

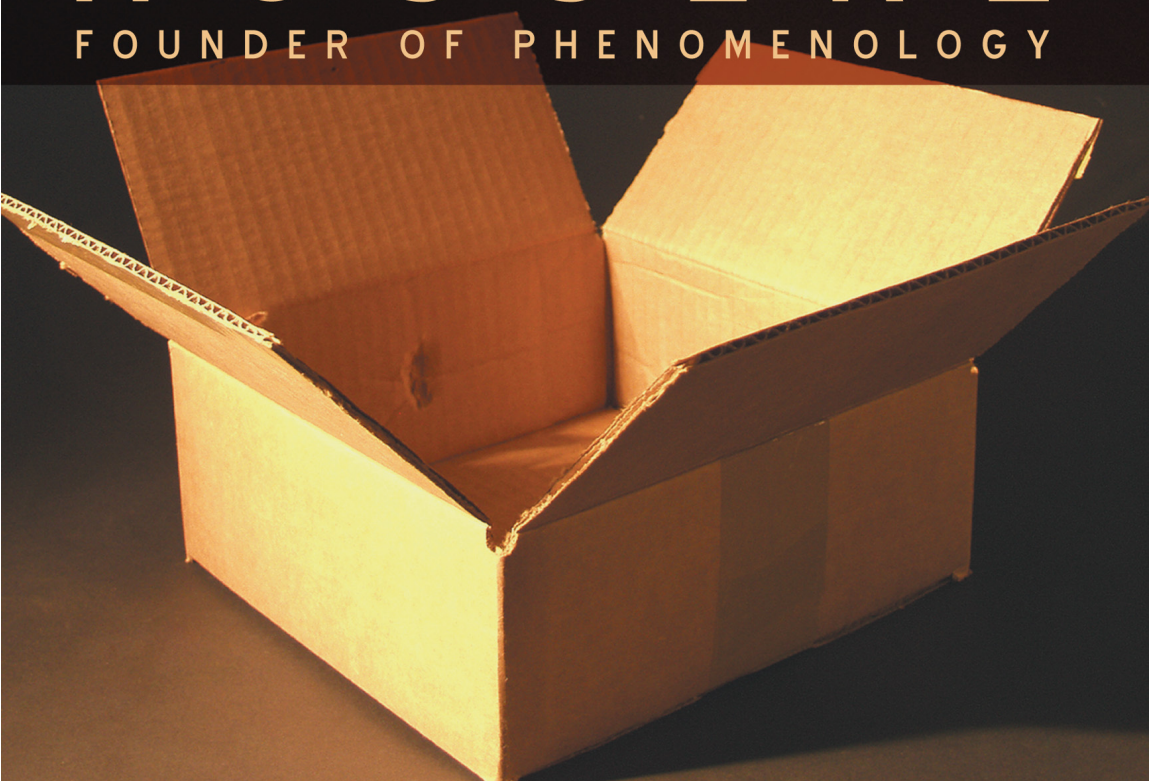
Key Contemporary Thinkers

edmund

H U S S E R L

FOUNDER OF PHENOMENOLOGY

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Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl

Founder of Phenomenology

Dermot Moran

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First published in 2005 by Polity Press

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK.

Polity Press
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148, USA

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ISBN: 0-7456-2121-X
ISBN: 0-7456-2122-8 (pb)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library and has been applied for from the Library of Congress.

Typeset in 10 on 11.5 pt Palatino
by SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd, Hong Kong
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd., Bodmin,
Cornwall

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To Loretta, Katie, Eoin and Hannah

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Acknowledgements

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is best known as the founder of phenomenology, the descriptive science of consciousness and its objects as they are experienced. In his mature works, he also developed and radicalized the post-Kantian tradition of transcendental idealism. He published few books in his lifetime, but he left behind a corpus of philosophical writing that is vast, complex and varied, ranging from lecture notes to bundles of private research writings organized thematically. As this *Nachlass* continues to be edited and published, the overall picture of Husserl as a philosopher is undergoing rapid change. In this book I hope to introduce Husserl's thought as it appears across the range of his works and from within, recognizing the originality and power of his descriptive analyses of the life of consciousness as well as his original approach to transcendental philosophy. I want to present Husserl in a way that will entice readers to seek out his original works. For this reason, I have tried as far as possible to present his project *from within*, in terms of its own motivations rather than in comparison and contrast with other philosophers (which would require a quite different book). I do not intend to address his critical legacy (the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Sartre or Derrida, etc.); rather, my aim is Husserl *par lui-même*, in his own words. I want to explicate Husserl's achievement primarily for those coming to him for the first time; so I have tried as far as possible to avoid unnecessary philosophical jargon and to explain Husserlian terms as they are introduced. I have not engaged in lengthy critique of his positions, but rather I have sought to present them in the most charitable and sympathetic light. Nevertheless, while I aim this book at the neophyte, I also hope, that my interpretative reading of Husserl has sufficient originality to interest and challenge more advanced students and scholars.

While the final responsibility for the interpretation of Husserl in the pages following rests with me alone, I would like here to record my thanks to some of the scholars who have assisted me over the four years it has taken me to research and write this book. First, I want to thank the Husserl Archive in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, for accommodating me during several visits, especially its director, Rudolf Bernet, secretary, Ingrid Lombaerts, as well as Roland Breeur, Ullrich Melle and Robin Rollinger. Thanks also to William Desmond and Carlos Steel of the Higher Institute of Philosophy in Leuven. I would especially like to record my appreciation of the scholarship of the late Karl Schuhmann of the University of Utrecht, who gently and generously corrected some of my misconceptions about Husserl. I would also like to record the influence of the following scholars: in France, Jocelyn Benoist, Jean-François Courtine, Natalie Depraz, Claire Ortiz Hill and Jean-Luc Marion. In Germany, I would like to mention specifically the work of Klaus Held, Dieter Lohmar and Olav Wiegand. In Switzerland, Eduard Marbach, Kevin Mulligan and Gianfranco Soldati have been extraordinarily generous with their time and knowledge. In the UK, Michael Beaney, David Bell, Sir Michael Dummett and Peter Simons have all assisted me in understanding the relationship between Frege and Husserl.

Among US scholars, I have learned a great deal from Lester Embree of the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, David Woodruff Smith and Donn Welton. I have benefited greatly from conversations with members of the Husserl Circle, especially Betsy Behnke, Marcus Brainard, John Brough, Richard Cobb Stevens, Steve Crowell, John Drummond, Burt Hopkins, Len Lawlor, Nam-In Lee, Sebastian Luft, William McKenna, James Mensch, Tom Nenon, Rosemary Rizo-Padron Lerner, John Scanlon, Robert Sokolowski and Dallas Willard. In Ireland, Jim Levine of Trinity College Dublin offered helpful comments on Frege's philosophy of mathematics. I would also like to thank my colleagues at UCD, and especially Richard Kearney for stimulating conversations and insights, and my Head of Department Gerard Casey for facilitating my research leave. I am grateful to graduate students at UCD and Rice University (in particular Irene McMullin) for their comments on draft chapters of this book.

This book could not have been written without institutional support. I would like to thank the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) for a Senior Fellowship in the Humanities in 2002–3, and University College Dublin for the President's Fellowship for 2003–4. Thanks to Professor Steven Crowell and the Philosophy Faculty at Rice University for hosting me as Lynette S. Autry Visiting Professor in the Humanities (Fall 2003). A special word of thanks to Professor Arthur Few, Master, and his wife, Joan Few, for making me welcome as Visiting Scholar at Martel College. I thank Dan

Zahavi for accommodating me at the Center for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen. I am grateful to the Publications Committee of University College Dublin and to the National University of Ireland for their support. I want also to thank the Humanities Institute of Ireland for providing me with a research office to complete writing the book. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family for their support, especially my wife Loretta and our three children, Katie, Eoin and Hannah.

University College Dublin

Abbreviations

APS	Husserl, <i>Analysen zur passiven Synthesis</i> , Hua 11 (<i>Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis</i> , trans. A. J. Steinbock; English translation also includes selections from Hua 14, 17 and 31)
Bedeutungslehre	Husserl, <i>Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre: Sommersemester 1908</i> , Hua 26
Briefwechsel	Husserl, <i>Briefwechsel</i> , ed. K. and E. Schuhmann, Husserliana Dokumente, vol. 3, 10 vols
Chronik	<i>Husserl-Chronik</i> , ed. K. Schuhmann
CM	Husserl, <i>Cartesiansche Meditationen</i> , Hua 1 (<i>Cartesian Meditations</i> , trans. D. Cairns)
CPR	Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood
CW	Husserl, <i>Collected Works</i>
DP	Brentano, <i>Deskriptive Psychologie</i> , ed. R. Chisholm and W. Baumgartner (<i>Descriptive Psychology</i> , trans. B. Müller)
DR	Husserl, <i>Ding und Raum</i> , Hua 16 (<i>Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907</i> , trans. R. Rojcewicz)
EB	<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i> article, Hua 9 (<i>Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology</i> , trans. T. Sheehan and R. E. Palmer)
ELE	Husserl, <i>Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie: Vorlesungen 1906/1907</i> , Hua 24
EP I	Husserl, <i>Erste Philosophie (1923/4)</i> , Erster Teil: <i>Kritische Ideengeschichte</i> , Hua 7
EP II	Husserl, <i>Erste Philosophie (1923/4)</i> . Zweiter Teil: <i>Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion</i> , Hua 8

- EU Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. L. Landgrebe (*Experience and Judgment*, trans. J. Churchill and K. Ameriks)
- EV Husserl, 'Entwurf einer "Vorrede" zu den *Logischen Untersuchungen* (1913)', ed. Eugen Fink, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 1, 1 and 2 (May 1939), pp. 319–39 (*Draft Introduction to Logical Investigations*, ed. E. Fink, trans. P. J. Bossert and C. H. Peters); Hua 20/1: 272–329
- EW Husserl, *Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 5, trans. D. Willard
- FTL Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik*, Hua 17 (*Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. D. Cairns)
- GA Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (1884) (*Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J. L. Austin)
- GPP Husserl, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (1910/11), Hua 13
- HSW Husserl, *Shorter Works*, trans. and ed. Frederick Elliston and Peter McCormick
- Hua Husserliana, Kluwer (now Springer) publishers, 1950–
- Ideen I Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Erstes Buch, Hua 3 (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten)
- Ideen II Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Zweites Buch: *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, Hua 4 (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer)
- Ideen III Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Drittes Buch: *Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, Hua 5 (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Third Book*, trans. T. E. Klein and W. E. Pohl)
- IG Twardowski, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen: Eine psychologische Untersuchung* (*On the Content and Object of Presentations*, trans. R. Grossmann)
- Intersubjektivität Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass*. Hua 13–15
- IP Husserl, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Hua 2 (*Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. L. Hardy)

<i>Krisis</i>	Husserl, <i>Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie</i> , Hua 6 (<i>The Crisis of European Sciences</i> , trans. D. Carr)
<i>LU</i>	Husserl, <i>Logische Untersuchungen</i> Hua 18, 19/1 and 19/2 (<i>Logical Investigations</i> , trans. J. N. Findlay, ed. D. Moran, 2001)
<i>LV</i>	Husserl, <i>Londoner Vorträge</i> , Hua 35
<i>PA</i>	Husserl, <i>Philosophie der Arithmetik</i> , Hua 12 (<i>Philosophy of Arithmetic</i> , trans. Dallas Willard)
<i>PES</i>	Brentano, <i>Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt</i> , 3 vols. (<i>Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint</i> , trans. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell and L. L. McAlister)
<i>Phän. Psych.</i>	Husserl, <i>Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925</i> , Hua 9 (<i>Phenomenological Psychology</i> , trans. J. Scanlon)
<i>PP</i>	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phénoménologie de la perception</i> , 1945 (<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , trans. C. Smith)
<i>Prol.</i>	Husserl, <i>Prolegomena</i> , <i>Logische Untersuchungen</i> (<i>Prolegomena</i> , <i>Logical Investigations</i> , trans. J. N. Findlay)
<i>PSW</i>	Husserl, 'Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft', Hua 25 ('Philosophy as a Rigorous Science', trans. Q. Lauer)
<i>PV</i>	<i>Pariser Vorträge</i> , Hua 1 (<i>Paris Lectures</i> , trans. P. Koestenbaum)
<i>Rezension</i>	Frege's review of Husserl's <i>Philosophy of Arithmetic</i>
<i>SZ</i>	Heidegger, <i>Sein und Zeit</i> (<i>Being and Time</i> , trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson)
<i>TE</i>	Sartre, <i>La Transcendance de l'égo. Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique</i> (<i>Transcendence of the Ego</i> , trans. F. Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick)
<i>Trans. Phen.</i>	Husserl, <i>Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)</i> , trans. and ed. R. E. Palmer and T. Sheehan
<i>Wiss.</i>	Bolzano <i>Wissenschaftslehre</i> (<i>Theory of Science</i> , trans. R. George)
<i>ZB</i>	Husserl, <i>Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)</i> , Hua 10 (<i>On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time</i> , trans. J. Brough)

In general, citations of Husserl give the English translation pagination (if any) followed by the Husserliana volume number and pagination. In the case of *Ideen I*, the German pagination is that of the original published edition of 1913, printed in the margin of the Husserliana edition. For *Erfahrung and Urteil*, the English pagination is followed directly by the German pagination of the *Meiner* edition. For the English transla-

tion of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, I am using the revised edition of J. Findlay's translation (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). Volumes 1 and 2 are indicated by **I** and **II** respectively, followed by page number.

Introduction

My mission is science alone.¹

There is only one philosophy, one actual and genuine science . . .
the all embracing science of transcendental subjectivity. (FTL §103)

Husserl: Phenomenologist and Transcendental Philosopher

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is a serious, difficult – often inaccessible – thinker, yet his work also exhibits extraordinary originality, range, depth, vitality and relevance. His unique contribution, *phenomenology* (the careful description of what appears to consciousness precisely in the manner of its appearing), was highly influential on twentieth-century European philosophy, but he also offers an interesting and challenging programme for a radicalized transcendental philosophy. In this book I propose to read Husserl as both phenomenologist and transcendental philosopher.

Despite his historical prominence, Husserl is today quite neglected, usually approached as a precursor to Heidegger and contemporary European philosophy rather than as a systematic philosopher in his own right. Indeed, he attracted the best minds among several generations of European philosophy students, including Heidegger, Gadamer, Arendt, Marcuse and Levinas, who studied with him, as well as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Derrida, Habermas, Adorno and others, who, while they did not personally study with him, engaged creatively with his thought, to such an extent that the contemporary French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion has characterized phenomenology as assuming in the twentieth century the ‘the very role of philosophy itself’.² Nevertheless, students of European philosophy tend to be more

directly familiar with Martin Heidegger (even though he acknowledged that it was his mentor Husserl who first gave him 'eyes' to see), or with Levinas or Derrida, than with Husserl.

Analytic philosophy has similarly neglected Husserl in favour of Frege as the founding father of its movement. There is some recognition, largely due to the work of Michael Dummett, of Husserl's significance for the history of early analytic philosophy, but recent Anglophone discussions,³ while illuminating for their close focus on his pre-transcendental writings, have tended to downplay or disparage what Husserl himself regarded as his real 'breakthrough': namely, his development of *transcendental phenomenology*, reached through the consistent application of the *epoché* and reductions. His deepening exploration of phenomenology led him to embrace a radicalized form of the Kantian project of transcendental philosophy and to recover transcendental idealism (in the spirit of Fichte). Husserl believed that consciousness must be conceived anti-naturalistically – as *transcendental*, as a condition for the possibility of the objective world in all its appearing forms. Because of the re-emergence of an anti-naturalistic, transcendental tradition in recent analytic philosophy, there is need to revisit Husserl with fresh eyes.

Consciousness: The Mystery of Mysteries

Building on the insights of his teacher, Franz Brentano (1838–1917), Husserl envisaged *phenomenology* as the descriptive, non-reductive science of whatever appears, in the manner of its appearing, in the *subjective* and *intersubjective* life of consciousness. He was fascinated by what he regarded as the 'mystery of mysteries': namely, the *life of consciousness* (*Bewusstseinsleben*), with its unique, inner temporal flow and its ability to gain objective knowledge of what transcends it. His account of the essential forms, structures and complex interlacings and layerings of this 'stream of consciousness' (*Bewusstseinsstrom*),⁴ is considerably richer and more subtle than those of his contemporaries William James (1842–1910) and Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Of course, the nature of consciousness is now of intense interest to the cognitive sciences, philosophy of mind and psychology, but Husserl, under the name of 'phenomenology', offers an original and astonishingly thorough and systematic way of approaching these problems that still has considerable scientific relevance.⁵

The achievement of knowledge cannot be understood without consciousness. Husserl stresses that consciousness is presupposed in all our dealings with the world. It is the medium through which everything objective – the whole world with all its layers and horizons – is made manifest (Hua 9: 326). As he put it in his *Idea of Phenomenology*

lectures of 1907, the 'riddle' of epistemology is how to explain how transcendent knowledge is possible (*IP*, p. 30; *Hua* 2: 38). Phenomenology solves this riddle by side-stepping it. It accepts what is given *purely as given*, excluding all positing of 'non-immanent reality' (2: 45), grasping transcendent entities as revealed in immanence, i.e. how they are 'constituted' *as* transcendent. In this way Husserl focuses attention not just on the conditions for the possibility of objective knowledge, but also on the conditions for the very appearing or manifestation of the interminable and inexhaustible world itself.

At one point in the Twenties, Husserl characterized this project as specifying the 'ABC of consciousness'. As he wrote in the visitor's book of the psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger at the latter's home in Kreuzlingen:

Unless we become as children, we shall not enter the longed-for heavenly kingdom of a pure psychology. We must search out the ABC of consciousness (*das ABC des Bewusstseins*), and so become true elementary learners (*ABC-Schütze*). The path that leads to the ABC of consciousness and thence upwards to elemental grammar and, through a gradual ascent, to the universal a priori of concrete formations is that path that makes possible true science and knowledge of the All.⁶

In pursuit of this objective, throughout his writings Husserl offers detailed descriptive analyses of the complex structure and contents of our perceptual experience, memory, imagination, judgement and other cognitive and affective acts – the entire inventory of psychic life. Moreover, he offers not just isolated studies of individual cognitive acts, but a subtle account of what must belong to the whole complex yet unified 'interconnected complex of consciousness' (*Bewusstseinszusammenhang*),⁷ a philosophical account of the cognitive architecture of conscious cognition, including the complex manner in which environmental backgrounds and horizons are involved in even the most simple conscious experiences. This led him to recognize that human experience is always temporal and finite, and always takes place within the broader context that he calls 'world'. Indeed, although Kant had already recognized the essential components of sensuousness and finitude in human knowledge, Husserl is the first modern philosopher to make the theme of *embodiment* central to his analysis of consciousness.

Husserl began his phenomenological researches into consciousness from the standpoint of the individual, an approach he characterized as '*egological*'. But he always regarded this as an abstraction from our concrete social world, and he developed profound analyses of the encounter with the other through 'empathy' (*Einfühlung*; lit. 'feeling-into') and of the whole network of intersubjective sociality, influencing

a range of European thinkers, including Schutz, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, among many others. Husserl radically rethought the nature of subjectivity and its relationship to all forms of objectivity or 'otherness', including human others or persons, leading to his recognition of the manner in which the objective world is in fact always experienced as an intersubjective, public, communal world.

On Husserl's view, phenomenology is not just a science of consciousness and subjectivity, a science of 'objective subjectivity' as he puts it in *CM* (§13); rather, it also seeks to identify and catalogue the *objectifying* structures that allow consciousness to come to knowledge of 'what is', i.e. what philosophers – including Husserl – have called 'being'. Phenomenology, then, takes over the role that previous philosophers since Aristotle have assigned to 'first philosophy' (*protē philosophia*). Husserl regarded phenomenology as laying the only solid basis for metaphysics and ontology, thereby stimulating his younger colleague Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) in his inquiries into fundamental ontology.⁸

Finally, Husserl is also of interest for his challenging vision of the practice of philosophy (including metaphysics) as a rigorous, strict science, which tries to institute human life as a life of grounded and responsible rationality, constantly on guard against the dangers of prejudice and ungrounded speculative thinking. His work is testimony to his belief in the role of philosophy in the preservation and renewal of the scientific and cultural achievement of humankind. Indeed, there is a genuine sense in which Husserl is *par excellence* the philosopher's philosopher. His thought and writing, like that of the later Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), is fractured and sporadic. It encapsulates the very *experience* of philosophical thinking itself, probing, encountering uncertainties, difficulties and blockages (*aporiai*, 'dead-ends', from *aporos* = 'without passage', 'having no way through') searching for 'solid ground', for 'clarity'. There is no last word, only evolving thought. He constantly made new beginnings, and indeed, at the end of his life, claimed that he had at last earned the right to call himself a 'true beginner' in philosophy. As he put it, he had won the right to live a philosophical life.

The Emergence of Phenomenology

Originally trained as a mathematician, Husserl's philosophical career began when he applied Brentanian descriptive psychology to the clarification of basic mathematical concepts. He was soon forced to pursue deeper foundational inquiries into the nature and status of logical concepts and ideal objects, and into the framework of cognitive acts (e.g. judgements) that constituted the subjective side of the accomplishment

or 'achievement' (*Leistung*) of knowledge. This led to the epistemological inquiries of *Logische Untersuchungen* (*Logical Investigations*, 1900/1), in which he offers a devastating critique of psychologism. He is an energetic critic of the representationalist account of knowledge in classical empiricism. He went on to criticize naturalism (the view that everything belongs to nature and can be studied using the natural sciences; see *PSW*; Hua 25: 8), positivism (the resolution of physical nature into complexes of sensations; 25: 9), biologism, historicism and scientism. In his Freiburg years (e.g. in *First Philosophy*), he was a creative and insightful reader of Descartes, Hume and Kant.

Husserl's approach in *LU* owes its fruitfulness to the far-reaching and profound consequences he drew from the fundamental phenomenon of the *intentionality* ('directedness' or 'aboutness') of conscious experiences. Brentano provided Husserl with his key insight: namely, that the 'essential character' (*Grundcharakter*) or 'universal fundamental property' (*CM* §14) of our mental life is *intentionality*. In his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), Brentano states:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. (*PES*, p. 88)

Every mental act is directed at an object.⁹ Consciousness is constantly stretching out or reaching beyond itself towards something else. The manner of this reaching out and the manner in which the object comes into view are both matters that can be considered from the phenomenological point of view. Phenomenology, then, considers every object in so far as it is an object-for-a-subject. For Husserl, intentionality became the 'indispensable fundamental concept' for phenomenology (*Ideen I* §84).

Using intentionality, Husserl explored and documented the *essential* (or 'eidetic', *eidetisch* – a word Husserl coined from the Greek *eidōs* meaning 'essence' or 'form'; see *Ideen I* §2)¹⁰ structures of the whole 'life of consciousness' with its contents, objects, backgrounds, horizons and sense of world-involvement (what Husserl often called 'world-having', *Welthabe*), all described according to their unique modes of givenness. His slogan from *LU* onwards was 'back to the things themselves'. These 'things' include not just the immediate perceptual objects of our sensuous experience, but also so-called *ideal* and *categorical* objects and 'objectivities' (*Gegenständlichkeiten*), such as the states of affairs of the cat-being-on-the-mat. We are conscious not just of physical things, but also of ideal objects such as numbers, propositions, essences, possibilities and so on. Phenomenological reflection, furthermore, can turn

back towards consciousness itself, and explore the essences of conscious acts (perceivings, judgments, imaginings, remembering and so on). If scientific, philosophical knowledge is to be clarified, then the ineliminable role of subjectivity in knowledge needs to be truly grasped.

Husserl refers to this early phenomenology as a 'method for the analysis of origins' (7: 230), according to which, as he insisted in a letter to the German philosopher Hans Cornelius, *origin* signifies 'the exhibition (*Aufweisung*) of the intuitive sense of the genuine meaning' (24: 441; see also *Ideen* I §1n.). Phenomenology wants to clarify concepts in terms of the original intuitions in which they are experienced in a living way. In a sense, the eighteenth-century empiricists had tried to do this when they sought to characterize the concept of solidity in terms of resistance or to explain the perception of distance in terms of experiences of movements in the eyes. Husserl too wanted to locate the concrete intuitions underlying key cognitive concepts, and so he regards phenomenology as a radicalized empiricism. Soon after the publication of *LU*, however, he realized that it had been a mistake to cast phenomenology in terms of descriptive *psychology* (where psychology is understood as an *empirical* science), when what was at stake was in fact 'essential analysis' (*Wesensanalyse*) or the a priori 'intuitive viewing of essences' (*Wesenserschauen*). From 1902 onwards, he sought strenuously to correct the mistaken impression that he was doing psychology in any sense; rather, he was pursuing ideal, a priori, *eidetic* description which in no way related to the individuality (or *haeccitas*, 'thisness') of real experiences (24: 426).

This led Husserl to re-conceive phenomenology in terms of the *transcendental idealist* tradition of philosophy, which he traces not just to Kant (with whom he acknowledges his 'basic affinity', *Ideen* I §16), but, more importantly and controversially, especially given the later reception of his thought, to Descartes' discovery of an egological subjectivity that cannot be thought away even in the most radical doubt. Husserl offers a demythologized version of transcendental idealism: there is no such thing as the 'thing in itself'; all being and objectivity must be understood as the product of subjective accomplishments, and cannot be thought without them. As he put it in 1908, 'Transcendental phenomenology is the phenomenology of constituting consciousness' (24: 425). Thus in his 1924 address to the Kant Commemoration held in Freiburg on the bicentennial of Kant's birth, he says that, 'despite all remoteness from Kant's fundamental presuppositions, guiding problems and methods', there is a 'manifest essential kinship' (7: 230) between his philosophy and that of Kant, from whom he had taken the term 'transcendental'. He sees himself as radicalizing Kant, challenging the typical nineteenth-century reading of him as a *psychologist* of the a priori forms of human consciousness. Indeed, Husserl believes he

has taken a step beyond Kant and Hume by clarifying the true meaning of the a priori as having nothing to do with inner mental structures, but referring to the domain of essence (Hua 2: 51), to what necessarily belongs to the nature of something as the very kind of thing it is.

In similar vein, Husserl wants to recover what he perceives to be the ground-breaking *transcendental* insights of René Descartes (1599–1650), especially in the latter's *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641/2), insights that had subsequently been covered up and lost in the naturalism of John Locke and his successors. Husserl's emulation of Descartes is explicitly brought to the fore in his *Paris Lectures* of 1929, where he characterizes his programme as almost a 'new Cartesianism' (*PV*, p. 3; Hua 1: 3).

In his mature work, Husserl explicitly defended a radicalized version of transcendental idealism whereby all 'being and sense' are produced by the transcendental ego, or, more precisely, by a plurality of embodied, intersubjectively related egos which both produce the world and are incarnated in it. The life of knowing is to be approached as a life of *meaning*, of *intending*; it is always in its very essence object-directed. But there are different ways in which objects present themselves to the experiencer, different modes of 'object-having' (as Husserl puts it) *correlated with* the different cognitive 'attitudes' (*Einstellungen*) such as believing, judging, knowing.¹¹ He explicitly characterizes phenomenology as the systematic study of the essential correlation of subjectivity with objectivity (24: 441). It is essentially 'correlation-research'.

The Phenomenological *Epoché* and Reduction

In his mature work, from 1905 onwards, Husserl distinguished between the 'philosophical' or 'transcendental' attitude and the 'natural attitude' (*IP*, p. 15; Hua 2: 17), according to which we accept the world and its forms of givenness as simply *there*, 'on hand' (*vorhanden*; Hua 3/1: 53) for us. The philosophical attitude arises when we recognize the natural attitude as one of naïveté. Borrowing from the Greek sceptics, Husserl terms this disruption or break with the natural attitude, *epoché* (literally 'check' or 'suspension', but used by ancient Greek philosophers to mean 'suspension of judgement'). He characterizes it as a 'certain refraining from judgement' (*Ideen I* §32; Hua 3/1: 55),¹² an 'abstention' (*Enthaltung*), 'bracketing' (*Einklammerung*) or 'putting out of play' (*ausser Spiel zu setzen*). According to this *epoché*, the objects and contents of our experience are now treated simply as phenomena: 'Thus to every psychological experience there corresponds, by way of the phenomenological reduction, a pure phenomenon that exhibits its immanent essence (taken individually) as an absolute givenness' (*IP*, p. 34; Hua 2: 45).

In *Ideen I*, Husserl speaks of *epoché* as a decision, produced by a free act of the mind, to suspend the belief component or commitment of our intentional experiences, to remove or bracket what he calls the 'general thesis' (*Generalthesis*) that assumes the existence of the world, so that we can focus solely on what is given as it is given 'immanently', and are not seduced by our naïve belief in its extantness or 'on-hand-ness' (*Vorhandenheit*).¹³ This procedure is similar to that performed by Descartes with his methodic doubt, but Husserl maintains that his version has an entirely different purpose and, furthermore, that he is not interested in doubt *per se*, but only in the particular exercise of *epoché* as refraining from judgement and modifying itsthetic function. The new attitude arrived at, Husserl terms 'transcendental'. This putting of the very 'obviousness' (*Selbstverständlichkeit*) of the world in question highlights what Husserl calls the 'being-sense' (*Seinssinn*) of the world, its being and meaning, what it *means to be* an entity, in whatever way, and in so doing it also brings the function of our normal, naïve world-acceptance or 'world-belief' (*Weltglaube*) into relief. But it also has the significant effect of bringing our consciousness to bear on consciousness itself, leading to a kind of 'doubling' of the ego, with one side of it acting as a non-participating spectator towards the ongoing activity of natural, conscious life. When we thus grasp experiences and objects in their 'self-givenness' or 'immanence' (in Husserl's sense), we have arrived, he says, at 'the shore of phenomenology' (Hua 2: 45). Entities still have, as it were, a reference to transcendence. Our perceptual objects still carry as it were a 'made in the transcendent world' label on them: 'The relating-itself-to-something-transcendent . . . is an inner characteristic of the phenomenon' (*IP*, p. 35; Hua 2: 46). We are led into a world of the pure phenomenon, of what is self-given, and hence into the domain of the 'evident'.

The Crisis of the Sciences and the Discovery of the Life-World

One of the most exciting aspects of Husserl's contribution is his critical account of the emergence of scientific rationality in European thought. This theme found published expression quite late in his *Crisis of the European Sciences* (1936),¹⁴ but had been a preoccupation in his work since his essay *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* (1910/11). Husserl emphasizes the importance of understanding that original breakthrough to systematic science that occurred in ancient Greece with the discovery of the essential and universal, and in modern Europe, in Galileo and Descartes, with the development towards mathematical formalization that led to the transformation of European and Western culture. Unless the essential form of scientific thought can be under-

stood, and its origin grasped and clarified, the nature of its current crises cannot be understood.

Husserl's investigation into the meaning of modern science aims to recover its 'hidden, innermost motivation' (*Krisis* §5, p. 11; Hua 6: 9) through intellectual reconstruction using a 'genetic' or 'critical historical inquiry' into the 'primal foundations' (*Urstiftungen*) of original scientific breakthroughs. In *Krisis* he shows how it is possible to remain rigorously scientific while divesting oneself of the Cartesian dualist picture of the world that necessarily leads to a reductive scientism. This intellectual reconstruction (he uses the word 'hermeneutics' in his 1931 Frankfurt lecture (Hua 27: 177)) must recover not only the scientist's own motivations but also other forces which were at work on him, even if he did not sense them. Husserl writes:

In order to clarify the formation of Galileo's thought we must accordingly reconstruct (*rekonstruieren*) not only what consciously motivated him. It will also be instructive to bring to light what was implicitly included in his guiding model (*Leitbild*) of mathematics, even though, because of the direction of his interest, it was kept from his view: as a hidden, presupposed meaning it naturally had to enter into his physics along with everything else. (*Krisis* §9a, pp. 24–5; Hua 6: 21–2)

This reconstruction helps remove distortions that threaten the meaning of science: for instance, the danger of substituting the formalized version of objects and the world found in the mathematical-experimental sciences for the real living world in which humans flourish.

Husserl wants to recognize the primacy of our life-world (*Lebenswelt*) which founds all scientific inquiry.¹⁵ This notion of 'world' as the 'horizon of horizons' emerged in *Ideen I* in connection with the consideration of life in the natural attitude. As conscious beings, we always inhabit – *in a pre-theoretical manner* – an experiential world (3/1: 73), given in advance (*vorgegeben*), on hand (*vorhanden*), and always experienced as a unity. It is the universal framework of human endeavour, including our scientific endeavours. It is the general structure that enables objectivity and thinghood to emerge in their different ways in different cultures. Husserl sometimes speaks as if the structure of the life-world is invariant for all; but according to his more differentiated account, there is not one single life-world, rather there is a set of intersecting or overlapping worlds, beginning from the world which is closest to us, the 'home world' (*Heimwelt*), and extending to other worlds which are farther away, 'foreign' or 'alien worlds', the worlds of other cultures, and so on.¹⁶ Husserl even projected a new science of this much-disparaged world of opinion, or *doxa* (*Crisis* §44, p. 155; Hua 6: 158).

Husserl's Achievement

Husserl has, at various times, been characterized as caught in Cartesian metaphysical presuppositions (by Heidegger), as a bourgeois rationalist (by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer), an epistemological foundationalist (by Richard Rorty) and so on. Indeed, on the basis of a casual and superficial reading, it is relatively easy to detect strains of introspectionism, foundationalism, Cartesian solipsism and so on in his work. But the true Husserl is a much more complex and compelling thinker. While he does believe in beginning one's philosophical meditations from the standpoint of oneself, he is by no means a philosopher of the isolated, solipsistic, 'Cartesian' consciousness. Indeed, he has a deep understanding of the essentially communal and intersubjective nature of human experience. Similarly, there is a fairly standard view of Husserl that his search for a priori essential ('eidetic') structures failed to recognize the brute facticity, historicity and finitude of human existence that Heidegger and later French existentialist thinkers have emphasized as central to the human condition. To invoke Hans-Georg Gadamer's vignette, Husserl somehow 'forgot' history. But in fact, he recognizes the essentially temporal character of consciousness and subjectivity, and while emphasizing its transcendental role as producer of 'being and meaning', also insists on its necessary embodiment, historicity and finitude. Furthermore, Husserl, especially in his later years, not only had a deep interest in the history of modern philosophy as the explicit working-out of the ideal of self-knowledge, he had a poignant awareness of the fragility of the scientific project in the face of the growing scepticism, relativism and irrationalism of the age, and sought, notably in *Krisis*, to mount a spirited defence of self-critical universal rationality as the only way to combat the descent into barbarism so visible in the Germany of the 1930s.

Fortunately, a number of important studies have helped to overcome these stereotypes by offering much fuller and more nuanced accounts of Husserl's *œuvre*.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there is still considerable ignorance about the meaning of his achievement. In this book, therefore, I want as far as possible to provide a more balanced picture of Husserl's philosophical achievements, to read through all his work and not just his early books, and to free him from the accumulated layers of post-Heideggerian interpretation, to recover him as an exciting and original philosopher in his own right.¹⁸

Difficulties in Reading Husserl

One should not underestimate the difficulties involved in attempting an overview of Husserl's achievement. His work is complex and, even

with growing English translations, relatively inaccessible. As even the most casual encounter will confirm, he is a difficult – even tortuous – thinker, beset by constant doubts about the nature and legitimacy of his project, struggling to overcome periods of mental despondency and inability to move forward, incessantly revising his position and advocating a plurality of approaches to his transcendental ‘first philosophy’. He wrote incessantly, mostly for himself. As his former student, the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden (1893–1970) remarked, ‘Husserl wrote because writing was his manner of thinking.’¹⁹ The result is a vast, untidy range of unpublished writings, ranging from short private notes in shorthand to relatively complete book manuscripts, brought almost to the point of publication and then abandoned by their frustrated author.

There are also genuine difficulties with his published books, not only because they range over many complex, technical areas – from the meaning of signs and the nature of the forms of judgement to the arcane areas of the ego’s self-constitution in time (its ‘self-temporalization’) and its co-operation with the ‘community of monads’ to constitute the objective world – but also because their publication dates do not necessarily correspond in any straightforward way to stages of his own development. It is now clear from the ongoing publication of his research manuscripts by Husserl Archives teams that he often pursued several avenues of approach more or less in parallel, and his ‘zig-zag’ method of referring backwards and forwards defeats any simplistic concept of progression. Moreover, his published books – just six in his lifetime – were usually occasioned by external circumstances, and do not adequately reflect his thought as a whole. In most of these books (e.g. *Ideen I*, *CM*, *Krisis*) his focus is mostly procedural; he labours to set out and justify the theoretical foundations of phenomenology as a distinct science and as providing intellectual clarification for all scientific knowledge. These publications at best should be considered like the visible tip of an iceberg, the vast bulk of which lies ‘under water’, i.e. in his manuscripts. These private research writings often contain much more detailed analyses of phenomena than those found in the published works: for instance, his detailed analyses of memory, fantasy, image- or picture-consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*), judgement, empathy, intersubjectivity, time-consciousness and so on. Fortunately, this ‘hidden’ Husserl is now coming to light in the critical Husserliana edition, now extending towards forty volumes. Undoubtedly, there are still many twists and turns in his progress to be uncovered and understood; nevertheless, we are now beginning to see the overall shape and extent of his lifelong meditations on the nature of consciousness, cognition, embodiment and communal rational life. His voluminous correspondence (now available in a ten-volume critical edition²⁰), includes illuminating exchanges with other

prominent philosophers of his day, offering considerable insight into his motivations.

The Approach of this Book

Despite these difficulties, I hope here, by drawing selectively from his *oeuvre* as a whole, to introduce readers to the living texture of Husserl's thought through his research life, showing the main themes of his thinking and attempting as far as possible to show how they emerge and develop. I want to emphasize the continuity of Husserl's thought and the manner in which his transcendental philosophy is already prefigured in his descriptive phenomenology. Despite the variety of themes and approaches, there is only *one* Husserl.

I shall draw both from the published books, all of which have been translated into English, and the extensive *Nachlass*, which is mostly not available in English aside from his *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, his *Analyses of Active and Passive Synthesis*²¹ and some other works. I shall also refer to works not available in English, e.g. *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung*,²² and *Erste Philosophie* ('First Philosophy', *EP I* and *EP II*), an extremely rich source of material on Husserl's conception of the history of modern philosophy (and his own position in relation to it). *EP I*, with its 'critical history of ideas' involving extensive discussions of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Leibniz and Kant, gives the lie to the popular opinion that Husserl, as a trained scientist, was not well versed in philosophy. *EP II* marks an important transition in Husserl's work, in that it focuses on the theory of the phenomenological reduction, the theme he took to be vital to the whole phenomenological project. It attempts to explicate the sense in which phenomenology as an 'ultimately grounded' science must investigate its own conditions of possibility, in terms of its own possibility of reflecting on its own operations. Iso Kern's three-volume edition of Husserl's research on intersubjectivity, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität: Texte aus dem Nachlass (On the Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity: Texts from the Posthumous Works)*, Hua 13–15, has been extensively commented on by German and French philosophers, but is hardly known in the Anglophone world, apart from Husserl specialists. These volumes offer extensive discussions both of Husserl's account of the intuition of others in 'empathy' as well as analyses of social acts and communal forms of intentionality.²³ Volume 15, especially, contains many of Husserl's late reflections on time, the transcendental ego, transcendental intersubjectivity, the community of monads and the Absolute, showing that Husserl was capable of entering into the most complex of metaphysical discussions. This dense and difficult speculation in the mid-Thirties is all the more surprising when

one puts it beside the wonderfully clear and penetrating discussions of science and philosophy in the Vienna Lecture and *Krisis* texts of the same period. In these texts Husserl struggled to explicate the full sense of his transcendental problematic.

Thanks to recent publication of Hua 34 and 35, I have been able to make use of Husserl's writings from the Twenties, works composed in that long period between the publication of *Ideen I* (in 1913 and *FTL* in 1929). The recent publication of Husserl's 1922/3 lectures, *Einleitung in die Philosophie (Introduction to Philosophy)* and the London Lectures of 1922 (both in Hua 35), also provides significant new insight into Husserl's explication of phenomenology in terms of a particular reading of the history of modern philosophy, and especially his attempt to rethink and revive Descartes' project in the *Meditations*.

My approach in the book is both chronological and thematic. In chapter 1, I describe Husserl's life and intellectual development. He began as a theorist of knowledge, interested specifically in mathematics and logic as modes of knowledge to be investigated by descriptive psychology, which he broadened into, first, eidetic and, later, transcendental phenomenology. In chapter 2, I offer an overview of his conception of philosophy as sense-clarification. Chapter 3 charts Husserl's development from his first 'psychological' investigations into the nature of number to his 'breakthrough' to phenomenology in *LU*. Chapter 4 offers a relatively detailed tour through *LU*, with particular attention paid to the emergence of phenomenology in that work. Chapter 5 departs from the chronological approach to explore the essential structures of consciousness in a more composite way, drawing from across Husserl's *oeuvre*, emphasizing the consistency of his descriptions of conscious acts throughout his career. Here I give a brief exposition of his understanding of the noema, the object as intended, or sense, but I shall not dwell on it because, despite the extensive commentary it has generated, it does not play a great role in his writing after *Ideen I*. His late work took an idealist turn and focused more on the transcendental ego, intersubjectivity and the life-world, and so chapter 6 focuses on central themes of Husserl's mature philosophy: namely, his transcendental idealism.

More and more in his mature writings, Husserl made the philosophizing self a major theme: not just the self of everyday 'natural' experiences, not just the anonymous transcendental ego that functions to give the world its 'being-sense' (*Seinssinn*), but also the self who deliberately philosophizes, the 'detached spectator' whose self-critical self-awareness marks a new and higher possibility for humankind. Chapter 7 attempts to disentangle the various strands of his complex approach to the transcendental ego and to capture the sense of Husserl's growing attachment to transcendental idealism in his late metaphysical musings about the community of 'monads' (his term for the whole individual

person's life) as well as his critical analysis of the meaning of the natural attitude and the 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*) in which humans always live and find themselves. Finally, I conclude with a brief overview and assessment of Husserl's achievement and influence.

For reasons of space, I have had to forgo treatment of Husserl's reflections on ethics and value theory, subjects he pursued for decades, primarily in his lectures (see, e.g., Hua 28 and 37).