

PHENOMENOLOGY OF LIFE
FROM THE ANIMAL SOUL TO THE HUMAN MIND
BOOK I

ANALECTA HUSSERLIANA
THE YEARBOOK OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH
VOLUME XCIII

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ANNA-TERESA TYMIENIECKA

*The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning
Hanover, New Hampshire*

For sequel volumes see the end of this volume.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF LIFE
FROM THE ANIMAL SOUL
TO THE HUMAN MIND

Book I
In Search of Experience

Edited by

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The World Phenomenology Institute, Hanover, NH, U.S.A.

Published under the auspices of

The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning

A-T. Tymieniecka, President

 Springer

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available

ISBN 978-1-4020-5191-3 (HB)

ISBN 978-1-4020-5192-1 (e-book)

Published by Springer,
P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

www.springer.com

Printed on acid-free paper

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*In memory of
the phenomenologist Stephan Strasser
a great scholar and a noble friend
(Catholic University of Nijmegen 1947–1975)*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume of studies, like the following one (Volume 94), is dedicated to the memory of Stephan Strasser, great scholar and friend of The World Phenomenology Institute. It gathers papers read at our Fifty-Fifth International Phenomenology Congress, which was held in August 17–20, 2005 at The Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. It was at this university, formerly the Catholic University of Nijmegen, that Stephan Strasser taught Phenomenological Psychology.

As one of the Counselors on the Board of The World Phenomenology Institute he has worked with us and supported the Institute from its inception until his death. We owe him innovative ideas and wise counseling, as well as dedicated friendship.

The participants in the conference – authors in the present collection – who have come from various parts of the world, deserve our heartfelt thanks. We would also like to thank Springer for their help with the copy-editing and proof reading of this volume.

A-T.T.

OPENING ADDRESS

As the leader of the hosting Political Theory and Philosophy of Management Group at Radboud University – until recently the Catholic University of Nijmegen – I am delighted to welcome the participants to the Fifty-Fifth International Phenomenology Congress.

Its theme is “Phenomenology of Life: From the Animal Soul to the Human Mind”. But more particularly, the congress is dedicated to the memory of Stephan Strasser, who from shortly after the Second World War until 1975 taught as a professor of Philosophical Psychology and Anthropology at the Catholic University. At the same time he was also a close collaborator of the World Phenomenology Institute and of its President, Prof. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka.

I know that our colleague Daniel J. Martino is scheduled to speak on Strasser’s philosophical legacy later in this congress. But I wanted to mention a number of things about his biography, his Nijmegen career and say a very few words about philosophical teaching and research in Nijmegen now.¹

Our great Nijmegen expert on the work of Stephan Strasser is Anton Monshouwer, presently teaching here at the Department of Pedagogy in the field of the Philosophy and History of Education, but who for reasons of ill-health could unfortunately not be with us at this event. Monshouwer has published, among other works, *Ratio Militans. Perspectieven op Stephan Strasser*,² as well as a bibliography of Strasser’s writings.³ Readers of Dutch may therefore profitably make a study of those volumes.

The University of Nijmegen was from its inception, in 1923, a Catholic institution, whose foundation was inspired by the general struggle for Catholic emancipation in the Netherlands. It originally contained three faculties: Theology, Law and Humanities, including Philosophy and Pedagogy. Up until the outbreak of the Second World War it was, in the philosophical field, largely inspired by neo-Thomism. A fascinating and controversial figure in its history was Ferdinand Sassen, professor from 1929 of Greek and Roman philosophy and, in his own words, a progressive neo-Thomist. An article by Sassen on Thomas and Hegel, published in 1932, provoked a concerned reaction in Rome, though he was defended by the Dutch bishops, if not

entirely whole-heartedly. Sassen left Nijmegen shortly after the end of the Second War, for the Ministry of Education and then Leiden University, a non-confessional institution.

The Catholic University of Nijmegen emerged from the war and the German occupation with its reputation high: it had refused to collaborate with the enemy. It was in this period that Strasser received his appointment, at roughly the same time as Dries van Melsen. Strasser's philosophical attention was to be directed in particular to the students of psychology and of pedagogy, Melsen's to the students of the natural sciences. Thus, in a sense, Strasser worked on the periphery of the rather small faculty. Neither was a priest, though many of the local students of philosophy were, and the Church kept an eye on the Faculty's teaching.

Born in 1905 in Vienna of Hungarian-Jewish parents, Strasser escaped from Austria in 1938, at the time of the *Anschluss*, and found asylum in Belgium, where however, with the Nazi occupation, he soon also had to go into hiding. The Phenomenology Online website notes: "[Herman] van Breda offered him work at the Husserl Archives, where, in the space of 25 months, Stephan Strasser, his wife and mother-in-law transcribed 20,000 pages of Husserl's shorthand into ordinary text. These experiences and his studies with [Alphonse] de Waelhens in 1944 were formative for Strasser's philosophical career."⁴

Strasser's doctorate had not been on a typically philosophical topic: it concerned the novelist and poet Joseph von Eichendorff. His teachers in philosophy were de Waelhens and Albert Dondeyne. My Nijmegen colleague Harm Boukema adds that he later came into contact with Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Lévinas, Helmuth Plesner and F.J.J. Buytendijk. For Nijmegen he represented a good point of contact with Louvain as well as, more generally, with phenomenology. But, as Boukema points out, he certainly preferred some phenomenologists to others: Ricoeur, Lévinas and Gabriel Marcel to Merleau-Ponty, and Merleau-Ponty to Sartre.

The above-cited source on phenomenological scholars remarks that for a time, Strasser "became intensely interested in Heidegger, but eventually he moved closer to Merleau-Ponty and in his later years especially to the work of Lévinas. Strasser exercised significant international influence. In North America, his writings provided access to continental thought; in Germany, he helped introduce ... Lévinas; in France, he helped introduce ... Husserl; and in Japan, he helped introduce the human science approach." It concludes: "Throughout his career, it was Strasser's ambition to practice human science without doing violence to what is human. His 1947 inaugural lecture was on the theme 'Objectiviteit en Objectivisme' (Objectivity and Objectivism). In

1950, he introduced the *Husserliana* series by publishing the first volume: *Cartesianische Meditationen und die Pariser Vorträge* (Cartesian Meditations and the Paris Lectures).” He also published *Fenomenologie en empirische menskunde*, translated into English as *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences* in 1963.⁵ For Nijmegen, he clearly represented an opening to a wider philosophical world. But the general and the philosophical situation at Nijmegen has changed so radically in the period since his retirement that this contribution is nowadays not always fully recognized.

Any specifically “Catholic” signature of the university as well as of its philosophers is now almost, though not entirely, unrecognizable. Philosophy is by the way not taught only in the Philosophy Faculty itself, but also by philosophers appointed to chairs in other faculties, to teach philosophy of the natural sciences, of the educational sciences or of the management sciences and so on. This phenomenon is itself in part a heritage of the old Catholic University, which wanted to promote philosophical reflection among students of all disciplines.

The Philosophy Faculty presently represents – as indeed do all such Dutch faculties – a more or less eclectic mixture of philosophical positions and tendencies. An interest in phenomenology does exist, if not in the sense in which, in Strasser’s time, it was a window through which neo-Thomists were able to take account of the wider philosophical world to which I referred above.

But to conclude, with an eye to the coming days: Nijmegen welcomes the World Phenomenology Institute and its President, as well as Mr Alexander W. Schimmelpenninck, from its Dordrecht publishers, and wishes all participants a very successful congress.

NOTES

¹ In this respect I am entirely indebted to information publicly provided by colleagues from the Nijmegen Philosophy Faculty, especially Dr Harm Boukema and Dr Ad Vennix. This information is contained in Dutch-language lectures held on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Philosophy Faculty in 2003. But see the remark in the text on Dr Anton Monshouwer.

² Bemmel: Uitgeverij Concorde, 1997.

³ “De filosofische en wijsgerig-pedagogische werken van Stephan Strasser (1905–1991). Een bibliografisch overzicht.” *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 56, 1994.

⁴ See <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/scholars>.

⁵ loc. cit.

THEMATIC STUDY

FROM SENTIENCE TO CONSCIOUSNESS

SENTIENT INTENTIONALITY AS THE THREAD OF LIVING
CONTINUITY

IN THE ONTOPOIETIC UNFOLDING OF LIFE

Proposing an investigation of living human beings as stretching from the stages of the animal soul to the human creative spirit, we have already indicated the line of the unfolding of life in individual beingness as it has come to unfold. Since the phases of this unfolding pinpoint the essential transformations that have occurred along the trajectory of the unfolding that bring about growth and progress—since “to live” means to grow or to diminish and never to stand still—there has been raised since the beginning of modernity the question of the continuity of this trajectory. In question is the diversity but concurrently the continuity of the sense of life that this unfolding maintains.

It is enough to mention the Cartesian distinction between the seemingly drastically divergent entities that are body and mind, whose functioning introduces and advances innumerable transformative threads of sense.

I have been proposing and elaborating a radically different approach to classic philosophy at large. Before I come to focus in on the issue at stake, it is necessary to return to the foundation stones of this new conception of philosophy.

Before outlining the new approach to the continuity of the temporal progress of self-individualizing life, let me state that no instrumental/operational rationality may account for the vital, psychic, intellectual, and creative metamorphosis that engenders a multiplicity of sense-giving factors. No scientific effort to seek the passage from one category of sense into another in the minutiae of operative and symbiotic mechanisms can bridge the discrete stations of these transformative moves. Were it not for the foundational role of the logos of life carrying the self-individualizing processes, those moves would not have occurred. *It is the core of the thread of the logos of life, namely,*

sentience, that advances the translating rationale running through and carrying the life processes in the discrete (to our mind) continuity of their unfolding.

Now let us outline the foundations of our philosophical outlook.

A. THE POINT OF DEPARTURE OF OUR ONTOPOIETIC INQUIRY: THE HUMAN CREATIVE CONDITION WITHIN THE UNITY OF LIFE

We abandon, in fact, the time-honored classification of philosophical problems with their separate realms of inquiry, and in contrast approach their common groundwork, which is life itself at its basic onto-metaphysical level. *Phenomenology/ontopoiesis of life indeed descends intuitively to the level of the pristine logos of life*, wherefrom all scientific and philosophical problems have their common root. It is on this level that problems that through the centuries could not be resolved find their natural setting and solution.

It is upon the basic metaphysical-ontic platform, therefore, that I will attempt to show how the numerous questions that "human development" poses may be treated profitably. Foremost I will focus on the issue of the discrete continuity of life's unfolding, avoiding the undue reductions that became fashionable with the developments of neurobiology and its associated sciences. Upon the platform of the ontopoiesis of life we will see that no basis presents itself for such "naturalizing."

Let us first of all, then, correct some classic preconceptions of the appropriate point of departure, for the concept of what is "human" cries out for revision. Traditionally, the human being has been specified by its "nature," that is, identified by the salient features that distinguish us from other living beings. With the penetrating progress of natural science, this approach can no longer be upheld.

The biological, chemical, medical sciences of today compel us to move away from this approach. The human being's salient specific character is not a once and forever established entity. On the contrary, we are as a type first and foremost the fruit of a long line of development within the natural unfolding of life. But each individual also unfolds, grows, and declines, remaining dependent throughout on his or her natural milieu with its laws. In agreement with these concrete findings of science, our inquiry into the logos of life reveals that *the human being cannot be defined by its specific nature but by the entire complex of individualizing life*, of which complex it is vitally part and parcel. And so we speak not of human nature but of the *Human Condition-within-the-unity-of-everything-there-is-alive*. We do,

however, make one very essential specification by referring to “the HUMAN CREATIVE CONDITION.”

It is precisely by the human creative act, instead of by a cognitive act, that we may enter into this innermost line of the workings of the logos of life, which in its basic thread of vital force—*vis viva*— — —brings individualizing life about, promotes its unfolding, and controls its course.

It is the descent into the becoming of beings, living creatures and nonliving objects in their origination, generative ties, existential connect-edness, interactive unfolding—and this in the innermost logos that prompts them—that is indispensable to achieving understanding of the intricacies of existence. I will say after Periander that to understand a single thing one has to know all things. Thus the logos of this origination and becoming is the crucial focus of our researches.

The human creative condition as a conception of the human being is already the fruit of such ontic discovery. As a matter of fact insofar as this continuity of the living process (progress/regress) is a basic question of epistemology as well as a major part of our knowledge at large, it is by focusing on the nature and extent of the human creative act that we discover the Human Condition-within-the-unity-of-everything-there-is-alive, discovering an ontologically basic plane of life’s generation and becoming. Upon this plane, in contrast to classic ontologies focusing on the structure of things and living beings, we inquire into and may follow *poiein*— — —the making of, the becoming, the very unfolding of those structures in their circumambient context of resources, forces, intergenerative energies, as these are arrayed in basic self-individualization in existence. Upon the onto-poietic level it is confirmed that life consists of constructive *poiein*, becoming, unfolding, development. On the onto-poietic level of the logos of life, we uncover its incipient forces, its directional law, its LOGOS. But the logos of life could not implement its order were it not for its sentient core, which allows all the joints of the instrumentality of ordering to work together.

To understand the Human Condition-within-the-unity-of-everything-that-is-alive, we have to focus on two of its basic features: (1) the discrete continuity displayed through the disruptions in life’s unfolding, (2) the ingrownness of individual existence into its circumambient existential network. Ingrownness is a paradoxical way of becoming. In order to establish order, to particularize, to individualize, and to unfold, incipient beingness is necessarily existentially implicated in a radius of external conditions. Each living being is supported on a system of life subtending it in living beingness. No living element may be seen

as standing apart, in itself, beyond its circumambient cogeneric radius and outside of its inscription in the network of the earth, its ground, and of the cosmos with its laws. These two spheres of existential dependencies codetermine the autonomy of the living/becoming individual.

B. THE MATRIX OF BECOMING

This twofold inward/outward oriented existential route makes it manifest that in order to grow in selfhood from within, living beingness has to draw on forces and energies from the “external” circumambient sphere. What lies at the center of our inquiry is the question of how the directional devices operating from “within” find their fulfillment in the sphere of their application.

In this respect we have to differentiate the span of life’s individualizing becoming two existential matrices of poiein along with a third “in between” matrix:

- 1) the onto-poietic vital matrix of the generation, unfolding, development of the organic/vital significance of individualizing life;
- 2) the transformatory climax of the unfolding of living types that goes *in between* the natural/vital and the creative specifically human phase of unfolding life following on the advent of Imaginatio Creatrix;
- 3) the creative matrix of specifically human activity.

It is of primary importance to differentiate these three matrices, which each have their specific functional systems and yet are inwardly fused together in collaborative variations. There is the differentiation of their guiding principles, on the one hand, and their innermost existential discrete continuity of developmental advance, on the other hand. Here is the key to the understanding of human development with its autonomy, on one side, and its existential dependencies, on the other.

I. Let us first of all come back to the incipient instance of life. It is in its self-individualization from the prompting *vis viva* of the logos that beingness sets out on its life career, carrying with itself the entire initial endowment concentrated in its onto-poietic sequence. The onto-poietic sequence carries not only life’s germinal endowment but simultaneously as well all the indispensable dynamic directional devices enabling it to unfold within favorable rudimentary circumstances in such a way that using them according to how they fit with a living being’s own constitution it works out its unfolding, simultaneously transforming appropriately this circumambient groundwork. The onto-poietic sequence prepares as well further propitious conditions for the extended development of its sequential virtualities. It

initiates thereby a thread of unfolding that develops the living beingness according to the constructive design that it brings with itself. This constructive encounter of the inner virtualities prompted by logoc forces with fitting material and propitious circumstances constitutes the individualizing beingness and its vital matrix.

However, what is of crucial significance is that in the unfolding of life from its incipient instance, and even before, already at the forming of prelife conditions, each and all of the constructive moves of the individualizing logos proceed along the line of this core—a rationale of coalescence, “fitness,” the amalgamation of modulating constructive moves, of operative moves, etc. that is made possible by the sentient core of the constructive line of the logos of life. I speak of a “sentient intentionality” that allows all the innumerable operative connections to come together. To reemphasize, it is owing to the sentient virtuality of the logoc sequence that it may perform its modulating/directing role in the constructive metamorphic generation of new sense that is the mark of each step in life’s advance. To put the matter sharply, the order, self-ordering, of the course of individualizing life is not a “neutral,” automatic fitting together of matching elements. To the contrary, this ordering—effected by living intentionality, *vis viva*—is a sentient selection, the logos of life of congenial forces and virtualities deploying their capacities in contact with appropriately chimed energies.

This amplification that I bring to my investigation of the logos of life has far-reaching consequences. First of all and critically, it allows us to lay down the foundations for understanding the metamorphic continuity of life’s unfolding, the extended history of transformation worked in the growth and decline of individualized life. Secondly, our amplified account of life undercuts any unwarranted “reduction” of one phase of sense attained in this unfolding to any preceding phase. Thirdly, it provides the core explanation of the passage that takes place in the unfolding of individual types from among living agents, whose unfolding is an interior expansion of sentience into selfhood, a progressive advance toward full human consciousness. Lastly, our understanding makes it most manifest how one of the major imports of the Cartesian controversy, a “naturalizing” that still lurks in phenomenology, has no justification.

To summarize, the vitally significant ontopoiesis found in nature progresses and promotes the flow of life, organizing it around the self-individualization that flows out of the coalescing moves of becoming that follow as the intrinsic line of a directional sequence comes to

constitute a circumambient radius of elements suited to the continuance of that sequence. The telos of living beingness is projected by its *intrinsic logoic sequence*, which is transformed in an extended course of unfolding into a self-prompting agency to be followed. *This onto-poietic course of self-individualization occurs as a function of the sentient intentionality proper to the logos of life.*

II. The perfecting of the self-prompting agency occurs in its unfolding of sharing-in-life. This is the phase of life's onto-poiesis at which Imaginatio Creatrix will enter into play.

The vitally significant onto-poietic matrix leads in its constructive unfolding to the more developed sharing-in-life matrix of communicative animality. A climactic constructive apex of the inward agency of self-individualizing beingness is its acquisition of the organic basis for higher communicative sharing of life's necessities. Communication enters into the play of becoming.

With the progressive unfolding of receptive/remitting organs in living agencies, the system is readied for the entry into the game of life of the unique force that is Imaginatio Creatrix, which surpassingly transforms the functional system of the onto-poietic/animal matrix of momentum, internal programming, and external selection into a self-directed imaginatively programmed and deliberately selected project, the autonomous creative matrix of the specifically human significance of life.

It is in this intermediary field of essential transformations that the metamorphosis of the animal/vital functions occurs. All the life-significant forces—organic, vital, psychic, and spiritual—meet at this field forming the essential constructive functional links that transform the living agent into a self-conscious selective agency.

This transformed functional field, whose leading orientation comes from creativity, opens a new theater for the logos of life. (To be continued in *Analecta Husserliana* XCIV.)

DANIEL J. MARTINO

STEPHAN STRASSER'S PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY
AND DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY'S SIMON SILVERMAN
PHENOMENOLOGY CENTER

It is truly an honor to have been given the opportunity to present for the 55th International Phenomenology Congress the connection between Stephan Strasser's philosophical legacy and The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center at Duquesne University, the place he saw as the proper repository for his personal library and scholarly archival materials. Because it is an interesting and important connection for appreciating the growth of phenomenological thought in the 20th century, this author felt a certain onus of responsibility and challenge. On the one hand, Strasser deserves all the due diligence necessary to ensure that his scholarly contributions are preserved as accessible resources to guide and inspire like-minded scholars of every generation. On the other hand, his level of prolificity and degree of involvement in the phenomenological world do not lend themselves to succinct exposition. In striving to achieve a manageable balance between these two daunting demands, I fully resonated with the frustration that he expresses in a piece of his voluminous correspondence. There, as in nearly all his letters to colleagues, the passion for his work is palpable. However, in this instance his zeal has temporarily overwhelmed him, as he writes, "The paper I am busy with deals with Merleau-Ponty and metaphysics. The difficulty I am coping with is that I have so *much* to say while I do not know yet the most adequate manner [of] *how* to say it ... I am pretty sure that I shall overcome this difficulty."¹

As evidenced by Strasser's lengthy list of publications, he met the challenge over and over again by more than adequately articulating his thoughts on a wide range of issues that drove his philosophy, his "love of wisdom." Likewise, in a very isolated sense, I too was able to resolve the tension associated with the charge to adequately represent the extensive documentation of Strasser's philosophical career in a respectful way. Respect and honor in no way should be seen as a eulogy. This is an exercise that reverentially highlights the record of Strasser's scholarship in order to showcase its timeless dynamism and ongoing source of scholarly inspiration. His intellectual life

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as preserved in the Strasser Alcove at The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center is not guarded by docents in a museum as a relic of dead thought nor as a passing reference in downstream philosophies. Instead, Strasser's thought and the materials that supported and sustained that thought (correspondence, manuscripts, notes) are held in the Center as if they were in a garden – a place that constantly nurtures his thought as an ahistorical body of thinking that will continue to pervade and positively influence the understanding of human experience.

1. STEPHAN STRASSER AND DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY: ALLIES IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Ernst Orth and Thomas Seebohm have included Strasser as part of the first generation of postwar phenomenologists. He, along with Ludwig Landgrebe, Eugen Fink and Walter Biemel, worked at the Husserl Archives in Leuven. This was seen as the center of the new beginning for the phenomenological movement.² With 50,000 pages of Edmund Husserl's writings (40,000 of which in Husserl's untranscribed handwriting) safely brought to Leuven by the heroic offices of Herman Leo van Breda, O.F.M., the stage was set for phenomenology's flourishing. Without question Strasser played an instrumental part in the successful launch of this exciting new epoch by his transcription of 20,000 pages of Husserl's *Gabelsberger* beginning in 1942. This experience, however, was not merely a detached chore for which he received only a stipend in return. Deciphering the shorthand meant becoming familiar with Husserl's thought, and it is in this process that something of inestimable worth was given to him – a philosophical awakening that would have an abiding influence on his life's work. Bas Levering and Max van Manen have identified the Husserl Archives' years as a significant period of opportunity and grace for Strasser: "These experiences and his studies with De Waelhens in 1944 were formative for Strasser's philosophical career."³

While Strasser's appreciation for the value of Husserl's thinking continued to grow throughout the late 1940s, the emergence of yet another postwar center of phenomenological flourishing was taking place across the Atlantic at Duquesne University. In 1948, the Dutch philosopher Henry Koren, C.S.Sp. came to Duquesne University. He was a member of the Spiritans, the religious order that founded and continues to sponsor the university, and as David L. Smith, C.S.Sp. explains: "It was through the efforts and vision of [Father Koren] that phenomenology first came to Duquesne and took deep root there."⁴ When Koren became the chair of the philosophy department in 1953/54 he oversaw a Thomistic program – the prototype for Catholic

philosophy departments at that time. While his own philosophical background and orientation were also along Thomistic lines, Smith recounts Koren's sense of disconnect between Thomism and the *Zeitgeist* of the mid 20th century: "while convinced that Aquinas' formidable synthesis offered a satisfactory overall view, he was keenly aware that he left many modern questions untouched."⁵ In order to give the philosophy department greater relevance and purchase as it instituted a Ph.D. program under his watch, Koren turned to phenomenology. Most interestingly he arrived at this potential source for philosophical awakening and rejuvenation through Van Breda, the same person who coincidentally introduced Strasser to Husserl's phenomenology. In correspondence with André Schuwer, O.F.M., Koren credits Van Breda for influencing the shape of the doctoral program that would become one of the first in the United States to emphasize the concentrated study of phenomenology and contemporary continental philosophy, "Van Breda woke me from my dogmatic slumbers (*pace* Kant) and directed my attention to phenomenology, whose very existence was unknown to me."⁶

The confluence of phenomenological activity in Europe and its nascent development in the States was effectuated by one of Koren's perspicacious programmatic initiatives. Throughout the 1950s he would invite visiting professors to teach at Duquesne University who were committed to serious phenomenological scholarship. These lecturers included Andrew G. van Melsen (University of Nijmegen – now Radboud University), Herman Leo van Breda (Catholic University of Leuven), Remy Kwant (University of Utrecht) and most importantly for the current context, Stephan Strasser (University of Nijmegen) in 1956. At various levels, Koren's strategy would have far-reaching impact for the advancement of phenomenology. Beyond satisfying the short-term need to shore up the credibility of a fledgling graduate program, the promotion of its very distinctiveness would attract and so form interested scholars in North America who might not otherwise have the resources necessary for a European education. Besides this comprehensive seeding of phenomenology in the U.S., a more particular result of Koren's series of visiting professors was the forging of a close relationship between Strasser and Duquesne. In looking back on the beginnings of the relationship that would last nearly four decades until his death in 1991, Strasser credits its causality with reverential regard. It was neither mere chance nor the work of the fates but an act of providence, as expressed in his acknowledgments during the dedication ceremony of the Strasser Alcove at The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center: "it was providential that in 1956 I started in America as a Fulbright-fellow at the [*sic*] Duquesne University."

But this beginning would not only be viewed as providential from Strasser's perspective. From its vantage point, Duquesne University would also rejoice in its new found friendship with Strasser as a moment of providence. His interaction with Duquesne lent prestige to its efforts to advance phenomenological thought. It is important to understand that the effectiveness of Strasser's influence was felt in a pointed sense by various entities within the university. In other words, it was not merely a generic endorsement to a faceless structure or a narrowly confined boost to the philosophy department. Instead, his reach of influence to promote phenomenology extended to the Duquesne University Press and the psychology department, deemed at one point as "the capital of phenomenological psychology in the New World."⁷ From 1957 to 1985, the Duquesne University Press would publish four of Strasser's books. This ensured increased access to his writings for an eager English speaking readership. As indispensable as these press runs were for the greater dissemination of Strasser's thought and the profile enhancement of Duquesne's commitment to phenomenology, the relationship cultivated between the psychology program and Strasser has a significance in its own right and cannot be overlooked.

After his initial visit to Duquesne in 1956 to lecture in the philosophy department, Strasser received repeated invitations to return. He obliged twice, once in 1968 and a second time in 1982. The occasion for the latter visit was to conduct a mini-course for the department of psychology entitled "Understanding and Explanation: Basic Ideas Concerning the Possibility of Human Sciences." Strasser's appearance for the course was the direct result of a key faculty member in the department at the time, Amedeo Giorgi. From 1962 to 1987, Giorgi did all in his power as a scholar and administrator to ensure the flourishing of Duquesne's graduate psychology programs and their internationally renowned exclusive commitment to phenomenology. Giorgi first came to know Strasser as an author. When his book *The Soul in Metaphysics and Empirical Psychology* became available in English in 1957, Giorgi saw this as an appropriate text for his graduate psychology courses in the early 1960s. A more personal relationship developed during a visit to Nijmegen in 1961. After their initial meeting, Giorgi visited Strasser numerous times and the two men maintained an ongoing correspondence. In a recent conversation, Giorgi summed up his meaningful and long standing association with Strasser as follows: "it was a very cordial relationship between two phenomenologists, one a philosopher and the other a psychologist."⁸

By the fall of 1982 as Strasser completed the three-day psychology mini-course, the cordiality between him and Giorgi reached a level of comfortableness. It was during a dinner hosted by Giorgi at his home that he broached

a potentially delicate topic – what were Strasser's plans for his personal library and scholarly papers after his death?

Giorgi had the perfect place in mind for Strasser's materials – the newly instituted Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center. Founded in 1980 with the support of the University's Academic Vice President, Edward L. Murray, C.S.Sp., Giorgi was the driving force in the establishment of the Center. When the phenomenological psychiatrist Erwin Straus died in 1975, Giorgi worked closely with Mrs Straus so that her deceased husband's books and scholarly papers would be given to Duquesne. The collection of Straus' materials became the cornerstone of what would evolve into The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center.

Giorgi and John Sallis, at that time a professor of philosophy at Duquesne, approached Simon Silverman, the president of Humanities Press and asked him if he would be willing to support the idea of a center which would be a repository for world literature on phenomenology. Silverman was a fitting prospect since he had an affinity for Duquesne and its commitment to phenomenology, as Smith explains: "Silverman's relationship with Duquesne University went back to 1972 when Humanities Press became the exclusive distributor for the Duquesne University Press."⁹ Silverman was favorably disposed to Giorgi's idea of a hub for phenomenological research and so gave a generous endowment in 1980, and the Phenomenology Center bearing his name came to be. When Straus' *Nachlass* arrived at Duquesne and was placed in the special collections area of the University Library, soon to follow was the personal library and manuscripts of Aron Gurwitsch. Each of these scholars also gave memorabilia and other personal possessions. These items helped to foster a warm and inspiring climate for scholars visiting the Center.

Having seen this space and trustful of Giorgi's stewardship of the Center, it is easy to understand why Strasser quickly agreed to designate The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center as the optimal place for his scholarly materials.

The official dedication of the Stephan Strasser Alcove at The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center comprised a two-day celebration on October 15 and 16, 1984. Aside from the ceremonial festivities there were also intellectual segments of high caliber. Strasser's successor at the University of Nijmegen, C.E.M. "Kees" Struyker Boudier, delivered the dedicatory lecture titled "Philosophical Anthropology: Buytendijk and Merleau-Ponty" to which Strasser responded. On the second day there was a round table discussion devoted to "Phenomenology and Philosophical Anthropology." Reflecting on this course of events, Strasser wrote these sentiments to Richard Rojcewicz, the Center's first director: "Gertrude and I want to thank you for the cordial

manner we were received by the people of Duquesne University. I had the impression that the opening of the Strasser Alcove and the Round Table conference took place in a dignified manner but also in a warm human atmosphere."¹⁰ In the next section I hope to highlight the more salient aspects of Strasser's materials which enabled the alcove to maintain scholarly dignity and human warmth beyond the initial hope stirred at its dedication.

2. THE ALCOVE OF STEPHAN STRASSER

Because Strasser was an active scholar at the time of the inauguration of his alcove in 1984, it was necessary to ensure that his personal library was at his ready disposal. As a result, only a portion of the total materials that would comprise the alcove at Duquesne was sent prior to the dedication *fête*. In a letter to Rojcewicz, he ruminated on the separation anxiety which afflicts all serious scholars and their love affair with the potentialities of the written word: "I wonder whether the first part of the materials has arrived by now. I emphasize that it constitutes only a third of my library and the less valuable part. It is easy to explain the cause of this disparity: while pondering whether I shall need this book or that series in the coming years I mostly answered 'yes'. Can you understand the ridiculous optimism of mine?"¹¹ This first installment of materials did safely arrive and proved to be a fitting backdrop for the alcove's formal establishment as well as contributing greatly to the quality and depth of the Silverman Center holdings. Nearly a decade would pass before the final installment would be received in the summer of 1995. While Strasser died in 1991, the directors of the Center were sensitive to Mrs Strasser's request that her husband's materials not leave Nijmegen until after her death. Liesbeth Strasser, the Strassers' second child, diligently oversaw the shipment of her father's library and made it a point to thank the Center's leaders for their sensitivity to her mother's wishes: "In your letter from January 20, 1993 you and the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center kindly gave permission to our family to postpone the transfer of my father's archives and books till after my mother's death. My mother was very grateful that you took this decision ... Thank you again for your consideration for my mother."¹²

It was therefore a bitter sweet moment when all of Strasser's books and papers were finally installed in his alcove at the Silverman Center. On the one hand their arrival was the direct result of his passing and then the death of Mrs Strasser. However, with the full complement of his materials now in place in their new home a decorous and accessible space was finally established to

preserve his legacy and to invite other scholars engaged in phenomenological research who will keep his work alive and meaningful in new ages.

What can scholars expect to find when consulting the resources of the Strasser Alcove? No doubt books, journals and nearly forty archival boxes containing correspondence, manuscripts and off-prints first greet any visitor. However, this initial greeting is given immediate warmth because of a handsome portrait of Strasser that adorns the alcove. The artist, Henry Koerner, was commissioned by the Silverman Center to paint the portrait for the dedication ceremonies. Koerner was a cousin of Mrs Strasser who by coincidence lived in Pittsburgh. The portrait lends inspiration to any research project, since it quickly and clearly contextualizes the books and papers as Strasser's, which at one time were the life blood of his academic achievements. The number of books comprising his personal library is 1,637 volumes. Even the most cursory glance over the stacks will evoke a sense of awe for the diversity of philosophical sources that nurtured his thinking – from the golden age of Plato and Aristotle, to the high middle ages of Thomas Aquinas and of course to the contemporary period which includes every well known phenomenologist and existentialist, and even to postmodernity and post-structuralism with such figures as Derrida and Foucault being represented.

Aside from the books, there is also the sizable collection of personal archival materials. Most noteworthy here is the correspondence. A lively and extensive exchange of letters took place between Strasser and other luminaries who have left a lasting mark on continental thought. Among those with whom he exchanged missives on a regular basis include Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Lévinas, Werner Marx, Samuel IJsseling, Rudolf Bernet, M.J. Langeveld, Jacques Taminiaux, Helmuth Plessner, Hermann Lübbe, Adriaan Peperzak, Bernard Waldenfels and of course Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka.

The frequent and intense correspondence between Strasser and Ricoeur as well as between him and Lévinas has a singular significance and is deserving of further study. Ricoeur's recent passing will generate a renewed interest in his thought, while Strasser's acclaim for having first presented Lévinas to Germany's intellectuals will be of lasting import, a point not missed by Anotonino Mazzù. "His more recent book [*Jenseits von Sein und Zeit: Eine Einführung in Emmanuel Lévinas*] may be considered as a classical introduction of Lévinas' thought to the German-speaking public."¹³ A more careful examination of this correspondence will be of inestimable scholarly worth, since it will disclose rare insights about the thought behind the thought that reaches the reader only in its final and published form. Because of the unique forum correspondence provides, a perspective of an author is captured that

can enhance a reader's comprehension in a more holistic way. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner made this observation in their edited work on the correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers: "Because neither, probably, ever thought this correspondence would be published, and because they had absolute trust in each other, there is hardly a trace of self-censorship in these letters. They reveal themselves in a more personal, spontaneous, warmer and, at the same time, more ruthless way than they do in their works."¹⁴

The more personal and warmer manner in which Strasser reveals himself is especially noticed in the correspondence where he assumes the role of mentor. A long paper trail gives evidence of how numerous younger colleagues sought his counsel on their writing and research. It is possible to trace the sequence of this interaction in different ways. Henk Struyker Boudier, for instance, vetted an article concerning F.J.J. Buytendijk and Erwin Straus through Strasser prior to its publication in the 19th volume of the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* (1988). Angela Ales Bello, on the other hand, welcomed Strasser's reactions to her work on Husserl and God after its publication. Unmistakable in this exchange is an appreciation for the revelatory power of correspondence. At that point in time the issue of Husserl and God was also of interest to Strasser. Having presented a paper titled "History, Teleology and God in the Philosophy of Husserl" at the Sixth International Phenomenology Conference,¹⁵ the receipt of Ales Bello's *Husserl Sul Problema di Dio*¹⁶ was a timely opportunity for scholarly symbiosis. By simply noting the very length of Strasser's reactions – a three-page letter – a clear testament is given to the simultaneity of his scholarly rigor and genuine human concern which was brought to bear on the review of her book. Ales Bello's response in turn demonstrates a moment of academic challenge and deepening as well as personal affirmation:

First of all I am very grateful to you for your review of my book, it is really an honor for me because of your authority in the phenomenological field – I am sorry that you spent so much time reading it – and secondly I thank *you* for your kind remarks upon my interpretation of Husserl's thought. It is true that I did not deal with the question of pantheism and that Husserl's manuscript on teleology (*Intersubjectivität* III, 378–386) may suggest a pantheistic point of view ... It is true that from a philosophical point of view there is a deep difference between pantheism and theism, but Husserl's aim was not to discuss the problem of God it [*sic*] itself; for this reason we can discover an ambiguity in his position...In any case I thank you very much for having asked my opinion so that I could think over this argument.¹⁷

Aside from the invaluable unique glimpse that the correspondence provides of Strasser's intellectual activity as he interacts with others, there are additional alcove materials that complement this view from a different angle. Instead of grasping his thought as it is worked out through correspondence,

there are also draft manuscripts and personal reading notes that show the more solitary practices necessary for scholarly growth and refinement. For instance, it is interesting to note the editorial discernment to which Strasser submitted his writing when comparing the rough drafts and final published form of *Welt im Widerspruch: Gedanken zu einer Phänomenologie als ethischer Fundamentalphilosophie*.¹⁸ It is also scintillating to pour over the meticulous notes he took when reading primary philosophical texts. Included here are not only the more obvious authors that would have propelled his thought – Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer – but also to be found are notes on the works of Kant, Hegel, Popper, Kuhn and Lacan. This diversity speaks volumes of the multi-colored palette which hued Strasser's intellect.

This intellect expressed itself in Strasser's prolific output. He read much in order to write much. One particular outlet for his writing in which the Silverman Center had direct involvement was the publication associated with the 1984 dedication of his alcove – *Clefts in the World: And Other Essays on Lévinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Buytendijk*. When the Center's leaders at that time, Giorgi and Rojcewicz, proposed the idea of the publication to Strasser, it was met with enthusiasm. The original content plan for book included one chapter by C.E.M. Struyker Boudier and the remaining five as original contributions from Strasser. Upon its final publication, he viewed the work with pride and hoped that it could reach a wide audience. On one occasion he called the work “a tangible proof of my philosophizing,”¹⁹ and at another time saw his yearning for its potential outreach as something to be taken seriously: “you should understand, like every author, I wish that my book be read; and you know the Scholastic adage: “*Desiderium naturale non potest esse inane*.”²⁰ Aquinas used this expression to caution against the facile dismissal of natural human desires for God as illusory.²¹

Indeed the Silverman Center continues to heed Strasser's natural desire to be read and studied. That is the purpose of his alcove, where scholars will always be welcome to avail themselves of the distinctive resources that will stimulate new inroads in phenomenological scholarship as inspired by the seminal work of Strasser. While not restricting the course that these inroads may take, he nonetheless provides some possible directions. These are expressed in a piece that was slated for inclusion in *Clefts in the World*, but was later excluded because of spatial constraints. The “Critical Self-Presentation” is a meditative retrospective of his scholarly life. Though first published in 1981 as volume seven of Peter Lang's series *Philosophers on Their Own Work*, Strasser believed strongly that it would a most fitting inclusion in the publication accompanying the inauguration of his alcove as well as a most effective means to ensure that his writings were more widely read. He asked

Rojcewicz to translate it into English from the German. I am proud to now share with you its first presentation in English. It is therefore in keeping with Professor Strasser's wishes to now reiterate the self-appraisal he made of his philosophical legacy. As he had hoped that it would generate thought and avenues of research at the occasion of the founding of his alcove in 1984, so too is it hoped that his words will serve as a similar catalyst at the 55th International Phenomenological Congress devoted to his memory in 2005. His natural desire to be read and studied is accorded the greatest respect and without doubt there will be innumerable re-readings and reexaminations of his works.

3. STRASSER'S "CRITICAL SELF-PRESENTATION"²²

A critical self-presentation is incumbent on me. Such an assignment can be interpreted in two senses: the word "critical" can be understood as referring to the "self" or as calling for a taking up of a critical position versus other philosophers and philosophical currents. To satisfy both these requirements I will formulate a few theses at the end of my presentation; they will express certain convictions that I still – after decades of philosophical development – consider valid today. The theses will exhibit the required critical aspects.

In a self-presentation, what is under discussion is the "self." In my case this is all the more necessary, since I came to philosophy only late in life and as a consequence of all sorts of fateful events. How was it that I became conscious of my philosophical vocation so late?

A first circumstance lies no doubt in the fact that Vienna, the city of my birth, was a center of musical and literary culture but not so much an abode of the philosophical spirit. The opera, theater, literature, and politics captured, at the time of my youth, wide segments of the public, while the intellectuals of Vienna were occupied with the battle between Freud and Adler, between psychoanalysts and exponents of individual psychology. As for the philosophical discussions of the "Vienna Circle," they were limited to a few initiates. My own interests were primarily directed toward literature, psychology, and pedagogy. In addition, I felt very happy in my vocation as a teacher (an "assistant master") in a secondary school. The wave of Austrian school reform bore me on; I was successful as a teacher; the pedagogical eros allowed no other ambition to arise in me. I did not think of a scholarly career.

This all changed as a consequence of two world-historical events. The first was the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, which led me to emigrate, with my family, to Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Then, in 1940,

Belgium itself was occupied by the Nazi despots. The director of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven, H. L. van Breda, found himself deprived of his two most important collaborators when Ludwig Landgrebe and Eugen Fink were called into military service. So Van Breda entrusted to me, in 1942, the task of working on the transcription of the posthumous papers of Edmund Husserl, many thousands of pages in *Gabelsberger* shorthand. While living as illegals in Belgium, my wife, her mother, and I steeped ourselves in Husserl's handwritten notes and learned to decipher them. But I also realized I had to familiarize myself with Husserl's philosophy itself, since without an understanding of his thinking a correct transcription was impossible.

In the 25 months that I lived this clandestine existence, I was converted to philosophy. I grasped that philosophy is a decisive matter, because it is the matter of the great decisions. And it was Husserl's genius, and also his unconditional truth-ethos, that fascinated me. The many repetitions to be found in his unpublished papers, the academic style, the long-winded sentences – these did not impair my admiration. For me, aesthetic-literary norms were now laid aside.

It is then understandable that, after the liberation of Belgium, I worked at first as a Husserl scholar and interpreter. Since Husserl's papers were systematically made available in the course of the following decades, and since every volume of the *Husserliana* opened new perspectives, a wide field of activity was offered to me. As a scholarly collaborator of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven, I edited in 1950 the first volume of *Husserliana*, the *Cartesischen Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*. My publications on the problem of apodicticity (1946), on the question of God (1954), on social philosophy (1975), and on Husserl's monadology (1978) were contributions to the understanding of this great thinker.

A further event that determined my life in a decisive way was my call to be a professor at the University of Nijmegen in The Netherlands. In 1947 I was appointed professor of philosophical psychology and philosophical anthropology, and in 1949 that was made to include the philosophical foundation of education and the history of education. Thereby areas of instructional, organizational, and administrative activity opened themselves to me. Together with my closest colleague, Joseph Gieler, I managed to call into life, starting from almost nothing, a full pedagogical sub-department. But the situation at Nijmegen also gave rise to new goals for me as a philosopher.

My philosophical interest expanded first of all inasmuch as it was directed to the phenomenological movement as a whole. The interpretation and critique of the great phenomenological thinkers followed as a matter of course and occurred in the form of conferences, lectures, and articles. *Wesen und Grenzen*