

# A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism

*Edited by*

Hubert L. Dreyfus

*and*

Mark A. Wrathall



# A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism

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*Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall*

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# A Brief Introduction to Phenomenology and Existentialism

MARK A. WRATHALL AND HUBERT L. DREYFUS

Phenomenology and existentialism are two of the most influential movements in twentieth-century philosophy. During the heyday of existentialism in the middle decades of the twentieth century, there were heated disputes about whether the movements belonged together or were even compatible with one another. Herbert Spiegelberg, for example, argued that, while phenomenology and existentialism are independent movements, they are compatible in principle and, indeed, that they have “at least enough affinity for fruitful cooperation” (1960: 70). Asher Moore, by contrast, saw the relationship between existentialism and phenomenology as an “unholy alliance,” and argued that phenomenology was “unfit . . . for existential inquiry” because it necessarily had to overlook individual existence in its search for universal structures (1967: 408, 409).

Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre were the two figures crucial to this debate – crucial in the sense that each could, with right, be claimed by both phenomenology and existentialism. In fact, they disagreed on the subject of the relationship between existentialism and phenomenology. Heidegger always thought of his work as true to the genuine spirit of phenomenology (although he stopped referring to his work as “phenomenological” in order to distance himself from Husserlian phenomenology). He was dismissive, however, of existentialism, contending that it was a continuation of the errors of modernism (Heidegger 2000: 225). Heidegger concluded in 1966, perhaps unrealistically, that “it is hardly necessary anymore today to expressly observe that my thought deals neither with existentialism nor with existence-philosophy” (Heidegger 1986: 649–50). Despite his rejection of twentieth-century existentialism, Heidegger’s work carried on the existential tradition of thought as it had been developed by the nineteenth-century progenitors of existentialism, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and also was tremendously influential on the later development of existentialism. Heidegger’s standing in the existential tradition is secured by his exploration of the existential structure of *Dasein* or human being, his historicized account of essences, his critique of the banality of conformist everyday life, and his reflections on guilt, anxiety, death, and authenticity.

Sartre, on the other hand, embraced the label of existentialism, arguing that it was “the least scandalous, the most austere of doctrines” (1947: 15). Existentialism, he

claimed, was “a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity” (1947: 12). At the same time, Sartre saw his existentialism as fundamentally grounded in a phenomenological approach. He gave *Being and Nothingness* the subtitle “A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology.” And in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, he wrote of phenomenology that “for centuries we have not felt in philosophy so realistic a current. The phenomenologists have plunged man back into the world; they have given full measure to man’s agonies and sufferings, and also to his rebellions” (1962: 105).

Before saying any more about existentialism’s and phenomenology’s compatibility with and relevance to one another, we should briefly introduce the two movements.

## Phenomenology

The term “phenomenology” has been in common use in philosophy since Hegel’s monumental work, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807). During the nineteenth century, the word denoted a descriptive as opposed to a hypothetical–theoretical or analytic approach to a problem.

Phenomenology began as a discernible movement with Edmund Husserl’s (1859–1938) demand that philosophy take as its primary task the description of the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness. This description was meant to be carried out on the basis of what the “things themselves” demanded, without assuming or adopting the theoretical frameworks, assumptions, or vocabularies developed in the study of other domains (such as nature).

Husserl apparently began using the term in the 1890s in his lectures “Phänomenologie: ein Abschnitt in Brentanos Metaphysik (Klärung von Grundbegriffen)” (see Heidegger 1993: 13 n. 6). Franz Brentano (1838–1917) had a decisive influence on Husserl’s development of phenomenology owing to Brentano’s own descriptive approach to the study of psychic phenomena, and also through his arguments regarding the structure of consciousness. Also of influence was Wilhelm Dilthey’s (1833–1911) argument against naturalistic accounts of the psychic domain, and his attempt to develop a more descriptive approach to the human sciences.

In Husserl’s hands, “phenomenology” came to have a more precise, methodological sense (see Chapter 2). For Husserl, phenomenology is a study of the structures of consciousness (see Chapter 6), which proceeds by “bracketing” the objects outside of consciousness itself, so that one can proceed to reflect on and systematically describe the contents of the conscious mind in terms of their essential structures (see Chapters 8 and 9). This was a method, Husserl believed, which could ground our knowledge of the world in our lived experience, without in the process reducing the content of that knowledge to the contingent and subjective features of that experience (see Chapter 7).

On the basis of this method, Husserl believed, philosophy could be established as a rigorous science that could “clarify all species and forms of cognition” (Husserl 1964: 4), because it could discover the structures common to all mental acts. Following

Brentano, Husserl saw intentionality, object-directedness, as the mark of the mental (see Chapter 5). Intentional acts, Husserl argued, have a meaningful structure through which the mind can be directed toward objects under aspects. Another essential structural feature of the mental, Husserl argued to great influence, was temporality (see Chapter 10).

Early followers of Husserl extended his work into a variety of domains – Max Scheler (1874–1928), for instance, into an examination of the essence of emotions and intuition; Roman Ingarden (1893–1970) into art and aesthetics; Edith Stein (1891–1942) into the nature of empathy; Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) into psychology. Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Husserl’s most brilliant student and influential critique, along with Jaspers, moved phenomenology in a new direction.

Heidegger rejected Husserl’s focus on consciousness and, consequently, much of his basic phenomenological method. For Heidegger, the purpose of phenomenological description was not to discover the structures of consciousness, but to make manifest the structure of our everyday being-in-the-world. Because Heidegger’s interest was worldly relations rather than mental contents, he rejected both the usefulness of the phenomenological method as practiced by Husserl and the need for mental meanings to account for many if not most forms of intentional directedness. Indeed, Heidegger argued that the intentionality on which Husserl focused – the intentionality of discrete mental judgments and acts – is grounded in more basic intentionality of a general background grasp of the world. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61) extended Heidegger’s account of being-in-the-world to a study of our bodily experience of the world in perception (see Chapter 3). Sartre as a phenomenologist shared Heidegger’s focus on existential, worldly relationships, but sought to account for those relationships in a Husserlian fashion by focusing on consciousness.

Heidegger and Husserl both had a formative influence on many of the most prominent philosophers of the latter half of the twentieth century. These include Heidegger’s students Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), who developed Heidegger’s philosophical hermeneutics, and Hannah Arendt (1906–75), whose work on politics and public ethics developed many of Heidegger’s insights into our being with one another in a shared public world. Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95), Michel Foucault (1926–84), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), and Jürgen Habermas (1929–) have all been influenced by and, to some degree, defined their work by opposition to, the phenomenologies of Heidegger and Husserl.

## Existentialism

Existentialism was self-consciously adopted as a label for a movement only in the twentieth century. But existentialist writers see themselves as carrying on a tradition that was first anticipated by Blaise Pascal’s (1623–62) rejection of Cartesian rationalism, which tried to define human being in terms of our rational capacities. Pascal saw human being as an essential paradox, a contradiction between mind and body. Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55), usually acknowledged as the founder of modern existentialism, shared Pascal’s sense for the inherent contradiction built into the human

condition. Kierkegaard reacted to Hegel's systematic and, purportedly, total account of human being and history in terms of rationality, arguing for the essential absurdity of human existence, and the need for a fundamentally irrational, but faithful and passionate commitment to a Christian form of life. Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Dostoevsky (1821–81) likewise criticized the philosophical tradition's emphasis on rationality as undermining the passionate attachment to the world necessary to support a worthwhile life. Together, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche form the historical background to twentieth-century existentialism (see Chapter 11).

In the twentieth century, the existential approach to religion pioneered by Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky was developed by a surprising range of theologians and religious thinkers (see Chapter 13). These include, among others, Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), Nicholas Berdyaev (1874–1948), Paul Tillich (1886–1965), Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), Miguel de Unamuno (1865–1936), Lev Shestov (1865–1938), Karl Barth (1886–1968), and Martin Buber (1878–1965).

In the public imagination, however, twentieth-century existentialism was most well known in its atheist form as popularized by French thinkers like Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir (1908–86), and Albert Camus (1913–60) (see Chapter 14). This branch of existentialism was deeply influenced by Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God," his rejection of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and his consequent critique of traditional metaphysics and ethics.

Like the phenomenology of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, existentialism as a movement starts its analysis with the existing individual – the individual engaged in a particular world with a characteristic form of life. Thus, an emphasis on the body (see Chapter 17) and on the affective rather than rational side of human being (see Chapter 16) are characteristic of existentialism. For existentialist thinkers, the focus is on uncovering what is unique to that individual, rather than treating her as a manifestation of a general type. Existentialists thus tend to be anti-essentialists, to deny that there are essential features or properties that determine the being of a thing. Many go further and insist that the world is not just lacking in essence, but absurd, and thus incapable of being made sense of (see Chapter 19). Indeed, existentialists like Sartre and Camus argue, human being itself is rendered meaningless and absurd by the inevitability of death (see Chapter 20).

With their focus on the individual and a denial of any meaningful sense of what constitutes an essential or absolute goal for human existence, existentialists emphasize human freedom and responsibility (see Chapter 18), and hold that the only goal consistent with that freedom and responsibility is to live authentically (see Chapter 15). Finally, existentialists tend to share an opposition to rationalism and empiricism alike, and often define themselves by their opposition to the main currents of modern philosophy.

Because existentialist analysis takes as its starting point an involved stance within an individual's experience of the world, some of the most powerful works in existentialist thought have taken the form of novels, plays, or pseudonymous tracts. These forms are effective ways for an existentialist author to explore a way of being in the world from the inside, as it were. As a consequence, existentialism has been, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, at least as influential in the literary arts as it has been in philosophy. Dostoevsky was, of course, primarily a writer of fiction,

but many of Sartre's, Beauvoir's, and Camus's most influential writings were also works of fiction. Camus received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957; Sartre was awarded (and refused) the prize in 1964. Literary figures influenced by existentialism, or recognized as existentialists in their own right, include novelists,<sup>1</sup> playwrights,<sup>2</sup> and poets.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

Let us return, then, to the issue of the compatibility of existentialism and phenomenology. To a large extent, the arguments over the issue have been rendered moot. With the benefit of few more years of historical distance, it no longer seems pressing to decide to what extent existentialism can be phenomenological, or whether phenomenology leads one inevitably to existentialist views on the self and the world. What is clear is that there is no merely accidental relationship between the two traditions. Indeed, the ultimate compatibility of the movements is resolved in practice. Both movements are now routinely drawn upon in addressing current concerns in the philosophy of mind and action (Chapters 21–25), cognitive science (Chapter 26) and psychology (Chapter 27), the philosophy of science and technology (Chapters 29 and 31), ethics broadly construed (Chapters 30, 34, and 35), politics (Chapter 36), history (Chapter 37), art (Chapter 38), and mathematics (Chapter 39).

The phenomenological and existential traditions have now largely merged into a common canon of works and ways of doing philosophy. If we had to try to summarize what these two traditions have in common, we could perhaps do no better than identify the following four approaches that they both share:

1 A concern with providing a description of human existence and the human world that reveals it as it is, without the distortion of any scientific presuppositions. This leads to:

2 A heightened awareness of the non-rational dimensions of human existence, including habits, non-conscious practices, moods, and passions.

3 A focus on the degree to which the world is cut to the measure of our intellect, and a willingness to consider the possibility that our concepts and categories fail to capture the world as it presents itself to us in experience.

4 A belief that what it is to be human cannot be reduced to any set of features about us (whether biological, sociological, anthropological, or logical). To be human is to transcend facticity.

Existentialism develops these concerns in a particular direction, coming to hold the following:

5 Everyday life is at best banal and at worst absurd and meaningless.

6 Anxiety in the face of death can disclose to us the banality or absurdity of life; hence, there is a constant motivation to flee from anxiety back into conformism and a reaffirmation of everyday life.

7 The most pressing philosophical task is to help us cope with anxiety and despair in such a way that we can affirm *this* life in all its absurdity.

8 The ideal human life will be authentic, that is, accept responsibility for the exercise of freedom.

\* \* \*

## The Organization of the Book

This book is divided into three main parts: Part I is devoted to phenomenology and Part II is devoted to existentialism. Each of these parts contains longer chapters devoted to the main movements of the respective traditions, and a number of shorter chapters highlighting some of the central concepts of the movement. In Part III we abandon the attempt to treat phenomenology and existentialism as movements in isolation from one another. Indeed, we abandon the effort to treat them as *historical* movements at all. Instead, we present chapters devoted to taking up contemporary problems, issues, and fields of philosophy from an existential and/or phenomenological perspective. Some of these chapters are more influenced by one movement or the other. As a whole, however, we believe that they demonstrate the continued vitality of phenomenology and existentialism.

## Notes

- 1 These include Ivan Turgenev (1818–83), Franz Kafka (1883–1924), Hermann Hesse (1877–1962), André Malraux (1901–76), Walker Percy (1916–90), John Updike (1932–), Norman Mailer (1923–), and John Barth (1930–).
- 2 These include Samuel Beckett (1906–89), Eugène Ionesco (1912–94), and Arthur Miller (1915–2005).
- 3 Such as Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926).

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Part I

Phenomenology

## Main Movements

# Husserlian Phenomenology

STEVEN CROWELL

## Phenomenology and Twentieth-Century Thought

Though the term “phenomenology” was in use prior to Edmund Husserl – it is found, for instance, in Kant and Lambert, and, with a very different signification, in Hegel – it is in its Husserlian form that phenomenology came to exert decisive influence on twentieth-century thought. To understand Husserlian phenomenology it is pointless going back to the previous uses of the term, since Husserl paid no attention to these (Spiegelberg 1982: 6–19); instead, his thinking developed in debates over the foundations of arithmetic and logic carried out in the school of the Austrian philosopher, Franz Brentano. Nor is Husserlian phenomenology a static entity. Initially a method for tackling certain epistemological problems, phenomenology became, over the four decades of Husserl’s mature philosophical life, the basis for a complete “system” that “has within its purview all questions that can be put to man in the concrete, including all so-called metaphysical questions, to the extent that they have any possible meaning at all” (Husserl 1989: 408; translation modified). So understood, phenomenology was to be a platform for generations of researchers who would contribute, as in the natural sciences, to a growing stock of philosophical knowledge. In so doing they would shore up the threatened legacy of European civilization: a culture based not on tradition and opinion, but on rational insight into universally valid truths and values. The fate of Husserlian phenomenology in the twentieth century turned out quite differently, however. Husserl’s project did provide the starting point for several generations of philosophers, beginning with contemporaries such as Alexander Pfänder, Adolf Reinach, and Moritz Geiger, and continuing through Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jacques Derrida, among many others. Yet in each case adoption of the phenomenological approach was accompanied by rejection of much of Husserl’s actual doctrine. As a result, though phenomenology remains a vital contemporary movement, *Husserlian* phenomenology is often treated as a mere historical antecedent.

And yet, it is no exaggeration to say that only now is it possible to see just what Husserl’s phenomenology actually *is*. The historical reception – in which Husserl’s philosophy is dismissed as an arch-essentialist version of Cartesian foundationalism, a radical idealism that flirts with solipsism, a philosophy of “reflection” that cannot

do justice to the realities of the body, history, and sociality – is largely a function of Husserl’s manner of working and the difficulties he had in bringing his thoughts to print. Husserl’s output is divided into the relatively few books he published during his lifetime – which, after the *Logical Investigations* (1900; cited as Husserl 1970b and 1970c), mostly have the character of introductions to phenomenology’s methods and programmatic aspirations – and a vast store of research manuscripts representing the fruit of Husserl’s daily writing schedule: applications of phenomenology to specific topics such as perception, temporality, embodiment, social reality, history, culture, and value. Upon Husserl’s death in 1937 this entire output was threatened with destruction at the hands of the Nazis, but a Belgian cleric, H. L. van Breda, smuggled it out of Germany and established the Husserl archive at Leuven. The editing and publishing of this material – including its translation into many languages – has now reached a point where a new picture of Husserl has begun to emerge. What on the basis of Husserl’s publications might look to be a confusingly discontinuous series of positions – an early “realism,” a middle-period Cartesian “idealism,” a late rejection of Cartesianism – can be seen from the *Nachlass* to be the outgrowth of a sustained, and remarkably consistent, internal development. Further, these manuscripts suggest that phenomenology has far more to contribute to contemporary debates – in epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and social ontology, for instance – than the traditional picture might lead one to suspect. This is not to say that the “new” Husserl is free of paradox, nor that the standard criticisms get no grip on his thought. But it does mean that presenting Husserlian phenomenology now involves something other than assessing it as a mere precursor.

Since the present chapter cannot hope to take the full measure of Husserl’s thought, its goal shall be to examine what is most distinctly *phenomenological* about it. What, then, *is* phenomenology? It is not impossible to give a reasonably concise characterization – if not definition – of Husserlian phenomenology through a series of contrasts. First, phenomenology is a *descriptive* enterprise, not one that proceeds by way of theory construction. Before one can develop a theory of something – say, an account of how perception is caused by the interaction of eye and brain, or how mental representations must be postulated to explain it – it is necessary, according to Husserl, to provide a careful description of what perception itself is, to get clear about the phenomenon that one is trying to explain. Thus, second, phenomenology aims at *clarification*, not explanation. Phenomenological descriptions neither employ nor provide causal laws that explain the existence of things; instead, they mark those distinctions – such as those between memory and perception, or between depictions and signs – that allow us to understand what it is to be a thing of this or that sort. This means, third, that phenomenology is an *eidetic* and not a factual inquiry; it is not concerned to describe all the properties of some particular thing but to uncover what belongs to it *essentially* as a thing of that kind. Phenomenology studies some concrete act of perception only as an example for uncovering what belongs necessarily to perception as such – for instance, that it gives its object “in person,” or that it apprehends its object against a co-given background or “horizon.” Finally, phenomenology is a *reflective* inquiry; it is not concerned directly with entities, as are the natural sciences, but with our *experience* of entities. It is committed to the view that descriptive clarification of the essential conditions for being X cannot be achieved by *abstracting* from our experience of X but

only by attending to how X is *given in* that experience. Of the four features just mentioned, this reflective character is most distinctive of phenomenology, and richest in implications. For it challenges entrenched philosophical theories about “mind” and “world” and demands that we attend to how “the things themselves,” as Husserl put it, show themselves.

Why did phenomenology – this reflective, descriptive clarification of eidetic features – have such an extraordinary impact on twentieth-century thought? One could point here to its discoveries about consciousness and intentionality, its critique of the epistemological dilemmas of modern philosophy, the resources it provides for a new ontology or theory of categories; and so on. Yet such contributions themselves rest upon a more fundamental achievement, namely, phenomenology’s recognition that meaning (*Sinn*) is the proper topic of philosophical inquiry, one that cannot be grasped with traditional categories of mind and world, subject and object. Here phenomenology shares a motive with the “language-analytic” philosophy that emerged simultaneously with it. Both movements sought to break free of traditional philosophy, and for the same reason: in order to do justice to meaning. In contrast to early analytic philosophy, however, phenomenology does not see meaning as *primarily* a linguistic phenomenon. Rather, it comes into its own when Husserl takes the “important cognitive step” of extending terms like meaning and signification “to all acts, be they now combined with expressive acts or not” (Husserl 1982: 294). This allows phenomenology to break decisively with mentalism and representationalism and explore meaning as encountered directly in the world of our practical and perceptual life. This chapter will examine how this focus on meaning leads to Husserl’s most distinctive innovations, and to his most controversial claims.

### Husserl’s “Breakthrough” to Phenomenology: Intentionality and Reflection

Husserl was born on April 8, 1859, in Prossnitz, Moravia. His “breakthrough” to phenomenology came some forty years later, in the *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 1970b, 1970c). His initial studies had been in mathematics, in which he finished a doctoral dissertation in 1882 in Vienna. While in Vienna he attended lectures by Franz Brentano, whose call for an empirical scientific philosophy based on a kind of descriptive psychology had attracted much attention. At its core was the concept of a “mental phenomenon,” which Brentano defined by appeal to “what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or sometimes mental) inexistence of an object, and what we should like to call . . . the reference to a content, the directedness toward an object” (Spiegelberg 1982: 36). Drawn by questions in the foundation of number theory, Husserl switched his attention to philosophy and began to explore Brentano’s notion of “intentionality” as a way to clarify our concept of number – a topic on which he wrote his second dissertation, in Halle, in 1887.

While teaching as a *Privatdozent* in Halle until his move to Göttingen in 1901, Husserl continued to study what he then thought of as the “psychological” foundations of arithmetic, though his first major book, *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891; cited as Husserl 2003), already breaks with many of the particulars of Brentano’s approach.

Especially unclear in Brentano was the relation between the “content” that is bound up with mental acts and the “directedness toward an object” that such acts involve. While his contemporary, Gottlob Frege, held that the content through which such directedness is achieved is the content, or meaning (*Sinn*), of sentences – a concept or “thought” that has nothing to do with the mental – Husserl wondered how sentences could come to *have* meaning at all. For him, it would not be enough to develop a sentential logic. It would be necessary to show how the intensionality of terms depends on the intentionality of consciousness, since no content or meaning is intelligible without reference to the *subject* who thinks, judges, and perceives. Husserl’s “break-through” to phenomenology began the slow process of disengaging this appeal to subjectivity from the psychological trappings of its Brentanian origins.

### *The problem of psychologism*

The birth of phenomenology in the *Logical Investigations* has always had something paradoxical about it. For there Husserl introduces phenomenology as “descriptive psychology,” arguing that it is the only way to approach foundational problems in philosophy of logic; yet he does so only after devoting 200 pages to a critique of “psychologism,” the view that logic must be founded upon psychology. To get a sense for the dilemma that would exercise Husserl throughout his career, let us take a closer look at this paradoxical breakthrough.

Logical psychologism is a cluster of positions, all of which claim that because the laws of logic are laws of thinking they must ultimately derive from psychological facts and the evolution of human thought-processes. Husserl objected to what he saw as the skeptical and relativistic consequences of such a view. Psychologism yields relativism, since logical validity is taken to depend on the contingent psychic make-up of the human being, such that a different make-up would produce different laws. And it yields skepticism since, by denying logic unconditional validity, it renders every truth-claim undecidable. Husserl seizes on this last point to demonstrate the self-refuting character of psychologism. As a theory – that is, a set of propositions whose explanatory power comes from the material and logical laws that organize it – psychologism asserts, as true, propositions concerning logic that, if they *were* true, would undermine the epistemic authority of the theory itself (Husserl 1970b: 135ff.). Husserl’s rejection of psychologism appears uncompromising: logical laws have *ideal* validity; they are normative for human thinking because they are necessary conditions for *truth* as such. Husserl thus places two constraints on any account of logical validity: first, it must preserve the link between logic and the norm of truth; and second, it must be “presuppositionless” in the sense of refusing (on pain of circularity or outright skepticism) to derive logical validity from any contingent fact.

This latter requirement actually rules out any *explanation* of logical validity at all, if by “explanation” is meant a theory that accounts for such validity without presupposing it. Husserl acknowledges this point when he claims that “theory of knowledge, properly described, is no theory.” That is, its “aim is not to *explain* knowledge in the psychological or psychophysical sense as a *factual* occurrence in objective nature, but to *shed light* on the *Idea* of knowledge in its constitutive elements and laws” (Husserl 1970b: 264, 265). As a descriptive method, phenomenology is appropriate for

theory of knowledge in this sense. But, surprisingly, Husserl calls it descriptive *psychology* (Husserl 1970b: 262). How did he imagine that it could avoid his own anti-psychologistic arguments?

The answer here – to the extent that the *Logical Investigations* provides one – lies in the fact that Husserl examines cognitive acts (thinking, judging, perceiving, etc.) not as mental items but as *truth*-bearers, i.e., in light of the norm of truth. On this view, intentionality is not simply the static presence of a “presentation” in a mental experience (*Erlebnis*) but a normatively oriented *claim to validity*. This claim need not take the form of an explicit judgment, but in every case of a consciousness-of-something it is there.

To say that a mental experience is intentional is to say that it is “of” something, that it refers to something. But such reference cannot be a simple relation between two things – an act and its object – since there are “objectless presentations” such as hallucinations, which possess intentional directedness without an existing object. This led Husserl to recognize that the content of an intentional act is complex, involving both a putative intended object as well as an “intentional object” or manner in which the intended object is given. To avoid infinite regress, the intentional object cannot be another object toward which the act is directed; it must be an aspect of the act itself. Husserl’s breakthrough is to see that this aspect is a normative or inferential structure, not a “psychic” one. The intentional object provides something like satisfaction conditions that must hold of the intended object *if* the claim inherent in the act is veridical. Thus, to say that I currently perceive “a coffee cup” is to say that what I currently experience (these white, gleaming surfaces, etc.) is taken as (partially) satisfying a rule inhabiting my act as its meaning, determining that it is “of” this rather than that. In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl had not yet freed himself from psychological assumptions. For instance, he initially held that this meaning arises when sensory input is formed by an interpretive mental act (*Auffassung*). Yet even here the essential point is attained: relations between acts cannot be understood in causal terms but are functions of *meaning*. The two most important of these are “foundation” (*Fundierung*) and “fulfillment” (*Erfüllung*). Together, they yield the distinctive phenomenological epistemology of *Evidenz*.

### *Founding, fulfillment, and Evidenz*

In turning to these relations, one should recall that phenomenology is not concerned with particular intentional experiences except as examples of their *kind*. It aims at the essence of acts and the essential relations between them; it is an eidetic science, not a factual one. In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl defends a strongly anti-empiricist theory of universals, and throughout his career he practiced an “eidetic reduction” in which the factual is probed for its essential constitution by “freely varying” a particular example until the limits of its variability are grasped. There is nothing particularly phenomenological about this reduction, however. It is practiced in eidetic sciences such as geometry and is at work in the conceptual analyst’s pursuit of necessary and sufficient conditions. What is distinctly phenomenological is the connection Husserl establishes between this method and what he calls “intuition” (*Anschauung*), to which we shall return.

In his analysis of the logic of wholes and parts, Husserl defines the relation of *Fundierung*: When “an *A* cannot as such exist except in a more comprehensive unity which associates it with an *M*” then *A* is “founded” in *M* (Husserl 1970c: 463). Intentional acts exhibit such relations among themselves. For instance, memory is founded upon perception, since the content of a memory (what Husserl calls the “matter” of that act) cannot exist without reference to a prior act of perception: When I remember the cup of coffee I had yesterday the content of this memory is not simply the cup, conceived as an item in the world, but the cup *that* I drank from, admired, in short, *perceived*. “Having perceived” belongs necessarily to the memory’s “intentional content” even when I turn out to be wrong, for that is what distinguishes the memorial act from an act of imagination. The crucial point here is that *Fundierung* is not a real relation – causal, mechanical, psycho-associative – but a *meaningful* one: neither strictly logical nor inferential (since there is no logical connection between the acts of perception and memory), it is what Husserl calls an “*intentional* implication.” Thus it is also not a genetic relation in the causal sense. Husserl will eventually come to recognize a genetic dimension to relations of foundation, but the laws of such genesis concern “compossibility” (Husserl 1969a: 74) and not causal sequence.

An important example of a founded act is judgment or assertion, an instance of what Husserl calls a “categorical” act. The sense (or act matter) of the assertion, “my coffee is cold and milky,” points back to acts of perception in which cold, milky coffee is directly perceived. In an assertion categorical forms (such as part/whole) that “are not genuinely present in the unarticulated percept” but are there as “ideal possibilities” get “articulated” explicitly, thereby constituting a new, founded object, a “state of affairs” (Husserl 1970c: 792ff.; translation modified). In our example, the categorical forms “is” and “and” bring out ideal possibilities contained in the content of my perception (not the object of perception as a thing in the world but as the intentional content of *this* act of perception); they thus necessarily point back to *some* intuited founding content. But what can that content *be*? In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl seems to hold that categorical forms are not “genuinely present in the unarticulated percept,” but he later expresses dissatisfaction with his doctrine of categorical intuition, in part because perception’s meaningful content seems neither to be that of an unarticulated whole nor something founded upon conceptual or categorical acts. The issue of how to understand such content thus became a spur to the development of phenomenology.

The relation of founding between perception and judgment also illustrates a second, perhaps even more important, phenomenological relation among intentional acts – that of “fulfillment” (*Erfüllung*). For it is not just that the judgment refers back to some perceptual content; rather, it is *fulfilled* by it. Articulation of the perceptual content is the *telos* of the judgment, the measure of its success or failure. To express this relation Husserl introduces the distinction between “empty” or “merely signitive” acts and “fulfilling” or “intuitive” acts (see Husserl 1970c: 728). When, in the absence of the corresponding perception, I assert that my coffee is cold and milky, the content of my assertion is presented in an empty or merely signitive way. But if I make the same assertion after having raised the cup to my lips, the content is intuitively given and I can experience how this intuition fulfills the sense of the assertion: the very same cup that is the object of my judgment, and in *just the way* that it is judged by me, is