

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY:
HUSSERL AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy

By

David John Bachyrycz, B.A.

Washington, D.C.
December 18, 2009

UMI Number: 3397423

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

Dissertation Publishing

UMI 3397423

Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This edition of the work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest[®]

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright 2010 by David John Bachrycz
All Rights Reserved

PREVIEW

**THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY:
HUSSERL AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE**

David John Bachyrycz, B.A.

Thesis Advisor: John B. Brough, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The goal of this dissertation is to provide an account of Edmund Husserl's epistemology and its place within his phenomenology up through the publication of *Ideas I* in 1913. It represents a challenge to the view that Husserl is a Cartesian epistemologist seeking to safeguard the foundations of theoretical knowledge from the challenge of skepticism. Instead, I argue that Husserl aims to provide a transcendental clarification of knowledge understood as particular kind of intentional performance. The animating question of Husserl's theory of knowledge is not *whether* the achievement of objective knowledge is possible for an experiencing subject, but *how* it is possible.

I begin by examining Husserl's earliest attempt at a general theory of knowledge in the First Edition *Logical Investigations*, which I argue should be understood in broadly Kantian terms, as a project of disclosing the conditions for possibility of knowledge by way of a phenomenological investigation of intentional consciousness. I next look at how Husserl articulates his analysis of knowledge on the basis of the cardinal phenomenological distinction between empty and fulfilled intentions. I trace the development of this distinction from Husserl's earliest pre-phenomenological work in the philosophy of mathematics to its appearance in the *Logical Investigations*, first in the context of language (Investigation One) and then in the context of the theory of

knowledge itself (Investigation Six). This enables us to see how the clarification of a remarkable and pervasive feature of conscious life—the dynamic interplay between empty and fulfilled intentions—is the true, distinctly phenomenological motivation behind Husserl’s early theory of knowledge. Finally, I argue that Husserl’s epistemology after the so-called “transcendental turn” is largely in keeping with that of the *Logical Investigations*, despite whatever other differences there may be between the two periods. I do so by showing how many of the developments of *Ideas I* draw on resources more or less explicit in the *Investigations*, thereby allowing us to view the later work as enriching and extending, rather than fundamentally altering, the course of phenomenological philosophy.

PREVIEW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with every dissertation, this work bears one name, but is indebted to the efforts of many people. I would like to name some of them here. First, I must thank Robert Sokolowski for allowing me to attend in his seminar on Husserl's Sixth Logical Investigation at Catholic University in the Spring of 2006. This course and my conversations with Father Sokolowski were absolutely invaluable resources for coming to grips with Husserl's early phenomenology; I cannot imagine having written Chapters Two and Three without them. Secondly, I must express heartfelt gratitude to my friends and colleagues at the Department of Philosophy at Georgetown, my home in more ways than one for the better part of a decade. In particular, I would like to thank Wayne Davis and the members of the Graduate Committee for granting me the time and funding to see this project through and my wonderful graduate student colleagues, Lauren Fleming, Christian Golden, Karim Sadek, Chauncey Maher, Jeff Engelhardt, Billy Lauinger, Nate Olsen, Justyna Japola, Andrew Blitzer, Oren Magid, Tony Manela, and Adi Shafir, for always having stood ready with advice and encouragement whenever it was needed.

I owe my deepest thanks to my dissertation committee: John Brough, Bill Blattner, and Terry Pinkard. One could not wish for a more distinguished collection of scholars than these three men. And that they are as fine gentlemen as they are philosophers ensured that working with them was as pleasant as it was intellectually fulfilling. Of the three, I must single out my chairperson, John Brough, for special attention. John has not only taught me most of what I know about Husserl, but also provided me with a constant reminder of the intellectual virtues that drew me to philosophy in the first place. Moreover, it is no exaggeration to say that this dissertation

would not have been completed without John's inexhaustible patience, constant encouragement, and morale-boosting good humor. And so it is to him that I dedicate this dissertation, with the greatest appreciation and fondness.

PREVIEW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One

An Introduction to Husserl and the “Problem” of Knowledge	1
§1. Husserl and the Question of Epistemology.....	1
§2. The Cartesian Controversy.....	7
§3. An Alternative View	14
§4. The Basic Orientation of Husserlian Epistemology	26
§5. Overview	37

Chapter Two

Phenomenology and Epistemology in the Logical Investigations	40
§1. The Prolegomena and the Task of Epistemology.....	43
§2. The Logical Conditions of Knowledge: Psychologism and the Defense of Ideality .	48
§3. The Return to Subjectivity: The Second Volume	56
§4. Husserl’s Early Conception of Phenomenology	61
§5. The Basic Subjective Conditions: The Structures of Intentional Consciousness	80

Chapter Three

Husserl’s Phenomenological Clarification of Knowledge	92
§1. From Logic to Language.....	92
§2. The Emergence of a Theme: Authentic and Symbolic Presentations	96
§3. Husserl’s Phenomenology of Language	106
§4. Meaning and Knowing: Empty and Fulfilled Intentions	118
§5. Knowledge and Its Clarification: The Sixth Investigation	126

Chapter Four

Epistemology and the “Transcendental Turn”	140
§1. Transcendental Phenomenology: Turn or Continuation?	141
§2. Phenomenology and Naturalism	148
§3. Absolute Consciousness, The Perceptual Thing, and Epistemology	157

§4. The Reduction and the Intentional Object 163
§5. Noematic Epistemology: The Problems of Reason and Actuality 175

Bibliography 187

PREVIEW

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

All references to the writings of Edmund Husserl have been cited parenthetically in the text according to the following abbreviations. In most cases, the abbreviations are taken from Husserl's *Gesammelte Werke (Husserliana)* published by Martinus Nijhoff and Kluwer. In each citation the page number(s) of the original German text is listed, followed by that of the English translation in the instances where one is available.

Hua I	<i>Cartesianische Meditationen</i>
Hua II	<i>Die Idee der Phänomenologie</i>
Hua III	<i>Ideas zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie</i>
Hua VI	<i>Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie</i>
Hua VIII	<i>Erste Philosophie. I Teil</i>
Hua XII	<i>Philosophie der Arithmetik</i>
Hua XVIII	<i>Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik</i>
Hua XIX:1	<i>Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis. I. Teil</i>
Hua XIX:2	<i>Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis. II. Teil</i>
Hua XX:1	<i>Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. I. Teil</i>
Hua XXII	<i>Aufsätze und Rezensionen (1890-1910)</i>
Hua XXIII	<i>Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1898-1925)</i>

Hua XXIV	<i>Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie: Vorlesung 1906/07</i>
Hua XXV	<i>Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911-1921)</i>
“Bericht”	“Bericht über deutsche Schriften zur Logik in den Jahren 1895-99”
“Erinnerungen”	“Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano”
“Kant”	“Kant und die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie”
“Philosophie”	“Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft”
“Selbstanzeige”	“Selbstanzeige der <i>Logischen Untersuchungen</i> ”
“Studien”	“Psychologischen Studien zur Elementaren Logik”
“Vorrede”	“Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage der <i>Logischen Untersuchungen</i> ”

Jedenfalls weniger Studium an eine Lehre wenden, als nötig ist, ihren Sinn zu fassen, und sie doch kritisieren, das verstößt gegen die ewigen Gesetz literarischer Gewissenhaftigkeit.

E. Husserl, 1921

PREVIEW

CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO HUSSERL AND THE “PROBLEM” OF KNOWLEDGE

§1. Husserl and the Question of Epistemology

The diversity of interpretation surrounding a particular philosophy can often speak to the richness of its content. It can also speak to that philosophy's obscurity. In the case of the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, the variety of interpretations that we find, as well as the critical controversies spawned from them, owes something to both of these factors. For on the one hand, there can be no denying the enormous breadth and depth of Husserl's ambitious body of work; the strands of his densely woven intellectual tapestry include investigations into mathematics, logic, language, mereology, the consciousness of time, intersubjectivity, value theory, epistemology, formal ontology, and intentionality, among others. And if we chose to measure philosophical richness in terms of intellectual fecundity, Husserl has few peers in the recent history of western philosophy. His philosophical progeny dominated much of twentieth century European philosophy before and just after his death in 1938, and even today there are few philosophers working on the Continent who have not come to terms in some way with

phenomenological tradition inaugurated with the publication of the *Logical Investigations*.

This very richness, however, presents the scholar with a problem. To be sure, Husserl's work contains an abundance of worthwhile strands, but their arrangement often can resemble less a finely crafted tapestry and more a tangled web of crisscrossing themes and problems with no clear central focus. For in the effort to chase after and pin down the "things themselves," Husserl sometimes pays less attention to the overall philosophical narrative of his investigations than we might like. To Husserl's credit, this cannot be understood simply as a sin of omission; there is a principle at work here as well. Husserl would view the idea that the results of philosophical research should naturally arrange themselves in a tidy scheme as a potentially distorting prejudice. A prior commitment to something like parsimony, for example, could lead us to overlook instances of genuine diversity or shoehorn objects under investigation into falsifying categories.¹ Husserl would instead encourage us to *look and see*, letting our results fall where they may; theories should be shaped by the phenomena in question, rather than the other way around. Although this methodological imperative may strike us as reasonable, if not even laudable, the proliferation of new distinctions and concepts invited by it can be overwhelming; it hardly aids in understanding the content of Husserl's theories themselves. That Husserl himself seemed unable to settle on a comprehensive take on his

¹ This point has been made, rather colorfully, by J.N. Findlay: "We have [in Husserl] none of the misplaced economy, suitable in natural science, where it is all-important to have only a few explanatory ultimates or laws, carried over into the realm of thought-distinctions, where it encourages one to massacre some valuable concept . . . [and] so fears the 'jungle' of ramifying things of reason that it is prepared to sink into the Serbonian bog of enforced simplification" ("Translator's Introduction" to *Logical Investigations, Volume I* [Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000], 5). Herbert Spiegelberg has made this same point, though in more subdued tone, writing that Husserl's phenomenology represents a "conscious challenge to the reductionism of Occam's Razor." (*The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982], 715)

philosophy—as evidenced by his several “introductions” to phenomenology—further compounds the scholar’s predicament. The self-described “perpetual beginner” was forever uneasy, if not openly dissatisfied, with his conclusions, treating them as always tentative and in need of further refinement or reworking.² At best, they were considered provisional steps in the slow, asymptotic approach toward phenomenological adequacy. Husserl’s phenomenology was “a philosophy which remained constantly in the making,” as Herbert Spiegelberg has put it.³

We can, however, gain some interpretative leverage on Husserl’s philosophy if we consider the intellectual climate at the time of its earliest making. In the wake of the perceived metaphysical excesses of post-Kantian idealism and advances in the positive sciences, the mid to late nineteenth century saw the rise of self-described “scientific” philosophies, each of which sought, in its own way, to reinstate the primacy of epistemology to the philosophical enterprise. On the one hand, there were the various schools of Neo-Kantianism emerging from the mid-century work of Hermann von Helmholtz, Jürgen Meyer, Rudolph Haym, Otto Liebmann, Friedrich Lange, and Hermann Cohen among others.⁴ Of these, the Marburg school is worth mentioning in particular. For one, Husserl corresponded with and wrote favorably of one its principal members, Paul Natorp.⁵ And secondly, the Marburg school emphasized the philosophical

² The following remark from a letter to Paul Natorp in 1922 is typical of Husserl’s attitude: “I almost curse my inability to bring my works to an end and that first quite late, partly only now, the universal, systematic thoughts come to me, which, though demanded by my previous particular investigations, now also compel me to rework them all. Everything is in the stage of recrystallization!” I owe this reference to Donn Welton’s *The Other Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 8.

³ Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 71.

⁴ For a survey of these early developments, see Klaus Christain Köhnke’s *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus: Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 151-67, 211-56.

⁵ In regard to Neo-Kantian philosophers, Husserl reported to Marvin Farber that, “only Natorp interested me” (Marvin Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and the Quest for a Rigorous*

study of theoretical knowledge understood as a *theory of science*, that is, as an investigation into the logical structure of valid scientific theories.⁶ This project is in broad outline the very same as the task Husserl assigns to pure logic in the *Logical Investigations*. The other great current in the rising tide of “scientific” philosophy was, of course, the school of Franz Brentano. Brentano judged German idealism harshly and sought to reform philosophy into a strict, epistemologically rigorous discipline on par with the natural sciences. As described in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), philosophy was to be a precisely delimited science—the science of mental phenomena—and was to proceed in its investigations only on the evidential basis of inner perception.

Given this renewed attention to epistemology in Germany at a time when Husserl was coming of age intellectually, it would be surprising if epistemology were *not* a central preoccupation for his phenomenology. This is especially so when Husserl himself reported that it was the very promise of epistemological rigor held out by Brentano’s empirical method that ultimately persuaded him to abandon his mathematical pursuits in order to dedicate himself entirely to philosophy.

At the time when . . . I was uncertain whether to make my career in mathematics or philosophy, Brentano’s lectures [during the winter semesters of 1884/5 and 1885/6] settled the matter . . . Brentano’s lectures gave me for the first time the conviction that encouraged me to choose philosophy as my life’s work, the conviction that philosophy too was a *serious* discipline which also could be, and must be, dealt with in the spirit of the *strictest science*. (“Erinnerungen,” 305/48; my emphasis)

Science [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943], 17). Among other reasons, Natorp interested Husserl as one of the few early critics of psychologism. Exchanges with Natorp were also instrumental in persuading Husserl to introduce the pure ego into phenomenology, something he had originally been resistant to do in the *Logical Investigations* for Humean reasons.

⁶ This is in contrast with the Southwest school of H. Rickert, E. Lask, W. Windelband, et. al, which took the distinctive kind of the value (*Wert*), validity (*Geltung*), or as we might say to day, norms, constitutive of cultural (*geistigen*) practices—rather than the logical essence of theory—as its philosophical point of departure.

Now these historical and biographical remarks would count for little if they did not resonate with Husserl's actual texts. Fortunately, one need not spend much time with Husserl's work to discover a persistent interest in epistemological issues. Repeatedly one comes across references to "a critique of knowledge" (Hua XIX:2, 543/672), "the great problems of knowledge" (Hua XIX:2, 543/672), "a new idea of the grounding of knowledge" (Hua I, 66/27), and the like. In a lecture course on the theory of knowledge, Husserl goes so far as to say that "authentic [*eigentliche*] philosophy begins" with nothing other than "the establishing of epistemological problems" (Hua XXIV, 179/176). And so it is with no little justification that Robert Sokolowski has claimed that "the chief aim [Husserl] has is to establish philosophy as the radical clarification of knowledge."⁷ According to William McKenna, it is precisely the enduring epistemological problematic running through Husserl's several "introductions" to phenomenology that binds them together. "Despite whatever differences there may be between the 'introductions'," he writes, "there is one problem which emerges in all of them, namely *the problem of cognition of the world*."⁸ And so despite the dense, sometimes thorny, thicket of distinctions, technical vocabulary, and lengthy analyses, we can clear some interpretative space for ourselves by recognizing the central place of epistemology in Husserl's phenomenology.⁹

⁷ Robert Sokolowski, *The Formation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 116.

⁸ William McKenna, *Husserl's "Introductions to Phenomenology": Interpretation and Critique* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 18; my emphasis.

⁹ Timothy Stapleton, however, has challenged this view in *Husserl and Heidegger: The Question of a Phenomenological Beginning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), where he puts forward the novel thesis that "an ontological problematic" is at the root of Husserl's phenomenology, rather than an epistemological one. Stapleton treats the project of epistemology in overtly Cartesian terms, as "a quest for epistemic certitude" concerning our pre-philosophical beliefs about the world, and argues that if such a

And yet it must be admitted that even this space is cluttered by controversy. For while nearly all quarters concede the centrality of epistemology to Husserl's philosophical enterprise, there are disputes over the precise nature and purpose of Husserl's epistemological project. For what exactly is the "problem of the cognition of the world," to use McKenna's phrase? At its heart is certainly what Husserl calls the "enigma of enigmas," the way conscious experience *transcends* itself towards, and comes to know, objects. How can the *subjectivity* of experience reach out to and come to have knowledge of something *objective*? This question, however, has been interpreted variously. One common interpretation is to see it as an expression of a concern preoccupying so much of Western philosophy since Descartes's *Meditations*: is there a world of objects that exists independently of my mind, and if so, how do I come to have knowledge of this world? This reading of the "problem of the cognition of the world," or more simply, "the problem of knowledge," thus construes Husserl's epistemology as a quest to justify our supposedly naïve, pre-philosophical belief in the objects of everyday experience. For example, Brice Wachterhauser has written that "[i]t is well documented," that Husserl is engaged in a "search for the final and ultimate justification for knowledge" and that "his search for the *fundamentum absolutum et inconcussum*

quest is taken to be that "which occasions the radical reflexivity of phenomenology," then we do nothing less than elevate "apodictic certitude to the status of the final cause underlying the Husserlian project" (13). Now, Stapleton is correct in pointing out that that Husserl's project is not of this sort. However, this fact does not entitle us, as Stapleton thinks it does, to infer the stronger and more controversial conclusion that Husserl's phenomenology is ultimately not epistemological in nature. This is so because epistemology need not be understood as the project of justifying pre-philosophical beliefs, particularly, in confrontation with skepticism. As Steven Crowell has points out (*Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001], 184), Stapleton is simply guilty of interpreting epistemology too narrowly. If we avoid Stapleton's mistake by recognizing that epistemology can be interpreted more or less broadly, the real issue confronting us is not whether Husserl was motivated to pursue distinctively epistemological concerns, but rather a question over the precise nature of those concerns.

leads him in Cartesian fashion to the indubitable evidence of the *ego cogito*.”¹⁰

According to Wachterhauser, Husserl takes up the “radical Cartesian demand to defend the foundations of knowledge beyond all possible doubt.”¹¹ On views like these

Husserl’s phenomenology, in both its method and aims, is shaped by a fundamental commitment to a conception of epistemology that is more or less Cartesian.

Phenomenology is intended to be first philosophy, a body of apodictic and foundational truths secured by a reflective regress to subjectivity. And haunting this entire project is, of course, the spectral presence of skepticism, which provides its ultimate motivation. As scholars of Husserl no less prominent than Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach have put it, “Husserl’s philosophy went forth originally from the problematic of skepticism.”¹²

§2. *The Cartesian Controversy*

This Cartesian interpretation of the epistemological project underlying Husserl’s philosophy is worth careful scrutiny, especially since its unquestioned acceptance has often led to hasty, wholesale dismissals of Husserl’s work. As Steven Crowell has pointed out, descriptions such as “Cartesian” and “foundationalist” are “terms of deepest opprobrium in contemporary philosophy.”¹³ Indeed, they are used more as slurs than honest attempts to designate philosophical positions seriously. Moreover, philosophical

¹⁰ Brice R. Wachterhauser, “The Shipwreck of Apodicticity? Phenomenology’s Journey ‘beyond’ Skepticism,” in Brice R. Wachterhauser (ed.), *Phenomenology and Skepticism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 4. It is worth noting that the ‘beyond’ in the title of Wachterhauser’s essay does not refer to Husserl’s phenomenology, but to that of his successors, such as Heidegger.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹² Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, *Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 64.

¹³ Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and The Space of Meaning*, 4.

traditions both near and far from Husserl's own have taken a dim view of any philosophy seriously concerned to confront epistemological skepticism. On the one hand, there is the tradition of analytic philosophy. Since the so-called linguistic turn and the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein it has become increasingly fashionable in some quarters of the Anglophone world to regard many traditional philosophical problems—particularly those motivated by skepticism—as mere pseudo-problems thought to endure only on the basis of certain confusions. As such, the proper response to them is not to respond at all, in the sense of offering any type of answer or solution. To the extent that philosophy should trouble itself with such problems, it should only be to demonstrate how they do not need answering by illuminating the errors that get them off the ground and perpetuate their confounding existence. As Barry Stroud has described:

scepticism in philosophy has been found uninteresting, perhaps even a waste of time, in recent years. The attempt to meet, or even to understand, the sceptical challenge to our knowledge of the world is regarded in some circles as an idle academic exercise, a willful refusal to abandon outmoded forms of thinking in this new post-Cartesian age.¹⁴

Carnap's distinction between internal and external questions¹⁵ and Quine's proposal to "naturalize" epistemology¹⁶ are emblematic of this way of thinking according to Stroud.¹⁷

On the other hand, and much closer to home, we find references to a similar polemical strategy in the early work of Husserl's one-time assistant, Martin Heidegger. For example, in a 1925 lecture course Heidegger remarks that "[p]erhaps it is precisely the task of philosophical investigation ultimately to deprive many problems of their sham

¹⁴ Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), viii.

¹⁵ See Rudolph Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" in *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

¹⁶ See W.V.O Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

¹⁷ See Chapters V and VI of *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*.

existence, to reduce the number of problems and to promote investigation which opens the way to the matters themselves.”¹⁸ In section 43 of *Being and Time* Heidegger identifies the problem of knowledge of traditional epistemology—with its familiar questions regarding the mind’s “transcendence” and our so-called knowledge of the existence of the “external world”—as having just such a sham existence.¹⁹ For given an appropriate ontological understanding of what it is to be a human being, the project of epistemology is self-defeating or absurd. “The question of whether there is a world at all and whether its Being can be proved, makes no sense if it is raised by Dasein . . . If Dasein is understood correctly, it defies such proofs, because in its being, it already is what subsequent proofs deem necessary to demonstrate for it.”²⁰ Thus *pace* Kant, the scandal of modern philosophy is not that the existence of the external world has not yet been satisfactorily proven, but rather that a proof is still sought.^{21 22}

The curious thing, however, is that Heidegger’s method for exposing and moving beyond pseudo-problems is not the analysis of the logical structure of language, as it is for Carnap, but rather *phenomenology*. Indeed, *Being and Time* takes this as one of phenomenology’s distinctive characteristics; Heidegger’s initial presentation of the phenomenological method describes how it “is opposed to those pseudo-questions which

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 162.

¹⁹ Heidegger identifies the problem of knowledge with the following questions: “(1) whether any entities which supposedly ‘transcend our consciousness’ are at all; (2) whether this Reality of the ‘external world’ can be adequately *proved*; (3) how far this entity, if it is Real, is to be known in its Being-in-itself; (4) what the meaning of this entity, Reality, signifies in general” (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [New York: Harper Collins, 1962], 245-46; emphasis in original).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 246-47; 249.

²¹ “The ‘scandal of philosophy’ is not that this proof has yet to be given, but *that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again.*” (*ibid.*, 249)

²² Don Welton discusses the standard critiques of Husserl made from within both the analytic and continental traditions in the appendix to *The Other Husserl*; see 393-404.

parade themselves as ‘problems’, often for generations at a time.”²³ Now I say that this is curious because if phenomenology is in fact a critical philosophy, one opposed to pseudo-problems in the way Heidegger describes, it would surely be surprising to find Edmund Husserl, the very founder of the phenomenological method, slavishly appropriating problems of a philosophically bankrupt tradition. But in the minds of some commentators, this is precisely what we do find. Husserl’s self-described quest to make philosophy a “rigorous science” is seen as just the latest historical development in the attempt to secure the objectivity of cognition in the face of skeptical worries, what Richard Bernstein has called “Cartesian anxiety.”²⁴ As such, Heideggerian critics of Husserl often use Husserlian phenomenology as a foil for Heidegger’s own. Hubert Dreyfus, for example, claims that the skeptical question, which Heidegger criticizes on the grounds that it “violates the conditions for making sense,” was one “which Husserl was still asking.”²⁵ And William Blattner makes the same point: “the epistemological problematic that motivates Husserl’s conception of phenomenology . . . is precisely the Cartesian question whether we can know the world to exist . . . And it is this question—Can I know the world to exist?—that Heidegger rejects so completely.”²⁶

We must not think, however, that this interpretation of Husserl as an epistemologist at arms against skepticism is the exclusive province of Heidegger scholars, ones perhaps unsympathetic to Husserl’s philosophy. It is more widespread

²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 50.

²⁴ Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 16-20. Richard Rorty has also offered a diagnosis of this quest in his *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

²⁵ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 250.

²⁶ William D. Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15-16.

than that. Paul Ricoeur, the translator of the first French edition of *Ideas I*, has argued that the very “origin of the phenomenological question” was nothing other than “a true skeptical crisis.”²⁷ According to Ricoeur, the question at the heart of this crisis is: “[h]ow can [consciousness] move beyond itself and encounter its object with certainty?”²⁸ And we have already seen how Bernet, Kern, and Marbach stress the importance of skepticism for Husserl’s philosophy. Indeed, they identify it, as the Heideggerians do, as the underlying motivation of his phenomenology:

skeptical argumentations (especially those of Hume and the ancient sophists Protagoras and Gorgias) made a deep impression upon Husserl . . . they seem directly to have given rise to the ‘transcendental turn’ so decisive for his philosophy . . . He discovered in skepticism itself the hidden transcendental motivation for this turn.²⁹

But perhaps most striking is that Husserl seems to confirm this interpretation himself in lectures from 1923, where he claims, for example, that skepticism “had the grand historic mission of compelling philosophy on to the pathway of a transcendental philosophy” (Hua VIII, 62).³⁰

If we consider another series of lectures, given earlier in Göttingen in the spring of 1907, it would seem that this claim is borne out by the very historical progress of Husserl’s own thought. These lectures, published as *The Idea of Phenomenology* in 1950, are generally looked upon as a crucial text for understanding the development of Husserl’s philosophy. For they contain one of the earliest extended discussions of what would become a defining feature of his phenomenology: the phenomenological

²⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁹ Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*, 63.

³⁰ “Diese Skepsis und nur sie hatte die grosse historische Mission, die Philosophie in die Bahn einer Transzendentalphilosophie zu zwingen.”

reduction. What makes this text important to consider for our purposes is the way the reduction is introduced on the back of an open concern with epistemological skepticism. In these lectures, it seems clear that Husserl does feel the weight of skeptical worries in the way Ricoeur and Bernet, et al. describe. In fact, he would appear to give voice to them explicitly. For example, Husserl asks at the outset, “[h]ow do I, the knowing subject, know—and how can I know *for sure* [zuverlässig]—that not only my experiences, these acts of knowing, *exist but also what they know exists? Indeed, how do I know that there is anything at all that can be set over against knowledge as an object?*” (Hua II, 20/17; my emphasis) These are exactly the types of pernicious concerns motivating the problem of knowledge as described by Heidegger. As such, it should be unsurprising to find Husserl treating objective knowledge as problematic: “At the outset of the critique of knowledge, then, the entire world—physical and psychological nature, and ultimately one’s own human ego, together with all the sciences that deal with such objectivities—must be assigned the index of *dubitability*. Its being, its validity, remains undecided” (Hua II, 29/23).

Objective knowledge is here treated as problematic because of the aforementioned enigma of transcendence. As Husserl puts it, transcendence is “that enigmatic character [of consciousness] which is the source of all skeptical predicaments” (Hua II, 33/26). Thus, the central, organizing question of epistemology is “[h]ow can knowledge go beyond itself and reach its objects reliably?” (Hua II, 20/17) Transcendence “remains both the initial and the guiding problem for the critique of knowledge” (Hua II, 28/28). The main purpose of the *Idea of Phenomenology* lectures is to identify the proper philosophical method for addressing this problem. According to Husserl, if a critique of