

Jonathan Strassfeld

6 Reestablishing Phenomenology in America

Abstract: Many of Husserl's disciples were deeply committed to his vision of phenomenology as a cooperative and foundational enterprise. However, even before his passing in 1937, Husserl's movement, disproportionately composed of Jewish and liberal-Catholic philosophers, faced an existential crisis. Its members were removed from academic posts, forced into exile, and even lost their lives to the Nazi regime. A substantial number of those displaced philosophers found refuge in the United States, aided by connections formed through a pattern of transatlantic exchanges between Harvard and Freiburg. This essay traces the routes émigré phenomenologists followed through the American academy and shows how the networks they established in the early twentieth century shaped the institutions they created on American shores and allowed them to reestablish phenomenology as a philosophical movement in the United States after the death of its founder.

By the 1930s, Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy had become an important philosophical movement in Germany, with its influence quickly spreading across the European continent. However, the rise of Nazism and the death of Husserl upset the foundations of this program. While some adherents, most notable Martin Heidegger, exploited the situation, the group of disproportionately Jewish and liberal-Catholic philosophers who had taken up Husserl's cause were persecuted, enduring professional dismissals, exile, and murder. Like most intellectuals who fled from the Nazis, the phenomenologists who escaped war-torn Europe went West, converging on the United States as a refuge or new home. Although these endangered philosophers took whatever opportunities were available to preserve their lives, families, and careers, the pattern of the phenomenological migration was not entirely a product of chance. Rather, its path was paved by three decades of engagement between American philosophers and their movement, which made possible the reestablishment of phenomenological institutions and intellectual communities on American shores.

The first contact between personal American philosophers and Edmund Husserl was made by William Ernest Hocking, then a graduate student under Josiah Royce at Harvard. Following the advice of the Marburg Kant scholar Paul Natorp, who was then lecturing at Harvard, Hocking sought out Husserl in Göttingen in 1902 under the auspices of a Harvard travel fellowship (Hocking 1959, 5). While

Hocking's visit to Göttingen was cut short at the behest of Hugo Münsterberg, who chaired the committee that granted Hocking's stipend, Husserl and Hocking forged a durable connection.¹ Hocking enrolled in courses on logic and epistemology with Husserl and attended his seminar on Hume. However, "it would be more accurate," Hocking wrote, "to say that this study is under the guidance of Professor Husserl himself, for he has been kind enough to take a personal interest in my work, and has given me every opportunity to converse with him and bring him my questions."² The philosophers remained correspondents and friends for the rest of Husserl's life. Despite its brevity, this first encounter established the trajectory of phenomenology's development in America over the next three decades, as interest in phenomenology continued to grow at Harvard, fostered by Hocking and the neo-realist philosopher Ralph Barton Perry. Facilitated by Harvard's generous travel fellowships, student pilgrimages to study phenomenology in Germany resumed in 1912 and became common in the 1920s. Between 1923 and 1937, at least ten Harvard students, including Paul Weiss, Charles Hartshorne, Dorion Cairns, William Frankena, and Charles Malik, attended lectures by and, in some cases, studied with Husserl or Martin Heidegger directly (Strassfeld 2022, 42–51).

One of these itinerant Harvard students was Marvin Farber, a PhD candidate in Philosophy, who traveled to Germany in 1922 under the auspices of Harvard's prestigious Sheldon Fellowship, carrying a letter of introduction from Hocking.³ Few details of Farber's subjective impressions of Germany have been preserved beyond his account of Husserl "an eminently fine teacher" whose "personal guidance and instruction" he was "fortunate" to have.⁴ However, the diary of the British philosopher W. R. Boyce Gibson, who spent four months of 1928 in Freiburg, provides valuable evidence of the unique conditions that shaped the reception of phenomenology by the foreign philosophers who studied the movement on its native soil. Husserl fostered an ethos devoted to collaboration that called on his students "to take his ideas and work them for all they can." It was like, Gibson wrote, being conscripted as "privates in the great *Wissenschafts-armee*" in which "each of us disinterestedly contributes his quota" (Spiegelberg 1971, 65). From Freiburg, Farber wrote to Hocking that he was so impressed by Husserl that he quickly "formed a resolution to sit at the feet of this sage." Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas* became Farber's "daily companions" as he remained at Freiburg for the

1 Hocking to Münsterberg, December 19, 1902, Box 18, Folder "Hugo Münsterberg (1 of 2)," William Ernest Hocking correspondence, 1860–1979. Houghton Library, Cambridge, MA (hereafter WHC).

2 Hocking to Münsterberg, December 3, 1902, Box 18, Folder "Hugo Münsterberg (1 of 2)," WHC.

3 Farber to Hocking, January 8, 1923, Box 8, Folder 19, Marvin Farber Papers. University Archives: The State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY (hereafter MFP)

4 Farber to James Woods. April 7, 1923, Box 25, Folder "Woods, James," MFP.

1923–24 university term with a second year's funding as one of Harvard's Parker Fellows.⁵ Farber returned to America in 1924 and received his PhD from Harvard in 1925. His dissertation, "Phenomenology as a Method and as a Philosophical Discipline," was published in 1928, becoming the first major study of Husserl's thought available in English (Farber 1928).

During the subsequent decade, American engagement with phenomenology shifted towards Husserl's apparent heir, Martin Heidegger. Indeed, when asked in 1934 to recommend "the most eminent scholars in [their] field" who might be honored and invited to lecture at Harvard's Tercentenary, its philosophy department named Martin Heidegger as its fourth choice, behind Carnap, who ranked third, but ahead of Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore.⁶ Explaining their recommendations, R. B. Perry described Heidegger as "the leader of the most vigorous and promising of the more recent movements in German thought," reporting that he "is generally regarded as the most influential contemporary philosopher in Germany, and is beginning to make his influence felt in other countries including America and in particular Harvard."⁷

Despite America's growing interest in phenomenology, when émigré philosophers began seeking refuge from the Nazi regime in the United States, they confronted an academy facing severe financial exigencies due to the Great Depression in which appointments were vanishingly scarce, even for domestic scholars. Because of the dearth of regular positions, an ad hoc system that provided refugees with temporary appointments, funded by outside charities, was improvised by a complex of established charitable organizations and new aid groups. For many scholars it was a vital lifeline—however, because of its tenuous structure, many phenomenologists would spend years teaching variously among universities and departments, drifting between temporary appointments unsuited to their talents, before finding a permanent position that would allow them to work within their field.

The most successful philosopher-émigrés were those whose international reputations made them choice targets for universities. Still, even such eminences

5 Farber to Hocking, July 2, 1923, Box 8, Folder 19, MFP.

6 "Ballots," Box 3, Folder "Greene, J. D. + W. G. Land – Tercentenary 1934–5, 1935–6," Harvard University Department of Philosophy Records (1906–1979): correspondence and other records, ca. 1927–1938 (UAV 687.10). Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA (hereafter HDPR); Jerome Greene to R. B. Perry, October 11, 1934, Box 3, Folder "Greene, J. D. + W. G. Land – Tercentenary 1934–5, 1935–6," HDPR.

7 Perry to Greene, October 30, 1934, Box 3, Folder "Greene, J. D. + W. G. Land – Tercentenary 1934–5, 1935–6," HDPR; R. B. Perry to W. B. Land, December 12, 1934, Box 3, Folder "Greene, J. D. + W. G. Land – Tercentenary 1934–5, 1935–6," HDPR.

faced obstacles. For instance, when Harvard's philosophers discussed hiring Carnap in 1934, they concluded that, although he "would be an extremely stimulating person to have," the department's need of him was not "imperative" and it was "improbable" that his appointment would be beneficial to Harvard in the long-term.⁸ At the same time, the department's recommendations for the University's Tercentenary suggest that Husserl or Heidegger might have attained a position at a well-regarded philosophy department had they immigrated to the United States. Indeed, the University of Southern California did attempt to lure Husserl to Los Angeles in 1933 on either a visiting or permanent basis. However, the issue of the appointment of an assistant for Husserl proved to be a sticking point. With both parties still expressing interest in some arrangement negotiations stalled, and Husserl remained in Germany.⁹

For philosophers who could not rely on the strength of their international reputation, the most important American émigré organization was the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, which was founded in the summer of 1933. The Committee served both financial and logistical functions. In the former role, it raised money and organized funds from larger organizations to provide grants to cash-strapped and often skeptical American universities. In the latter, it identified American universities with suitable positions for particular foreign scholars. When a match was made, the Committee subsidized the cost for a temporary appointment while the institution determined whether to offer them a permanent position (Krohn 1993, 27–29).

Despite the advantages this program offered American universities, significant resistance to hiring émigrés remained. Much of this was simple xenophobia. American attitudes towards refugees during World War II were deeply mixed, with overt expressions of hostility well within the mainstream. Louisiana State Law School, for instance, explained that they would not hire Gerhart Husserl, the son of Edmund Husserl, because the "combination of Jewish ancestry and undoubtedly broken English would place him at such a handicap with our somewhat provincial student body that it would be almost impossible for him to do the type

8 Perry to Kenneth Murdock, April 11, 1934, Box 4, Folder "Philosophy and Psychology," Records of the Dean of Faculty of Arts and Sciences: Correspondence of Dean K. B. Murdock, 1933–1934. Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.

9 Ralph Tyler Flewelling to Husserl, October 26, 1933, Box 4, Folder "Visiting Professor," University of Southern California School of Philosophy Records. USC Libraries Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA (hereafter USCPR); Flewelling to Husserl, April 4, 1934, Box 4, Folder "Visiting Professor," USCPR; Husserl to Flewelling (Trans. by Dr. Von Koerber), March 11, 1934, Box 4, Folder "Visiting Professor," USCPR.

of work that we want.”¹⁰ Indeed, antisemitism was so commonplace in that era that those expressing overtly anti-Semitic views might deny holding any bias. For instance, Cornell University’s efforts to find employment for one of its Jewish students in 1940 elicited a letter from Dartmouth, stating: “We should not at present, however, appoint a Jew, not because we have any racial prejudice, but because we already have one full Jew and another man whose fractional status is anywhere from 1/8 to 8/8 in our Department.”¹¹ Moreover, the vast majority of European scholars in this diaspora were relatively unknown within the United States. Particularly at elite universities, many discounted the talents of this group, with philosophers facing particular suspicion. As one letter remarked: “there are always questions about these displaced foreign scholars and nowhere more than in philosophy positions.”¹² Despite these obstacles, most refugee phenomenologists found a home in America through the aid of benevolent organizations, family relations, and colleagues encountered through three decades of transatlantic exchanges.

The first phenomenologist to seek refuge in the United States was Moritz Geiger, a Jewish student of Edmund Husserl and Theodor Lipps who lost his position as a professor at Göttingen in 1933. Geiger had visited America twice before: first in 1907 to spend three months at Harvard with Royce, Santayana, Münsterberg; second in 1926 when he was invited to give lectures at Stanford and attend the International Congress of Philosophy, which was being held at Harvard.¹³ Well connected by the time of his third sojourn to America in 1934, Geiger quickly secured an appointment as chair of Vassar’s philosophy department with the help of the Emergency Committee and Columbia’s Frederick James Eugene Woodbridge, who arranged for a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to cover Geiger’s salary.¹⁴ Geiger understood the incredible fortune of finding such amenable pro-

10 Frederick Beutel to W. E. Hocking, February 19, 1936, Box 4, Folder La-Ly, HDPR.

11 Maurice Picard to Gustavus Watts Cunningham, February 8, 1940, Box 22, Folder “Sage School of Philosophy Correspondence + Recommendations on Teaching Positions 1935–1952 D-I,” Dept. of Philosophy records, 1892–1952. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY.

12 Paul Anderson to Laurens Hickok Seelye, March 11, 1941, Box 32, Folder Herbert Spiegelberg (2 of 2), Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars Records. New York Public Library, New York, NY (hereafter ECFSR).

13 Geiger to Henry Noble MacCracken, November 5, 1933, Box 11, Folder “Moritz Geiger (1 of 2),” ECFSR.

14 Hanna Hafkesbrints to Felix Warburg, September 28, 1933, Box 11, Folder “Geiger, Moritz (1 of 2),” ECFSR; Hafkesbrints to Warburg, October 3, 1933, Box 11, Folder “Geiger, Moritz (1 of 2),” ECFSR; Emergency Committee. 1933. “Status of the Moritz Geiger Case,” October 14,

fessional circumstances and a welcoming community for himself and his wife at Vassar. "These three months at Vassar have been for both of us a time of real happiness," Geiger wrote in May 1934. "All members of the faculty and all students have welcomed us like old friends, and the atmosphere is so full of humanity that we dare to think that the cause of liberty is not entirely lost."¹⁵ Praised for his "unfailing enthusiasm, imagination, and keen perception" as well as "the breadth of humanity and understanding," Geiger was awarded the college's annual "Vassarion" prize in 1937 (MacCracken 1937).¹⁶ His death after a brief illness several months later was both tragic and unexpected. In the wake of his passing, Vassar informed the Committee that "in spite of the very fine impressions that Geiger made" a faction of their faculty was opposed to appointing another German in philosophy. Vassar accepted no more refugee philosophers.¹⁷

In general, scholars whose work could contribute to the war effort had a professional advantage over others.¹⁸ Particularly after America's entry into the war, there was such demand for instructors of mathematics and sciences that proficient émigrés whose expertise lay elsewhere were recruited to teach courses in these fields. This was the case for Aron Gurwitsch, a phenomenologist specializing in the philosophy of psychology and the social sciences who sustained himself through much of the war by working as an instructor in physics. Gurwitsch immigrated to America in 1940, initially serving as a Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University.¹⁹ Although Gurwitsch was acutely aware of his fortune in escaping Europe, he had difficulty adapting to life in a country in which he remained an outsider. Both sentiments were expressed in his extensive correspondence with his fellow émigré and friend, Alfred Schütz. With war waging in Europe, the everydayness of life in America was an experience akin to a different reality for Gurwitsch. As one letter to Schütz reported:

We are very comfortable in my aunt's house. It is actually a rather fantastic story: we were intended for the concentration camp and then for everything that the Nazi invasion brought with it, and instead of that one finds oneself in this roomy house, one sits on the porch and works on Sartre's theory of the ego. One has to 'realize' all that. And where might Sartre be? At times I have the feeling that I am working on nothing other than obituary notices.²⁰

1933, Box 11, Folder "Geiger, Moritz (1 of 2)," ECFSR; Edward Murrow to Henry Stuart, January 15, 1934, Box 11, Folder "Geiger, Moritz (1 of 2)," ECFSR.

15 Geiger to Mary Waite, May 26, 1934, Box 11, Folder "Geiger, Moritz (1 of 2)," ECFSR.

16 MacCracken to Stephen Duggan, July 16, 1937, Box 11, Folder "Geiger, Moritz (2 of 2)," ECFSR.

17 MacCracken to Duggan, January 3, 1943, Box 14, Folder "Fritz Kaufmann (1 of 3)," ECFSR.

18 Aron Gurwitsch to Betty Drury, September 12, 1943, Box 13, Folder "Gurwitsch, Aron," ECFSR.

19 Gurwitsch to Drury, January 9, 1941, Box 13, Folder "Gurwitsch, Aron," ECFSR.

20 Gurwitsch to Schütz, August 5, 1940, in Grathoff (1989, 15).

In this letter, otherwise written in German, the word “realize” is in English, as though signifying the effort of translation between these two worlds, coexistent but so mutually foreign that one can only be made real within the other by an act of will. As Gurwitsch explained in another letter, “We are quite lonely here. And that not merely in the sense that we see so few people here. But even among those whom we see, we feel very alone, since we are still rooted in another world.”²¹

Gurwitsch had been among the first rank of Husserl’s students and made a considerable impression on his colleagues at Johns Hopkins from 1940–1942. Yet, despite his performance and qualifications the university refused to retain him, citing financial exigencies. Gurwitsch perceived other reasons for his dismissal, as he explained:

I am running the Graduate School practically alone... But what does that, as well as the fact that I use up the publication budget of our department all by myself, have to say when compared to my disqualifications: foreigner, Jew, unbaptized, Jewish wife, etc. *That* is too much. They could tolerate it if someone would buy me a *chair* for \$150,000. Then they would take me in the hope, as one of the professors... told me today, that I wouldn’t live all too long, such that the successor would be more acceptable in the social sense.²²

Gurwitsch was unable to find another position in philosophy in 1942, but sustained himself through a research grant from the American Philosophical Society and a “fellowship by courtesy” at Harvard, secured for him by R. B. Perry, who developed a personal connection to the phenomenological movement after visiting Husserl at Freiburg in 1930. Still without prospects for a permanent position in philosophy, Gurwitsch was able to retain his connection to Harvard by accepting a position as an instructor in Physics the following year. Hired to supplement its faculty for wartime instruction, Gurwitsch remained at Harvard from 1943–1946, teaching courses for army recruits.²³

The most significant migration of phenomenologists to America occurred between 1937–1939, bringing Felix Kaufmann, Fritz Kaufmann, Alfred Schütz, and Herbert Spiegelberg to the United States. In Germany, Fritz Kaufmann had served at Freiburg as *Privatdozent* and Husserl’s assistant. From 1933–1936 Kaufmann also offered *Volkshochschulkurse* to Jewish students denied entry to universities by Nazi race laws. The combination of political and financial pressures on the one hand, and the plight of Germany’s Jewish youth on the other, left Kaufmann

²¹ Gurwitsch to Schütz, August 23, 1940, in Grathoff (1989, 18).

²² Gurwitsch to Schütz, October 9, 1941, in Grathoff (1989, 41).

²³ Gurwitsch to Schütz, July 11, 1942, in Grathoff (1989, 58).

feeling “like a candle lit at both ends” and in search of means with which provide for his family.²⁴ A grant from the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in London allowed Kaufmann to leave Germany for England in September 1936.²⁵ Kaufmann came to the United States in November of 1937 and, with the help of the Committee for Refugee Scholars, secured a series of temporary appointments in philosophy at Northwestern University. Northwestern’s philosophy department would maintain its association with the phenomenological movement into the postwar era, becoming the first institutional home of SPEP and publishing numerous important texts through its *Northwestern Studies in Phenomenology* series.²⁶

The Austrian philosopher Felix Kaufmann, unrelated to Fritz Kaufmann, also immigrated to the United States in 1938. Kaufmann was a philosopher of great breadth, whose interests ranged from the foundations of mathematics to the philosophy of law. Visiting Switzerland at the time of his country’s invasion by the Nazis, Kaufmann was warned, as both a Jew and an associate of Austria’s socialist party, against returning home.²⁷ A grant for a \$3,000 was quickly obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation to cover the majority of Kaufmann’s salary on the recently created Graduate Faculty at the New School for Social Research, where Kaufmann remained until his death in 1949.²⁸

The existence of The New School for Social Research dated only to 1919, when it was founded as a center for adult education by a group of progressive intellectuals that included Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson. In 1933 its director, Alvin Johnson, initiated a campaign to raise funds for the creation of an affiliated graduate school. This new “University in Exile” would fill its faculty with scholars who had lost their positions under the Nazi regime. Given significant autonomy within The New School, refugee scholars were able to make the University a sort of “European scholarly enclave,” while simultaneously gaining a foothold in the American academic world. Indeed, Husserl’s movement was particularly suited to ethos of The New School, whose faculty was committed to a vision of interdis-

24 Kaufmann to Farber, September 14, 1937, Box 11, Folder “Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39,” MFP.

25 “General Information: Fritz Kaufmann,” Box 14, Folder “Kaufmann, Fritz (1 of 3),” ECFSR; Kaufmann to Bernard Flexner, July 8, 1940, Box 14, Folder “Kaufmann, Fritz (2 of 3),” ECFSR.

26 Dalton Howard to Betty Drury, April 13, 1938, Box 14, Folder “Kaufmann, Fritz (1 of 3),” ECFSR.

27 “Excerpted from confidential memorandum (concerning Austrian scholars) submitted to the Emergency Committee with letter of May 5 from Malcom W. Davis,” Box 14, Folder “Kaufmann, Felix,” ECFSR.

28 Alvin Johnson to Stephen Duggan, May 24, 1938, Box 13, Folder “Kaufmann, Felix,” ECFSR.

ciplinariness that made philosophy the “generative center” of a broad humanistic education that stressed the “essential unity” of the social sciences.²⁹

In 1943, Alfred Schütz joined Kaufmann at the New School. With Kaufman, Schütz, and Husserl’s former student Alexandre Koyré on its faculty, The New School for Social Research had quickly become one of the world’s preeminent centers of phenomenological training expertise—a tradition that continued into the postwar era with the appointment of philosophers such as Dorion Cairns, Aron Gurwitsch, and Hans Jonas and the creation of an American branch of the Husserl archives. Graduates of the New School, including Maurice Natanson, Richard Zaner, Lester Embree, Helmut Wagner, and Thomas Luckmann, would be counted among the leading figures in the postwar generation of American phenomenologists (Krohn 1984, 104; Barber and Embree 2017, 174–384).

In this way, world events had brought a critical mass of phenomenological talent to the United States by the late 1930s. Because of the circumstances in which they arrived, reliant on an informal network of American acquaintances and European peers already established in America, émigré phenomenologists retained some semblance of community through the diaspora. That this cohesion would prove sufficient for a revitalization of the *phenomenological movement* on American shores was, however, far from guaranteed. Indeed, the desire for such a goal could hardly be taken as a given. Many refugee intellectuals, though grateful to their adoptive countries, would never come to think of them as their own. Instead, their eyes were set on a return to Europe and the reconstruction of their homelands following fascism’s defeat. Even those who wished to take root on American shores faced both a challenge—adopting a new language, new professional conventions, and navigating an unknown academic landscape—and a choice of whether to focus on an audience of their expatriated peers, or to attempt to engage a broader American philosophical discourse. Among the group of émigré phenomenologists were scholars particularly committed to the latter course. Still, it is doubtful whether phenomenology would have been restored as cooperative project in the United States if not for two factors: the death of Edmund Husserl in 1938, and the organizational efforts of Marvin Farber.

Despite his continuing work on phenomenology, Farber had maintained only occasional correspondence with his erstwhile teacher in the decade after his encounter with Husserl in Freiburg. However, he was drawn back into Husserl’s orbit in 1936 by entreaties from Edmund and his wife Malvine to assist their son Gerhart, a philosopher and legal theorist, in finding an academic position in

29 “Suggestions of the Coordinating Committee to The Graduate Faculty,” January 20, 1941, Graduate Faculty Minutes, Sept. 1933 – June 1945, Box 1, New School Archives. New York, NY.

the United States. Gerhart's arrival in America was facilitated by Herman Weyl, a mathematician and philosopher of mathematics who was among those recruited by Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. However, the arrangement to deliver a lecture at Princeton held no long-term prospects. With only the patina of employment necessary to pass customs, Gerhart was safe from Nazi persecution, but still reliant on American acquaintances for assistance and Husserl was grateful for Farber's efforts on his son's behalf.³⁰

In a November 1936 letter, Husserl expressed his happiness at the news that Dorion Cairns and Farber had begun discussing translating his works. Thinking of the phenomenology's future, Husserl urged their cooperation in "συμφιλοσοφειν," which might be translated as "philosophizing together" or, more literally, "sharing a love of knowledge." Indeed, he wrote, "There is nothing more beautiful in this woeful world than a free συμφιλοσοφειν on the same ground, in sharing the same fundamental methodological beliefs!" In the coming years, Farber would take the project of phenomenological συμφιλοσοφειν in America farther than Husserl could have expected (Cho 1990, 30).³¹

Afflicted by pleurisy, Edmund Husserl died in April 1938. In the United States, Husserl's passing would reunite phenomenology's disciples, both American and European, in the project of paying tribute to their former teacher. The idea for a volume dedicated to Husserl seems to have originated with Farber. By mid-May, he had begun to discuss compiling a collection of essays by Husserl's "friends and pupils" with Fritz Kaufmann, who pledged that "for such a work you can count on my contribution as well as on my cooperation in every respect."³² Over the following months, he and Kaufmann compiled a veritable directory of Husserl's former students and acquaintances, phenomenologists, and fellow travelers residing in America (Spiegelberg 1981, 242–246).

Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl was published by Harvard University Press in 1940 and included articles by Dorion Cairns, John Wild, W. E. Hocking, Aron Gurwitsch, Herbert Spiegelberg, Felix Kaufmann, Fritz Kaufmann, and Alfred Schütz, among others (Farber 1940). The long work of commissioning and obtaining manuscripts renewed ties between those in America who had been touched by Husserl, defining the outline of a new Husserl circle with Farber at its center. However, the process of compiling and editing the collection also revealed host of obstacles to importing Husserl to America. For instance, clarity re-

³⁰ Edmund Husserl to Farber, February 18, 1936, Box 9, Folder "Husserl, Edmund and Mrs.," MFP; Malvine Husserl to Farber, February 17, 1936, Box 9, Folder "Husserl, Edmund and Mrs.," MFP; Flexner, Abraham. Letter to John Whyte, May 9, 1936. Box 75, Folder "Husserl, Gerhart," ECFSR.

³¹ Husserl to Farber, November 20, 1936, Box 9, Folder "Husserl, Edmund and Mrs.," MFP.

³² Kaufmann to Farber, May 21, 1937, Box 11, Folder "Kaufman, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

quired the creation of a common lexicon of English translations for Husserl's technical vocabulary.³³ Further, even in Germany, Husserl's reticence to publish meant that his later philosophy was not widely understood. In America, many of those who had studied with Husserl in the 1920s or earlier remained entirely ignorant of these developments. This problem was highlighted by the first draft of Hartshorne's contribution, "The Social Structure of Immediacy," of which Fritz Kaufmann remarked: "God forgive him as he does not know what he is talking about."³⁴ Reluctant to refuse a paper already written by an invited contributor, Farber wrote to Kaufmann: "If we are to hope to introduce [phenomenology] to the American scene, we cannot afford to alienate friends or potential friends. Unanimity was never achieved in Germany; and it cannot be expected here" (Hartshorne 1940, 223–224).³⁵

As Farber's exchange with Kaufmann indicates, he understood that his editorial decisions could affect the contours of phenomenological development in America, selecting the membership of an informal inner circle, and determining criteria on which the group of philosophers claiming the name "phenomenology" might be organized. A product of the pluralist ethos that characterized Harvard philosophy in that era, Farber opted for an attitude of tolerance towards those who shared Husserl's aims. However, he also gave significant weight to the opinions of his principal collaborators, Kaufmann, Cairns, and Gerhart Husserl. It is impossible to know how different choices might have changed the history of phenomenology in the United States—as if, for instance, Farber had solicited material for the volume from Max Horkheimer or Herbert Marcuse as suggested by Fritz Kaufman, rather than deferring to Gerhart Husserl, who opposed their inclusion, potentially bringing the Frankfurt School in closer contact with American philosophers.³⁶

It was against the backdrop of these deliberations that Farber began to envision the founding of a new phenomenological organization, which would be based in America, far from the reach of Nazi persecution. The first reference to a phenomenological society in Farber's correspondence appears in a July 1939 letter to Fritz Kaufmann, which proposes the foundation of a philosophical organization and publication dedicated to the ideal of philosophy as a rigorous science.³⁷ Five

33 Farber to Kaufmann, February 18, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz, 1937–39," MFP; Kaufmann to Farber, February 11, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

34 Kaufmann to Farber, October 14, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP; Kaufmann to Farber, October 15, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

35 Farber to Kaufmann, October 18, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

36 Kaufmann to Farber, October 14, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP; Farber to Kaufmann, October 24, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

37 Farber to Kaufmann, October 24, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

months later, on December 26, the core members of the nascent International Phenomenological Society met at the New School, adopting a constitution and electing officers, including Marvin Farber as its President (Wagner 1984, 212).³⁸ “If our undertaking succeeds,” Farber would write to Husserl’s former assistant Eugen Fink, “we shall have instated phenomenology as a major philosophical tendency in the United States.”³⁹

Over the next five months Farber and his collaborators undertook the enormous work of organizing a new society, securing it funding, and beginning to plan the first issue of its journal, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. This title (hereafter PPR), as various observers noted, was quite a mouthful.⁴⁰ To phenomenologists, however, the phrase drew a direct line between Farber’s journal and Husserl’s periodical, the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (Almanac for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research), in which many of the movement’s most significant texts had first appeared. Indeed, a draft announcement found in Alfred Schütz’s papers explicitly refers to PPR as the “successor to Husserl’s *Jahrbuch*.”⁴¹ The journal was also the new phenomenological society’s principal expense. Farber obtained funding for the project in November of 1939, securing a guarantee from the Chancellor of the University at Buffalo of an annual subvention of \$1000.⁴² The other major financier of Farber’s organization was Harvard University’s philosophy department, which gifted PPR \$300 in 1940, \$200 per year from 1941–1943, and subventions of \$100 in 1944, 1946, and 1947.⁴³

The rapid organization of The International Phenomenological Society (hereafter IPS) and PPR was only possible because of the network that had been estab-

38 Farber to Gerhart Husserl, December 7, 1939, Box 9, Folder “Husserl, Gerhart 1936–47,” MFP.

39 Farber to Fink, April 10, 1940, Box 6, Folder “Fink, Eugen,” MFP.

40 Boas, George. 1963. Letter to Farber, August 8, 1963. Box 1, Folder “B,” MFP; Galt, Alexander. 1940. Letter to Richard Hays Williams, October 5, 1940. Box 42, Folder “International Phen. Society D-K,” Marvin Farber PPR Papers. University Archives: The State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY.

41 “Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,” n.d., Box 24, Folder “Marvin Farber Correspondence (1 of 14),” Alfred Schütz Papers. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, CT (hereafter ASP).

42 Farber to Samuel Capen, April 3, 1946, Box 3, Folder “Capen, Samuel P. 1945–50,” MFP.

43 International Phenomenological Society. 1942. “Statement of Cash Receipts and Expenses February 1, 1942.” Box 27, Folder 618, ASP; Departmental Minutes, February 26, 1942; Departmental Minutes, May 25, 1943; Departmental Minutes, June 8, 1944; Departmental Minutes, May 14, 1946; Departmental Minutes, April 24, 1947, “Department of Philosophy Minutes 1939–40—1949–50,” Harvard University Department of Philosophy Records (1906–1979): minutes of departmental meetings and correspondence files, 1924–1960 (UAV 6871). Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.

lished compiling the Husserl memorial, whose contributors comprised the nucleus of the new group. Farber's principal collaborators were Fritz Kaufmann, Dorian Cairns, Gerhart Husserl, Felix Kaufmann, and Alfred Schütz, on whom he relied for both advice and organizational efforts.⁴⁴ Assembling and editing the Husserl memorial also revealed to Farber and his collaborators many of the challenges their future endeavor would face. "With this experience gained in connection with our memorial volume," Farber noted in a letter to Fritz Kaufmann, "we should know how to avoid errors."⁴⁵ One difficulty suggested by the group's experience was the challenge of cultivating a quantity of high quality material sufficient for a regular publication from the modest group of American phenomenologists. This could be solved, in Farber's estimation, by organizing the phenomenological society internationally and tailoring its publications for a global audience. In early discussions of the journal, Farber advocated accepting works from scholars around the world, publishing abstracts for each translated into three languages (Wagner 1984, 212–213).⁴⁶

Farber never abandoned his aspiration to lead a truly international phenomenological organization. However, his vision changed as he struggled to realize it. The growing worldwide conflagration was a major impediment to international cooperation. Indeed, a note at the end of PPR's first issue explained with a tone of dark understatement that "Due to world conditions the list of foreign members of the editorial staff must be incomplete for the present." The first issue of PPR was published in September 1940, containing articles by Farber, Landgrebe, Felix Kaufmann, John Wild, Fritz Kaufmann, and Edmund Husserl himself. Although each of these men was connected with the phenomenological movement, a note at the issue's conclusion explained that the journal was committed to fostering broad philosophical discourse:

While the philosophy of Edmund Husserl is the point of departure for the publication, it represents no special school or sect. Its aim is to maintain philosophy in the ancient sense, as an exact, descriptive discipline, at the same time bringing it to bear on the modern world. (PPR 1940, 126)

As editor of PPR, Farber continued to advocate this policy of tolerance, at times bringing him into conflict with those who favored a more partisan approach. How-

44 Farber to Kaufmann, October 15, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP; Farber to Kaufmann, November 20, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz, 1937–39," MFP.

45 Farber to Kaufmann, September 25, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

46 Farber to Kaufmann, October 15, 1939, Box 11, Folder "Kaufmann, Fritz 1937–39," MFP.

ever, Farber's broad outlook was endorsed by the society's most important collaborators, including the Husserl archives in Louvain.⁴⁷

Harvard's philosophy department also exerted significant influence over PPR's governance and editorial policies, with John Wild serving on the journal's editorial board, and R. B. Perry on its advisory committee. During its first decade, PPR would feature an increasing number of articles by prominent American philosophers such as Ernest Nagel, Richard Brandt, Roy Wood Sellars, and Harold R. Smart, as well as European positivists and logicians including Alfred Tarski, Rudolf Carnap, and Hans Reichenbach. Farber's work succeeded in establishing PPR as a publication of significance that earned plaudits from figures across the broad American philosophical community. Despite the journal's troublesome name, it had, in the words of the New School's Horace Kallen, "taken an important place in the philosophical enterprise of the United States." He continued, "I have found it to be consistently one of the liveliest and one of the best-written and edited of the periodicals in the field."⁴⁸ A 1945 letter from W. V. Quine to Farber simply stated, "I have watched the progress of your journal with much admiration, and heartily congratulate you."⁴⁹ While changes in postwar culture and a broad transformation of American academic institutions would stymie the phenomenological movement's progress in the United States, as discussed in *Inventing Philosophy's Other: Phenomenology in America* (Strassfeld 2022), a solid foothold had been secured by 1940—and in the postwar era, the phenomenological centers established because of this intellectual migration, such as PPR, the New School, Northwestern, and Fordham, would continue to play an important role for phenomenologists in the United States.

References

- Barber, Michael D. and Embree, Lester. 2017. *The Golden Age of Phenomenology at the New School for Social Research, 1954–1973*. Series in Continental Thought. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Cho, Kah Kyung. 1990. "Phenomenology as Cooperative Task: Husserl-Farber Correspondence During 1936–37." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50, Supplement (Autumn): 27–43.
- Farber, Marvin. 1928. *Phenomenology as a Method and as a Philosophical Discipline*. Buffalo, NY: University of Buffalo.
- Farber, Marvin, ed. 1940. *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

47 Eugen Fink to Marvin Farber, December 1, 1939, Box 6, Folder "Fink, Eugen," MFP.

48 Kallen to Farber, May 28, 1945, Box 10, Folder "Kallen, Horace," MFP.

49 Quine to Farber, November 12, 1945, Box 17, Folder "Quine, Willard V," MFP.

- Grathoff, Richard. 1989. *Philosophers in Exile: The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, 1939–1959*, translated by J. Claude Evans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hartshorne, Charles. 1940. "The Social Structure of Immediacy." In *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, edited by Marvin Farber, 219–230. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hocking, William E. 1959. "From the Early Days of the 'Logische Untersuchungen'." In *Edmund Husserl, 1859–1959*, edited by the editorial committee of *Phaenomenologica*, 1–11. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.
- Krohn, Claus-Dieter. 1993. *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research*. Amherst, NY: University of Massachusetts Press.
- PPR. 1940. "Notes." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1 (1): 126.
- Spiegelberg, Herbert. 1971. "From Husserl to Heidegger: Excerpts from a 1928 Freiburg Diary by W. R. Boyce Gibson Edited by Herbert Spiegelberg." *Journal of The British Society for Phenomenology* 2: 58–83.
- Spiegelberg, Herbert. 1981. *The Context of the Phenomenological Movement*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Strassfeld, Jonathan. 2022. *Inventing Philosophy's Other: Phenomenology in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Wagner, Helmut. 1984. "Marvin Farber's Contribution to the Phenomenological Movement: An International Perspective." In *Philosophy and Science in Phenomenological Perspective*, edited by Kah Kyung Cho, 209–236. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.

