There are two tendencies in Husserl's concept of phenomenological reduction which sometimes fuse and at other times conflict. What I have called "tendencies" derive from the different emphases given to the two procedural steps of the reduction. These two steps are the negative one of the epoché which is a bracketing of presuppositions, and, once the epoché has been applied, the positive step of an unprejudiced examination of one's object. Clearly the two steps belong together in that they are mutually implicatory; a setting aside of preconception implies as a next step the making of a new beginning in which one makes no use of previously held "knowledge"; and to make a radically new beginning means a prior discarding of past acquisitions. But the two steps of the reduction become two different tendencies which conflict with each other if the emphasis on the epoché as excluding prejudice is seen as designed to lead to apodicticity and the reduction in its positive sense is seen as a device leading to an enriched and more complex understanding of experience. The aspiration after indubitability is primarily a natural scientific ideal, that after richness, nuance, complexity is more compatible with the arts. When Husserl speaks of phenomenology as a rigorous science, a protoscientific science, the science of sciences and when he defines a rigorous science as one that contains no unexamined presuppositions

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(Husserl, 1970), he might be said to follow the positivist ideal of apodicticity, and to be emphasising the negative step of the reduction. When, on the other hand, Husserl refers to the epoché as leading to the freeing of the gaze of the philosopher (1970) he would emphasize the positive yield of the reduction. This tension between the different tendencies in Husserl’s account of the reduction remains more or less hidden in his work. It becomes explicit in the different interpretations given to the reduction by different successors. Schutz for whom the phenomenological investigator is above all the “disinterested observer” represents those who give only a negative meaning to the reduction. Merleau-Ponty perhaps most strongly of those successors of Husserl who did not reject the reduction, takes the opposing non-naturalist line.

The Husserlian Reduction and Human Science

I shall give a simple outline of the “reductions” or procedural steps or phases and their application to the human sciences as set forth by Husserl. Husserl speaks of the phenomenological reduction to characterize the method in general. But he also uses the term interchangeably with epoché, the first step of the reduction, to indicate the reduction of the objectively existent to the phenomenal—a reduction achieved by the bracketing of all presupposition—both of theory and common sense. Included in the epoché is, importantly, the natural attitude, that naive faith in the objective existence of the world, other people and the empirical self, which is shared by common sense and natural science. The reduction is not only phenomenological, in that it leads us to the phenomena or pure meanings, but it is also transcendental, in that by virtue of the epoché it leads to the residue which escapes the bracketing. For Husserl this residue is consciousness, the pure cogito. The reduction is eidetic in that it leads the investigator to the eidos or essence of his object, i.e., to a clarification of what the thing essentially is. And it is apodictic in that it leads to what is absolutely self-evidently given. All these reductions are, as Husserl stresses, bound up with each other.

Broadly, Husserl envisages the application of the reduction by the phenomenological philosopher and the human scientist in the following way: the philosopher will include the natural attitude in his epoché, i.e., he will suspend all existential belief, while the human scientist will suspend all presuppositions except those which stem from the natural attitude. Differently expressed, where the philosopher applies the epoché to all existential belief, the human scientist applies it only to the preconceptions he holds about matters in his disciplinary field. The