing world of objects and qualities is set aside; the laws of logic, mathematics, and sciences, norms and values are all brought into question and put aside. Phenomenology, according to Husserl, must be a rigorous science; it must also be presuppositionless, in the sense that it must attain absolutely valid knowledge of things.² All nonphilosophical sciences are based on various kinds of presuppositions which cannot be validated within those sciences themselves. Thus if philosophy is not to be another

R. Puligandla is Associate Professor of Philosophy, The University of Toledo.

¹ Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras; all references to this work in this paper are indicated by section and sūtra numbers.
science alongside such sciences, it must leave nothing unsolved. Philosophy is to reduce everything to primary presuppositions, which do not need to be and cannot even be clarified because they are immediately evident and grasped in direct intuition. It is in this sense that Husserl's conception of philosophy is presuppositionless. The epoché is the first stage on the way to seeing intuitively the essences of things. The epoché, then, is the act of putting aside every prejudice, bias, belief, theory, presupposition, and principle so as not to allow it to hinder the seeing of essences. All such hindrances to achieving primordial intuition Husserl calls "the natural attitude." The epoché does not, however, mean denying the existence of the world and any theories about it; rather, it is simply an attitude of detachment in which nothing is affirmed or denied. In short, the epoché is the act of suspending the natural attitude so that one may take a detached look at things.

The epoché is followed by the eidetic reduction, in which one passes from facts to essences. Thus one may choose anything whatever as the object of eidetic reduction and analyses. The object may be a color, figure, relation, feeling, perception, or a principle. Then the object is investigated from various points of view; for instance, modifications of perception, memory, and fantasy. The role of fantasy in eidetic reduction cannot be overemphasized, for the fully arbitrary character of fantasy, without any regard to the reality or unreality of the object, brings out the essential character of the object, those invariant, necessary characteristics without which the object cannot be what it is. Thus one grasps by intuition the immediate, absolute, and unique essences of all objects of that class. The essences so grasped are known as the "eidos." The eidos, however, must not be mistaken for generalities or general ideas of empirical sciences. For Husserl the eidos are pure generalities which put before our mind pure possibilities whose validity is independent of experience.³

The final stage of phenomenological reduction is known as the "transcendental reduction." It is common knowledge that the doctrine of intentionality of consciousness is central to phenomenology. According to this doctrine, consciousness is always the consciousness of something (or other). That is, every act of consciousness has an object, or one may say equivalently that every act of consciousness intends something. Once this is granted, it follows that if an act of a certain structure is present, then by that very fact a certain object is also present; also, more importantly, the character of this object is codetermined by the character of the consciousness in which it appears. Thus, according to phenomenology, the key for understanding and grasping the essence of any object is to grasp the structure of consciousness which determines the object. However, most of our acts of consciousness are not originary and pri-

mary but derived. They are derived in the sense that they are acts of a consciousness which is conditioned by several factors, such as historical, cultural, artistic, scientific, and even plain day-to-day beliefs, habits, customs, and norms of the society. Therefore, in order for the essence of things to be grasped, which is the same as seeing them in their primordiality, they should first become objects of a consciousness which is free from the various conditionings which are characteristic of derived acts. This purification of consciousness is accomplished through the phenomenological epoché, dealt with earlier. It should also be noted that insofar as the character of any object is codetermined by the character of the act in which it appears, “any kind of being has a way of giving itself that is exclusively its own.”

Here an interesting question arises: If intentionality is the essence of consciousness, does it mean that consciousness simply finds and adapts itself to objects which are already there? The phenomenologist’s answer is clearly in the negative. Quite the contrary, the acts of consciousness are acts of meaning-giving and are thus constitutive of objects. Thus the so-called intentional and constitutive analyses of the phenomenologists are concerned with grasping the meanings and essences of objects as they present themselves to the primordial intuition. The meanings and essences so discovered are what make an object what it is. It is in this sense that the meanings and essences constitute the object. Put differently, the object of an act of consciousness is what it is by virtue of the meanings consciousness creates and by which it structures the object. It is not as though meanings are already there waiting to be discovered by consciousness; on the contrary, intentional analyses ultimately become constitutive analyses, that is, analyses which do not indicate how meaning is found in the primordial experiences, but which want to explain how the meaning of things is primordially constituted in and through consciousness. Or again,

... The object of any act is an inseparable aspect of the meaning phenomenon itself. In Husserl’s philosophy the object appears as essentially determined by the structure of thinking itself; this thinking itself first gives meaning to the object and then continues to orient itself to the pole of identity which it itself has already created.

From here to transcendental idealism is but a short step, which only Husserl and a few of his disciples were prepared to take as the logical outcome of phenomenological philosophy. Others shied away from it while still claiming to do intentional and constitutive analyses. Be that as it may, the whole process

6 Kockelmans, op. cit., p. 34.
from the epoché to intentional and constitutive analyses is known as the transcendental reduction:

Instead of the universal doubt of Descartes, then, Husserl proposes this universal "epoché". A new scientific domain is thus determined. All the sciences which refer to the natural world are also eliminated: no use is made of their propositions and results. They may only be assumed in brackets, and not as propositions presuming validity. That which remains when the entire world is eliminated (including us with all "cogitare") is "pure" or "transcendental" consciousness. That is the phenomenological residuum.7

In other words, the transcendental reduction culminates in the realization of pure subjectivity, and from then on the task is to grasp intuitively how this pure subject (the transcendental ego) constitutes objects and thus serves as the source of all objectivity.

**YOGIC MEDITATION**

The techniques of meditation to be described here are from Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. All schools of yoga, no matter what their differences, regard Patañjali as providing the foundation of yoga, just as all schools of phenomenology acknowledge Husserl as their source. The aspirant for yogenic knowledge must prepare himself for embarking on yogenic concentration and meditation. This preparation consists of the practice of certain physical and mental exercises and several observances such as cleanliness, contentment, truthfulness, non-violence, nonpossessiveness, nonacquisitiveness, etc. These exercises and observances are known as the first five *āṅgas* of yoga: *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇyāma*, and *pratyāhāra*. The first two eliminate distractions arising from uncontrolled desires and emotions. *Āsana* and *prāṇyāma* eliminate disturbances arising from the physical body. The function of *pratyāhāra* is to detach the sense-organs from the mind, thus cutting it off from the external world and the sense-impressions it produces on the mind. The subject's mind is now completely isolated from the world and is therefore ready to practice concentration and meditation without any distractions, bodily or mental. This preparatory stage is the yogenic counterpart of the phenomenological epoché, the act of suspending the natural attitude. Freed from all kinds of hindrances, be they beliefs, desires, emotions, theories, or feelings, the mind now is in a position to direct full attention to any object whatever and grasp it in its primordiality. But before the subject can arrive at the originary or primordial intuition, he has to pass through three stages of concentration, namely, *dārāṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*, the last three *āṅgas* of Patañjali's yoga. Attainment of *samādhi* is the first goal of yogenic meditation, but, contrary to popular belief, it is not

the ultimate goal. It is merely the stage which opens the door to kaivalya, variously known as mokṣa, final liberation, and total freedom from bondage. I come now to a consideration of the three stages of meditation.

Dhāraṇā. “Concentration is the confining of the mind within a limited mental area (object of concentration).”⁸ In ordinary thinking the mind constantly shifts from one object to another. What the subject aims at in the dhāraṇā stage is to keep the mind continuously engaged in the consideration of one object and to bring it quickly back to that object whenever the mind shifts to some other object. Thus in this stage the mind is fixed and is yet variable insofar as it shifts away from the chosen object of concentration, and the success of the subject is measured according to the frequency of his mind’s shifting. The smaller the number of shifts and interruptions, the more successful is the dhāraṇā.

Dhyāna. “Uninterrupted flow (of the mind) toward the object (chosen for meditation) is contemplation.”⁹ Thus the subject passes from the dhāraṇā to the dhyāna stage by being able to keep the mind steadily on one and only one object. Here it would be helpful to introduce and explain the meaning of ‘pratyaya’. The term refers to the total content of mind at any given time. This does not, however, mean the total information of a mind at any given time. It merely refers to the content which is the object of meditation. In order to understand this better, it is enough to note that in ordinary thinking the mind is constantly shifting from one pratyaya to another, and in dhāraṇā the frequency of pratyaya change is made very small. In the dhyāna this frequency is reduced to zero; that is, the mind has now one and only one object as its total content. Even so, it is important to note that the mind is variable, the shifting taking place within the limits of the pratyaya. This is no defect or disadvantage. That is in fact how it should be, for the purpose of dhyāna is to study the chosen object in its various aspects. The point here can be illustrated by analogy with the use of a microscope. When one focuses the microscope on an object, one is directing attention to one object, which is the pratyaya. But one also scans the various parts of the object; one’s attention is shifting but only within the limits of the pratyaya. Thus the yogic aspirant reaches the dhyāna stage when he is able to hold his mind on one pratyaya. The success of the student is judged by the frequency of pratyaya change and hence the frequency of his efforts to bring the mind back into the chosen pratyaya. The lower these frequencies, the more successful is dhyāna.

Samādhi. “The same (contemplation) when there is consciousness only of the object of meditation and not of itself (the mind) is samādhi.”¹⁰ This is an

⁸ Patanjali, Yoga Sūtras III. 1.
⁹ Ibid., III. 2.
¹⁰ Ibid., III. 3.
extremely important sūtra and needs detailed explanation. First one would like to ask: if the subject has been able to keep his mind on the object, where is the need to go beyond dhāyāna to the samādhi stage? What is to be gained by this additional step? It is true that as the student progresses from dhāraṇā to dhāyāna his concentration increases and hence he knows the object much more clearly and intimately than in ordinary thinking. In the dhāraṇā and dhāyāna stages all distractions are removed and the mind is occupied with one single object. Nevertheless, there is yet one distraction which prevents the subject from seeing the essence of the object, and that distraction is the subject’s awareness of himself. This awareness stands between himself and the object, no matter how thinly, and prevents the object from being grasped in its primordiality. This distraction is to be eliminated by going from the dhāyāna to the samādhi stage, in which all self-awareness of the mind disappears and the object shines in its primordiality. This point becomes clearer if we consider briefly Patañjali’s view of the manifested world. According to Patañjali, everything in manifestation has two forms: rūpa and svarūpa. Rūpa is the superficial and inessential form and svarūpa is the essential form. Thus, during dhāyāna, the rūpa of the mind is its pratīyaya (the object of meditation) and it is through this that the mind finds expression. The svarūpa is the residual consciousness of its own action and role in the process of dhāyāna and is essentially the subjective nature of the mind. As one goes from dhāraṇā to dhāyāna, the mind’s residual consciousness of itself becomes weaker and weaker and the concentration of the object stronger and stronger. Thus in the dhāyāna state, the svarūpa of the mind is still there, albeit in a weak manner. By going to the samādhi, the svarūpa (residual awareness of the mind of itself) completely disappears, giving place to the object; that is, there now takes place the fusion of the mind with its object—the fusion of the subject and the object. There are no longer two things here; there is only one, pure consciousness, which is not an object. At this point the structure of consciousness and that of the object coincide.

“In the case of one whose modifications of the mind have been almost annihilated, fusion or entire absorption in one another of the cognizer, cognition, and cognized is brought about as in the case of a transparent jewel (resting on a coloured surface).”11 It is obvious that the clear jewel in this sūtra is the mind which undergoes no modifications—not even those due to self-awareness, for self-awareness itself is eliminated in the samādhi state—and the colored surface is the object of meditation. The object is grasped in its primordial reality without any modifications imposed upon it by the mind. The pure, real, internal knowledge regarding the object is isolated from the mixed, external object and the yogi can then know the real object by making the mind one with it.

11 Ibid., I. 41.
Such, then, is the nature of samādhi and knowledge obtained through it. The three stages, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi, taken together constitute what Patañjali calls the 'sāmyama'.

According to Patañjali, at the samādhi state the subject is freed from the brain-bound intellect and acquires intuition, known as buddhi or prajñā. It is through this intuition that the yogi grasps the subtler and profounder aspects of objects in the manifested universe.

Sāmyama can be performed on any object whatever and knowledge of it at different levels can be obtained. Thus Patañjali classifies knowledge as sabda, artha, and jñāna. Sabda is knowledge based on words alone. Artha is the knowledge which the yogi seeks, the true knowledge of any object whatever as grasped by intuition in the samādhi state. Jñāna is knowledge based on perception and reasoning, under which come all empirical sciences. Patañjali also distinguishes between the savitarka and nirvitarka samādhi stages. In the former, the separation of knowledge into the above three kinds takes place; in the latter, which is the culmination of the sāmyama, the pure, real, internal knowledge regarding the object is obtained and the yogi then knows the real object by making the mind one with it.

DISCUSSION

The phenomenologist and the yogi both aim at absolutely certain, direct, presuppositionless knowledge; that is, they are both looking for self-validating knowledge. It is in this sense that that kind of knowledge is called presuppositionless. They both claim that such knowledge can only be obtained by first suspending the natural attitude. This is done in the one case by the phenomenological epoché and in the other by the aṅgas. The yogic aspirant and the phenomenologist both maintain that such knowledge consists of direct, intuitive seeing of objects in their primordiality. Such intuition is known as originary or primordial intuition. The knowledge obtained through yogic meditation is not to be confused with ordinary kinds of knowledge, for instance, common sense and scientific knowledge. The latter are always based on presuppositions which cannot be validated within the disciplines themselves. Thus Patañjali says that "The knowledge based on inference or testimony is different from direct knowledge obtained in the higher states of consciousness because it (the former) is confined to a particular object or aspect." For Patañjali there are three sources of right knowledge in the realm of intellect: direct cognition, inference, and testimony. Direct cognition through sense-organs plays a very limited role and cannot itself provide knowledge unless corrected, checked, and supplemented by inference and testimony. But the knowledge obtained through prajñā (intuition) is based on neither testimony nor infer-

12 Ibid., III. 4.
13 Ibid., I. 49.
ence but on direct cognition. This cognition is different from direct cognition through sense-organs and is free from the error and illusion which bedevil the latter. The yogi’s knowledge is thus through and through intuitive and non-conceptual. One may as well say that this kind of knowledge is nonrational. It should be noted that ‘nonrational’ is not the same as ‘irrational,’ for the latter means opposition to reason and intellect, whereas the former means something that is outside of the province of reason and intellect. This simply means that the intuitive knowledge of the yogi is radically different from conceptual, mediated, intellectual knowledge. It does not, however, mean that yogic knowledge is necessarily opposed to intellect and reason. It simply means that it transcends reason and intellect.

One may ask here whether knowledge so obtained can be used as a basis for intellectual knowledge, such as that of the sciences. The yogic answer to this question is yes at one level and no at another. It has been said earlier that in the savitarka stage of samādhi the separation of knowledge into three kinds, śabda, artha, and jñāna, takes place, and by going to the next higher stage of nirvītarka (nondiscriminatory) samādhi the yogi obtains the pure knowledge of the object. Thus if one stops at the savitarka stage surely one can obtain the jñāna component, knowledge based on perception and reasoning, and use it as a basis for constructing conceptual knowledge. But the knowledge attained at the nirvītarka stage cannot be so used. This does not, however, mean that it cannot be used at all by the yogi. On the contrary, the yogi makes full use of such knowledge by directly reaching the corresponding plane of consciousness. He does not employ any instruments, perceptions, or concepts for acquiring and using such knowledge. Thus Patañjali says “Thence, instantaneous cognition without the use of any vehicle and complete mastery over Pradhāna (manifested universe).” Therefore it seems correct to say that the yogi’s knowledge is of the noumena (things-in-themselves).

The yogi, very much like Kant, maintains that intellectual, perceptual, conceptual knowledge is of phenomena only. But with that he parts company with Kant, for, according to Kant, it is not given to man to have knowledge of the noumena. The yogi emphatically rejects this position and claims that man can know the noumena through yoga. (The difference between Kant and the yogi can in part be explained in terms of the difference between their respective cultural traits. Thus the finitude of man, his limited perfectibility, and his dependence on the grace of God are among the central tenets of Christianity, an integral part of Kant’s heritage. For the yogi, on the other hand, man is infinitely perfectible and is God Himself. Therefore there is nothing that he cannot know. These notions are indeed part of the cultural heritage of the yogi.)

14 Ibid., III. 49.
Such, then, is the intuitive knowledge of the yogi. What about the phenomenologist? Does he hold that the techniques of phenomenological reduction lead him to knowledge of things-in-themselves? Phenomenologists are not in agreement about the answer to this question. Kockelmans states that "Husserl's own interpretation is rooted in the conviction that a consistent phenomenology must turn its back on every established theory, on all traditional, prejudiced, and 'metaphysical' views in order to gain access to a pure and primordial experience in which the 'things themselves' appear to us in a genuinely original way." Thus Husserl seems to hold that phenomenology makes it possible to have knowledge of things-in-themselves. And he certainly maintained that knowledge so obtained is to serve as the foundation of all other knowledge: "Husserl seeks the ultimate foundations of all our rational assertions in an immediate vision, that is, an original intuition of the things themselves concerning which we want to make a statement." Or again, according to Quentin Lauer:

The novelty lies in Husserl's insistence that intuition, in the full sense of the term, is the presence to consciousness of an essence, with all that that implies by way of necessity and universal validity. Phenomenological intuition is essential intuition, which is to say an intellectual intuition, the impossibility of which Kant had so vigorously asserted. It is plain to see, then, that such an intuition must be something more than the simple view contained in perception or imaginative representation, even though these latter acts are the examples from which the notion of intuition is derived. For Husserl intuition means more than empirical contact with an object. On the other hand, it is not some sort of mystical penetration into a world of essences inaccessible to merely rational thought.

Lauer's puzzling claims are worth examining, for they are the paradigm of the dilemma and inconsistency that haunt the phenomenologist. Lauer asserts that phenomenological intuition is the intellectual intuition which Kant denies man but which Husserl grants. He then tells us rightly that the Husserlian intuition is more than an empirical contact with an object. What is this more? The best way to find out what this more is is to go back to what Husserl himself says about primordial intuition:

Thus essential insight is intuition, and if it is insight in the pregnant sense of the term, and not a mere, and possibly a vague, representation, it is a primordial dator Intuition, grasping the essence in its "bodily" selfhood. But, on the other hand, it is an intuition of a fundamentally unique and novel kind, namely in contrast to the types of intuition which belong as correlatives to the object-matters of other categories, and more specifically to intuition in the ordinary narrow sense, that is, individual intuition.

15 Kockelmans, op. cit., p. 224.
16 Ibid., p. 29.
18 Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, pp. 49-50.
Further, "Immediate 'seeing' (Sehen), not merely the sensory seeing of experience, but seeing in general as primordial dator consciousness of any kind whatsoever, is the ultimate source of justification for all rational statements."\(^{19}\)

Finally,

Philosophy, on the other hand, does not want to leave anything unsolved; it wants to reduce everything to primary "presuppositions" which do not need to be clarified because they are immediately evident and cannot even be clarified. It is only in this sense that philosophy as the "science of ultimate grounds" is a rigorous science.\(^{20}\)

The following propositions are implied by the passages quoted above: (1) primordial intuition is not to be identified with either the activity of intellectual abstraction and concept construction or ordinary empirical intuition; (2) unlike merely rational thought which, by combining concepts, gives mediated knowledge, primordial intuition is immediate (unmediated) seeing; (3) insofar as this is so, primordial intuition is the ultimate source of justification for all rational statements; and (4) being the ultimate justification of all rational statements, primordial intuition cannot itself be clarified through rational statements, systems, frameworks, etc. Thus whatever else it may or may not be, primordial intuition is certainly nonrational. But, and here is the puzzling point, Lauer rules out nonrational, direct, immediate intuition by dismissing it as a mystical penetration not accessible to merely rational thought. Here Lauer faces a dilemma: either he should grant that there is a rational framework in which phenomenological intuition arises, in which case it is governed by presuppositions that are not self-validating, thus negating the whole objective of phenomenology; or he should admit that phenomenological intuition is nonrational. He may choose whichever horn of the dilemma pleases him. But he cannot claim consistently that phenomenological intuition is accessible to merely rational thought and that such intuition enables him to have knowledge of the noumena, for such an intuition is a contradiction in terms, as was clearly exemplified by the Kantian antinomies. It may be remarked in passing that the yogi does not fall into this contradiction. He can consistently hold that the phenomenologist's intuition, insofar as it can serve as the foundation for intellectual knowledge, is nothing but the mixed intuition of the savitarka stage of samādhi, whereas the intuition of nirvitarka samādhi is pure, direct, nonrational prajñā. The contradiction in Lauer's remarks, pointed out above, is what is referred to at the beginning of this paper as the inconsistency between the phenomenologist's conception of his intuition and the goal of phenomenology. But, as is clear from the position of the yogi, it can be removed by identifying the phenomenologist's intuition with the mixed intuition of the savitarka samādhi.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 75-76.

\(^{20}\) Husserl, Ideen, Nachwort, III, 159-162.
The yogi and the later Husserl are both in agreement that knowledge of the essence and constitution of the world is to be obtained by attaining transcendental subjectivity.

The phenomenological reductions make it possible for the mind to discover its own nature; originally lost in the world, the mind can find itself again by means of these reductions. Only when that discovery opens up the possibility of an entirely new task can the mind begin to interpret the world as a coherent system constituted as such by itself. The coherence and unity of the world are ultimately founded upon the unity of the ego, to which all elements of the world necessarily refer. The task of constitutive analyses is to clarify how the ego constitutes worldly Being and the world itself.21

Or again,

Phenomenology becomes a self-explanation of the ego, even there where the original interest was in the constitution of the object, the realm of the physical or the cultural. The ego is here no longer the subject-pole placed opposite an object-pole; it instead becomes that which encompasses everything. Everything now becomes constructum of and for transcendental subjectivity; the whole world of reality becomes a mere product of the transcendental ego's activity. Phenomenology as a whole becomes a "self-explanation of one's own ego taken as subject of all possible knowledge." Husserl's definitive view on the ego links phenomenology inseparably with idealism, a conclusion fully accepted by Husserl himself.22

The yogi, by sinking deeper and deeper into his own consciousness, realizes the state of pure subjectivity, which is not an object. In such a state, he realizes that the whole manifested universe is nothing but his own essence. He also realizes that the ordinary feeling of separateness between himself and the world is the product of illusion and ignorance (avidyā). Thus in the nirbijasamādhi, the samādhi in which there is no seed or object at all, the seeker himself becomes the object. This is the final goal of all yoga, the attainment of the highest consciousness, the realization of transcendental subjectivity, the mind discovering its own nature and how it constitutes worldly Being and the world itself. Thus Patañjali writes: "The highest knowledge born of the awareness of Reality is transcendental, includes the cognition of all objects simultaneously, pertains to all objects and processes whatever in the past, present, and future and also transcends the World Process."23 In other words, the knowledge of the yogi is direct, intuitive, absolute, and certain. It is beyond spatio-temporal considerations, which are the hallmark of phenomena and world process. Both the yogi and the phenomenologist are thus transcendental idealists. It is true there are several phenomenologists for whom transcendental idealism is unpalatable. But that is not our point here. It is rather that, granted Husserl's époché, intentional and constitutional analyses, and the function of the tran-

21 Kockelmans, op. cit., pp. 222-223.  
22 Ibid., p. 230.  
23 Patañjali, op. cit., III. 55.
scendental ego, transcendental idealism is the logical outcome, and that Husserl himself fully accepted such an outcome. "Strictly speaking, therefore, yoga boldly carries Husserl's transcendental reduction to its inevitable logical end."24

It should be emphasized, however, that even Husserl's conception of and quest for transcendental subjectivity was seriously beset with some difficulties which arise from the goals which he has set for phenomenology as a philosophy and method. For Husserl phenomenological reductions, including the transcendent(al reduction, are logico-epistemological devices for establishing philosophy as a rigorous and presuppositionless science. He could never bring himself to abandon this goal in order to carry phenomenological reduction to a point where, with the collapse of the noesis and noema into a unity, the doctrine of the intentionality of consciousness itself breaks down; for here, with the onset of transcendental subjectivity, it would no longer be possible to talk about consciousness on the one hand and its intentionality on the other. Except for occasional references in his later writings, Husserl did not push reductions to this point, which Sinari appropriately calls the 'zero limit'.25 It is the zero limit because consciousness has now gone beyond the reflective stage to the prereflective, preconscious. But this should not be construed as a defect or failure on the part of Husserl, because to what extent one wants to pursue phenomenological reductions depends upon one's goals. Nevertheless, the transcendent(al reduction did pose serious difficulties to Husserl as well as to his followers insofar as they wanted to eat the cake and yet have it—they aimed at rigorous epistemology through transcendental subjectivity, but the former can only be had in a matrix in which subject-object distinction holds. Yogic meditation does not fall into this inconsistency because the goal of samadhi is not an epistemology and rigorous philosophy, but

. . . an ontological realization of the most primordial essences of objects, which, in a sense, are not fully describable. It gives us an access to that point of consciousness at which an object reveals itself "in itself" (svarūpa), in its true being, and becomes absolutely transparent to the knowing faculty. The purpose of samadhi is to "see" the world through "transcendental subjectivity." . . . Every perception arouses the ego-sense and the judgments of the ego. As long as this ego-sense persists, the succession of the states of mind is experienced. The registering power of the mind (manas), the discriminating power (buddhi), and the thought-impressions (vritti) are all due to the ego-sense, and when this is abandoned, the total existence ceases to be present to consciousness. What is realized by means of samādhi, therefore, says Patañjali, is the cessation of this ego-sense and the possession of "pure," "seedless," "undifferentiated," "transcendental," "non-attached" consciousness.26

Also, "While, for Husserl, the transcendental consciousness can never be

25 Ibid., p. 224.
26 Ibid., p. 225.
transmuted to a state at which it would cease to operate as empirically oriented, the yogins invariably maintain that samādhi is an ‘ecstatic’ stage, similar to self-revelation, and constitutes a complete removal of the distinction between consciousness and its object.”27 Thus the challenge presented by transcendental reduction and transcendental subjectivity is met by yogic meditation fully and consistently.

The next point concerns the validity of intuitive seeing. How do we know that what a phenomenologist or yogi claims to know intuitively is valid, correct, and true? The yogi answers unambiguously that this is an improper question. It is improper because it misconstrues the nature of yogic intuition. For insofar as yogic intuition is nonrational, there can be no way of validating it through conceptual schema and rational categories. What we are dealing with and experiencing here, says the yogi, is pure subjectivity, which is not an object of any subject but that from which all objectivity springs. This is not to say, however, that we are helpless. He simply invites others to practice the techniques and see for themselves. For the yogi, the knowledge, peace, and wisdom that come through yoga are good enough proof; nothing else is either necessary or possible or appropriate. In short, one cannot understand yoga without being oneself a yogi. There is no other way.

Now let us see how the phenomenologist answers this question. He, too, is aware of the difficulties in answering it in a straightforward way. Thus Lauer writes:

The first of these . . . reductions is termed by Husserl somewhat generically the “phenomenological reduction,” which is to have as its term a subject which is in no sense of the term objectified, hence a “pure” subject. It is not easy to conceive an awareness which in no way objectifies that of which it is an awareness, but unless we can do this we shall have missed the sense of Husserl’s “phenomenological reduction.”28

Lauer is here saying that the only way to understand the notion of pure subject is to attain pure subjectivity. Further, talking about the objective validity of the knowledge resulting from phenomenological reduction, Lauer writes:

Here again is one of the fundamental weaknesses of the phenomenological method, whether it is practised by Husserl himself, by Max Scheler, by Dietrich von Hildebrand, or by Jean-Paul Sartre. Nor have the philosophers who draw their inspiration from Husserl sufficiently eliminated this precise weakness. What guarantee is there that the process of ideation as performed by one philosopher is necessarily more valid than that performed by another, precisely when the results of both are contradictory?29

He then goes on to say:

29 Ibid., p. 59.
It may well be doubtful whether anyone who has not already committed himself to phenomenology can clearly see the distinction between psychological compulsion and the necessity of the objective element in an act of consciousness] at all. Eugen Fink, whom Husserl himself considered as one of his most authentic interpreters, claims that it is impossible to understand what phenomenology is without being oneself a phenomenologist.  

It should be quite clear by now that the phenomenologist, like the yogi, is saying that one cannot understand phenomenology without oneself doing it. But one might say that that is true of anything. For instance, one cannot understand bread-baking without oneself being a bread baker. But this objection is powerless in view of the fact that bread-baking does not, unlike yoga and phenomenology, require the attainment of pure subjectivity. No bread baker seems to require his apprentice to attain pure subjectivity before he may delve into the mysteries of the dough.

It is interesting to see how Lauer proposes to cure phenomenology of what he considers its chief weakness, the lack of a method of validating the objectivity of phenomenological intuitions. Appealing to Gabriel Marcel, he writes:

Thus, for Marcel, an individual intuition, even his own, has little significance by itself. Like other phenomenologists, he will appeal to appearances, but he does so on the assumption that other men have had and do have similar experiences. On this basis it is possible by discussion to seek to persuade others to derive from these experiences the same intuitions which one has gained oneself. At the same time it is very possible that one will be brought to modify one's own "intuition" by contact with the "intuition" of others. The result may very well be a sort of "social" intuition, which has more validity precisely because man is more truly man when acting in accord with others.

He then says that Husserl failed to benefit from Hegel's insight that "the opinions of others, both in the past and in the present, are extremely important, since man thinks authentically as man only when he thinks in a framework which is both historical and social." The above views logically imply the following: (1) phenomenological intuitions could be mistaken; (2) they are communicable and discoursable; (3) hence one can correct the false and incorrect intuitions of others as well as one's own by discussion, which itself assumes as a necessary condition that true and correct intuitions are already known; (4) that intuition which is shared by the majority in society is more valid and correct than an individual's intuition; and (5) intuitions outside of a historical, social framework are not authentic and valid. It is curious that this way of eliminating the weakness of phenomenology at the same time eliminates phenomenology itself. For otherwise, what is the point of the epoche, which is the act of setting aside and suspending all beliefs, theories, prejudices, and frameworks, historical and social as well? Thus it would seem that the best

Ibid., p. 60.

Ibid., p. 63.

Ibid.
way to do phenomenology is by nose-count and polling of intuitions. Quite democratic indeed! Husserl, in my judgment, is to be commended for his unflinching adherence to his own conception of phenomenological intuition and for refusing to make any compromise with social intuition, which would only result in the negating of the very core of phenomenology.

To conclude, phenomenological reduction and yoga are both transcendental pursuits. In such pursuits, it is certainly possible to an extent to communicate knowledge obtained by intuition through mundane meanings as limiting cases, different conceptual schema pointing to different limits to which one can penetrate through them into the primordiality of objects. But the transcendental, intuitive knowledge obtained at the level of pure subjectivity cannot be exhausted through mundane meaning and experience. On this both Husserl and yoga are in full agreement. Whereas phenomenology merely talks of bracketing, ideating, and performing reduction, Patañjali's yoga provides a stepwise procedure for actually accomplishing them. Finally, both yoga and phenomenology logically lead to transcendental idealism, the view that the world is a mere product of the transcendental ego's activity.