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

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

I begin by examining Husserl’s earliest attempt at a general theory of knowledge in the First Edition *Logical Investigations*, which I argue should be understood in broadly Kantian terms, as a project of disclosing the conditions for possibility of knowledge by way of a phenomenological investigation of intentional consciousness. I next look at how Husserl articulates his analysis of knowledge on the basis of the cardinal phenomenological distinction between empty and fulfilled intentions. I trace the development of this distinction from Husserl’s earliest pre-phenomenological work in the philosophy of mathematics to its appearance in the *Logical Investigations*, first in the context of language (Investigation One) and then in the context of the theory of
knowledge itself (Investigation Six). This enables us to see how the clarification of a remarkable and pervasive feature of conscious life—the dynamic interplay between empty and fulfilled intentions—is the true, distinctly phenomenological motivation behind Husserl’s early theory of knowledge. Finally, I argue that Husserl’s epistemology after the so-called “transcendental turn” is largely in keeping with that of the *Logical Investigations*, despite whatever other differences there may be between the two periods. I do so by showing how many of the developments of *Ideas I* draw on resources more or less explicit in the *Investigations*, thereby allowing us to view the later work as enriching and extending, rather than fundamentally altering, the course of phenomenological philosophy.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

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

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

Chapter Four
Epistemology and the “Transcendental Turn” ................................................................. 140
§1. Transcendental Phenomenology: Turn or Continuation? .............................................. 141
§2. Phenomenology and Naturalism .................................................................................... 148
§3. Absolute Consciousness, The Perceptual Thing, and Epistemology ......................... 157
§4. The Reduction and the Intentional Object ............................................................. 163
§5. Noematic Epistemology: The Problems of Reason and Actuality ...................... 175

Bibliography ............................................................................................................... 187
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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

Hua I  Cartesianische Meditationen
Hua II  Die Idee der Phänomenologie
Hua III Ideas zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie
Hua VI  Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie
Hua VIII Erste Philosophie. I Teil
Hua XII Philosophie der Arithmetik
Hua XVIII Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik
Hua XIX:2 Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis. II. Teil
Hua XX:1 Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. I. Teil
Hua XXII Aufsätze und Rezensionen (1890-1910)
Hua XXIII Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1898-1925)
Hua XXIV  
*Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie: Vorlesung 1906/07*

Hua XXV  
*Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911-1921)*

“Bericht”  
“Bericht über deutsche Schriften zur Logik in den Jahren 1895-99”

“Erinnerungnent”  
“Erinnerungnent an Franz Brentano”

“Kant”  
“Kant und die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie”

“Philosophie”  
“Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft”

“Selbstanzeige”  
“Selbstanzeige der *Logischen Untersuchungen*”

“Studien”  
“Psychologischen Studien zur Elementaren Logik”

“Vorrede”  
“Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage der Logischen Untersuchungen”
Jedenfalls weniger Studium an eine Lehre wenden, als nötig ist, ihren Sinn zu fassen, und sie doch kritisieren, das verstößt gegen die ewigen Gesetz literäischer Gewissenhaftigkeit.

E. Husserl, 1921
CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO HUSSERL AND THE “PROBLEM” OF KNOWLEDGE

§1. Husserl and the Question of Epistemology

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

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

¹ This point has been made, rather colorfully, by J.N. Findlay: “We have [in Husserl] none of the misplaced economy, suitable in natural science, where it is all-important to have only a few explanatory ultimates or laws, carried over into the realm of thought-distinctions, where it encourages one to massacre some valuable concept . . . [and] so fears the ‘jungle’ of ramifying things of reason that it is prepared to sink into the Serbian bog of enforced simplification” (“Translator’s Introduction” to *Logical Investigations, Volume I* [Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000], 5). Herbert Spiegelberg has made this same point, though in more subdued tone, writing that Husserl’s phenomenology represents a “conscious challenge to the reductionism of Occam’s Razor.” (*The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* [The Hague: Martinis Nijhoff, 1982], 715)
philosophy—as evidenced by his several “introductions” to phenomenology—further compounds the scholar’s predicament. The self-described “perpetual beginner” was forever uneasy, if not openly dissatisfied, with his conclusions, treating them as always tentative and in need of further refinement or reworking. At best, they were considered provisional steps in the slow, asymptotic approach toward phenomenological adequacy. Husserl’s phenomenology was “a philosophy which remained constantly in the making,” as Herbert Spiegelberg has put it.3

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

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

3 Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, 71.

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

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

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

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

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\(^6\) This is in contrast with the Southwest school of H. Rickert, E. Lask, W. Windelband, et. al, which took the distinctive kind of the value (*Wert*), validity (*Geltung*), or as we might say to day, norms, constitutive of cultural (*geistigen*) practices—rather than the logical essence of theory—as its philosophical point of departure.
Now these historical and biographical remarks would count for little if they did not resonate with Husserl’s actual texts. Fortunately, one need not spend much time with Husserl’s work to discover a persistent interest in epistemological issues. Repeatedly one comes across references to “a critique of knowledge” (Hua XIX:2, 543/672), “the great problems of knowledge” (Hua XIX:2, 543/672), “a new idea of the grounding of knowledge” (Hua I, 66/27), and the like. In a lecture course on the theory of knowledge, Husserl goes so far as to say that “authentic [eigentliche] philosophy begins” with nothing other than “the establishing of epistemological problems” (Hua XXIV, 179/176). And so it is with no little justification that Robert Sokolowski has claimed that “the chief aim [Husserl] has is to establish philosophy as the radical clarification of knowledge.”

According to William McKenna, it is precisely the enduring epistemological problematic running through Husserl’s several “introductions” to phenomenology that binds them together. “Despite whatever differences there may be between the ‘introductions’,,” he writes, “there is one problem which emerges in all of them, namely the problem of cognition of the world.” And so despite the dense, sometimes thorny, thicket of distinctions, technical vocabulary, and lengthy analyses, we can clear some interpretative space for ourselves by recognizing the central place of epistemology in Husserl’s phenomenology.

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8 William McKenna, Husserl’s “Introductions to Phenomenology”: Interpretation and Critique (The Hague: Martinis Nijhoff, 1982), 18; my emphasis.
9 Timothy Stapleton, however, has challenged this view in Husserl and Heidegger: The Question of a Phenomenological Beginning (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), where he puts forward the novel thesis that “an ontological problematic” is at the root of Husserl’s phenomenology, rather than an epistemological one. Stapleton treats the project of epistemology in overtly Cartesian terms, as “a quest for epistemic certitude” concerning our pre-philosophical beliefs about the world, and argues that if such a
And yet it must be admitted that even this space is cluttered by controversy. For while nearly all quarters concede the centrality of epistemology to Husserl’s philosophical enterprise, there are disputes over the precise nature and purpose of Husserl’s epistemological project. For what exactly is the “problem of the cognition of the world,” to use McKenna’s phrase? At its heart is certainly what Husserl calls the “enigma of enigmas,” the way conscious experience transcends itself towards, and comes to know, objects. How can the subjectivity of experience reach out to and come to have knowledge of something objective? This question, however, has been interpreted variously. One common interpretation is to see it as an expression of a concern preoccupying so much of Western philosophy since Descartes’s Meditations: is there a world of objects that exists independently of my mind, and if so, how do I come to have knowledge of this world? This reading of the “problem of the cognition of the world,” or more simply, “the problem of knowledge,” thus construes Husserl’s epistemology as a quest to justify our supposedly naïve, pre-philosophical belief in the objects of everyday experience. For example, Brice Wachterhauser has written that “[i]t is well documented,” that Husserl is engaged in a “search for the final and ultimate justification for knowledge” and that “his search for the fundamentum absolutum et inconcussum

quest is taken to be that “which occasions the radical reflexivity of phenomenology,” then we do nothing less than elevate “apodictic certitude to the status of the final cause underlying the Husserlian project” (13). Now, Stapleton is correct in pointing out that that Husserl’s project is not of this sort. However, this fact does not entitle us, as Stapleton thinks it does, to infer the stronger and more controversial conclusion that Husserl’s phenomenology is ultimately not epistemological in nature. This is so because epistemology need not be understood as the project of justifying pre-philosophical beliefs, particularly, in confrontation with skepticism. As Steven Crowell has points out (Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001], 184), Stapleton is simply guilty of interpreting epistemology too narrowly. If we avoid Stapleton’s mistake by recognizing that epistemology can be interpreted more or less broadly, the real issue confronting us is not whether Husserl was motivated to pursue distinctively epistemological concerns, but rather a question over the precise nature of those concerns.
leads him in Cartesian fashion to the indubitable evidence of the *ego cogito.*”\(^{10}\)

According to Wachterhauser, Husserl takes up the “radical Cartesian demand to defend
the foundations of knowledge beyond all possible doubt.”\(^{11}\) On views like these
Husserl’s phenomenology, in both its method and aims, is shaped by a fundamental
commitment to a conception of epistemology that is more or less Cartesian.
Phenomenology is intended to be first philosophy, a body of apodictic and foundational
truths secured by a reflective regress to subjectivity. And haunting this entire project is,
of course, the spectral presence of skepticism, which provides its ultimate motivation. As
scholars of Husserl no less prominent than Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach
have put it, “Husserl’s philosophy went forth originally from the problematic of
skepticism.”\(^{12}\)

§2. The Cartesian Controversy

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

\(^{10}\) Brice R. Wachterhauser, “The Shipwreck of Apodicticity? Phenomenology’s Journey ‘beyond’
Skepticism,” in Brice R. Wachterhauser (ed.), *Phenomenology and Skepticism* (Evanston:
Northwestern University Press, 1996), 4. It is worth noting that the ‘beyond’ in the title of Wachterhauser’s essay does
not refer to Husserl’s phenomenology, but to that of his successors, such as Heidegger.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 2.
\(^{12}\) Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, *Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston:
Northwestern University Press, 1993), 64.
\(^{13}\) Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and The Space of Meaning*, 4.
traditions both near and far from Husserl’s own have taken a dim view of any philosophy seriously concerned to confront epistemological skepticism. On the one hand, there is the tradition of analytic philosophy. Since the so-called linguistic turn and the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein it has become increasingly fashionable in some quarters of the Anglophone world to regard many traditional philosophical problems—particularly those motivated by skepticism—as mere pseudo-problems thought to endure only on the basis of certain confusions. As such, the proper response to them is not to respond at all, in the sense of offering any type of answer or solution. To the extent that philosophy should trouble itself with such problems, it should only be to demonstrate how they do not need answering by illuminating the errors that get them off the ground and perpetuate their confounding existence. As Barry Stroud has described:

scepticism in philosophy has been found uninteresting, perhaps even a waste of time, in recent years. The attempt to meet, or even to understand, the sceptical challenge to our knowledge of the world is regarded in some circles as an idle academic exercise, a willful refusal to abandon outmoded forms of thinking in this new post-Cartesian age.\footnote{Barry Stroud, \textit{The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), viii.}

Carnap’s distinction between internal and external questions\footnote{See Rudolph Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology” in \textit{Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).} and Quine’s proposal to “naturalize” epistemology\footnote{See W.V.O Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized” in \textit{Ontological Relativity and Other Essays} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).} are emblematic of this way of thinking according to Stroud.\footnote{See Chapters V and VI of \textit{The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism}.}

On the other hand, and much closer to home, we find references to a similar polemical strategy in the early work of Husserl’s one-time assistant, Martin Heidegger. For example, in a 1925 lecture course Heidegger remarks that “[p]erhaps it is precisely the task of philosophical investigation ultimately to deprive many problems of their sham
existence, to reduce the number of problems and to promote investigation which opens the way to the matters themselves.”\textsuperscript{18} In section 43 of *Being and Time* Heidegger identifies the problem of knowledge of traditional epistemology—with its familiar questions regarding the mind’s “transcendence” and our so-called knowledge of the existence of the “external world”—as having just such a sham existence.\textsuperscript{19} For given an appropriate ontological understanding of what it is to be a human being, the project of epistemology is self-defeating or absurd. “The question of whether there is a world at all and whether its Being can be proved, makes no sense if it is raised by Dasein . . . If Dasein is understood correctly, it defies such proofs, because in its being, it already is what subsequent proofs deem necessary to demonstrate for it.”\textsuperscript{20} Thus *pace* Kant, the scandal of modern philosophy is not that the existence of the external world has not yet been satisfactorily proven, but rather that a proof is still sought.\textsuperscript{21,22}

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

\textsuperscript{18} Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 162.
\textsuperscript{19} Heidegger identifies the problem of knowledge with the following questions: “(1) whether any entities which supposedly ‘transcend our consciousness’ are at all; (2) whether this Reality of the ‘external world’ can be adequately proved; (3) how far this entity, if it is Real, is to be known in its Being-in-itself; (4) what the meaning of this entity, Reality, signifies in general” (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [New York: Harper Collins, 1962], 245-46; emphasis in original).
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 246-47; 249.
\textsuperscript{21} “The ‘scandal of philosophy’ is not that this proof has yet to be given, but that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again.” (ibid., 249)
\textsuperscript{22} Don Welton discusses the standard critiques of Husserl made from within both the analytic and continental traditions in the appendix to *The Other Husserl*, see 393-404.
parade themselves as ‘problems’, often for generations at a time.’”23 Now I say that this is curious because if phenomenology is in fact a critical philosophy, one opposed to pseudo-problems in the way Heidegger describes, it would surely be surprising to find Edmund Husserl, the very founder of the phenomenological method, slavishly appropriating problems of a philosophically bankrupt tradition. But in the minds of some commentators, this is precisely what we do find. Husserl’s self-described quest to make philosophy a “rigorous science” is seen as just the latest historical development in the attempt to secure the objectivity of cognition in the face of skeptical worries, what Richard Bernstein has called “Cartesian anxiety.”24 As such, Heideggerian critics of Husserl often use Husserlian phenomenology as a foil for Heidegger’s own. Hubert Dreyfus, for example, claims that the skeptical question, which Heidegger criticizes on the grounds that it “violates the conditions for making sense,” was one “which Husserl was still asking.”25 And William Blattner makes the same point: “the epistemological problematic that motivates Husserl’s conception of phenomenology . . . is precisely the Cartesian question whether we can know the world to exist . . . And it is this question—Can I know the world to exist?—that Heidegger rejects so completely.”26

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

than that. Paul Ricoeur, the translator of the first French edition of *Ideas I*, has argued
that the very “origin of the phenomenological question” was nothing other than “a true
skeptical crisis.”

According to Ricoeur, the question at the heart of this crisis is: “[h]ow
can [consciousness] move beyond itself and encounter its object with certainty?”

And we have already seen how Bernet, Kern, and Marbach stress the importance of skepticism
for Husserl’s philosophy. Indeed, they identify it, as the Heideggerians do, as the
underlying motivation of his phenomenology:

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

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

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

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28 Ibid., 31.
30 “Diese Skepsis und nur sie hatte die grosse historische Mission, die Philosophie in die Bahn einer
Transzendentalphilosophie zu zwingen.”
reduction. What makes this text important to consider for our purposes is the way the reduction is introduced on the back of an open concern with epistemological skepticism. In these lectures, it seems clear that Husserl does feel the weight of skeptical worries in the way Ricouer and Bernet, et al. describe. In fact, he would appear to give voice to them explicitly. For example, Husserl asks at the outset, “[h]ow do I, the knowing subject, know—and how can I know for sure [zuverlässig]—that not only my experiences, these acts of knowing, exist but also what they know exists? Indeed, how do I know that there is anything at all that can be set over against knowledge as an object?” (Hua II, 20/17; my emphasis) These are exactly the types of pernicious concerns motivating the problem of knowledge as described by Heidegger. As such, it should be unsurprising to find Husserl treating objective knowledge as problematic: “At the outset of the critique of knowledge, then, the entire world—physical and psychological nature, and ultimately one’s own human ego, together with all the sciences that deal with such objectivities—must be assigned the index of dubitability. Its being, its validity, remains undecided” (Hua II, 29/23).

Objective knowledge is here treated as problematic because of the aforementioned enigma of transcendence. As Husserl puts it, transcendence is “that enigmatic character [of consciousness] which is the source of all skeptical predicaments” (Hua II, 33/26). Thus, the central, organizing question of epistemology is “[h]ow can knowledge go beyond itself and reach its objects reliably?” (Hua II, 20/17) Transcendence “remains both the initial and the guiding problem for the critique of knowledge” (Hua II, 28/28). The main purpose of the Idea of Phenomenology lectures is to identify the proper philosophical method for addressing this problem. According to Husserl, if a critique of
knowledge is to be possible at all it must be grounded in a type of knowledge other than the knowledge of transcendent reality that is at issue. Fortunately, there is such a type of knowledge, namely, the knowledge that can be acquired from reflection upon my own subjective experiences. With this type of reflection a “sphere of absolute givenness” is disclosed. Here, the problem of transcendence does not arise, as experience and object now both belong on the side of consciousness; *transcendence* has been replaced by *immanence*. This immanent sphere of givenness is secured by what Husserl calls the reduction, a procedure of directing our attention away from its natural focus upon the transcendent objects of putative empirical knowledge to the philosopher’s domain of indubitably given mental experiences.

In every epistemological investigation, into whatever type of knowledge, the epistemological reduction must be performed, that is all transcendence that comes into play here must be excluded, must be applied with the index of indifference, of epistemological nullity, with an index that says: the existence of transcendent entities, whether I believe in them or not, does not concern me here. (Hua II, 39/30)

Thus, there seems to be good reason for believing that Husserl’s phenomenology belongs to the tradition that Heidegger criticizes in *Being and Time*. For Husserl appears to share its concern with the challenge of epistemological skepticism, and he seems to construct his very philosophical method, the phenomenological reduction, in light of this challenge. Furthermore, the stage is all but set to view Husserl as not only engaged in a Cartesian-style regress to subjectivity, but in Cartesian-style foundationalist project as well. Given Husserl’s open admiration for Descartes and his desire to reform “philosophy into a science grounded on an *absolute foundation*,” (Hua I, 43/1; my emphasis) it is tempting to interpret the reduction as an attempt to secure a body of apodictic knowledge
that could serve as an epistemic foundation for empirical knowledge. As Dan Zahavi puts it,

Husserl’s Cartesian way to the reduction, which . . . [appeals] to the fact that consciousness is given with a different kind of evidence than worldly objects, has often led to the claim that Husserl advocates a kind of foundationalism. More precisely, Husserl’s phenomenology has been interpreted as an attempt to disclose a number of certain and indubitable truths that could serve as the systematic foundation and point of departure for all other types of knowledge.31

Seen this way, Husserl’s philosophy is thoroughly Cartesian: in both spirit—the desire to combat skepticism—and letter—the turn toward subjectivity as a means to disclose a source of foundational truths—Husserl follows the philosophical model put forth by Descartes in the Meditations.

§3. An Alternative View

At the end of §1 I claimed that although there is a general critical consensus regarding the centrality of epistemology to Husserl’s phenomenology, there is some controversy about how we should interpret it. For all that has been said up to this point, however, it would seem that there is no controversy at all. All the commentators and evidence considered so far indicate that Husserl’s epistemology is motivated by skepticism to secure or defend the objectivity of knowledge that we unthinkingly take for granted in our everyday lives. But things are not so simple, for reasons that I will begin to describe in this section.

First, and most generally, when discussing the role skepticism plays in Husserl’s thought we must be wary of falling prey to a genetic fallacy. For even if Ricoeur and Bernet, et al. are correct to identify skeptical reflections as an original motivation—

perhaps the original motivation—that propelled Husserl toward phenomenology, it is still an open question as to how these reflections actually inform his work—if they do so at all. Consider the case of Husserl’s early psychologism. We know from Husserl’s own reports that his earliest philosophical steps were guided by “the prevailing assumption that psychology was the science from which logic . . . had to hope for philosophical clarification” (Hua XVIII, 6/42). That Husserl initially believed the content of fundamental logical (and mathematical) concepts to be psychological in nature no doubt motivated his interest in descriptive psychology, an interest that would lead him to develop his own brand of descriptive research, phenomenology. However, we cannot infer on this basis that psychologism is a central feature—or even a feature at all—of the philosophy it helped bring into existence. To settle the question of psychologism’s place in Husserl’s work we must actually turn to that work, and of course when we do, it is not long before we discover Husserl’s fervent anti-psychologism.

The situation facing us is no different with respect to Husserl’s conception of epistemology. To understand Husserl’s epistemology we cannot rest content with genetic considerations, but must turn our attention to the actual content of what he has written on the theory of knowledge. This leads me to my second point. When we make the necessary turn to Husserl’s epistemological writings, we should be careful not to exaggerate the significance of the Idea of Phenomenology. For we must remember that the Idea of Phenomenology (a) is composed of lectures Husserl did not see fit to publish himself, and (b) was written during a period when Husserl was still coming to terms with the “breakthrough” to phenomenology achieved in the Logical Investigations six years...
prior. As such, the picture of phenomenology that emerges there can hardly be taken as definitive, especially if we bear in mind that Husserl would not explicitly introduce the reduction in print for almost another seven years (with the publication of Ideas I in 1913). I have already mentioned the difficulty of finding a fixed or settled statement of Husserl’s conception of phenomenology in any single one of his works; it seems to me especially rash to look to the Idea of Phenomenology, in particular, for anything like one.

If one needs more convincing on this point, however, let us consider Husserl’s lectures on logic and the theory of knowledge from the winter of 1906/07. Like those contained in the Idea of Phenomenology, these lectures given just the previous semester also discuss the reduction, referring to it as “the first, fundamental piece of epistemological method” (Hua XXIV, 188/184). On a casual and selective reading, these lectures can appear as conforming to the Cartesian interpretation of Husserl described in the previous section. After all, Husserl does state plainly that “the critique of knowledge must, by its nature, begin” with skepticism (Hua XXIV, 188/185). In fact, he goes so far as to elevate skepticism to the very “precondition of all philosophizing” (Hua XXIV, 179/176). But this appearance is deceiving since Husserl is also careful to distinguish between two forms of skepticism, and the statements just cited need to be read with this distinction in mind. On the one hand, there is critical skepticism, which “constitutes the necessary starting point of theory of knowledge” (Hua XXIV, 180/177),

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33 The oft repeated language of a “breakthrough” [Durchbruch] was originally Husserl’s own. For examples, see the Foreword to the Second Edition of the Logical Investigations (Hua XVIII, 2/43) and the Introduction to Ideas I. (Hua III, 4/xviii)

34 These lectures have been published in Husserliana XXIV under the title Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie: Vorlesung 1906/07.

35 Husserl explicitly mentions the “phänomenologischen Reduktion” for the first time in a series of manuscript pages written during a 1905 holiday in Seefeld, Austria. These pages, now referred to as the Seefelder Blätter, have been published in Hua X. The term appears shortly thereafter in Husserl’s 1905 time lectures, but unsupported by the kind of sustained exposition found in the Idea of Phenomenology or Husserl’s 1906/07 lectures now under consideration.
and on the other, *dogmatic skepticism*, which Husserl deems an immature philosophical standpoint. “[T]he thoughts of those who persevere in [dogmatic] skepticism,” according to Husserl, “have not matured” (Hua XXIV, 179/177). As such, it should be clear that when Husserl writes approvingly of skepticism it is skepticism in the critical sense. But what does this distinction amount to? Let me start with dogmatic skepticism.

According to Husserl’s exposition, dogmatic skepticism, in both ancient and modern forms, is a philosophical theory concerning human knowledge, specifically one that denies the possibility of rational justification either in general or with respect to some particular domain of putative knowledge. Husserl dismisses the former generalized skepticism, finding “something absurd” (Hua XXIV 181/178) in a view that would deny the possibility of rational justification *in toto* while nonetheless putting forward a substantive philosophical thesis, and confines his remarks to the latter. As he describes it the *Logical Investigations*, this more restricted form of skepticism tries “to limit human knowledge considerably and on principle . . . [removing] from the sphere of possible knowledge wide fields of real being, or such especially precious sciences as metaphysics, natural science, or ethics as a rational discipline” (Hua XVIII, 120-21/137). In these lectures, Husserl singles out the skeptic regarding natural science as his particular focus. For all that such a skeptic can claim to know, there very well may be a world of empirical reality as presupposed by natural science; she does not deny this possibility. But she does deny the possibility that our belief in such a reality could ever be rationally justified; our

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36 Husserl takes the Sophists as exemplars of the former, while Hume to be an exemplar of the latter.
37 Husserl’s stance on global skepticism recalls Hume’s remark from the *Enquiry*: “It may seem a very extravagant attempt of the skeptics to destroy reason by argument and ratiocination” (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 204). In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl considers it “of the essence” of such total skepticism “to be nonsensical” (Hua XVIII, 121/137).
epistemic credentials as thinkers simply fall short of knowledge on this score. Of course this is to overturn one of the most basic, pervasive convictions of human life, and as such, Husserl is quick to point out—as Hume and others did before him—that it is impossible to integrate such a theory into our daily lives. No one, not even the most committed Pyrrhonian, lives as a skeptic. Skeptical conclusions may grip us when insulated in the relative isolation of the study or classroom, but they evaporate in the light of everyday, practical concerns. In the hands of the dogmatic skeptic, philosophy thus becomes alienated from the very life-world—to use a term of the later Husserl—from which it emerged and is always embedded.

That a skeptic’s theories run counter to her lived convictions (*lebendigen Überzeugungen*) in this way is significant to Husserl. According to him it means that “these theories could not actually have served, or at least should not have been allowed to serve, to express what they *verbally signify*” (Hua XXIV, 181/179; my emphasis). This statement shows that skepticism, on its own terms (what it “verbally signifies”), is not the problem for Husserl. Rather, what Husserl sees as the problem is what the existence of skepticism represents or indicates. And what is that? Nothing other than a “lack of clarity [*Unklarheit*] about the meaning and possibility of knowledge” (ibid.). “All the puzzling [skeptical] questions combined signify that we do not understand sciences in general” (Hua XXIV, 177/174). Husserl interprets the rift between skepticism and the convictions of everyday and scientific life as a symptom of underlying confusion about the nature of human knowledge. The problem with dogmatic skepticism is not that its conclusions are drawn too hastily, that we perhaps do after all possess the right sort of epistemic credentials to justify our empirical beliefs, but rather
that it proceeds with the unearned, dogmatic assumption that we have a philosophically adequate account of what knowledge is. A theory of knowledge thus should not be oriented to meet the skeptic’s challenge, but instead aimed at an “ultimate clearing up [letzten Aufklärung]” of the confusion that sets skeptical worries into motion in the first place (Hua XXIV, 165/163). As Husserl describes it in these lectures, the project of epistemology is an attempt at “’elucidating’ [aufklären] . . . [or] understanding [verstehen] what is implied in the meaning of knowledge and its objectivity” (Hua XXIV, 190/187).

The way beyond confusion toward clarification begins with critical skepticism, and ultimately, the reduction. Husserl describes the reduction as involving a form of skepticism because its proper execution first and foremost requires a suspension of the natural tendency to treat our empirical beliefs as objectively valid knowledge. This suspension, which Husserl calls the epoché, entails neither doubt nor disavowal of any knowledge. Husserl makes it clear that from the standpoint of the epoché, empirical beliefs are not seen as unfounded (unbegründet) or unjustified (Hua XXIV, 185/182); no knowledge is to be admitted as valid, but “none [is] disclaimed either” (Hua XXIV, 186/183). This is because unlike dogmatic skepticism, critical skepticism is not itself a substantive theory of knowledge. It is supposed to represent no view on the nature of empirical knowledge, “it forms no opinion about all knowledge and science” (Hua XXIV, 185/182). Instead, the epoché is meant by Husserl to represent part of the necessary method for constructing any philosophically adequate theory of knowledge. Empirical knowledge is called into “question” or made into a “problem” by critical skepticism, but only in the sense of making it an explicit theme for philosophical examination, and
ultimately clarification. In our everyday lives, according to Husserl, we “dwell” (*leben*) in the achievements of knowledge, making use of these achievements in contexts ranging from the mundane and practical to the esoteric and highly theoretical. In all of these instances, however, we do not *reflect* on knowledge, on what it “*means* or how it is *possible*” (Hua XXIV, 165/162; my emphasis). This type of unnatural reflection is “the task of the philosopher” (Hua XXIV, 163/161). To carry out this distinctly philosophical task we must bring knowledge “before our eyes” (Hua XXIV, 178/175), “make knowledge itself into an object” (Hua XXIV, 200/196), and this first requires that we no longer make use of it, that we put it out of play. So long as knowledge remains subservient to practical interests, rather than philosophical ones, it will remain obscured from our view, absorbed as we are in pursuing whatever task is at hand.

Critical skepticism therefore holds our usual claims to knowledge in abeyance so that they may come into view for philosophical analysis. Of course, to hold all knowledge claims in abeyance, to completely refrain from judgment would be to render a theory of knowledge impossible (Hua XXIV, 195-96/192). After all, a theory of knowledge is an attempt to render correct judgments concerning the “meaning and possibility” of knowledge; it is itself a philosophical striving for knowledge. Fortunately, then, critical skepticism does not condemn us to silence. The epoché only puts out of play and makes no use of the kind of knowledge that, on reflection, occasions perplexity. For the employment of such knowledge could never allow us to reach the clarity we seek; it would be akin to permitting the blind to lead the blind. What is required to make a start in the theory of knowledge, then, are “instances of knowledge that . . . [are] of such a nature that any doubt is pointless for them, that any possible question concerning their
“meaning” and their possibility is answered *eo ipso* as soon as it is asked, that nothing can be intelligibly said about any lack of clarity with regard to them” (Hua XXIV, 194-95/191). As in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl here too follows the “fundamental Cartesian meditation” (Hua XXIV, 198/194) and argues that knowledge of the way subjective experiences appear satisfies this requirement. That an object is actually given to me with objective validity by way of a certain subjective, cognitive experience can create puzzlement and even lead to skeptical denials, but that I actually live through an experience, and that this experience *appears* or *purports* to be objectively valid, cannot be subject to confusion or doubt. As Husserl puts it,

> [i]f I do not understand how subjective perception can actually perceive a real object, grasp it cognitively in its way . . . indeed, if in my perplexity I doubt whether it can the least do this, *I nevertheless have the perception*. It is an absolute this-there [*Dies-da*], something whose existence it makes no sense to doubt. (Hua XXIV, 199/195; my emphasis)

Hence, Husserl argues that the execution of the epoché leaves open a field of possible knowledge to explore, namely the domain of indubitably given subjective appearances or phenomena. The reflective turn to our cognitive experiences, raising them to the level of thematic awareness while making no use of the transcendent knowledge bracketed by the epoché, is the reduction proper. 38 Having made our cognitions into appearing objects in this way, we can “make statements about them, compare them with one another, classify them, etc.” (Hua XXIV, 197-98/194). The hope is that since we have knowledge only by way of our various cognitive experiences (“knowledge is a subjective matter . . . realized in the knowing subject” (Hua XXIV, 179/166)), their analysis can help to clear up “the

38 That this turn is accompanied by the methodological strictures of the epoché is crucial for Husserl. So much so that he often does not distinguish between the epoché and the reduction, speaking simply of the reduction.
problems that torment us” and invite skepticism about human knowledge (Hua XXIV, 198/194).

I have discussed these lectures at some length for two reasons. First, they should give us some pause in accepting the kind of overly Cartesian reading of Husserl’s theory of knowledge often inspired by *The Idea of Phenomenology*. For although the reduction is introduced—as it is in *The Idea of Phenomenology*—on the basis of the Cartesian insight concerning the privileged givenness of the subjective, it is clear in these lectures that Husserl intends to put this insight to a very different use from Descartes. In fact, Husserl makes it a point to contrast the objective of Cartesian epistemology with his own (C.f. Hua XXIV, 188/185). The Cartesian is concerned with “a complete rebuilding of all science . . . realized on absolutely unshakeable ground,” but Husserl’s stated goal of “clearing up” knowledge is not like this search for an ultimate justificatory foundation for empirical knowledge. As we have seen, it is a project of reflective elucidation through which the cognitive achievements of science “become thoroughly understandable [verständlich]” rather than justified (Hua XXIV, 189/186; my emphasis). As such, Husserl can claim that “[t]he existing sciences are essentially neither enhanced [verehrmehrt] nor downgraded [vermindet] by the truths of critique of knowledge” (ibid.). Instead, we simply come to “understand what makes them sciences, the ultimate meaning of their attainments, the ultimate meaning of the objectivity that they know and determine” (ibid.). Second, these lectures provide a convenient way of previewing the general interpretation of Husserl’s epistemology that I will defend in this dissertation. For when we turn to Husserl’s published work devoted specifically to the theory of knowledge, in particular the sixth of the *Logical Investigations* and Part Four of *Ideas I*,


nowhere do we find anything like an attempt to rationally reconstruct empirical
knowledge on the basis of an indubitable foundation, or any other attempt to answer the
skeptic. Instead, we find a systematic attempt to carry out just the sort of “clearing up” or
clarification indicated in these lectures.

That Husserl sets before himself a task of this sort is not, philosophically
speaking, particularly novel. Clarifying the nature of knowledge and related
epistemological notions is a perfectly recognizable philosophical project with a history
dating back at least to Plato. Since the early modern period, however, skepticism has
loomed large in philosophical discussions of knowledge, so much so that epistemological
pursuits concerned with things other than skepticism have attained a lower profile by
comparison. Perhaps this helps explain why it seems so natural to many to interpret
Husserl’s epistemology as orbiting around a skeptical axis. However, from the very
moment of his phenomenological breakthrough in the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl
distinguished between two approaches to the theory of knowledge in an attempt to better
define the specific object of *his* epistemological interest. 39  Husserl’s distinction mirrors
what the contemporary epistemologist William Alston has described as the “important
distinction between two [epistemological] enterprises,” namely, *meta-epistemology* and
*substantive epistemology*. 40  According to Alston, meta-epistemology “is concerned with
the basic concepts of knowledge, truth, belief, justification, rationality and so on.” 41

“Assuming that we do have knowledge (justified beliefs) of the relevant sort,” meta-

39 See the Introduction to the second volume; Hua XIX:1, 26-7/264-65.
epistemology tries “to understand” that—determine what the conditions are under which one has knowledge (justified beliefs) in that domain, make such internal distinctions in the domain as seem called for, clarify the basic concepts involved in carrying out these tasks, and so on.”⁴² This is meant to contrast with substantive epistemology, the attempt to “use these concepts [knowledge, truth, justification, etc.] to arrive at results . . . on what knowledge or justified belief we have.”⁴³ In this type of epistemological enterprise one “can raise the radical question as to whether we have any knowledge (justified belief) . . . This amounts to deciding how to react to skepticism.”⁴⁴

Husserl draws his analogous distinction in the introduction to the second volume of the Logical Investigations, where he describes an approach to the theory of knowledge centered on “questions concerning the justifiability of accepting ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ realities which transcend consciousness, what the essence of these realities is, and which laws govern them” (Hua XIX:1, 26/264). Included in such questions is “[t]he question of the existence and nature of the ‘external world’ [Außenwelt]” (ibid.). This approach, which Husserl here labels “metaphysical” and elsewhere the “metaphysical problem of knowledge,”⁴⁵ is then contrasted with another that entirely prescinds from these types of questions. “We must entirely keep apart from the theory of knowledge [metaphysical] questions . . . The theory of knowledge . . . will not enter upon the specific question of whether we really can arrive at such knowledge [e.g. of the external world] from the data we actually have, nor will it attempt to realize such knowledge” (ibid.). What Husserl

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⁴² Alston, “Perceptual Knowledge,” 224; my emphasis.
⁴³ Alston, Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge, 2.
⁴⁴ Alston, “Perceptual Knowledge,” 224; my emphasis.
here simply calls ‘the theory of knowledge’ he later in the text refers to as a ‘formal’ or ‘general’ theory of knowledge (Hua XIX:1, 27/265). This analog of Alston’s meta-epistemology is the Aufklärung of knowledge discussed in the 1906/07 lectures, since it seeks to provide just what those lectures argued to be philosophically lacking, namely “an evident understanding of thinking and knowing as such . . . [and] the meaning of ‘validity’, ‘justification’, ‘mediate’ and ‘immediate evidence’, and their opposites” (Hua XIX:1, 25/263; my emphasis). It is a specifically formal theory of knowledge because it is not concerned with the substance of our knowledge, but rather with “knowledge as such,” that is, the general nature of knowledge irrespective of its subject matter. As Husserl succinctly puts it, his epistemology seeks the “essence of the form of knowledge in contradistinction to its matter” (Hua XVII, 6/42; my emphasis). Consequently, Husserl’s chosen line of epistemological inquiry does not aim at rendering verdicts regarding the validity of any of our putative knowledge claims (or general classes thereof); it is not substantive epistemology, to use Alston’s term. And so the attribution of a thoroughgoing Cartesianism to his epistemology takes on a rather queer appearance. For far from a straightforward continuation of the Cartesian epistemological tradition, Husserl’s epistemology, in its very point of departure, puts to one side precisely the sort of questioning—what Husserl here describes as metaphysical—that provides Descartes with his principal motivation. In its concrete execution, then, it would seem that Husserl’s epistemology does not raise, let alone attempt to answer, skeptical questions.

46 The language of Aufklärung appears several times in this passage with Husserl describing his theory of knowledge as a “clearing up of the ideal essence and sense of cognitive thought” (Hua XIX:1, 26/264).
47 This obvious analogy here is, of course, formal logic, which studies the various modes of proper inference regardless of what such reasoning may happen to be about.
§4. The Basic Orientation of Husserlian Epistemology

Considerations like these have provided grist for alternate interpretations of Husserl’s epistemology and its relationship to Cartesianism that are striking in their opposition to the interpretation discussed above in §2. Elizabeth Ströker, for example, has written that, “skepticism is not at all a problem that occupies [Husserl].” As she explains,

[Husserl’s] project is not the doubting of knowledge that . . . has every right not to be doubted. Rather it is the grasping of what takes place and must take place in all knowledge so that knowledge can achieve what we take it to achieve. Thus, for Husserl, the question is not whether knowledge is capable of encountering its object. His question is, rather, how we are to comprehend the fact that knowledge comes to have the validity ascribed to it, and what talk about its validity and truth means and can only properly mean.

Dallas Willard makes a similar point by emphasizing how “it is clarification, not justification which [Husserl] seeks.” For Willard this means that “[w]hen [Husserl] asks how a certain type knowledge is possible, the how is not the skeptical ‘how,’ and does not mean ‘whether’ . . . the general skeptical ‘how’ is not the question to be answered by the theory of knowledge.” In distinguishing between the questions of whether knowledge is possible, on the one hand, and how it is possible, on the other, both Ströker and Willard are no doubt alluding to the kind of distinction made by Kant in the Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. For unlike the first Critique, the Prolegomena pursues what Kant refers to as an “analytical” approach to the question of the synthetic a priori. On this approach, the point is not to demonstrate or prove that synthetic a priori

48 Elisabeth Ströker, Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 50; my emphasis.
49 Ibid.
50 Dallas Willard, Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), 5; my emphasis.
51 Ibid.; my emphasis.
knowledge is possible, as the skeptic might demand, but rather to analyze such
knowledge in order to discern the necessary conditions of its possibility. As Kant himself
puts it, “we can say with confidence that certain pure a priori synthetic cognitions are
actual and given, namely pure mathematics and pure physics . . . We have therefore,
some, uncontested, synthetic knowledge, a priori, and need not ask whether it be possible
(for it is actual) but how it is possible.”

In this dissertation I stand with Ströker and Willard, and argue that Husserl’s
approach to epistemology, in its most basic orientation, is analogous to that of Kant in the
Prolegomena in the general sense that Husserl is not concerned with the question of
whether I actually possess empirical knowledge, but rather with the question of how such
knowledge is possible. That Husserl would approach the theory of knowledge in such
generally Kantian terms should not be completely surprising when one remembers the
intellectual milieu of academic German philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century.
As I mentioned above, Neo-Kantianism was the order of the day, and although Husserl
has reported on his distance from the movement, it is hardly unimaginable that it would
have influenced him at least in the way he framed certain philosophical problems.
Furthermore, over the course of his career Husserl increasingly came to acknowledge
Kant as one of his closest intellectual forbearers. Even in the supposedly “pre-

53 See note 5 above.
54 For example, Husserl writes in Ideas I that although Descartes and Hume both made important advances
toward phenomenological philosophy, “the first to correctly see it was Kant, whose greatest intuitions
become wholly understandable to us only when we had obtained by hard work a fully clear awareness of
the peculiarity of the province belonging to phenomenology” (Hua III, 133/142). In “Reminiscences of
Brentano” (1919), Husserl reflects more candidly on his relation to Kant, and German Idealism more
generally.

Having been completely under Brentano’s influence when I began philosophy, it took some time
before I arrived at the conviction, which at present is shared by many researchers who are intent
transcendental” period of the *Logical Investigations*, Kant is cited as an important influence and a precursor.\(^{55}\) Thus, Husserl wrote in 1924 that from the *Logical Investigations* to the *Ideas* there “emerged an obvious and essential affinity [Verwandtschaft] between phenomenology and the transcendental philosophy of Kant” ("Kant," 230).\(^{56}\)

However, it is not my intention to argue that Husserl is a straightforward Kantian any more than it is my intention to paint him as a straightforward Cartesian. For although Husserl sets about answering questions of a generally Kantian sort, he does so in his own distinctive ways, in particular, by drawing on a concept that received renewed philosophical currency in the latter half of the nineteenth thanks to Brentano: intentionality. In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* Brentano seized on the way conscious experience is characterized by a directedness or relation of reference to an object. Our experiences are always *of* or *about* something: “in presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in

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on a rigorous scientific philosophy, that the Idealist systems—basically no different from any of the previous philosophies in the epoch which began with Descartes—should rather be seen as a kind of youthful immaturity, and should, as such, be very highly esteemed. It might be true that Kant and the other German Idealists offered little that was satisfying and tenable for a scientifically rigorous treatment of the problem and motives that deeply concerned them: [nevertheless] those who are really able to understand these motives and to enter into their intuitive content are certain that in the idealistic systems completely new and extremely radical dimensions of philosophical problems are coming to light, and that it is only through their clarification and through the elaboration of the method of philosophy called for by the very nature of these problems, that the ultimate and highest aims of philosophy will be revealed. ("Erinnerungen," 309/50-1)

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\(^{55}\) For example, in the Sixth Investigation Husserl writes that despite various points of disagreement “we nonetheless feel ourselves quite close” to Kant (Hua XIX:2, 732/833). Husserl also credits Kant as one of his inspirations for the conception of pure logic defended in the first volume of the *Investigations*. And as should become clear in the following chapter especially, referring to the *Logical Investigations* as "pre-transcendental" is misleading on all but a very narrow reading of "transcendental".

\(^{56}\) “Denn in der Prinzipiellen Fortbildung, welche die Phänomenologie in meiner Lebensarbeit genommen hat, in ihrem Entwicklungsang von einer neuartig gestalteten Methode fur Ursprunganalysen—so in ihrem ersten Durchbruch in den *Logischen Untersuchungen*—zu einer neuartigen und im strengsten Sinne eigenständigen Wissenschaft—der reinen oder transzendentalen Phänomenologie meiner *Ideen*—hat sich eine offenebare Wesensverwandtschaft zwischen dieser Phänomenologie und der Transzendentalphilosophie Kants herausgestellt.”
desire desired, and so on.” Husserl takes Brentano’s general insight on board, describing intentionality as “the fundamental property of consciousness” (Hua III, 337/349). Human consciousness is, most generally, a matter of living through experiences, or mental acts, of various identifiable sorts in virtue of which objects appear. Husserl’s conception of intentional consciousness, however, is philosophically pregnant in at least one respect that Brentano’s was not. For unlike Brentano, who was unfavorably inclined toward Kant’s philosophy, Husserl understands conscious experience as transcendental in addition to intentional. As Husserl explains in Ideas I, consciousness can be understood as transcendental because of the special significance intentional acts bear for the theory of knowledge.

The characterization of . . . the pure sphere of mental experiences [Erlebnissphäre] as ‘transcendental’ rests on the fact that . . . [it] is the primal source [Urquelle] in which the only conceivable solution of those deepest problems of cognition concerning the essence and possibility of an objectively valid knowledge. (Hua III, 228/239)

Mental experiences, intentional acts, acquire this paramount epistemological importance on the basis of their role as the conditions for the appearance of objects and by extension, objective knowledge. Acts are, as Husserl puts it in the Logical Investigations, “the source [Quelle] of all those unities-of-validity [Geltungseinheiten] which confront the thinker as objects of thought and knowledge” (Hua XIX:2, 537/667). As such, it is by way of acts that “[a]ll thought, and in particular all theoretical thought and knowledge, is

58 Strictly speaking, however, Husserl does not treat intentionality as the essence of consciousness as Brentano did. Husserl holds that there are some conscious experiences, for example pain sensations, which are not intentional in nature.
59 ‘Act’ and ‘intentional experience’ are synonymous terms for Husserl. The language of ‘psychical acts’ was common among psychologists of the nineteenth century, Brentano included. Husserl had some reservations about adopting a term laden with associations foreign to his own views, as well as no small amount of obscurity, but did so nonetheless in the Investigations. His hope was that his analyses would prove sufficient to convey his meaning. Husserl, however, would employ the language of acts less frequently in his later writings, instead favoring other terms such as noesis and cogitatio.
accomplished [vollzieht]” (Hua XIX:2, 537/667; my emphasis). For Husserl, therefore, the “definitively elucidating procedure of theory of knowledge” is nothing other than “the study of acts” (Hua XXIV, 173-4/170). Indeed, Husserl cites such a study as a “precondition [Vorbedingung]” for the whole of his philosophy (Hua XIX:1, 353/534); “phenomenology,” he says, “begins with problems of intentionality” (Hua III, 337/349).

It is important to note Husserl’s language in the text just cited: problems of intentionality. The concept of intentionality—that consciousness is always consciousness of something—may at first sound platitudinous, even trivial, but for Husserl it names a philosophical problem requiring extensive and probing analyses. This is because intentional consciousness is not simple, bare awareness; it is nothing, for instance, like a single, undifferentiated ray of light that illuminates the world for us. Consciousness does light up the world, but it does so in various and complicated ways. To imagine an object is not to perceive an object; to judge an object is not to recall an object from memory. Objects are intended by a multiplicity of act types each with their own distinct manner of referring to an object.

[T]here are essential, specific differences of intentional relation or intention among acts] . . . . The manner in which a ‘mere presentation’ refers to its object, differs from the manner of a judgment, which treats the same state of affairs as true or false. Quite different again is the manner of a surmise or doubt, the manner of a hope or fear, of approval or disproval, of desire or aversion. (Hua XIX:1, 381/554-55)

In a parallel fashion, the way an object appears to consciousness varies depending on the type of act through which it is given. For example, the way an object is given through the use of language is experientially distinct from the way an object shows up for us in a direct perceptual encounter with it. Matters become increasingly complicated with Husserl’s recognition that “[m]ost, if not all, acts are complex experiences, very often
involving intentions which are themselves multiple” (Hua XIX:1, 381/555). To use our
previous example: through the use of language, say when I am reading a text, my
experience is directed toward the object described by the text, but at the same time, as
part of the same experience, I perceive the words on the page. Here two acts, one
linguistic and one perceptual, are “fused” together in one compound experience.

These observations describe only a small part of the rich complexity that Husserl
locates within the intentional life of the subject, but they nonetheless give us a
provisional sense of the type of phenomena that are the target of the Aufklärung described
in the previous section. Husserl regards knowledge first and foremost as a kind of
intentional experience. And so its clarification must be geared toward the kinds of acts,
and the relations between them, that constitute the possibility of the knowledge
experience.

Genuine theory of knowledge . . . has to do exclusively with systematic
clarification [der systematischen Aufklärung] of the knowledge performance
[Leistung], a clarification in which this must become thoroughly understandable
as an intentional performance. (Hua I, 118/85; my emphasis)

But what exactly is it to “bring to light” or “clear up” the conditions for the possibility of
knowledge? Answering this question brings out another distinctive aspect of Husserl’s
approach to the theory of knowledge vis-à-vis Kant. For although I will argue that
Husserl approved of the general Kantian project of seeking the subjective conditions that
make objective experience, and hence, knowledge, possible, he disapproved of Kant’s
method and by extension, his substantive conclusions. In the Transcendental Aesthetic,
Kant acknowledged that “all thought must, directly or indirectly . . . relate ultimately to

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60 This means that Husserl’s theory of knowledge is in the first instance a clarification of occurrent
knowledge. Dispositional knowledge is analyzed in terms occurrent knowledge; the latter is conceptually
basic for Husserl.
intuitions \textit{[Anschauungen]}\)” (A19/B33). Husserl, however, complains that in his thinking about the conditions for the possibility of experience, Kant failed to relate his thought to any intuition. Kant arrived at his transcendental conditions, the pure categories of the understanding, deductively, by way of an elaborate, and by many accounts, highly obscure argument. For Husserl, Kant’s doctrine of the categories amounts to a theoretical or metaphysical construction, an invidious characterization from the point of view of phenomenology. For “phenomenological explication,” as Husserl tells us, “is nothing like ‘metaphysical construction’; and it is neither overtly nor covertly a theorizing . . . It stands in sharpest contrast to all that, because it proceeds within the limits of pure ‘intuition’” (Hua I, 177/150).

This contrast—between deductive inference and theory, on the one hand, and intuition, on the other—gives us some insight into the form of Aufklärung that is the goal of Husserl’s epistemology. The conditions of the possibility of knowledge are not to be inferred on the basis of some set of possibly questionable premises, for “deductive theorizings are excluded from phenomenology” (Hua III, 157/169). Instead, they are to be genuinely disclosed, that is, made available for a direct, intuitive apprehension; “[w]e must see, behold, what actually lies before us there, just how consciousness looks” (Hua XXIV, 174/170; my emphasis). This “seeing” is accomplished by way of a reflective turn to the actual lived experience of the knowing subject, the \textit{Erlebnisstrom} in which knowledge is realized. Once we have consciousness before our reflective gaze in this way, the object is not to explain what appears, as the neuro-scientist or cognitive psychologist might, but to describe what appears. Only a descriptive analysis of what is

\footnote{Or much less charitably, obscure “mythical \textit{[mythische]}” talk as Husserl puts it in the \textit{Logical Investigations} (C.f. Hua XVIII, 216-17/214) and the \textit{Crisis} (C.f. Hua VI, 116/114).}
involved in actual acts of thinking and knowing can yield the kind of clarification sought by Husserl; “descriptive differences . . . these alone . . . concern the epistemologist” (Hua XIX:1, 398-9/567). To proceed deductively when the phenomenon under investigation can be made an object of direct description is to fall into metaphysical speculation and court the kind of obscurity that is fundamentally at odds with the Aufklärung of knowledge. Thus, the “mythically, constructively inferring method” of Kant must be replaced by “thoroughly intuitively disclosing method” of phenomenology (Hua VI, 118/115). It is this demand that the conclusions of the theory of knowledge consist in descriptions of what can be experientially given, in combination with the turn to consciousness, that makes Husserl’s approach to the theory of knowledge distinctly phenomenological.62

62 David Carr has characterized this demand as the “empiricist in Husserl” (The Paradox of Subjectivity: The Self in the Transcendental Tradition [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 68). And although Husserl was critical of empiricism (see below), Carr is certainly right here. Indeed, Heidegger wrote in Being in Time that “Husserl has not only enabled us to understand once more the meaning of any genuine philosophical empiricism; he has also given us the tools” (Being and Time, 490n). Husserl’s phenomenology definitely shares the spirit of Hume’s rejection of metaphysical speculation in favor of an “experimental” method based on careful observation. And there is more than a passing resemblance between Hume’s project, as described in the Enquiry, of providing the “geography” and “secret springs” of the mind and Husserl’s own goal—as long as we allow that these “secret springs” can ultimately be brought to intuitive givenness (An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, 93). This is especially the case at the time of the Logical Investigations when Husserl did not always clearly distinguish phenomenological from psychological description and his analyses focused exclusively on the act side of the intentionality.

More specifically, however, the demand that epistemology proceed descriptively reveals another influence of Brentano’s empirical psychology. For although the impact of Brentano’s doctrine of intentionality is rightly stressed as pivotal to Husserl’s philosophical development, Brentano’s method of descriptive psychological analysis was no less decisive. Theodeore de Boer is one of the few scholars to emphasize this. (See his The Development of Husserl’s Thought [The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978], particularly Part One, Chapters Two and Four, and Part Two, Chapter Two.) Brentano labeled his psychological method ‘empirical’ because of its ‘experiential basis’, i.e. the way basic psychological concepts are clarified by a “precise study of mental phenomena themselves” as given evidentially in inner perception (Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint, 194). The “fundamental rule” of empirical psychology according to Brentano is “that it should proceed from a study of the objects to be classified and not from an a priori construction” (ibid.). In the context of Brentano’s psychology, ‘empirical’ is meant to distinguish forms of psychological inquiry that are descriptive in nature from those that deal in explanatory hypotheses, what he calls genetic psychology. The relation to Husserl should be clear.

Husserl’s criticism of traditional empiricism is not a rejection of the philosophical significance of experience, but a rejection of empiricism’s specific conception of experience. We can see this in a remark from Husserl’s essay “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science” from 1911: “[a]way with empty word analyses!
Husserl’s phenomenological epistemology, then, must be understood as an intuitive project aimed ultimately at the disclosure and description of the mental acts that make knowledge possible. The specifically phenomenological “problem of knowledge” is a problem of intentionality, an attempt to clarify the intentional structures peculiar to theoretical cognition, rather than answer questions concerning the factual existence of objects. The question of the existence of the world and its objects is not a transcendental question. Husserl’s phenomenological method, the reduction, is constituted precisely by a principled disregard for such questions in order to investigate the very basis upon which they can arise and have sense. Claims to transcendent knowledge are indeed held in abeyance by the reduction, but not so that they might later be justified. To attach a justificatory function to the reduction vis-à-vis empirical knowledge is simply to misunderstand the point and purpose of phenomenology.63 And Husserl tells us as much himself: “[t]he point is not to secure [sichern] objectivity, but to understand [verstehen] it” (Hua VI, 193/189; my emphasis). As such, Husserl describes how

[i]t is naturally a ludicrous, though unfortunately common misunderstanding, to seek to attack transcendental phenomenology as ‘Cartesianism,’ as if its ego cogito were a premise or set of premises from the which rest of knowledge . . . was to be deduced [deduzieren], absolutely ‘secured’ [absoluter ‘Sicherung’]. (ibid.). 64

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63 It is important to note the qualification in this sentence—“vis-à-vis empirical knowledge”—since I do not want to claim that reduction is without any special justificatory function. For very much to the contrary, as we will begin the see in the following Chapter, Husserl’s phenomenological methodology is in large part constructed precisely to ensure legitimacy of philosophical claims. Although Husserl may have been unconcerned to meet skeptical challenges to the ordinary empirical beliefs of the natural attitude, he was concerned to safeguard the validity philosophical enterprise.

64 It is interesting to note that although some Heideggerian critics of Husserl seem to have missed this point, Heidegger did not. For example, in a lecture from 1925 Heidegger describes how Husserl’s theory
Descartes’s attempt to use the indubitable knowledge of the *ego cogito* as an inferential foundation from which the rest of our knowledge could be securely derived was a critical error by Husserl’s lights. Descartes positioned himself at the threshold of phenomenology by turning toward the subject, but was prevented from advancing by an “obtrusive interest” in the epistemic status of the objects of natural sciences (Hua VI, 83/81). This interest was obtrusive and philosophically stultifying because it led Descartes to focus on objects of our knowledge at the expense of the mental acts that intend them.

Descartes, in his haste to ground objectivism and the exact sciences as affording metaphysical, absolute knowledge, does not set himself the task of systematically investigating [subjectivity] . . . with regard to what acts, what capacities, belong to it and what it brings about, as an intentional accomplishment, through these acts and capacities. (Hua VI, 84/82)

By insufficiently appreciating the intentionality of consciousness, Descartes overlooked the stream of mental acts as a possible field of philosophical research. For Husserl, Brentano was the first truly to seize upon the philosophical significance of subjectivity, seeing the possibility of a science of mental phenomena. Subjectivity was no longer a brief stopover on the way to securing the objectivity of natural science, but a domain appropriate for a science in its own right.

Husserl conceives of the reduction as the necessary method of such a science. Its true function is to allow us to attend to, and as a result, put ourselves into a position to describe, the mental acts that make transcendent knowledge possible. The reduction is a

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of knowledge is *not* “a deductive system whose goal is to explain given facts. Husserl expressly rejects this customary sense of a theory of knowledge” (Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 26). Heidegger does say that “we can detect a kinship with Descartes” in Husserl’s phenomenology, but points out that Husserl had “another method and another philosophical goal.” (ibid., 101)
methodological necessity because in our everyday, pre-philosophical lives, what Husserl calls the ‘natural attitude’ (natürliche Einstellung), we live “immersed” or “interested” in the world, that is, in the objects that we intend. All the while, however, the intentional acts that make such an immersion possible remain out of direct view, functioning “anonymously.”

Daily practical living . . . is immersion in the already-given world, whether it be experiencing, or thinking, or valuing, or acting. Meanwhile all those productive intentional functions of experiencing, because of which physical things are simply there, go on anonymously. The experiencer knows nothing about his productive thinking . . . [objects] present themselves because of the hidden performances . . . the intentional performances from which everything ultimately originates remain unexplicated. (Hua I, 179/152-3; my emphasis)

It is for this reason that Husserl hesitated to follow Brentano’s use of ‘psychical phenomena’ as a generic label for conscious experiences.65 For in the natural attitude the psychical is not a phenomenon, that is, an object that appears for consciousness. Instead, the psychical, or in Husserl’s new terminology, the intentional act (later, the noesis or cogitatio) is the condition for the appearance of objects; it is that by means of which an object is presented to consciousness. This is not to say, however, that intentional acts are completely outside conscious awareness; Husserl’s description of acts as “anonymous” or “hidden” should not be taken to imply that he considers them unconscious. On the contrary, Husserl thinks that we have a non-thematic awareness of our own intentional experiences as they run off and transpire; we experience objects with a kind of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Husserl uses the term ‘Erleben’ to distinguish this form of non-objectivating self-awareness from the experience of intentional objects, which he

65 See §11 and §13 of the Fifth Logical Investigation.
labels with ‘Erfahren’. In natural, everyday living, objects are *erfährt*, encountered or confronted, while the acts that present them are simply *erlebt*, lived through.\textsuperscript{66}

A mental act can come to be *erfährt*, that is, experienced as an explicit object for consciousness, but only through the relatively rarefied act of philosophical reflection. On Husserl’s view, this kind of philosophical reflection requires the adoption of a new, unnatural attitude toward conscious experience. In order to understand how the course of everyday experience is possible, we must disengage from the one-sided attention to objects that distinguishes the natural attitude and become a “disinterested onlooker,” attending to the precise modes in which these objects appear and to the mental acts which intend them (Hua I, 73/35). “Rather than living in perception, adverted to the perceived,” Husserl argues that we must instead “direct [our] regard instead to the perceiving, [and] to the own peculiarities of the mode of givenness of the perceived” (Hua III, 201/212).

The turn toward subjectivity by way of the reduction allows us to bring our intentional acts thematically into focus so that they may be described philosophically. This reflective turn away from the natural attitude toward the conditions of its possibility is the heart of Husserl’s phenomenology. It represents the necessary method for realizing Husserl’s twin ambitions: a philosophy that is at once transcendental in nature and grounded upon intuitive givenness.

§5. Overview

Over the course of the chapters to follow I aim to make good on the claims of the preceding two sections by providing a careful account of Husserl’s conception of

\textsuperscript{66} Both ‘Erfahrung’ and ‘Erlebniss’ are usually translated into English with ‘experience’. Context is normally sufficient to convey the sense of ‘experience’ Husserl is employing in a particular passage, but I will often provide the German for the sake of clarity.
epistemology and the role that it plays within his phenomenology. These chapters represent a direct challenge to the view that Husserl was a Cartesian epistemologist, seeking to safeguard the foundations of theoretical knowledge from the challenge of skepticism. Instead, they show that Husserl strives to provide a transcendental clarification of knowledge understood as particular kind of intentional performance. The animating question of Husserl’s theory of knowledge is not whether the achievement of objective knowledge is possible for an experiencing subject, but how it is possible.

I begin in Chapter Two by examining Husserl’s earliest attempt at a general theory of knowledge in the First Edition of *Logical Investigations*. There I show how Husserl conceives of his epistemology in broadly Kantian terms, as a project of disclosing the conditions for possibility of knowledge by way of a phenomenological investigation of intentional consciousness. Then in Chapter Three I look at how Husserl articulates his analysis of knowledge on the basis of the cardinal phenomenological distinction between empty and fulfilled intentions. I trace the development of this distinction from Husserl’s earliest pre-phenomenological work in mathematics to its appearance in the *Logical Investigations*, first in the context of language (Investigation One) and then in the context of the theory of knowledge itself (Investigation Six). This enables us to see that the clarification of a remarkable and pervasive feature of conscious life—the dynamic interplay between empty and fulfilled intentions—is the true, distinctly phenomenological motivation behind Husserl’s early theory of knowledge.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I turn to Husserl’s second major phenomenological work, the first book of *Ideas Pertaining to A Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, in an attempt to show that Husserl’s epistemology after
the so-called “transcendental turn” is largely in keeping with that of the *Logical Investigations*, despite whatever other differences there may be between the two periods. In particular, I argue that the developments of the *Ideas* draw on resources more or less explicit in the *Investigations*, and hence, we can view the *Ideas* as enriching and extending, rather than fundamentally altering, the course of phenomenological philosophy. One important manner in which *Ideas I* succeeds in enriching and extending the phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations* is by the way it takes the intentional object to be within the proper purview of phenomenological analysis. As such, Husserl is able to recast his theory of knowledge in terms that are more consistent and philosophically satisfying than those found in the *Logical Investigations*. Nonetheless, we will see that the epistemology of *Ideas I*, as articulated in the second chapter of its final part, “Phenomenology of Reason,” remains firmly built upon the foundation laid by the Sixth Logical Investigation.
CHAPTER TWO

PHENOMENOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE

LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The *Logical Investigations* was originally published in two volumes, with the first volume, *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, appearing in 1900 and the second, *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, following thereafter in 1901.\(^{67}\) The second volume contains the six investigations themselves and is principally devoted to elaborating a novel account of intentional consciousness along lines generally inspired by Brentano’s descriptive psychology. In the last and largest of these investigations, “Elemente einer phänomenologischen Aufklärung der Erkenntnis,” Husserl brings his penetrating descriptive acumen to bear directly on issues in the theory of knowledge. This sixth investigation represents not only Husserl’s first published work

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\(^{67}\) Husserl would subsequently revise both volumes of the text in an effort to bring them in line with the more mature phenomenological standpoint of his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, which he published in 1913. The revised Second Edition arrived in two stages: the *Prolegomena* and the first five investigations of Volume Two appeared in their reworked form in 1913, while the revised Sixth Investigation eventually made it to press in 1921. Since I am interested in the historical development of Husserl’s thought, I focus almost exclusively on the First Edition of the text. Any passage taken from the Second Edition will be clearly noted in the body of the paper or in a footnote.
devoted exclusively to a general the theory of knowledge, but also his most extended treatment of the topic.\textsuperscript{68}

That we find such a treatment at all might, at first, come as something of a surprise. For the preceding volume of the *Logical Investigations* is a book-length inquiry into the foundations of logic. In *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik* (hereafter, the *Prolegomena*), Husserl argues for the necessity of understanding logic “purely,” that is, as “a theoretical discipline, formal and demonstrative, and independent of psychology” (Hua XVIII, 23/56). As the previous citation suggests, Husserl’s opponents in this work are those thinkers who understand logic in terms of the psychological operations of the human mind. Views of this type, ranged under the generic label ‘psychologism,’\textsuperscript{69} were becoming increasingly prevalent in Germany in the mid to late nineteenth century, a state of affairs that Gottlob Frege likened to “a widespread philosophical disease.”\textsuperscript{70} Although empirical psychology was coming into its own as an independent scientific discipline—Wilhelm Wundt, for example, founded his *Institut für Experimentelle Psychologie*, one of the first laboratories dedicated to psychological research, in 1879\textsuperscript{71}—Frege saw “the influx of psychology into logic” as philosophically disastrous trend.\textsuperscript{72} According to psychologism, logical laws just are certain regularities of human thinking that can be discovered empirically; they are, so to speak, the natural laws of thought. A law such as

\textsuperscript{68} Investigation Six runs for 250 pages in the original German. Its counterpart in Part Four of *Ideas I*, “Reason and Actuality,” runs for 58 pages.

\textsuperscript{69} The term itself, ‘Psychologismus’, was coined by Johann Erdmann. See his *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Verlag Wilhelm Hertz, 1870), 636.


\textsuperscript{71} Wundt’s *The Principles of Physiological Psychology*, published in 1874, was also a key development in emergence of empirical psychology in Germany. Husserl studied in Leipzig prior to receiving his mathematics doctorate in 1883 and Husserl references him in each of his major early works, the *Philosophy of Arithmetric*, the *Logical Investigations*, and *Ideas I*.

\textsuperscript{72} Frege, “Review of Dr. E. Husserl’s *Philosophy of Arithmetic*,” 324.
the principle of non-contradiction would reduce to a claim about an observable fact of human psychology, for example, that it is psychologically impossible for a sincere thinker to affirm and to deny the same proposition.\textsuperscript{73} It was only natural, then, that psychologistic thinkers saw empirical psychology as the discipline appropriate for the study of logic.

Husserl shares Frege’s antipathy towards this way understanding of logic, and devotes nine of the \textit{Prolegomena}’s eleven chapters to a lengthy critique of psychologism.\textsuperscript{74} My first goal in the present chapter is to show how this seemingly narrow logical preoccupation is not orthogonal to the epistemological project of the second volume of the \textit{Logical Investigations}. For as we will see immediately below in §1, Husserl’s general approach to the theory of knowledge, one that centers on the conditions for the possibility of knowledge, is first articulated as part of the \textit{Prolegomena}’s attempted refutation of psychologism. Moreover, §2 will show how the \textit{Prolegomena} even goes some ways toward carrying out this theory of knowledge by identifying and defending ideality as a necessary condition for the possibility of theoretical knowledge. The distinctly phenomenological aspect of Husserl’s theory of knowledge, however, is the business of the second volume. The remaining sections of this chapter will prepare the way for an examination of that volume by first (§3 and §4)

\textsuperscript{73} This, roughly, is Sigwart’s formulation. Husserl considers several psychologistic formulations of the principle of non-contradiction, along with their attendant defect in Chapter Five, §25 through §29.

\textsuperscript{74} John Stuart Mill is a main stalking horse—the \textit{Prolegomena} begins with a passage from his \textit{Logic}—but Husserl addresses a range of thinkers including F.A. Lange, Johann Erdmann, Christoph Sigwart, Theodor Lipps, and G. Heymans among others. The audacious scope of Husserl’s critique was one of the contributing factors to its considerable impact on contemporary German philosophy. Frege, as well as Paul Natorp, had cried foul against psychologism before the publication of the \textit{Prolegomena}, but neither did so in a way that was as focused and thorough as Husserl’s critique. Nonetheless, Husserl acknowledges the work of both men in the \textit{Prolegomena}, referring with approval to Natorp’s “Über objective und subjektive Begründung der Erkenntnis” (1887) and Frege’s \textit{Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik} (1884). As far as historical predecessors, Hermann Lotze and Bernard Bolzano were two of Husserl’s formative influences, as we will see below.
getting clear about the nature of phenomenology itself, and then (§5) by laying out the
basic foundation of Husserl’s epistemology, his theory of intentionality.

§1. The Prolegomena and the Task of Epistemology

As I noted in Chapter One, Husserl began his philosophical career under the sway
of psychologistic thinking, a fact that the Logical Investigations makes no attempt to
conceal. For right in the Foreword to the First Edition, Husserl admits that the errors of
psychologism were once his own, since he formerly shared “the convictions of reigning
logic, which sought to illuminate the given science through psychological analyses” (Hua
XVIII, 6/43). Husserl, then, cannot in good faith deny that psychologism carries at least
some measure of appeal. “If we ask for the justification of such [psychologistic] views, a
most plausible line of argument is offered” (Hua XVII, 64/91). After all, as a general or
formal discipline, logic is not concerned with the objects of our knowledge, but rather the
nature of our reasoning about such objects whatever they may be. This focus on
reasoning would seem to deliver us over to the domain of the psychological. For what is
reasoning but a particular kind of psychological process? Husserl articulates this
common line of thought in Chapter Three.

Any glance at the contents of logical literature will confirm this. What is being
talked of throughout? Concepts, judgments, syllogisms, deductions, inductions,
definitions, classifications etc.—all psychology . . . Draw the bounds of pure logic
as tightly as one likes, it will not be possible to keep out what is psychological.
(Hua XVII, 64/91)

And he repeats the same point later in Chapter Eight.

75 “As regards my frank critique of psychologistic logic and epistemology, I have but to recall Goethe’s
saying: There is nothing to which one is more severe than the errors that one has just abandoned.” (Hua
XVIII, 6/43)
What is logic about? Everywhere it concerns itself with presentations and judgments, with syllogisms and proofs, with truth and probability, with necessity and possibility, with ground and consequent, and with other closely related or connected concepts. But what can be thought of under such headings but mental phenomena and formations? . . . Is it not, therefore, strange that one should wish to exclude from psychology propositions and theories which relate to psychological phenomena? (Hua XVIII, 170-71/177)

Psychology quite naturally, then, suggests itself as the science appropriate to the study of the theoretical foundations of logic. The Prolegomena, however, attempts to show that the initial plausibility of psychologism cannot withstand critical scrutiny. “Obvious as [psychologism] may seem, it must be mistaken. This is shown by the absurd consequences which . . . psychologism cannot escape” (Hua XVIII, 171/178). Far from being plausible, Husserl argues that psychologism leads to absurd consequences that undermine its very claim to be a theory. According to Husserl, psychologism falls prey to “[t]he worst objection that can be made against a theory,” namely that it violates the “conditions for the possibility of a theory in general” (Hua XVIII, 119/135). 76 As such, psychologism “is not merely false, but fundamentally confused [von Grund aus verkehrt]” (Hua XVIII, 119/135).

Before looking at how Husserl reaches this conclusion, we must first appreciate what it reveals about the overall task of the Prolegomena, and of the Investigations more generally. Initially, the Prolegomena may strike the reader simply as a parochial dispute over the proper conception and study of logic. However, these remarks concerning the

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76 This may the worst objection one can make against psychologism, but it is not the only one. In “Über psychologische Begründung der Logik” (1900), a short, contemporaneous summary of the Prolegomena, Husserl tells us that, “[t]wo ways can be taken to overcome psychologism. One can (1) follow out the contradictory consequences in which psychologism . . . gets entangled. (2) One can, through direct analysis of the prejudices that mislead psychologism, demonstrate the unsoundness of its position” (SW, 146). Husserl pursues the latter course in eighth chapter of the Prolegomena, “The Psychologistic Prejudices.” There the task is to show how the arguments made in favor of psychologism gain traction only on the basis of faulty assumptions. Unlike the first course, which we will explore below, Husserl’s goal in Chapter Eight is to argue not for the view that psychologism is absurd, but rather for the weaker claim, that it is argumentatively unsupported.
“conditions for the possibility” of theory serve notice of the fact that Husserl viewed his critique as serving a larger purpose. Specifically, they show that Husserl viewed the Prolegomena in a broader, epistemological context, one that we will see encompasses the second volume of the Investigations as well. For despite their various and sometimes seemingly disjointed philosophical trajectories—even Husserl complained of “their internal unevenness and fragmentary nature” (“Vorrede,” 110/17) —the Prolegomena and the six investigations that make up the second volume share at least one overarching concern, namely the “important question as to the ‘conditions of the possibility of science in general’” (Hua XVIII, 238/232). This question is first raised in the Prolegomena and is taken up again in the second volume, most centrally in Investigation Six. We can therefore see the two volumes of the Investigations as unified by Husserl’s attempt to identify and describe the conditions for the possibility of scientific, or theoretical, knowledge.

This unity is easily missed, and indeed was missed by most contemporary readers of the Investigations, who saw its two volumes as discontinuous, if not directly at odds, with one another.77 To a large extent, this was a result of the nature of the work itself. Although one of the great strengths of the Investigations lies in its detailed, concrete analyses, these analyses are often lengthy and proceed without much in the way of an explanation of their interrelation. As Husserl himself remarks in the Foreword to the Second Edition, “[the Investigations] do not lose themselves in discussions of standpoint, but rather leave the last word to the things themselves, and to one’s work upon such things” (Hua XVIII, 9/44-45). However, the dogged pursuit of the various “things

77 A common criticism was that the descriptive studies of Volume Two represent a slide back into the psychologism Husserl purported to overcome in the Prolegomena. I will discuss this criticism below in §3.
“themselves” can give rise to the impression that the *Investigations* is a mongrel work, “a patchwork of ideas on a lot of largely independent philosophical themes,” as David Woodruff Smith has put. Indeed, according to Smith, this is how the work generally has been viewed in the one hundred years since its publication. Husserl does give some indication of the work’s unifying theme in the Foreword and the Introduction to the second volume. For example, in the Foreword Husserl expresses interest in the “relationship . . . between the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of content known” (Hua XVIII, 7/42). Husserl returns to this idea in the Introduction to Volume Two, referring to it as one of the “basic questions of epistemology [erkenntnistheoretischen Grundfragen]” (Hua XIX:1, 12/253). However, neither of these remarks is followed up or elaborated in any great detail in either the Foreword or the Introduction before Husserl moves on to “the things themselves” in the *Prolegomena* and *Investigations* proper. And once this move is made, as Robert Sokolowski has explained, “Husserl goes into such exhaustive detail in examining aspects of his main themes that the identity of the theme itself can easily be forgotten.”

Husserl is indeed exhaustive in his efforts to discredit psychologism, but nonetheless a substantive indication of his basic approach to epistemological questions can be discerned within them. As we have just seen, this approach is of a broadly

79 Ibid., 21.  
80 Husserl recognized the expositional shortcomings of the *Investigations*, later admitting that “a preface or an introductory chapter ought to have prepared the reader historically and topically.” (“Vorrede,” 110/16)  
81 Robert Sokolowski, “The Structure and Content of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*,” *Inquiry* 14 (1971), 319. Sokolowski points to another feature of the *Investigations*, one especially prominent in the critical *Prolegomena*, that also tends to distract from its overall purpose: “[Husserl] sometimes circuitously approaches his own position through examination and correction of other opinions, many of which are now less known and of minor importance. It is as though Kant had included all his debates with contemporaries in the *Critique of Pure Reason.*” (ibid, 319)
Kantian character in that it is conceived in terms of conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Husserl was aware of the “historical echoes” of this conception, and indeed tells us that they are fully intended (Hua XVIII, 239/232). However, given the preliminary picture of Husserl’s methodological orientation sketched in the previous chapter, we should already be in a position to realize that this similarity to Kant can only be a general one. As was mentioned there, the cardinal difference between Husserl and Kant can be distilled to the divergence between their respective methods for pursuing transcendental questions. Whereas Husserl aims to proceed descriptively, Kant derives, and then deductively justifies, the conditions for the possibility of the objectivity of thought, and by extension, empirical knowledge. Adding to this, the course of Kant’s deductions is shaped by starting points that Husserl does not share, for example, the stark division of human cognition into separate faculties of sensibility and understanding. Such starting points lead Kant to seek after the conditions for our cognitive relation to objects in the specific form of a priori concepts of the understanding. Husserl makes his dissatisfaction with the results of this procedure clear: “[w]e shall naturally not accept Kant’s confusing, mythic concepts of understanding and reason” (Hua XVIII, 216-17/214). And it is equally clear why Husserl voices this dissatisfaction. The categories and their supposed synthesizing activities strike Husserl as “obscure, hypothetical events in the soul’s unconscious depths” with little to no justification (Hua XIX:1, 398-99/567). For philosophical justification is had only on the basis of “descriptive differences” given intuitively; only these differences concern the epistemologist (ibid.). Hence, the

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82 “We are plainly concerned with a quite necessary generalization of the question as to the ‘conditions of the possibility of experience’.” (Hua VIII, 239/232)
83 I will say more on this in §4 below.
phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations* is meant to provide transcendental philosophy with a surer epistemological footing than Kant is able to provide.\(^8^4\)

Nevertheless, Husserl shares his most fundamental epistemological orientation with Kant, and this is what gives sense to his claim that phenomenology “will not enter upon the specific question of whether we really can arrive at such [transcendent] knowledge . . . nor will it attempt to realize such knowledge” (Hua XIX:1, 26-27/264-65; my emphasis).\(^8^5\) Husserl’s philosophical gaze is simply averted elsewhere, namely, to the conditions that make such knowledge possible.

\(\text{\S}2.\ The\ \textit{Logical Conditions of Knowledge: Psychologism and the Defense of Ideality}\)

Husserl introduces what he takes to be the two basic sorts of transcendental conditions in §32 of the *Prolegomena* and repeats them again in §65: *objective* or *logical* conditions, on the one hand, and *subjective* or *noetic* conditions on the other. The *Prolegomena* is tasked with specifying and defending the former, while the phenomenological analyses of the second volume are directed ultimately toward disclosing and describing the latter. In the *Logical Investigations*, and in his phenomenology more generally, Husserl expends most of his philosophical effort on the subjective conditions of knowledge. I will examine this effort, which culminates in the

\(^8^4\) Of course, this is not to say that Husserl’s own approach may not itself be mythical, with its appeal to “insight” and “seeing” over argument, or that he faithfully followed the descriptive methodology he set for himself. Indeed, Husserl was criticized on both of these fronts by his contemporaries. For example, Moritz Schlick criticized Husserl’s conception of intuition as an utterly mysterious kind of non-psychological experience incapable of the kind intersubjective confirmation demanded by any scientific endeavor; Cf. his *General Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1974), 121. This charge has been rehabilitated in recent criticisms of phenomenology by Daniel Dennett (*Consciousness Explained* [Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1991], 44) and especially Thomas Metzinger (*Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003], 591). Wundt, on the other hand, charged Husserl with logicism, that is, with distorting the nature of psychological experience by interpreting it through the lens of infelicitous logical categories; see his *Kleine Schriften*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1910), 511-634.

\(^8^5\) In the Second Edition, Husserl describes this as an “empirical” question.
Sixth Investigation, in §5 and the chapter to follow. In this section, I will return to Husserl’s critique of psychologism in light of the role it plays in highlighting the logical conditions of knowledge.

Husserl’s investigation of both basic kinds of transcendental condition centers on a question of form or structure. What form or structure must the content of thought exhibit to enter into a relation of knowledge with a thinking subject? And what form or structure must subjectivity possess so that the thinking subject can stand in a relation of knowledge to that content? Taken together, these questions express Husserl’s basic concern, as stated in the Foreword to the First Edition, with the “relationship . . . between the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of content known” (Hua XVIII, 7/42).

Since Husserl’s focus is on scientific knowledge, that is knowledge which “can only be achieved through theory” (Hua XVIII, 239/232), questions concerning the objective or logical conditions of knowledge are essentially questions about the general form or structure of theories.86 Taking Bolzano’s Wissenschaftslehre as inspiration, Husserl is therefore moved to articulate a theory of theories as such, or, put another way, a “science of science” (Hua XVIII, 27/60).87 “We are interested,” Husserl tells us, “in what makes science science” (Hua XVIII, 230/225), that is, “the formal features that

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86 It is for this reason that Husserl moves between speaking of conditions for the possibility of theory (§32) and conditions for the possibility of knowledge (§65). Husserl makes it plain that he considers these two ways of speaking as essentially equivalent. As he says, we can “replace our question [i.e. that of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge] by a question as to the conditions of the possibility of theory in general.” (Hua XVIII, 239/232)

87 Husserl is uncharacteristically unstinting in his praise of the Wissenschaftslehre, a work he laments as “not yet sufficiently valued . . . [and] in fact, almost unused” (Hua XVIII, 43n/73n). “Excellent thoughts toward the circumscription of our discipline [i.e. pure logic] are to be found in Bolzano’s Wissenschaftslehre” (Hua XVIII, 43/73). And again: “Bolzano did not, of course, expressly discuss or support any independent demarcation of pure logic in our sense, but he provide one de facto in the first two volumes of his work, in his discussion of what underlay a Wissenschaftslehre or theory of science; he did so with such purity and scientific strictness, and with such a rich store of original, scientifically confirmed and ever fruitful thoughts, that we must count him as one of the greatest logicians of all time.” (Hua XVII, 227/223)
stamp [sciences] as sciences” (Hua XVIII, 40/70). In the German sense of ‘Wissenschaft’, a science is any disciplined theoretical inquiry that ranges over a specific domain of objects. However, a scientific theory is not a mere collection of truths about some set of objects; “not every putting of truths together in a single association of truths constitutes a science” (Hua XVIII, 233/227). Scientific theories embody a unity that goes beyond that of a single, abiding objective concern. Crucially, they also exhibit “a certain unified interconnection” (Hua XVIII, 233/227), or a “systematic coherence” (Hua XVIII, 30/62). For example,

[a] group of isolated bits of chemical knowledge would certainly not justify talk of a science of chemistry. More is plainly required, i.e. systematic coherence in the theoretical sense, which means finding grounds for one’s knowledge, and suitably combining and arranging the sequence of such groundings. (Hua XVIII, 30/62)

For Husserl, a theory of science is most centrally devoted to the study of the essence of this particular theoretical unity, a task he assigns to pure logic.89

That Husserl conceives the theory of science as a task for logic follows both from its formal character and from the fact that Husserl understands the unity of theory in terms of logical relationships among meanings (Bedeutungen) or more specifically, propositions (Sätze). A scientific theory is a deductive system, a collection of propositions caught up and bound together in an “interconnected web [Zusammenhang]” of inferential relations, e.g. ground and consequence, with one another (Hua XVIII, 244/236). Hence, viewed in terms of its content, scientific or theoretical knowledge

88 This is in contrast to the English word ‘science’, which is typically heard as synonymous with ‘natural science’.
89 To wit: “[pure] logic is the science of theoretic unity in general.” (Hua XIX:1, 98/232)
90 ‘Meaning’ (Bedeutung) is a broader, more general term for Husserl, covering both concepts and propositions.
91 “A given theory is a certain deductive combination of given propositions.” (Hua XVIII, 244/237)
takes the form of a logically structured set of propositions. Pure logic is to spell out and clarify the general contours of this logical structure, contours, which as general, are shared by every particular theory regardless of its subject matter. For example, what types of inferential combinations are constitutive for the systematic unity of theory? And what are the various proposition types that figure in such combinations? These are the basic questions of Husserl’s pure logic.92

A key feature of this logic, and one of wide ranging significance for phenomenology as a whole, is the way Husserl conceives of the nature of propositions themselves. Still following Bolzano—in this case, his notion of abstract Sätze an sich—Husserl argues that we must understand propositions as ideal objects.93

The theoretic content of a science is no more than the meaning-content [Bedeutungsgehalt] of its statements [Aussagen] . . . Undeniably what we call ‘meaning’ [Bedeutung] in this sense covers only ideal unities, expressed through manifold expressions, and thought of in manifold act-experiences, but none the less clearly separable from such chance expressions and from such chance experiences of thinking subjects. (Hua XIX:1, 97-98/323; emphasis added)

Propositions are involved intimately in our thought and talk—it is where they find their expression—but they are not reducible to either. For a proposition is not some sort of psychological object, nor an object of any type that could be placed within an empiricist ontology, i.e. an ontology exhausted by spatio-temporal particulars.94 Nonetheless,

92 Although these are the most basic questions, the full scope of pure logic extends beyond them. In the final chapter of the Prolegomena, “The Idea of Pure Logic”, Husserl specifies that the clarification of laws of inference (§68) and the various species of propositions—individual versus general, contingent versus necessary, etc. (§67)—is central to the task of pure logic. However, pure logic should also, for example, involve shedding light on non-inferential, syntactic laws of combining propositions and their parts, as well matters that could be considered issues of formal ontology—the concepts of object, state of affairs, number, etc. as such (§67). Additionally, §69 prescribes the task of specifying the basic types of theory forms and the possible relationships between them.

93 Husserl speaks variously of ideal objects (Gegenständen), species (Spezies), and unities (Einheiten) depending on context and chosen emphasis. For simplicity’s sake, I will speak mainly of ideal objects.

94 Or most specifically, temporal particulars: “[f]or us temporality is a sufficient mark of reality [as opposed to ideality]. Real [reales] being and temporal being may not be identical notions, but they
Husserl is prepared to treat them as objects in a quite full-blooded sense; ideal objects, of which propositions are a class, are said to exist “genuinely” (wahrhaft, in Wahrheit) or have being (Hua XIX:1, 130/352). As such, the Logical Investigations defends “the intrinsic right of specific (or ideal) objects to be granted objective status alongside individual (or real) objects” (Hua XIX:1, 112/338). This “idealism” is completely central to Husserl’s entire philosophical enterprise. In the Investigations, it is at the heart of the critique of psychologism and the attempt to begin articulating the conditions for the possibility of knowledge.

Husserl is well aware, of course, that any talk concerning the objective existence of ideal entities is offensive to philosophers oriented towards modern natural science. At best, it will come off as a kind of perverse nostalgia for a naïve, outmoded form of metaphysics. At worst, it may even sound paradoxical or absurd: “talk of universal [or

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95 Husserl takes for granted that such statements are likely to occasion accusations of Platonic hypostatization. And so he is clear to point out that to speak of ideal objects as “existing genuinely” or having being is on his view merely to say that such objects are capable of sustaining predicates; Cf. Hua XIX:1, 130/352. As he puts it in a formulation from Ideas I, one intended as restatement of the position of the Investigations, “object [Gegenstand] is defined . . . as a subject of a true (categorical, affirmative) statement” (Hua III, 41/41). This metaphysically defanged conception of being is taken over from Lotze, whose interpretation of Plato’s theory of forms greatly influenced Husserl. In Chapter Two, Book Three of his Logic (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888), Lotze argued that universals are not located in space and time, and so lack real being or Wirklichkeit, but as the subjects of true propositions must be granted ideal being, or validity (Geltung) as he chose to call it. For more on Lotze’s influence on Husserl, see also my Chapter Three, note 32.

96 My use of ‘idealism’ (Idealismus) here follows Husserl’s own self-characterization in the introduction to Investigation II; C.f. Hua XIX:1, 112/338. (Husserl also describes his arguments against psychologism as “idealistic” in the Prolegomena; C.f. Hua VIII, 216/213.) Husserl realizes that the connotations of this term are apt to mislead, and so immediately notes that by ‘idealism’ he does not mean a kind of metaphysical doctrine. However, one could rightly protest against this qualification, since granting being to ideal objects surely sounds like a metaphysical position. I think we should read Husserl’s remark first as a reminder that this idealism follows first and foremost from epistemological considerations, and second as an attempt to distinguish his idealism from the specific kind of metaphysical doctrine normally associated with the term, e.g. that of Berkley or even Kant. It is clear that Husserl’s view is not an idealism in the sense used by either of those philosophers. The idealism discussed here should also not be confused with the “transcendental idealism” described in Ideas I.
ideal] objects and of their being, may well seem fundamentally confused

[grundverkehrt]” Hua XIX:1, 330/352). This air of paradox is natural, Husserl tells us, as long as “one has accustomed oneself to understand by ‘being’ only real [reales] being [i.e. spatio-temporal being]” (Hua XIX:1, 330/352). The salient question, of course, is whether or not this custom is justified. Unsurprisingly, Husserl claims that it is not. This naturalistic understanding of being is rather a theoretical prejudice, one that, in fact, uproots the very intelligibility of science conceived as both a specific body of cultural knowledge and an ongoing human practice. We can only begin to make sense of science on the basis of an idealistic ontology. This is because Husserl sees a commitment to ideality as necessitated by one of the most basic requirements of any successful theory of science, namely, the ability to account for the intersubjectivity of theoretical knowledge. A Wissenschaftslehre must conceive of theory in such a way as to render its propositional content capable of being communicated and shared. For Husserl, this demand can only be met if we conceive of meaning as something unitary or identical set over and against its manifold expressions in thought and talk. No such unity is found in the realm of spatio-temporal objects and events; for there we find nothing but the multiplicity of numerically distinct linguistic tokens and the essentially private Erlebnisse associated with the production and apprehension of such tokens. Husserl concludes, then, that the sought-for identity must be understood as something ideal.97 The unity of theory is

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97 It is tempting here to understand Husserl’s appeal to ideality as something along the lines of a hypothetical, explanatory posit. Husserl, however, warns us against this interpretation explicitly: “[w]e are not here dealing with a mere hypothesis, justifiable only by explanatory fruitfulness” (Hua XIX:1, 105/329). Such an interpretation would be at odds with Husserl’s descriptive methodology generally, but more specifically with his claim that ideal objects, such as propositions, universals, and essences, can be given intuitively; their existence, Husserl tells us, is “an immediately graspable truth” (Hua XIX:1, 105/329; my emphasis). This view is defended in Investigation II, and Husserl returns to it in §52 of Investigation Six, claiming that “[t]alk of an intuition, and, more precisely, of a perception of the universal is . . . well-justified.” (Hua XIX:2, 691/800)
accordingly “an ideal fabric of meanings” (Hua XIX:1, 100/325), rather than “a tissue [Gewebe] of acts of knowing” (Hua XVIII, 26/60) as psychologism might have it.\textsuperscript{98}

Husserl thinks we can see the need for the ideal from another direction as well, one that effectively exposes the Achilles heel of psychologism as a theory of logic. If we reflect without prejudice on the distinctive character of logical truths, “[n]othing,” Husserl tells us, “seems plainer” than the fact that they are known \textit{a priori} and express necessities (Hua XVII, 74/99). Husserl argues that no empirical science, including psychology, could ever account for this since the laws of empirical sciences are inductive generalizations that express probabilities. A psychologistic logic would reduce logical truths to mere \textit{a posteriori} probabilities in contradistinction to their essential character; “[l]ogical laws must, accordingly, without exception, rank as mere probabilities [for psychologism] . . . [but] the laws of ‘pure logic’ all have \textit{a priori} validity. They are established and justified, not by induction, but by apodictic inner evidence” (Hua XVII, 74/99). Thus if psychologism were taken to be true, an absurd consequence would follow, namely, that the very \textit{explicandum} in question would be ruled out by the general character of the \textit{explicans}. Viewed in this light, the problem with psychologism then is not a failure of explanation, but rather the fact that it causes there to be nothing to be explained. A thoroughgoing empiricism simply erases the logical from the philosophical landscape. The only way to avoid this consequence is to conceive of the logical in terms of the ideal, specifically in terms of the relations holding between ideal objects independent of empirical objects, psychological or otherwise. The proper objects of

\textsuperscript{98} In the following chapter we will look at more of the details of the theory of language that underpins the idealistic approach to meaning described here.
logic, the truth makers of logical laws and propositions, are abstract, ideal entities and their relations grasped by rational insight (Einsicht).

Thus despite an initial element of intuitive appeal, psychologism is ultimately a non-starter for Husserl. This is because it cannot but fail even to begin to account for the logical; its very methodology keeps its intended explanatory target perpetually out of sight. This would be sufficient to discredit psychologism, but psychologism is plagued by a further, even more damning defect as well. According to Husserl, psychologism is hopelessly ensnared in a deep paradox: it is an attempt, on the one hand, to advance a specific theory of logic, while being forced, as a matter of principle, to deny the grounds upon which the content of any theory depends, on the other. This, of course, is just to put in another way the claim quoted earlier, i.e. that psychologism violates “conditions for the possibility of a theory in general” (Hua XVIII, 119/135). We are now in a position to understand why Husserl thinks this is the case: ideality is a condition for the possibility of theory, and by extension theoretical knowledge. Ideal objects and their relations account for the propositional content and inferential structure constitutive of scientific theories. Accordingly, Husserl writes that “idealism . . . alone represents the possibility of a self-consistent theory of knowledge”; it is entitled to this status for the very reason that it “recognizes the ‘ideal’ as a condition for the possibility of objective knowledge in general, and does not ‘interpret it away’ in psychologistic fashion” (Hua XIX:1, 112/338).

99 Since this view might appear particularly backward looking to some readers, especially those accustomed to the ontological asceticism of early analytic philosophy, it is perhaps worth noting that essentially the same view was put forward by Bertrand Russell in The Problems of Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) a decade after the Logical Investigations. See in particular Chapter Nine (“The Word of Universals”) and Chapter Ten (“On Our Knowledge of Universals”).
Much more, of course, would need to be said in order to gain a full picture of Husserl’s idealism.\textsuperscript{100} For the present purpose, however, it is enough to see that all theoretical cognition involves ideal meanings for Husserl.\textsuperscript{101} Ideality is thus similar to a Kantian category; a necessary, non-empirical element of cognition.\textsuperscript{102} However, ideality is not subjective in the manner of \textit{a priori} concepts of the understanding. Ideal objects and their relationships exist independently of human subjectivity; the Pythagorean Theorem, understood as an ideal meaning, was true before ever being entertained in thought and will remain true after all human thought has been extinguished. For that reason, Husserl labels ideality as an objective condition for the possibility of knowledge.\textsuperscript{103}

§3. The Return to Subjectivity: The Second Volume

As we saw in the previous section, the \textit{Prolegomena} of the \textit{Logical Investigations} specifies a task for phenomenology and begins its concrete execution. The task is to identify and describe the conditions for the possibility of knowledge, and Husserl’s defense of ideality is the first step toward its completion. It can only be a first step because ideality represents only one category of transcendental condition identified by

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\textsuperscript{100} A good discussion of Husserl’s idealism as it relates to his early logic as well as his historical context can be found in Chapter Four of Dallas Willard’s \textit{Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge: A Study in Husserl’s Philosophy} (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984). Husserl himself elaborates his idealism in the first and second investigations of the second volume. The former is a descriptive exploration of how the ideal is involved in our thought, specifically in the case of linguistic discourse, while the latter is a general defense of Husserl’s objective idealism against the kind of reductivist accounts found in empiricist theories of abstraction. We shall look at the First Investigation in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{101} My use of ‘involves’ here is intentionally vague. Husserl only spells out the precise relation between the ideal and our thought after the \textit{Prolegomena} in Volume Two. I will discuss this relation somewhat more concretely in §5 below, as well as in §3 of the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{102} Russell is also once more called to mind, specifically his claim that “all truths involve universals, and all knowledge of truths involves acquaintance with universals.” (\textit{The Problems of Philosophy}, 93)

\textsuperscript{103} As I mentioned above, and for reasons that should by this point be clear, Husserl refers to the objective conditions for the possibility of knowledge also as \textit{logical} conditions.
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Husserl, namely, the objective or logical. The second category, the subjective or noetic conditions, remains undisclosed. And so Volume Two of the *Investigations* marks a turn away from the objectivity of logic toward the subjectivity of consciousness. This move was puzzling to many readers, however, as it seemed to represent a relapse back into the very psychologism Husserl had been at such pains to discredit in the *Prolegomena*.104 This puzzlement was compounded by Husserl’s own unfortunate choice of terminology; in the First Edition of the *Logical Investigations* Husserl (in)famously characterizes phenomenology as descriptive psychology: “Phänomenologie ist descriptive Psychologie” (Hua XIX:1, 24n/262n).

But this turn back to psychology is not without a discernable motivation, one that flows out of, rather than against, the arguments of the *Prolegomena*. For if we understand logic in terms of the ideal, as Husserl does, we may legitimately wonder how logic enters into our thought. That is, we will want to ask after the relationship between the ideal objects of logic, on the one hand, and the concrete acts of thinking and experience of specific subjects, on the other. This is precisely the problem posed to Husserl by Natorp. In his 1901 essay, “On the Question of Logical Method,” Natorp discusses the *Prolegomena* and argues that “[w]hat remains unresolved . . . is the contrast of the *a priori* and the empirical, and thereby also that of the logical and the psychological.”105 For a psychologistic logic this is not an issue since there is no real

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104 As Husserl complains in his lectures on the theory of knowledge from 1906/7: “psychologistic empiricists have said . . . that the first volume of the *Logical Investigations* is a genuine breviary of anti-psychologism; the grounding of the theory of knowledge by psychology is refuted in every way, psychology is slain with a thousand arguments. But, in the second volume, just as the real epistemological investigation begins, psychologism is merrily revived. What does the second volume offer? Nothing but psychology.” (Hua XXIV, 201-02/197)
105 “Aber auch so bleibt bei Husserl unaufgelöst bestehen der Gegensatz . . . des Apriorischen und Empirischen, damit auch des Logischen und Psychologischen” ("Zur Frage der logischen Methode" [Kantstudien, Vol. 6, 1901], 282). Since Natorp had written his review before the second volume of the
Gegensatz between the logical and the psychological if the logical just is the psychological; propositions just are mental ideas and their relationships are nothing more than statistical psychological regularities. The proponent of pure logic, however, needs to clarify this relationship on pain of reducing logic to an “empty formalism,” that is a “naturally bounded, internally closed-off [geschlossen] science” with no connection to the thinking of actual human subjects (Hua XVIII, 71/96). Hence, rather than eliminating the need for psychological analysis, Husserl’s rejection of psychologism in favor of pure logic actually calls out for it; as he puts it in §20 of the Prolegomena, the anti-psychologistic position inevitably leaves an “an unresolved residuum [ein ungelöster Rest]” (Hua XVIII, 70/96). Moreover, a psychological investigation into the relation between the objectivity of logic and subjectivity of knowing consciousness by no means necessitates some form of psychologism. That is, nothing about such an investigation carries with it a commitment to reducing the logical to the psychological, the objective to the subjective, as psychologism would have it. Of course, this is one possible course such an investigation could take, but there is no entailment here.

Investigations appeared, he was not aware that Husserl recognized this and would attempt to carry out the necessary “psychological” analyses in the Investigations proper.

106 The charge of empty formalism was actually brought against Husserl by his contemporary Palágyi in Der Streit der Psychologisten und Formalisten in der modernen Logik (1902). Palágyi’s work is mostly notable only for the fact that it elicited a response—a dismissive, but ultimately clarifying one—from Husserl. This response appeared as a critical review in Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane in 1903, and has subsequently been published in Hua XXII.

107 Critics of Volume Two also failed to notice that the actual position of the Prolegomena is not that psychology has no role to play whatsoever in the elucidation of the foundations of logic. Rather Prolegomena defends the weaker claim according to which psychology is only denied sole proprietorship over logic. Husserl’s makes this clear in §20. Regarding the debate between psychologist thinkers and their anti-psychologist opponents, Husserl asks whether the “truth lies in the middle” and answers in the affirmative (Hua XVIII, 70/96). Husserl concedes that “psychology helps in the foundation of logic,” but denies that “it has the only or main part in this . . . that it provides logic’s essential foundation” (Hua XVIII, 71/96). According to Husserl, even if we grant the force of psychologistic arguments, “the possibility remains open that another science contributes to it, perhaps in a much more important fashion” (Hua XVIII, 71/96). The science Husserl has in mind here is, of course, pure logic.
All this said, Husserl nonetheless came to see how his characterization of phenomenology as “descriptive psychology” was misleading, and used the occasion of his second logical survey, “Bericht über deutsche Schriften zur Logik in den Jahren 1895-99,” published in 1903 shortly after the *Investigations*, to clarify his position explicitly.¹⁰⁸

Phenomenology therefore must not be designated as “descriptive psychology” without some further qualification. In the rigorous and true sense it is not descriptive psychology at all. Its descriptions do not concern lived experiences, or classes thereof, of empirical persons . . . Concerning such matters it poses no questions, attempts at definitions, makes no hypotheses.” (“Bericht,” 206-07/251; emphasis added)¹⁰⁹

Husserl’s reference to “empirical persons” is meant to distinguish empirical psychology, which examines particular, contingent mental experiences of actual human beings, from phenomenology, which is concerned with the essential structures of subjectivity as such. As Husserl puts it in a passage added to the Second Edition of the *Investigations*, “reflection on the sense of knowledge . . . must be carried out as a pure intuition of essence on the exemplary basis of given experiences” (Hua XVIII:1, 25/263-64; my emphasis). We turn to psychological experience as reflecting phenomenologists, but such experience is not the ultimate target of our theoretical interest. Our theoretical interest lies instead with the general structures of subjectivity, which concrete

¹⁰⁸ Even in the First Edition of the *Investigations*, however, Husserl realized that his use of ‘descriptive psychology’ might engender misunderstanding, writing that “we shall do well to speak of phenomenology rather than of descriptive psychology” (Hua XIX:1, 24/263). Nonetheless, he continued to use the term. He explained this inconsistency in a draft of a preface intended to accompany the revised 1913 edition of the *Investigations*: “different sections developed at different times, and a final reworking was necessary to bring everything into a single standpoint. Because of inner uncertainty, however, during the final composition, I either fell back repeatedly into the old habits of thought or was incapable of carrying through everywhere the distinctions I had already recognized in other contexts as necessary.” (“Vorrede,” 329/51)

¹⁰⁹ From this article onwards, Husserl ceased referring to phenomenology as any sort of psychology, and excised the offending characterization from the Second Edition of the *Investigations*. Nonetheless, the distinction between phenomenology and psychology would remain a preoccupation in much of Husserl’s post-*Investigations* work. Even the move to the explicitly transcendental conception phenomenology first promulgated in *Ideas I* can be seen as, among other things, part of Husserl’s attempt to properly situate phenomenology with respect to rival, and by his lights, misguided, approaches to understanding subjectivity.
psychological experiences exemplify or instantiate. Although obscured by misleading
terminology and insufficiently emphasized, this is the position of the First Edition of the
Investigations as well. For example, in the Prolegomena Husserl writes that

by subjective conditions of possibility, we do not mean here real [reale]
conditions [i.e. psychological conditions] rooted in the individual judging subject,
or in the varied species of judging beings (e.g. human beings), but ideal
conditions whose roots lie in the form of subjectivity as such [der Form der
Subjektivität überhaupt]. (Hua XIX, 119/136; my emphasis)

And this passage just reiterates the claim already made in the Foreword to the First
Edition that phenomenology pursues “fundamental questions regarding the essence of the
form of knowledge” (Hua XIX:1, 6/42; my emphasis). Husserl is perhaps most clear in
the Introduction to the second volume where he writes that phenomenology is not
interested in cognition as a “temporal event, in the psychological or psycho-physical
sense,” but rather “the idea of cognition according to its constitutive elements and laws”
(Hua XIX:1, 27/265; my emphasis). Epistemological criticism has a psychological basis
for Husserl in that psychological experience is the “exemplary basis” for an investigation
of the general structures of consciousness that make knowledge possible. However, it is
a basis we always pass beyond, as we move from the particulars of individual
consciousness to the general structures of subjectivity as such. Phenomenological
analysis begins with psychology but does not remain there.\textsuperscript{110} But what precisely is
phenomenological analysis at this juncture for Husserl? It is to this question I now turn.

\textsuperscript{110} This way of putting things, although in accord with Husserl’s own language, is still ultimately
misleading. For although phenomenology makes its start with the subjective, lived experience, it is best not
to describe this experience as psychological. This is because psychology represents a particular
interpretation of the lived experience, one that goes beyond what is part of the experience strictly
considered. See discussion of the principle of pressuppositionlessness below.
§4. Husserl’s Early Conception of Phenomenology

Husserl always considered the *Logical Investigations* to be his breakthrough to phenomenology, and so it comes as something of a surprise to learn how little the text actually says about phenomenology as such. To be sure, the words ‘phenomenology’ and ‘phenomenological’ appear regularly throughout the second volume, but there is no extended discussion of their meaning, certainly not in the manner of later works, in which Husserl repeatedly labored to introduce and clarify the nature of the phenomenological method. The second volume, however, suffers from no lack of specific phenomenological analyses. Indeed, one of the advantages of the *Logical Investigations* over Husserl’s more programmatic texts is the way it affords the reader a view of phenomenology as it is actually practiced *in concreto*. As Husserl remarks in the Foreword to the Second Edition, “if these Investigations are to prove helpful to those interested in phenomenology, this will be because . . . they are attempts at genuinely executed fundamental work . . . [they] do not lose themselves in discussions of standpoint, but rather leave the last word to the things themselves, and to one’s work upon such things” (Hua XVIII, 9/44-45). Thus in the *Investigations* the reader comes to phenomenology mainly as Husserl did himself: from the inside as it were, immersed in the nest of intricate problems surrounding the “things themselves.” By attending to phenomenology as it is practiced *in concreto*, in conjunction with the few procedural remarks Husserl does provide, we can gain a sense of the standpoint of Husserl’s early

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111 In fact, with the exception of *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1928), all of Husserl’s major publications after the *Logical Investigations* took the form of “introductions” to phenomenology. As a result, most of Husserl’s important phenomenological studies remained confined to lectures and unpublished manuscripts.
conception of phenomenological research, a standpoint largely consistent with the
lengthier elaborations to come later.

We approach the question of the phenomenological standpoint by first getting
clear about Husserl’s specific domain of theoretical interest, i.e., the aforementioned
“things themselves.” We saw in our introduction that the study of intentional
consciousness is the point of departure for phenomenology generally, as well as the
specific target of Husserl’s epistemology insofar as it is concerned with the subjective
conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Unsurprisingly, then, the analyses of the
second volume of the *Investigations* focus exclusively on mental acts, or intentional
experiences, in particular on what Husserl calls their genuine or real (*reelle*) content or
features. The *reell* content of an act is what is actually contained or immanent within it
as it is lived through, “the sum total of its concrete or abstract parts, or in other words, the
sum total of the *partial experiences* that really constitute it” (Hua XIX:1, 411/576). As
if to emphasize this restriction to subjective immanence, Husserl uses
‘phenomenological’ (as well as ‘descriptive-psychological’) interchangeably with ‘*reell*’;
the phenomenological or descriptive content of an act just is its *reell* content (Hua XIX:1,
411/576). To practice phenomenology, then, is to investigate the *reell* features of

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112 The adjective ‘*reell*’ is an important term of art in Husserl’s philosophy used to apply exclusively to
mental acts and their contents. Unfortunately, it poses a problem for translation since its most natural
rendering into English, ‘real’, is also the natural translation of ‘real’, an adjective which Husserl uses in an
importantly different way (viz. to describe empirical objects and their properties). To avoid any ambiguity,
I have chosen to leave ‘*reell*’ untranslated (and outside of passages quoted from Husserl, undeclined) in
what follows.

113 Husserl’s mention here of “abstract parts” should be understood in terms of the theory of parts and
wholes of Investigation Two. By an abstract part Husserl means what the Second Investigation refers to as
a *moment*, the kind of part that cannot exist independently of the whole to which it belongs. To speak of
such parts in isolation from the whole on which they depend, say to speak of color independently of any
object, is always to speak abstractly.

114 Husserl points this out himself in a footnote added to the Second Edition of the *Investigations*: “[t]he
word ‘phenomenological’ like the word ‘descriptive’ was used in the First Edition only in connection with
conscious experience, to “point out and describe . . . inwardly perceived experiences in and for themselves, as they are really [reell] given in perception” (Hua XIX:1, 411/576; my emphasis). Although this characterization of phenomenology’s sphere of research may seem obvious enough, it has two important related consequences worth noting.

The first consequence is that the restriction of phenomenological research to the reell content of intentional experience means that the object intended by such experience is excluded from phenomenological analysis. Husserl expresses this fact bluntly, writing that “[f]or the phenomenological mode of consideration, objectivity [Gegenständlichkeit] itself counts as nothing” (Hua XIX:1, 427/587).\footnote{115} This is because unlike Brentano, who (in)famously characterized intentional objects as a kind of “immanent objectivity” within consciousness, Husserl insists that our experience is directed toward objects which are properly transcendent, that is, irreducible to mental acts and their reell content.\footnote{116} To identify the object of experience with some reell content within experience is to commit what Husserl calls “a conceptual distortion almost without equal in philosophy” (Hua XIX:1, 170/385). That Husserl describes this specifically as a “distortion” (Verfälschung) indicates the nature of his most basic complaint against Brentano’s

\textit{The real [reelle] elements of experience”} (Hua XIX:1, 411/576). This is an important footnote; we will return to it in Chapter Four.

\footnote{115} Husserl will often use ‘Gegenständlichkeit’, which Findaly translates here as ‘objectivity’ and elsewhere as ‘objective correlate’, to refer to the objects of both mental acts and linguistic expressions. He explains his reasons for using this term over the more straightforward ‘Gegenstand’ in the First Investigation: “I often make use of the vaguer expression ‘objectivity’ [Gegenständlichkeit] since we are here never limited to objects [Gegenständen] in the narrower sense, but have also to do with states of affairs, properties, and non-independent forms, etc., whether real or categorical.” (Hua XIX:1, 45n/281n)

\footnote{116} The following passage from \textit{Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint} is the locus classicus of Brentano’s view: “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 toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.” (\textit{Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint}, 88; my emphasis)
position and others like it. In criticizing immanent object views, Husserl puts aside any 
unwelcome epistemological or ontological consequences they may incur, and instead 
seizes on the way they present a picture of conscious life that is simply false from a 
descriptive-psychological standpoint. For example, he ridicules such views for likening 
intentional experience to physical containment, as if consciousness were some sort of a 
box (Schachtel): “the objects of which we are ‘conscious’ are not simply there in 
consciousness as though in a box, so that one could simply find them there and reach in 
and grab them” (Hua XIX:1, 169/385). Husserl considers it a simple matter of 
unprejudiced descriptive psychology that the intentional object is transcendent to the act 
which intends it: “intentional experience may be dissected as one chooses in descriptive 
analysis,” but the intentional object “will not be found in it” (Hua XIX:1,386/558). A 
mental act aims at or directs itself toward an object, but does not contain it.117

Brentano was barred from seeing this, and hence led to descriptively falsify 
intentional experience, by assuming intentionality to be a relation between two things: a 
psychical act, on the one hand, and an object on the other. Since a relation can hold only

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117 Husserl was also particularly critical of the way Brentano’s view invites the “serious error” of drawing a 
“distinction between ‘merely immanent’ or ‘intentional’ objects” and “‘transcendent’ objects,” where the 
former are treated as representations that mediate reference to the latter (Hua XIX:1, 595/439). This 
doubling of the object seems forced upon us by the Brentano’s position if we wish to avoid the idealistic 
conclusion that all possible objects of human thought and experience are essentially mental in nature. 
Again, Husserl considers this doubling unacceptable not because of the well known epistemological 
problems it gives rise to, but rather because of its phenomenological inadequacy, by the way it is unfaithful 
to reell structures of intentional acts. To hold that our experience never aims directly at non-mental 
objects, but mental proxies somehow standing in their stead, is to ignore important distinctions between 
especially different act types. Representational consciousness is an important and pervasive form of 
experience, but it has a particular intentional structure that stands in contrast to other act types, such 
as perception. For example, a representational experience is a complex, or founded (fundierte), act of the sort 
mentioned in §4 of our Introduction. For a represented object to be given intentionally to consciousness, 
the representation itself must be intentionally given as well. By contrast, a perceptual experience is a 
simple experience in that perceptual directedness to an object is not made possible by some other type of 
intentional act which serves as its foundation. The insistence on the essential distinction between 
representational and perceptual consciousness is an enduring feature of Husserl’s work. In Chapter Four I 
will look at how this distinction figures into in Ideas I.
if its respective relata exist, this conception of intentionality faces a \textit{prima facie} challenge in the form of “objectless presentations” (\textit{gegenstandlose Vorstellungen}) or non-veridical intentionality, experiences which are intentionally directed toward non-existent objects, e.g. fictitious or impossible objects. \footnote{118} In order to preserve the intentional relation in the face of this challenge, the object is located within consciousness. The centaur I imagine or the round square I judge to be impossible may not exist in reality, but it can be said to exist in the form of an idea or representation in my mind. Husserl forsakes the relational conception of intentionality in favor what is now described as an adverbial view: intentionality is not a \textit{relation} between consciousness and an object, but rather an intrinsic \textit{property} or \textit{feature} of consciousness itself.

The object is an intentional object: this means there is an \textit{act} having a determinate intention, and determinate in a way which makes it an intention towards this object. This \textquote{reference to an object} belongs peculiarly and intrinsically to an \textit{act-experience}, and the experiences manifesting it are by definition intentional experiences or acts. (Hua XIX:1, 427/587; my emphasis).

According to Husserl, what provides an act with reference to an object is something entirely internal to the act itself; it is \textquote{through its own essence . . . [that] the intentional \textquote{relation} to an object is achieved}” (Hua XIX:1, 386/558; my emphasis). \footnote{119}

\footnote{118} With the exception of a few remarks in the third chapter of the Fifth Investigation (§11 and the Appendix), the problem of objectless presentations or non-veridical intentionality is largely passed over in the \textit{Logical Investigations}, but it was a preoccupation for Husserl, along with other students of Brentano like Meinong and Twardowski, in the 1890s. For example, in an 1894 essay, “Intentional Objects,” which did not appear at the time, but has subsequently been published in Hua XXII, Husserl addresses the issue head on by way of a critical engagement with Twardowski’s \textit{On the Content and Object of Presentations} (\textit{Zur Lehre von Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen}).

\footnote{119} Husserl calls the moment of the act responsible for intentional reference its \textit{matter} [\textit{Materie}]. We will look at this notion in the following section. Also notice the way Husserl puts the term \textquote{relation} in inverted commas in this citation. This is, of course, to signal that he is speaking in a conventional manner, rather than in strict accordance with his considered philosophical viewpoint according to which intentionality is not a relation. For an overview of relational theories of intentionality, sometimes referred to as “object theories,” see Chapter Two of David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, \textit{Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language} (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982).
The second consequence of identifying the phenomenological domain exclusively with the real content of acts is an elaboration of the first. If the Logical Investigations restricts its attention to the real content of conscious experience, thereby excluding transcendent objects from its consideration, it would then seem that the general methodological orientation of Husserl’s early phenomenology is not far removed from what it would become with the introduction of the reduction. For the exclusion of transcendence, i.e. all that falls outside of the real content of the act, anticipates what Husserl would eventually come to refer to as the epoché. As such, Theodore de Boer has claimed that “the famous bracketing of reality, which has achieved a certain notoriety since the publication of Ideen I in 1913 . . . is already to be found in LU . . . It is in LU that Husserl first places reality in brackets—and not in Ideen I.”120 The bracketing of transcendent reality initiates a shift from the natural course of experience to the standpoint of phenomenological reflection. This new standpoint is an unnatural one in that it reverses the direction of intentional attention characteristic of pre-philosophical experience: pre-philosophical experience is not directed toward acts, but is directed by their means toward objects which transcend them. Phenomenological reflection leads us back from our natural, objective orientation to the acts and their contents that make the appearance of objects possible. Husserl summarizes this movement in a passage from the Introduction to Volume Two:

120 De Boer, The Development of Husserl’s Thought, 178. Iso Kern has argued along similar lines: “the reduction (as the exclusion of all that is not given absolutely) appears as the exclusion of everything that is really transcendent. This is again this is the standpoint of the Logical Investigations.” (“The Three Ways to the Transcendental Reduction in the Philosophy of Edmund Husserl,” in F. Elliston and P. McCormick (eds.), Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977], 128)
The essential difficulty lies in the *unnatural* direction of intuition and thought that is demanded by phenomenological analysis. Instead of becoming lost in the performance of acts built intricately on one another, and attending exclusively to their objects, we must rather “reflect”, that is, make these acts themselves into objects. When objects are intuited, thought of, and placed in relation with one another . . . we must not direct our theoretical interest upon these objects nor toward what appears or is taken to be valid in the intention of those acts, but rather to the acts themselves . . . we must now make these acts into objects, analyzing and describing them in new acts of intuition and thought. (Hua XIX:1, 14/254-55; my emphasis)

The thematization of subjectivity on the basis of a reflective disengagement with transcendent objectivity described here suggests that not only the epoché, but its methodological compliment, the reduction proper, is also operative in at least a nascent, inarticulate form. Aron Gurwitsch, for example, has written that the “change in attitude” distinctive of the reduction “was already now and then practiced in the *Logische Untersuchungen*—but . . . was not explicitly characterized as such prior to the *Ideen*.”

We will turn to the relation between the method and aims of the *Investigations* and Husserl’s subsequent work in some detail in Chapter Four, but here we can already see some measure of continuity between the two periods.

This passage is illuminating in another important respect as well. Thus far we have been focused on the “what” of phenomenology, that is, its distinctive domain of inquiry, but Husserl’s mention here of intuition helps point us toward its “how,” the way that domain should be approached and studied. For Husserl, it is not enough that subjectivity simply be thematized and made an object for theoretical interest. Descartes and Kant, for their parts, accomplished as much, but neither was a phenomenologist. This is because neither made subjectivity, understood as intentional experience, an object of intuition. Husserl thought that Kant, for example, had placed himself at the threshold

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of phenomenology insofar as he took subjectivity as the transcendental ground for objective experience (Hua III, 119/142). It was with his specific account of subjectivity, however, that Kant parted ways with phenomenology in that it was purely speculative, constructed inferentially from dubious premises in the absence of any direct examination of subjectivity itself. Kantian subjectivity was not a scientific discovery in Husserl’s eyes, but a metaphysical creation, one indicating a complex and highly original mind to be sure, but a creation all the same. Husserl’s concern is not with creation, but with description. The phenomenologist must not speculate or hypothesize what mental acts must be like given some set of prior commitments or assumptions, e.g. the completeness of Aristotelian logic. Rather she must come to an “evident understanding of what thinking and knowing actually are” (Hua XIX:1, 25/263; my emphasis), which for Husserl requires “an actual given basis of experiences of thinking and knowing” (Hua XIX:1, 25/263-64). As we saw in the passage quoted in the previous paragraph, phenomenology’s unnatural, reflective turn is meant precisely to bring these experiences to givenness, to make them objects of possible intuition.

Husserl stresses the central methodological importance of intuition throughout the *Investigations*, but he attempts something like a definitive statement in §7 of the Introduction to the second volume with the so-called “principle of presuppositionlessness.” According to this principle, if the theory of knowledge is “to yield, not mere opinion, but the evident knowledge it strictly demands” (Hua XIX:1, 25/263-64), then its “propositions must not . . . ever be adduced in some other sense than that in which they have been intuitively established” (Hua XIX:1, 29/266; my emphasis). The reference here to “evident [einsichtiges] knowledge” makes clear that we are dealing
here with an epistemological principle. This should not be surprising. For the theory of knowledge is not simply a reflection on knowledge; it is a Wissenschaft like any other theoretical pursuit, and hence aims to achieve Wissen, knowledge, particularly, knowledge of knowledge. In order to carry out this aim, however, I must have some sense of what this achievement consists in; there must be some criterion with which to distinguish my claims from expressions of mere opinion, dogma, prejudice, groundless speculation, etc. Only by holding fast to such a criterion can the theory of knowledge “seriously claim to be scientific” (Hua XIX:1, 25/263).

What does the principle of presuppositionlessness amount to? Husserl’s remarks in §7 are compressed and require supplementation from other texts if they are to be adequately unpacked, but the root idea there is relatively straightforward: for scientific claims of any sort to pass epistemological muster, for them to be truly scientific, they must be produced in conformity with the objects to which their theoretical interest is directed. Husserl sees this as a norm embedded in the very idea of science as an enterprise that aims at knowledge. As we remarked in §2, a Wissenschaft is any theoretical discipline concerned with a specific domain of objects; for Husserl, these objects function as the ultimate arbiters of truth and justification for scientific research.122 This is to say, on the one hand, that scientific claims are true if and only if they correspond to the object or state of affairs judged. On the other hand, justification—and hence, knowledge—is had by seeing or grasping this correspondence. This view of

122 As Husserl puts it in Ideas I: “[t]o each science there corresponds an object-province as the domain of its investigations; and to all its cognitions, i.e., here to all its correct statements, there correspond, as primal sources [Urquellen] of grounding which validates their legitimacy, certain intuitions in which objects belonging to the province become themselves given.” (Hua III, 7/5)
knowledge is first introduced in §51 of the Prolegomena, where Husserl explicitly identifies truth as correspondence and refers to the kind of seeing constitutive of epistemic justification as evidence [Evidenz]: “evidence is called a seeing [Sehen], a grasping [Erfassen] of the self-given (‘true’) state of affairs” (Hua VIII, 193/195; my emphasis). Evidenz is “nothing other than the ‘experience’ of truth” (Hua VIII, 193/194), that is, the “experience of agreement [Zusammenstimmung] between meaning and what is experienced . . . between the experienced sense of an assertion and the experienced state of affairs” (Hua VIII, 193-94/195).

Husserl returns to the language of Evidenz in §7: “[t]he premises of our putative results must lie in propositions satisfying the requirement that what they assert permits of . . . a fulfillment through evidence” (Hua XIX:1, 29/266; my emphasis). It is ultimately the achievement of Evidenz that provides the criterion of epistemic adequacy that is the goal of any scientific researcher; it is the mark that distinguishes mere opinion or belief from genuine knowledge. Consequently, for a scientific inquiry to be rationally answerable to its domain of discourse, and hence, make good on its in-built aspiration to terminate in knowledge—understood here as claims accompanied by Evidenz—the objects of that discourse must be capable of being

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123 Husserl returns to the notion of truth as correspondence in Chapter Five of Investigation Six, “The Ideal of Adequation. Evidence and Truth.” There Husserl attempts to give determinate content to Aquinas’s well known dictum (“Veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus”) by recasting it in terms of the phenomenological framework developed over the course of the second volume of the Investigations. According to Husserl’s restatement: “the intellectus is in this case the thought-intention, the intention of meaning. And the aequatio is realized when the object meant is in the strict sense given in our intuition, and given as just what we think and call it” (Hua XIX:2, 648/762; my emphasis). Our next chapter (§5) will allow us to appreciate the meaning of Husserl’s position.

124 This statement was an addition to the text of the Second Edition.

125 Findlay translates ‘Evidenz’ as inner-evidence or self-evidence to indicate that Husserl’s term refers to a kind intentional experience, rather than a kind of object (fingerprints left at the scene of a crime, for example). These terms, however, may lead one to confuse Husserl’s general concept of Evidenz with the kind of “self-evidence” often said to accompany the apprehension of logical truths. In order to avoid confusion, and since no better translation suggests itself, I will leave ‘Evidenz’ untranslated in what follows.
given in experience. The possibility of a well-grounded science, then, depends on intuition.

Some further comment is needed here, however, in order to forestall an obvious worry. The worry centers on the way Husserl’s conception of *Evidenz* just described seems to couple justification and truth together in an inseparable bond: if justification requires “seeing truth,” then it would be impossible for there to be justification in the absence of truth (‘seeing’ is a verb of success). However, it is a fairly standard epistemological view that while knowledge implies truth, justification does not. A belief of mine can be rational and well justified, but nonetheless turn out to be false. In the natural sciences, for example, justification is probabilistic. The accumulation of evidence, however rigorously and responsibly carried out, does not guarantee that scientific claims are true; it only makes them more likely to be so. And this likelihood, however high, is always compatible with the possibility of disconfirming evidence discovered over the further course of experience.

Is Husserl therefore forced to deny empirical science the possibility of knowledge? Husserl accepts the probabilistic nature of scientific justification and does so for reasons rooted in his phenomenology of perception. For Husserl, empirical beliefs are essentially fallible due to the way perceptual experience always involves a certain form of incompleteness or imperfection. This incompleteness stems from the way perception is *perspectival* in nature. “[I]n all cases of ‘external’ perception,” Husserl writes,

the object . . . *is not given wholly and entirely as that which it itself is*. It only appears ‘from the front’, only ‘perspectively foreshortened and projected’ etc. While many of its properties are illustrated in the nuclear content of the percept, at least in the (perspectival) many in which the last expressions indicate, many
others are not present in the percept in such illustrated form: the elements of the invisible rear side, the interior . . . are not themselves part of the intuitive, i.e. perceptual or imaginative content, of the percept. (Hua XIX:2, 589/713; my emphasis)

According to this account, perceptual objects only ever show up for us partially, that is, from this or that side or visual aspect. Only these visual profiles or adumbrations of the perceptually intended object —what Husserl calls ‘Abschattungen’—are given intuitively to cognition in the strict sense; the rest of the object (“the invisible rear side, the interior” etc.) remains intuitively absent relative to my visual orientation and spatial location of the object. Nonetheless, Husserl stresses that I see the whole object, in the sense that it is the entire object, and not a side or profile of it, which is intended by my perceptual experience; “[w]hether I look at this book from above or below, from inside or outside, I always see this book” (Hua XIX:2, 677/789). As for the absent sides, I may be able to bring them to intuitive presence by changing the spatial location of the object (I turn the book over to see its back cover) or my own visual orientation (I crane my neck to read its spine), but these changes in perspective are always accompanied by new elements of hiddenness; “[g]ain and loss are balanced at every step: a new act has richer [intuitive] fullness in regard to certain properties, for whose sake it has lost fullness in regard to others” (Hua XIX:2, 599/721). A degree of intuitive absence is an ineliminable element of perceptual experience; there are always aspects of the perceptual object that outstrip our intuitive grasp.

Perceptual experience, therefore, always intends or refers to more than what can be completely given intuitively, and this is what accounts for its fallibility. Since I never adequately “see” the object of perceptual experience, it is always possible that it is other than I take it to be. My use of ‘adequate’ [adäquat] here is in the technical sense
employed by Husserl to describe cognitive experiences which, unlike the incompleteness or partiality of perception, involve “the full self-appearance [vollen Selbsterscheinung]” of their objects (Hua XIX:2, 651/76; my emphasis). Husserl’s various descriptions of adequate cognition contain an unmistakable trace of Cartesianism. For example, in the Sixth Investigation Husserl describes “the adequate self-presentation of the object” as “the goal of absolute knowledge” (Hua XIX:2, 598/720; my emphasis). The Cartesian underpinnings of Husserl’s conception of adequacy, however, are only made fully explicit in the Appendix to the Second Volume, “External and Inner Perception: Physical and Psychical Phenomena,” one of the few places in the Investigations where Descartes is mentioned or discussed.126 There adequate cognition is described as the “most clear cognition” marked by “that unassailable certainty which distinguishes knowledge in the strictest sense” (Hua XIX:2, 754/854; my emphasis), and it is distinguished from inadequate cognition in terms of the “Cartesian treatment of doubt”: “I can doubt the truth of an inadequate . . . perception . . . But I cannot doubt adequate perception . . . [it] is indubitable” (Hua XIX:2, 770/866). The object of an adequate cognition is experienced with an unsurpassable clarity that precludes doubt because there are no elements of hiddenness to escape my sight; the object is there for me in full view, given completely as I believe it to be. Adequate cognition is thus Evidenz in the

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126 Descartes is referenced only seven times over the course of the nearly one thousand pages of the Logical Investigations; four of these references occur in the Prolegomena, two come in the Appendix just mentioned, while the actual six Investigations of Volume Two contain only a single reference. (However, this reference, as well as the entire passage containing it (Investigation Five, §7) was excised in the Second Edition of the text.) By contrast, Kant and Brentano appear eighteen and nineteen times respectively throughout the two volumes of the Investigations.
“epistemologically narrow [prägnante] sense”: the experience of the complete agreement between what is intended and what is given (Hua XIX:2, 651/765).127

That sense perception falls short of this kind of adequacy, however, does not lead Husserl to deny the possibility of empirical knowledge as our initial worry suggested. This is because Husserl’s ultimate conception of Evidenz, described in the Sixth Investigation, is more nuanced than its initial presentation in the Prolegomena would suggest. For in the Sixth Investigation, Husserl recognizes that one’s epistemic standing as a cognitive agent is not a digital, all or nothing affair; mere opinion and adequate cognition represent two poles between which a scale of meaningful epistemic distinctions can be drawn. This is to say that justification, or Evidenz, is a matter of degree: “to speak of degrees and levels of Evidenz . . . has a good sense” (Hua XIX:2, 651/765). One can be more or less justified; one can live through Evidenz that is more or less epistemically rich. For example, Husserl considers it appropriate to speak of Evidenz “wherever an assertive intention (a statement in particular) finds verification in a corresponding . . . percept” (Hua XIX:2, 651/765). Although Husserl describes this as Evidenz in a loose (laxe) sense—since the verification in question can never be total, given the partial nature of perception—it nonetheless represents a genuine epistemic advance over a merely presumptive belief, i.e. one ungrounded by any intuition whatsoever. And although empirical verification can only be partial, it can be better or worse. For example, of the possible views of my I object that I can take up, some are better than others (those in clear light, up close, etc.). I can also set about collecting multiple views of my object,

127 Findlay often translates the German adjective ‘prägnant’ with the English ‘pregnant’, but this gives off exactly the opposite meaning intended by Husserl. ‘Prägnant’ means concise or succinct, and so to speak of the “prägnante Sinn” of a term is to speak of it in a restricted or narrow fashion, rather than in an extended or wide sense, as would be suggested ‘pregnant’. 
gradually bringing more and more absent aspects to intuitive presence over the course of a series of perceptions. Taken as a whole, this series “represents an increase in fullness in comparison with a single act in the series” (Hua XIX:2, 599/721); it represents an attempt to overcome the one-sidedness of a single percept by synthetically approximating the completeness that adequate cognition achieves in “a single stroke [einem Schlage]” (Hua XIX:2, 599/721). In the empirical sphere, then, Evidenz in the strict (strenge) sense of adequate cognition is an “ideal limit” (Hua XIX:2, 598/720), a “final ideal of perfection” (Hua XIX:2, 651/765) which we can only attempt to approximate. But to the extent that we do approximate it our “epistemic merit [Vorzug] steadily increases” (Hua XIX:2, 598/720).

All of this, however, raises the question of whether there is a domain of knowledge that does admit of the possibility of adequate cognition. We find our answer by, once again, turning to the Appendix to the second volume.128 There we learn that the domain of adequate cognition is none other than that of phenomenology itself: “only the perception of one’s own actual lived experiences is indubitable and evident” (Hua XIX:2, 770/866). This is another expression of Husserl’s Cartesianism: just as “I cannot doubt that I exist and am doubting,” I also cannot doubt that “while I experience them, that I am having presentations, am judging, feeling or however else I may designate such inwardly perceived appearances: to doubt in such a case would be evidently irrational” (Hua XIX:2, 754/854). When I reflect on a mental experience by way of “inner perception” an object appears which is exhausted by that appearance; what is given in the strict sense is the object itself, rather than an adumbration of it. Husserl calls this “intuition in the most

128 It is another testament to the expositional shortcomings of the Logical Investigations that information so crucial to our understanding phenomenology is located only in its Appendix.
narrow sense” (Hua XIX:2, 769-70/866). Since the “experienced content is also the object of perception,” inner perception is not marked by the incompleteness characteristic of inadequate external perception; “[t]here are no residual intentions in it that must yet achieve [intuitive] fulfillment. The whole intention, or the intention in all its aspects, is fulfilled” (Hua XIX:2, 770/866). Such complete intuitive fulfillment is possible because of the reflexive nature of inner perception: inner perception is experience turned back on itself; there is a unity between the perceiving and the perceived that provides an occasion—in fact the only occasion—in which talk of “immanent objectivity” is justified for Husserl. As he says, the “intuited object itself really and truly dwells [einwohnt]” in the perception; it is “immanent in the act of appearing” (Hua XIX:2, 770/866).

Husserl, however, does think that a degree of inadequacy can, and often does, find its way into the reflective perception of one’s lived experiences. As such, Husserl does allow for the possibility of error even in the case of inner perception: “not every perception of the ego, nor every perception of a psychic state referred to the ego, is certainly evident (Hua XIX:2, 761/859). Husserl uses an example of mistakenly experiencing a toothache as residing in a healthy tooth to illustrate his point. In such a case I am led into error because the “perceived object is not the pain as it is experienced [so wie er erlebt], but rather the pain as it is transcendently interpreted [transzendent gedeutet], in particular as connected [zegedeutet] to the tooth” (Hua XIX:2, 770-71/866; my emphasis). When I tacitly subject my experience to an interpretation in this manner, inner perception becomes a form of apperception; I intend an object (the ache in my tooth) that goes beyond what is given completely in experience (the ache itself). In this way inner perception becomes “tainted” by transcendence and hence no less fallible than
outer perception. In order to perceive mental experiences adequately—as the epistemological rigor of phenomenology demands—we must put aside our tendency to interpret them empirically, that is, with bodily location (Hua XIX:2, 761/859). Phenomenology requires “that we take [mental experiences] simply for what they are instead of interpretively going beyond them” (Hua XIX:2, 771/867). This imperative to take experiences “simply for what they are” is just an expression of the principle of presuppositionlessness, Husserl’s demand that phenomenology be circumscribed within the bounds of intuition alone. For the phenomenologist, “all suppositions [Annahmen] that cannot be fully and completely realized . . . on purely phenomenological terrain [i.e. mental experiences and their reell contents]” must be excluded (Hua XIX:1, 24-25/263).

If the principle of presuppositionlessness is rigorously maintained, if the practicing phenomenologist keeps her eyes trained on only what is truly given in experience, Husserl believes that it is possible to cognize the objects of reflective, inner perception in an adequate manner.

With this claim concerning the adequacy of phenomenological cognition, the Logical Investigations anticipates Husserl’s later characterization of phenomenology as a “rigorous” or “strict” science (strenge Wissenschaft). Husserl famously developed his idea of scientific philosophy in the 1911 essay, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” but the foundation had already been laid in the Investigations with its commitment to the possibility of adequate cognition. To see this, let me first say something about the notion of scientific philosophy in general. Most broadly, Husserl’s idea of scientific philosophy is one of epistemic rigor. To establish philosophy as a rigorous science is, first and foremost, to provide philosophy with a precise method that when consistently applied
yields rationally justified conclusions, thereby ensuring the philosophical enterprise a secure epistemic footing. This preoccupation with rigor is partly motivated by Husserl’s suspicion, if not the outright conviction, that much of the philosophy of the nineteenth century had been little more than groundless flights of fancy, perhaps even meaningless, but certainly not knowledge. We can see this in a brief remark on Hegel from the Prolegomena. While praising the “clearness and strictness” of Bolzano’s Wissenschaftlehre, Husserl disparages Bolzano’s more illustrious contemporary, noting how “the ambiguous profundity of . . . [Hegel’s] systematic philosophy, which rather aimed at thinking out world conceptions and a world-wisdom . . . hindered the progress of scientific philosophy so badly by its unholy blend of discordant intentions” (Hua XVIII, 227-28/223). Husserl worried that the unchecked speculation of system builders like Hegel had, to use Hume’s phrase, “drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself,”129 and to such an extent that allegiance to the very idea of philosophy as an objectively valid science was in danger of erosion. At worst, he feared that philosophy might come to be seen just as a series of contingent, cultural formations, each expressing a particular historical perspective or Weltanschauung, but none possessing any special claim to truth. As Husserl would complain in “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” “every [philosophical] position is a matter of individual conviction, of the interpretation given by a school, of a ‘point of view’” (“Philosophie,” 5/74-5).

These concerns exhibit another dimension of Brentano’s considerable influence over Husserl’s thought. For Husserl’s aversion to the speculative excesses of nineteenth century metaphysics was inherited directly from Brentano, who denounced German

Idealism as a “degenerate” form of philosophy according to Husserl’s reminiscences (“Erinnerungen,” 308/50). In response to this perceived state of degeneration, Brentano sought to rehabilitate philosophy by way of a new method of philosophical analysis: empirical or descriptive psychology. Descriptive psychology was intended to recast philosophy as an exact discipline on par with the natural sciences and thereby restore epistemological respectability to the philosophical enterprise. As I mentioned in Chapter One, this promise of scientific rigor made a great impression on Husserl; it was, we will recall, pivotal in his decision to abandon mathematics in favor of a career in philosophy. However, as Husserl emerged as an original thinker in his own right and not simply a disciple of Brentano, his philosophical ambitions swelled beyond those of his teacher. For whereas Brentano was content to raise philosophy to the level of the natural sciences, Husserl envisioned philosophy as occupying an exalted position beyond them. Philosophy is not simply one science among many for Husserl, but rather a foundational science, prima philosophia.

There are scholarly controversies over what “first philosophy” might mean for Husserl—hence, this dissertation—but one thing is beyond dispute. At least part of what is supposed to entitle philosophy—Husserl’s philosophy at any rate—to a position of privilege vis-à-vis the natural sciences is the superior epistemic status of its claims. All science, qua science, proceeds on the basis of evidence, and in this phenomenology is no different. What distinguishes phenomenology is the particular kind of evidence that provides the justifying grounds for its claims. Husserl argues that phenomenology is the most rigorous of sciences because it constitutes a body of absolute knowledge built up from the most perfect form of evidence. This is precisely the view that begins to take
shape in the *Logical Investigations*. Although the *Investigations* does not foreground phenomenology’s unsurpassable epistemic merit in the manner of Husserl’s subsequent work,\(^\text{130}\) it nonetheless presents phenomenology as a science set apart by the way it can cognize its objects on the basis of evidence which natural sciences can only approximate, but never achieve.

One of the central questions for understanding Husserl’s phenomenology as a whole, and his theory of knowledge particularly, is to what use Husserl puts this privileged form of evidence. For example, does Husserl use the presuppositionlessness turn to subjectivity to disclose indubitable, foundational truths in order to ground all other varieties of knowledge? This is a question we will answer in the following chapter by looking directly at Husserl’s theory of knowledge as presented in the Sixth Investigation. But before we undertake this task, we must first introduce the terms in which Husserl frames the discussions of the Sixth Investigation, namely, his theory of intentionality.

§5. The Basic Subjective Conditions: The Structure of Intentional Consciousness

In the previous sections we have seen how Husserl requires that the theory of knowledge should proceed only on the basis of a direct, intuitive examination of actual experiences of knowing made objective in reflection. It should aim at presuppositionlessness, restricting its claims to descriptions of what is really found in such experiences, i.e. their *reell*, descriptive content. This examination is the culmination of the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*, taking place in the final of its six

\(^\text{130}\) Indeed, phenomenology’s epistemic pretensions are placed—quite literally—in the background of the *Logical Investigations*, since, as we saw above, they are only made fully explicit in the appendix to the text.
investigations, “Elements of a Phenomenological Clarification of Knowledge” (“Elemente einer phänomenologischen Aufklärung der Erkenntnis”). According to Husserl, however, the task of the Sixth Investigation cannot be carried out “without first performing a much more general phenomenological investigation,” namely, an investigation into the general structures of intentionality (Hua XIX:1, 352/533). This is because knowledge, on Husserl’s view, is first and foremost an accomplishment of intentional consciousness; it is an intentional experience of a specific sort, one in which a subject is directed toward an object in the manner characteristic of Evidenz, but an intentional experience all the same. Therefore, “[t]o be as clear as one can in regard to the nature of [intentional] reference is of fundamental interest for epistemology” (Hua XIX:1, 442/598). In other words, a complete clarification of knowledge must begin with a study of the elements essential to any intentional experience or mental act whatsoever.¹³¹ These elements represent the most basic subjective conditions necessary to stand in relation to a possible object of knowledge, for only on their basis are there objects for consciousness at all. A theory of intentionality is not itself sufficient to clarify knowledge, for to be directed toward an object is not necessarily to know that object, but it does provide the necessary foundation for such a clarification. Therefore, in this final section I will briefly lay out the general structure of intentionality as given in the Fifth Investigation, “On Intentional Experiences and their ‘Contents’” (“Über Intentionalen Erlebnisse und ihren ,Inhalten’”). This will prepare us to look at the particular intentional formations characteristic of Evidenz in the chapter to follow.

¹³¹ As Husserl puts it in the Introduction to the Sixth Investigation: “[p]lainly we shall have gone far in our elucidation of knowledge, once we have established the peculiarities of acts as such, that much debated, little understood class of experiences.” (Hua XIX:2, 537/667)
In keeping with the methodological strictures described above, Husserl’s phenomenology of intentionality focuses exclusively on the intentional act. To speak of the “structure of intentionality” here is therefore not to speak of any relation between subject and object (remember that “objectivity counts as nothing” from the point of view phenomenological description), but rather the inner constitution (Konstitution), construction (Bau), or make-up (Bestand) of intending act itself. The title of the Fifth Investigation makes this clear: understanding intentionality is a matter of getting clear about the content (Inhalt) of intentional experience, i.e. the “the sum total of its concrete or abstract parts, or in other words, the sum total of the partial experiences that really constitute it” (Hua XIX:1, 411/576). Such reell or phenomenological content is not the object of the intentional act, but rather that by means of which the act points beyond itself toward a transcendent object.

The first kind of reell content identified in the Fifth Investigation is introduced in §14, where Husserl discusses the raw sensory component that constitutes the distinctive qualitative texture of perception. Husserl refers to the colors, sounds, smells, tactile feels and other lived through (erlebt) sensory qualities that provide the intuitive “fullness” or “vividness” (Hua XIX:1, 433/591) characteristic of perceptual experience as sensuous contents (Empfindungsinhalten) or simply sensations (Empfindungen). We can think of Husserl’s Empfindungsinhalten along the lines of what philosophers in the Anglophone tradition have tended to call ‘qualia’, i.e. the subjective or “phenomenal” character of certain conscious experiences.\footnote{The term ‘qualia’ (singular: ‘quale’) was introduced into Anglophone discussions of mind and knowledge by C.I. Lewis in his Mind and the World Order: An Outline of a Theory of Knowledge (NewYork: Charles Scribners, 1929). See, in particular, Chapter II, “The Given Element in Experience.”} For sensations fill in the details, so to speak, of the intended object, thereby making its sensible appearance present to consciousness in a
qualitatively determinate way. As such, there is something it is like to undergo a perceptual episode from a first personal perspective.\footnote{Husserl’s Empfindungen, however, are unlike Hume’s impressions of outward sentiment or the sense data of latter day empiricists like Russell and Moore, in that they are not the immediate objects of our perceptual awareness. Husserl is perfectly unambiguous on this point throughout the text of the Investigations. Sensations, he says, “do not appear as objects: they are not seen, heard, or perceived by any sense” (Hua XIX:1, 399/567; c.f. Hua XIX:1, 81/309-10). On Husserl’s view, we do not look at sensations (Hua XIX:1 81/309), but rather look at things by means of acts which contain sensations as part of their reell content. We hear the song of the singer, not tone patterns; we see colored things, not assemblages of color patches (Hua XIX:1, 387/559). This is just to reiterate Husserl’s conception of intentionality: it is the essence of intentionality that consciousness transcends itself, i.e. its reell content, toward an object. Therefore, we must not to confuse immanent sensations with the sensible properties of objects they help to present; only “[u]ncritical theories,” Husserl tells us, overlook “the fact that the thing’s appearing properties are not themselves sensations.” (Hua XIX:1, 763-64/861)}

Although sensations make an essential contribution to the lived perceptual experience in this way, Husserl considers sensations to be an inessential form of content from the point of view of a general theory of intentionality. For one, not every intentional experience is a perceptual one; it is possible for an object to be intended in the absence of any corresponding sensations. This is true in the case of what Husserl calls signitive acts, of which linguistic experiences provide the clearest examples. When I read and understand the sentence ‘John’s car is red’ there are no red sensations involved in my experience, unless, of course, the sentence happens to be printed in red ink. But even in such a case these red sensations would relate to the physical expression (the sentence ‘John’s car is red’) and not to the object intended (John’s red car); they would present qualities of the perceived words rather than the object of which the complete experience is about. Secondly, even if we restrict our attention to perception, there still remains an important sense in which sensations are intentionally inessential. This is because Husserl holds that while sensuous contents lend qualitative determinateness to perceptual acts, they do not provide the objective directedness constitutive of perception qua intentional experience. Husserl denies that the “immanent character” of sensations
can give rise to “objective intentions [gegenständliche Intentionen]” (Hua XIX:1, 397/567); considered in and of themselves, sensations are intentionally inert.¹³⁴

Husserl motivates this claim first by considering the familiar psychological phenomenon of perceptual constancy, i.e. the way perceptual objects can undergo noticeable changes in the manner of their sensible appearance while maintaining their experienced identity. To take some of Husserl’s examples: the adagio of the violin is “at one moment heard close at hand, at another far away” (Hua XIX:1, 395/565); the seen physical object “now appears with clearness and definiteness, now becomes lost in a mist, now becomes paler in color, etc.” (Hua XIX:1, 433/591). The adumbrative character of perception provides another illustration: the box I see appears from one perspectivally foreshortened profile and then another as I tilt and turn it (Hua XIX:1, 396/565). These examples are meant to show how an unfolding perceptual experience can involve a stream of changing sensations and yet still refer to the selfsame object; in a “flux of experienced [erlebt] content,” we can nonetheless find ourselves “in perceptual touch with one and the same object . . . we experience a ‘consciousness of identity’, i.e. a claim to apprehend identity” (Hua XIX:1, 396-97/566). Secondly, Husserl points out how the same sense contents can be involved in experiences of several distinct objects (Hua XIX:1, 395/565). To take an example inspired by one of Husserl’s own,¹³⁵ imagine that I visit a museum and mistake a particularly lifelike sculpture, say, one of Duane Hanson’s stunningly hyper-realistic pieces, for a real human person. If a companion informs me of my error, I will cease to see a human being, and instead begin to see a

¹³⁴ Although sensations are inessential to intentional experience as such in this way, we will see in the next chapter that sense contents play an essential for the kind of intentional “seeing” constitutive of Evidenz. Sense or presenting contents therefore play in essential role in the experiences necessary for the achievement of knowledge.

¹³⁵ Husserl uses an example of a dummy at a wax museum; see Hua XIX:1, 458-60/609-10.
cleverly fabricated art object; my experience of one object (human being) passes over into an experience of another (art object). And yet despite this change in the intentional object of my experience, Husserl would claim that there is no corresponding change in the sensible properties that appear to me; both objects appear “endowed with the same set of phenomenal determinations [phänomenalen Bestimmtheiten]” (Hua XIX:1, 460/610).

In the case of seeing a human being and seeing a sculpture the same colors, shapes, etc. are present to me. Husserl makes the same point by imagining a situation in which a person sees a sequence of arabesque inscriptions merely as a decorative pattern before realizing that they are in fact a string of meaningful linguistic symbols.\(^\text{136}\)

On the basis of these facts of experience, Husserl considers it evident that the complete perceptual act must include more in the way of content than sensations alone. Sensations may be the “building stones” (Bausteine) of perceptual acts, but to understand perception simply in terms of a passive receptivity to sensory data is to eliminate the very possibility of our intentional openness to the world. As Husserl says, a conscious experience limited in content to sensations alone “will intuit no things, and no events pertaining to things, it will perceive no trees and no houses, no flights of birds nor any barking of dogs” (Hua XIX:1, 81/309). Therefore, in addition to sensations, Husserl argues that perceptual experience involves a contribution from the perceiving subject, a certain “mindedness [Zumuteseins],” which he refers to alternately as an apprehension (Auffasung), interpretation (Deutung, Interpretation), and sometimes, but less frequently, an apperception (Apperzeption).\(^\text{137}\) On this view, an objective intention arises in perception by apprehending the changing manifold of sensuous content according to a

\(^{136}\) See Hua XIX:1, 398/566-67.
\(^{137}\) The language of ‘Apperzeption’, however, appears more frequently in the Second Edition, where Husserl tends to use it in place of ‘Interpretation’.
single interpretation. As Husserl puts it, “different sensuous contents are given, but . . . they are interpreted [gedeutet], apprehended [aufgefaßt], or apperceived [apperziert] ‘in the same sense’” (Hua XIX:1, 397/566; my emphasis). By isolating this moment of the act, Husserl believes he has identified what is intentionally essential in perceptual experience. For unlike sensations, which are “neutral with respect to the object,” the intentional apprehension is that reell element of the perceptual act which functions precisely to provide direction to “this object and no other” (Hua XIX:1, 428/588). Such an immanent interpretation “is in essence such as to makes us perceive this or that object, for example, see this tree, hear this ringing bell, smell the scent of the flower, etc.” (Hua XIX:1, 399/567; my emphasis).

In its broad outlines, Husserl’s distinction between sensations and their apprehension is a familiar one in the history of philosophy. Indeed, C.I. Lewis has claimed that the recognition that “there are, in our cognitive experience, two elements: the immediate data, such as those of sense, which are presented or given to the mind, and a form, construction, or interpretation, which represents the activity of thought” is “one of the oldest and most universal philosophic insights.” However, even if we are sympathetic to Lewis’s assessment, there is something suspect about Husserl’s distinction from a phenomenological point of view. For although Husserl describes the intentional apprehension of an act as a kind of interpretation, this sense of ‘interpretation’ is quite a ways removed from how we ordinarily understand the term. Consider some everyday

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138 I owe this useful way of formulating Husserl’s position to John Drummond; see his “The Structure of Intentionality,” in Don Welton (ed.), The New Husserl (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 66.  
139 Lewis, Mind and the World Order: An Outline of a Theory of Knowledge, 38. This supposed “insight,” however, came under increasing attack as the twentieth century wore on, especially with the appearance of Donald Davidson’s “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” which took aim at precisely the distinction Lewis finds so unimpeachable. Davidson’s influential article is reprinted as Chapter 13 of his Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 183-98.
examples of interpretation: interpreting a friend’s grimace as an indication that my joke fell flat, interpreting the lines of the poem as having a metaphorical rather than literal meaning, or interpreting a data set as evidence for a proposed hypothesis. We can also take Husserl’s preferred example: interpreting the perceived arrangement of shapes on the page before me as meaningful symbols while I read. In all of these cases, interpretation is more or less a conscious, cognitive activity performed on some given object. As Husserl admits, however, the “phenomenological structure” of the kind of interpretation involved in an intentional apprehension is “somewhat different” (Hua XIX:1, 81/309). For to talk of “interpretation” in this context

must not be misread as implying that consciousness first looks at its sensations, then turns them into perceptual objects, and then bases an interpretation on them, which is what really happens when we are objectively conscious of physical objects, e.g. sounded words, which function as signs. (Hua XIX:1, 81/309)

Sensations are not objects of experience and so their apprehension must be understood as a kind of pre-cognitive or pre-objective mental process. But this would seem to place the mind’s interpreting activity below the level of conscious awareness, and hence beyond the reach of phenomenological description. One worries then that Husserl’s “intentional apprehension” has no more phenomenological justification than Helmholtz’s appeal to unconscious inferences or Kant’s supposedly “mythical” deductions. Indeed, one might complain that Husserl is guilty of appealing to precisely the kind of explanatory posit or hypothetical construction to which phenomenology is opposed in principle.

It is fortunate, then, that Husserl’s analysis of the real elements of intentional experience is not limited to §14, but continues in §20 and §21. In these later sections we find Husserl proceeding in a manner that is more sensitive to the actual experiential dimension of intentionality. Sensations still figure into Husserl’s analysis as the
intentionally inessential content of perception, but his talk of interpretation and apprehension largely drops out of the picture. Instead, Husserl now prefers to conceive of the essential reell structure of intentionality in terms of a newly introduced distinction, that of matter (Materie) and quality (Qualität). “In the descriptive content of every act,” Husserl now distinguishes “quality and matter as two mutually dependent moments” (Hua XIX:1, 431/590; my emphasis).

Husserl is lead to this new way of seeing things by the recognition that perception involves more than a simple, unqualified directedness to an identical, qualitatively determinate object. What the analysis of §14 leaves out, or at the very least insufficiently emphasizes, is the meaningful dimension of perceptual experience. When I perceive the book on my desk I am not simply confronted with an enduring object of a certain size, shape, color, etc., but also an object that shows up with a certain meaningful valence. For example, it is experienced as my book, perhaps just the one I was looking for, something affording my handling and use, etc.\(^{140}\) In other contexts and on other occasions, the same book might be experienced with different shades of significance, for example, as a bit of obtrusive clutter, a source of anxiety, etc.\(^ {141}\) As such, Husserl distinguishes between “the object which is intended [der Gegenstand, welcher intendiert ist]” by an act and “the

\(^{140}\) This is not to say, however, that Husserl thinks we explicitly attend to the various layers of meaning running through our perceptual experiences, although we can. Just as I can pre-Thematically register the sensible qualities of objects—for example, when I am aware of the color of the chess pieces while playing even though my focus is not directed upon them—I can likewise take in their meaningful significance without any explicit, conscious articulation.

\(^{141}\) Husserl takes this to be a kind of meaningfulness inherent to the perceptual experience itself; it is not some extrinsic add-on, say, by way of a judgment. Husserl makes his position on this very clear in Ideas I: “I simply find physical things in front of me furnished not only with merely material determinations but also with value-characteristics, as beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable, and the like. Immediately, physical things stand there as objects of use, the “table” with its “books,” the “drinking glass,” the “vase,” the “piano,” etc. These value-characteristics and practical characteristics also belong constitutively to the objects ‘on hand’ [vorhandenen] as objects, regardless of whether or not I turn to such characteristics and the objects. Naturally this applies not only in the case of “mere physical things,” but also in the case of humans and brute animals belonging to my surroundings. They are my “friends” or “enemies,” my “servants” or superiors, “strangers” or “relatives,” etc.” (Hua III, 58/53)
object as it is intended [der Gegenstand, so wie er intendiert ist]” by the act (Hua XIX:1, 414/578). This “how” (Wie) of an object’s presentation is a dimension of determinateness in perceptual experience alongside of, but distinct from, the qualitative determinateness contributed by sensations. It is also a dimension that it is perfectly general, cutting across the whole sphere of intentional experiences: “[i]n every act an object is presented as determined in this or that manner [Weise]” (Hua XIX:1, 414/578; my emphasis). This is to say that for Husserl, intentional directedness is never a mere, general pointing, but always meaningfully qualified in some specific manner; “reference to objects is possible a priori only by way of a definite manner of reference [bestimmte Weise der gegendständlichen Beziehung]” (Hua XIX:1, 430/589). 142

Husserl understands this “definite manner of reference” along two dimensions. On the one hand, there is the meaningful element of intentional experience that we have been discussing and which Husserl labels the ‘matter’ of an act. Husserl understands the matter of an act as a kind of immanent meaning or sense (Sinn), what he calls “the sense of the objective interpretation [Sinn der gegenständlichen Auffassung]” (Hua XIX:1, 430/589). This is a natural unpacking of the concept of an act’s matter, since Husserl holds that objects always enter into our experience with a certain interpretive slant, that is, as meaningfully determined in such and such way. Only by having certain meanings “in mind,” that is, as immanently contained, reell contents of acts, do we experience the

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142 This is why in addition to the language of ‘intending’ (intendieren), Husserl will often talk of an object as being “meant” (gemeint) or how an act “means” (meint) an object. This terminology is just an expression of Husserl’s position that an act never simply refers to objects in the sense of merely pointing or indicating, but does so in some definite, meaningful way (Weise). As such, we can read ‘mean’ in these contexts as shorthand for meaningful reference. To say that an object is “meant” by an act, is to say that it is meaningfully referred to by it. Similarly, to speak of an act “meaning” its object is just to say an act meaningfully refers to it.
world in its full significance and descriptive richness. The matter of an act, then, is the real content by means of which conscious experience is intentionally directed toward objects; it is the matter that determines what my experience is about. Husserl makes this clear in §20:

The matter, therefore, must be that element in an act which first gives it reference to an object, and reference so wholly definite that it not merely fixes the object meant in a general way, but also the precise way in which it is meant . . . [it] is that peculiar side of an act’s phenomenological content that not only determines that it grasps the object but also what it grasps it as. (Hua XIX:1, 429-30/589)

Matter, however, is always the matter for a particular kind or type of act: I perceive my book on the desk, or I remember it, desire it, imagine it, etc. Therefore, the “definite manner of reference” of an intentional experience has a second, descriptively determinate dimension, which Husserl refers to as the ‘quality’ of an act. Although act-qualities do not establish the intentional directedness of conscious experience, they are nevertheless an essential real component of intentional subjectivity, since a “matter that was not matter for presentation, nor judgment, nor for . . . etc. etc., is unthinkable” (Hua XIX:1, 430/589). Husserl therefore concludes that matter and quality represent “the wholly essential, and so never to be dispensed with, constituents of an act,” and fittingly refers to

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143 This way of putting things suggests that Husserl has replaced the vaguely Kantian conception of intentionality from §14 with one modeled on Frege’s theory of linguistic reference. For the conception of intentionality put forward in §20 and §21 holds that mental acts refer to objects only by way of a meaning in a manner similar to Frege’s view that linguistic expressions harbor a reference in virtue of their meaning. Husserl believes that an act’s quality is a genuine descriptive feature of experience. That is, Husserl thinks there is a genuine experiential difference between acts like judgments, wishes, beliefs, and the like. This is a minority view, however, as most hold the view that only sensory acts and emotional states have a distinctively phenomenal character that could ground the descriptive differences to which Husserl appeals. Galen Strawson has challenged this view, however, arguing that cognitive acts also have a genuine experiential dimension. He writes, for example, that “the apprehension and understanding of cognitive content, considered just as such and independently of any accompaniments in any of the sensory-modality-based modes of imagination or mental representation, is part of experience, part of the flesh or content of experience, and hence, trivially, part of the qualitative character of experience” (Mental Reality [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994], 12). And again: "[e]ach sensory modality is an experiential modality, and thought experience (in which understanding-experience may be included) is an experiential modality to be reckoned alongside the other experiential modalities." (ibid., 196)
their inseparable union as the intentional essence (das intentionale Wesen) of an act (Hua XIX:1, 431/590).

With matter and quality Husserl takes himself to have identified the two reell component aspects of intentional experience by means of which an act directs itself toward a transcendent object. However, there is one last aspect of Husserl’s theory of intentionality that needs to be addressed. For Husserl would like to be able to say “that a person may, at different times, and that several people may, at the same or different times, have the same presentation, memory, expectation, perception, utter the same assertion or wish, cherish the same hope etc. etc.” (Hua XIX:1. 432/590). The sameness Husserl has in mind here should not, of course, be taken to mean that several individuals can share in the same act-experience, “as if my consciousness [could] in some way [be] conjoined with someone else’s” (Hua XIX:1, 432/591); instead, Husserl is pointing to the intersubjective availableness of objects. To say that you and I have the same perception is just to say that we both intend the same object and in just the same way, which for Husserl means that our respective experiences contain the same intentional essence. But how could two or more subjects share the same intentional essence, if such an essence is essentially private, part of the reell, descriptive content of intentional consciousness? Husserl’s response to this question comes in the form of a distinction between the descriptive content of an act and its intentional content. According to Husserl, the intentional content of an act is a kind of ideal content instantiated by its descriptive, reell content. This content is nothing other than the intentional essence of the act considered in specie; so considered, the matter and quality of an act form an ideal essence that can be multiply instantiated across the different concrete mental acts of one individual or several.
§1. From Logic to Language

In the preceding chapter we made three important advances toward our goal of accounting for Husserl’s theory of knowledge in the *Logical Investigations*. Firstly, in the midst of Husserl’s attempt to defend a conception of pure logic from the encroaching tide of nineteenth century psychologism, we saw how the overall epistemological project of the *Investigations* is articulated in terms of a concern for the conditions for the possibility of scientific or theoretical knowledge. Secondly, we saw how a specifically phenomenological approach to this kind of project must be undertaken by way of a reflective, presuppositionless turn toward mental acts and their *reell* content. And finally, we became acquainted with the basic phenomenological framework within which Husserl will work out his epistemology (and philosophy as a whole), the theory of intentionality. In the present chapter, these gains will serve as our interpretive backdrop as we delve more deeply into the second volume of the *Investigations* to examine the specific intentional structures Husserl takes to be constitutively involved in experiences of knowing. We will therefore move beyond the general account of intentional subjectivity...
given in the Fifth Investigation and finally make our way to the Sixth Investigation, where Husserl brings the *Logical Investigations* to a close with his careful phenomenological description of the intentional structure of knowledge. Our treatment of this crucial phenomenological study, however, must wait until we take one final preparatory step, as I will now explain.

Husserl marks the transition from the first to second volumes of the *Investigations*, that is, from pure logic to the theory of knowledge, by way of a foray into the philosophy of language. Considered from the point of view of pure logic, this manner of proceeding makes good sense. As we know from the preceding chapter, Husserl conceives of pure logic as a *Wissenschaftlehre*, a science of theoretical unity, where the unity in question is understood in terms of inferential relations between meanings (*Bedeutungen*) or propositions (*Sätze*). The proposition, therefore, naturally “stands ‘at the threshold’ of logical science” (Hua XIX:1, 5/248); it is “the general object of investigation in the science which is concerned with the essence of science” (Hua XIX:1, 100/325). Indeed, of the basic concepts or “categories” of pure logic, Husserl ranks that of the proposition as chief among them.\(^{145}\) As such, it is clear why Husserl thinks “[l]inguistic discussions are certainly among the philosophically indispensable preparations for the building of pure logic” (Hua XIX:1, 6/249). For only on the basis of such discussions “can the true objects of logical research [i.e. propositions]—and, following thereon, the essential species and differentiae of such objects—be defined in detail” (ibid.). Now as we know, the first volume of the *Investigations* is almost exclusively given over to the critique of psychologism. This critique clears the way for

\(^{145}\) See, for example, Husserl’s lectures on logic from 1907: “Nennen wir die primitiven Begriffe der reinen Logik die „logischen Kategorien“, so gruppieren sich die einen um die *Kategorie Satz als oberste Kategorie.*” (Hua XXIV, 70-71; emphasis in original)
Husserl’s positive account of logic, but the *Prolegomena* contains only a single chapter—its eleventh and final chapter—devoted to the idea pure logic itself. And even there we find only what amounts to, in Husserl’s words, a “provisional image” (Hua XVIII, 230/225); the task of a new field of investigations is merely indicated, rather than concretely undertaken. The linguistic analyses of the second volume are therefore an opportunity for Husserl to begin to fill in the details of his conception of pure logic which were only sketched in the *Prolegomena*.146

Considerations concerning the nature of language, however, are no less relevant to the project of a theory of knowledge, which is, after all, the official business of the second volume. For on the one hand, as Husserl points out in the Introduction to the second volume, only in the form of linguistic expressions “can truth . . . become an abiding possession of science, a documented, ever available treasure for knowledge and advancing research (Hua XIX:1, 7/250). But even more importantly, the use and understanding of language exhibits a basic feature of intentionality that will be of crucial importance to Husserl’s phenomenological analysis of knowledge. The feature in question is the way our thought can be directed toward an object in the absence of any intuition of that object. Such intentional experiences involve what Husserl calls empty (or mere) ‘meaning-intentions’, and their contrast with experiences of intuitive givenness,

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146 Husserl’s theories of logic and language are, in fact, mutually complimentary. For just as the linguistic analyses of Volume Two aid in carrying out the task of pure logic by clarifying the nature of the proposition, the defense of abstract, ideal entities in the *Prolegomena* makes possible the view of language. As we will see below in §2, Husserl attempts to stake out a position that rejects both ideational and referential theories of meaning. According to the analysis of the First Investigation, the meaning of a linguistic expression is not something fully subjective—say an idea or mental state of some kind—as ideational theories would have it. Meaning is also not the object—construed broadly enough to include states of affairs—referred to by an expression, as referential theories would have it. For Husserl meanings are neither *real* nor *reell*, but rather *ideal*. 
by which an *empty* meaning-intention comes to be *fulfilled*, provides the framework in which Husserl articulates his theory of knowledge in the Sixth Investigation.

Given the central place of empty and fulfilled meaning-intentions in Husserl’s theory of knowledge, the first half of this chapter will attempt to introduce and clarify this intentional phenomenon itself. I begin in §1 by turning to its original appearance in Husserl’s early pre-phenomenological writings in the philosophy of mathematics, particularly the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*. This section, with its a brief examination of “symbolic presentations,” will not only provide us with a provisional grasp of what it means to intend an object “emptily,” but will also help us to see how the relationship between empty intentions, fulfilled intentions, and knowledge was a preoccupation of Husserl from the very start of his philosophical career. Indeed, it will help to motivate one of the central themes of this chapter: that clarifying the dynamic interplay between empty and fulfilled intentions is the true, distinctly phenomenological motivation behind Husserl’s theory of knowledge.

In §2 we will return to the *Logical Investigations* to look at Husserl’s account of empty intending in the context of language use as presented in the First Investigation of the second volume. Here empty intending receives a fuller, more mature phenomenological treatment and we find Husserl intimating the Sixth Investigation by way of provisional remarks concerning the “epistemic function” of meaning-intentions. I will discuss these remarks in §3 as a way of previewing the dedicated theory of knowledge to come in the Sixth Investigation. The Sixth Investigation itself will then be our concern in §4. In this section we will see how Husserl sets out to provide just the sort of *Aufklärung* of knowledge described in our first chapter. In particular, we will see how Husserl attempts “to render knowledge itself intelligible [*verstäändlich*], in its essence
Wesen and achievement [Leistung],” as a complex intentional experience characterized in all cases by a specific tripartite act-structure (Hua XIX:2, 695/804). This tripartite act-structure represents the form of subjectivity that allows for the possibility of objective knowledge to be realized by an intentional subject. Here Husserl moves beyond the most basic subjective conditions for the possibility of knowledge—the general structures of intentional consciousness as such examined in our last chapter—and provides us with a phenomenology of those intentional experiences in which an object is given with Evidenz.

By the end of this chapter, a picture of Husserl’s epistemology will have emerged, one that in its motivation and substantive philosophical content differs from the one often imputed to Husserl by both critics and admirers alike. It is a picture in which neither skepticism nor any attempt to rationally vindicate putative knowledge claims plays a role. What we find instead is a philosopher engaged in a meticulous effort to work out the distinctive intentional contours involved in the achievement of knowledge. For Husserl, the merits of his theory of knowledge should be judged on the strength of its descriptive accuracy rather than its success in answering skeptical worries. Phenomenological epistemology, like any other instance of phenomenological analysis, stands or falls solely on the basis of its fidelity to the phenomenon under investigation.

§2. The Emergence of a Theme: Authentic and Symbolic Presentations

Husserl began his academic career as a student of mathematics, receiving his doctorate in 1882 with a dissertation on variational calculus under the title Beiträge zur Theorie der Variationsrechnung. Issues in mathematics continued to preoccupy Husserl
even after his decision to pursue a career in philosophy. Husserl’s earliest philosophical works, beginning with his 1887 Habilitationsschrift, “On the Concept of Number: Psychological Analyses,” and continuing with his first monograph, Philosophy of Arithmetic: Psychological and Logical Investigations (1891), attest to this. For they are all attempts to apply Brentano’s method of descriptive psychology to foundational issues in mathematics. More specifically, they are attempts to clarify basic mathematical concepts by tracing them back to their “psychological origin [Ursprung],” a methodological strategy borrowed from Husserl’s Habilitationsschrift supervisor, Carl Stumpf.\footnote{Although most scholarly attention is devoted to the importance of Brentano, Carl Stumpf exercised a considerable influence over Husserl’s philosophical development as well. Originally one of Brentano’s earliest students, Stumpf emerged as an important and well-regarded psychologist and philosopher in his own right. William James, for example, described him as “the most philosophical and profound of all writers” (Principles of Psychology [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983], 911). Through his own research and teaching at the Berlin Institute of Psychology, which he founded in 1890 and presided over until 1921, Stumpf helped to mold a generation of German psychologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler, two of the principal founders of Gestalt psychology, wrote their dissertations at the Institute under Stumpf’s direction. (Max Wertheimer also took classes with Stumpf in Berlin, but finished his degree under Oswald Külpe at University of Würzburg.)}

Husserl came to study with Stumpf—on Brentano’s recommendation—in the fall of 1886, while Stumpf was still a professor at the University of Halle. Stumpf had written his own Habilitationsschrift on mathematical axioms in 1870, and so he was an ideal mentor for the mathematically minded Husserl. Stumpf’s 1873 work, \textit{Über den psychologischen Ursprung der Raumvorstellung}, would also be significant to Husserl, at least for the project of the Philosophy of Arithmetic. For in this work, Stumpf employed the method of conceptual analysis Husserl pursues in the Philosophy of Arithmetic, namely, that of clarifying concepts—in Stumpf’s case, basic spatial concepts—in terms of their psychological origin. Stumpf’s imprint on Husserl’s thought, however, endured even after Husserl abandoned the psychological program of his early work. For example, in the Logical Investigations, which is dedicated to Stumpf, Husserl’s theory of parts and wholes takes its point of departure from Stumpf’s distinction between dependent and independent contents (see Hua XIX.1, 227-23/435-42). Stumpf’s 1891 essay, “Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie,” which is referenced in a note attached to §19 of the Prolegomena (see Hua XIX:1, 69n/95n), was an influence on Husserl as well. Although Stumpf’s focus in this work is epistemological, rather than logical, his criticism of any attempt to reduce the theory of knowledge to psychology helped to shape Husserl’s thinking on the errors of psychologism. Husserl’s critique of psychologism also bears a further, though indirect, debt to Stumpf, since Husserl’s exposure to the work of Lotze, a decisive influence on the brand of idealism endorses in the Prolegomena, likely came first through Stumpf. For Stumpf had written both his dissertation (1868) and Habilitationsschrift (1870) with Lotze, since at the time Brentano had not yet habilitated himself and so could not supervise dissertations. For more on Stumpf’s significance to the development of phenomenology, see Spiegelberg’s The Phenomenological Movement, 51-65.
clarified genetically if they are to be clarified at all. This means examining the circumstances of their acquisition. The circumstances Husserl has in mind are nothing but the kinds of direct intuitive encounters with objects found in everyday psychological experience. Such intuitive experiences of objects and their properties provide us with the material with which to abstractly form concepts. As such, Husserl holds that the content of an abstractly formed general concept is actually given in experience of its instances. This is what gives sense to Husserl’s claim that, “[n]o concept be thought without a basis in a concrete intuition” (Hua XII, 79/83). A concept without such a basis would be, to use Kant’s phrase, empty, that is without content. To employ such an empty concept in our thinking could never result in a genuine scientific cognition, i.e. knowledge.

Therefore, in order to make the content or meaning of a simple concept clear to ourselves, we must identify the intuitive experiences from which it arose and then attend to the specific experiential features that constitute its abstractive foundation. Such a procedure yields an illustrative “seeing” of the content of the concept in question that is meant to contrast with the grasping a concept’s meaning by way of a definition. Husserl’s Habilitationsschrift and the Philosophy of Arithmetic attempt to carry out this type of analysis in the mathematical sphere, with the end goal of clarifying the most basic of arithmetic concepts, number. From the outset, however, one might be dubious of Husserl’s prospects for success. Indeed, one might think that he is pursuing a completely wrongheaded, even naïve, line of investigation. For even if the method of seeking after the psychological origins were plausible in broad outline, mathematical concepts would seem to pose a special problem. This is because unlike straightforwardly empirical

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148 As Husserl puts it, “[w]hat one can do in such cases [i.e. cases of simple concepts] consists in pointing to the concrete phenomena from or through which the concepts are abstracted, and laying clear the nature of the abstraction process involved.” (Hua XII, 119/125)
concepts, say, color concepts, it is not at all clear how concepts such as those of the cardinal numbers, not to mention negative numbers, irrationals, and the like, have a connection to intuition. Frege, for example, had already argued in *The Foundations of Arithmetic* (1884) that mathematical concepts have nothing whatsoever to do with intuition in either their genesis or content. The basic question of the philosophy of mathematics according to Frege—“How are numbers to be given to us, if we cannot have any presentation [Vorstellung] or intuition of them?”—is thus precisely opposite of the way Husserl conceives it.149

Despite this fundamental disagreement, Husserl would nevertheless recognize a measure of insight within Frege’s view and others like it. For although Part One of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* makes the case that the concepts of a number in general (multiplicity) and a determinate number (cardinal number) have an origin in the intuition of concrete aggregates of objects,150 Husserl admits that “all number representations [Vorstellungen] that we possess, beyond the first few in the number series, are symbolic [i.e. non-intuitive], and can only be symbolic” (Hua XII, 190/200-01; my emphasis).151 According to Husserl, the concepts of a particular cardinal number can be formed on the basis of intuition of aggregates only if “grasping each [item of the aggregate] as something separate and specifically noticed, and together with all of the others, in one act” is possible (Hua XII, 192/202). This is to say that while experiencing an aggregate I

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150 The specific details of this of this account are unnecessary for the purpose of the present discussion. For a concise overview, however, see David Bell’s *Husserl* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 48-52.
151 In the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* Husserl uses ‘Vorstellung’, which Willard translates both as representation and presentation, much in the same way as Kant did, namely as a generic catch-all term for any subjective element of cognition. It is therefore analogous to Locke’s use of “ideas” or Hume’s use of “perceptions.”
must not simply be aware of being presented with a collection of things; I must also have
distinct awareness of each individual item of the collection as well. Now this is indeed
possible—for example, when I notice the stack of books on my desk, I can concurrently
and with equal immediacy notice each individual book of the stack—but only “under
especially favorable conditions,” i.e. when the aggregate in question is relatively small in
number (ibid.).\footnote{Husserl proposes twelve as the upper limit.} It is simply a fact about our cognitive capacities that our ability to keep
multiple objects in focus simultaneously is limited. Husserl thinks this is “a fact which
totally determines the character, sense, and purpose of arithmetic,” since arithmetic
procedures are designed expressly to circumvent such cognitive limitations (Hua XII,
190/200-01).\footnote{“Indeed, the whole of arithmetic is . . . nothing other than the sum of artificial devices for overcoming
the essential imperfections of our intellect.” (Hua XII, 192/202)} But this fact also means that nearly all of our cardinal number concepts
lack an origin in intuition in any straightforward way.

Husserl is therefore led to ask, in what is surely a deliberate echo of Frege: “how
can one speak of concepts which one does not genuinely have? And how is it not absurd
that upon such concepts the most secure of all sciences, arithmetic, should be grounded?”
(Hua XII, 192/203) This question, however, is purely rhetorical since Husserl responds
without hesitation: “The answer is: Even if we do not have the concept given in the
authentic manner, we still have it given—in the symbolic manner” (ibid.).\footnote{This formulation betrays the terminological imprecision of Husserl’s Philosophy of Arithmetic, in
which ‘object’ (Gegenstand), ‘content’ (Inhalt), ‘representation’ (Vorstellung), and ‘concept’ (Begriff) are
used almost interchangeably. See also note 12 below.} Husserl is
here drawing a distinction that will not only be essential to the analyses of the Philosophy
of Arithmetic, but to his philosophy as a whole. Dallas Willard, for example, has claimed
that, “[i]t is not a great or pointless exaggeration to say that the analysis of symbolic
representing and knowing is *the* main problem for the investigations throughout Husserl’s career.”¹⁵⁵ At the very least, I hope to show in this chapter that it is arguably *the* cardinal distinction in the development of Husserl’s epistemology.¹⁵⁶

Husserl often writes of authentic and symbolic *concepts*, but the authentic-symbolic distinction is, at root, a distinction concerning *objects*.¹⁵⁷ It names two phenomenologically distinct ways objects can be given to thought, and hence play a role in theoretical cognition. On the one hand, “if a content is . . . directly given to us as that which it is” we are in the possession of what Husserl refers to as an “authentic” (*eigentliche*) presentation of an object (Hua XII, 193/205).¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, an object can be given “indirectly *through signs which univocally characterize it,*” in which case “we have a symbolic [*symbolische*] presentation” (ibid.). Husserl offers the contrast between the perceptual acquaintance of an object and our relation to objects via linguistic descriptions as a paradigm of the phenomenon he has in mind:

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¹⁵⁵ Willard, *Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge*, 89; emphasis in original.
¹⁵⁶ Husserl takes over the distinction between authentic and symbolic concepts (or presentations) from Brentano, as he notes in Chapter XI of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*. “In his university lectures Franz Brentano always placed the greatest of emphasis upon the distinction between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ or ‘symbolic’ presentations. To him I owe the deeper understanding of the vast significance of inauthentic representing for our whole psychical life, which before him, so far as I can tell, no one had fully grasped” (Hua XII, 193n/205n). However, Husserl moved well beyond Brentano by analyzing authentic and inauthentic thinking in spheres of intentionality left untouched in his teacher’s work and with unsurpassed descriptive richness.
¹⁵⁷ And sometimes Husserl writes in a manner that is ambiguous between both, for example, when he uses the term ‘content’ (*Inhalt*). In what Marvin Farber calls an unfortunate “concession to the usage of the time” (*The Foundation of Phenomenology*, 27n), Husserl employs ‘content’ ambiguously, using it at times to refer to something subjective, e.g. a concept or a *reell* part of a mental act, while at other times to refer to something objective, e.g. an intentional object that appears to consciousness by way of a mental act. Husserl does not distinguish between the two uses, and as a result, we can only disambiguate on the basis of context. As we saw in the preceding chapter, however, Husserl, is much more careful in the *Logical Investigations*, taking care to disambiguate various senses of ‘content’, e.g. content as sensations, content as matter, etc. With regard to object of intentional experience, Husserl advises dropping the language of “content” altogether: “we shall do well never to speak of an intentional *content* where an intentional *object* is meant, but to call the latter the intentional object of the act in question.” (Hua XIX:1, 416/580; my emphasis)
¹⁵⁸ In this passage it seems clear that Husserl is using ‘content’ in the objective sense, as Farber suggests; *C.f. The Foundation of Phenomenology*, 27n.
We have, for example, an authentic representation of the outer appearance of a house when we actually look at the house; and we have a symbolic representation when someone gives us the indirect characterization: the corner house on such and such side of such and such street. Any description of a perceptual object has the tendency to replace the actual representation by a surrogate sign-representation. (Hua XII, 194-95/205-06)

If I perceive a specific house, if I “actually look at” it, then I have an object given to me authentically. This is to say that the intentional object of my current experience is given to me in its immediate presence, it is placed before me, so to speak, in a concrete intuition. The selfsame house, however, can also be intended in the absence of any such direct intuition, for example, when I think about it under a description, “the corner house on such and such side of such and such street, etc.” In such a case, the house remains the intentional object of my thought, even though it is the description, and not the house, that is intuitively present. This is because the description functions as a *sign*. Signs have the peculiar intentional character of what we might call self-effacement or deferentiality; when confronted with a sign, the mind is carried away from the sign itself to the object it stands in for.159 As Findlay puts it, signs “bow themselves off stage as prime terms of our references” in order “to introduce, or to help to introduce, objects and connections other than themselves.”160

Thus, the house thought by means of a description is still given, but in a symbolic manner, that is, indirectly by means of a sign. Shortly after the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, Husserl began to refer to symbolic intentionality also as *mere intending* (bloß *intendieren*), a piece of terminology that would continue in the *Logical Investigations*. In his 1894 article “Psychological Studies in the Elements of Logic,” Husserl offers a

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159 Of course, I can turn my attention to the sign itself and consider it as an object. But then it ceases to function as a sign.
definition of symbolic intentionality under this new label: “the phrase ‘merely intended’
here signifies precisely that a content is a content not given in consciousness, but one
aimed at, minded, or referred to with understanding, by means of some contents which
are given in consciousness” (“Studien,” 107/154). This formulation suffers from
Husserl’s early terminological infelicities, but if we correct for this, the meaning is
clear. An object is merely intended if it is not given intuitively (or authentically) to
consciousness, but is nonetheless an intentional object for consciousness in virtue of
another object that is given intuitively, viz. a sign. Signs, therefore, perform the
important epistemic function of allowing us to engage cognitively with objects that are
intuitively absent.

Against the mathematical formalist, for whom mathematics is simply a matter of
rule governed syntactical operations and strictly speaking not about anything at all,
Husserl thinks that arithmetic provides an exemplary instance of an important and
pervasive form of intentionality. Husserl, of course, recognizes the central place of
symbol manipulation in mathematical practice, but his commitment to intuition requires
that arithmetic calculation be seen as more than the rule-governed use of meaningless
symbols. For Husserl, mathematic symbols name or stand for concepts that have genuine
content. The second part of the Philosophy of Arithmetic is devoted to showing how this
is possible when the very things arithmetic concepts are about—the cardinal numbers,
their properties and relations—are, in the main, inaccessible to intuition. The signs
involved in arithmetic are therefore not provisional surrogates, as in Husserl’s example of
a linguistic description used to refer to a perceivable object, but permanent ones. The

161 See note 13 above on Husserl’s early use of ‘content’ (Inhalt).
specific details of Husserl’s account of how inauthentic or symbolic concepts can have content, and hence play the role they do in mathematical thinking, are unnecessary for the purpose of this section. For one, Husserl himself was not fully satisfied with his results and consequently abandoned the proposed second volume of the Philosophy of Arithmetic. But more importantly, my goal has simply been to introduce the distinction between authentic and symbolic intentionality, and show that it is a central concern even in Husserl’s earliest philosophical work.

However, one general point about Husserl’s account is worth mentioning here. It is one that Dallas Willard has raised in his work on the early Husserl. “It is important to understand,” according to Willard, “that Husserl neither gives nor seeks any ultimate ‘explanation’ of what makes ‘signing’ possible. Rather he wants to clarify what it is.” That mathematics yields knowledge of its specific domain of objects is treated by Husserl—the formally trained mathematician—as a simple matter of fact. The predominant role of symbolism in mathematical thinking does not call this fact into question, but instead makes it all the more remarkable. It is “a fact most remarkable [höchst merkwürdige],” Husserl writes in “Psychological Studies in the Elements of Logic” that, “while we are engaged with representing contents [i.e. intuited signs], we believe ourselves to be employed with the represented objects themselves” (“Studien,” 121/167). Indeed, “it is actually an occasion for astonishment” (“Studien,” 120/166; my emphasis). The second part of the Philosophy of Arithmetic is meant to trace the cause of this astonishment to its source: the actual experiences of signing that make mathematical

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162 The details, however, can be again found in Bell’s Husserl (53-59), and also Willard’s Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge (95-107).
knowledge possible. In keeping with the methodological orientation of Brentano’s psychology to which he was allied, Husserl aims to provide a descriptive analysis of this kind of experience. If Husserl can be said to produce a “theory” of signing at all, it is one that consists in a summarization of the descriptive features of the phenomenon in question, rather than a hypothesis meant to explain it.

Thus motivated by a distinctively philosophical wonder in the face of a remarkable achievement, Husserl addresses himself to the question of how signing works. There is no question here as to whether signing works, that is, whether signing makes mathematical knowledge possible, but rather a question of how signing does so. This point is worth raising and emphasizing because we will see in the sections to follow that Husserl’s general approach to the theory of knowledge is similar. On the one hand, Husserl approaches knowledge not as something problematic, but rather as something remarkable. Again and again throughout the text of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl uses the adjective ‘*merkwürdig*’ to describe the intentional structures involved in the knowledge experience: “to cast more light on this remarkable situation . . .” (Hua XIX:1, 515/649); “we must explore the remarkable facts of fulfillment . . .”(Hua XIX:1, 585/710); “it is therefore our task to describe this remarkable phenomenological relationship . . .” (Hua XIX:1, 353/533; my emphasis).164 Like a biologist whose research is compelled by the splendid diversity and complexity she observes in the biosphere, Husserl is struck by the remarkable complexity of his chosen sphere, the life

164 These are just a few of the many examples that can be found throughout the *Investigations*. Husserl continues to use the language of ‘*merkwürdig*’ in *Ideas I* to register his wonder in the face of the extraordinary depth and complexity of intentional consciousness. In §130, to pick a single example, Husserl calls us to “bring these remarkable structures closer to us” (Hua III, 299/311). It is with no little justification, then, that Herbet Spiegelberg has written that Husserl’s phenomenology “in general may be characterized as a philosophy which has learned to wonder again and to respect wonders for what they are in themselves, where others see only trivialities or occasions to employ the cleaning brush.” (*The Phenomenological Movement*, 81)
of intentional consciousness, and is motivated to bring this complexity to philosophical clarity, to understand just how consciousness achieves all that we take it to achieve. And like Husserl’s approach to the intentionality of signs, phenomenological epistemology seeks after such an understanding by way of a descriptive analysis of actual experiences of knowing, rather than in the form of an explanatory theory.

§3. Husserl’s Phenomenology of Language

Although the Philosophy of Arithmetic restricts its analysis to the realm of mathematical thinking, the text nonetheless does recognize “the vast significance of inauthentic representing for our whole psychical life” (Hua XII, 193n/205n; my emphasis). In the second volume of the Logical Investigations Husserl attempts to make good on this claim by moving beyond mathematics to analyze the relationship between authentic and inauthentic thinking—or in his new terminology, between meaning-intentions that are empty and those that are intuitively fulfilled—in diverse forms of cognitive experience. The first sort of experience that Husserl examines in light of this fact is the use and understanding of language. At the outset of this chapter I described how Husserl takes the philosophical clarification of language as being of the uttermost importance to the task of pure logic. A clarification of language also provides an occasion for further coming to grips with symbolic intending, since as Husserl already realized in the Philosophy of Arithmetic, “signs mediate every time language comes into play” (Hua XII, 194/206). By examining the nature of symbolic intending in language, Husserl is able to begin to shed some light on the “epistemic function” of meaning-intentions (Hua XIX:1, 39/276), a function, which occupies an absolutely central place in
Husserl’s analysis of knowledge. Husserl’s philosophy of language therefore prepares the way toward the Sixth Investigation’s phenomenology of knowledge.

The First Investigation of the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*, “Expression and Meaning” (“Ausdruck und Bedeutung”), is Husserl’s attempt to clarify the particular species of sign employed in linguistic discourse, the expression. Husserl uses ‘expression’ (Ausdruck) as a technical term in the *Logical Investigations*. Whereas in the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* Husserl wrote simply of signs (Zeichen), the First Investigation draws what Husserl refers to as the “essential distinction” between a sign simpliciter and an expression. According to Husserl, something counts as a sign based solely on its relation of indication (Anzeichen) to something else. The perception of a sign, say, smoke off in the distance or road cones, motivates, either by way of inference or some psychological association, a belief in something other than itself (fire, road work, etc.). But contrary to popular expression, smoke does not mean fire. For Husserl, it does not mean anything at all. Only those kinds of signs which Husserl calls ‘expressions’ are meaningful; expressions are meaningful signs rather merely indicative ones.

Expressions exhibit the general deferential character of signs described in the preceding section. Husserl writes of how, for example, an intuited expression “seems to direct interest away from itself” (Hua XIX:1, 42/279), that it has a “power to direct itself as a name to this or that objective correlate [Gegenständlichkeit]” (Hua XIX:1, 42/279).

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165 Unlike Frege, Husserl uses ‘Bedeutung’ and ‘Sinn’ interchangeably. “‘Meaning’ [Bedeutung] is further used by us as synonymous with ‘sense’ [Sinn] . . . our ingrained tendency to use the two words as synonymous . . . makes it seem rather a dubious step if (as G. Frege has proposed) we use one for meaning in our sense, and the other for the objects expressed.” (Hua XIX:1, 58/292)

166 “From indicative signs we distinguish meaningful signs, i.e. expressions.” (Hua XIX:1, 37/275; emphasis in original)
However, this reference is not the mere pointing or indicating of a simple sign. Recall Husserl’s example from the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*: “the corner house on such and such side of such and such street.” Here we make use of what that earlier text called a sign to refer to, or intend, an object, but we do so in a particular fashion, namely, as the corner house on such and such side of such and such street. This is to say that the description in question, which in the *Logical Investigations* Husserl now calls an expression, does not simply refer to an object, but does so under a specific meaningful conception, what Frege called a “a mode of presentation” and Husserl calls a “definite manner of objective reference” ([*bestimmte Weise der gegandständlichen Beziehung*]) (Hua XIX:1, 430/589); meaning is “the determinate manner in which we refer to our object” (Hua XIX:1, 55/289). A simple, indicative sign lacks this meaningful dimension; an indicative sign says nothing about the object to which it refers us. By contrast, any expression has both a meaning and a reference, it both “says something . . . [and] says it of something: it not only has a meaning, but refers to certain objects” (Hua XIX:1, 52/287; my emphasis).

Although meaning and reference are essential dimensions of expressions, they are distinct dimensions, which Husserl is careful not to conflate. “[T]he object [of an expression],” Husserl tells us, “never coincides with the meaning” (Hua XIX:1, 52/297; my emphasis). Husserl argues for this claim along lines elaborated by Frege in “Über

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167 On Husserl’s use of ‘Gegenständlichkeit’, see Chapter Two, note 43.
169 Already we can see the close connection between Husserl’s theory of intentionality and his theory of language.
170 Although simple, non-expressive signs lack a meaningful dimension, expressions, as a kind of sign, do have an indicative dimension. For in the context of communication, linguistic expressions intimate (*ankündigen*) the mental experiences of their author.
Sinn und Bedeutung” (1892), by pointing out how expressions, whether words, phrases, or whole sentences, can differ in meaning, yet refer to the same object. Like Frege, Husserl mainly relies on subsentential nominal expressions, especially names, to make his case. Both ‘the victor at Jena’ and ‘the vanquished at Waterloo’, to use one of Husserl’s examples, refer to the same man, Napoleon, while nonetheless differing in meaning. Husserl, however, does think that the point can be extended to whole sentences as well. For if we take the referent of a simple predicative sentence, ‘S is P’, to be its grammatical subject, we can easily see the cleavage between meaning and reference by considering sentences that predicate different properties to the same subject. If, however, we instead take the referent of a sentence to be the entire state of affairs it describes, we can still observe the divergence in question. For example, Husserl argues that the two sentences ‘A is bigger than B’ and ‘B is smaller than A’ refer to the same state of affairs, yet do so in different ways. According to Husserl, this difference is not merely grammatical or syntactical; it is a difference in meaning. Despite this cleavage, Husserl maintains that there is nevertheless an important connection between meaning and reference: an expression “means something, and in so far as it means something, it relates to what is objective” (Hua XIX:1, 44/280; my emphasis). Husserl puts the point more directly in §13: “an expression only refers to an objective correlate because it means something, it can rightly be said to signify or name the object through its meaning” (Hua XIX:1, 54/289; my emphasis). So although meaning and reference are distinct, meaning determines the reference of an expression.

171 Although the First Investigation is noncommittal about how to best characterize the referent of sentential expressions, by the Sixth Investigation, particularly the discussion of categorical intuition, it is clear that Husserl ultimately favors viewing such referents as states of affairs (Sachverhalte).
Given these generally Fregean observations, Husserl is moved to address the nature of linguistic meaning itself. In the first instance, Husserl is concerned to understand how it is that some physical inscriptions and sounds, paradigmatically the words of written and spoken language, are meaningful while others are not. After all, as Husserl points out, an “expression itself, e.g. a written word, is . . . as much a physical object as any penscratch or ink-blot on paper” (Hua XIX:1, 420/583). But an expression is not experienced as such. That is, a written word is not experienced as a mere physical arrangement of ink, graphite, pixels, etc., just as a speaker’s linguistic utterances are not experienced as mere sound, just one sensible auditory disturbance in an environment abuzz with them. Instead, they are experienced precisely as written or spoken words, that is, as the meaningful objects of linguistic discourse. Husserl therefore sets out specifically to discover what accounts for the difference between the experience of a mere physical object and that of a physical object somehow glazed with meaning. That is, Husserl is concerned to articulate a general criterion of meaningfulness for linguistic expressions, a criterion that would allow us to understand why the din of the crowded café speaks to us, while “the rattle of machinery”—to use one of Husserl’s examples—appears perfectly mute with respect to meaning, though perhaps equally clangorous (Hua XIX:1, 72/303).

Husserl realizes that this criterion will amount to nothing having to do with the actual physical properties of the expressions. “There is, however, no intrinsic connection between . . . meanings and the signs to which they are tied” (Hua XIX:1, 109-10/333).\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{172} “Plainly the connection [between an expression and its meaning] is in a certain sense entirely extrinsic, since the expression as such, i.e. the manifest verbal sound or written sign, is not seen as part of the object intended in the whole act, nor even as really determining I, nor as having really to do with it.” (Hua XIX:1, 421/583-84; my emphasis)
No physical object has intrinsic semantic content; an expression’s physical properties and its meaningfulness are related only contingently. Consider, for example, the prosaic fact that the same meaning (“red”) can be expressed by different signs (‘red’, ‘rot’, ‘rouge’, etc). As such, the “physical expression . . . may seem inessential to [the experience of meaning], and it is inessential inasmuch as any other verbal sound might have replaced it and done duty for it” (Hua XIX:1, 421/583). Consider also how the very same physical object can be perceived both as meaningful and meaningless. To illustrate this point, Husserl offers an example that we mentioned previously in Chapter Two: a sequence of arabesques seen initially in purely aesthetic terms—as, say, a visually pleasing spatial arrangement of lines and shapes—before eventually being recognized as a string of words. 173 Since the same physical object is ex hypothesi present in both cases, “the surplus element distinguishing” the latter experience from the former cannot be found on the side of the object (Hua XIX:1, 397/567). Husserl thus locates the sought after surplus element on the side of the subject; linguistic expressions owe their meaning to the mental activity of human thinkers. 174

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173 “Let us imagine that certain arabesques or figures have affected us aesthetically, and that we then suddenly see that we are dealing with symbols or verbal signs. In what does this difference consist? Or let us take the case of an attentive man hearing some totally strange word as a sound-complex without even dreaming it a word, and compare this with the case of the same man afterwards hearing the word, in the course of conversation, and now acquainted with its meaning. What in general is the surplus element distinguishing the understanding of a symbolically functioning expression from the uncomprehended verbal sound?” (Hua XIX:1, 397/566-67; my emphasis)

174 It is interesting to compare Husserl’s thinking here to that of G.E. Moore: “It is quite plain,” Moore claims, “that when we understand the meaning of a sentence, something else happens in our minds besides the mere hearing of words of which the sentence is composed. You can easily satisfy yourselves of this by contrasting what happens when you hear a sentence which you do understand, from what happens when your hear a sentence you do no understand . . . Certainly in the first case, there occurs, beside the mere hearing of the words, another act of consciousness” (Some Main Problems of Philosophy [New York: Collier Books, 1962], 73). And now Husserl: “[w]hat distinguishes the mere word, as a sense complex, from the meaningful word, is something we know full well from experience”; “[w]e do not think that where symbols are understood [as words] . . . the mere symbol alone is present: we think rather that an understanding, a peculiar act-experience relating to the expression is present.” (Hua XIX:1, 71/302)
Husserl thinks we can see this simply by attending to the way expressions show up in everyday contexts of spoken communication. To take my interlocutor as an interlocutor, that is, as someone “who is not merely uttering sounds but speaking,” I must take her words as accompanied by meaning-conferring (sinnverleihenden, bedeutungverleihenden) or meaning-giving (sinngegeben Akte, Akte welche Bedeutung geben) acts, which Husserl labels ‘meaning-intentions’ (Bedeutungsintentionen) (Hua XIX:1, 39/277; my emphasis). This label is fitting in this context because it is precisely an intention to mean something that infuses the physical substratum of language, sounds, inscriptions, etc. with meaning. According to Husserl’s view, the vocalization of a competent linguistic practitioner is “a spoken word or communicative bit of speech,” rather than acoustic disruption in the ambient environment, because he “produces it with the purpose [Absicht] of ‘expressing himself about something’ through its means; in other words, in certain mental acts he endows [verleiht] it with a meaning [Sinn], a meaning which he wishes to communicate with his audience” (Hua XIX:1, 39/276-77; my emphasis). These “certain mental acts,” meaning-intentions, result in making human speech more than mere sound and written language more than just an arrangement of shapes. The well-trained parrot may perfectly mimic the acoustic

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175 In the Sixth Investigation, Husserl also uses ‘expressive acts’ (auszudrückenden Akte) as another term for meaning-intentions. This term is also fitting since a meaning-intention is “the thinking counterpart” of verbal expressions. (Hua XIX:2, 545/676)

176 Although Husserl clearly takes the presence of meaning-intentions to be a necessary condition for the constitution and proper use of linguistic expressions, it is less obvious whether he takes their presence to be a sufficient condition as well. However plausible one takes his claim regarding the necessity of meaning-intentions, there is good reason to be skeptical of extending this claim to one of sufficiency as well. For regardless of what intentions I may have, I cannot just decide willy-nilly to make a sound or inscription mean anything I’d like it to. For example, that I utter ‘cat’ with an intention to mean dog, does not make ‘cat’ mean dog. Husserl, however, is principally concerned with how language functions within scientific discourse, where vocabularies are relatively fixed and consistent. Hence, Husserl’s linguistic investigations can be taken to assume a backdrop of stable, agreed upon conventions governing the use of linguistic...
contours of human speech, but it nevertheless does not speak. Lacking the capacity to form an intention to mean anything, the parrot merely produces sound. And if I were to produce sounds without any such intention, say in the rote memorization of a poem, I would be parroting.

Linguistic expressions, then, are meaningful in virtue of the mental acts associated with their production. It is the “the ‘meaning-intention’,” according to Husserl, that “marks off an expression from empty ‘sound of words’” (Hua XIX:1, 47/283). At first blush, this might seem like an odd position for Husserl to endorse. A mental act, be it a meaning-intention, perception, memory, judgment, or what have you, is an immanent, reell moment of consciousness. My words, written or spoken, can bear witness to such moments and intimate them to others—this is the indicative dimension of expressions—but only I live through them. Mental acts, as subjective Erlebnisse, are essentially private in this way. But we know that a central element of Husserl’s attempt to provide a Wissenschaftlehre, and theory of knowledge more generally, is the publicity of meaning. Indeed as we noted at the outset of this chapter, it is precisely the way language functions as the intersubjective storehouse of scientific knowledge, as well as the medium of its transmission,¹⁷⁷ that generates much of Husserl’s interest in language in the first place. That Husserl introduces meaning-giving acts in the specific context of communication¹⁷⁸ makes it clear that the intersubjectivity of meaning remains one of Husserl’s core philosophical commitments in the First Investigation.

¹⁷⁷ C.f. Hua XIX:1, 7/250.
Unsurprisingly, then, Husserl is careful to point out that while mental acts are necessarily associated with any genuinely functioning linguistic expression, these correlated acts are not equivalent to the meaning of the expression: “talk about meaning [Bedeutung] naturally does not refer [meint] to the meaning-conferring experience” (Hua XIX:1, 49/284). Husserl is therefore not guilty of smuggling an old Locke-styled ideational theory into his philosophy under the cover of the new phenomenological idiom of acts and intentions. For whereas Locke claimed that “[w]ords, as they are used by Men, can properly and immediately signify nothing but Ideas, that are in the Mind of the Speaker,”179 Husserl holds that the “essence of meaning [das Wesen der Bedeutung],” lies not “in the meaning-conferring experience, but in its ‘content’ [Inhalt]” (Hua XIX:1, 102/327; my emphasis). Now if the sense of ‘content’ employed here were that of something actually contained in the meaning-conferring experience as a reell part, then Husserl could not account for the intersubjectivity of meaning any more than Locke could. Husserl, however, makes it clear that he is not using ‘content’ in this sense: “the ‘content’ of a meaning-conferring experience . . . is not at all what psychology means by a ‘content’, i.e. any real part or aspect of an experience (ibid.). Rather, what he has in mind is the ideal, intentional content—as opposed to reell, descriptive content—that we discussed at the close of our previous chapter.

We will recall that according to Husserl’s theory of intentionality all acts of consciousness intend their objects by way of instantiating an ideal intentional essence. We will also recall—and this is what is crucial to the present discussion—that the intentional essence of an act does not simply direct consciousness toward an object, that

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is, it does not simply lend objective reference to our experience, but meaningfully determines our experience as well; “[i]n every act an object is presented as determined in this or that manner [Weise]” (Hua XIX:1, 414/578; my emphasis). This is to say that every act includes a meaning—an Auffassungssinn that Husserl calls the ‘matter’ of the act—as a moment of its intentional essence. As such, all acts are “experiences of meaning [Erlebnisse des Bedeutens]” in that all acts contain a “meaningful element [Bedeutungsmäßige],” i.e., the matter of their intentional essence, “which makes the act an ‘intentional’ experience, one ‘directed’ to objects” (Hua XIX:1, 353/533). With his conception of intentional essence, Husserl therefore has a notion of content at his philosophical disposal that serves the needs of his theory of language. In the first instance, it is a form of meaningful content, and so can function as the source of the meaning of linguistic expressions. Moreover, as a form of ideal rather reell psychological content, it can make sense of meaning as a “self-identical intentional unity set over and against the dispersed multiplicity of actual and possible experiences of speakers and thinkers” (Hua XIX:1, 102/327); that is, it can preserve the intersubjectivity of meaning. However, as an ideal content instantiated in actual experiences of speakers and thinkers, it can also preserve the idea that mental acts lend or give meaning to linguistic expressions. For these reasons, Husserl holds that “the meaning of expressions must lie in the intentional essence of the relevant acts” (Hua XIX:2, 538/668; my emphasis).

Husserl’s theory of language thus conceives of meanings as a class of ideal objects on the model of universals—indeed, Husserl refers to meanings as universal
objects (allgemeinen Gegenständen) in places\(^\text{180}\)—that are instantiated in concrete particulars, where the particulars in question just are the meaning-intentions of individual language users. “The manifold of singulars for the ideal unity of meaning are naturally the corresponding acts of meaning, the meaning-intentions” (Hua XIX:1, 106/330). The identity of meaning across separate language users is thus understood analogously to the way a single property can be exemplified in a multiplicity of spatio-temporally distinct objects. As Husserl puts it in his favored analogy: “[m]eaning is related to varied acts of meaning . . . just as Redness \textit{in specie} is to the slips of paper which lie here, and which all ‘have’ the same redness” (Hua XIX:1, 106/330).\(^\text{181}\) Thus the relation between thought and its semantic content is that of the relation between universal and particular. Or put another way, meaning-intentions token ideal meaning types.\(^\text{182}\)

Husserl’s basic phenomenology of meaning is therefore articulated along four essential dimensions: a) the linguistic expression, b) the meaning-conferring act, i.e. meaning-intention, c) the ideal meaning, and d) the object of reference.\(^\text{183}\) We can summarize this account as follows:

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\(^{180}\) See, for example, §31 and §33.

\(^{181}\) Husserl was fond on this way of putting the point and made use of it on several occasions. For example, in his critical review of Palagyi’s \textit{Der Streit der Psycholgien und Formalisten in der modernen Logik}, Husserl writes that, “the proposition relates thus relates to those acts of judgment to which it belongs as their identical meaning in the same way, for example, as the species redness relates to individuals of the same red color.” (Hua XXII, 157/201)

\(^{182}\) This is how Dermot Moran tends to put it; see Chapter Four of his \textit{Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology} (Cambridge: Maldem, MA, 2005).

\(^{183}\) I say ‘basic’ here because Husserl’s full phenomenology of meaning is richer than this schema would suggest. Although correct in outline and sufficient for the purpose of this section, it leaves out Husserl’s descriptive efforts to capture the way the various dimensions of meaning are fused together in a unified experience. As Husserl writes, the “acts involving the expression’s appearance, on the one hand, and the meaning-intention . . . on the other, do not constitute a mere aggregate of simultaneously given items in consciousness. They rather form an \textit{intimately fused unity} of a peculiar character” (Hua XIX:1, 45/282; my emphasis). The way acts can “fuse” together in this peculiar manner is not unique to the phenomenological character of linguistic experience, but rather a pervasive feature of intentional life. Indeed, Husserl’s theory of knowledge just is an intentional analysis of the particular kind of “fusion” or “synthesis” involved in experiences of knowing. We will begin to look at this synthesis in the following section.
Given this account, we can see that Husserl’s does come close to the Lockean view that language expresses our thought (or “ideas,” to use Locke’s preferred parlance). After all, Husserl writes that language serves to “put certain ‘thoughts’ on record” (Hua XIX:1, 37/275); only when a sign is backed up by thought, a meaning-intention, does it become endowed with meaning, and hence, function as a genuine expression. On this view, linguistic expressions inherit their semantic content from the semantic content of our thought. However, Husserl avoids the potential psychologistic pitfalls of such a view by construing mental content in terms of ideal meanings: thought has a certain shareable,
determinate semantic content in virtue of the way it instantiates or tokens types of ideal meanings. Ultimately, then, Husserl’s philosophy of language rejects the subjectivism of the Lockean tradition in favor of the idealism of Bolzano’s *Sätze an sich*.\(^{184}\)

§4. Meaning and Knowing: Empty and Fulfilled Intentions

With the concept of a meaning-intention introduced, we can now turn to Husserl’s suggestive remarks on the role of meaning-intentions in knowledge, what Husserl refers to as their “epistemic function” (Hua XIX:1, 39/276) These remarks are mainly confined to §9 and §14, and they find Husserl anticipating the descriptive analyses to come later in the Sixth Investigation. Before we turn to these remarks directly, let us first recall how Husserl introduced the notion of a meaning-intention.

Husserl first presented the meaning-conferring act in the context of his discussion of the distinction between simple signs and expressions. By focusing on the experiential difference between meaningful linguistic expressions and merely indicative signs (as well as mere physical objects), Husserl was able to throw light on the constitutive functioning

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\(^{184}\) I use ‘idealism’ here in the sense discussed in Chapter One. The full force of Husserl’s semantic idealism can be felt in a remark from §35, “Meaning ’In Themselves’ and Meanings Expressed”: “We cannot therefore say that all ideal unites of this sort [i.e. of meaning] are expressed meanings . . . As numbers—in the ideal sense that arithmetic presupposes—neither spring forth nor vanish with the act of enumeration, and as the endless number-series thus represents and objectively fixed set of general objects, sharply delimited by an ideal law, which no one can either add to or take away from, so it is with the ideal unities of pure logic, with its concepts, propositions, truth, or in other words, with its meanings. They are an ideally closed set of general objects, to which being thought or being expressed are alike contingent (Hua XIX:1, 110/333). It is interesting to note that Husserl initially viewed the attempt to account for semantic content in terms of ideal objects, such as Bolzano’s *Sätze an sich*, as a misguided appeal to “mythical entities”—‘mythical’ being one of Husserl’s favored terms of opprobrium. However, his encounter with Lotze’s *Logic* inspired a rethinking of his position on the ideal. “For the fully conscious and radical turn and for the accompanying ‘Platonism’, I must credit the study of Lotze’s *Logic* . . . his brilliant interpretation of Plato’s doctrine of ideas gave me my first big insight and was a determining factor in all further studies” (Hua XX, 128-29/36). Lotze’s interpretation of Plato’s theory of forms gave Husserl a model 1.) for conceiving of ideal objects without a metaphysically dubious hypostatization, and 2.) for understanding the mind’s relation to such objects without appealing to vague, *ad hoc* concepts such as Frege’s metaphor grasping (*Erfassen*). For more on Husserl’s discussion of this, see Hua XXII, 157/201; and for the interpretation of Plato that so impressed Husserl, see Lotze’s *Logic*, Book III (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888), 433-49.
of meaning-conferring mental activity underlying language use. As Husserl puts it in §17, “[w]e have oriented our concept of . . . meaning intention, towards the phenomenological character essential to an expression as such, which distinguishes it descriptively in consciousness from a merely sounded word” (Hua XIX:1, 67/299). In §9, however, Husserl employs a different contrast class to illuminate meaning-intentions, namely the class of meaning-fulfilling (sinnerfüllende) acts. Here a ‘meaning-fulfilling act’ refers to a specific class of intuitive experience, namely one in which the object referred to by an expression is made intuitively present. Not every act of intuition belongs to this class. For example, the experience by which the linguistic sign is perceived is not a meaning-fulfilling act. Although such an experience is an intuitive act—it gives the actual sign itself to consciousness—the sign is not what is meaningfully referred to by the sense-conferring act. The concept of a meaning-fulfilling act is, hence, a relational or functional one. It only makes sense to speak of an intuitive act as meaning-fulfilling if there is a meaning-intention to which its object is correlated.185

From our discussion above, we know that on Husserl’s view of meaning every linguistic expression essentially has an objective reference. However, it is not essential for this object to be intuitively given coincident with the use of the expression which refers to it. According to Husserl, “talk of ‘intimation’, ‘meaning’ and ‘object’ belongs essentially to every expression. Every expression intimates something, means something and names or otherwise designates something” (Hua XIX:1, 58/290; my emphasis). However, “relation to an actually given objective correlate . . . is not essential to an

185 Although not every intuitive experience actively functions as the fulfillment of an empty meaning-intention, Husserl takes it to be essential to intuitive acts that they can perform this function. For Husserl, every intuitive act is correlated with a possible empty meaning-intention to which it could provide fulfillment. Conversely, Husserl holds that every enacted meaning-intention is correlated with a possible experience of intuitive fulfillment.
expression” (ibid.). This is to say that language can, and most often does, function in a merely symbolic fashion. As Husserl puts it in §9, the object of a linguistic expression, can either be actually present through accompanying intuitions [i.e. meaning-fulfilling acts], or may at least appear in representation, e.g. in a mental image . . . Alternatively this need not occur: the expression functions meaningfully [bedeutunglich], it remains more than mere sound of words, but it lacks any basic intuition that will give it its object. The relation to the object is now . . . a mere meaning-intention. (Hua XIX:1, 44/280; my emphasis)

Husserl takes this to be a simple descriptive fact of everyday experience, one that only a very “retarded state of descriptive psychology” could pass over or interpret away (Hua XIX:1, 67/299); “[i]t should be quite clear that over most of the range both of ordinary, relaxed thought and the strict thought of science . . . we may in the fullest sense, judge, reason, reflect upon and refute positions without recourse to more than symbolic presentations” (Hua XIX:1, 73/304). This is most clear in the case of non-ostensive language use. For example, if I speak of a distant friend, say by expressing the judgment that she is intelligent, I am speaking precisely about her. This is to say that she is the intentional object of my current thought, as expressed through my spoken judgment, and the thought of anyone who might hear and comprehend my speech. Yet it is also the case that my friend herself is not present to my audience and me. This is true in the most obvious sense that my friend, as physically distant, is absent from our field of visual perception. But it is true also in the sense that she need not be present “before the mind” in the form of some mental image brought forth from memory or imagination. Husserl spends the brief second chapter of the First Investigation inveighing against those who would contest this point, i.e. those who would claim that “[t]o understand an expression means . . . to meet with pertinent mental pictures” (Hua XIX:1, 67/299). The chapter in question is brief because “to treat [mental images] as necessary conditions for
understanding runs counter to the plainest facts” of everyday experience of the sort described above (Hua XIX:1, 68/299); any attempt to deny these facts represents a gross distortion of that experience. If one tries to square the image thesis with the lived texture of experience, one can do so only by positing unobservable or unconscious mental images, a move that Husserl finds at best philosophically unmotivated and, at worst, incoherent.

Genuine language use can clearly proceed in the absence of any direct or intuitive experience of its intended object. Therefore, “the meaningful is not to be found in intuition, speech without intuition . . . [is] not speech deprived of thought. If intuition lapses, an act . . . continues to cling to the sense-given expression” (Hua XIX:1, 73/304). In these cases, we have, as Husserl says, a mere (bloße) meaning-intention, that is, a meaning-conferring act unaccompanied by a meaning-fulfilling act. Husserl describes such mere meaning-intentions as empty (leeren), since they lend meaningful reference to my experience, but they do not impart it with the intuitive fullness (anschauliche Fülle). Husserl uses the language of “fullness” as an attempt to capture the way the intuitive presence of an object can “fill out” my experience by illustrating or depicting the meaning of my expression. This is the same metaphor, we will recall, that Husserl uses to describe the qualitative determinateness lent to experience by sense contents [Empfindungen]. Sense contents provide the illustrative materials, so to speak, necessary for the intuitive presentation of an object. “Representing contents [Repräsentanten]” therefore “constitute the difference between ‘empty’ signification and

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186 Husserl uses ‘mere (bloße) meaning-intention’ and ‘empty (leeren) meaning-intention’ interchangeably.
187 See Chapter Two, §5.
‘full’ [voller] intuition; they are responsible for ‘fullness’ [Fülle]” (Hua XIX:2, 700/808).  

Let us consider more directly what Husserl has in mind here with a simple example. Consider the sentence: ‘Samantha’s lorikeet is colorful.’ Husserl would argue that there is an experienced (erlebt) difference between an occasion when (a) I produce this sentence in absence of Samantha’s lorikeet and when (b) I use it ostensively, say, to express a report or observation of Samantha’s lorikeet there before me. The difference between the two sorts of experience is not one of meaning—for the expression is perfectly meaningful in both cases—but a difference in the mode of givenness of the object. It is this difference that Husserl describes in terms of emptiness and fullness; in the latter case, my experience of the object is intuitively full rather than empty. Alternately, we can say that in this latter case something is now seen of which formerly was merely spoken.

Husserl himself often writes of the difference between empty and fulfilled intending in terms of seeing, and doing so helps to bring out its epistemological significance. For what exactly is seen in the case of a meaning-fulfilling act? In the first instance, I see the object referred to by my expression. This is just the basic phenomenological character of intuitive experiences. For such experiences are distinguished phenomenologically by the way they provide consciousness with an object at (an) which to look (schauen). As Husserl puts it, they “render the object ‘apparent’, ‘seeable’ [bringen den Gegenstand zur ‘Erscheinung’, zur ‘Anschauung’]” (Hua XIX:2, 700/808).

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188 For reasons that will become clear when we discuss categorical intuition in the next section, Husserl tends to speak of ‘representing contents’ (Repräsentanten) rather ‘sensuous contents’ (Empinfindungen) in the Sixth Investigation.
And they do so by means of sensuous or representing contents, which place a qualitatively determinate object before us (vom uns hinstellen) as a likeness (Analogon, Bilde), in the case of imagination or memory, or as the very thing itself (das Selbst), in the case of perception. However, I do not simply see this object; I see it just as I referred to it in my statement. Therefore in the case of an intuitively fulfilled experience, in addition to the object, I also “see”—in an extended sense of the term—the agreement between what is meant and what is currently given in experience. I become aware of, I live through, the “agreement between meaning and what is experienced... between the experienced sense of the assertion and the experienced state of affairs” (Hua VIII, 193-94/195; my emphasis). Here we have the experience of Evidenz described in the previous chapter; in this experience of agreement we come to experience truth. In the case of a meaning-fulfilling act I can actually see for myself that my statement is true. On the basis of such a seeing, I have lived through Evidenz, and hence, possess justification for the truth of the proposition expressed by my sentence. All of this should make clear that while a meaning-fulfilling act is unnecessary for an expression to refer meaningfully to an object—a mere, empty meaning-intention is necessary and sufficient for this—a meaning-fulfilling act is necessary for knowing. As Husserl puts it in the Prolegomena: “to know truth and to utter it justifiably, presupposes the prior seeing [einsehen voraussetzt] of it” (Hua VIII, 185/189; my emphasis). The meaning-fulfilling act is precisely the condition for the possibility of this “seeing.”

189 Unlike the English word ‘intuition’, ‘Anschauung’ wears this connection to looking or seeing right on its sleeve. For ‘Anschauung’ is derived from the verb ‘schauen’, which means to look, and the preposition ‘an’, meaning on or at.
190 The intentional directedness exhibited by thought, and the language that expresses it, is therefore not any kind of causal relation holding between consciousness and object. This is in part because intentionality is at bottom not a relation at all for Husserl, as we saw in §4 and §5 of the previous chapter.
Husserl’s theory of knowledge is first and foremost a phenomenological inquiry into the type of agreement at work when an empty meaning-intention finds fulfillment \((Erfüllungseinheit)\) in, or is fulfilled \((erfüllt)\) by, a meaning-fulfilling act. It pursues the question of how knowledge is possible by attending to and describing the complicated act structure involved in such experiences of agreement. This inquiry is the official business of the Sixth Investigation, but the First Investigation does gesture toward the more detailed account to come later. The germ of that account consists in Husserl’s preliminary reflections on the complex nature of intentional experiences.

What we have been calling up to now “an” intentional experience or act is in many cases actually a complex whole with multiple intentional acts as its moments. Husserl’s general reflections on such complex or founded \((fundierte)\) acts are contained in the Fifth Investigation,\(^{191}\) but to capture the peculiar phenomenology of language he is forced to look ahead. For when we experience a word as a word, that is, as a meaningful linguistic expression, at least two acts are involved. According to Husserl, the experience of linguistic meaning has “a variously tinctured act-character, presupposing an act of intuitive presentation as its necessary foundation. In the latter act, the expression becomes constituted as a physical object. It becomes an expression, in the full, proper sense, only through an act founded on this former act” (Hua XIX:1, 81/310). On the one hand, there is, as Husserl says, the presentation or appearance of the underlying physical basis of the word to consciousness by way of an intuitive act, say of perception. On the other hand, there is the meaning-intention by which the word is experienced as a word, rather than a bare perceptual object.

\(^{191}\) See §18 and §19.
What interests Husserl as a phenomenologist, and hence what he is at great pains to describe properly, is the precise nature of the experienced relation between these two acts. He is clear on how we do not experience these related acts. For one, we do not first attend to the word, given as a physical object, and then somehow throw a meaning over it. This is simply a descriptively false characterization of how meaning shows up for us in experience. The “intuitive word-presentation” and its meaning are never experienced as temporally disjoined in this manner; rather they are experienced simultaneously in a single act. Husserl, however, is careful to point out that this complex, composite act is not experienced as “a mere aggregate of simultaneously given items in consciousness” (Hua XIX:1, 45/282). The intuitive act and meaning-intention are not simply “alongside” one another in experience as simultaneous, but nonetheless discrete, disconnected perceptions (such as if I were to hear my phone ring as I read the paper). Rather, these two acts are internally related; they are blended together and “form an intimately fused unity” (ibid.). As Husserl describes the situation in the Fifth Investigation, the meaning-intention is not “outside of . . . beside . . . or merely simultaneous in consciousness [with]” the intuitive act (Hua XIX:1, 421/583); rather it is “one with it, and so one, that we can scarcely avoid regarding them all as making up a unitary total act . . . We do not find in ourselves a mere sum of acts, but a single act in which, as it were, a bodily and spiritual side are distinct” (ibid.).

The way acts of various sorts can “blend” and find unity in a more complex, but experientially unitary act, provides the basic framework for understanding the intentional structure of the agreement between meaning-intentions and meaning-fulfilling acts. For as Husserl describes in §9, meaning-fulfilling acts “become fused with meaning-conferring acts in the unity of knowledge or fulfillment” (Hua XIX:1, 44/281; my
emphasis). It is in the complex act of knowing that we experience the agreement described above. In §14 Husserl refers to this agreement as the experience of a *unity of coincidence*, a phrase that he carries over into the Sixth Investigation. It is an apt expression, since it captures both dimensions of the phenomenological situation. On the *act* side, there is the lived through intentional *unity* or *synthesis*, as he will call it in the Sixth Investigation, of the meaning-conferring and meaning-fulfilling act. And on the side of the *object*, we experience the *identity* or *coincidence* of the object as *meant* by meaning-conferring and as *given* by the meaning-fulfilling act; “the object, at once intended and ‘given’, stands before us, not as two objects, but as one alone” (Hua XIX:1, 57/291) Husserl is aware that this talk of unity and synthesis, identity and coincidence is simply a brief sketch. He calls his description “provisional,” counting mostly for having shown “how complex is the correct description of a phenomenological situation” (Hua XIX:1, 47/283). He admits that the full “the phenomenological clarification of these relationships calls for long, difficult analyses” (Hua XIX:1, 61/294). These analyses take place in the Sixth Investigation, to which we now turn.

§5. Knowledge and Its Clarification: The Sixth Investigation

The Sixth Investigation of the *Logical Investigations* is an attempt to complete the theory of knowledge that began in the *Prolegomena*. We saw last chapter how Husserl identifies two basic conditions for the possibility of knowledge: objective or logical conditions, on the one hand, and subjective or noetic conditions, on the other. The latter conditions, which are explored in the second volume of the *Investigations*, consist in the structural features of subjectivity that allow a cognitive subject to stand in the right sort of epistemic relation to the content of her thought. At the most basic level, these
conditions are comprised by the general structures of intentionality as such, the
conjunction of matter and quality in virtue of which there are objects for consciousness at
all. However, the realization of genuine knowledge requires more than a simple
intentional relatedness to an object. Mere opinion, irrational prejudice and the like are all
ways of being intentionally directed to an object, and yet are completely anathema to the
achievements of theoretical knowledge. Therefore, in order to account for knowledge,
Husserl must move beyond the basic subjective conditions necessary for intentionality as
such and provide an account of the intentional structures specific to epistemic
justification. If we are to maintain the distinction between knowledge and “baseless
opinion [grundlosen Meinem]” (Hua XVIII, 29/61) or “unwarranted assertion [rechtlosen
Behauptung]” (Hua XVIII, 119/136), it is not enough for a thinker merely to bear a
cognitive relation to an object that can be expressed in a true claim or judgment; she must
also possess some grounds, justification or evidence, for her claim or judgment. As
Husserl puts it in §6 of the Prolegomena:

In knowledge . . . we possess truth as the object of correct judgment. But this
alone is not enough, since not every correct judgment, every affirmation or
rejection of a state of affairs that accords with truth, represents knowledge of the
being or non-being of this state of affairs. Rather we may say that if it is to be
called ‘knowledge’ in the narrowest, strictest sense, it requires to be evident . . .
distinguished in a familiar fashion from blind belief. (Hua XVIII, 28-29/60-61; my
emphasis)

This, of course, is a fairly conventional epistemological view with a history probably
stretching back to Plato’s analysis of knowledge as true belief plus an “account” in the
Theaetetus.192 Husserl’s novelty, however, consists in his specific account of epistemic

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192 As venerable as this traditional view may be, it became the subject of considerable debate with the
appearance of Edmund Gettier’s “Is True Justified Belief Knowledge?” (Analysis, 23 (1963), 121-23) and
the so-called epistemic externalism which arose in the wake of Gettier’s paper. For an example of the
justification, or more specifically, his descriptions of the subjective structures that makes such justification possible.

According to Husserl, justification requires that it be possible for a subject “to have direct personal experience and apprehension of his judgment’s justifying character” (Hua XVIII, 118-19/135; my emphasis). That is, she must be able to experience “Evidenz which distinguishes [knowledge] from blind prejudices” (ibid.). What confers the epistemic status of “being justified” is something internal to the thinking subject, namely the experience of Evidenz. A specifically phenomenological theory of knowledge is therefore motivated to illuminate the peculiar intentional structure of this type of evidential experience. As we saw in our previous section, the First Investigation already indentified this structure as one marked by a relation between empty and fulfilled meaning-intentions. At bottom, then, Husserl’s epistemology is a descriptive exploration of the phenomenon of empty and fulfilled intentions. As Husserl puts it himself, “we have often spoken of the fulfillment of a meaning-intention through corresponding intuition . . . It is therefore our task to describe this remarkable [merkwürdige] phenomenological relationship, and to lay down its role, and so to clarify the notions of knowledge which presuppose it” (Hua XIX:1, 353/533; my emphasis).

The five chapters that comprise the First Section of the Sixth Investigation (“Objectifying Intentions and their Fulfillments: Knowledge as a Synthesis of Fulfillment and its Gradations”) comprise Husserl’s attempt to provide a careful phenomenological study of empty and fulfilled meaning-intentions at the most basic or simple level of nominal acts, that is, intentional experiences lacking explicit syntactical or propositional

latter, see Alvin Goldman’s “A Causal Theory of Knowing” in The Journal of Philosophy, 64 (1967), 357-72.
articulation. Nominal acts intend objects in the strict sense of *things*, rather than *states of affairs*. For example, I perceive my book, I remember her face, I imagine a green goblin, but I do not *claim* or *assert* anything about these objects that I am intending. That is to say that in the nominal act of perceiving my book I do not judge *that* it is my book or *that* it is a certain size or shape, etc. Such a judgment is an intentional experience of a higher, more complex sort for Husserl. These kinds of higher order acts are obviously essential to scientific knowledge and so will need to be studied. Nonetheless Husserl thinks that a general illumination of knowledge benefits from starting at the nominal level, since the interplay between empty and fulfilled nominal meaning-intentions exhibits in a simplified form the intentional structure common to *all* experiences of knowing. This interplay is *dynamic*, comprising various sorts of agreement—partial and full, static and temporally extended—but also disagreement and conflict as well. Hence, the Sixth Investigation goes well beyond the intimations of the First Investigation not only in the descriptive depth of its analyses, but also in its scope.

Before Husserl considers the phenomenology of knowledge at the most basic strata of intentional life, i.e. knowledge of *things*, he starts the Sixth Investigation by once more demarcating meaning-intentions, now under the label of ‘expressive acts’ (*auszudrückenden Akte*), as a distinct class of intentional experience. This brief discussion, taking place across the first five sections of Chapter One, is Husserl’s attempt to isolate the two most basic elements of his phenomenological clarification of knowledge, which we know from the proceeding section to be meaning-intentions and meaning-fulfillments. Husserl motivates this distinction by considering whether all mental acts can function in a meaning-conferring capacity, or whether this function is
restricted to acts of a specific sort. Initially, it might seem that every act could function in this capacity, since every act has an expressible, meaningful content in virtue of intentional essence. As Husserl says, we might be inclined to think that “any and every act might operate in a sense-giving fashion. For it seems plain that we can verbally express acts of every kind . . . All acts are certainly expressible, if language is sufficiently rich” (Hua XIX:2, 544/675). In §4, however, Husserl argues that this is, in fact, not the case. He does so by considering an occasion in which I give voice to an occurrent perceptual experience: while looking out into the garden, I see a blackbird and utter the expression, “There flies a blackbird!” According to Husserl, the meaning of this expression could not be inherited from my perceptual act, since, on the one hand, the very same perceptual experience could have served as the basis for any number of meaningfully distinct expressions (“There flies a bird!”; “That is black!”; etc.). On the other hand, the very same expression (“There flies a blackbird!”) could have been appropriately produced by any number of qualitatively distinct perceptions. And furthermore, my expression could function perfectly as a meaningful piece of discourse in the absence of the perceptual experience itself. For example, if a friend is within earshot of my exclamation, she will be able to understand my sentence even if she has not seen the blackbird herself. Husserl therefore concludes that “we must . . . draw a general distinction between the perceptual and the significant element in the statement of perception; we must . . . locate not part of the meaning in the percept itself” (Hua XIX:2, 556/685).

Here Husserl has again distinguished the kind of mental act associated with the use of language—either in the case of nominal expressions or full sentential claims—
which merely sets up an object for thought, and the kind of intuitive acts which present
the object intended itself by means of representing contents. For Husserl, these intuitive
acts are paradigmatically acts of perception, but imagination and memory can also
function to bring intuitive fullness to an empty meaning-intention. Husserl’s main aim
throughout the Sixth Investigation is to investigate the way these acts can come to be
related in experience. As we saw in the previous section, the First Investigation takes this
relation to be a kind of “fusion” between acts. In the Sixth Investigation Husserl prefers
to speak in a more Kantian voice, adopting the language of ‘synthesis’ rather than
‘fusion’.

Husserl’s first attempts elucidate this synthesis in §6, where he describes the
static synthesis of expressive thought (one’s meaning-intention) with a corresponding
intuitive act (a perceptual presentation). Static synthesis plays out in all of those
everyday worldly experiences in which, without forethought or anticipation, we come
upon an object and recognize or identify it at the moment of our encounter. Husserl
initially presents these experiences in terms of applying a name to a perceptually present
object: “I speak, for example, of my inkpot, and my inkpot also stands before me. The
name names [der Name nennt] the object of my perception” (Hua XIX:2, 558/688). For a
less stilted example, we can imagine a simple case of noticing an acquaintance: as I make
my way down the street, a friend comes into view and I register her appearance by calling
out her name. In saying my friend’s name, I do not assert anything about her. I do not,
for example, say what a pleasant surprise it is to see her or how her green blouse brings
out her eyes; I simply recognize or identify her. Of course, I could have recognized my

193 Husserl considers the example of recognizing a person in §7: I “recognize Hans as Hans,” I “recognize a
person as this person.” (Hua XIX:2, 565/693)
friend without actually having uttered her name. As I make my way through the world, I recognize all sorts of persons, places, and things without saying anything at all. Thus the type of simple recognition that Husserl wants to highlight in §6 need not involve the explicit use of language. Husserl does not necessarily make this clear in §6, but does in §8, where he maintains that an object can be recognized by the application of a concept in thought just as well by the application of a name through the use of speech. As Husserl explains, “where some act of meaning-intention fulfills itself in an intuition,” it can be either that “The object of intuition is known through its concept’ or ‘The correct name has been applied to the appearing object before us’” (Hua XIX:2, 567/695; my emphasis). Indeed, Husserl tends to gloss the project of the Sixth Investigation as an attempt to clarify the relation between thinking (Denken) and intuiting (Anschauen).

Experiences of nominal recognition, such as pre-assertively noticing an inkpot or a friendly face, are bound to seem simple at first glance. For they are part of the primitive fabric of our most basic and familiar worldly experiences, far removed, it would seem, from the lofty achievements of scientific cognition. This familiarity, however, masks an intentional structure that turns out to be quite complex, involving no less than three distinct types of act-experiences on Husserl’s analysis. On the one hand,

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194 And again in §15, where he takes up the topic of “wordless recognition [wortlosen Erkennens],” maintaining that such recognitive episodes “exhibit the precise structure of verbal recognition, although words, in their sensuous-signitive content, are not actually present at all” (Hua XIX:2, 592/715; my emphasis). Husserl is also clear that wordless thinking is a pervasive feature of our cognitive lives: “trains of thought sweep on to a large extent without bondage to appropriate words.” (Hua XIX:2, 593/716)

195 Therefore when Husserl talks about pre-predicative experience, we should not read him as talking about pre-conceptual experience.

196 See, for example, the Introduction to the Sixth Investigation (Hua XIX:2, 541/671) and, in particular, §66, where Husserl describes how the analyses of the Sixth Investigation have “imported a satisfactory, general clearness into the much used, but little clarified, relation between thinking and intuiting.” (Hua XIX:2, 730/832)
there is, of course, the meaning-intention, or expressive act, responsible for the
meaningful function of the word or the cognitive deployment of the relevant concept. On
the other hand, there is the perceptual act by which the object named is made intuitively
present.¹⁹⁷ This much Husserl carries over from the First Investigation. Husserl moves
beyond the First Investigation, however, by now identifying a third act component
involved in this kind of experience, namely a specific act of recognition (Erkennen) or
classification (Klassifikation); it is only by this third act that the meaning-intention and
the perceptual intuition are brought into synthetic unity. This third act is necessary since
merely uttering a linguistic expression in the perceptual presence an object does not
amount to naming or recognizing that object. On the contrary, I must intend to apply the
name to just this object; I must, according to Husserl, recognize that the object of the
expressive act is one and same as the object of the perceptual intuition. Otherwise we
would simply have two experiences “alongside” one another in consciousness, a “mere
sum” of acts, rather than “an intimate, in fact intentional, unity” (Hua XIX:2, 562/691);
that is, we would not have two acts “intentionally combined in the unity of a single
[complex] act” (ibid.). It is therefore a third, recognitive act that “fuses an expressive
experience, on the one hand, with the relevant perception, on the other” in the manner of
that experienced unity between acts described in the preceding section (Hua XIX:2,
560/689; my emphasis).

¹⁹⁷ Once again, perception is treated as the paradigm, but other kinds of intuitive acts, such as memory or
imagination, could do duty here as well. Husserl is explicit about this at the end of §6: “The same holds of
cases in which picture-presentations serve in place of percepts. The imaginatively apparent object, e.g. the
identical inkpot in memory or in fancy, is felt to bear the expression which names it” (Hua XIX:2,
560/689). Therefore, from the point of view of recognitive synthesis, “[i]t is likewise irrelevant if . . .
intuition is a perception, or a pure construction of fantasy, etc.” (Hua XIX:2, 645/760). For more on this
point, see §14 where Husserl discusses signitive, imaginative, and perceptual intentions and how each
relates to the issue of intuitive fulfillment.
This tripartite act-structure is laid out more perspicuously in recognitive experiences characterized by what Husserl refers to as ‘dynamic synthesis’. In dynamic synthesis, the meaning-intention and act of intuition are not perfectly mapped onto one another in complete coincidence such that they can only be prised apart analytically, but are partly disconnected in time. As Husserl describes it in §8, when recognition occurs dynamically rather than statically,

the members of the [synthetic] relation, and the act of recognition which relates them, are disjoined in time: they unfold themselves in a temporal pattern . . . we have a first stage of mere thought (of pure conception or mere signification), a meaning-intention wholly unsatisfied, to which a second stage of more or less adequate fulfillment is added, where thoughts rest as if satisfied in the intuition of the object thought. (Hua XIX:2, 569/695; my emphasis)

Thus in dynamic synthesis, language or thought first functions in the absence of its intended object, while the object itself only subsequently makes its appearance in some later act of intuition. For example, imagine that I find myself with the desire to read. In such a case, my thought might travel emptily, that is, in a “merely symbolic” fashion, to the copy of Crime and Punishment on my nightstand. Now my thought might remain at this level of “pure meaning” (Hua XIX:2, 566/694): if my desire to read passes and the thought of my book dissolves, my meaning-intention would have stayed “pure,” that is, completely untouched by intuition, for its entire duration. However, my experience might subsequently become mixed and blended with intuitive components to varying degrees over the ensuing course of my experience. For example, while my thought of the book persists, I might imagine it there on my nightstand, picturing it just as I left it the evening before. Or I might walk over to the book itself and see it there before me in its full perceptual presence. When the object of my thought makes its intuitive appearance in this way we “experience [erleben] a descriptively peculiar consciousness of fulfillment
[Erfüllungsbewusstein]” (Hua XIX:2, 566/694; my emphasis), that is, we live through the way these acts come to compliment and fuse with one another. Rather than simply living in the established unity of meaning and intuition in the manner of a static recognition, we live through the coming to be of this unity. In dynamic synthesis, the “mutual belongingness” of thought and intuition “reveals its phenomenological roots” (ibid.).

Husserl also describes the phenomenological situation of dynamic synthesis from the “standpoint of the intended object” (Hua XIX:2, 567/695). That is, in addition to describing acts of dynamic nominal recognition in terms of the experience of one act finding fulfillment in another, we can also speak in terms of experiencing a unity, coincidence, or identity of what is intended. In static or dynamic union we “experience [erleben] how the same objective item which was ‘merely thought’ [bloß gedacht] in symbol is now presented in intuition, and that it is intuited as being precisely the determinate so-and-so that is was first merely thought or meant [bloß bedeutet] to be” (Hua XIX:2, 566/694). In other words,

the thing which, from the point of view our acts is phenomenologically described as fulfillment, will also, from the point of view of the two objects involved in it, the intuited object, on the one hand, and the object thought, on the other, be expressively styled ‘experience of identity’, ‘consciousness of identity’, or ‘act of identification’. (Hua XIX:2, 568/696; my emphasis)

Although this may seem the most natural way of describing the nature of recognitive experiences, Husserl holds that “talk of fulfillment . . . characterizes the phenomenological essence of the recognitive relation more satisfactorily” (Hua XIX:2, 567/695; my emphasis). This is because a specifically phenomenological treatment of recognition must focus on the way acts, rather than objects, are related in such experiences; intended objectivities, as we know, have no place within phenomenological
analysis as Husserl conceived of it at the time of the *Logical Investigations*. Hence, the real, phenomenological unity involved in acts of recognition is the unity of fulfillment, even though Husserl is himself not fully consistent of this point.\(^{198}\)

Husserl’s general tripartite act-analysis of nominal recognition can be summarized as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{1Empty Intention} & \text{2Recognitive} & \text{3Intuitive} \\
\downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow \\
\text{Object}\,_{1} & \text{Identity} & \text{Object}\,_{1}
\end{array}
\]

In acts 1 and 3, we have the mere meaning-intention and the intuitive act, both directed toward the selfsame object. And in act 2, we have the recognitive act, which holds acts 1 and 2 together in the synthetic unity of fulfillment. The recognitive act affects this synthesis by means of its objective correlate, namely, the *identity* of the objects intended by acts 1 and 3. As Husserl puts it,

\[
\textit{identity} \text{ is the objective datum which corresponds to the act of fulfillment, which ‘appears in it’. This means that, not only signification and intuition, but also... their union of fulfillment, can be called an act, since it has its own peculiar intentional correlate, an objective something to which it is ‘directed’. (Hua XIX:2 568/696)}
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This identity is not made thematic as the focal point of our worldly encounter—our dominant attention instead resides in the object recognized\(^{199}\)—but it is nonetheless

\(^{198}\) Despite the avowed methodology restrictions of the *Investigations*, Husserl brings the object into his descriptive analyses time and again. As such, the Sixth Investigation is often in tension with itself, as the content of its analyses strain against the strictures of its method. Looking back upon the *Investigations* from the vantage point of *Ideas I*, Husserl would say that the “nature of the things themselves compels the carrying out of noematic [i.e. object-directed] analyses” (Hua III, 296n/308n), even though such analyses were strictly forbidden in the earlier work. As we will see in the next chapter, the introduction of the noema in *Ideas I* allowed Husserl to overcome the self-imposed methodological limitations of the *Investigations* and articulate a more complete and consistent theory of knowledge, i.e. one that encompasses both “objective” and “subjective” standpoints.

\(^{199}\) As Husserl makes clear in the *Addendum* to §8: “where a name is applied to an object of intuition, we refer to the intuited and named object, but not to the identity of this object.” (Hua XIX:2, 569/697)
This experienced identity is the philosophical core of the epistemological analysis of the Sixth Investigation. It is the element that transforms Husserl’s phenomenology of recognition from being simply the analysis of one intentional formation among others into a genuine theory of knowledge.

The full epistemological significance of the identity experienced by way of the recognitive act is fully brought out in the fifth chapter of the Sixth Investigation, particularly §39, “Evidence and Truth.” For in this section Husserl explicitly relates this particular intentional identity to truth. In experiences of nominal recognition, according to Husserl, the truth of things becomes disclosed to us. “Truth,” as he says, is “the correlate of an identifying act” (Hua XIX:2, 652/765). It should be unsurprising that Husserl takes up this position, since to say that we live through the coincidence or identity of an object intended by a meaning-intention and an act of intuition is just another way of saying that we experience the agreement or correspondence between our thought and its objects. And this latter formulation is precisely how Husserl understands truth throughout the Logical Investigations. We have already seen how the Prolegomena took truth to be the “agreement [Zusammenstimmung] between meaning and what is experienced” (Hua VIII, 193-94/195), and Husserl repeats this line in §39,

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200 Husserl insists on this point throughout the Sixth Investigation—see also, for example, §39—but by saying that this identity is merely erlebt, he is less clear than we might like. For we will recall from Chapter One (§4) that talk of ‘Erleben’ is standardly reserved for the way we live through intentionally acts; it is precisely not used to describe the way we experience the objects of those acts. As we said before, objects are erfährt, while the acts that present them are erlebt. Husserl, however, is not reducing the object to the act here. Rather he is attempting to capture the way an object can be intended in a complex experience without being the primary intentional focus of that experience. We saw something of this sort in the case of language. While reading a novel, the physical inscriptions that make up its sentences are presented to consciousness; they are, according to Husserl, the intentional objects of an ongoing perceptual act. Nonetheless, my experience does not intentionally fixate on these words. They are involved in my experience to be sure, they are intended, but my primary attention resides with what the words are about, the characters, settings, etc. It is in this sense that the identity in question above is merely experienced.

201 Chapter Two, §4.
telling us that truth is the “agreement [Übereinstimmung] of what is meant with what is given as such” (Hua XIX:2, 652/765). Husserl therefore adopts a view of truth in line with the traditional understanding of truth as correspondence, even referencing Aquinas’s dictum (“Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus”) at one point in §37. However, in Husserl’s hands the notion of correspondence is given a distinctively phenomenological interpretation in terms of relations of fulfillment among acts. Correspondence, understood as the fulfillment of a meaning-intention by way of an act of intuition, is not a relation between experience and “things-in-themselves,” but a relation internal to experience. Therefore accessing truth does not require that we somehow get up out of our experience in order to see how things stand between our thoughts and their objects—an impossible demand to be sure—but rather that we live through a synthesis of fulfillment. In such a synthesis, truth is “present [vorhanden]” to us (Hua XIX:2, 652/766), although in the manner of an Erlebnis\(^{202}\) rather than a focal object of a perception. Nonetheless, Husserl holds that “we have always the a priori possibility of looking towards this agreement [i.e. truth], and of laying it before our intentional consciousness” as an object (ibid.).

Thus when Husserl talks of “synthesis of fulfillment” and “Evidenz,” he is simply describing the same intentional phenomenon from two different standpoints.\(^{203}\) Both expressions refer to the experience of truth,\(^{204}\) but whereas the former emphasizes the peculiar intentional structure of this experience, the latter brings out its epistemological significance. By way of the synthetic mental activities involved in experiences of

\(^{202}\) See note 56.  
\(^{203}\) Husserl’s makes their equivalence made explicit in §38: “Evidenz itself is . . . this synthesis of fulfillment.” (Hua XIX:2, 651/765)  
\(^{204}\) “Evidenz is the ‘experience’ [Erlebnis] of truth.” (Hua XIX:2, 652/766)
successful recognition, the truth of my thinking is can be disclosed or made present to consciousness. And in so far as I myself have lived through this truth, my thought can be considered grounded or justified. Husserl’s tripartite analysis of recognition therefore provides what his theory of knowledge set out to achieve: a philosophical clarification of the structure of subjective that allows for the possibility of epistemic justification. That is, Husserl has made good on his ambition, first articulated in §32 of the Prolegomena, to elucidate the subjective (or noetic) conditions for the possibility of knowledge.\footnote{One might balk at this suggestion on the grounds that notions of truth and evidence have no place in contexts devoid of propositional structure. Husserl’s talk of truth, evidence, and knowledge at the level of mere nominal acts, i.e. those acts which merely present objects without any predicative articulation, may be seen as thoroughly misguided and naïve. Husserl recognized that his analysis might evoke a reaction of this sort. For he was well aware that the “concepts of truth, justification, the true, are generally interpreted more narrowly,” than they are in Sixth Investigation (Hua XIX:2, 654/678), namely, they are interpreted only as “they are connected with judgments and propositions” (ibid.). However, Husserl argues that his “more general interpretation of these concepts in unassailable” (ibid.), since nominal acts can find their fulfillment in intuition just as well as assertive or predicative acts, i.e. those acts which intend states of affairs. As shown by Husserl’s act-analysis of static and dynamic synthesis, “acts of naming can also achieve their adequation,” and as such, can be considered true or false (ibid.). “The very nature of the case,” then, “demands that the concepts of truth and falsehood should . . . be fixed so widely as to span the whole sphere of objectifying acts [i.e. both nominal and predicative acts]” (ibid.).}
In my first chapter I claimed that Husserl’s theory of knowledge, in both its principal motives and concrete execution, is unconcerned to answer the kind of skeptical challenges that have been a central preoccupation for many epistemologists. I have tried to make good on this claim in Chapter Two and Three, where an examination of Husserl’s early epistemology in the *Logical Investigations* revealed a broadly Kantian project of disclosing the subjective conditions for possibility of knowledge by way of a phenomenological investigation of intentional consciousness. In Chapter Three we saw how those conditions are the intentional structures that allow for the subjective having of truth, *Evidenz*. It is now time to begin considering Husserl’s epistemology in the period after the *Logical Investigations*. For even if the account of Husserl’s theory of knowledge presented in chapters Two and Three is accepted as correct, one could still question whether that account could be extended, in its broad outlines, to characterize Husserl’s later work as well. My take on this question can only be provisional, since a full treatment of the issues surrounding it would require a second dissertation.
Nonetheless, in this final chapter I will attempt to make a plausible case for the extension of my reading of Husserl’s early epistemology to his later work.

§1. Transcendental Phenomenology: A Turn or Continuation?

I recognize that the suggestion that the *Logical Investigations* is in any large measure consistent with the work that proceeded it will arouse some skepticism, since most commentators on Husserl’s thought see the *Logical Investigations* as discontinuous in important respects with the work that followed it. This view of the *Investigations* stems from an orthodox position among scholars according to which Husserl’s philosophical development took place over the course of a series of breaks and supersessions. We encounter this position, for example, in the work of Marvin Farber, who writes of several “epoch-making changes” that occurred at various points in Husserl’s career. The first, and perhaps most dramatic, of these is Husserl’s repudiation of the psychologism of his earliest work in favor of the phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations*. There has been some discussion concerning the actual extent of Husserl’s early psychologism, particularly in conjunction with Frege’s criticism of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, but we need not wade into these waters since I think Husserl’s own view on the matter speaks for itself. Moreover we can set this issue

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206 Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*, 16.
207 Dallas Willard is at the forefront of this discussion; see, for example, his “Translator’s Introduction” to the English translation of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*. Willard argues that Frege’s criticisms of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* are largely unfair, based on an uncharitable and insufficiently thorough reading of the text. See also J.N. Mohanty’s “Husserl, Frege, and the Overcoming of Psychology,” in *The Possibility of Transcendental Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 1-12.
208 Here I refer to the passage from the Foreword to the First Edition of the *Investigations* quoted in Chapter Two: “[a]s regards my frank critique of psychologistic logic and epistemology, I have but to recall Goethe’s saying: There is nothing to which one is more severe than the errors that one has just abandoned” (Hua XVIII, 6/43). According W.R. Boyce Gibson, the first English translator of *Ideas I*, Husserl also
aside since our present concern is not with what came before the *Logical Investigations*, but with what comes after it. And what does come after the *Logical Investigations*? According to the standard view of Husserl’s development currently under consideration, the *Investigations* are followed by the second of the kind of “epoch-making changes” referred to by Farber. As Eugen Fink has put it, “[t]here is a widespread and often repeated opinion that the development of Husserl’s philosophy in no way presents a progression continuous with its original motives as portrayed in the *Logical Investigations*, but that . . . it undergoes a radical transformation.”

Although these remarks by Fink were directed at Husserl’s contemporary Neo-Kantian critics, the view he describes has persisted among readers of Husserl, both critical and sympathetic alike. David Bell, for example, writes of how “at some point around 1905 or 1906 . . . Husserl’s philosophical orientation underwent a radical and permanent change.” Elizabeth Ströker similarly describes Husserl’s philosophy as having taken a “decisive turn . . . a few years after the publication of the *Logical Investigations*.” The result of this radical and decisive turn, to use the language of Bell and Ströker, would not fully emerge until the publication of the first book of *Ideas Pertaining to A Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (hereafter, *Ideas I*) in 1913, Husserl’s first monograph since the appearance of the *Logical

remarked that “Frege’s criticism was the only one that he was really grateful for. It hit the nail on the head.” (W.R. Boyce Gibson, “From Husserl to Heidegger: Excerpts from a 1928 Freiburg Diary” [Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, 2 (1971)], 58)


210 Bell, *Husserl*, 153; my emphasis.

Investigations over a decade prior. In this work we find phenomenology explicitly recast as a form of transcendental philosophy. Gone are any references to descriptive psychology; Husserl now consistently describes his philosophy as pure (reine) or transcendental phenomenology. Hence, the change in question is typically referred to as Husserl’s “transcendental turn,” leading scholars to distinguish between pre-transcendental and transcendental stages of phenomenology, in addition to the pre-phenomenological period of psychologism. On this reading of Husserl’s development, the transcendental phase of phenomenology is inaugurated by the introduction of the reduction, Husserl’s newly articulated method for thematizing intentional consciousness “purely” by way of suspending our participation in the natural attitude. It is the reduction, as Klaus Held writes, that “sets up phenomenology in the tradition of transcendental philosophy as it was established by Kant.”

However, if the sense of ‘transcendental’ employed here is the Kantian one, as Held suggests in agreement with most other commentators, then I think this reading of Husserl’s development needs to be rejected or at least seriously qualified. To see this, let us first remind ourselves what Kant means by ‘transcendental’. Kant defined his use of the term in the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* as follows: “I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a

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212 Husserl did provide the public with some advance notice of his maturing position in various lectures courses given in the years leading up to the publication of *Ideas I*. The *Idea of Phenomenology* lectures and the 1906/7 lectures on logic and the theory of knowledge, which I discussed in Chapter One, stem from this period.

213 According to Farber it “is possible to distinguish a number of different periods in Husserl’s development . . . These are, broadly speaking, the periods of psychologism, simple descriptive phenomenology (phenomenology in the narrow sense), and transcendental phenomenology.” (The *Foundation of Phenomenology*, 15)

Now if the analysis of our chapters Two and Three is at all correct, I think we must grant that the theory of knowledge carried out in the *Logical Investigations* conforms to this Kantian definition of transcendental, even if Husserl had not yet taken to using the term to describe his phenomenology. For first, Husserl openly admits that he is “concerned with a quite necessary generalization of the question as to the ‘conditions of the possibility of experience’” (Hua VIII, 239/232). He is concerned not with the putative objects of our knowledge, but with the essential structures of consciousness that make any knowledge of objects possible. Indeed, as we saw in §4 of Chapter Two, every sort of transcendence, including the objects of empirical knowledge, are to be rigorously excluded from phenomenological consideration in favor of mental acts and their *reell* contents. And secondly, Husserl fully intended his philosophy to be an *a priori* discipline, since phenomenological research always aims at the disclosure of general essences—the essential structures of intentional consciousness as such—rather than the description of particular events unfolding temporally in the *Erlebnisstrom*. It is therefore my view that referring to the *Logical Investigations* as “pre-transcendental” is deeply misleading at best. It is certainly false to say, as Elizabeth Ströker does, that Husserl “called for a transcendental phenomenology which seeks to clarify the conditions of the possibility of the empirical knowledge of being” only subsequent to the *Logical Investigations*.

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216 Although the term ‘transcendental’ does not appear, we did see in Chapter Two how Husserl acknowledged the historical precedent (“historical echoes”) to his approach to the theory of knowledge; see Hua VIII, 239/232.
217 Recall Husserl’s assertion that “[f]or the phenomenological mode of consideration objectivity itself counts as nothing.” (Hua XIX:1, 427/587)
Like the *Logical Investigations* before it, *Ideas I* was the result of over a decade of research interspersed with relatively few publications. By all accounts, including Husserl’s own, this decade was a period of intense reflection. The results of this reflection, however, do not represent a drastic departure from the phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations*. It is best to think of the period after the *Logical Investigations* as one of recrystalization in which Husserl struggled to find a way to present and properly characterize the breakthrough achieved in his landmark work. For as Husserl wrote in a set of unpublished remarks on the *Investigations* from 1913,

> there is a great difference . . . between performing novel theoretical discoveries out of the innermost necessities and in pure dedication to the subject matter, on the one hand, and one’s being clear in reflection on the unique sense and scope of those discoveries—or rather, on the unique sense of the method employed—on the other.” (“Vorrede,” 109/16)

The need to achieve reflective clarity was felt intensely by Husserl, since he recognized the shortcomings of the *Logical Investigations* as an introduction to his newly minted phenomenological philosophy from the start. As he wrote in the Foreword to the Second Edition, “I felt its defects immediately after its appearance” (Hua XVIII, 12/47). Indeed, Husserl’s *Selbstanzeige*, published alongside the second volume in the *Vierteljahrschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie und Soziologie*, adopts an almost apologetic tone in places. “It is no small venture,” Husserl writes, “to turn over to the public a work which is fragmentary to such an extent and still not clarified along several lines of thought.

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219 The following diary entry is typical of this period: “I have been through enough torments from lack of clarity and from doubt that wavers back and forth . . . Only one need consumes me: I must win clarity, else I cannot live; I cannot bear life unless I can believe that I shall achieve it.” (Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 76)

220 These remarks were part of what was intended to serve as a preface to the revised, Second Edition of the *Investigations*, but Husserl chose ultimately not to use them. This discarded preface has been published posthumously in Husserliana XX under the title “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage der Logischen Untersuchungen.”
Originally these investigations were never intended for publication in the form in which they are here presented to the reader” (“Selbstanzeige,” 263/9). Here, Husserl alludes to the particular literary genesis of the *Investigations* as a way of explaining their imperfect (“fragmentary”) mode of presentation. Husserl did not originally compose the six investigations that comprise Volume Two with the intention of their forming a single, unified work, but rather wrote each independently—in some cases separated by many years—as individual studies. They were assembled together only later, mainly as a concession to the exigencies of professional advancement,221 with the result that they were “not, properly speaking, one book or work in a literary sense,” as Husserl noted in the Foreword to the Second Edition (Hua XVIII, 10/46). Consequently, the *Investigations* lack the narrative unity and cohesion of a carefully planned and arranged philosophical treatise.

Husserl thus realized that the *Investigations* required a “final reworking” in order “to bring everything into a single standpoint” and to carry “through everywhere the distinctions . . . already recognized in other contexts as necessary” (“Vorrede,” 329/51). Given the sprawling nature of the work, however, the amount of time required for such an undertaking was not feasible professionally, and so the *Investigations* were published as they stood at the time. However, with the success of the *Prolegomena* securing him a tenured position, Husserl subsequently found himself with the professional liberty to rework his phenomenology in the way he always felt necessary. The result of this reworking, twelve years in the making, was the publication of *Ideas I*. Here, Husserl introduces his phenomenology with a clear and confident voice earned over the course of 221 When the first volume of the *Logical Investigations* was published in 1900 Husserl was forty one years old and still an untenured Privatdozent at Halle. The success of the work, however, helped to secure him a professorship at Göttingen, where he remained for fifteen years before moving to Freiburg in 1916.
a decade of labor in a work whose unity and focus contrasts markedly with the unwieldy sprawl of the *Investigations*. Gail Soffer has remarked that this contrast “gives the appearance of a radical change” in Husserl’s philosophy, “where in fact all that has occurred is a clearer and more fundamental thinking-through.”\textsuperscript{222} This is the general view to be defended in this chapter. I will argue that the developments of *Ideas I* draw on resources more or less explicit in the *Investigations*, allowing us therefore to view *Ideas I* as enriching and extending, rather than fundamentally altering, the course of phenomenological philosophy. To begin making my case, I will return to the claim that phenomenology only became a transcendental philosophy subsequent to the *Logical Investigations*. In particular, I want to examine the common claim that the explicitly transcendental phenomenology of *Ideas I* represented a rejection of an earlier naturalism in Husserl’s philosophy. This discussion in §2 will set the stage for examining Husserl’s conception of absolute consciousness and the phenomenological reduction in §3 and §4 respectively. Finally, I will turn to the actual epistemology of *Ideas I* in §5. There we will see that the epistemology of *Ideas I*, articulated in the second chapter of its final part, “Phenomenology of Reason,” remains firmly built upon the foundation laid by the Sixth Logical Investigation, although formulated in a manner that is more consistent and philosophically satisfying than that of the *Logical Investigations*. This improvement is made possible by the way the phenomenological standpoint of *Ideas I* now includes the intentional object within its purview.

§2. Phenomenology and Naturalism

One way of understanding transcendental philosophy is by contrast with philosophical naturalism. Indeed, it is precisely in terms of such a contrast that some commentators attempt to argue for the supposed transcendental turn which took place in Husserl’s philosophy after the Logical Investigations. David Bell, for example, has claimed that “one way to describe this change [from the Logical Investigations to Ideas I] is to say that Husserl moves from a naturalistic point of view to a transcendental one.” Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach argue along similar lines in their joint introduction to phenomenology, and Theodore de Boer has claimed that from the standpoint of Husserl’s later philosophy “the philosophy of Logischen Untersuchungen moves within the natural attitude.” It is therefore worth considering this reading of the relationship between Husserl’s earlier and later phenomenology.

To begin, we must be clear about what is meant here by “naturalism.” Bell defines naturalism in the sense relevant to this discussion as “the view that the universe contains nothing but natural phenomena—a natural phenomenon being any object, event, property, fact, or the like, whose explanation can in principle be couched exclusively and without remainder in terms acceptable within the natural sciences.” The most salient aspect of naturalism from the point of view of phenomenology is the way it is intended to be a truly comprehensive philosophical view of reality, one that applies just as much to the psychical as to the physical; every aspect of reality, including the province of

\[^{223}\] Bell, Husserl, 154; my emphasis.
\[^{224}\] See Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology, 58-60.
\[^{225}\] De Boer, The Development of Husserl’s Thought, 406.
\[^{226}\] Bell, Husserl, 154; my emphasis.
phenomenology—intentional consciousness—is ultimately understandable in the terms of modern natural science, i.e. physical states of causally related objects. From the naturalistic viewpoint, then, “the human mind is just a common-or-garden part of the natural order of things.”\footnote{Idid., 155.} In contrast to this naturalistic conception, in which the mind is just one object among many, a properly transcendental conception of subjectivity, according to Bell, holds that “the mind is not ultimately just a part of the natural world, but on the contrary must be assigned some \textit{foundational} or \textit{constitutive} role with respect to the natural world as a whole.”\footnote{Ibid.; my emphasis.} Kant’s theoretical philosophy, according to which the mind’s synthesizing functions actively constitute the world studied by natural science, is the paradigm of the transcendental conception. On the Kantian picture, the mind is not an object in the world, but that through which there is an objective world of experience in the first place.

Now how does all this stand with respect to Husserl? On the one hand, Bell is without question correct to point out that a passionate anti-naturalism becomes a pronounced and enduring feature of Husserl’s work after the \textit{Logical Investigations}.\footnote{In fact, it would endure to the very end of Husserl’s life, finding perhaps its most eloquent and urgent expression in the lecture “Die Philosophie in der Krise der europäischen Menschheit” delivered in Vienna in 1935. This lecture appears as a supplementary text the \textit{Crisis} to Husserliana VI (314-48) under the title “Die Krise des europäischen Menschenentums und die Philosophie.”} Indeed, an invective against naturalism forms the core of Husserl’s first major post-\textit{Investigations} publication, the 1911 essay, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science.” There Husserl criticizes “the naturalist,” for whom “[w]hatever is is either itself physical, belonging to the unified totality of physical nature, or it is in fact psychical, but then merely as a variable dependent on the physical” (“Philosophie,” 9/79; my emphasis), on
the grounds that her view amounts to a “naturalizing of consciousness” as well as a
“naturalizing of . . . all ideals and norms” (“Philosophie,” 9/80). So far so good for Bell’s
position, but we must now ask whether this anti-naturalism is a genuinely new
development in Husserl’s thought. Is “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” an attempt to
atone for past philosophical sins in the manner of the Prolegomena vis-à-vis
psychologism? It would be difficult to make that case, since the Prolegomena itself is
nothing less than a protracted attack on naturalism in the logical sphere: psychologism—
the critical target of the Prolegomena—just is the attempt to naturalize logic. Husserl
indicates as much in “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” when he describes how “formal
logical principles . . . are interpreted by naturalism as natural laws of human thinking”
(ibid.), and then in a footnote directs the reader to the first volume of the Logical
Investigations where the “absurdity [Widersinn]” of such a view is “demonstrated in
detail” (ibid.).230 And as we saw earlier in our own Chapter Two, Husserl’s own
conception of logic is entirely anathema to naturalism, in that it is built around a
commitment to the existence of ideal objects over and above, and irreducible to, spatio-
temporal particulars.231 Husserl’s logical idealism is therefore simply incompatible with
the view that all objects can be accounted for “exclusively and without remainder in
terms acceptable within the natural sciences,” and hence, undercuts the claim that Husserl
was a naturalist in this sense at the time of the Logical Investigations.

230 Husserl makes similar references back to the Logical Investigations during his critique of “empiricistic
naturalism” in the second chapter of the first part of Ideas I. For example, in §20 he breaks off his remarks
on the logical shortcomings of empiricism, commenting that “more lengthy analyses . . . would only repeat
what has been said elsewhere” (Hua III, 38/38). A footnote makes clear that Husserl is here referring to the
Prolegomena to the Logical Investigations.

231 Recall Husserl’s claim, quoted above in Chapter Two, that ideal objects have the “intrinsic right” of
being “granted objective status alongside individual (or real) objects.” (Hua XIX:1, 112/338)
However, even if the critique of psychologism shows that naturalism was rejected as a comprehensive theory of being, the *Logical Investigations* may very well still contain specific instances of naturalistic interpretation that run counter to a properly transcendental standpoint. For example, that Husserl denies the possibility of naturalizing logic does not entail a similar denial with respect to consciousness. And so for all that has been said thus far, it is still an open question as to whether Husserl fell prey to naturalizing consciousness in the *Logical Investigations*. Husserl’s characterization of phenomenology as a form of psychology has inclined some to answer this question in the affirmative. This is the position taken, for example, by Bernett, Kern, and Marbach. Together these scholars argue that Husserl’s turn to consciousness in the *Investigations* was a turn to a worldly, empirical consciousness rather than a pure, transcendental consciousness. One might assume that Bernet et al. base their claim here on Husserl’s well-known rejection of the Kantian “pure ego” in §8 of the Fifth Investigation in the First Edition of the *Investigations*.232 Bernett et al., however, pursue a different line of argument, claiming that Husserl naturalized consciousness by way of an *empirical apperception* of its content.

Husserl thematized consciousness with a kind of philosophical unconcern by employing an order of reflection that rested upon the basis of *natural-empirical apperception* . . . he conceived of consciousness thoroughly and expressly . . . in the manner of psychology. Consciousness is taken to be quite simply a component of the empirical, corporeal-spiritual, thus and so determined ‘I’ of this or that personal individual.233

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232 “I must frankly confess . . . that I am quite unable to find this ego, this primitive center of relations. The only thing I can take note of, and therefore perceive, are the empirical ego and its empirical relations to its own experiences, or to such external objects as are receiving special attention at the moment” (Hua XIX:1, 374/549). In the Second Edition of the text, Husserl famously remarked of the pure ego: “I have since managed to find it.” (ibid.)

233 Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*, 60; my emphasis.
So on the view of Bernett et al., even if there is a sense in which the *Investigations* transcends psychology by subjecting lived experiences to an ideating abstraction meant to reveal what is essential to any consciousness whatsoever (“consciousness as such”), the point of departure for such abstraction, its exemplary basis, is empirical consciousness. As such, the phenomenology of the *Investigations* terminates at the essential structures of empirical consciousness; given its worldly starting point it can reach no deeper, i.e., into the essence of pure, world-constituting transcendental subjectivity. Thus, Bernet, Kern, and Marbach argue that “beyond the achievement of the *Logical Investigations* in reflectively turning our gaze toward acts of consciousness as such, there is still required a methodologically *pure* apprehension of consciousness.” On their view, the search for such a “methodologically pure” mode of investigating conscious experience is part of the motivation behind Husserl’s transcendental turn. Phenomenology only becomes a transcendental philosophy with the introduction of the reduction in *Ideas I*. De Boer supports this view as well. He argues that the reduction functions to “undo” the kind of naturalistic interpretation of consciousness operating in the *Investigations*, thereby laying bare transcendental consciousness for phenomenological description.

The position of Bernet, Kern, and Marbach (and de Boer) turns on the claim that Husserl’s reflections on conscious experience in the *Investigations* involve a form of *apperception*, an implicit construal or interpretation of mental acts that goes beyond what is strictly given when they are thematized in reflection. This apperception is an *empirical* one, since the interpretation in question attributes mental states disclosed in reflection to a particular empirical person existing as an object in nature. Husserl himself describes this

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form of treating consciousness as “a subordinate real event within [the] world” in §53 of *Ideas I*, “Animalia and Psychological Consciousness” (Hua III, 116/124). There he wants to “make clear . . . how consciousness, so to speak, can enter into the real world” (ibid.; my emphasis), how it can become “a component part of nature” (Hua III, 117/125). According to Husserl, this “reification of consciousness” is effected in just the way Bernet, Kern, and Marbach describe, namely, by way “peculiar kind of interpretation [Auffassung] or experience, a peculiar kind of ‘apperception [Apperzeption],’” through which consciousness is brought into relation with a transcendent, worldly object, namely, the human organism. “Consciousness is apperceived as part of nature” when “the stream of mental experiences [is] given as human” (ibid.).

There is no indication in the text, however, that Husserl takes himself in this section to be describing one of his own former positions. This is telling since in other parts of the *Ideas I* he takes care to signal his departures from the *Logical Investigations*. There is, for example, the footnote to §57 where Husserl makes clear that he no longer advocates the skepticism regarding the ego expressed in the *Investigations*.236 And to pick another example, there is the footnote to §128, where Husserl remarks on how he now considers the descriptive analyses of the *Logical Investigations* one-sided, focusing as they did only on the reel content of acts.237 That there is no analogous remark appended to §53—or to be found anywhere else in the text—gives us good reason to believe that the presentation of the empirical apperception of consciousness found there is not a description of the approach to consciousness taken up in *Investigations*.

236 See Hua III, 124n/133n.
237 See Hua III, 296n/308n. We will look at this internal criticism below when we examine Husserl’s notion of the noema at the end of §4.
We have an even better reason for being suspicious of the claim of Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, however, if we refer back to our earlier discussion in Chapter Two of the Appendix to the second volume of the *Investigations*. For in the Appendix Husserl described just the sort apperception—under the label “transcendent interpretation”—discussed in §53 of *Ideas I*, and *expressly forbade the practicing phenomenologist from engaging in it.*

Recall that Husserl used the example of mistakenly locating a toothache in a healthy tooth to show how a mental experience could be misperceived. Husserl takes the source of this kind of error to lie in the fact that we do not attend to the mental experience in question precisely at it is lived through, but rather subject it to an interpretation that goes beyond what is actually contained in the experience. As Husserl puts it, the “perceived object is not the pain as it is experienced, but rather the pain as it is transcendently interpreted, in particular as connected to the tooth” (Hua XIX:2, 770-71/866). Because I subject my experience to such an interpretation, because I apperceive my experience in relation to an empirical object not completely given in the experience, my perception of the experience is fallible. In order to perceive mental experiences in a way that does not admit of this fallibility, Husserl requires that the phenomenologist “take [mental experiences] simply for what they are *instead of interpretively going beyond them*” (Hua XIX:2, 771/867; my emphasis). Since this requirement to take experiences “simply for what they are” is just another way of expressing the principle of presuppositionlessness, it is highly dubious to claim that the phenomenology of the *Logical Investigations* involves a naturalizing, apperceptive orientation. For how could the *Investigations* involve such an orientation when the very methodological principle

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238 In §4 of the Appendix Husserl writes simply of ‘*Interpretation*’, which in the Second Edition he consistently replaces with the language of ‘*Apperzeption*’, making the connection to §53 of *Ideas I* clear.
directing its research was designed to prohibit such interpretative tendencies?\textsuperscript{239}

Moreover, it is completely false to claim, as Bernet, Kern, and Marbach do, that Husserl only recognized the tendency toward the empirical apperception of mental experiences around 1905/06.\textsuperscript{240} If the Appendix of the *Logical Investigations* somehow does not suffice to show this, let me refer back to a passage I quoted in Chapter Two from Husserl’s “Bericht über deutsche Schriften zur Logik in den Jahren 1895-99,” published in 1903: “Phenomenology therefore must not be designated as “descriptive psychology” without some further qualification. In the rigorous and true sense it is not descriptive psychology at all. Its descriptions do not concern lived experiences, or classes thereof, of empirical persons (“Bericht,” 206-07/251; emphasis added).

Finally, we will now want to consider whether Husserl’s conception of consciousness at the time of the *Investigations* was properly transcendental in the sense described by Bell above. That is, we will want to inquire into whether Husserl went beyond merely avoiding the temptation to naturalize consciousness and assigned to consciousness the kind of constitutive or foundational role vis-à-vis the natural world that Bell takes to be definitive of transcendental tradition in philosophy. It is, of course, beyond controversy that Husserl assigned such a role to consciousness in *Ideas I*. This is made most clear, perhaps, in §55 where Husserl claims that “the world itself has its whole being [ganzes Sein] as a certain ‘sense’ [Sinn], which presupposes absolute consciousness as the field where sense is bestowed” (Hua III, 120-21/129). Although

\textsuperscript{239} Gail Soffer is one of the few scholars to emphasize the importance of the Appendix for understanding Husserl’s progression from the *Logical Investigations* to *Ideas I*. It is unsurprising, then, that she sees more continuity between the two works than most. “The move from the descriptive to transcendental phenomenology is sometimes thought to be an abrupt and dramatic one. Yet far from representing a radical change, the line of thinking that will lead to the transcendental attitude is clear as early as the early as the Appendix to the *Logical Investigations.*” (*Husserl and the Question of Relativism*, 105)

\textsuperscript{240} Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*, 60.
statements like this suggested to many readers that a form of idealism had newly crept into Husserl’s thought,\(^{241}\) this view has a clear precedent in the *Logical Investigations*. For recall that according to Husserl’s theory of intentionality, “nothing [is] more plain than the distinction . . . between *contents and acts*, between perceptual contents in the sense of *presentative sensations*, and perceptual acts in the sense of *interpretative intentions*” (Hua XIX:1, 397/566; my emphasis). On this view, which we examined in Chapter Two,\(^{242}\) empirical objects only show up for me—their “*being [Dasein]*” as an object for me is “first *constituted [ausmacht]*” (ibid.; my emphasis)—when passively received sensuous contents are subject to an interpretation (*Deutung*) or apprehension (*Auffasung*) on the part of intentional consciousness. As such, Husserl’s picture of the mind and its relation to the world is not one of passive receptivity in the tradition of, for example, classical empiricism, but one of active constitution more in line with Kant. And so it is not surprising that when Husserl explains his characterization of consciousness as “transcendental” in §97 of *Ideas I*, he does so by reference to the act-content distinction taken over from the *Logical Investigations*, simply recast in his updated terminology of stuff and noesis: “The characterization of the phenomenological reduction and likewise, of the pure sphere of mental processes as ‘transcendental’ rests precisely on the fact that we discover in this reduction an absolute sphere of stuffs and noetic forms” (Hua III, 228/239). And it is only by way of the “determinately structured combinations” of such stuffs and noetic forms that “the marvelous consciousness of something determinate and determinable, given thus and so” is constituted (Hua III, 228/239; my emphasis).

\(^{241}\) Of course, Husserl’s description of phenomenology as a form of “transcendental idealism” did much to encourage this view as well.

\(^{242}\) See §5.
§3. Absolute Consciousness, the Perceptual Thing, and Epistemology

As I hope the previous section has satisfactorily shown, Husserl’s phenomenology was far from the standpoint of philosophical naturalism at the time of the *Logical Investigations*. However, it is nonetheless true that the case against naturalism gains a new, more radical impetus in *Ideas I*. This new impetus comes in the form of Husserl’s claim that consciousness, on the one hand, and the natural world of physical objects, on the other, represent two distinct and inassimilable regions of being. According to Husserl, there is “a fundamentally essential difference between *being as mental experience* [Sein als Erlebnis] and *being as a physical thing* [Sein als Ding]” (Hua III, 87/89). The argument for this claim occupies most of Part Two, Chapter Two: “Consciousness and Natural Actuality” of *Ideas I*, and proceeds by way of a reflection on the intentional modes of givenness through which mental and physical objects appear to consciousness.

According to Husserl, I can at any time turn my attention to the ever-flowing stream of subjective experiences that constitutes my conscious life; “[the] essence [of consciousness] involves the essential possibility of a *reflective turning of* regard and naturally in the form of a new cogitatio that, in the manner proper to a cogitatio which simply seizes upon, is directed to it” (Hua III, 77/78). In writing that this act of reflection “simply seizes upon” its intendent object, Husserl is drawing attention to the fact that it is a type of an intuitive perception; the object of reflection is given “in person” or originarily, rather than by means of any type of sign, image or representation. However, what is especially noteworthy to Husserl about this kind of “internal perception” (ibid.) is the respect in which it differs essentially from sensory or external perception. Unlike the
perception of a physical thing, the perception of a mental experience is not perspectival in
nature; a mental experience does not appear by means of adumbrations. “Where there is
no spatial being it is senseless to speak of a seeing from different standpoints with a
changing orientation in accordance with different preappearances, adumbrations” (Hua
III, 88/90-91). As such, Husserl takes it as basic descriptive fact that between a perceived
physical object and mental experience there is “an essentially fundamental difference
between corresponding kinds of givenness” (Hua III, 88/90). However, this difference is
not some quirk of our subjective constitution, but according to Husserl, a difference in the
being of the objects intended. Husserl thinks we are here confronted with a
“fundamentally essential [grundwesentlicher]” ontological difference.

It is neither an accident of the own peculiar sense of the physical thing nor a
contingency of “our human constitution” that “our” perception can arrive at
physical things themselves only through mere adumbrations of them. Rather it is
evident and drawn from the essence of spatial things (even in the widest sense,
which includes “sight things”) that, necessarily a being of that kind can be given
in perception only through an adumbration; and in like manner it is evident from
the essence of cogitationes, from the essence of mental processes of any kind, that
they exclude anything like that. For an existent belonging to their region [of
being] . . . adumbrations make no sense whatever. (Hua III, 88/90-91; my
emphasis)

According to Husserl, immanent perception discloses an object the being of which is not
inseparable from the very act of perceiving itself. The perceiving and perceived “form
essentially an unmediated unity . . . the perceiving includes its Object in itself in such a
manner that it can only be separated abstractively, only as an essentially non-selfsufficient
moment, from its Object” (Hua III, 78/79-80). This is to say that the object of immanent
perception is a reell feature of the unity of my conscious life. This “really inherent
‘includededness’ [reellen Beschlosenseins]” is what accounts for the absolute givenness
of such objects (Hua I, 79/80).
Now it is precisely because the physical thing is not on the side of consciousness that it can never be given absolutely in natural experience;\textsuperscript{243} the physical thing can never be completely given to consciousness because it is not a \textit{reell} content of consciousness. My intentional relation to physical objects will always include empty, unfulfilled intentions, which extend beyond what is intuitively given because such objects are \textit{transcendent} to consciousness.

To the physical thing . . . there belongs essentially and quite universally the incapacity of being immanently perceived and accordingly of being found at all in the concatenation of mental processes. Thus the physical thing is said to be, in itself, unqualifiedly transcendent. Precisely in that the \textit{essentially necessary diversity among modes of being, the most cardinal of them all, becomes manifest: the diversity between consciousness and reality.} (Hua III, 89/90; my emphasis)

A consequence of this cardinal ontological distinction is, of course, a rejection of any form of naturalism. The mental cannot be reduced to the physical since they represent two distinct regions of being.

It also follows for Husserl that the physical cannot be reduced to the mental; the intentional physical object is a content for consciousness; it must not be reduced to an immanent content within consciousness. This is a consequence of great importance for Husserl’s epistemology. For there had been a long tradition of construing the object of which the mind is directly aware as some type of mental representation or idea. As mental, these representations or ideas fall on the side of consciousness, and hence, consciousness is only intentionally related in any direct manner to what it includes within itself. So, according to this picture of things both act and object are immanent. And this

\textsuperscript{243} The qualification in this sentence—“in natural experience”—is important here, since Husserl does think there is a way of reflecting on transcendent objects that admits of complete givenness. But this type of reflection requires that we take up the \textit{unnatural} standpoint of philosophical reflection and view objects as they are correlated to the acts which intend them. I’ll have more to say about this when I discuss the noema in §4.
picture is by no means confined to the views of the early modern rationalists and empiricists. For as we saw earlier, even Brentano’s descriptive psychology conceived of the intentional object as an “immanent objectivity.” And relatively concurrent with the publication of *Ideas I*, Bertrand Russell was advocating a form of Lockean representationalism in his *Problems of Philosophy* published in 1912.244 Indeed, well into the twentieth century Roderick Firth felt the need to draw attention to the “phenomenological theory of perception” and its possible “revolutionary importance for the theory of knowledge.”245

With both act and object treated as immanent in this way, the category of the transcendent becomes a philosophical problem. For when the direct object of conscious awareness belongs to consciousness as a *reell* moment, we become gripped by questions of whether our thought can ever truly be about a transcendent physical world, or, indeed, whether there is anything independent of the mind at all. It is precisely these types of questions that turn the gears of traditional epistemology and around which the traditional epistemological positions are organized. One such position is indirect realism or indirect representationalism. According to the indirect realist, our thought can be about physical things, albeit indirectly, because the objects of our thought can be *representations* of physical things. We can recover a sense of genuine transcendence because in the case of apprehending a representation the object of our thought is not the representation itself, a mental entity, but the *represented* which can be a physical, mind-independent entity.

Now from the history of epistemology we know that this is not so much an answer as a shift to a new set of problems. Indeed, questioning the precise relation such


internal, mental representations have to the external reality they purport to represent has been the standard job description of the skeptical philosopher. Husserl too is interested in questioning the adequacy of indirect realism, but not in the manner of the skeptic. Rather than attempting to show that the indirect realism is somehow epistemologically inadequate, Husserl is concerned to show how it rests on a basic conceptual confusion. For in addition to resting upon a phenomenologically unclarified distinction between the immanent and the transcendent, the indirect realist picture assumes that the consciousness of a perceptual object can be treated analogously to the consciousness of an image or sign. According to Husserl, however, this is an illegitimate, unfounded assumption; perceptual consciousness and image or sign consciousness represent phenomenologically distinct types of intentional experiences which must not be conflated. Husserl makes this point in §43 of *Ideas I*:

> Between *perception*, on the one hand, and *depictive-symbolic* or *signitive-symbolic objectivation*, on the other hand, there is an unbridgeable essential difference. In the latter kinds of objectivation we intuit something in consciousness as depicting or signitively indicating something else; having the one in our field of intuition we are directed not to it, but to the other, what is depicted or designated, through the medium of a founded apprehending. Nothing like that is involved . . . in perception . . . In immediately intuitive acts [such as perception] we intuit an “it itself;” on their apprehendings no mediate apprehendings are built up at a higher level; thus there is no consciousness of anything *for which* the intuited might function as a “sign” or “picture.” (Hua III, 92/93)

Perception is for Husserl a simple and direct seizing upon an intentional object, and as such, that object has the character of being “there itself” or “bodily present *[Leibhaftigkeit]*.” By contrast, the apprehension of an image or sign is an intentional experience of a more complex sort. For in the case of image or sign consciousness there is a directly intuited perceptual ground, but this ground is only a *founding* layer of
experience rather than the actual object of consciousness. The actual object of consciousness is precisely what is not given perceptually, namely the object depicted or designated. Such objects, therefore, are not given to us in the manner of bodily presence.

For Husserl, this is all made evident by an actual turn toward and unprejudiced examination of the subjective mental experiences that constitute our conscious life as subjects. Husserl views the indirect realist, by contrast, is in the grip of a prior commitment to a particular conception of the mental, making empty, phenomenologically unfounded claims. She is, Husserl would say, theorizing, basing her account of perception on presupposition and prejudice rather than on a careful reflection upon the particular type of intentional experience that perception represents. When we actually undertake such reflection we see that sensory perception never involves a representation of a physical thing, but rather discloses the transcendent physical thing itself.

Thus, in one clear sense Husserl is not faced with what Kant referred to as a “scandal to philosophy.” The problem of showing how immanent representations of which I am directly aware relate to the existence of transcendent things is not a problem. It is not a problem because for Husserl my perceptual access to the world is fundamentally not a matter of such immanent representations. As such, Husserl does not answer skepticism, but rather he simply denies an assumption about the mental that allows skeptical positions to get off the ground. And this promotes a shift in how we should understand the project of epistemology. As we have seen thus far, phenomenological epistemology becomes a project of clarification or understanding how we achieve knowledge. Before we look at how Husserl carries out this epistemological project in Part Four of Ideas I, I want to say a few words about the phenomenological
reduction, since it is subject to many common misconceptions that stand in the way of a proper understanding of Husserl’s theory of knowledge.

§4. The Phenomenological Reduction and the Object Intended

The phenomenological reduction is fundamentally a change in attitude toward our conscious experiences as they are lived through in the natural attitude. According to Husserl, the natural attitude involves a “general positing” of the actuality or the factual existence of the objects we encounter. This general positing is never taken up as an explicit theme in any particular mental act, for example, in an existential judgment, but rather operates more like an implicit, background assumption that “lasts continuously throughout the whole duration of… natural waking life” (Hua III, 56/57). Husserl calls this character of our ordinary experience an attitude (Einstellung) just to emphasize just this fact. Even when the existence of a particular object or set of objects does become an issue for us, it is always against the background of a world implicitly taken to exist:

“The” world is always there as an actuality; here and there it is at most “otherwise” than I supposed; this or that is, so to speak, to be struck out of it and given such titles such as “illusion” and “hallucination,” and the like; it is to be struck out of “the” world which—according to the general positing—is always factually existent. (ibid.)

Husserl’s account of the natural attitude should not be considered controversial or even novel. Indeed, it does a good job of pointing to the basis of the bafflement and frustration felt by many when confronted with philosophical skepticism for the first time. Husserl, however, has sparked controversy and invited confusion with his attempt to introduce what he takes to be the proper method for philosophical reflection, the phenomenological reduction. The opening move of the reduction is the epoché, what Husserl describes variously as the “exclusion,” “parenthesizing,” or “bracketing” of the
general positing that pervades pre-philosophical life. Husserl first introduces this notion of parenthesizing in *Ideas I* by reflecting on the nature of a familiar Cartesian theme: the attempt to doubt universally. This was, perhaps, a poorly chosen expositional strategy on the part of Husserl. For by making the attempt to doubt the point of departure for explaining his model of philosophical reflection, Husserl has led many to seriously confuse the nature and purpose of the reduction. For example, it has led some to think that the bracketing involved in the reduction *just is* an act of doubt, and as such, sets up a philosophical project akin to that of Descartes. It might seem that Husserl takes philosophical reflection to call our naïve, pre-philosophical belief in the existence of worldly, mind transcendent objects into question, thereby giving philosophy the task of attempting to justifiably ground such beliefs. If this reading were correct, it would mean that the interpretation of Husserl’s philosophy that I have been putting forward is in serious error.

Fortunately, this is not how we should read Husserl, and he tells us as much himself in §31. We can begin to see how the parenthesizing of the reduction is not the act of doubting if we notice that Husserl is interested only in drawing our attention to a specific feature that can be abstracted from the attempt to doubt:

we are not interested in every analytically distinguishable component of the attempt to doubt, and consequently we are not interested in the exact and fully sufficient analysis of it. *We single out only the phenomenon of “parenthesizing” or “excluding”* which, while obviously not restricted to the phenomenon of attempting to doubt, is particularly easy to analyze out. (Hua III, 58/59)

It is clear from this passage that parenthesizing is not coextensive with the attempt to doubt. All that interests Husserl about the attempt to doubt, say, a belief, is the modification in my relation to that belief that such an attempt entails. When I *attempt* to doubt a certain belief, I must put the belief out of play, so to speak, while I consider it
reflectively. The belief is still there for me,²⁴⁶ I simply put it out of its normal, pre-reflective use so as to consider it. This type of abstract, reflective consideration, which is prior to and makes possible any concrete act of doubting, is precisely what Husserl means by the equivalent expressions ‘parenthesizing’, ‘excluding’, and ‘bracketing’. And as it is not an act of doubt, parenthesizing the posting of the natural attitude does not involve “the transmutation of positing into counter positing, of position into negation” (Hua III, 58/59). Accordingly, Husserl writes that in performing the reduction: “I am not negating this “world” as if I were a sophist; I am not doubting its factual being as though I were a skeptic” (Hua III, 60/61).

What Husserl is doing by performing the reduction is putting himself in the proper position to reflect philosophically on the natural attitude. Given that we now have seen that the reduction is not akin to the Cartesian method of universal doubt, we should no longer be tempted to think that Husserl’s philosophical reflections would be oriented toward answering traditional epistemological questions concerning the factual existence of the objects of our beliefs. Indeed, such ontological position taking is precisely what is excluded by the reduction. However, belief in the factual existence of the transcendent world is on hand in the form of a bracketed belief of the natural attitude. For Husserl, the goal of phenomenology is to understand this belief, rather than to justify it. The reduction opens up the possibility of understanding objective knowledge because by bracketing our belief in the factual existence of the world, we remove ourselves from the immersion in objects that characterizes the natural attitude of pre-philosophical living; by

²⁴⁶ Husserl insists on this point adamantly, arguing that in performing the epoché, “[w]e do not give up the positing we effected [in the natural attitude], we do not in any respect alter our conviction” (Hua III, 63/59). Indeed, Husserl goes so far as to claim that the epoché “is compatible with the unshaken conviction of truth, even the with the unshakable conviction of evident truth.” (Hua III, 64/59-60)
way the reduction we become what Husserl calls in the *Cartesian Meditations* a “disinterested onlooker” with respect to our conscious experiences (Hua I, 73/35). As a disinterested onlooker no longer absorbed one-sidedly with objects, it becomes possible for me to reflect upon the intentional subjective processes that are otherwise transparent to me in my everyday living. Philosophical reflection in the form of the reduction thematizes the various intentional acts of consciousness so as to understand the underlying subjective component of our objective knowledge.

The reduction not only opens the reflecting phenomenologist to the stream of functioning intentionally subjectivity, but also to what Husserl calls the ‘noema’ (plural ‘noemata’) as well. Unfortunately, just what Husserl takes noema to be is notoriously difficult to determine from the text of *Ideas I*. Indeed, the proper understanding of the noema has become one of the most vexed and contested questions in Husserl scholarship. The noema, we are told, is the intentional correlate of the act. *This* much is clear from the text and beyond dispute as a matter of scholarly interpretation. The interpretative problems arise, however, with Husserl’s attempts to provide a more substantial characterization of the noema. For in explicating the noema, Husserl describes it both as a kind of a sense or meaning (*Sinn*) and as the intended object considered as such (*als solches*), that is, just as it is intended in experience. Making matters worse, Husserl writes as though these two seemingly distinct characterizations were equivalent, sometimes even running them together within the span of a single sentence. For example, in §88 Husserl writes that perception, has its noema, most basically its *perceptual sense* [*Wahrnehmungssinn*], i.e. the *perceived as perceived* [*das Wahrgenommene als solches*]. Similarly, the current case of remembering has its *remembered as remembered*, precisely as it is “meant,” “intended”; again, the judging has the *judged as judged*, liking has the
liked as liked, and so forth. In every case the noematic correlate, which is called ‘sense’ \([\text{Sinn}]\) here (in a very extended signification \([\text{Bedeutung}]\)) is to be taken \textit{precisely} as it inheres “immanently” in the experience of perceiving, of judging, of liking. (Hua III, 203/214; first emphasis is mine)

As this passage suggests, the ambiguity in Husserl’s presentation of the noema is not one that Husserl even so much as recognizes, let alone attempts to resolve. In general, commentators have dealt with the resulting interpretative difficulty by privileging one dimension of Husserl’s characterization over the other. The scholarly controversy surrounding the noema has therefore largely become a debate between what are sometimes called “object-theories” and “sense-theories,” that is, a debate between those who interpret the noema as in some sense the object intended and those who interpret it as an intensional object distinct from the inten/ional object. I cannot do justice to the full scope and complexity of this debate here in the present section.\footnote{For what is to my mind the most textually sensitive and philosophically sophisticated account of the issues surrounding the noema, see John Drummond’s \textit{Husserlian Intentionality and Non-Foundational Realism: Noema and Object} (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990).}

Nevertheless I think the account of Husserl’s phenomenology developed over the course of the previous two chapters gives us sufficient resources to favor the general orientation of object-theories, as I will now explain.

Object-theories and sense-theories have their genesis in the pioneering works of Aron Gurwitsch and Dagfinn Føllesdal respectively. Gurwitsch was one of the very first commentators to take a significant interest in the noema, beginning as early as his 1928 dissertation (“Phenomenology of Thematics and the Pure Ego: Studies of the Relation between Gestalt Theory”). Continuing from his dissertation Gurwitsch produced a number of important studies,\footnote{See, for example, “Husserl’s Theory of Intentionality in Historical Perspective,” in E.N.} in which he put forward a view that emphasized
Husserl’s description of the noema as the intended as intended (the perceived as perceived, the judged as judged, etc.). With this as his point of departure, Gurwtisch developed a quasi-phenomenalist view of the intentional object: the noema is the object as it appears in the act—the “appearing of the appearing,” to use Husserl’s words (Hua III, 183/217)—and the object itself is the ideal concatenation of all such possible noemata.

More recent object-theories, such as those proposed by John Drummond and Robert Sokolowski, have moved away from Gurwitsch’s brand of phenomenalism, while retaining his emphasis on the close internal connection between the noema and the intentional object. According to these accounts, the noema is nothing more than the object of the act considered from the standpoint of philosophical reflection, i.e. the reduction. While performing the reduction, we can consider the objects of pre-philosophical experience in a new way, namely, as correlates of heretofore anonymous mental acts. So considered, we can then fix our attention on the precise ways in which objects show up or appear for different types of mental acts; our concern as phenomenologists is not with the object simpliciter, but with the object in its specific mode of givenness or the how (Wie) of its appearance. On these neo-Gurwitschean views, the reduction does not reveal a new type of object to us, but rather makes possible a new way, philosophical of considering the ordinary objects of natural, pre-philosophical experience.


249 Here I refer the reader once again to John Drummond’s Husserlian Intentionality and Non-Foundational Realism: Noema and Object. See also Robert Sokolowski’s Introduction to Phenomenology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
In his 1969 paper, “Husserl’s Notion of the Noema,” Føllesdal departs from the Gurwitschean tradition altogether, thereby giving rise to the competing sense-theory tradition. According to Føllesdal’s influential interpretation, the noema is not in any way the object of experience, but an entity of an entirely different ontological sort. Taking seriously Husserl’s repeated references to the noema as a Sinn, Føllesdal argues instead that the noema should be understood as an abstract, intensional entity that functions to mediate intentional reference; the noema is not the intended object, but that through which an object is intended. According to Føllesdal and those who subsequently followed his lead, the noema represents an attempt on Husserl’s part to transpose a Fregean-style model of linguistic reference to all spheres of intentionality.

Initially, sense-theories of the sort proposed by Føllesdal may seem well supported, if not altogether confirmed, by the text of Ideas I. After all, Husserl does say in §124 that while words like ‘Bedeuten’ and ‘Bedeutung’ find their original and most natural place in the context of “the linguistic [sprachliche] sphere, that of ‘expressing’ [Ausdrückens],” we can also speak of ‘Bedeutung’ with respect to any experience whatsoever, whether linguistic or not (Hua III, 285/294).

One can scarcely avoid . . . extending the meaning of these words [Bedeuten, Bedeutung]. . . to all acts, be they now combined with expressive acts or not. Thus we have continued to speak of “sense” [Sinn] in the case of all intentional experiences—a word which is used in general as equivalent to meaning [Bedeutung]. (ibid.; my emphasis)

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The problem for sense-theories, however, is that while the noema represents a novel development in Husserl’s phenomenology, the position expressed in this passage does not. For the claim that it is philosophically justified to speak of meaning or sense in context of all intentional experiences, rather than just linguistic experiences, can already be found in the First Edition of the *Logical Investigations*. Indeed, in the Introduction to Investigation Six, we find Husserl remarking along lines incredibly similar to those of the passage just quoted from *Ideas I*.

Differences which had already struck us in our First Investigation, in the narrower context of meanings [*Bedeutungen*], appeared once more in a wider context and in the most general forms [in the Fifth Investigation] . . . for the same series of identities, previously employed to illustrate the unity of meaning, now yielded, suitably generalized, a certain identity, that of ‘intentional essence’, which applied to all acts whatsoever. (Hua XIX:2, 538/667; my emphasis)

From our own Chapter Two we know that according to the position of the *Logical Investigations* all acts are “experiences of meaning [*Erlebnisse des Bedeutens*],” in that every act contains a particular kind of *Sinn* as a moment of its intentional essence (Hua XIX:1, 353/533). Indeed, it is precisely this *Sinn*, what Husserl calls the matter of an act, that constitutes our experiences as intentional. As Husserl puts it in a passage from the Introduction to Investigation Five, “the meaningful element [*Bedeutungsmäßige*] in each such single act [is] . . . that element which makes the act an ‘intentional’ experience, one ‘directed’ to objects (ibid.). So although there is much in sense-theories that is consonant with Husserl’s general theory of intentionality, they are at odds with the facts of Husserl’s philosophical development. Any minimally adequate account of the noema must be able to do justice to the fact that noematic phenomenology represents a new developmental stage in Husserl’s philosophy.
Object-theories therefore have at least one immediate advantage over sense-theories: by taking the noema to be the intended object as such, they attribute a genuinely new philosophical dimension to the phenomenology of Ideas I. For although Husserl had already drawn the general phenomenological distinction between the intended object (der Gegenstand, welcher intendiert ist) and the intended object as it is intended (der Gegenstand, so wie er intendiert ist) in the Logical Investigations, we know that the official methodological position of that text banished the object of experience, however considered, to the sidelines of phenomenological research. “For the phenomenological mode of consideration,” as I have often quoted Husserl as saying, “objectivity itself counts as nothing” (Hua XIX:1, 427/587). The phenomenology of the Logical Investigations, as we saw over the course of the previous two chapters, was meant to be exclusively act phenomenology; only mental acts and their reell contents are treated as permissible targets of phenomenological analysis. Object-theories, therefore, succeed where sense-theories fail, namely, in putting forward a conception of the noema that at least recognizes that the noema is a novel addition to Husserl’s philosophy after the Logical Investigations. Thus a critic like Robert Solomon, who complains that object-theories trivialize Husserl’s doctrine of the noema, reducing it “little more than a restatement of the epistemological platitude that we never simply ‘see’ material objects, but only material objects from a certain perspective, within a certain context, and so on,” completely ignores the way that admitting the intended object into phenomenological research opens up an entirely new dimension in Husserl’s philosophy.

252 See Hua XIX:1, 414/578 and my Chapter Two, §5.
Far from trivializing the noema, object-theories can explain why the introduction of the noema was so significant.

Object-theories also have the additional, and equally significant, merit of finding support within Husserl’s texts. Perhaps the most important of these texts is a highly revealing footnote that Husserl added to the Second Edition of the *Investigations*.

In the First Edition I wrote ‘real [reell] or phenomenological’ for ‘real’ [reell]. The word phenomenological like the word ‘descriptive’ was used in the First Edition only in connection with real [reelle] elements of experience . . . It became plainer and plainer, however, as I reviewed the completed Investigations and ponder on their themes more deeply . . . that the description of intentional objectivity as such [intentionalen Gegenständlichkeit als solcher], taken just as we are conscious of it in the concrete act-experience, represents a distinct descriptive dimension where purely intuitive description may be adequately practiced, a dimension opposed to that of real [reellen] act-contents, but which also deserves to be called ‘phenomenological’. (Hua XIX:1, 411n/576n; my emphasis)

Here Husserl tells us in admirably straightforward terms that a key development in his thought after the publication of the First Edition of *Investigations* in 1900/01 was the realization that “intentional objectivity as such,” that is, the intended object “taken just as we are conscious of it in the concrete act-experience,” admits of phenomenological study alongside mental acts and their reell contents. No longer counting “for nothing,” Husserl now sees intentional objectivity as “a distinct descriptive dimension where purely intuitive description may be adequately practiced.” Husserl is therefore announcing his departure from strict act-phenomenology; phenomenology is now correlative research, that is, oriented toward both acts and their objects. Husserl ends his footnote by referring the reader to the recently published *Ideas I*, “particularly what is said of Noesis and Noema” (ibid.). Given this, I think we can be fairly sure that the “intentional objectivity as such” referenced in this passage coincides with Husserl’s concept of the noema.
The key insight that facilitated this breakthrough to act-noematic phenomenology is captured in the second of Husserl’s 1907 Göttingen lectures collected in *The Idea of Phenomenology*. In these lectures Husserl explains how the concept of *transcendence* “[u]pon closer examination . . . turns out to be *ambiguous*” (Hua II, 35/27). On the one hand, ‘transcendence’ may be taken in an *ontological* sense, meaning that which is not really (*reell*) contained in a mental experience. On the other hand, ‘transcendence’ admits of an *epistemological* reading, according to which calling an object ‘transcendent’ is to say that the object is not *given* absolutely or completely to consciousness.

Correspondingly, there are thus two concepts of ‘immanence’, one ontological and one epistemological: immanence can refer to *reell* containment or to the kind of absolute, self-givenness that “constitutes the precise [*prägnanten*] concept of *Evidenz*” (Hua II, 35/28). In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl implicitly ran the two senses of each concept together, since he took for granted that ontological immanence always went along with epistemological immanence, just as ontological transcendence was taken to always go along with epistemological immanence. In *The Idea of Phenomenology* lectures, however, this presupposition is rejected. For Husserl argues that an object may be transcendent in an *ontological* sense while being immanent in an *epistemological* sense; a transcendent object, according to Husserl’s new view, can be given immanently, that is completely, if we attend to it precisely as it is given in experience. A physical object, for example, is always given to me incompletely due to the perspectival or adumbrative character of perception. However, this fact about how physical objects are given is not given incompletely, and hence does not admit of the kind of epistemic inadequacy that necessarily accompanies claims about objects *simpliciter*. Philosophical
reflection targeted at objects just as they are intended, that is, in their mode of givenness, can secure adequate cognition just as reflection on acts and their reell contents can. Immanent objects (in the ontological sense) are therefore not the only objects that satisfy phenomenology’s rigorous epistemological demand for adequate givenness. Husserl therefore concludes that “the phenomenological reduction does not entail a limitation of investigation to the sphere of real [reellen] immanence, to the sphere of what is really [reell] contained in the absolute ‘this’ of the cogitatio, but rather a limitation to the sphere of things that are purely self-given” (Hua II, 60/45). With this expansion of phenomenology’s domain of theoretical interest, Husserl has placed his philosophy on the threshold of act-noematic phenomenology.

It seems, then, that we have very good reason to favor an object-centered approach to the noema. The obvious question that faces us now is whether the introduction of the noema into phenomenology might in some way upset the interpretation of Husserl’s epistemology that I have been defending. In the final section below I will argue that it does not. On the contrary, act-noematic phenomenology is actually better suited to the epistemological project of the Logical Investigations than the strict act-phenomenology originally practiced by Husserl. For if the basic goal of a theory of knowledge is, as Husserl states in the Foreword to the Investigations, to clarify the relation between subjectivity and objectivity, that is, the relation between “the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of content known” (Hua XVIII, 7/42), then the restriction of phenomenology to an investigation of mental experiences alone could only result in a one-sided and incomplete clarification of knowledge. And indeed, that is what we find in the Investigations. For as we saw in the previous chapter, the Sixth
Investigation does not explore the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in so much as the relationship between thought and intuition, two types of mental experiences. As we noted, there is some slippage on Husserl’s part toward speaking from the “standpoint of the object,” but Husserl’s main concern in the Sixth Investigation is to describe how various acts are synthesized in the unity of fulfillment. As such, De Boer has argued that the theory of knowledge presented in the Investigations “must be characterized as a psychology of knowledge.” Therefore, far from undermining or altering the epistemological project announced in the Foreword to Investigations, the introduction of the noema allows Husserl to carry out that project more fully by allowing him to transcend the self-imposed limits of a strict act-phenomenology. “Objective” and “subjective” standpoints can now be integrated in a comprehensive theory of knowledge.

§5. Noematic Epistemology: The Problems of Reason and Actuality

In his Selbstanzeige to the second volume of the Logical Investigations, Husserl wrote that the sixth of his Investigations was “the most extensive, most mature in content, and probably the most fruitful of the entire book” (“Selbstanzeige,” 261/7). This conviction remained essentially unchanged during the intervening years between the Investigations and Ideas I. We can see this in the Foreword to the 1913 edition of the Investigations, where Husserl again singles out the Sixth Investigation as “the most important Investigation from a phenomenological point of view” (Hua XVIII, 15/50). Indeed, he goes on to claim that its “stock of problems” remained “authoritative [maßgebend]” for his continuing research (ibid.). This later claim, in particular, is borne

254 De Boer, The Development of Husserl’s Thought, 177; my emphasis.
out in *Ideas I*. For when Husserl turned his attention to epistemological issues in the fourth and final part of that work, “Reason and Actuality,” the Sixth Investigation, particularly its discussion of *Evidenz*, provided him with a point of departure. As Husserl himself writes there, “[t]he whole of the Sixth Investigation offers, universally, preliminary phenomenological studies for dealing with the problems of reason in the present chapter” (Hua III, 301n/345n).

In this final section I want to look at the provisional theory of knowledge that Husserl sketches in Part Four of *Ideas I*, particularly with an eye toward how it is informed by and operates within the conceptual space opened by the Sixth Investigation. Doing so will allow me to make good on my claim that the account of Husserl’s early epistemology given in chapters Two and Three can be extended to Husserl’s later philosophy as well. In the previous sections I tried to motivate this claim by considering how several general features of Husserl’s philosophy remain consistent between the *Investigations* and *Ideas I* (while admitting that certain of these features became enriched, deepened, or radicalized in the latter). Here I will argue along similar lines, but now restricted to the specific context of the theory of knowledge. First, I look at how epistemological considerations first enter *Ideas I* in the context of methodological reflections, and how a critique of naturalistic empiricism points toward the need for a phenomenological theory of knowledge. And secondly, I turn toward Husserl’s theory of knowledge itself, which reveals itself as a sketch of an account of epistemic justification built upon the foundation laid by the Sixth Logical Investigation.

Statements of an explicit epistemological nature appear almost immediately in the text of *Ideas I*. As is the case in the *Logical Investigations*, these statements enter the text
not through a full blown theory of knowledge—for anything like that the reader must wait until the fourth and final part of the book—but rather in the context of considerations of methodology. Although the first two chapters of *Ideas I*, “Matter of Fact and Essence” and “Naturalistic Misinterpretations,” are mainly dedicated to arguing for the propriety—indeed, the necessity—of extending one’s philosophical ontology beyond natural objects to include essences, they include important remarks regarding Husserl’s stance on the proper procedure of any science. As always, Husserl begins with the guiding idea of science as an enterprise aiming at grounded judgments, justified belief. How can science pass beyond mere opinion and lay claim to judgments that express the rational requirements of knowledge, rather than dogma or prejudice? The answer, by now, will be familiar to us: “to judge rationally or scientifically about things signifies to conform to the things themselves or to go from words and opinions back to the things themselves, to consult them in their self-givenness ” (Hua III, 41/35; my emphasis). In other words, genuine scientific thinking is realized on the basis of intuition.

To each science there corresponds an object-province as the domain of its investigations; and to all its cognitions, i.e., here to all its correct statements, there correspond, as primal sources [Urquellen] of grounding which validates their legitimacy, certain intuitions in which objects belonging to the province become themselves-given. (Hua III, 10-11/5; my emphasis)

In §24 Husserl refers to the epistemological primacy of intuition as the “principle of all principles”: “every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition,” and so “everything . . . offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there” (Hua III, 51/44). As such, Husserl will hold his science, phenomenology, to the strict
epistemological demand that its statements do nothing more than provide “faithful expression to differences that are directly given in intuition,” taking such “differences precisely as they are given in intuition, without any hypothetical or interpretative explication” (Hua III, 39/33). “Every statement” of phenomenology must do “no more than confer expression on such [intuitive] data by simple explication and by means of significations precisely conforming to them” (Hua, 51/44).255

In general, Husserl views the empirical sciences as living up to the epistemological demand inherent in the very idea of science much more than traditional philosophy.256 He praises the “radicalism” of their “cognitive practice” for the way empirical claims are given their ultimate hearing not by the “idols” of received opinion, prejudice, or superstition, but rather by the tribunal of sensory experience (Hua III, 41/35). The “scientific investigator of nature” is commended for “following the ‘principle’ that we question every assertion bearing upon matters of fact of nature relative to the experience which grounds it” (Hua III, 51/44). At the strict level of its concrete, ongoing practice, Husserl finds the natural sciences unimpeachable in almost every respect. They have rigorously worked out a method for investigating nature that is “as

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255 As should be obvious, the “principle of all principles” is the analog of the “principle of presuppositionlessness” from the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*.

256 Husserl puts this point very forcefully in “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” arguing that philosophy has failed to comport itself to inherent norms of scientific research to such an extent that it cannot even be properly considered a science at all.

I do not say that philosophy is an imperfect science; *I say simply that it is not yet a science at all*, that science it has not yet begun. All sciences are imperfect, even the much-admired exact sciences. On the one hand they are incomplete, because the limitless horizon of open problems, which will never let the drive toward knowledge rest, lies before them; and on the other hand they have a variety of defects in their already developed doctrinal content, there remains evidence here and there of a lack of clarity or perfection in the systematic ordering of proofs and theories. Nevertheless they do have a doctrinal content that is constantly growing and branching out in new directions . . . The imperfection of philosophy is of an entirely different sort from that of the sciences just described. It does not have at its disposal a merely incomplete and, in particular instances, imperfect doctrinal system; it simply has none whatever. Each an every question is herein controverted, every position is a matter of individual conviction, of the interpretation given by a school, of a ‘point of view.’ (“Philosophie,” 4-5/73-75)
perfect as possible,” securing results that have engendered agreement across place and time. This contrasts with philosophy, which has yet to secure for itself an acceptable method or any universally agreed upon doctrinal content. As Husserl complains in “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in the case of philosophy, “every question is . . . controverted, every position is a matter of individual conviction, of the interpretation given by a school, of a point of view” (“Philosophie,” 5/75). The natural sciences only become objectionable to Husserl when they step out of their “prephilosophical, sphere of research” (Hua III, 54/47), that is, “when [the natural scientist] reflects ‘philosophically’ and allows himself to be deceived by the sophisms of empiricistic philosophers” (Hua III, 51-52/45; my emphasis). This is to say that the natural sciences go awry for Husserl when they embed their understanding of scientific practice within a more comprehensive philosophical view about the nature of reality, namely, naturalism. According to the story Husserl tells in §26, natural science has developed, indeed “has become great,” by putting aside perennial philosophical questions concerning skepticism and the like in order “to busy [itself] with the question of the right method of cognition of Nature” (Hua III, 54/47). In this effort, natural science has been enormously successful, generating a store of knowledge, the enormous value of which Husserl would be the first to recognize. However, this success has led empiricism to treat the scientific cognition of natural objects, i.e. physical objects given by way of sense perception, as the only form of rational cognition. To speak of objects beyond the recognized limits of scientific experience is to indulge in a retrograde Scholasticism with its “metaphysical specters,” “ideological excess,” etc. (Hua III, 41/35).
For Husserl, however, it is precisely this overweening naturalism that represents a retrogression, since it takes the advances of sciences “a step backwards” by giving “new room to new skeptical reflections” (Hua III, 54/47). Rather than consigning skepticism to the sidelines of theoretical inquiry, naturalism actually invites skepticism into play in a way that undermines the accomplishments of science, as well as making them unintelligible. In the first instance, Husserl’s stance here is just a reiteration of the argument of the Prolegomena to the Logical Investigations as §20 of the Ideas, “Empiricism as Skepticism,” makes clear.\textsuperscript{257} There Husserl asks the naturalist how a purely factual science could account for universal principles, such as the modes of valid inference the empirical science relies upon in formulating her theories. Most basically, he asks how the very guiding evidentiary norms of science could ever be validated naturalistically. For Husserl, such a validation requires the recognition of non-empirical essences and extension of the concept of experience to allow for their intuition. “[N]o science of matters of fact,” according to Husserl, “were it fully developed as a science, could be pure of eidetic cognitions” (Hua III, 22/17). Moreover, naturalism harbors the seeds of skepticism within itself, in that its one-sided focus on natural objects cuts it off from the non-objective basis of all knowledge, namely, intentional consciousness. Hence, any attempt to reflect on its achievements, on the nature and possibility of scientific knowledge, can only engender confusion and a lack of clarity. Naturalism introduces an eradicable opacity at the heart of scientific practice.

No matter how satisfied cognition might be which is purely materially directed and borne by insight, as soon as it reflectively turns back upon itself the possibility of validity of all modes of cognition and, under that, even intuitions and insights, is infected by confusing unclarities, by sheer, unresolvable difficulties; and this is especially the

\textsuperscript{257} Husserl points out the obvious connection to the Prolegomena in his two footnotes to this section.
case with respect to the transcendence which cognitive objects claim over and against cognition. *Just for this reason there are skepticisms which become prevalent in spite of all intuition, all experience, and insight.* (Hua III, 55/48)

For Husserl, then, the theory of knowledge “as a science needs its own dimension,” one that is not beholden to the naturalism of modern empiricism (ibid.). Only such a non-naturalistic approach to the study of knowledge can actually clarify the “ultimate sense and cognitive value” of modern scientific practice (ibid.), thereby removing the confusion and obscurities that might tempt us toward skepticism. Of course, for Husserl only phenomenology can provide such a theory of knowledge and he attempts to sketch out its contours in the final part of *Ideas I*, “Reason and Actuality,” to which we now turn.

All conscious experience is experience of something or other. This cardinal insight of Brentano’s philosophy was taken over by Husserl and made the cornerstone of his phenomenology. “Intentionality,” Husserl writes, “is the name of the problem encompassed by the whole of phenomenology” (Hua III, 337/349; my emphasis). But although all experiences are directed toward objects, only a subset of intentional experiences are so directed in a way that can be considered *rational, justified, or grounded*. That is to say, that some conscious experiences, paradigmatically those of theoretical inquiry, represent achievements of knowledge, or at the very least lay claim to such an achievement. What is phenomenologically distinctive about this class of cognitive experience? With this question Husserl says we “finally confront the question of what the ‘claim [Prätention]’ of consciousness actually to ‘relate’ to something objective, to be ‘well-founded [trifftiges],’ properly signifies, of how ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ objective relations become phenomenologically clarified” (Hua III, 297/308; my emphasis). That is, “we confront the great problems of reason” (ibid.). This is an
important statement. Placed at the outset of “Reason and Actuality” (at the close of the first, introductory section), it provides the reader with a concise description of the nature of the investigations to follow. It is, therefore, worth taking a moment to attend carefully to what it reveals. The first thing to note is what is absent. Here Husserl introduces his theory of knowledge without any reference to skepticism. There is no talk of whether the claims of consciousness are well-grounded, valid, or invalid. Instead, Husserl is searching after how these terms of epistemic evaluation can be clarified phenomenologically; he wants to know what they “properly signify.” This suggests that Husserl’s concern in Part Four of the Ideas I is meta-epistemological, rather than substantive, to use terms introduced in our first chapter. As in the Logical Investigations, Husserl is here concerned to clarify what knowledge is, how it is possible, rather than to show or demonstrate that we are justified with respect to this or that piece of putative knowledge.

This impression is borne out in Chapter Two, “Phenomenology of Reason,” where Husserl begins to lay out his theory of knowledge. From the first instant it becomes clear that what Husserl is offering is an account of justification, a return to the phenomenology of Evidenz. Scientific or rational cognition requires grounding or justification, and Husserl construes such justificatory grounding as the “seeing” of its object; justification is a kind of rational consciousness (Vernunftbewußtein). The phenomenology of rational consciousness consists in the descriptive exploration of the different manners in which the object of knowledge can show itself to a cognitive subject. The preeminent mode of rational showing is originary givenness (originärer Gegebenheit), or originarily presentive intuition (originär gebende Anschauung), which,
as have seen, Husserl claims to be the ultimate “legitimizing source” of rational assertions (Hua III, 51/44). The preeminent form of such a showing involves the givenness of the object itself, “in person” (leibhaft), rather than intermediately, through an image, or emptily, through the use of linguistic signs. Husserl usually talks about originary intuitions in the context of perception (I can talk about a favorite landscape without any intuition of it, I can call forth an image of it from memory, or I can actually visit it and perceive it there before me “in person”), but this is only for purposes of illustration. Husserl’s considered view is that there are diverse modes of originary givenness indexed to various regional ontologies: “[t]o every region and category of alleged objects there corresponds . . . a fundamental type of originary presentive consciousness” (Hua III, 321/333). Husserl uses a mathematical example in §136 to motivate his point.

For example: we can assert “blindly” that two plus one is equal to one plus two; but we can also make the same judgment in the manner peculiar to intellectual seeing [einsichtiger Weise]. When we do this, the state of affairs [Sachverhalt], the synthetical objectivity corresponding to the judgment-synthesis, is given originarily, seized upon in an originary manner. (Hua III, 315/327)

This suggests one task for the phenomenology of reason: identifying the various ways in which originary givenness becomes manifest in experience, a task to be carried out in conjunction with regional ontology.

Although the fundamental distinction of Husserl’s phenomenology of reason is between intentional experiences marked by originary evidence and those that are not, the bulk of Husserl’s actual descriptive work in “Reason and Actuality” consists in drawing distinctions within the sphere of originary Evidenz. Foremost among these distinctions is

258 Kersten consistently translates ‘Sachverhalt’ as ‘predicatively formed affair-complex’, which is unnecessarily unwieldy. ‘State of affairs’ is preferable since it has the advantage of being less cumbersome, as well as being a familiar idiom in English philosophical parlance.
that between adequate (or apodictic) *Evidenz* and inadequate (or assertoric) *Evidenz*.

Both adequate and inadequate *Evidenz* involve the originary, *leibhaftige* givenness of their objects, and hence, lend justification to the beliefs or assertions they give rise to, but they differ in their justificatory force or rational power. An adequate evidential seeing strictly rules out the possibility of the possibility of error, it “excludes” the “being otherwise” of what it presents (Hua III, 317/329). It is the highest form of rational legitimatization, since what is seen perfectly coincides with what is true; truth and justification perfectly interlace with one another. Inadequate *Evidenz*, such as the perception of a physical object, is a rational showing as well, but an *imperfect* one in comparison to adequate *Evidenz* for reasons, by now, well known to us. Here, as we saw in Chapter Two, degrees of rational power make sense, whereas adequate *Evidenz* is “of essential necessity incapable of being further ‘strengthened’ or ‘weakened’” and is “thus without degrees” (Hua III, 321/333). Husserl recognizes that the full phenomenological elucidation of inadequate *Evidenz* requires extensive descriptive studies, particularly with respect to how the rational power of such *Evidenz* can change dynamically over time. However, these further studies are merely indicated, rather than carried out. Husserl’s phenomenology of reason remains a sketch.

From these preliminary descriptions of the kinds of discoveries and tasks of Husserl’s phenomenology of reason, we can, I think, see quite plainly that the ground being plowed here is precisely that which was cleared by the *Logical Investigations*. This is the case both in terms of Husserl’s specific analyses and in terms of the overall nature of the project, namely that of shedding light on the complicated intentional structures

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259 See Chapter Two, §4.
lived through by any thinking subject. The “problem” of knowledge for Husserl—if it can even be called a problem—is through and through one of clarification.

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In his 1925 Marburg lectures on the concept on time, Martin Heidegger subjected Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology to what he described as an “immanent critique.”260 Heidegger’s central complaint against Husserl in this critique was that his phenomenology had not sufficiently inquired into the being of intentional consciousness. Heidegger alleged that Husserl had passed over the question of the being of intentionality and simply took for granted a conception of consciousness inherited from the standard philosophical tradition: “[t]he elaboration of pure consciousness as the thematic field of phenomenology is not derived phenomenologically, by going back to the things themselves, but by going back to tradition.”261 As such, Heidegger concluded that in “the basic task of determining its ownmost field . . . phenomenology is unphenomenological!”262

Husserl would naturally find much to object to in this criticism. And, perhaps, we would too. However, I think we must grant that it is, in the very least, the right sort of criticism. For Heidegger’s complaint proceeded on the basis of a deep understanding of the aims and impulses behind Husserl’s phenomenology. He had truly found his way into Husserl’s thought and it was from this “immanent” position that he was able to articulate his powerful critical remarks. In this Heidegger contrasted markedly from most

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260 These lectures have been published under the title The History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). For Heidegger’ so-called “immanent” critique of Husserl, see §11-§13.

261 Heidegger, The History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena, 107

262 Ibid., 128.
other contemporary critics of Husserl, who rarely rose above the level of philosophical
name-calling. Husserl was at turns derided as a logicist, a Platonist, a Scholastic
revivalist, and an idealist, to pick just a few prominent examples. We might call these
“external critiques,” since they were often formulated on the basis of a superficial
understanding of phenomenology, as Husserl often complained.  

In my mind, there have been too few “immanent” criticisms of Husserl and too
many “external” ones. Indeed, even the philosophical name-calling is all too common in
the present day. As we saw at the outset of this dissertation, it is routine, for example, to
see Husserl casually dismissed as a long outdated “Cartesian.” And the reason for this
dismissal is largely the same as it was during Husserl’s own time. For as Steven Crowell
points out: “Husserl’s thought has not been well understood, because it has not been read,
by most of those who criticize.” It is a somewhat cruel irony that Husserl, the great
champion of turning to the things themselves, would suffer at the hand of critics who
would chose to forsake a careful study of his work itself, making do instead with
prejudice and presuppositions. It is my hope that this dissertation will help to improve
this situation. In particular, I hope to have satisfactory shown that Husserl’s theory of
knowledge is of an altogether different sort than that of Descartes, and hence, the charge
of “Cartesianism” against Husserl is, at best, strained. This is not to say that there is
nothing objectionable in Husserl’s thought. However, any intellectual serious objection
to Husserl must respect certain facts concerning the nature of his phenomenology. It has
been my goal in this dissertation to bring some of those facts to light.

263 See, for example, Husserl’s remarks about superficial readings of his work “drawn from an extra-
phenomenological sphere of thought” in the Foreword to the Second Edition of the Sixth Investigation.
I. Works by Edmund Husserl

Hua I  


Hua II  


Hua III  


Hua VI  


Hua VIII  
Hua XII


Hua XVIII


Hua XIX:1


Hua XIX:2


Hua XX:1


Hua XXII


**Hua XXIII**  


**Hua XXIV**  


**Hua XXV**  

“Bericht”  
“Bericht über deutsche Schriften zur Logik in den Jahren 1895-99.” In Hua XXII.


“Erinnerungnen”  
“Erinnerungnen an Franz Brentano.” In Hua XXV.


“Kant”  
“Kant und die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie.” In Hua VIII.
“Philosophie”  “Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft.” In Hua XXV.


“Selbstanzeige”  “Selbstanzeige der Logischen Untersuchungen” In Hua XIX:2.


“Studien”  “Psychologischen Studien zur Elementaren Logik.” In Hua XXII.


“Vorrede”  “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage der Logischen Untersuchungen.” In Hua XX:1.


II. Works by other authors


