**Husserl, Edmund (1859-1938)**

Born Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl in Proßnitz, Austrian Empire (now Prostějov, Czech Republic), Edmund Husserl was a Neo-Kantian philosopher, mathematician and founder of phenomenology, the twentieth century philosophical school concerned with the structure of human subjectivities, consciousness and experience. His work influenced such thinkers as Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

His first book, *Philosophie der Arithmetik. Psychologische und logische Untersuchungen* (1891; *Philosophy of Arithmetic*), theorizes the concept of numbers, arguing for their symbolic, largely psychological construction. This text lays the groundwork for Husserl’s later work on phenomenology. He began teaching Philosophy at the University of Halle in 1887, after serving as assistant to German psychologist Karl Stumpf (1848-1936), and became a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Göttingen, where he published his most influential work, *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-01; *Logical Investigations*). Influenced by German philosopher Franz Brentano, Husserl shifted his observations on symbiosis from numbers to human experience in *Logical Investigations,* where his philosophy turns away from empirical sciences and begins to approach phenomenology as a form of ‘descriptive psychology’ (6). This type of inquiry, he argues, is not merely relative description, but rather, a form of ‘pure description’ (175), wherein the knowledge gleaned from subjective experience can be logically understood as pure concepts, outside of empirical or scientific forms of description. In short, Husserl identifies the object of phenomenology as the essence and descriptive content of the individual, isolated experience (263).

In 1912, while still working at the University of Göttingen, Husserl established the first journal dedicated to the school of phenomenology, *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (‘Yearbook of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research’), at the University of Freiburg. In this influential publication, Husserl first published his most controversial work, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (1913; *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*). *Ideas* elaborates on the central tenets of transcendental, or constitutive phenomenology, moving away from his earlier work in the realist phenomenology of *Logical Investigations*, and separates the essence of consciousness from the phenomena or objects it interprets. This turn towards the transcendental aspects of experience caused the first rift in phenomenology, as the Munich Group, including philosophers Adolf Reinach (1883-1917) and Moritz Geiger (1880-1937), rejected Husserl’s constitutive approach. Later in the twentieth century, existential phenomenologists Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty would also take issue with Husserl’s *Ideas*, arguing instead for a deeper understanding of the essence of consciousness through the nature of Being.

Following the death of his son Wolfgang at the Battle of Verdun, Husserl was appointed as a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Freiburg, where both Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger served as his assistants. He retired in 1929, but continued to lecture across Europe. His work was stifled by the Nazi racial civil service laws enacted in 1933, which stripped him of his ties to the University of Freiburg and the Deutsche Akademie due to his Jewish heritage. One year after Husserl’s death, in 1939, Franciscan father H. L. Van Breda (1911-1974) smuggled Husserl’s wife Malvine and over forty thousand pages of his manuscripts out of Germany to Belgium. These manuscripts are still held in the archives at the University of Leuven.

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**List of key works**

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------ (1952) *Ideen II: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, trans R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer as *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*—*Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989.

------ (1952) *Ideen III: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, trans. T. Klein and W. Pohl as *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy - Third Book: Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1980.

**References and further reading**

Levinas, E. (1973) *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1967) *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

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Zahavi, D. and Stjernfelt, F. (2002). *One Hundred Years of Phenomenology: Husserl's Logical Investigations Revisited*, Dordrecht: Kluwer.