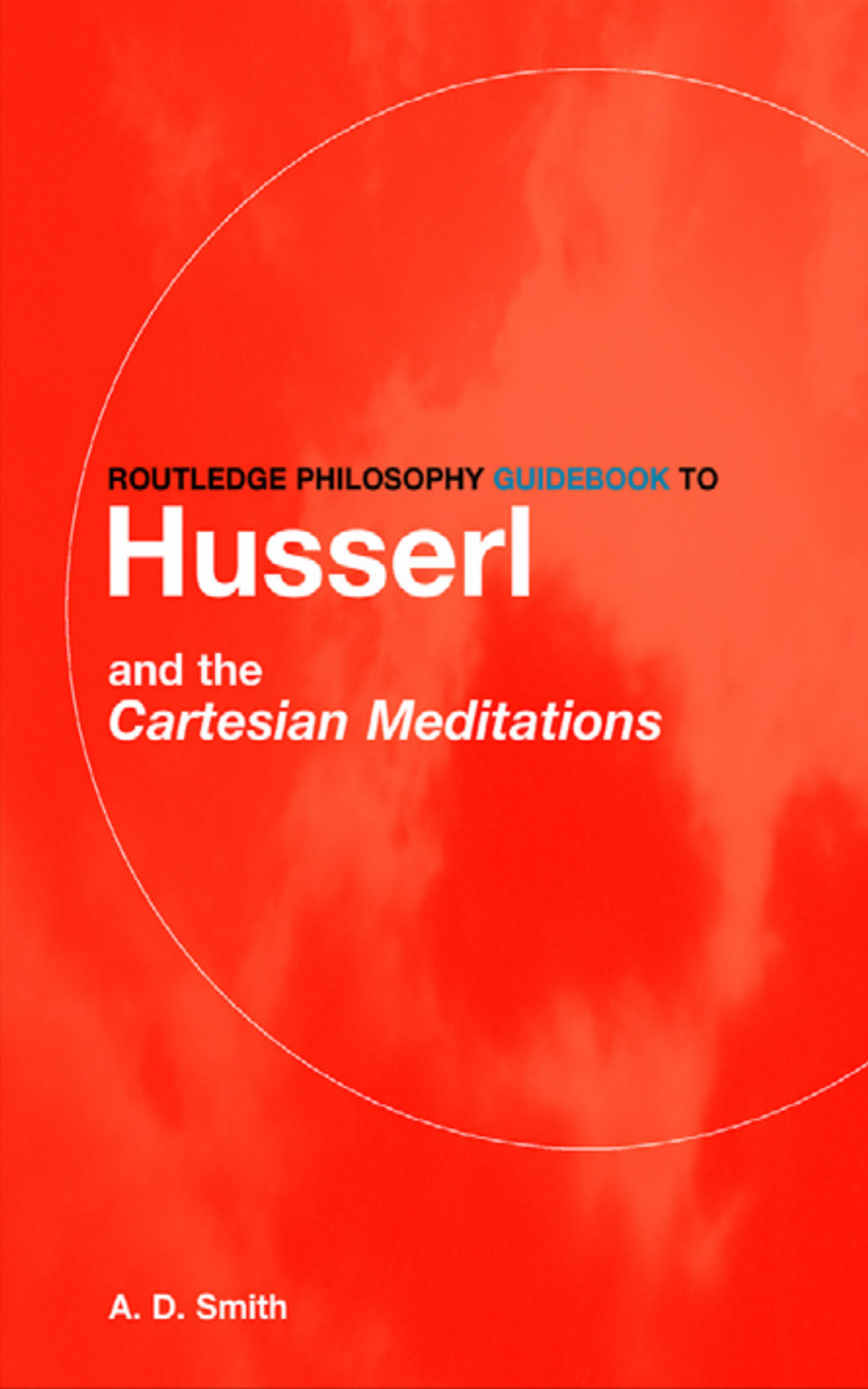

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Husserl

and the *Cartesian Meditations*

A. D. Smith

Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to

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A. D. Smith is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Essex.

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A. D.
Smith

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PREFACE

That Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* is his most widely read work is not surprising. It is short, available in paperback, and its subtitle – 'An Introduction to Phenomenology' – promises accessibility. As such an introduction, however, the work must be judged a dismal failure. Most strikingly, although Husserl by the time he wrote this work had developed a battery of technical terms to express his philosophy – terms that he employs repeatedly in the *Meditations* – he usually doesn't bother to explain their meanings to the reader. Furthermore, the work's very brevity actually works against its accessibility. For Husserl's philosophy was complex and wide-ranging, its various parts being multiply related to one another. The result is that, even though he focuses on just a few fundamental issues in the text, he is repeatedly forced to allude to various other aspects of his thought that do not get properly treated. This is particularly sad in the case of Husserl, because one of the most significant and impressive aspects of his philosophy is the depth with which he pursues his analysis of particular topics. It is only in the final meditation, one that deals exclusively with a single topic, that the reader gets a glimpse of the penetration characteristic of Husserl's work in general. Even setting aside these factors, the *Cartesian Meditations* is far from ideal. Throughout his life Husserl was worried by the problem of effectively presenting phenomenology to the public. For he was convinced, not only that phenomenology is the one true way of philosophizing, but that engaging in phenomenology requires a decision on the part of the philosopher – a decision that, as he says at one point, is analogous to a religious conversion (*Crisis*, 140 [137]).[1] Husserl therefore repeatedly worried over the best way to induce the reader to make such a decision. It cannot be said that the presentation in the first of the *Cartesian Meditations* is one of his best. For these reasons at least, a companion to the work may prove useful. Because of the shortcomings of the *Cartesian Meditations* itself, I have been obliged, in writing this companion, to refer repeatedly to Husserl's other writings so as to fill out the frequently unsatisfactory presentations in the target text. Only in this way can the present introduction to the *Cartesian Meditations* be what Husserl had wished for that work itself: that it be a decent introduction to transcendental phenomenology in general.

An additional reason for writing an introduction to the *Cartesian Meditations* is that it is a work of Husserl's maturity. It was written in 1929, less than ten years before Husserl's death at the age of 79. This constitutes a reason, at least in relation to readers within the English-speaking world, because the majority of discussions of Husserl's work within the so-called 'analytical tradition' of philosophy, which dominates that world, focus on his earlier philosophy. The principal reason for this is that, as we shall see, in the early years of the twentieth century Husserl became an idealist – a philosophical position with which the overwhelming majority of 'analytical philosophers' have no sympathy at all. Husserl's work dating from after this period tends, therefore, to be shunned. This is both unfortunate and silly. It is silly because much of what Husserl has to say in his middle and late periods can be assessed independently of that metaphysical issue. And it is unfortunate because Husserl is one of those philosophers whose thought quite simply got more profound as the years passed. Although I shall sometimes refer to Husserl's earlier writings on issues where his position did not substantially change, the present work is definitely meant as an introduction to his mature philosophy: to *transcendental* phenomenology, as he called it.

The *Cartesian Meditations* is an expanded version of two lectures that Husserl gave (in German) in Paris, appropriately enough in the Sorbonne's *Amphithéâtre Descartes*. Although a French translation of Husserl's expanded version of those lectures was published in 1931, no German version appeared during his lifetime. This is because, as Husserl continued to work over the lectures, he conceived the project of expanding them even further, in collaboration with his assistant Eugen Fink, into a large-scale work that would give a comprehensive account of his philosophy. It is to this projected work that he is referring when he says, in 1930, that it 'will be the principal work of my life', upon the completion of which he will be able to 'die in peace' (Schuhmann 1977, p. 361).[2] It was not long, however, before he gave up on this project, and turned his attention to composing another large-scale work that would give a different sort of introduction to his philosophy. Husserl died, in 1938, before this latter work could be brought to completion, though the extensive extant manuscripts were edited and published after his death as *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* – commonly known as '*The Crisis*', for short. This was the last fruit of an intensely active philosophical career that lasted over half a century.

Edmund Husserl was born into a Jewish family on 8 April 1859 in Prossnitz, Moravia (now Prostejov, in the Czech Republic). At school he excelled in mathematics, the subject that he would pursue at university (after three terms studying astronomy). He first went to the University of Leipzig, where attendance at some philosophy lectures brought him into brief contact with Wilhelm Wundt. While in Leipzig he became a close friend of Thomas Masaryk, who later became the first president of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, but who at the time was a philosophy student of Franz Brentano's in Vienna. In 1878 Husserl moved to the University of Berlin, where he studied under the mathematicians Weierstrass and Kronecker. It was the former, Husserl attested, who 'awoke in me an interest in a radical grounding of mathematics', and from whom he got 'the ethos of my scientific endeavour' (Schuhmann 1977, 7).

In 1881 Husserl moved to Vienna, where his friend Masaryk was still living. Although he at first continued his mathematical studies, submitting a dissertation in the subject, he also attended philosophy lectures given by Brentano, who first convinced him that philosophy could also be conducted in the spirit of 'most rigorous science' (Schuhmann 1977, 13). This led Husserl to face the decision whether to devote his life to mathematics or to philosophy. He says that the impulse that finally led him to the latter 'lay in overwhelming religious experiences' (*ibid.*). Husserl now attended many more lectures by Brentano; and the two of them finally became sufficiently close that Husserl could spend a three-month summer vacation with Brentano and his wife. While in Vienna, and under Masaryk's influence, Husserl closely studied the New Testament. In 1886 he was baptized and received into the Evangelical (i.e., Lutheran) Church. He finally left Vienna as a result of Brentano's recommendation that he move to Halle to study under the philosophical psychologist Karl Stumpf, who himself now began to exercise a considerable influence on Husserl. It was in Halle that Husserl gained his first university appointment. His philosophical work at this time was focused on the philosophy of mathematics and logic, and his first book, *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, appeared in 1891. Husserl's philosophical horizons were broadening rapidly, however, and at the end of the decade he published the massive *Logical Investigations* – his first indisputable masterpiece, a work that ranges far more widely than its title would suggest, and one in which Husserl himself saw the 'breakthrough' to phenomenology (as he put it in the foreword to the second edition of this work). Soon after its publication Husserl moved to Göttingen to take up a chair of philosophy.

In the early years of the new century Husserl entered a deep philosophical crisis, in which he despaired – the *Logical Investigations* notwithstanding – of being able to give any sound justification for human claims to knowledge. The result of his working his way out of this epistemological impasse was the most decisive philosophical turning point in Husserl's career: he became an idealist, and embraced what he would call the 'transcendental' viewpoint. It is with the philosophy that Husserl began to work out after this point in his career, and of which the *Cartesian Meditations* is a mature expression, that we are primarily concerned in this book. Husserl published nothing during the first decade of the twentieth century, but his new-found philosophical outlook received expression in his lecture courses from this time – most notably, perhaps, in the 'Five Lectures' of 1907, now published under the title *The Idea of Phenomenology*, together with a companion series of lectures now published as *Thing and Space*. From this period also come Husserl's first sustained investigations into the nature of our consciousness of time – a topic that would preoccupy him throughout his life. In 1911 he published an article entitled 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science' in the journal *Logos* – an article that has something of the character of a manifesto. The first full-length publication to express what he now called 'transcendental phenomenology' appeared, however, in 1913: a book with the somewhat forbidding title *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Psychology, Book One* – commonly known as '*Ideas I*'. This is the first major expression of Husserl's mature philosophy. From now on, until the end of his life, there will be no more radical changes of direction, but simply an ever deeper pursuit of what he had come to regard as the true path of philosophy. Books Two and Three of *Ideas* were both projected and largely written around this time, but they did not appear during Husserl's lifetime. Indeed, apart from one or two articles, nothing more was published by Husserl until the late 1920s. As his manuscripts show, however, this period (indeed, the period until shortly before his death) was one of intense philosophical activity. In fact, the work to be found in Husserl's manuscripts is arguably the most important that he ever produced. Fortunately, these works are gradually seeing the light of day in the series *Husserliana*. We should all be grateful to the dedicated Husserl scholars who are responsible for this on-going work.

In 1916 Husserl moved to take up the chair of philosophy at Freiburg, where, despite an invitation in 1923 to take up Germany's most prestigious chair in philosophy at Berlin, he remained until his death, retiring in 1928 to become Emeritus Professor. During his teaching career at Freiburg Husserl attracted a large number of outstanding students, among whom he himself placed his greatest hopes in Martin Heidegger. In 1927 the two of them collaborated on several drafts of an article entitled 'Phenomenology' for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, though the final version shows little, if any, of Heidegger's influence. Heidegger succeeded Husserl in the chair of philosophy the following year, and he also brought out a selection of Husserl's writings on time-consciousness from the previous two decades – Husserl's first book for fifteen years. Only the next year, however, yet another book appeared – *Formal and Transcendental Logic* – which Husserl had written in a matter of months. At this time, also, Husserl's assistant, Ludwig Landgrebe, had been charged with the task of preparing several of Husserl's manuscripts dealing with 'transcendental logic' for publication. This project involved Landgrebe, in consultation with Husserl, updating and expanding the manuscripts in the light of *Formal and Transcendental Logic* – a project that lasted until Husserl's death. The book was finally published in Prague in 1939 with the title *Experience and Judgement*, though the publishing house in question was then immediately shut down as a result of Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia.

Although Husserl had converted to Christianity in the previous century, life as a born Jew became difficult for him after the rise to power of the Nazis. As a result of a local decree, Husserl was given an enforced leave of absence from the university on 14 April 1933. Although this was soon rescinded, Husserl, a true German patriot, regarded it as the greatest affront of his life (Schuhmann 1977, 428). After this time he was effectively excluded from university life. In particular, Martin Heidegger, now the University Rector, cut off all contacts with him. And a few years later the German government refused Husserl permission to take up an invitation to give a keynote address at an International Descartes Conference in Paris. In August 1937 Husserl fell seriously ill with a form of pleuritis. 'I have lived as a philosopher,' he said to the nurse tending him during his last days, 'and I will try to die as a philosopher' (Schuhmann 1977, 488). He did so at 5.45 on 27 April 1938. Only one member of the Freiburg philosophy faculty, Gerhard Ritter, attended his cremation two days later. After his death, his manuscripts were smuggled out of Germany by Fr H. L. van Breda, who established the first Husserl Archive in Leuven, Belgium, where the work of sorting out Husserl's huge philosophical legacy continues to this day. I wish to thank the Archive, and its director Prof. Rudolf Bernet, for permission to consult as yet unpublished material by Husserl held there, and to quote from it in the present work.

NOTES

1 For an explanation of the abbreviations of the titles of Husserl's works used in this book, see the List of Abbreviations, pp. xvii–xix. Page references without any such preceding abbreviation are always to the *Cartesian Meditations* itself. For an explanation of the page references, see the 'Note on Translations and Citations'.

2 Some indication of how this 'principal work' might have shaped up is given in Eugen Fink's so-called *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (Fink, 1988). This work, however, contains far more of Fink's contribution to the collaborative project than of Husserl's. And so, despite its great intrinsic interest, I shall not be discussing it further.

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS AND CITATIONS

I quote from Dorion Cairns's English translation of the *Cartesian Meditations*, though the references I give follow the pagination of the standard German edition, which is given in the margins of the Cairns translation. Indeed, I follow the pagination of the German editions whenever reference is made to any of Husserl's works, although I quote from their English translations where these exist. In almost all cases such pagination is indicated in the translations. In cases where it is not, I give two page references, the first to the German edition, the second to the English translation.

Cairns's is not at all a bad translation of the *Cartesian Meditations*. He typically manages to render Husserl's frequently tortuous German prose into reasonable English. I have felt free, however, to modify his translation where I see fit. Since this happens so frequently, I have not cluttered up the text with indications of the fact. There are, however, three issues of translation over which I have departed from Cairns that are of sufficient note to warrant a warning and an explanation to the reader. The first concerns Cairns's use of italics and inverted commas, which is very confusing. More often than not sets of inverted commas correspond to italicization in Husserl's original text. German editions of Husserl's works frequently employ wide spacing to signify emphasis, though this is often unrepresented in Cairns's translation. Conversely, Cairns's own italics often correspond to nothing in Husserl. I advise the reader as far as possible simply to ignore all these aspects of the Cairns translation. I have myself employed inverted commas to represent inverted commas in Husserl, and italicization for both of the other two devices of emphasis, though I have sometimes cut down on Husserl's somewhat excessive use of them (as I have, also, when quoting from translations of other texts by Husserl).

Second, throughout his translation Cairns renders '*wirklich*' as 'actual'. I almost always translate it as 'real'. There is reason for Cairns's choice, since Husserl also employs the German word '*real*', which also needs to be translated somehow; and Cairns uses the English word 'real' for this purpose. There are two disadvantages to this policy, however. The first is that, although '*wirklich*' does sometimes need to be translated by 'actual', most of the time, and especially in the crucially important Third Meditation, where it bulks so large, the English word 'real' is precisely what we want. By contrast, Husserl's German term '*real*' has a highly technical meaning. Something is 'real' in this sense if it is spatio-temporal (or at least temporal) in nature, and subject to causality. It contrasts, not with things that are illusory or otherwise unreal, but with things that are 'ideal' – such as numbers, propositions and essences. Since this term is far less prominent in Husserl's text than '*wirklich*', I also render it as 'real', but explicitly indicate the fact that the technical meaning is in question. The second disadvantage to Cairns's policy is that Husserl sometimes employs the German word '*aktuell*', which Cairns also translates as 'actual' (as I do). It is not clear from Cairns's translation that the 'actuality' that features in the heading of §19 of the *Cartesian Meditations* is different from that which dominates the Third Meditation. What is '*aktuell*' contrasts not with what is unreal, illusory and so forth, but with what is *potential*. This notion will receive some discussion in Chapter 2.

The third significant departure from Cairns's translation policy concerns the German words '*Gegenstand*' and '*Objekt*', and their associated adjectives. In a footnote to p. 45, Cairns indicates that there are two Husserlian terms that need to be rendered by 'object', which he will distinguish by using capitalization. He employs 'object' with a small 'o' to express '*Gegenstand*', and 'Object' with a large 'O' to stand for '*Objekt*'. This is a policy that Cairns also advocated in his influential book *Guide for Translating Husserl*. Although Cairns does not himself claim this in that work, the idea has grown up among certain scholars that Husserl uses the term '*Objekt*' only to refer to something that is objective in the ordinary sense: i.e. that is not 'subjective' but, rather, 'public' or intersubjectively determinable. '*Gegenstand*', by contrast, is held to refer to any object of consciousness at all – even one, like an object in a dream, that is not 'objective'. In fact, although very occasionally – as on p. 153 of the *Cartesian Meditations* – Husserl can indeed use the term '*Objekt*' with a connotation of objectivity, usually he does not, and the two terms '*Objekt*' and '*Gegenstand*' are standardly used interchangeably by him. Indeed, on p. 128 of the *Meditations*, it is essential that the term '*Objekt*' *not* be given the 'objective' reading. I, therefore, dispense with capitalization, and render both of these terms as 'object'. On the rare occasions where '*Objekt*' does carry a connotation of objectivity, I make this clear by writing of 'something objective' or of an 'objective thing'. By contrast, there *is* commonly (though not always) such a difference in meaning where the two related adjectives are concerned. The term '*objektiv*' (always capitalized as 'Objective' by Cairns) does often mean *objective* in the everyday sense, and '*gegenständlich*' ('objective' with a small 'o' in Cairns) does not, but has the technical meaning of 'pertaining to an object' (whether objective or not) rather than pertaining to our *awareness* of the object. For example, if you dream of a large dragon, its size is something '*gegenständlich*', since it attaches to the object of your dream, to *what* you dreamt – unlike, say, the vividness with which you dreamt it, which pertains to you the subject; but the large size is not something objective, since we are dealing with but a dream object. I again dispense with capitalization, since we shall not have much call to refer to what is technically *gegenständlich*. On the rare occasions where the technical notion of what is *gegenständlich* is at issue, I employ some construction involving the noun 'object': as in 'object-sense' for '*gegenständlicher Sinn*'.

Abbreviations

Almost all the works by Husserl published in German are in the *Husserliana* series, now published by Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, and formerly by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague. In the list below, volumes from this series are referred to simply by the number of the volume in the *Husserliana* series ('Hua I', etc.) and the date of publication.

APS	*Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*, Hua XI (1966).
Bernau	*Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein (1917/18)*, Hua XXXIII.
CM	*Cartesian Meditations*, tr. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973). *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, Hua I (1973).
Crisis	*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, tr. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, Hua VI (1954).
EB	Various drafts of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article 'Phenomenology' in *Psychological and Transcendental*

	Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931), trs Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 83–194. German versions in *PP*, 237–301.
EJ	*Experience and Judgment*, trs James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). *Erfahrung und Urteil* (Hamburg: Claasen & Goverts, 1948).
Epilogue	'Epilogue' in *Ideas I* (see below), 405–430. 'Nachwort', in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch*, Hua V, 138–162.
EP I	*Erste Philosophie (1923–1924): 1. Teil*, Hua VII (1956).
EP II	*Erste Philosophie (1923–1924): 2. Teil*, Hua VIII (1959).
FTL	*Formal and Transcendental Logic*, tr. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969). *Formale und Transzendentale Logik*, Hua XVII (1974).
Ideas I	*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*, tr. Fred Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982). *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch*, Hua III (1984).
Ideas II	*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book*, trs R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989). *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch*, Hua III (1984).
Int I	*Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Erster Teil: 1905–1920*, Hua XIII (1973).
Int II	*Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Zweiter Teil: 1921–1928*, Hua XIV (1973).
Int III	*Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Dritter Teil: 1929–1935*, Hua XV (1973).
IP	*The Idea of Phenomenology*, tr. Lee Hardy (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999).

	Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Fünf Vorlesungen, Hua II (1973).
LI	*Logical Investigations,* tr. J. N. Findlay, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).
	Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band, Hua XVIII (1975).
	Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band, 2 vols, Hua XIX (1984).
PA	*Philosophie der Arithmetik,* Hua XII (1970).
P&A	'Phenomenology and Anthropology', in the Sheehan and Palmer volume (see under '*EB*' above), 485–500.
	'Phänomenologie und Anthropologie' in *Aufsätzte und Vorträge* (1922–1937), Hua XXVII (1989).
PP	*Phenomenological Psychology,* tr. J. Scanlon (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977). This translation omits much supplementary material published in the Husserliana edition.
	Phänomenologische Psychologie, Hua IX (1962).
Time	*On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917),* tr. J. B. Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990).
	Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917), Hua X (1969).
TS	*Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907,* tr. Richard Rojcewicz (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997).
	Ding und Raum, Hua XVI (1973).

'A II 1, 25' and suchlike are references to still unpublished manuscripts.

INTRODUCTION

(§§1–2)

Husserl would wish to be remembered for one thing: the discovery of *transcendental phenomenology* as the one true path of philosophy. In fact, for many of us the unforgettable achievement of Husserl is to be found in the detailed analyses at which he toiled throughout his life – analyses of a profundity rarely seen. Husserl himself did not, however, regard many of his findings as definitive. He repeatedly speaks of how difficult it is properly to carry out detailed phenomenological work, and his manuscripts clearly testify to a constant reworking of his accounts of a range of phenomena that, to judge by his published works, one might think he had 'settled'. Moreover, Husserl always saw in phenomenology a *communal* enterprise. It would proceed by a critical interchange of views; and he looked to others to lead forward philosophical (i.e., phenomenological) enquiry after his death. In fact, as §2 of the Introduction to the *Cartesian Meditations* indicates, his own time (and equally, he would no doubt think, our own) calls for phenomenology because of the irreconcilable divisions within philosophy itself. Transcendental phenomenology would *communalize* philosophy, fashion it into a community of mutually respectful co-workers: an *ethical* community, moreover, because, as we shall soon see, the ethical demand is inseparable, for Husserl, from the very drive to philosophize itself. No; despite the ground-breaking profundity of many of his treatments of specific philosophical topics, Husserl would not have wished to be remembered primarily for his 'results', but for his discovery of transcendental phenomenology as such.

THE 'IDEA' OF PHILOSOPHY

I write of a discovery, rather than an invention, of phenomenology because, although Husserl can freely speak of such a phenomenology as something new, he saw it not as some replacement for traditional philosophy, but, to use a Hegelian turn of phrase, as a matter of the (Western) philosophical tradition 'coming to its own truth'. Transcendental phenomenology is, as Husserl himself put it, the 'secret longing' of all genuine earlier philosophy. It constitutes the final breakthrough to a realization of the *idea* that has governed philosophy from its inception among the ancient Greeks. The word 'idea' (*Idee*) is one that occurs frequently in the *Cartesian Meditations* (indeed in Husserl's writings generally), and it is short for what Husserl will sometimes spell out as 'an idea in the Kantian sense'. It is a *regulative* idea: one that points us forward in an enterprise that can have no final, finite completion, though we have a definite recognition of progress. It is most simply thought of as an ideal. Philosophy is in its present divided state because the directive idea of philosophy, which, according to Husserl, was born in ancient Greece and was revivified by Descartes, has lost its vital force. The 'newness' of transcendental phenomenology is but that of the unprecedented radicality with which we decide to be led by this fundamental idea, the one and only idea that could, according to Husserl, govern a life that deserves to be called philosophical.

The sub-title of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* is 'An Introduction to Phenomenology'; the sub-title to Husserl's first major work after his move to idealism (mentioned in the Preface) was 'General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology'; that of his last, unfinished, major work, the *Crisis*, was 'An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy'; and he also referred to his *Formal and Transcendental Logic* as an introduction. These repeated attempts to introduce transcendental phenomenology to the world not only bespeak a dissatisfaction with his earlier efforts; more importantly, they indicate an essential characteristic of transcendental phenomenology itself. For equally balanced with the difficulty of carrying out detailed phenomenological work is the difficulty of attaining the transcendental phenomenological perspective in the first place. True philosophizing is, as Husserl repeatedly states, an unnatural activity. In all our non-philosophical life – not only in all our 'everyday' activities, but also in all scientific endeavours – we are concerned with *objects in the world*, determining their properties and their reality (or lack of it). In such a life we are, as Husserl puts it, 'given over' or 'dedicated' to the world. All our concerns and activities are 'objectively' directed. As we shall see in our examination of the First Meditation, transcendental phenomenology involves a *switch of interest* – away from the world, and towards our own conscious life in which such a world presents itself to us. Such a redirection of mental focus is not a matter of engaging in psychology, since psychology, too, is concerned with what exists in the world: it is just that it is selectively interested in one domain or stratum of it – the 'mental', or the 'psychological'. The radical newness of transcendental phenomenology consists in its claim to have discovered an entirely new realm of being – one 'never before delimited', as he says in *Ideas I* – together with a new method of dealing with this new subject-matter. Much of the difficulty in introducing transcendental phenomenology consists precisely in getting someone even to discern this new field of enquiry – especially as it is so easy to misconstrue it as simply the familiar domain of the psychological. At a number of points throughout the *Cartesian Meditations* the reader will notice Husserl speaking of 'beginning philosophers'. This is not a reflection of the nature of his audience. On the contrary, the work was originally delivered to a gathering of some of the leading intellectuals in France. The point is that we are *all*, Husserl included, beginners at coming to grips with this new field of enquiry – an enquiry into what he will call 'transcendental consciousness' or 'transcendental subjectivity'.

In fact, according to Husserl, the notion of a beginning, of making a start, is central to understanding the very nature of philosophy itself. In his most extended treatment of the history of philosophy, developed in lectures given a few years before the composition of the *Cartesian Meditations* and now collected in Part One of *Erste Philosophie* ('First Philosophy'), Husserl says that three figures stand out for him in their significance: the 'binary star' Socrates/Plato and Descartes. What is significant in the present context is that he singles them out as 'the greatest beginners' in philosophy. Husserl regarded transcendental phenomenology as 'a first breakthrough of a true and genuine first philosophy'; and 'first philosophy' is 'a philosophy of beginnings', a 'scientific discipline of the beginning' of philosophy (*EP I*, 6–8). We cannot dissociate ourselves from the beginning of philosophy, because philosophy cannot be identified with any set of results or doctrines, but only with how it begins – with the spirit of its beginning – and how that beginning is sustained as a 'living force' (compare *CM*, 44). Philosophy is not a set of doctrines, because it is at root a certain form of *ethical life*. To understand such a life we need to see how it is motivated, how it begins.

What Husserl calls the 'primal establishment' or 'primal institution' (*Urstiftung*) of philosophy is to be found among the Greeks, specifically Socrates and Plato. It begins with the 'idea' mentioned above – an idea that is, specifically, the ideal conception of *genuine science* as *universal knowledge*. The universality that is in question here has two senses: such knowledge concerns reality as a totality, and it can be accepted as binding by any rational person whatever. This second feature implies, furthermore, that such science should be both grounded in, and developed through, *absolute insight*, and hence be *absolutely justified*. The 'idea' of philosophy is the idea of 'rigorous science', as Husserl put it in the *Logos* article that was his first published proclamation of his philosophy after his 'transcendental turn'. The commitment to this idea, which defines the philosopher, is a commitment to a life of *reason*, for 'philosophy is nothing other than [rationalism] through and through' (*Crisis*, 273

[338]).[1] In a sense, philosophy proper would be – not the complete realization of such universal, absolutely justified knowledge through insight (for that, since it encompasses infinite tasks, is impossible), but – a secure method leading to absolute success in each of its steps. This would be the 'final establishment' (*Endstiftung*) of philosophy (*ibid.*, 73 [72]), in relation to which Husserl can refer even to transcendental phenomenology as but destined to *become* philosophy (*CM*, 67). To exist as a philosopher between these two points is to strive for a 're-establishment' (*Nachstiftung*) in one's intellectual life of that desire for universal insight found in Socrates/Plato – becoming with them, as he says elsewhere, 'joint beginners' of philosophy (*EP I*, 5). So even philosophical beginners in the everyday sense must be led to reproduce previously discovered truths through their own insight, and therefore to *reproduce a true beginner of philosophy in themselves.*

Philosophy, being a methodologically clarified attempt to progress towards the ideal of absolute knowledge, must of course be systematic. But Husserl refuses to separate the 'systematic' Plato from the 'ethical' Socrates in philosophy's origin. For the ideal of absolute knowledge is the goal that a certain sort of life sets for itself. We can, therefore, characterize philosophy as much by the nature of its motives as by the nature of its goal. And what above all characterizes the philosophic life is *self-responsibility*. 'Philosophy', as Husserl says in the very first section of the *Cartesian Meditations*, 'is the philosophizer's quite personal affair. It must arise as *his* wisdom, as his self-acquired knowledge tending towards universality, a knowledge for which he can answer from the beginning, and at each step, by virtue of his own absolute insights' (44). In fact, the reader will find references to responsibility scattered throughout the *Cartesian Meditations*. And at one point he speaks of the need for the philosopher's radicality to become 'an actual deed' (50). The responsibility in question is initially, of course, an intellectual responsibility to settle for nothing less than 'insight' in all matters. Socrates' method was that of 'tireless self-reflection and radical appraisal', a method of 'complete clarification' which leads to a knowledge that is 'originally produced through complete self-evidence' (*EP I*, 9–10). The self-responsibility that is philosophy is the responsibility to accept nothing as knowledge that you have not validated for yourself. It is nothing but the demand for 'universal self reflection', for 'a resolve of the will to shape one's whole personal life into the synthetic unity of a life of universal self-responsibility and, correlatively, to shape oneself into the true "I", the free, autonomous "I" which seeks to realise his innate reason, the striving to be true to himself' (*Crisis* 272 [338]). Such reason, as he goes on to say, is '*ratio* in the constant movement of self-elucidation'. Indeed, transcendental phenomenology is characterized by Husserl as ultimately nothing but absolute self-explication (*CM*, 97). Philosophy is nothing other than absolute honesty.

The notion of *insight* has already started to emerge as being at the very heart of Husserl's vision of philosophy, and he will spell it out in his own fashion in a way we shall investigate later. Preliminarily we can contrast it with '*doxa*' – mere opinion, what we take on trust, what we have not interrogated and brought to clarity in our own minds: in short, *prejudice*. Despite the fact that such *doxa* is indispensable for ordinary life, it is, because of its typical unclarity and its necessary relativity to a given culture, open to question. In fact, Husserl saw epistemological naïveté as giving way to philosophy as a result of the 'prick of scepticism' (*EP II*, 27). He presents Socrates and Plato as reacting against the Sophists (whom Husserl construes as sceptics); he presents Descartes as attempting to answer various later sceptical schools of thought; and his own move towards transcendental phenomenology in the first decade of the twentieth century was itself motivated by sceptical worries about the very possibility of knowledge – as the 'Five Lectures' of 1907 make plain. Scepticism rots the human spirit, corroding not only the life of the intellect but all moral and spiritual values. Nevertheless, by bringing all claims to knowledge into doubt, scepticism fulfils its destiny by making possible a truly philosophical perspective, one oriented to the possibility of knowledge as such and its implicit goal of universality. Once the human spirit has been goaded into philosophy, has decided in favour of a life of reason guided by the idea of science, a new level of human existence is achieved. As Husserl says in a late text, 'Philosophical reason represents a new stage of human nature and its reason. But the stage of human existence under ideal norms for infinite tasks, the stage of existence *sub specie aeterni*, is possible only through absolute universality, precisely the universality contained from the start in the idea of philosophy' (*Crisis*, 337–8 [290]).

The idea of philosophy – and its implied idea of mankind as beings capable of philosophy, capable of following the absolute demands of reason – was not engendered in an abstract humanity: it had a specific historical origination, and it is kept alive (or dormant) only through a specific tradition. The idea of philosophy should be of interest to us because that tradition is *our* tradition. The birth of philosophy determines 'the essential character and destiny of the development of European culture' (*EP I*, 17); it is the '*teleological beginning* . . . of the European spirit as such' (*Crisis*, 72 [71]). Philosophy does not confine itself to the groves of academe. As a transformation of the human spirit, as the raising of humanity to a higher level of existence, it will resonate through, indeed transform, the culture in which it is genuinely alive. 'Science spreads itself across all areas of life and everywhere that it flourishes, or is believed to, claims for itself the significance of being an ultimately normative authority' (*EP I*, 17). Philosophy has so changed humanity, at least European humanity, that any subsequent stage of its culture will be whole and hale only where the life of reason flourishes as a unifying and directive force, transforming mankind into 'a new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights' (*Crisis*, 329 [283]). Needless to say, the history of European humanity has hardly been that of the clear-sighted unfolding of reason. Philosophy begins with insight; but as it is handed on in a tradition, it can and does become doctrine. Truths that were attained through original clarity become 'sedimented': they are passed along, like so many possessions, without our reliving the experience of insight which brought them into being as truth, and in which their 'proper' meaning is alone to be found.[2] And so philosophy itself can turn into the very kind of 'prejudice' against which it originally arose. This, however, is the death of philosophy. And when philosophy dies, the whole civilization which it once informed grows sick. Husserl established transcendental phenomenology, as a rebirth of the original vital spirit of philosophy, in opposition to what he saw as the malaise of Western culture. This malaise was, he believed, directly attributable to philosophy having lost its way by having lost touch with its vital origin or 'primal establishment'. He saw a clear manifestation of this, as the Introduction to the *Cartesian Meditations* itself indicates, in the 'splintering of present-day philosophy', in an absence among philosophers of a 'commonness of their underlying convictions', and in a 'pseudo-reporting and pseudo-criticizing, a mere semblance of philosophizing seriously with and for one another . . . [which] hardly attests a mutual study carried on with a consciousness of responsibility' (46).

One thing that Husserl sees as an immediate consequence of this philosophical decadence is the supposed independence from philosophy of the so-called 'positive sciences'. The reader will have noticed that when discussing the 'primal establishment', Husserl speaks indifferently of 'philosophy' and of 'science'. On the very first page of the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl attributes to Descartes the view that all the various sciences 'are only non-self-sufficient members of the one all-inclusive science, and this is philosophy. Only within the systematic unity of philosophy can they develop into genuine sciences' (43). This is, however, not just Descartes's view; it is also Husserl's, because it is part and parcel of philosophy's 'primal establishment' – this time, specifically at the hands of Plato. The 'idea' of a systematic enquiry into universally valid truth comes first; any 'positive' science is but a 'regional' application of this philosophical perspective to a particular domain of reality. During the course of the nineteenth century, however, the positive sciences separated themselves off from philosophy as supposedly autonomous disciplines. One thing that results from this is that such 'sciences' lose 'that scientific genuineness which would consist in their complete and ultimate grounding on the basis of absolute insights, insights behind which one cannot go back any further' (44). That is left as a philosopher's pipe-dream. But this means that they are no longer expressions of genuine *science* – a failing that is actually manifest, as Husserl repeatedly points out, in the unclarities and controversies concerning the 'foundations' of the various sciences, even such 'hard' sciences as physics and mathematics (e.g. 179). An even more important result is that 'science' ceases to have any human meaning. 'Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people.' Such positive science, Husserl goes on to say,

> excludes in principle precisely the questions which man . . . finds the most burning: questions about the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence. Do not these questions, universal and necessary for all men, demand universal reflections and answers based on rational insight? In the final analysis they concern man as a free, self-determining being in his behaviour towards the human and extrahuman surrounding world and free in regard to his capacities for rationally shaping himself and his surrounding world. What does science have to say about reason and unreason or about us men as subjects of this freedom?
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> (*Crisis* 4 [6])

Husserl saw the role of transcendental phenomenology as being nothing less than the saving of a lost European civilization through the 'final establishment' of genuine philosophy, one that would 'infuse our times with living forces' (45) through a reassertion of that 'radicalness of philosophical responsibility [which] has been lost' (47). If he were alive today, more than half a century after his life's work ended, he would weep.

HUSSERL AND DESCARTES

The foregoing exposition of Husserl's views – featuring as it does an origin of true philosophical thinking among the ancient Greeks, one which has become sedimented and 'inauthentic' in our tradition, one which, therefore, we must revitalize by attempting to think it through originally – may remind some readers of Martin Heidegger. Some, indeed, have suggested that Husserl *derived* such a perspective from Heidegger himself, importing it, unacknowledged, into (only) his late work the *Crisis*, which postdates