HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

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Preface to the English Edition

A few years ago I was urged to have *Husserls Fænomenologi* (originally published in Danish in 1997) translated and published in English. In the spring of 2000, I started to translate the book myself, and at the same time I used the opportunity to rework the text completely, making numerous improvements, clarifications, and additions to the manuscript. I am grateful to John Drummond (Fordham University) and Eduard Marbach (Universität Bern) for their comments on an early version of the translation.

I am grateful to the director of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven, Professor Rudolf Bernet, for permission to consult and quote from Husserl's unpublished research manuscripts.

Finally, I would like to thank Ryan Gable for having gone through the text and suggested numerous grammatical and linguistic improvements.

Introduction

Edmund Husserl was born into a Jewish family on April 8, 1859, in Proßnitz, Moravia (then part of the Austrian Empire). Between 1876 and 1882 he studied physics, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy, first in Leipzig, and then in Berlin and Vienna. He defended his doctoral dissertation in mathematics in Vienna in 1882, where, in the years immediately following, he attended lectures by the prominent psychologist and philosopher Franz Brentano. In 1886, Husserl converted to Protestantism, and in 1887 he defended his *Habilitation* on the concept of number at the university in Halle, where he was employed for the next fourteen years as *Privatdozent*. During this period he was particularly interested in a series of foundational problems in epistemology and theory of science. His reflections on these themes resulted in his first major work, *Logische Untersuchungen*, which was published in 1900–1901. As a result of this work, Husserl was invited to the university in Göttingen, where he taught from 1901 to 1916, first as an *Extraordinarius Professor*, and from 1906 as an *Ordinarius Professor*. His next major work, which marked his turn to transcendental philosophy, was published in 1913 under the title *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I* (volumes II and III were published posthumously). In 1916 Husserl moved to Freiburg im Breisgau, where he took the chair in philosophy, succeeding the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert. It was during these years that both Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger worked as his assistants. Because of their editorial work, Husserl's famous lectures,

the *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*, were published in 1928. When Husserl retired in the same year, it was Heidegger who took over his position. During the following years two books were published: *Formale und Transzendentale Logik* (1929) and *Méditations cartésiennes* (1931).[1] In the last five years of his life, Husserl was a victim of the anti-Semitic legislation passed by the Nazis following their assumption of power in Germany in 1933. In that year he was eliminated from the list of university professors and was also—partly as a result of Heidegger's complicity—denied access to the university library. Although Husserl was isolated from the German university milieu during the 1930s, he was invited to give papers in Vienna and Prague in 1935, and it was these lectures that constituted the core of his last major work, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, the first part of which was published in a Yugoslav periodical in 1936.[2]

The books that Husserl himself published were by and large programmatic introductions to phenomenology, making up only a very small part of his enormous production. Husserl had the habit of writing down his reflections each day, and when he died on April 27, 1938, these so-called research manuscripts (together with his lectures manuscripts and still unpublished books) amounted to some 45,000 pages. All of these manuscripts were, for evident reasons, not safe in Germany. (Almost the entire first edition of the posthumously published work *Erfahrung und Urteil*, published in Prague in 1939, was destroyed by the Germans.) But shortly after Husserl's death, a young Franciscan, Hermann Leo Van Breda, succeeded in smuggling all of Husserl's papers out of Germany to a monastery in Belgium. Thus, before the onset of the Second World War, the Husserl-Archives were founded at the Institute of Philosophy in Leuven, where the original manuscripts remain to this day. At the time of the founding of the archives, the critical edition of Husserl's works—*Husserliana*—was begun. The critical edition, which so far contains thirty-four volumes, consists not only of new editions of the works that were published during Husserl's life, but also, and more important, of his previously unpublished works, articles, lectures, papers, and research manuscripts.[3]

*

Husserl's output was enormous, making it unlikely that any one person has ever read everything he wrote. This fact not only makes Husserl research a

relatively open affair—one never knows whether a manuscript will suddenly appear that undermines one's interpretation—it also complicates the attempt to write an exhaustive systematic account of his philosophy. Thus, no single work, and particularly not an introduction of this size, could possibly treat all aspects of Husserl's philosophy in full. To put it differently, I have been forced to make choices. Let me say a few words about the perspective I have chosen.

The title of the book is *Husserl's Phenomenology*, and it is exactly the development of his *phenomenology* that I wish to describe, rather than some other more traditional aspects of his philosophy, such as, for example, his formal ontology or his essentialism.

My presentation is divided into three main parts, combining, to a large extent, systematic and chronological perspectives. It roughly follows the development in Husserl's philosophy from the early analyses of logic and intentionality, through his mature transcendental philosophical analyses of reduction and constitution, to his late analyses of intersubjectivity and lifeworld.

The first part focuses on Husserl's early theory of intentionality. On the one hand this is a natural choice, since Husserl's description of the object-directedness of consciousness is among his most important and influential analyses. On the other hand, the analysis of intentionality is particularly suitable as a key to Husserl's thinking in general. A good part of his later analyses, whether it be his detailed analyses of different concrete phenomena or his more fundamental transcendental philosophical reflections, can be seen as attempts to radicalize and develop the insights contained in his initial investigation of the intentionality of consciousness.

In the second part, I account for the main elements in Husserl's transcendental philosophy. Why does Husserl claim that phenomenology is a kind of idealism, and how should one understand his repeated assertion that subjectivity is world-constituting? It is in this context that I will present Husserl's concepts of epoché, reduction, and constitution.

After having described the motives for, the road toward, and the development of the more formal and fundamental core concepts in Husserl's phenomenology, I will, in the third and longest part, turn toward a number of Husserl's more concrete phenomenological analyses. These (by and large) late investigations of body, time, and intersubjectivity should not simply

be understood as analyses where Husserl just applies already established phenomenological principles. As will become clear from my presentation, Husserl's analyses of these concrete topics led to a continual revision of the fundamental principles of phenomenology.

*

My presentation will be based on the works that Husserl himself published, on the texts that have subsequently been published in Husserliana, as well as on a number of still unpublished manuscripts. Although this book is intended as an introduction to Husserl's phenomenology, it is more than merely a presentation of the standard reading of Husserl's philosophy. It will also draw upon my own research.

The decision to make use of Husserl's research manuscripts where necessary requires a defense against a common methodological objection. Some (critical) Husserl scholars, for instance Paul Ricoeur, have defended the view that an interpretation should be based almost exclusively on the writings published by Husserl himself.[4] They have argued that it is problematic to make use of unpublished book manuscripts or research manuscripts that Husserl kept back from publication, and that he might even have written for his own eyes only. Texts that he wrote in order to obtain an insight through the very process of writing (Hua 13/xviii–xix) might have been rejected for publication exactly because he was dissatisfied with them.[5] If we look at the account of Husserl's working method and publication plans, which Iso Kern provides in his introduction to the three volumes on intersubjectivity (cf. Hua 14/xx), it is obvious however that the relation between the research manuscripts and the published works is more complex.

First, Husserl worked on many of the late research manuscripts in an attempt to write a definitive systematic presentation of his philosophy, a presentation that never found its final form. But this was not because Husserl was dissatisfied with the content of these manuscripts, but rather because he kept losing himself in minute analyses (Hua 15/xvi, lxi).

Second, and even more importantly, because of his recurrent problems with completing a systematic and comprehensive account, Husserl at times worked quite explicitly for his *Nachlaß* (cf. Hua 14/xix, 15/lxii, lxvii–iii). Thus he frequently remarked that the most important part of his writings were to be found in his manuscripts. For instance, in a letter to Adolf Grimme

on April 5, 1931, Husserl remarks: 'Indeed, the largest and, as I actually believe, most important part of my life's work still lies in my manuscripts, scarcely manageable because of their volume' (Hua 15/lxvi; cf. 14/xix).

Last but not least it is also possible to adopt a systematic perspective. If a number of Husserl's unpublished analyses are better worked out and more convincing than the analyses that we find in his published works, there seems to be no philosophical (but only philological) reasons to restrict oneself to the latter.

The Early Husserl: Logic, Epistemology, and Intentionality

Logische Untersuchungen (1900-1901) was not Husserl's first published work, but he considered it to constitute his 'breakthrough' to phenomenology (Hua 18/8). It stands out as not only one of Husserl's most important works, but also as a key text in twentieth-century philosophy. It is in *Logische Untersuchungen,* for instance, that one finds Husserl's first treatment of a whole range of key phenomenological concepts, including a detailed analysis of *intentionality.* It is precisely intentionality that has so often been emphasized as a central theme in Husserl's thinking (cf. Hua 3/187), and it will serve well as a guideline for a presentation of his philosophy.

Before I discuss Husserl's early notion of intentionality, however, it will be necessary to give a brief presentation of the contribution that originally made Husserl famous, namely his criticism of what is known as *psychologism.* It was against this critical background that the concept of intentionality was originally introduced.

Husserl's Criticism of Psychologism

Logische Untersuchungen consists of two main parts: the *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik* (which by and large contains the criticism of psychologism) and the six *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis* (which culminates in the analysis of intentionality). In the preface to the work, Husserl briefly describes the aim he has set himself, characterizing

Logische Untersuchungen as providing a new foundation for pure logic and epistemology (Hua 18/6). The status of logic and the conditions for the possibility of scientific knowledge and theory are his particular interests. The concept of epistemology used by Husserl in *Logische Untersuchungen*, however, is slightly different from the one currently in use. According to Husserl, the cardinal question facing a theory of knowledge is to establish how knowledge is possible. The task is not to examine whether (and how) consciousness can attain knowledge of a mind-independent reality. These very types of question, as well as all questions as to whether or not there is an external reality, are rejected by Husserl as being *metaphysical questions*, which have no place in epistemology (Hua 19/26). More generally (and this is very crucial when it comes to an understanding of his early concept of phenomenology), Husserl does not want to commit himself to a specific metaphysics, be it a realism or an idealism. Instead, he wants to address formal questions of a more Kantian flavor, particularly questions concerning the condition of possibility for knowledge (Hua 18/23, 208, 19/12, 26).

Husserl's answer to these questions in the *Prolegomena* proceeds along two tracks. On the one hand, he is engaged in a critical project which seeks to show that a popular position at that time was in fact incapable of accounting for the possibility of knowledge. On the other hand, he tries in a more positive move to spell out some of the conditions that have to be fulfilled if knowledge is to be possible.

The view criticized by Husserl is known as *psychologism*. Its main line of argumentation is as follows: Epistemology is concerned with the cognitive nature of perceiving, believing, judging, and knowing. All of these phenomena, however, are psychical phenomena, and it is therefore obvious that it must be up to psychology to investigate and explore their structure. This also holds true for our scientific and logical reasoning, and ultimately logic must therefore be regarded as a part of psychology and the laws of logic as psycho-logical regularities, whose nature and validity must be empirically investigated (Hua 18/64, 18/89). Thus psychology provides the theoretical foundation for logic.

According to Husserl, this position commits the error of ignoring the fundamental difference that exists between the domain of *logic* and *psychology*. Logic (as well as, for instance, mathematics and formal ontology) is not an empirical science and is not at all concerned with factually existing objects. On the contrary, it investigates ideal structures and laws, and its investigations are characterized by their certainty and exactness. In con-

trast, psychology is an empirical science that investigates the factual nature of consciousness, and its results are therefore characterized by the same vagueness and mere probability that marks the results of all the other empirical sciences (Hua 18/181). To reduce logic to psychology is consequently a regular category mistake that completely ignores the ideality, apodicticity (indubitable certainty), and aprioricity (nonempirical validity) characterizing the laws of logic (Hua 18/79–80).[1] These features can never be founded in or explained by reference to the factual-empirical nature of the psyche.

The fundamental mistake of psychologism is that it does not distinguish correctly between the *object* of knowledge and the *act* of knowing. Whereas the act is a psychical process that elapses in time and that has a beginning and an end, this does not hold true for the logical principles or mathematical truths that are known (Hua 24/141). When one speaks of a law of logic or refers to mathematical truths, to theories, principles, sentences, and proofs, one does not refer to a subjective experience with a temporal duration, but to something atemporal, objective, and eternally valid. Although the principles of logic are grasped and known by consciousness, we remain conscious of something *ideal* that is irreducible to and utterly different from the *real* psychical acts of knowing.

This distinction between the ideal and real is so fundamental and urgent to Husserl, that in his criticism of psychologism he occasionally approaches a kind of (logical) Platonism: The validity of the ideal principles are independent of anything actually existing.[2]

> No truth is a fact, i.e. something determined as to time. A truth can indeed have as its meaning that something is, that a state exists, that a change is going on etc. The truth itself is, however, raised above time: i.e. it makes no sense to attribute temporal being to it, nor to say that it arises or perishes (Hua 18/87 [109–110]).

> The truth that 2 + 3 = 5 stands all by itself as a pure truth whether there is a world, and this world with these actual things, or not (Hua 9/23).

In the First Investigation, which carries the title 'Ausdruck und Bedeutung,' Husserl continues his argument for a distinction between the temporal act of knowing and the atemporal nature of ideality, but this time in a meaning-theoretical context. As Husserl points out, when we speak of 'meaning' we can refer to that which we mean, for instance 'that Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark,' but we can also refer to the very act or process of meaning something, and these two uses must be resolutely kept