EDMUND HUSSERL

FIRST PHILOSOPHY

LECTURES 1923/24

AND RELATED TEXTS FROM

THE MANUSCRIPTS (1920-1925)

TRANSLATED BY

SEBASTIAN LUFT AND THANE M. NABERHAUS

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EDMUND HUSSERL

COLLECTED WORKS

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Lectures 1923/24
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Springer

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSLATION

by Sebastian Luft

The present volume features a translation of Edmund Husserl's lecture course from the Winter Semester of 1923/24 at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau with a selection of the author's research manuscripts from the same time period.[1] This text is one of the lecture courses of Husserl that stands out among his lectureship, both by his own judgment (and by some of his students who attended it[2]), as well as in light of the reception of Husserl's work after its publication in the two-volume edition prepared by Rudolf Boehm and published in 1956 (*Husserliana* VII) and 1958 (*Husserliana* VIII). It is not too far fetched to consider this one of Husserl's more important texts, perhaps even on par with the *Logical Investigations, Ideas, Book I*, and the *Crisis*. To underscore its importance, it was a text Husserl explicitly composed to serve as the basis for his repeatedly planned but never completed "Systematic Work" that would introduce and summarize his mature thought. Although the text was ultimately never published by Husserl, he himself repeatedly acknowledged its relevance by giving it to several of his students[3] and by assigning his assistant at the time, Ludwig Landgrebe, to prepare a typescript of the manuscript. Husserl continued to annotate further changes and improvements once the text was available in typescript. This practice of transcribing manuscripts, to which his assistants Edith Stein, Landgrebe, and Eugen

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[1] On the criteria for selecting these research texts, cf. below, pp. lxxix f.

[2] According to Schuhmann's chronicle, the following persons were in attendance at the time: Helmuth Bohner, Reinhold Saleski, Fritz Taeger, Ludwig Landgrebe, Marvin Farber, Günther Stern, and Ernst Zermelo (cf. Schuhmann 1977, p. 273). There is also some evidence that Rudolf Carnap attended this lecture course (cf. Mayer 2016).

[3] Boehm writes that among the people who were privy to this text, besides the students in attendance, belong "friends and students" at the time (Boehm 1954, p. xv), though he does not mention any names. From his own admission, Husserl's Baltic student Theodor Celms had access to this text when he composed his 1928 *Der phänomenologische Idealismus Husserls*, cf. Celms 1928/1993.

Fink were assigned, was ordered by Husserl only for texts deemed of great importance and ultimately for publication, although, as in the case of the present text, most of these typescripts—with the exception of *Cartesian Meditations*, which was only published in French translation—never saw the light of day during Husserl's lifetime.[4]

As the simplicity of the title "First Philosophy" indicates, Husserl understood first philosophy to denote nothing other than his phenomenology. He understood the latter to be first philosophy, which is called upon to serve as a first philosophy in the sense of Aristotle and Descartes (who are invoked at the very beginning), that is, in its function of grounding all other sciences and ultimately also establishing philosophy as metaphysics, addressing (and ultimately answering) the "highest and ultimate questions." Although Husserl's ambitions as of the *Logical Investigations*, where he sketches the Leibnizian idea of a *mathesis universalis* or a pure logic, were immense, they were arguably never as great as during the present period (the early 1920s), and here, in the present lecture course.[5] Whatever one makes of such grand systematic attempts, especially in light of Husserl's own commitment to the "small change" of microscopic analysis versus the "big bills" of system-building, one has to acknowledge that Husserl himself attempted to compose such a system or at least a systematic introduction and an overview over his philosophy and considered this task as being of utmost importance. The topics treated in this text were the opening moves of this systematic presentation as well as crucial elements of the systematic scope of his phenomenology.

For many reasons, however, Husserl was dissatisfied with the result. This is especially due to his own insuppressible tendency to digress, to delve deeper into the problems and revise his earlier presentation, leading him time and again to veer off topic, and ultimately to be his

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[4] Among these typescripts belong the lectures on the phenomenology of inner time-consciousness, *Ideas II* and *III*, the *Logische Studien* (after Husserl's death published by Landgrebe as *Experience and Judgment*), and the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, a text of Fink's but commissioned and heavily annotated by Husserl.

[5] The term "lecture course" is here used as a translation of the German *Vorlesung*, so as to not confuse this text with a single lecture (or talk), but ensure that we are dealing here, rather, with a one-semester lecture series (the German winter semesters, then and now, run from around mid-October until mid-February, with a rather short Christmas break).

own strongest critic. In many respects (to be discussed below), this text presents a "shipwreck" (Landgrebe),[6] but is, perhaps for this reason more than any other, one of the most interesting texts Husserl produced.[7] That Husserl ultimately withheld the text from publication due to the obvious problems in composition and trajectory is, thus, justified in hindsight *from his own standpoint*; that one of the first editors would overrule the master's verdict is telling, however. Indeed, Boehm himself judges the text (especially with respect to part II of the lecture course) and its composition to be "thoroughly problematic" (Boehm 1958, p. xi[8]). Such a verdict does not mean, however, that it may not be treated as what it is: one of the more problematic and certainly controversial texts Husserl has written. Even those who may not be especially fond of this systematic aspect of Husserl's work cannot afford to disregard this text (and its important appendices).

That the text has not been translated into English has been, up to now, a great lacuna in scholarship, especially given that the text, or parts of it, have been translated into French, Italian, and Spanish (and translations into other major languages are currently underway[9]). This translation intends to finally fill this gap. Given the importance of this text in Husserl's oeuvre, it is bound to lead to a reassessment of one of Husserl's most controversial claims, that his phenomenology, in the mature form of a transcendental idealism, should come forth as a first philosophy. Especially in light of the newer interest in a phenomenological metaphysics[10] and the recent publication of Husserl's

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[6] The reasons Landgrebe lists for this verdict (inspired by Heidegger) are thereby not endorsed; I will discuss critically Landgrebe's famous thesis ("departure from Cartesianism") in section IV, below.

[7] It should be mentioned that many of Husserl's philosophically important readers (beginning perhaps with one of his strongest critics, Heidegger) were never overly impressed by his systematic ambitions and were more smitten with his small-scale analyses and descriptions.

[8] In the same context Boehm asserts that, based on an oral communication from Roman Ingarden, Husserl showed this second part to nobody (Boehm 1958, p. xi, n. 1). Based on Celms' assertion (cf. above, n. 3), this is manifestly incorrect.

[9] The text has been translated (in part or in full) into French (Arion Kelkel), Italian (there are two translations, by Vincenzo Costa and Paolo Bucci, of part II only), and Spanish (Rosa Helena Santos de Ilhau). Translation projects into Japanese (Tetsuya Sakakibara) and Korean (Ki-Bok Kim) are underway.

[10] Cf. Tengelyi 2013.

own manuscripts dedicated to this topic,[11] this translation will surely contribute sufficient fodder for a renewed interest in these and other themes of the late Husserl.

This translator's introduction will first (I.) introduce the theme of the volume by situating it within the history of Husserl's oeuvre. It will provide some general (historical, biographical) background, discuss Husserl's plans for publishing the volume, and attempt to locate the volume's central position in Husserl's oeuvre. It will also give a brief presentation of the very idea of a first philosophy and of the different meanings "first philosophy" has in Husserl.

In the next section (II.), an overview over the lecture course and its core themes will be given. The lecture course is separated into two different sections, as indicated by the timing of the winter semester, one beginning in October 1923 before the Christmas break and the second after New Year's and until February 1924.

A special section (III.) of this introduction will be devoted to the supplemental texts, which are taken (for the most part, insofar as they are dateable) from the period of the lecture course. This section will also provide a justification of their selection, especially since they cover a range of topics not treated in the lecture course.

Section IV will discuss the volume's reception, especially in the decade after its publication. This reception came from the most prominent thinkers in Germany at the time (Hans Wagner, Dieter Henrich, Ludwig Landgrebe, and others) and foreshadowed its reception in later scholarship. Although some of the things claimed about this text are quite problematic in hindsight, they have become almost an integral part of the way Husserl's philosophy is viewed to this day. For this reason, they deserve to be discussed and, as appropriate, scrutinized critically.

The last section (V.) will first present a few editorial matters; also, a justification will be given for the selection of the supplemental texts.

This introduction ends with acknowledgments (VI.).

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[11] These topics are treated in many of the research manuscripts, including some of this volume, but the texts Husserl dedicated to this topic in the order of his literary estate have only recently been published (in *Husserliana* XLI, 2014).

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO HUSSERL'S LECTURE COURSE ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY

1. *The Historical Context*

Husserl delivered the lecture course entitled "First Philosophy" (without subtitle) in the Winter Semester of 1923/24 at the University of Freiburg. Zooming out briefly: having been at the University of Göttingen from 1901 (as of 1906 full professor), Husserl assumed the professorship (*Lehrstuhl*) in Freiburg in 1916, which had become vacant since his predecessor, the famous Neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert, had moved to the University of Heidelberg. This move to one of the top universities in Germany (dominated by the Neo-Kantians), and succeeding Rickert, who was a big name of this movement, was a substantial upward career move for the phenomenologist Husserl. Recovering (as all of his contemporaries) from the Great War, and mourning the loss of his youngest son in the war, Husserl's work took on a new upward trajectory as of the 1920s, becoming famous and attracting students from all over the world. Husserl was, in the 1920s and until his retirement in 1928, at the height of his career.

The well-attended lecture was delivered "*vierstündig*," that is, four times a week in 45-minute lectures[12] during the five monthlong semester.[13] As was Husserl's normal practice, the manuscript for this lecture was typically penned immediately before each class period, and in

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[12] According to the registrar's archive (*Quästurakten*) of the University of Freiburg, the lecture was delivered Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 5–6pm, the full hour traditionally meaning "c.t." = *cum tempore*, thus beginning at 5:15, ending on the full hour. The lecture course was announced "*publ*[*ice*]," that is, open for anyone and thus not only for students ("*privatim*"). The only other public lecture course in that semester was that of the Neo-Kantian Richard Kroner, "History of Newer Philosophy," which makes it likely that Husserl's lecture had a very good turnout (compared to Husserl, Kroner was fairly unknown). In that semester, Husserl also taught a seminar on "Phenomenological Exercises for Advanced Students," Wednesdays from 11–1. Other courses in phenomenology in that term were taught by Oskar Becker. Other notable figures teaching that semester in Freiburg were the Neo-Kantian Jonas Cohn and the Kant scholar Julius Ebbinghaus.

[13] Husserl delivered 54 lectures, which would make it a typical 13–14 week semester, excluding the Christmas and other holidays.

his lecture courses throughout his career, Husserl faithfully read off the manuscript, according to his own pronouncements, almost never veering off the text to speak extemporaneously. One can assume the same practice in this lecture course. In the case of this lecture, Husserl gave the manuscript afterwards to his assistant Ludwig Landgrebe on a weekly basis. The latter typed the lecture, giving each a title (perhaps in consultation with Husserl) and also attempting to give the text of the lecture course as a whole a structure consisting of two main parts with several sub-sections.[14] Husserl, in turn, read and annotated Landgrebe's typescript and wrote a plethora of marginalia and additional research manuscripts, often much more extensive than the lectures themselves. A selection of these are reproduced in footnotes (in the case of marginalia) and, if longer, in the texts printed in the appendix.[15]

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[14] Landgrebe writes in a later text, reflecting back on his time with Husserl: "My first task [as assistant] was the transcription [*Nachschrift*] and the editing [*Ausarbeitung*] of his lecture course on 'First Philosophy' in the winter semester of 1923/24. After every lecture, Husserl handed me his stenographic manuscript pages, which he for the most part had penned immediately before." (quoted in Schuhmann 1977, p. 273). Boehm claims (Boehm 1954, pp. xiii f.) that Landgrebe gave each lecture a title, ordered the text as a whole into subsections, and later wrote a synopsis (*Inhaltsübersicht*). However, it also appears that Husserl himself at least conceived the titles of the two main parts (critical history of ideas; theory of the phenomenological reduction), as his manuscripts referring to these parts indicate (see below, the supplemental texts). It is not unimportant to point out that there is a slight discrepancy between the facts that Husserl's assistants often ordered the lecture courses systematically (a practice that is followed in the lecture course editions of the *Husserliana*) and that Husserl himself wrote each lecture as a discrete text each time. He might have had a systematic order or structure in mind (prior to the semester, but which he often overthrew), but for the sake of reconstructing the composition of the entire text, he composed each lecture anew, oftentimes beginning by summarizing the main points of the previous lectures, but then pursuing the theme he was interested thenceforth. This practice, it should be noted, makes it quite difficult for an editor to furnish a systematic treatise from the manuscript base. In other words, the systematic structure that many editions of Husserl's lectures display has (for the most part) been produced by the editor and makes an impression that is more systematic than the at times *ad hoc* choices of themes or digressions in fact manifest.

[15] Boehm's appendices also contain lectures Husserl gave and drafts of texts Husserl intended to publish, for instance the Kant lecture on Kant's 200th anniversary (1924). Some of the latter have already been translated (e.g., the Kant lecture). Boehm also distinguishes between "*Abhandlungen*" (treatises) and "*Beilagen*" (supplements, oftentimes, though not always, with references to the lecture course). This distinction, however, is in many respects artificial and has not been reproduced here. Hence all texts in the appendix to this volume are here simply named "supplemental texts." It cannot always

The lecture course comes at a time in Husserl's career when he was beginning to put the events of the past behind him. In the period right after serving as chair of his departmental unit ("*Geschäftsführender Direktor*") from 1920–1921, which he describes as a rather annoying distraction, Husserl's work experienced a remarkable surge. He began broaching new systematic topics, leading him to produce a significant amount of new texts (only the minority of them published[16]). By then, Husserl had ascended to the top of his field in Germany. To illustrate his realm of influence: Husserl accepted invitations to give prestigious talks in London (1922), Amsterdam (1924) and, later, Paris (1929) (and this a long time before jet-setting became the preferred lifestyle of academics), each occasion giving rise to a plethora of manuscripts. Husserl was on the verge of becoming nationally and internationally recognized as Germany's most famous and well-respected philosopher. He witnessed, with great satisfaction, a large following of students who flocked to him from Germany and many parts of the world.

Having his retirement in view, it is not surprising that this period was also marked by his attempt to summarize his mature thought and give it a lasting systematic shape. Yet what was missing, in his own estimation, was a systematic presentation of his mature thought, including the newest results from his extensive research. Since 1913, when he published the programmatic *Ideas I* and declared phenomenology to be a form of transcendental philosophy, Husserl's thought had undergone major changes and expansions, most notably the move from static to genetic phenomenology.[17] At the same time, Husserl received critical pushback from many of his earlier followers from Göttingen and Munich, who disapproved of the transcendental turn he introduced in *Ideas I*. He did not feel the need to retract anything written there; but he acknowledged that his earlier presentation suffered from imperfections that inadvertently led to misunderstandings. What was clearly

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be said with certainty if Husserl wrote them as comments to the lecture course (although many times he refers to certain passages) or as "regular" research manuscripts.

[16] Among these are the articles Husserl published in the Japanese journal *The Kaizo*, in 1922, now published in Hua. XXVII.

[17] See the historical reconstruction in Welton (2000, esp. pp. 221–256) for a detailed analysis of the various projects Husserl was working on at the time.

needed was a new systematic introduction and a systematic overview, a comprehensive map of the landscape of his phenomenology (to speak in a metaphor Husserl appreciated). This systematic *project*, besides the more properly phenomenological *themes* he was working on at the time, now took center stage.

The plans to write a new systematic presentation of his phenomenology, which could serve as an introduction to his work as a whole, reach back to 1922. The outward reason for this was at the time the invitation to give a series of lectures at the University College of London. The four lectures he composed for this occasion are the basis of the systematic presentation, which also informed the composition of the present text, and are also the basis of the lectures delivered in Paris in 1929, leading to the 1930 work, *Cartesian Meditations*.[18] The *First Philosophy* lecture course is set squarely in this important period of the phenomenologist's work, when he was intent on giving phenomenology a lasting shape to serve as a philosophical program for future phenomenologists.

After the Great War, Husserl, like many contemporaries, also attempted to stem the tide of the crisis of culture he witnessed around him in the forms of skepticism, despair, and the overall mistrust in reason. Husserl's ambition extended not only to construing phenomenology as the *philosophia perennis* that was conceived in ancient Greece, revived in the Renaissance and since then frustrated in newer attempts. He was also convinced that phenomenology was the solution to the many crises of culture and civilization;[19] indeed, when he called his last work the *Crisis of the European Sciences*, this was just one

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[18] See the introduction by the editor of Hua. XXXV, Goossens, on a detailed reconstruction of these historical events. The book *Cartesian Meditations*, which was published only in French translation during Husserl's lifetime, contains five meditations, the fifth (the famous meditation on intersubjectivity) was added later, i.e., it was based on an impromptu lecture in Strasbourg. It does not, in other words, belong to the original composition of the four lectures (as in London and Paris).

[19] As he writes in 1919: "The greatest hopes rest on the pure and rigorous formation of these new disciplines [of philosophy], as you shall see; hopes which humankind can hope to place on the further progress of scientific culture." (Hua-Mat IX, p. 6). It is thus humankind as a whole that can have hope, not just scientists, and not just for science for the sake of science, but "scientific culture," that is, culture (encompassing science) that will be elevated to a higher plane.

of the several crises facing humankind at this time (the others were presumably omitted due to the censorship he experienced). Although the Nazi takeover of 1933 might not have been on the horizon a decade earlier, the time only a few years after the Great War and in the middle of the financial depression was nonetheless ripe with economic and political crises. Husserl felt his vocation as a philosopher clearly challenged, and although the present text is more narrowly focused on the problem of conceiving a first philosophy, these efforts have to be seen in the broader context just sketched, since, as we shall see, culture as a whole depends on foundations laid by the true philosophy, phenomenology.

As mentioned, Husserl intended to use these lectures as the basis for his systematic presentation to be published in the form of a (perhaps multi-volume) book.[20] It is important to mention, in this context, that in so doing he was taking up once again a plan that he had begun a year earlier, in the lecture course of the winter of 1922/23, *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Introduction to Philosophy, *Husserliana* XXXV), which, in turn, goes back to the "London Lectures" of the spring of 1922.[21] This earlier lecture course also had the purpose of introducing phenomenology through a meditation on the very idea of philosophy. Only when this idea has been laid out could it be made plain that phenomenology, and only it, would fit the bill for this idea. The lecture course of 1922/23 is in many respects thematically quite different from that of 1923/24.[22] Yet both lecture courses must be seen in connection

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[20] See the plans for the systematic (multi-volume) work Husserl sketched together with his assistant Fink in Hua. XV, p. xxxvi. Yet one must distinguish the plan of writing a *system* of phenomenology, giving an overview over the many themes of phenomenology, from that of a *systematic introduction* to phenomenology, which would prove to be the proper, rigorous-scientific form of *philosophy*.

[21] The London Lectures are published, in the form in which they were delivered in London, in *Husserl Studies* (Husserl 1999) and also in the appendix to Hua. XXXV, however here only the texts that were *omitted* later in the lecture course were printed. That is, some parts of the London Lectures were integrated verbatim into the lecture course. Cf. also the editor's elucidations of these historical details (Goossens 1999 and 2002).

[22] One thing Husserl does in the earlier course is to carry out the "apodictic critique" of phenomenology, or what also calls a "critique of the critique" (cf. Goossens 2002). Husserl mentions this task in *First Philosophy* in passing only and does not return to it, although it is also mentioned as a task to be carried out in *Cartesian Meditations* (Hua.

mainly due to their introductory character, that is, as a meditation in which the very theme of a leading-into (*Einführung*) phenomenology was problematized. Indeed, Husserl even included some of the manuscripts from the lecture course of 1922/23 in the present text.[23] That is to say, to fully comprehend the systematic ambitions Husserl harbored at this time, especially with respect to the topic of introducing his phenomenology and conceiving a satisfactory method to do so, the lecture courses of 1922/23 and 1923/24, respectively, deserve to be treated in close conjunction. The desire to publish the project as executed in 1922/23 was also abandoned once the semester came to a close, but not the plan itself. Husserl's lecture of 1923/24 is a renewed attempt at a systematic presentation, improving, so he hoped, over the earlier text. Yet, one year later Husserl again did not arrive at a result that satisfied him, and thus the plan, as well as the typescripts produced at the time, were shelved indefinitely, as so much of the work carried out by his assistants.

The text of 1923/24 is in several respects unique in Husserl's oeuvre. For one, the first half of the lecture is dedicated to a historical meditation on the very idea of philosophy in the Western tradition since the Greeks. Although Husserl lectured on the history of philosophy before and afterwards,[24] he never did so with the systematic intention of introducing his *phenomenology* in that manner, namely as the climax of the attempt to establish a *philosophia perennis* against the seemingly never abating pressure from skepticism.[25] The text is remarkable, secondly, since the systematic trajectory of the lecture course breaks off radically after the Christmas break, when Husserl

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I, p. 177). Given its crucial role for the sake of the fully critiqued phenomenological method, it is curious that Husserl never returns to it.

[23] These overlaps are detailed in (Goossens 2002).

[24] For a list of Husserl's historical lectures and seminars, cf. Hua. VII, pp. xxvii f. Cf. also the more detailed account in the introduction to Hua-Mat 9.

[25] To be fair, the lecture also titled "*Einleitung in die Philosophie*" (Introduction to Philosophy), which Husserl delivered several times between 1916 and 1920 (published in Hua-Mat IX), does include an historical précis of ca. 200 pages ranging from Descartes to Kant (ibid., pp. 288–477) and some musings on the "beginning Greek philosophy or science" (ibid., pp. 7–27), yet the "critical history of ideas" in the first half of the 1923/24 lecture course is a completely new composition with a much clearer "teleological" structure, which culminates in phenomenology as the "destiny" of all of Western philosophy.

begins a systematic presentation of the method of the phenomenological reduction. He begins anew, presumably, because the previous historical meditations were able to give his listeners "a preliminary concept of a transcendental phenomenology and of a genuine philosophy flowing from it—a purposive idea of the most general kind, and hence […] the necessary purposive idea of all future developments" (below, p. 4).[26] Although Husserl makes it seem that the earlier part had the purpose of an historical introduction, such that now the real, systematic, part could begin, it is not at all clear why there had to be such a strong rupture before and after the break. Rather than coming to a satisfying ending in his historical narrative, the text makes it appear that it was composed to fit the semester timing. This new beginning in 1924 is all the more curious, since the historical meditations break off with Kant, to whom he devotes (together with Leibniz) a mere summary lecture before Christmas 1923. To end with Leibniz and a very brief note on Kant makes the impression of a rushed conclusion before the break, and it means that Husserl omitted any discussion of German Idealism and the developments in the 19th century. Husserl never justifies this abrupt ending. To underscore the transcendental character of phenomenology and its character as transcendental idealism, as he emphasizes in the second half of the semester, it would have been helpful for the reader to hear Husserl present his views on Kant and especially the latter's shortcomings, as well as those of the Neo-Kantians.[27]

Another reason this text is unique is this systematic presentation of the reduction ensuing now (as of 1924) is in itself complex and its development and result surprising. By his own account, Husserl discovers and opens up a new path into the reduction, that via psychology. In terms of Iso Kern's famous presentation of "Husserl's three

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[26] Another possibility, hinted at by Landgrebe (though without any proof, cf. Landgrebe 1962, pp. 259f.), is that Husserl simply gave up on the plan of producing a publishable text: "It is the path [explicitly in part II] of an experimenting adventurer in thought whose successes are constantly thrown into question in the reflections which accompany the lectures and whose goal is not fixed from the start so that it actually leads elsewhere than initially foreseen" (ibid., p. 259).

[27] These discussions are indeed executed in much greater detail in the supplementary texts, esp. Text 1 and Text 4.

ways into the reduction" (the Cartesian, the psychological, and the ontological one), Husserl here introduces this second path for the first time publicly.[28] At the same time he acknowledges to his listeners the limits and shortcomings of the earlier Cartesian path, which he utilized in *Ideas I*, and which led to the famous reproaches of Husserl being a Cartesian, an idealist, or a solipsist. Such a public self-critique is rather rare in Husserl's oeuvre. Although Husserl is quite content with the opening up of this new path, the presentation is far from complete and comprehensive, due to the semester rushing to a close, and the lecture ends once again with some rather hasty remarks on phenomenology as transcendental idealism and a "new" monadology. Thus, while he accomplished quite a bit systematically, the presentation of the material, as it stands at the end of the semester, is far from satisfactory. Indeed, it is presumably for this reason that Husserl shortly afterwards abandoned the plan to use this text as the basis for his systematic introduction. As important as this systematic result is, one has to conclude that the manner of arriving at it is long-winded, full of ruptures and digressions. Nonetheless, the central importance of this text in Husserl's oeuvre is undisputed.

Husserl continues to plan and plot out a comprehensive systematic work (or systematic introduction), though by his own lights he never succeeds.[29] *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of 1929 can serve as an introduction to his genetic logic, and *Cartesian Meditations* of 1930 was deemed acceptable "only" to his French readers. After 1933 Husserl had essentially abandoned all plans. His last work, the *Crisis of European Sciences*, is a last and frantic attempt at such a presentation, which he undertakes in a last effort to give at least an introduction to

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[28] Kern's "three ways" essay has become canonical in its systematic presentation (cf. Kern 1962). However, this presentation overlooks the fact that to Husserl the question of the paths into the reduction was problematic at all times in his life after 1905. Not only are there also other ways into phenomenology (via the critique of the sciences, via intersubjectivity, etc.), it is also the case that traces of the way via intentional psychology can be found prior to 1924. The case that some interpreters have made of the importance of this lecture course *for the problem of the ways of the reduction* is in some respects overblown.

[29] An overview over these systematic plans is given in Kern's (editor's) introduction to Hua. XV, p. xxxvi. Cf. also the editor's introduction to Hua. XXXIV, which adds some newly found material.

his phenomenology. This last work is remembered, rightly so, for the existential urgency with which Husserl introduces phenomenology as a solution to the crisis of his day. However, especially in its historical part, the *Crisis* in many ways falls short of the much more detailed presentation in *First Philosophy*.

Scholars later have tried to make sense of the systematic place of *First Philosophy* in the context of Husserl's work in general, since the phrase "first philosophy" is not used by Husserl prior to 1923[30] and also recedes into the background after 1924. It was no lesser than Husserl's own pupil Heidegger, who claimed (in the 1929 dispute in Davos with Cassirer), that "for a period, Husserl had fallen into the arms of the Neo-Kantians,"[31] which presumably meant the temptation to conceive of phenomenology as a "first philosophy" in the sense of an ultimate foundationalism.[32] This claim also implies that at a later time Husserl would have wrested himself from this embrace and that it was only a temporary phase. Later scholars have also argued along Heidegger's claim that this task, and hence this text, presents a curiosity within Husserl's writings (see section IV, below). While it will be shown below that this claim is in many respects unfounded, it is true that in this text Husserl is perhaps more radical in his systematic ambitions than elsewhere. Husserl is dead serious when he characterizes phenomenology as the "secret desire of all of philosophy." What he means by this claim can perhaps be best understood by studying the present text.

Let me, in the following, address some of the central points tied to his claim that phenomenology should come forth as "first philosophy."

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[30] Interestingly, Natorp uses the phrase *proté philosophía* in his 1901 review of Husserl's *Prolegomena* (quoted in Boehm 1954, p. xix), not to identify Husserl's draft of a pure logic, but rather to argue that Husserl's achievement may not yet have accomplished this (though it should). It is not far-fetched to see Natorp as a *very strong* influence in Husserl's later attempt at such a first philosophy, as Natorp influenced Husserl in other aspects of his thought, especially in the 1920s (cf. Luft 2010, for more on Natorp's influence on Husserl).

[31] Heidegger 1973, p. 247.

[32] It is a different issue whether this captures the intentions of either school of Neo-Kantianism well. If it is to mean that philosophy should provide a firm foundations for all scientific efforts and be a permanent bulwark against skepticism, neither of the major schools of Neo-Kantianism would lay claims to such ambitions.

Understanding these can help the reader understand the main intentions driving Husserl. But before that, I will start out with a simple definition of what phenomenology is; this will provide the basis for my discussion of Husserl's attempt to bring phenomenology forth as first philosophy.

2. *A Simple Definition of Phenomenology*

Phenomenology is the eidetic science of transcendental subjectivity. What does this mean? Let us start with subjectivity (or consciousness or mind, all of which are synonymous for our purpose). Phenomenology studies the mind and its experience. The latter has a special feature: it is always of something. This "being-of-something" phenomenologists capture with the term "intentionality." The term is technical and not meant in the colloquial sense, in which "intentional" means something like "deliberate" or "with (explicit) intention." Rather, it designates the necessary "aboutness" of every mental episode or experience, and that in the broadest sense, which goes beyond merely psychic experiences. "Intentionality" thus refers to thinking, remembering, anticipating, hoping, but also seeing, feeling (such as pain), touching, wishing, emoting, willing, and so on. In a very basic sense, then, phenomenology studies the structure of intentionality in all regions of experience.

Looked at closely, every experience has a "subjective" and "objective" component. In the case of perceiving, for example, the act of seeing is the subjective component and that which is seen in the act is the objective component. Rather than calling this correlational structure "subjective" and "objective," since we are dealing with the structure of intentionality, Husserl uses the technical terms "noetic" and "noematic" for the two poles of the structure of intentionality. Thus, in a yet more basic sense, phenomenology studies the way in which the subject is connected with the world it experiences. It is an investigation of the relation of mind and world.

As covering *all* forms of intentionality, not just the strictly speaking mental ones ("inside our head"), phenomenology is not just psychology or a special version thereof. That phenomenology would be "descriptive psychology," as Husserl himself called it at the outset, is a severe limitation of its scope. Phenomenology studies the way in which the

world is experienced in all forms, and the way the subject *has* this experience. It is thus an investigation from the standpoint of the experiencing agent in her having experience in the broadest sense.

As discussed so far, phenomenology is mainly a descriptive exercise or a descriptive science. As describing the structure of intentionality in its different forms, it also aims to arrive at general insights that go beyond one's merely personal whimsy. Of course the investigator has to start from her (first person) experience, but what she describes are structures that hold for consciousness (or intentionality) as such, regardless of the fact that the person doing the describing is located in France or Finland or on the moon, regardless that she has two eyes, and that she studies the perception of a tree, a tiger in the forest, an object on the moon, or an imagined monster or a remembered loved one. The descriptor, hence, has to abstract from her own perspective and describe structures that hold as such. Every science has to move from individuals to generalities. Phenomenology is in this sense a science like every other science, aiming at general insights about, or essences concerning individuals.

Consider a basic example that Husserl was fond of: in the case of perceiving, the object that I see shows itself to me from a side facing me and a hidden (but co-meant) backside. The general structure *of perception* (mine, and everybody else's who has the ability to perceive) as a form of intentionality (regardless of who has it) is thus that its objects necessarily show themselves in profiles and that the perceiving agent cannot see all profiles at once. Phenomenology as a descriptive science abstracts from the fact (of, for example, the person's historical and geographical setting and her physical make-up) and aims at general structures. While there are levels of generality in empirical generalizations, phenomenology is philosophy and is thus aimed at insights that are a priori (independent of experience) and essential (necessarily true). In order to reach essential truths, the phenomenologist has to aim at insights that are true as such and not only valid for a certain group of exemplars (e.g., the human being). Though starting from her own experience, she aims at truths that are true independent of any existing experience, but true of *any possible* experience. It is, in this sense, an a priori science of consciousness in the same way that arithmetic is an a priori science of numbers. Thus far, I have clarified what "eidetic science of subjectivity" means.

Next, "subjectivity" has the addition "transcendental." As of Kant, the term has the meaning of "condition of the possibility." A transcendental investigation, hence, studies not a given something (in the case of Kant: cognition), but the conditions that must be assumed as necessarily in place to make this something possible. Again, to Kant, space and time as forms of intuition are the necessary condition of the possibility of us experiencing things in the world (as they give themselves to us conforming to our forms of sensibility).

In phenomenology, if subjectivity is called transcendental it means that subjectivity is understood as that which enables, broadly speaking, objectivity (or the world). In what sense is subjectivity the condition of the possibility for the world? Is this not a wild claim? It is, indeed, to us living normally and naturally. Normally we experience the world, that is, things in the world, and we do not attend to the subject we are who experiences the objects. We take this subjective aspect for granted. The same goes for the sciences, who study parts of the world, roughly distinguished as nature and spirit. The natural sciences study different species of animals, the physical and chemical world; the other sciences are what we also call "human" or "cultural" sciences, such as history, literary criticism, and theology. They all study things in the world and take the subjective aspect of experiencing them for granted. This general stance, in which we take the world for granted as existing independently from any experiencing agent, Husserl calls the "natural attitude." The natural attitude is the general, everyday way of living in the world, in which we pursue our projects. And it is also the stance every scientist takes. Phenomenology, as an "un-natural" science, stands opposed to the natural attitude, not negating it, but "bracketing" it in order to gain a different stance. Phenomenology takes place in a different attitude. In fact, its beginning occurs when we question the natural attitude and are, by virtue of that questioning, in a different attitude.

This attitude of phenomenology is different in that which focuses on that which the natural attitude precisely ignores or overlooks: the subjective part (of consciousness in its intentionality). It is always there, including in the natural attitude, but it is not attended to unless we explicitly reflect on it, when we, e.g., say, "it seems to *me* that X." But, of course, this is far from a well-formed science, and in any case, the subjective part is never seen *in* the natural attitude as a potential object of

a science, a science of the subjective. But when we attend to the sphere of intentionality, we have to concede that every experience in the natural attitude has a subjective (intentional) side to it. In order to make any scientific utterance about something, I must first have *experience* of it. This fact, which is trivial in the natural attitude, becomes precisely the problem and the scientific task for phenomenology; what would be a trivial aspect becomes an explicit object of a specific investigation. Because, when viewed reflectively (i.e., from the habitual standpoint of the phenomenologist), *every* worldly experience (of something in the world in the natural attitude) has this subjective side, this subjective aspect *enables* us to have any experience of objects. In this sense, then, one can say that subjectivity (in the way phenomenology frames it) is the *condition of the possibility* of everything objective. Consequently, phenomenology is the study of *transcendental subjectivity*, subjectivity in the way it experiences the world, or in whose experience the world manifests itself.

Phenomenology thus studies a dimension that is always there but always overlooked in the natural attitude. This is a dimension for which firstly an appreciation has to be engendered. To express its novelty, Husserl resorts to different metaphors. In one metaphor he uses repeatedly, he likens it to a new continent that has never been entered, let alone mapped. In another metaphor that is perhaps more apt (taken over from Gustav Theodor Fechner), phenomenology discovers a third dimension to the world of the natural attitude, which is merely two-dimensional. Phenomenology becomes true philosophy when it realizes it is *toto caelo* different from any other scientific discipline, and it is universal philosophy, since it encompasses *all* other sciences. It proceeds in this way, in general, in which one can distinguish the work of the sciences from that of philosophy. Phenomenology as the true philosophy, hence, does not just enable the natural attitude, but also all sciences of the natural attitude. As Husserl explains:

"To carry out plane-geometry, to investigate planes and their shapes, means: not to pay attention to the bodily dimension. But the latter is always there and everything spatial also has its third dimension. One may not ask too much of a metaphor, yet what it means for us for the sake of metaphorical talk is clear: Everything that the non-philosophical sciences investigate also has its 'philosophical' dimension, but to investigate it lies beyond the scope of these sciences.

Pure philosophy, hence, relates to all sciences, but what it searches for and captures theoretically, it cannot ever (for essential reasons) gain from these sciences. … The philosophical dimension provides not additional, generically related problems, but generically novel ones." (Hua-Mat IX, p. 2).

This enabling transcendental dimension comes first before the other dimension and the latter is dependent on it (the two-dimensional world is embedded in the three-dimensional one). It is the first for us (experience as access to the world), though it is not seen as such *in* the natural attitude. As standing on the ground of the natural attitude, all other disciplines of this dependent dimension are related to it in an essential way. In this way I have spelled out, in all brevity, not only the transcendental character of phenomenology, but its systematic position as *first philosophy*. Being in such a position, phenomenology, as being the "true" philosophy, also has, as it were, a special responsibility and calling.[33] We are now in a position to situate phenomenology's task as such a first philosophy, starting out with a short account of the term in the history of philosophy, and then in Husserl's oeuvre, where, as we shall see, it has several meanings that are related, to be sure, but that indicate different meanings and different tasks for the phenomenologist.

3. *The Very Idea of Phenomenology as First Philosophy*

Although it seems easy at first glance (in the sense just given) to give a definition of what Husserl means by "First Philosophy," it becomes a challenge to further explain this concept when he claims, *a fortiori*, that specifically *phenomenology* should come forth as a discipline that is more than just a descriptive, but also foundational discipline.[34] Rather,

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[33] Cf. also Schuhmann (2004) for an in-depth account of Husserl's idea of philosophy.

[34] On Husserl's alleged foundationalism and exactly which kind of foundationalist he is, cf. the helpful discussion by Berghofer (2018), who also gives a survey of this discussion both in contemporary philosophy of mind as well as in the scholarship on Husserl beginning with Føllesdal and up to more recent works by Drummond, Beyer, and Zahavi. It should be pointed out, however, that Berghofer, too, repeats the old error that Husserl does not distinguish between adequate and apodictic evidence until the *Cartesian Meditations* (cf. Berghofer 2018, p. 12). As is clear from the present discussion, this distinction was one of the main issues dealt with as of 1922 and it was a defining moment for the characterization of his phenomenology as First Philosophy.