



Department of Philosophy

# Phenomenologizing Epistemology

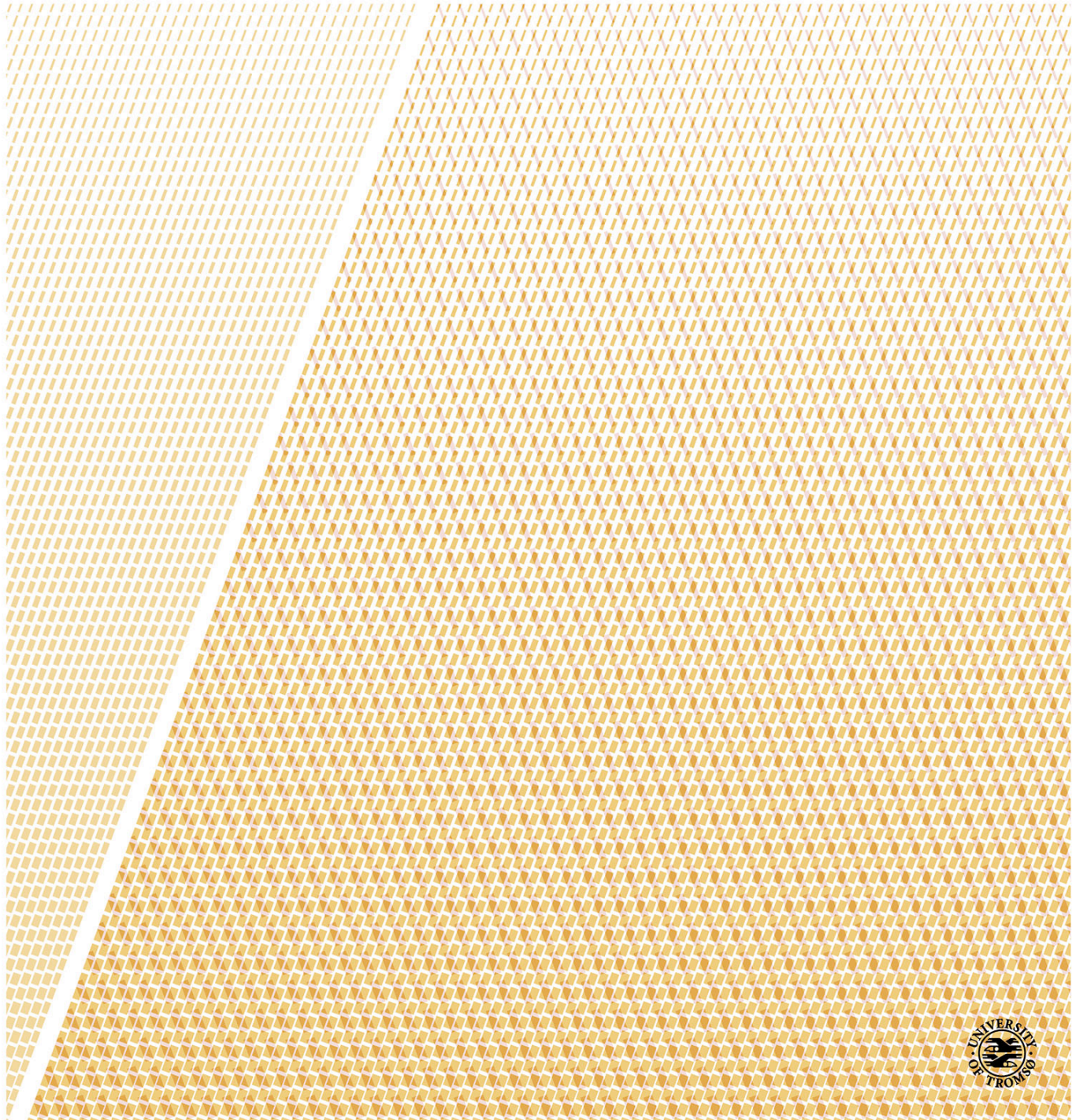
*Essays in Husserlian Philosophy*

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*A dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor – 11 2015*

CORRECTED VERSION





*For my parents*



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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following institutions for their generous financial support at different stages of the completion of this project: The U.S.-Norway Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange, the University of Tromsø, Lise and Arnfinn Heje's Fund, The EWS Foundation, The Northern Norway Fund, The Norway-America Association, and the University of Stavanger.

I would also like to thank the following people for inputs and discussions that, in more or less direct ways, have contributed to the shape of the present work: Richard Cobb-Stevens, Dan Zahavi, Frode Kjosavik, John Richard Sageng, Søren Overgaard, Ingunn Larsen, James Dodd, Nicolas de Warren, Mariann Solberg, Trygve Lavik, Arnt Myrstad and Jan-Harald Alnes. Thanks also to Dagfinn Føllesdal and Bjarte Ravndal for all their assistance.

Finally, I want to express my deep gratitude to my wife Ingunn, and my children Embla, Lydia and Rufus, for their help, encouragement and endurance.





## **Note on References and Translations**

With two exceptions, I refer to the Husserliana edition of Husserl's works, which I cite by volume number in Roman numerals. The first exception is texts in the Husserliana Materialien series, which I cite by volume number in Roman numerals preceded by the letter 'M'. The second is *Erfahrung und Urteil*, which I cite as EU. All translations are mine. Where previous English translations exist, I have sometimes borrowed from them, without comment. In these cases, I have included the English pagination, which is given after the German.



## INTRODUCTION

The overarching aim of the three essays that form the substance of the present work is to contribute to the assessment of Husserlian epistemology. A characteristic feature of Husserl's epistemology is the prominent place given to metaepistemological considerations, considerations of epistemological method in particular. And the most important supposed outcome of these considerations is a view according to which epistemological problems can be solved only by phenomenological means, or that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology. As Husserl puts it in a 1922/23 lecture course:

The rightful problems of epistemology [*Erkenntnistheorie*] can ... only be posed on the ground offered by phenomenology. All radical epistemological problems are phenomenological; and all other problems that, beyond those, can be designated as epistemological, including the problems of the correct "interpretation" of actually existing nature and the results of the sciences concerned with it, presupposes the pure epistemological problems, the phenomenological ones (XXV 189).

With his epistemology, then, Husserl does not aim only at solving epistemological problems, but at reforming epistemology, by redetermining the very nature of its problems and the methods by which they are to be solved. This relates Husserl's epistemological project to other projects of epistemological reform, such as current day naturalization projects. But where these seek to reform epistemology by, in effect, construing it as part of natural science, Husserl seeks to do so by construing it as a chapter of phenomenology, and thus by phenomenologizing rather than naturalizing it.<sup>1</sup>

Given this, no assessment of Husserl's epistemology can be complete without an evaluation of this reformation attempt. The aim of the first two essays is to contribute to such an evaluation. They both relate to what is arguably Husserl's most important argument for the claim that epistemology is

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<sup>1</sup> As the full title of the three volumes of his *Ideen—Ideen zur einen reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologische Philosophie*—indicates, phenomenology is not, strictly speaking, a branch of philosophy on Husserl's view. It is, rather, a self-standing discipline that can serve as a basis, indeed the only basis, for solving philosophical problems, by which Husserl means not only epistemological problems or problems of "theoretical" reason, but also problems of "axiological" and "practical" reason. (For an account of Husserl's differentiated concept of reason, see Melle 1988.)

possible only as phenomenology, which argument they both provide reasons for questioning. According to this argument, which I propose to call the argument from the problem of transcendence, or the transcendence argument, the nature of the central problem of epistemology, which Husserl terms the problem of transcendence, imposes certain methodological requirements that phenomenology alone can satisfy. In the first essay, “Husserl’s Riddle of Cognition”, I seek to clarify Husserl’s specification of that problem, and indicate some of its consequences. I argue that Husserl, in effect, specifies the problem as the problem of the possibility of defeasible cognition, and that this, when combined with the transcendence argument, commits him to an arguably unsustainable view of epistemological cognition, on which it must be indefeasible. In the second essay, “Husserl’s Argument from the Problem of Transcendence”, I attempt to elucidate the basic structure of the transcendence argument, and evaluate its most decisive step—the claim that any attempt to solve the problem of transcendence requires performance of an “epistemological reduction”. Arguing that Husserl’s support for this claim is less than compelling, I conclude that there is reason to think that the argument fails.

A negative assessment of Husserl’s metaepistemology would not necessarily entail a negative assessment of his substantive epistemology—the considerations offered as solutions to particular epistemological problems. For, despite his claims to the contrary, many of these considerations do not, arguably, depend for their cogency on the metaepistemological framework in which he himself places them, and are therefore assessable independently of it.

Among the relevant considerations perhaps the most important and fruitful ones are those relating to the nature and epistemic role of perception. With the third essay, “Perceptual Givenness and Justification in Husserl”, I seek to pose challenge to Husserl’s epistemology of perception, one that is independent of the fate of his metaepistemology. Specifically, I suggest that Husserl’s basic view of perceptual justification, according to which the perceptual givenness of an object is an epistemic justifier for belief about it, would appear to be in tension with his general view of epistemic justification.

The purpose of the rest of this introduction is to provide a background for the essays, bringing out their systematic interconnections and presenting some

relevant themes not addressed in them. I begin with a brief view of the place of Husserl's epistemology in the contemporary reception of his thought. I go on to sketch some of his contributions to the general epistemological themes under which the main problematics of the essays fall: the subject matter of epistemology (Essay 1), the methodology of epistemology (Essay 2), and the epistemology of perception (Essay 3). I close with a presentation of the essays themselves, indicating the basis for the conclusions suggested above.

### **1. Husserlian Epistemology Today**

Phenomenology, construed as the heterogeneous philosophical tradition inaugurated by Husserl around the turn of the last century, is a vital force in contemporary philosophy. Not only is there a steady outpouring of important scholarly work on the major figures of the tradition—Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and others—and the phenomenological topics associated with them. But, perhaps even more importantly, the results of this work are fruitfully brought to bear on a number of contemporary discussions within different fields and traditions.<sup>2</sup>

This is perhaps particularly true in the case of Husserl. As far as scholarly work is concerned, the last decades have witnessed a veritable Husserlian renaissance, as evidenced by the steadily increasing number of essays and monographs devoted to different aspects of his thought. This is not least related to the still ongoing publication of his lecture-courses and research manuscripts, which has contributed to correcting many of the distorted views of his phenomenology that earlier tended to stand in the way of appreciating its continued interest. Among the most pernicious of these has been the notion that Husserl's version of phenomenology is radically discontinuous with those of later figures in the phenomenological movement, Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's in particular, a notion sometimes encouraged by these figures themselves. This has nourished the mistaken belief that many of the themes

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<sup>2</sup> The classical account of the phenomenological tradition as a whole is Spiegelberg (1994). For two recent and complimentary overviews of the many-faceted contemporary relevance of phenomenology in general, see Luft and Overgaard (2012) and Zahavi (2012). For papers on Husserlian phenomenology from a predominantly analytic point of view, see Smith and Smith (1995).

developed in later phenomenology, such as those of embodiedness, intersubjectivity, community, practice and history, are absent in Husserl, who, as a consequence, for many has tended to appear as something of relic of philosophy's best discarded Cartesian past.<sup>3</sup>

But the current interest in Husserl's thought is not only scholarly. Husserlian philosophy has also increasingly come to be seen as a valuable source of ideas, concepts and arguments for advancing current discussions within many areas, including the philosophy of mind, epistemology, ontology and metaphysics, philosophy of logic and mathematics, philosophy of language, cognitive science and metaphilosophy.<sup>4</sup>

These developments—the renewed scholarly interest in Husserlian phenomenology, and the attempts to utilize it for contemporary systematic purposes—are not unconnected. On the one hand, the revised view of Husserl's thought forms part of the explanation for his status as an important contributor to present-day debates outside of the phenomenological tradition, narrowly construed. On the other hand, the use of his thought as a resource for these debates has also contributed to clarify and advance discussions within phenomenology itself, Husserlian and otherwise.

The place of Husserl's epistemology in this picture is somewhat paradoxical. The problems of knowledge and justification were of central importance to Husserl. Yet, in the contemporary scholarly interest in Husserlian phenomenology, they have tended to be eclipsed by problems relating to other themes such as intentionality in general, self-awareness, embodiedness and intersubjectivity. And, although for Husserl epistemology is not just a chapter, but the central chapter of the philosophy of mind, the current interest in his

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<sup>3</sup> For attempts to unseat this sort of belief in the case of the relation between Husserl and Heidegger, see, for instance, Stapleton (1983), Øverenget (1998), Crowell (2001) and (2013), Overgaard (2004), and Alweiss (2003). For reappraisals of the relation between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, see, for instance, the papers in Toadvine and Embree (2002). For a collection of attempts to correct the traditional view of different aspects of Husserl's phenomenology, see Welton (2003). See also Steinbock (1995), Zahavi (1999 and 2001) and Welton (2002).

<sup>4</sup> For overviews of relevant contributions, see Luft and Overgaard (2012) and Zahavi (2012). Among the fields open to Husserlian influence, one of the most hospitable has been the philosophy of mind. (See, for instance, Smith and Thomasson 2005 and Siewert 2012). Part of the explanation no doubt lies in in the latter's current interest in questions concerning intentionality and consciousness, combined with an increased awareness of the breadth and sophistication of Husserl's treatments of these topics. For an overview of current work on the relation between intentionality and consciousness, see Siewert (2006).

contributions to the latter has not, with some notable exceptions, been accompanied by a comparable interest in his contributions to the former.<sup>5</sup> Part of the reason for this may be that, in a rather sober contemporary epistemological climate, claims such as his claim that philosophy should be grounded in “apodictic evidence”, may have encouraged the view that his epistemology as a whole has little to offer for current debates.

Any attempt to decide the correctness of this view requires an assessment of Husserlian epistemology of the kind to which I aim to contribute here—an assessment, that is, of both his metaepistemology and his substantive epistemology. And, as indicated above, any attempt at assessing the former requires a clarification of his view of the subject matter of epistemology, to a presentation of which I now turn.

## 2. The Subject Matter of Epistemology

According to the Preface to the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, epistemology is concerned with “the relation between the subjectivity of cognizing [*Erkennen*] and the objectivity of the content cognized” (XVIII 7). Some time later, in a 1908 research manuscript, Husserl characterizes the questions to which attempting to understand this relation gives rise as “transcendental questions”:<sup>6</sup>

What is at issue under the heading “transcendental questions” is, in one sense and generally, a “clarification” of the possibility of objectively valid cognition [*Erkenntnis*], which, on the one hand, is “subjective” *qua* cognition, and, on the other hand, reaches an “objective” being, a being that is in itself, and independent of subjectivity (VII 386).

According to Husserl, then, the general problem of epistemology is the problem of how, if cognition is something “subjective”, it can be of something that is “objective” in the sense of existing “in itself”, independently of cognition,

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<sup>5</sup> The exceptions include, but are not limited to, Willard (1984 and 1995), Føllesdal (1988), Pietersma (2000) and Hopp (2011 and 2012).

<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge, Husserl first reference to transcendental questions or problems in the present sense can be found in a 1902 lecture-course (M III 75 ff.). So Kern is wrong to claim that Husserl did not make the term ‘transcendental’ part of his philosophical vocabulary until 1908 (1964, 240). On the differences between Husserl and Kant’s concept of the transcendental, see Kern (1964, 239 ff.).

and subjectivity in general. For something to be objective in this sense is for it to be “transcendent” to any and all cognitions of it, on one of Husserl’s uses of the term (cf. M VII 5). And this is the reason why he characterizes the problem as the “transcendental problem”, and also as the “problem of transcendence”: It concerns the question of how cognition, as something subjective, can be of what is transcendent to it. As he puts in a 1907 lecture course:

If we look closer at what it so enigmatic, and what, in the first reflections on the possibility of cognition, brings us embarrassment, we will find it to be the transcendence of cognition. All natural cognition, the pre-scientific and certainly the scientific, is transcendently objectivating cognition. It posits objects as being, purports cognitively to reach states of affairs, that are not “in the true sense given” in it, are not “immanent” to it (II 34 f./27).

To shed light on Husserl’s construal of the problem of transcendence, I first take a look at the basic assumptions from which he takes the problem to arise (2.1). I then consider his view of its general nature (2.2), and its basic forms (2.3). Finally, I take a brief look at his view of the problem of scepticism (2.4).

### *2.1 The Basic Assumptions of the Problem*

On the formulations quoted above, the problem of transcendence rests on three assumptions: a metaphysical assumption to the effect that there are, or at least can be, items or beings that are objective or transcendent, in the sense of having being in themselves; an epistemological assumption to the effect that it is possible to cognize transcendent beings as they are in themselves; and what could be called an ontological assumption to the effect that cognition is subjective, in a sense that remains to be specified. I will refer to these as the assumption of objective being, the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition, and the assumption of the subjectivity of cognition respectively.

I will not say much about the first assumption, other than noting that Husserl takes the extension of the concept of objective being involved to include both “real” (*reale*) and “ideal” (*ideale*) objects (cf. XXXVI 24). On his use of the term, to talk of real objects is, roughly, to talk of spatio-temporal particulars possessed of various sensuous features and causal properties, and of these features and properties themselves (cf. IX 99 f.). And to talk of ideal objects is to



talk of non spatio-temporal objects, the category of which, for Husserl, includes such items as states of affairs and “essences” (*Wesen*) (cf. III/1 13 ff.).

The second assumption, the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition, can be specified in three ways, corresponding to three Husserlian concepts of cognition. On the first and broadest of these, a cognition is an “intentional act” (*intentionale Akt*)—roughly, a mental occurrence characterized by being “of” or “directed on” something, which something Husserl calls its “intentional object” (*intentionale Gegenstand*) (XIX/1 414). The precise content of Husserl’s notion of intentional objects is a matter of controversy. On the interpretation I favour, which I cannot here attempt to substantiate, an Husserlian intentional object is not a special kind of object, but simply that on which the occurrence, *qua* intentional, is directed, whatever it might be: Any item that an experience can be specified as being “of” is, thereby, an intentional object in Husserl’s sense (cf. XIX/1 438 ff.).<sup>7</sup> Thus, the intentional object of an intentional act may be a spatial particular, as in my perception of the computer in front of me; but it may equally well be a “mental” particular, as in a reflection on my perception of the computer. Contrary to what the ordinary use of the term ‘object’ might suggest, it does not even have to be a particular, but may be a state of affairs, as in a thought about the circumstance that the computer is grey, or a property, as in a thought about the greyness of the computer. Nor does it have to be something that exists, but may, for instance, be entirely fictitious, as in a thought about the god Jupiter (XIX/1 386).<sup>8</sup>

On Husserl’s first concept of cognition, then, to be a cognition is to be an intentional act, or a mental occurrence possessed of an intentional object. Given this concept, the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition amounts to

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<sup>7</sup> According to this interpretation, Husserl’s concept of an intentional object would be what Crane calls a schematic, as opposed to a substantial, concept of an object (2000, 15 ff.). For a similar interpretation, see Drummond (1990) and Meixner (2006). For an alternative interpretation, see Smith and McIntyre (1982) and Ströker (1987).

<sup>8</sup> In saying that every intentional act has an intentional object, then, Husserl is not saying that every intentional act is related to a being of some kind, but only that it has the inherent character of being directed on something or other. And to say of the intentional object of an act that it does not exist is not, for him, to say that it exists only “mentally” or “immanently”. Nor is it to say that it has an extra-mental form of being other than existence, like Meinongian subsistence. It is just to say that while there exists a mental occurrence characterizable as being directed on something, that on which it is characterizable as being directed on does not exist (cf. XIX/1 386 f.).

the assumption that intentional acts can be directed on transcendent intentional objects.

On Husserl's second, and less inclusive, concept of cognition, a cognition is an intentional act that is "veridical", in the sense of being directed on an intentional object that actually exists, and actually has the properties it is taken to have (cf. XXIV 152). Given this concept, the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition amounts to the assumption that intentional acts can have actually existing transcendent objects for their intentional objects.

On Husserl's third, and most epistemologically significant, concept of cognition, a cognition is an intentional act that is "rational" (*Vernünftig*), in the sense, roughly, that its directedness on its object is rationally supported (cf. VII 377). More precisely, a rational cognition is an intentional act that meets two conditions. First, it involves what Husserl calls a "positing" (*Setzung*) of its intentional object—roughly, a belief to the effect that the object exists or has being (cf. XIX/1 499).<sup>9</sup> Second, the positing concerned is "rationally motivated" (*vernünftig motiviert*), in the sense of being based on "rational grounds" (*Vernunftgründe*) or "justificatory grounds" (*Rechtsgründe*), grounds providing epistemic justification for it (cf. VII 377).<sup>10</sup>

Given this concept of cognition, the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition amounts to the assumption that positings of transcendent objects can be rational, in the sense of being based on rational or justificatory grounds providing epistemic justification for them. To better see what this assumption involves, note should be taken of three requirements that Husserl places on justificatory grounds, which requirements together constitute what could be called his basic conception of epistemic justification, or justification for

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<sup>9</sup> This is simplified, for at least two reasons. First, positing in the present sense, which Husserl calls "doxic" positing, is only one of several forms of positing distinguished by him (cf. III/1 268 ff.). (For discussion of Husserl's differentiated concept of positing, and his related distinction between theoretical, axiological and practical reason, see Melle 1988 and 1990.) Second, doxic positing is not restricted to simple attributions of being, but includes any and all attributions of "being-characters" (*Seinscharactere*), which, in addition to that of being *simpliciter*, also comprises characters like being dubitable, possible and probable (III/1 239 ff.). For present purposes, these complications can be put to the side, and Husserlian positing be construed in terms of attributions of being *simpliciter*.

<sup>10</sup> As this suggests, Husserl's notion of rational acts bears affinities to the current notion of well-founded beliefs. See, for instance Feldman and Conee (1985) and Pryor (2000).

short.<sup>11</sup>

On what could be called the Being Requirement, something is a justificatory ground for positing an object only if it serves to indicate that the object has being, where guaranteeing that this is so would be the upper limit of indicating it (cf. VII 377; VIII 398; XXXVI 85). With this requirement, Husserl can be seen to endorse a version of what is commonly called a teleological conception of justification, according to which justification is a means to an end—the end, roughly, of believing truths and avoiding falsehoods.<sup>12</sup>

On what we might call the Awareness Requirement, something is a justificatory ground for positing an object only if it is consciously available, in the sense of being something of which the positing subject is suitably aware (cf. XXIV 130; XXX 316; XXXVI 84). In contemporary terms, then, Husserl endorses a form of access internalism about epistemic justification, according to which something can provide justification for a belief only if it is suitably accessible to the believing subject.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, on what could be called the Immediacy Requirement, something is a justificatory ground for positing an object only if it is either immediate or mediate, where an immediate ground is one that does not depend on other grounds for its justificatory force, and a mediate ground is one that does so depend, and where any mediate ground ultimately depends on an immediate ground (cf. XXIV 136, 345; III/1 326, 328). By endorsing this view, Husserl commits to a version of epistemological foundationalism, according to which there is immediate justification, and all non-immediate justification ultimately rests on immediate justification.

An important part of Husserl's foundationalism is what could be called his epistemic intuitionism. This is the view that the presence of an intentional object as “originarily given” (*originär gegeben*) in an “originary giving intuition” (*originär gebende Anschauung*), or originary intuition for short,

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<sup>11</sup> This conception is not explicit in Husserl, but it is, I argue, implicit in passages like those referenced below. For a more detailed account of the conception, see Essay 3.

<sup>12</sup> For an account of the structure of teleological conceptions of justification, as well as a critique of their attractiveness, see Berker (2013). For related discussions, see David (2001), DePaul (2001), Fumerton (2001) and (2011), and Kelly (2003).

<sup>13</sup> For accounts and discussions of the nature and viability of access internalism, see, for instance, Fumerton (1995) and Bergmann (2006).

constitutes an immediate justificatory ground for positing it (cf. III/1 51). For an object to be thus present is, roughly, for it to be present “in the flesh” or as “bodily selfgiven” (*leibhaft selbstgegeben*), as opposed, say, to being present as represented by some other object, like a sign or an image (cf. III/1 90). Husserl designates bodily selfgivenness as originary givenness because he takes it to constitute the most basic way of being present, or the most basic “mode of givenness” (*Gegebenheitsweise*), of intentional objects, the one from which all other modes of givenness are, in different ways, derived (cf. III/1 90).<sup>14</sup>

According to Husserl, for every basic category of object there is a special kind of originary intuition in which objects of that category can become originary given (III/1 15). In the case of physical objects, for instance, the intuition concerned is “outer perception” (*äußere Wahrnehmung*); in the case of intentional acts, it is “inner perception” (*innere Wahrnehmung*); in the case of states of affairs involving physical objects it is “categorical perception” (*kategoriale Wahrnehmung*); and in the case of essences, it is “eidetic intuition” (*eidetische Anschauung*) (cf. III/1 11, 14). And so, just as the presence of a physical object in outer perception constitutes an immediate justificatory ground for positing it, the presence of an intentional act, a physical state of affairs or an essence in an originary intuition of the relevant kind constitutes an immediate justificatory ground for positing them. Any object actually posited on the basis of such a ground will constitute the object of an “originary evidence” (*originäre Evidenz*), by which Husserl means any positing intentional act whose positing is based on the originary givenness of the object posited (III/1 318). Originary givenness being the most fundamental kind of justificatory ground, originary evidence, as the positing of objects on the basis of their originary givenness, is the most fundamental kind of rational act.

Not all instances of originary givenness provide justification to the same degree, however. More specifically, the degree to which the originary givenness of an intentional object gives justification for positing it is determined by the extent to which the features of the object is bodily selfgiven (cf. III/ 51). If all of its features are thus given, the object is said to be adequately given. In such

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<sup>14</sup> For critical considerations of this privileging of bodily selfgivenness vis-à-vis other modes of givenness of intentional objects, see Derrida (1967) and Bernet (1978).

cases, Husserl argues, the originary givenness of the object provides an indefeasible or absolute ground for positing it. By contrast, if some, but not all of the object's features are bodily self-given, the object is said to be inadequately given. And in such cases, although the originary givenness of the object still provides justification for positing it, the justification is defeasible or relative—relative, namely, to the non-bodily self-given features of the object's becoming bodily self-given in the further course of experience (cf. III/2 598). Whether or not an object can become adequately given is, Husserl argues, a matter of its basic category. For instance, whereas any intentional act can be adequately given, and will be if it occurs as the object of an inner perception, no physical object can become so given, not even if it were to occur as the object of an infinite process of outer perception.<sup>15</sup>

As this makes clear, Husserl's epistemological foundationalism is not a classical one, on which immediate justification must be indefeasible. It is, rather, a species of what today is called moderate foundationalism, which allows that immediate justification can be defeasible.<sup>16</sup>

Against the background of Husserl's basic conception of justification, the assumption that positings of transcendent objects can be rational may be further specified as the assumption that positings of transcendent objects can be based on mediate or immediate, consciously available and being-indicative grounds, where the immediate grounds concerned include the originary givenness of the objects, and where the justification provided by those grounds need not be indefeasible.

Finally, let us take a brief look at the third assumption from which the problem of transcendence arises, the assumption of the subjectivity of cognition. For Husserl, to hold this assumption is to endorse at least three claims. The first is that cognitions in general are "experiences" (*Erlebnisse*), where a mental occurrence is an experience just in case it is subject to consciousness in the form of "experiencing" (*erleben*) (cf. X 291; XIV 45).<sup>17</sup> The second is that no cognition

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<sup>15</sup> I return to this point in Section 4.2 below.

<sup>16</sup> For influential expositions and defences of modest foundationalism, see Alston (1976) and Pollock (1986).

<sup>17</sup> Husserlian experiencing must be distinguished from other forms of awareness of one's mental life, such as reflection, from which, Husserl insists, it differs in three crucial respects.

occurs in isolation, but belongs within the unity of a temporal “stream of experiences”, a continuously flowing continuum of experiences stretching from the past through the present to the future (III/1 182). And the third claim is that any experience, and the stream of experiences in which it occurs, belongs to a subject or “ego”.<sup>18</sup> Thus, to hold that cognition is subjective in the present sense is to hold, at least, that any cognition is an experience belonging to a continuum of experiences belonging to an ego.

## 2.2 *The General Nature of the Problem*

To indicate Husserl’s view of the general nature of the problem of transcendence, it will be useful first to consider his view of the status of the first two assumptions from which it arises, the assumption of objective being and the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition. In a 1906/07 lecture course,

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First, it is a non-intentional or non-objectifying form of self-awareness: It is not an awareness in which one’s mental occurrences are present as objects capable of re-identification in further acts of awareness (cf. XXIV 247; XXVI 168). Second, experiencing is a non-contingent form of self-awareness: My perception of the telephone on the table in front of me is independent of my possible reflection on it. I can perceive the telephone without turning my perception into an object of reflection. But, Husserl argues, my perception is not independent of my experiencing of it. In the absence of an experiencing of the perception of the telephone, there would not be any perception of the latter. And similarly with all other forms of mental occurrence. On Husserl’s view, then, being experienced is necessary for being mental. (It is also, he argues, sufficient (XIX/1 361 ff.), which is to say that it, in effect, constitutes his bid for the “mark of the mental”). Third, experiencing is a non-dependent form of self-awareness: Reflection is a dependent mode of self-awareness, in that it presupposes a more basic mode of awareness: namely, experiencing, and that in two ways. As co-constitutive of mental occurrences in general, experiential awareness is a precondition for instances of reflective awareness; and by the same token it is also a precondition for their objects. By contrast, Husserl argues, experiencing does not presuppose a more basic mode of awareness, and can therefore be characterized as “primal consciousness” (*Urbewußtsein*) (XXIV 245). As many have noted, Husserl takes this consciousness to coincide with what he calls “inner time-consciousness”: roughly, the consciousness by virtue of which our experiences appear as temporal (X 290). (See, for instance, Brough 1972 and Zahavi 1999.)

<sup>18</sup> Although Husserl endorsed this claim throughout his career, his interpretation of it changed. In the period, roughly, from 1901 to 1911, he construed it in two ways: as a claim that all experiences are related to a stream of experiences (XIX/1 363, 390), and as a claim that any stream of experiences includes as an essential core certain experiences intentionally directed at an ego understood as an empirical object among others (XIX/1 363, 374, 390). The upshot of these construals was a view of the ego-relatedness of experiences according to which this relatedness is either a relatedness to something non-objective (a stream of experiences), or to something radically different from them (an empirical object), but not both. Later he rejected this view, maintaining that the relatedness of experiences to an ego is a relatedness to something that is both non-objective and radically different from them. Specifically, he argued that all experiences are related to a non-objective ego that differs from them in remaining identical throughout all their actual and possible changes (III/1 123, 178 ff.). For discussion of Husserl’s changing views of the ego, see Marbach (1974).

he characterizes these assumptions, or, rather, the propositions that form their contents, as “trivial”:

Let us assume that things [*Sachen*] exist in truth and actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]. And, obviously, this assumption seems adequate to us. It does not occur to us to state it. Things are in their own right. On the other hand, thinking gets a hold of them, thinks them, knows them, is certain of their existence, or presumes them, posits them as existing with the highest degree of probability. The most obvious situation in the world. Is there anything more trivial than these facts? Unfortunately, it is the fate of philosophy to have to find the biggest problems in the biggest trivialities. How does thinking in its various forms (the question is in the end the same for each one) get a hold of things, since they are surely things existing in their own right? How does it concur with the nature of the things in the form of justified knowledge? Things surely are what and how they are in their own right (XXIV 150/148).

In a later passage from the same text, however, he argues that these propositions cease to be trivial, and become mysteries, upon recognition of the subjectivity of cognition:

The trivial truism [*Selbstverständlichkeit*] that there are things [*Sachen*] in themselves and that we just appear on the scene and grasp them, regard them, make statements about them, etc. turns into a mystery. Knowing about things in themselves means having a subjective experience called “knowing”, and if the things are not something itself occurring at the same time in the human consciousness, like a feeling, a sensation, and so on, then all talk about knowledge seems fictional. No knowing can go beyond itself. It is precisely knowing, consciousness, and not something that is not consciousness (XXIV 153/151).

How are we to understand this? In what sense of the term does Husserl take the propositions in question first to be, and then cease to be, trivial? Let us first note that a proposition may be trivial in two senses. On the one hand, it may be trivial in the sense of being obviously true or rationally indisputable. Let us refer to this as triviality in the epistemic sense. On the other hand, it may be trivial in the sense of being taken entirely for granted, or endorsed without any questions whatsoever being raised about it. Since triviality in this sense is a matter, not of the proposition itself or its justification, but of how it is taken, or the kind of attitude one takes towards it, we might refer to it as triviality in the attitudinal sense. These two senses are logically independent. A proposition may be trivial in the epistemic sense without therefore being trivial in the attitudinal sense. That all unmarried men are unmarried is epistemically trivial if any proposition is. And usually it is also attitudinally trivial. But in the context of,

say, a logical inquiry, although still epistemically trivial, it may no longer be attitudinally trivial. For it may then no longer be endorsed without any questions being raised about it—questions concerning the relation between its truth and its logical form, say. Conversely, a proposition may be trivial in the attitudinal sense without therefore being trivial in the epistemic sense. I usually assume that my car will start when I turn the ignition. And I usually do so without raising any questions whatsoever about this being so. But this is not, of course, to say that it is rationally indisputable.

Now, I believe we should take Husserl as holding that, prior to recognition of the subjectivity of cognition, the propositions in question are trivial in both the epistemic and the attitudinal sense; and that while, upon that recognition, they remain trivial in the epistemic sense, they cease to be trivial, and become mysteries, in the attitudinal sense. On his view, then, recognizing the subjectivity of cognition does not serve to undermine the rational indisputability of the propositions concerned. Instead, what it does is make us unable to take the propositions, whose truth we cannot rationally dispute, for granted: Prior to recognizing the subjectivity of cognition, we justifiably believe that there are transcendent objects, and that these objects are cognizable as they are in themselves; and we do so without concerning ourselves with how this can be so. After recognizing the subjectivity of cognition, we still justifiably believe the propositions; but we can no longer do so without being confronted with the question of how they can be true—a question that, initially at least, we find ourselves quite unable to answer.

As this suggests, Husserl's problem of transcendence really comprises two general problems, one epistemological and the other metaphysical. The epistemological problem, which could be called the problem of transcendent cognition, is the problem of how the assumption of the subjectivity of cognition can be reconciled with the assumption of objective cognition—that is, of how, if cognition is subjective, cognition of transcendent objects is possible. The metaphysical problem, which we might call the problem of transcendent being, is the problem of how the assumption of the subjectivity of cognition can be reconciled with the assumption of objective being—that is, of how, if cognition is subjective, transcendent being is possible. In a discussion of Georgian



scepticism in a research manuscript from the 1920s, Husserl formulates the latter problem as follows:

If objectivity is “only” subjective meaning, is not the being-in-itself of a world an illusion? Does this not hold for every cognizing subject? How can anyone know that what he means and verifies in himself corresponds with that of others and is the same? After all, the world is supposed to be an objective world, a world in itself for everyone. How can I, like a human being in general, know *that* a world, and the *same* world, “the” world, exists for everyone? Every man can only cognize it as his own meaning. How can I cognize fellow human beings other than as something meant in myself? I cannot even say: “What is true for every human being is what appears for him”. I can only say: What is true for me is what appears for me. “Everyone”—that is itself my meaning, which does not go beyond myself. Thus, I end with the solipsism that, it seems, Georgia’s expressed. There is nothing objective, no objective science. Only my being and the being of my meanings are given, even apodictically given, and anything else is not at all conceivable (VII 331 f.).<sup>19</sup>

In referring to the problem of transcendence, however, Husserl usually has in mind only what I have called the problem of transcendent cognition. And I will follow him in this here.<sup>20</sup>

Before turning to Husserl’s view of the status of the third assumption behind the problem of transcendence, I want to make two further remarks in relation to the view that, prior to recognition of the subjectivity of cognition, the propositions that form their contents are attitudinally trivial. First, as the following passage from a 1910/11 lecture course suggests, to take those propositions for granted is to be naïve, in Husserl’s special sense of the term:

For the naïve it is wholly truistic—to such an extent that he does not find the least occasion to reflect on it—that objects exist in themselves, that states of affairs obtain in themselves (that things change, events unfold, natural and mathematical laws are valid, all in themselves), and that the subject in its experiences of consciousness can perceive the objects existing in themselves, and, in a valid way, determine them in thought and evaluate them, and likewise subjectively cognize any state of affairs, any law obtaining in itself. This truism (and already the most primitive one relating to the perception of a thing) is the riddle of all riddles [*Rätsel aller Rätsel*] (XXX 341).

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<sup>19</sup> See also IX 288 ff.

<sup>20</sup> As the passage just quoted indicates, Husserl appears to hold that the problem of transcendent being follows from the problem of transcendent cognition, in the sense that if the subjectivity of cognition makes mysterious the possibility of objective cognition, it also, by that token, makes mysterious the possibility of objective being. It is hard to see how it could do so, however, at least without an additional assumption to the effect that what cannot in principle be cognized cannot be—an assumption that Husserl in fact accepts (cf. XXXVI 73; IX 288 ff.).

It should be emphasized that this naïveté is not a matter of believing the propositions concerned without taking account of readily available countervailing evidence, or some such, but of believing them without full understanding of what, exactly, we believe when we believe them. Thus, in saying that, prior to recognizing the subjectivity of cognition, we are naïve, Husserl is not saying that, prior to that recognition, we are unaware of a fact that, were it to be taken into account, should lead us to doubt that there are transcendent objects and that these are cognizable as they are in themselves. He is rather saying that, prior to that recognition, we do not raise any questions about what these presumed facts actually consist in.

Second, to be naïve in the present sense of the term is to live in what Husserl calls the “natural attitude” (*natürliche Einstellung*), and by which he means, roughly, a certain orientation or frame of mind within which, he holds, we ordinarily find ourselves, and on the basis of which all our ordinary practices unfold.<sup>21</sup> For Husserl, then, the loss of naïveté we suffer by recognizing the subjectivity of cognition represents a certain departure from the natural attitude:<sup>22</sup> When, upon recognizing the subjectivity of cognition, we cease to take the existence and cognizability of transcendent objects for granted, we thereby depart from the very frame of mind in which we ordinarily operate.

Having considered Husserl’s view of the status of the first two assumptions from which the problem of transcendence arises, let us now consider his view of the status of the third, the assumption of the subjectivity of cognition. Does he take the proposition that cognition is subjective to be trivial too, in one or both of the two above senses?

Husserl clearly regards it as trivial in the epistemic sense: We cannot rationally dispute that cognition is a subjective experience or something occurring in consciousness. It also seems clear that he regards it as trivial in the attitudinal sense. Indeed, he would seem to hold that taking this proposition for granted forms part of living in the natural attitude. Thus, for instance, in the last

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<sup>21</sup> In *Ideen I*, Husserl determines the natural attitude in terms of the taken for granted of the “general thesis of the existence of the world” (III/1 60 ff.), which, although not reducible to them, may be seen to include both the assumption of objective being, and the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition.

<sup>22</sup> I say a “certain” departure since a full departure from the natural attitude would require performance of the so called “epoché”, to a consideration of which I return in Section 3.1.

passage quoted, he formulates the second of the two propositions assumed without question by the “naïve” in terms of the possible achievements of “the subject in its experiences of consciousness”.

This view has two consequences worthy of note. First, it implies that the recognition of the subjectivity of cognition, which supposedly brings about a certain departure from the natural attitude, is not a matter of coming to know a fact to which we are entirely new, but of grasping in an explicit way a fact with which we are already implicitly familiar. Thus, to recognize the subjectivity of cognition is not just to cognize it, but precisely to re-cognize it. Second, given that, as Husserl argues, recognition of the subjectivity of cognition brings about a departure from the natural attitude, the view also implies that, upon that recognition, we suffer a certain loss of naïveté with respect to our belief that cognition is subjective. In other words, it implies that, upon recognition of the subjectivity of cognition, not only do the presumed facts that there are objects in themselves, and that we can cognize these objects as they are in themselves, cease to be trivial, and become mysterious, in the attitudinal sense, but, in a certain sense, the very fact that cognition is subjective does too.<sup>23</sup>

Returning to the question of the general nature of the problem of transcendence, I want to note three consequences of what I take to be Husserl’s view of the status of the assumptions from which it arises. First, that he regards the assumptions as epistemically trivial suggests that that he sees the problem as a paradox, in the sense of a problem arising from a combination of rationally indisputable, but apparently incompatible, propositions. More specifically, he would appear to take the problem to be that while the assumption of objective being, the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition, and the assumption of the subjectivity of cognition are all, by themselves, rationally indisputable, the second assumption would, initially, appear to be inconsistent with the third.<sup>24</sup> This view of the problem, we may note in passing, puts a constraint on any solution to it—namely, that the solution must retain the

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<sup>23</sup> The later Husserl will articulate this mystery in terms of the “paradox of subjectivity”—the supposed fact that the cognizing subject is both subject *for* the world and an object *in* the world, both that for which alone any worldly object can appear as such and a worldly object among others (VI 184). For an extended discussion of this problem, see Carr (1999).

<sup>24</sup> With this, I have not said anything about why, according to Husserl, these propositions would initially appear to be inconsistent. For discussion of this question, see Essay 1.

presumed truth of all of the assumptions from which it arises.<sup>25</sup>

Second, and closely related to this, that Husserl takes the assumptions in question to be epistemically trivial also suggests that the problem of transcendence is not a problem of justification, but what could be called a problem of understanding: The problem is not *whether* objective cognition is possible, given the presumed fact of its subjectivity, but *how* or *in what sense* it is possible, given this fact (cf. XXIV 196, 399; VII 378).<sup>26</sup> And the task it poses is not to justify that objective cognition is possible, in the teeth of the recognition that it is subjective, but to make these assumptions intelligible, and thereby show that the apparent inconsistency between them is just that—apparent—and so resolve the paradox they initially present.

Third, that Husserl takes living in the natural attitude to involve the naïve entertaining of all the assumptions concerned implies that he regards the problem of transcendence as what we might call a natural problem—a problem arising from a perceived inconsistency between propositions the taking for granted of which constitutes, or at least co-constitutes, living in the natural attitude. And this, in turn, is part of the reason why he takes the problem to be so important and solving it to be so urgent. For it means that, unlike most other paradoxes, which threaten the intelligibility of a more or less restricted range of phenomena, the problem of transcendence threatens the intelligibility of the very orientation or frame of mind in which we ordinarily find ourselves, and, with it, the intelligibility of all of our ordinary practises, cognitive and otherwise.

### *2.3 The Basic Forms of the Problem*

As the following passage suggests, the problem of transcendence can be specified in terms of three basic problems, corresponding to the three specifications of the assumption of the possibility of objective cognition sketched above:

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<sup>25</sup> For a critical discussion of whether Husserl's transcendental phenomenology can meet this constraint when it comes to the assumption of objective being, see Byers (2002). See also the exchange between Byers (2005) and Overgaard (2005a and 2005b).

<sup>26</sup> This point is generally recognized by commentators. See, for instance, Sokolowski (1970, 39), Willard (1984, 5), and Mohanty (1983, 94).

What does the problem of the objectivity of cognition signify? First of all, what does this talk of objectivity signify? To be more elaborate, the question is: What makes it the case that our thinking aims at an object, that as correct thinking it belongs to the object, fits the object; what makes it the case that correct movements of thought, however convoluted they might be, necessarily have to meet with the states of affairs to which they relate themselves; and what makes cognitions possible, in which, precisely, it becomes “cognized” that what is thought in such and such a way truly is? (XXIV 390 f./389)

The first problem, which might be called the problem of mere transcendence, is the problem of how, if cognition is subjective, or something occurring in consciousness, cognitions can be directed on transcendent objects at all, or have transcendent objects for their intentional objects. The second problem, which could be called the problem of veridical transcendence, is the problem of how, if cognition is subjective, cognitions can be directed on transcendent objects in a veridical way, or have actually existing transcendent objects for their intentional objects. And the third problem, which we might call the problem of rational transcendence, is the problem of how, if cognition is subjective, cognition can be directed on transcendent objects in a rational way, in the sense of positing them on the basis of mediate or immediate consciously available and being-indicative grounds.

Of these three, Husserl takes the problem of rational transcendence to be the epistemologically most central one—central, in the sense, roughly, that any other problem characterizable as properly epistemological is thus characterizable only by virtue of being suitably related to it (cf. II 36; VII 367). And so, when Husserl seeks to motivate the epistemological requisiteness of phenomenology by arguing that only phenomenology can satisfy the methodological requirements flowing from the nature of the problem of transcendence, what he has in mind is, as a rule, this form of the problem (cf. XXXVI 7 f.). Before turning to those requirements, however, I want to further clarify Husserl’s view of the problem of transcendence by briefly considering his view of the problem of scepticism.

#### *2.4 The Problem of Scepticism*

As we have seen, Husserl’s problem of transcendence is not a sceptical problem: The problem is not whether, but how or in what sense transcendent

cognition is possible. This is not, however, to say that Husserl thinks epistemology should be unconcerned with scepticism, construed as the view that transcendent cognition in general is dubitable or impossible. Indeed, in a 1902/03 lecture course, he argues that “[t]o overcome [*überwinden*] scepticism is the permanent task of epistemology” (XXIV 367/361). And in a 1923/24 lecture course, we find him claiming, in effect, that success in overcoming scepticism on the part of a science is a criterion of its philosophical value:

[The] abundant continued existence of scepticism, which in its argumentations spared none of the individual sciences, even the most exact mathematics, is a testament to the fact that post-Platonic science did not truly achieve what, according to its pretention, it should achieve as philosophy: cognition as absolute justification. For otherwise it would have made a sceptical operating impossible, it would have had to dissolve the latter’s paradoxes in a clean way (VII 57).

Broadly speaking, Husserl seeks to accomplish the task of overcoming scepticism in two ways. First, he argues that scepticism about the possibility of rational transcendence is incoherent, and that it is therefore not a position anyone could genuinely hold (cf. XXIV 179 ff.). Second, he seeks to show that scepticism, or rather—scepticism being presumed incoherent and therefore impossible—what could be called the inclination or tendency towards scepticism,<sup>27</sup> arises only as the result of a lack of clarity with respect to the possibility of transcendent cognition, and that to provide such clarity therefore is to uproot this tendency. As he puts it in a 1907 research manuscript:

The task of epistemology is not to refute [*widerlegen*] scepticism, but to remove the embarrassments in which cognition gets entangled through reflection upon its own possibilities, and to clarify this possibility, the essence of cognition, and the correlations with the object that belongs to it. Thereby, however, the motives that push towards scepticism are eliminated, while scepticism stands exposed as countersense [*Widersinn*] for those who have insight—which does not prevent it from not being refutable (XXIV 405/406).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In a 1907 research manuscript, Husserl describes the effect of lack of clarity with regard to the possibility of transcendent cognition as follows: “The confusions in which the human mind gets entangled through reflection upon the possibility of cognition throws it into scepticism, or plants the *inclination* towards scepticism (XXIV 397/397; my emphasis).

<sup>28</sup> At first blush, this passage might appear to contradict Husserl’s previously cited claim that overcoming scepticism is the permanent task of epistemology. The appearance of contradiction may be dispelled, however, if we take Husserl to recognize a distinction between “refuting” and “overcoming”, where to refute scepticism means to disprove it to the satisfaction of a determined sceptic, while to overcome it means to neutralize the motives that, for us, can

This, however, is in effect to say that even though the problem of transcendence is not, as such, a sceptical problem, overcoming scepticism is still a criterion of success for any attempt to solve it. For if clarifying the possibility of transcendent cognition is sufficient for overcoming scepticism, it follows that overcoming scepticism is necessary for clarifying the possibility of transcendent cognition. It follows, in other words, that unless an attempt to clarify the possibility of transcendent cognition succeeds in removing any tendency to scepticism, it cannot be deemed successful, at least not wholly so.

This, I take it, is one reason why Husserl on occasion characterizes the problems of epistemology as “the sceptical problems of the possibility of cognition” (III/1 54). Another is that he regards the recognition of the subjectivity of cognition, and thereby of a crucial premise of the problem of transcendence, as an achievement of the sceptical tradition—an achievement from which, however, it drew the wrong conclusions (cf. XXIV 368; VII 61, 348).

### **3. The Methodology of Epistemology**

As we have seen, Husserl takes the general problem of epistemology to be the problem of transcendence, the problem of rational transcendence in particular. And, as noted, he holds that this and any other genuine epistemological problem can be solved only by phenomenology. As we now shall see, his attempted justification for this claim is, very roughly, that any solution to the problem of transcendence must employ two methods, the use of which is both necessary and sufficient for the solution’s being a phenomenological one.<sup>29</sup> In what follows, I will refer to these as epistemological reduction (3.1) and phenomenological description (3.2).

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incline towards it. For he may then be taken to argue, consistently, that while refuting scepticism is impossible, overcoming scepticism by clarifying the possibility of transcendent cognition is not. Thus construed, Husserl’s response to scepticism would have affinities to what Pryor has called a “modest” as opposed to an “ambitious” anti-sceptical project (2000, 517). I return to this point in Section 4.3.

<sup>29</sup> For an extended account of the dynamic interplay between Husserl’s views of the matter and methodology of epistemology, see Rizzoli (2008).

### 3.1 *Epistemological Reduction*

The epistemological reduction, or “epoché”, as Husserl also calls it, is an operation whereby one “brackets” or “suspends” any and all forms of transcendent cognition, and any and all results obtained by means of it.<sup>30</sup> The suspension concerned is not a matter of doubting or negating the validity of transcendent cognition or its results, but simply of refraining from making any cognitive use of them, in the sense, roughly, of not employing them as premises for one’s conclusions (XXIV 213 ff., 370; II 6). Thus, on Husserl’s special use of the term, there would be no contradiction involved in suspending a transcendent cognition about whose validity I remain wholly convinced, such as my perception of the computer screen in front of me.

According to Husserl, the epistemological need for the epoché follows from what he takes to be a fundamental requirement on epistemological cognition, cognition adequate for solving the problem of transcendence and any other epistemological problem. On this requirement, epistemological cognition must be transcendentally unquestionable, in the sense of not itself exemplifying the kind of cognition whose possibility the problem of transcendence concerns (cf. IX 291).<sup>31</sup> The kind of cognition in question being transcendent cognition, the requirement amounts to the claim that epistemological cognition cannot be transcendent, or that the epistemologist must refrain from making any cognitive use of transcendent cognition in her attempt to solve the problem of transcendence. As Husserl puts it:

The problem of the How (how transcendent cognition is possible, and more generally: how cognition in general is possible) can never be solved on the basis of pre-given knowledge of what is transcendent, of pre-given propositions thereof, taken no matter from where, even from the exact sciences (II 38/30).

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<sup>30</sup> In addition to referring to this operation as epistemological reduction (II 48; XXIV 214, 240) and epoché (XXIV 189; XIII 80), Husserl refers to it as phenomenological reduction (II 6; XXIV 211; XXXVI 175; III/1 69), transcendental reduction (III/1 125; III/2 563; VIII 82; IX 473 f.) and transcendental-phenomenological reduction (III/2 642 f.). However, he also uses the latter terms to designate a more comprehensive methodological operation, which, in the present context, may be seen to consist of the methods of epistemological reduction and phenomenological description taken together. (For discussion of the relation between the reduction in the first and second of these senses, see, for instance, Larsen 2002. See also Luft 2002 and 2012.)

<sup>31</sup> For an account of the central methodological role Husserl attributes to this requirement, see Lohmar (2002).



All cognition of the natural world and its denizens being transcendent by Husserl's lights, this means, *inter alia*, that no attempt to solve the problem of transcendence can make any use of such cognition. And this means, in turn, that no attempt to solve the problem can, in any way, make use of results drawn from any science that, in one way or another, rely on the possibility of such cognition, which, for Husserl, include not just the natural sciences, but also the social and human sciences.<sup>32</sup>

Husserl's attempted justification for the requirement of transcendental unquestionableness, as it could be called, is that any attempt to solve the problem of transcendence by means of transcendent cognition—any attempt that does not involve performance of the epoché—would represent a failure to recognize the proper sense of the problem, and would be incoherent:

This sceptical positing-taking [*Stellungnahme*], this absolute epoché, which does not recognize any pregivenness, and sets its *non liquet* as a pure refraining from judgement over against all natural cognition, is the first and fundamental part of epistemological method. A theory of cognition that does not earnestly begin with this epoché sins against the sense of genuine epistemological problems. Any theory that erects itself on pregiven sciences, be it on metaphysics, be it on psychology, be it on biology, ends in countersense [*Widersinn*], just as it began in countersense (XXIV 187/184).

Husserl specifies this claim in terms of what amounts to two arguments for the epistemological requisiteness of the epoché. The first is that to make use of transcendent cognition in attempting to solve the problem of transcendence would be unacceptably circular:

If it is in principle unintelligible to us how consciousness with its consciousness-characters [*Bewusstseinscharakteren*] can come to grasp and determine an object that is in principle transcendent to it, and in such way that it is not just itself intellectually satisfied, but in such a way that this transcendent object actually is, and is as it has been determined to be—if, I say, this is in principle unintelligible to us, then any attempted solution that appeals to a particular kind

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<sup>32</sup> As this makes clear, Husserl would regard any attempt to naturalize epistemology as fundamentally misguided. (For a Husserlian response to Quinean naturalization, see Rinfner-Kreidl 2004). And so, to the extent that it is to serve an epistemological purpose, he would also regard as misguided any attempt to naturalize phenomenology. This is not to rule out that there could be a sense in which he would allow that phenomenological results might be integrated with results in the natural sciences of mind in a fruitful way. It is just to say that he would deny the resulting integrative discipline any epistemological relevance whatsoever. (For exposition and discussion of the current project of naturalizing phenomenology, see the contributions to Petitot et al. 2000. For a critique of the project, see Zahavi 2004.)

of transcendent existents, and to what they do or do not do, is a circle (XXXVI 83).

The second argument is that making use of transcendent cognition in attempting to solve the problem of transcendence would involve a *metabasis eis allo genos*, or an illegitimate substitution of the problem to be solved for a different one. Referring to the requirement in question, Husserl writes:

It is nothing other than the requirement always to bear in mind the motivating [*bewegenden*] problems and their proper sense, and not replace them with others. Implied in this, however, is that we may presuppose nothing as pregiven, use nothing as premises, allow no method of investigation, that is itself afflicted with the problem (X 346/357).<sup>33</sup>

The immediate result of performing the epoché is a negative one—to deprive the epistemologist of cognitions and results that might, initially, have appeared as resources for solving the problem of transcendence, and epistemological problems in general. Performing the operation may yield an indirect positive result, however, by providing the epistemologist with a fund of genuine epistemological resources. For if the epoché would leave us with any form of cognition at all—if refraining from making use of transcendent cognition would not leave us bereft of cognition altogether—then that form of cognition would satisfy an at least necessary condition on epistemological cognition.

Now, Husserl argues that the epoché would, indeed, leave us with not just one, but two forms of cognition. The first is “immanent perception” (*immanente Wahrnehmung*), by which he means originally intuitive reflective, or second-order, intentional experiences directed on current first-order experiences (III/1 78, 106 f.). With regard to Husserlian immanent perception, two points should be noted.

First, it should not be confused with introspection (cf. M VII 50 f.).<sup>34</sup> Introspection or natural reflection, as Husserl also calls it, is the reflective experience of one’s current experiences, construed as mental states of an organism inhabiting and interacting with a world of variously propertied spatio-

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<sup>33</sup> For the characterization of this sort of replacement as a *metabasis*, see for instance XXIV 176. For discussion of the roles that attempts to avoid different kinds of *metabasis* plays in Husserl, see O’Connor (2006).

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, Thomasson (2005), Drummond (2007), Zahavi (2007a) and Cerbone

temporal things. As thus construed, however, introspection is a form of transcendent cognition, and must consequently be suspended under the epoché. By contrast, immanent perception, or transcendental reflection, as Husserl also calls it, is the reflective experience of one's current experiences, construed, not as mental states of oneself as a natural being, but as "pure" experiences of oneself as a "pure" non-worldly ego.<sup>35</sup> Only as thus construed can reflection be taken to qualify as epistemologically admissible under the strictures imposed by the requirement of transcendental unquestionableness.<sup>36</sup>

Second, what is given or perceived in immanent perception is not, according to Husserl, restricted to one's current intentional experiences, narrowly construed. It also includes what he calls their "intended objects as intended" or their "intentional correlates", by which, on one interpretation at least, he means their intentional objects, taken as, and only as, they present themselves in the experiences whose objects they are (cf. XXIV 230 ff.; II 55 ff.).<sup>37</sup> His justification for this claim takes the form of a pointing out of a putative descriptive possibility: On the basis of an immanent perception of, say, my current perceptual experience of the computer in front of me, I can describe the perception itself, as a transient experiential occurrence. But I can also describe the computer perceived just as it is perceived—very roughly, as an object having such and features presenting themselves to me from such and such a perspective with such and such a degree of clarity (cf. M VII 54 ff.).

The second form of cognition with which performance of the epoché would supposedly leave us is eidetic intuition of the essences of pure intentional experiences and their intended objects as intended. Thus, having performed the epoché, what I would have available for cognitive use—the "phenomenological residuum" (III/1 68) or "transcendental residuum" (III/1 123)—would not be

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(2012).

<sup>35</sup> The exact status of the Husserlian pure ego and its pure experiences, and its relation to the worldly ego and its experiences, is controversial. For discussion of some of the issues involved, see Carr (1999).

<sup>36</sup> Husserl can be seen to argue as follows: (1) If immanent perception is left behind after the epoché, then both it and the experiences perceived are pure experiences. (2) Immanent perception is left behind after the epoché. (3) So, both immanent perception and the experiences perceived are pure experiences. Others, sceptical of the credentials of the idea of pure experiences, might instead want to combine the denial of (3) with (1) to conclude that its antecedent is false.

limited to, for instance, my immanently perceived pure perception of the computer in front of me, and the computer taken just as it appears in that perception. It would also include the essence of the pure perception and its perceived object as perceived—the invariant features by virtue of which they are the kind of intentional experience and the kind of intentional correlate that they are (M VII 83, 88).

According to Husserl, then, performance of the epoché does not only deprive the epistemologist of epistemologically inadmissible forms of cognition. It also provides her with epistemologically admissible forms of cognition—admissible in the sense of satisfying a necessary condition on epistemological cognition. To decide that a given form of cognition is epistemologically acceptable in this sense is not sufficient for determining how the problem of transcendence is actually to be solved, however. For in order to determine this, we would also need to know how the form of cognition concerned is to be used to that end. And this is the reason why, in the passage quoted above, Husserl describes the epoché only as “the first and fundamental *part* of epistemological method” (cf. also XXIV 193). Elsewhere he characterizes it as only a “method of passage” (*Durchgangsmethode*) (XXXIV 90), or “method of access” (*Zugangsmethode*) (III/2 643; IX 282, 314, 340)—a method that, while it provides access to the domain through the investigation of which the problem of transcendence is to be solved, does not, as such, constitute a method for the actual carrying out of that investigation.

This brings us to what Husserl takes to be the second part of epistemological method, or the second method of epistemology—the method of phenomenological description. For what Husserl does in presenting this method is, in effect, to determine the way in which the forms of cognition shown to be epistemologically admissible under the epoché can, and must, be employed in order actually to solve the problem of transcendence, and any other genuine epistemological problem. To be more precise, he determines the way in which the eidetic intuition of pure intentional experiences and their intentional correlates can and must be so employed. For, as we shall see, of the two forms of cognitions with which the epoché supposedly leaves us, it is, according to

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<sup>37</sup> I return to the question of the supposed nature of these items in Section 4.1.

Husserl, only through the methodical use of this one that the problem of transcendence can, ultimately, be solved.

### *3.2 Phenomenological Description*

On Husserl's use of the term, phenomenological description is descriptive articulation of the essences of pure intentional experiences and their intentional correlates, on the basis of their givenness in eidetic intuition (cf. III/1 156 ff.). So, to hold that this method represents the only way in which the epistemologically admissible eidetic intuitions of these essences can be used to solve the problem of transcendence is, in effect, to hold that they can be so used only as bases for descriptions of what is made available through them.

How, exactly, is phenomenological description supposed to help solve the problem of transcendence? Note first that, according to Husserl, to articulate an essence on the basis of its originary intuitive givenness is tantamount to "clarifying" the possibility of that whose essence it is. And to clarify the possibility of something in this way is, he also holds, to make that possibility eminently intelligible, or intelligible to the highest possible degree. Thus, for Husserl, phenomenological description is also, and necessarily, phenomenological clarification: In describing the essences of pure intentional experiences and their intentional correlates, on the basis of their givenness in eidetic intuition, one also, and at the same time, clarifies the possibility of those experiences and correlates, and thereby makes it eminently intelligible.

Given this, the epistemological relevance of phenomenological description follows: The task posed by the problem of transcendence is to make the possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible. But if phenomenological description is also, and necessarily, phenomenological clarification, then by articulating the essence of pure transcendent cognition, as given in eidetic intuition, one will, precisely, be making the possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible, and will, consequently, be solving the problem of transcendence.

According to Husserl, however, phenomenological description is not just epistemologically relevant—it is epistemologically requisite. Indeed, it is the only investigative method by means of which the problem of transcendence can actually be solved. For, on Husserl's view, making the possibility of something

intelligible through description of its originally given essence is not just one, but the only way of making that possibility eminently intelligible. And so, given the constraints on epistemologically admissible cognition imposed by the requirement of transcendental unquestionableness, there is no other way in which the possibility of transcendent cognition can be made intelligible, or at least eminently intelligible, than through phenomenological description, and the clarification it affords.

Now, to engage in phenomenological description is to do phenomenology (cf. III/1 162). So to say that the problem of transcendence can be solved only by means of phenomenological description is to say that it can be solved only by phenomenology. And, given the supposed epistemological centrality of that problem, this, for Husserl, is tantamount to saying that any genuine epistemological problem can only be thus solved, and hence that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology.

Concretely, the phenomenological description required for solving the problem of transcendence is to proceed on two levels. At the first level, the target of description is the essence of pure intentional experiences and their intentional correlates in general, and of transcendent intentional experiences—intentional experiences directed at transcendent objects—and their correlates in particular. The general aim of the description here is threefold: first, to articulate the features of intentional experiences by virtue of which they are intentionally directed on their objects in the way that they are; second, to articulate the features that the intentional correlates of the experiences exhibit by virtue of being the correlates of precisely the experiences whose correlates they are; and third, to articulate the relations of correlation obtaining between the structural features of the experiences and those of their correlates. In *Ideen I*, where Husserl refers to pure intentional experiences and their correlates as, respectively, “noeses” and “noemata”,<sup>38</sup> he characterizes this threefold aim as that of describing the general essence of the “noetico-noematic” correlation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Strictly speaking, what Husserl designates as noeses are not pure intentional experiences, but only those of their parts by virtue of which they are intentional, which does not include their sensuous or “hyletic” contents (III/1 191 ff.). I return to Husserl’s notion of these contents in Section 4.2.

<sup>39</sup> In *Ideen I*, the bulk of these sorts of descriptions are to be found in Chapter 3 and 4 of Part III.

At the second level, what is to be described is the essence of rational intentional experiences and their correlates, and, in particular, transcendent rational intentional experiences, rational experiences directed at transcendent objects. The general aim of the description here is, again, threefold: first, to articulate the structural features of the experiences by virtue of which they are directed on their objects in a rational, or epistemically justified, way; second, to articulate the structural features that the intentional correlates of the experiences exhibit by virtue of being the correlates of experiences of the relevant kind, roughly, the features by virtue of which they appear with the character of being justifiedly posited as existing; and, third, to articulate the relations of correlation obtaining between the features of rational intentional experiences and those of their rationally posited correlates.<sup>40</sup> Fully developed, these descriptions would constitute what Husserl in *Ideen I* calls a complete phenomenology of reason, or theoretical reason, to be more precise.<sup>41</sup>

Husserl specifies the relation of correlation between intentional experiences and their intentional object as one of “constitution” (*Konstitution*)—that is, as a relation of the experiences constituting their objects, or the objects being constituted by the experiences whose objects they are (cf. II 12 f.). So to say that the problem of transcendence, and any other genuine epistemological problem, can be solved only by means of phenomenological description is, for him, to say that they can be solved only by phenomenology in the form of a full-fledged descriptive account of the constitution of objects by consciousness, and, in particular, of the constitution of justifiedly posited objects by rational cognitions. This, however, is tantamount to saying that epistemology is possible only, not just as phenomenology, but as “transcendental phenomenology”, by which Husserl understands, precisely, such an account (cf. IX 250; I 118).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In *Ideen I*, descriptions of this sort make up Part IV.

<sup>41</sup> According to Husserl, theoretical reason is one of three forms of reason, the other two being axiological and practical reason. For discussion of his view of the relation between them, see Melle (1988) and (1990).

<sup>42</sup> The precise content of Husserl’s conception of constitution, and its implications for the precise content of his concept of the transcendental, and the nature of his avowed transcendental idealism, is a matter of controversy. This is at least in part due to the fact that, as Fink (1957) noted, the concept is an “operative” as opposed to “thematic” one—a concept of which Husserl makes crucial use, but never really explicates. For a classical account of the

Now, as we recall, Husserl holds that the most fundamental kind of rational experience is evidence, or the positing of objects on the basis of their originary givenness in originary giving intuition. And he therefore takes the most fundamental part of the phenomenology of theoretical reason, or the account of the constitution of justifiedly posited objects, to be the description of the noetico-noematic structures of evidence (cf. III/1 314 ff.).

Within this part of the phenomenology of reason, Husserl takes the description of perception to be of crucial importance. For he takes perception to be the epistemically most fundamental kind of originary intuition (cf. EU 13). This brings us to the third part of the context for the present work: the epistemology of perception.

#### **4. The Epistemology of Perception**

The fundamental epistemological importance Husserl attaches to perception is reflected in the wealth of investigations he devotes to its analysis.<sup>43</sup> Here I only want briefly to note some aspects of his view of the structure of intentionality in general (4.1), the nature of perception (4.2), and the epistemic role of the latter (4.3).

##### *4.1 The Structure of Intentionality*

The exact nature of Husserl's theory of intentionality is contentious. As noted, one of the aims of the theory is to account for that by virtue of which intentional experiences are intentional, or to identify what could be called the determinants of intentionality. It is uncontroversial that in the *Logische Untersuchungen* he takes the intentionality of an intentional experience to be determined by an inherent and non-repeatable feature of the experience that he there calls its "matter" (*Materie*). This feature supposedly fixes both which object the experience is directed on, and how it is directed on that object, or which features it presents the object as having; and it represents an

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development of Husserl's conception of constitution, see Sokolowski (1970). For recent contributions to the debate, see Smith (2003), Zahavi (2007b) and Thomasson (2007). See also Heinämaa and Hartimo (2014).

<sup>43</sup> Husserl's concern with perception spanned his entire career. See, in particular, XIX/2,



instantiation of an “ideal meaning-species”—roughly, a repeatable way of being directed on just that object in just this way (cf. XIX/1 435).<sup>44</sup> It is also uncontroversial that Husserl’s theory of intentionality underwent significant changes between *Logische Untersuchungen* and *Ideen I*, one of the most important of which is his introduction of the above mentioned notion of the “intended object as intended”, or the “noema”. The controversy concerns the exact nature of these changes, and, in particular, the status and theoretical role of the noema.

According to one influential interpretation, developed by Smith and McIntyre, the introduction of the notion of the noema marks a shift in Husserl’s view of the determinants of intentionality. On this construal, he came to hold that an intentional experience is intentional, not by virtue of having an intentional matter, or instantiating an ideal meaning-species, but by virtue of “entertaining” a noema, construed as an “abstract particular” that “prescribes”, and thereby mediates reference to, the object of the experience. Thus construed, noemata are similar to Fregean senses as standardly construed, and play a role in determining the intentionality of experiences similar to the role such senses are taken to play in determining the reference of linguistic expressions (1982, 154).<sup>45</sup>

According to a different interpretation, suggested by Willard, the introduction of the notion of the noema did not mark a shift in Husserl’s view of the determinants of intentionality, which remained more or less the same. Instead, it signalled a shift in his view of what is available for phenomenological description when dealing with the phenomenon of intentionality. In the *Logische Untersuchungen*, Husserl held, roughly, that the only items available for such description are intentional experiences, and their essences. With his

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XVI, IV, IX, XI and EU.

<sup>44</sup> The matter of an intentional experience is one of two non-independent parts, or “moments”, that constitutes its “intentional essence” (*intentionale Wesen*), the other being its “quality” (*Qualität*) (XIX 431). Unlike its matter, which determines which object the experience is directed on, the quality of the experience determines how it is directed on that object—say, whether it is a positing or mere presentation of it (XIX 425 ff.)

<sup>45</sup> Smith and McIntyre’s interpretation of the noema is heavily influenced by the interpretation Føllesdal first proposed in his (1969), from which, however, it differs on several counts. For one, Føllesdal construes the noema, not as an abstract particular, but as something like a Peircian type, of which corresponding noemes are tokens, thus in effect taking it to be akin to the meaning-species of the *Logische Untersuchungen* (see his 1990).

introduction of the notion of the noema, however, Husserl means to point out that the domain of what is phenomenologically describable must also be seen to include the “intended object as intended” of the phenomenologically available experiences, construed as something distinct both from the experiences themselves and from their actual objects, if there be any (1992, 41). Thus, unlike Smith and McIntyre, Willard argues that the notion of the noema does not replace the notion of species-meaning in Husserl’s account of the determinants of intentionality, but rather supplements it (1988, 189). That said, he finds the ontological status of the noema to be elusive, and suggests that the phenomenological clarification supposedly achievable by reference to it may also well be achievable without it (1992, 47).

The two interpretations of the noema sketched so far share the assumption that the noema of an intentional experience is distinct from its actual object, if there be one. A third influential interpretation, developed by, among others, Drummond, rejects this assumption, holding instead that the noema of an experience is ontologically identical with its actual object, and that the difference between them is a merely attitudinal one.<sup>46</sup> Specifically, Drummond argues, whereas to talk of the actual object of an experience is to talk of the object as it appears within the natural attitude, to talk of the noema of the experience is to talk of the very same object as it appears within the phenomenological attitude, where it appears as, and only as, the intentional correlate of that and other actual and possible experiences directed at it (2012, 124).

I cannot here attempt to evaluate these and other interpretations of Husserl’s notion of the noema.<sup>47</sup> Instead, I only want to indicate ever so briefly some of what can be seen to be at stake in the debate.

One’s view of the noema has consequences for one’s view of the nature of the epoché, and the result of performing it. It is uncontroversial that Husserl

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<sup>46</sup> Other proponents of this interpretation, which is commonly referred to as the East Coast interpretation in distinction to the so-called West Coast interpretation proposed by, among others, Smith and McIntyre, include Sokolowski (2000) and Cobb-Stevens (1990).

<sup>47</sup> For a sampling of some of the positions in the debate, see the papers collected in Drummond and Embree (1992). For critical discussions of Smith and McIntyre’s interpretation, see Willard (1988) and Drummond (1990). For objections to Drummond’s interpretation, see Smith (2013).

takes the phenomenological residuum—the totality of what is available as objects of study after performance of the epoché—to include only one’s originally given pure intentional experiences and their noemata, and their respective essences.<sup>48</sup> This means, however, that if the noema of an experience is something other than its actual object, as both Smith and McIntyre, and Willard, in different ways argue, then the actual object, as well as the entire actual world to which it belongs, will fall outside the purview of the phenomenologist, and by supposed implication, of the epistemologist. And, by the same token, it means that the epoché itself must be conceived as fundamentally an operation of exclusion, whereby one excludes the actual world from one’s field of study in order to investigate something else—namely, the systems of intentional experiences and noemata by virtue of which the world appears to us in the way it does.

By contrast, if, like Drummond, one takes the noemata of experiences directed at actual objects to be ontologically identical with the latter, then those objects, and the world to which they belong, will no longer fall outside of, but form part of, the phenomenological residuum. And the epoché will no longer have the character of an exclusion, but, rather, of an inclusion, or a bringing into view of something that is not thematic in the natural attitude—namely, the experiential correlates of the objects concerned.

One’s view of the noema also has consequences for one’s view of the nature of Husserl’s transcendental idealism, or at least for what options would initially seem available in this regard. If the noema of a veridical experience is taken to be ontologically distinct from its object, there would not seem to be any great obstacles in the way of construing Husserl’s idealism as fully compatible with metaphysical realism. For, in that case, his talk of noemata being “unities of sense” that are “constituted” by their correlated noeses, and are what they are only in their correlation with these, can be taken as expressing no more than the view that in order to “entertain” a certain representation of an object—a noema or noematic sense that “prescribes” that object—certain specific kinds of

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<sup>48</sup> Strictly speaking, this is incorrect. For, from the time of *Ideen* I at least, Husserl also takes the phenomenological residuum to include oneself as the subject of one’s pure intentional experiences, or as what he calls the “pure I” (III/1 123).

experiences are required.<sup>49</sup>

If the noema of a veridical experience is seen as ontologically identical with its object, however, it would seem harder to resist the conclusion that Husserl's idealism is a metaphysical idealism of sorts. For if actual objects and at least certain classes of noemata are ontologically identical, and noemata are unities of sense that are what they are only in correlation with the multiplicities of consciousness by which they are constituted, then, it would seem, actual objects too are what they are only in correlation with these multiplicities.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.2 *The Nature of Perception*

Like the question of Husserl's view of intentionality in general, the question of his view of the nature of perception is a controversial one, with the main approaches paralleling the main approaches to the former question.<sup>51</sup> That said, many aspects of his view are more or less beyond dispute, including the following six.

First, as noted in Section 2.1, perception is a species of originary intuition—that is, intentional experiences whose objects are present as “bodily selfgiven”, as opposed to being represented by some other object, like a sign or an image. More specifically, perception is originary intuition of individual objects or particulars, whether in the form of conscious experiences or physical objects. Perception of conscious experiences Husserl calls “immanent” or “inner” perception, and perception of physical objects he calls “transcendent” or

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<sup>49</sup> Thus, Woodruff Smith suggests that Husserl espouses an “ontological realism joined with a semantic theory of intentionality” (2013, 170).

<sup>50</sup> This is not to say that Drummond, or other proponents of the East Coast interpretation generally, takes Husserl's transcendental idealism to be a species of metaphysical idealism, which they do not. It is just to say that the identification of the noema and the actual object invites that construal, and that work is required to resist it. For interpretations on which Husserl is explicitly taken to be committed to metaphysical idealism, see, for instance, Ingarden (1975) and (1992), Philipse (1995), Smith (2003, 179 ff.) and Rollinger and Sowa (2003). For an account of possible interpretations of Husserlian idealism, see Smith (2013, 168 ff.)

<sup>51</sup> For West Coast interpretations of Husserl's theory of perception, see Føllesdal (1974) and (1978), Dreyfus (1982) and Smith and McIntyre (1982). For an East Coast interpretation, see Drummond (1990). For a construal inspired by Willard's account, see Hopp (2011), which represents the most comprehensive attempt to date at making Husserl's early theory of perception relevant to central issues in contemporary epistemology of perception. Other important contributions include Melle (1983), Smith (1989), Mulligan (1995) and Smith (2008). See also Kjosavik (2003) and Soldati (2013). For a general account of phenomenological approaches to perception, see Siewert (2015).

“outer” perception (cf. III/1 77 ff.).

Second, perception has the character of being a presentation of an object that exists, and has the properties it is presented as having, independently of being perceived (XXXVI 191). Combined with the first point, this is to say that Husserl endorses a form of direct realism about perception, according to which perception has the character of being a direct awareness of perception-independent objects.

Third, although outer perception is a presentation of objects as bodily self-given, it presents them only in a “one-sided” or “perspectival” way. For at any point in the unfolding of a perception of a physical object, only part of the object is “genuinely” perceived, namely, in the case of visual perception, the part of the object currently facing the perceiving subject. This is not to say that the other parts of the object—its flanks, its insides and its rear—are not in any way perceived, which they are. It is just to say that they are not “genuinely” perceived, and that although perception is a form of originary intuition, it is an inadequate as opposed to adequate form of such intuition (cf. XVI 51; EU 31).

Fourth, the noematic distinction between the genuinely and the non-genuinely perceived parts of the object is to be accounted for in terms of a corresponding noetic distinction between two sorts of intentions or object-directedness, both of which are present in any phase of an unfolding outer perception (cf. XI 5). To the genuinely perceived part of the object there corresponds intentions that are “sensuously filled”, in the sense of being “apprehensions” of certain experiential contents, called “sensations”, as being experiences of corresponding sensuous features of the object. And to the non-genuinely perceived parts of the object, there correspond intentions that are “empty”, in the sense of not being apprehensions of sense-data, whether data corresponding to the features of the object that they present, or any other sort of data (XVI 46 f.).<sup>52</sup>

Fifth, the non-genuinely or emptily presented parts of a perceived object constitute its “horizon”.<sup>53</sup> And the empty intentions directed at the horizon of an

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<sup>52</sup> Husserl’s use of this “apprehension-content” schema in describing the structure of perception has been criticized by other representatives of the phenomenological tradition. See, for instance, Gurwitsch (1978). See also Drummond (1990) and Hopp (2008b).

<sup>53</sup> To be precise, they constitute its “inner” as opposed to its “outer” horizon, where the

object have the character of anticipations—namely, of the genuine appearances of the object that would become available to the perceiving subject if her spatial position vis-à-vis the object were to change, for instance by her moving her body relative to it (XI 13 ff.). If the features of an object that come to be genuinely perceived in a given phase of a perceptual process correspond to features whose genuine appearance were horizontally anticipated in a previous phase, the horizontal anticipations involved are said to be “fulfilled” by the relevant sensuously filled intentions belonging to the later phase. By contrast, if what comes to be genuinely perceived does not so correspond, the horizontal intentions involved are said to be “disappointed” by the relevant sensuously filled intentions. Further, if a perceptual process is such that the horizontal anticipations belonging to the earlier phases of the process are continuously fulfilled, rather than disappointed, by sensuously filled intentions belonging to later phases, the process as a whole is said to be “harmonious” (*einstimmig*) (cf. III/1 320). Husserl refers to such harmonious processes as “syntheses of coincidence” (*Deckungssynthesen*), consisting, as they do, in a continuous synthesis of horizontal anticipations with sensory filled intentions in which the anticipatorily given objectual features concerned attain to actual givenness (cf. XVI 92).

Sixth, to say that a given outer perception is veridical, or that its object is actual, is equivalent to saying that it would be harmonious no matter which particular course it might take—say, whether it would involve seeing its object from the left or from the right—and that any of the courses that is open at any point of its duration would remain harmonious even if, *per impossible*, it were to run off into infinity. Since, as noted above, perception has the character of being a presentation of an actual object, this is to say that any perception involves a presumption to the effect that it would remain thus harmonious, which can also be put by saying that the “adequate givenness” of its object, or the genuine perceivability of all of its features, are prefigured in the perception in the form of a regulative or “Kantian” idea (III/1 330 ff.).<sup>54</sup>

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outer horizon of an object consists of the context of other emptily presented objects to which it belongs, which context is, ultimately, that of the “world” (EU 28 f.).

<sup>54</sup> For discussion of the role of this idea in Husserl’s phenomenology of perception, see Bernet (1978a) and (1978b), and Smith (2003, 171 ff.).

### 4.3 *The Epistemic Role of Perception*

Although Husserl attributes important epistemic roles to both inner and outer perception, here I shall only consider his view of the role of outer perception, which from now on is what I shall have in mind when referring simply to perception. And I shall be focusing on his idea of what could be called the basic epistemic significance of perception. This he takes to reside in the supposed fact that any perception provides epistemic justification for positing the object perceived, or, equivalently, that the perceptual givenness of an object—its presence as an object of perception—constitutes a justificatory ground for positing it. Perceptual givenness being a form of originary givenness, this view is an instance of what I have called Husserl’s general epistemic intuitionism, on which the originary givenness of any object is a justificatory ground for positing it. And we could, therefore, designate it as Husserl’s perceptual intuitionism.<sup>55</sup>

A point of clarification. In speaking of perception, I have, so far, been referring to originary intuitions of physical objects in the sense of spatio-temporal particulars, or what Husserl calls “simple” (*schlichte*) perception (EU 54). In a Husserlian context, however, talk of perception may also refer to what Husserl calls “categorical” (*kategoriale*) perception, by which he means originary intuitions of physical objects in the sense of states of affairs involving spatio-temporal particulars. Of these two, the former is the more fundamental, with categorical perception supposedly arising from simple perception through a process of logical or categorical articulation of its object (XIX/2 681 ff.; XXVI 126; EU 242 ff.).<sup>56</sup> For Husserl, then, the term ‘perceptual givenness of physical objects’ is ambiguous, referring, as it can, both to the givenness of physical particulars in simple perception, and to the givenness of categorical physical objects in categorical perception, where the latter is one-sidedly dependent on the former. But this means that the expression ‘Husserl’s perceptual intuitionism’ is similarly ambiguous, since it can refer both to the view that the

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<sup>55</sup> Entailing, as it does, that perceptions provide justification at least in part by virtue of their phenomenal character, or the phenomenal character of their objects, Husserl’s perceptual intuitionism would be an example of what Siegel and Silins (2015) calls the Phenomenal Approach in the epistemology of perception.

<sup>56</sup> For an account of Husserl’s notion of categorical intuition, see, for instance, Lohmar

perceptual givenness of a physical particular is a justificatory ground for positings of that particular, and to the view that the perceptual givenness of a state of affairs involving such a particular is a justificatory ground for positings of that state of affairs (cf. XIX/2).

This complication is a result of Husserl's endorsement of a principle to the effect, roughly, that positings of objects can only be justified by experiences whose objects are structurally identical to those posited (cf. XIX/2 657 ff.). This allows that simple perceptions can justify positings of physical particulars. But it disallows that they can justify positings of states of affairs involving such particulars. And for Husserl, who takes it that positings of this kind can, in principle, be perceptually justified, this means that they can be thus justified only by categorial perceptions.<sup>57</sup>

Given Husserl's perceptual intuitionism, we can go on to ask different sorts of questions (cf. Hopp 2011, 190). One is how, exactly, the perception of an object, or the perceptual givenness of that object, justifies an actual positing of the object, when it does so. Husserl's answer is, very roughly, that it does so by fulfilling the positing, in the sense of bringing the object, which is posited in a more or less empty way, to more or less complete originary givenness (cf. XIX/2 566 ff.).<sup>58</sup> Another question is by virtue of what the perception of an object, or the perceptual givenness of that object, constitute a justificatory ground for positing the object, even if it is not actually posited. This question is, arguably, the more fundamental. At any rate, Husserl's answer to the first question would be incomplete without an answer to the second. For, in the absence of an answer to that question, it would not be clear how, exactly, fulfilling a positing could amount to justifying it.

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(2006).

<sup>57</sup> Thus, Husserl can be seen to take a complex view of what Pryor calls the Premise Principle: "The only things that can justify a belief that P are other states that assertively represent propositions, and those propositions have to be ones that could be used as premises in an argument for P" (2005, 189). On the one hand, by maintaining that the perceptual givenness of an object can justify simple positings of it, Husserl denies the principle as a general constraint on justifiers. On the other, by holding that only what is itself categorially structured can fulfil, and thereby justify, positings of categorially structured objects, he can be seen to accept the principle, or a suitably modified version of it, as a constraint on justifiers of such positings.

<sup>58</sup> Husserl regards such fulfilments as "syntheses of identity" of a special kind. For discussion of their characteristics, see, for instance, Willard (1984) and (1995), and Hopp (2011, Ch. 7).



On Husserl's view, the most important reason why the perceptual givenness of an object is a justificatory ground for positing it is that it is indicative of the being of the object, or that it satisfies what, in Section 2.1, I called the Being Requirement on justificatory grounds. As he puts it in a 1915 lecture course:

Every experience [*Erfahrung*] evidently has a right [*Recht*] in itself. If I see a table, then I have a right to say: "That is a table", the most evident right, a primordial right. For I see, precisely, the table itself in the flesh. And that is no coincidence, but it is an essential matter that experience has experiential right [*Erfahrungsrecht*] (XXXVI 118).

That said, the perceptual givenness of an object indicates its being only in a relative or defeasible way. This is a consequence of the essential inadequacy of perception. For since no physical object can be adequately or absolutely given, the being-indicativeness of an instance of perceptual givenness depends essentially on the continued harmoniousness of the perceptual process to which it belongs. In the 1915 lecture course, Husserl puts the point as follows:

The being of what is bodily there in the thing-perception is in principle a mere pretension; a justified one, in so far as the perception provides an originary justificatory ground [*Rechtsgrund*] for the statement that the thing is, and has the properties that appear. But it depends precisely on the further course and entire context of experience whether this justified pretension of being retains and sustains, and perhaps constantly further confirms, its justification—namely, if further experience, and first of all the further continuing harmonious progress of the perception, again and again justifiably motivates the positing of the being and being-thus of the thing (XXXVI 109).

Husserl does not only take perceptual givenness to satisfy the Being Requirement, however. He also, in effect, holds that it satisfies the other two requirements on justificatory grounds that, together with this requirement, make up what I proposed to call his basic conception of justification. Perceptual givenness being a mode of givenness of physical objects—a way of being present to consciousness—he clearly takes it to satisfy the Awareness Requirement. And he equally clearly takes it to satisfy the Immediacy Requirement, holding, as he does, that it, like any other form of originary givenness, is an immediate justificatory ground in the relevant sense. As he puts it in a 1912 research manuscript:

Irrespective of the object-domain [*Gegenständlichkeitssphäre*] to which it may relate itself, cognition, as is well known, is immediate or mediate. That is: Cognitions, in the form of judgements that have a—perhaps limited—justificatory ground, draw their justification [*Recht*] either immediately from a being-grasping [*seinserfassenden*], “giving” act, in the way in which, for instance, a perceptual judgement immediately “expresses” (or explicates and expresses) what is “given” in a perceiving as actual; or they draw their justification from an inferential process that, with regard to the question concerning the justification of its “premises”, for its part lastly points back to immediately giving acts (III/2 534).

In holding that the perceptual givenness of an object constitutes a defeasible immediate justificatory ground for positing it, Husserl endorses a view of perceptual justification with affinities to contemporary neo-Moorean or so called dogmatist views.<sup>59</sup> The affinities are not restricted to the content of Husserl’s view, however, but extend to some of the uses to which he puts it. For, like the central proponents of the contemporary views concerned, and for similar reasons, Husserl holds that his view of perceptual justification has anti-sceptical force, as I now wish to indicate.

As noted in Section 2.4, Husserl holds that by clarifying the possibility of transcendent cognition, epistemology serves to overcome scepticism, by uprooting the “tendency towards scepticism” to which unclarity with regard to that possibility gives rise. The partial clarification of the essence of perceptually based cognition that his perceptual intuitionism supposedly provides represents one, if not the most, important example of this anti-sceptical strategy. A familiar range of sceptical arguments, the so called arguments from sceptical hypothesis, trade on the idea that perceptual justification is mediate, in the sense that the justification provided by our perceptions depends on non-perceptual justification for taking them to be non-deceptive.<sup>60</sup> As we have seen, however, with his perceptual intuitionism Husserl rejects this idea, arguing that the perceptual givenness of an object is an immediate justificatory ground for positing it, one that does not depend on other justificatory grounds for its justificatory force. Indeed, he suggests that the very idea of asking for a justification of the justificatory force of an instance of perceptual givenness, and

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<sup>59</sup> For influential expositions and discussions of such views, see Pryor (2000) and Huemer (2001). For an earlier example, see Pollock (1986). See also Chudnoff (2013) and Tucker (2013).

<sup>60</sup> For discussion of such arguments, see, for instance, Klein (1981), Stroud (1984), Brueckner (1994), Cohen (1998), Pryor (2000), Huemer (2001), Byrne (2004) and Vogel (2004).

originary givenness in general, is non-sensical. In a 1923 research manuscript he asks:

What kind of reasonable questions can be posed to an evidence? And in what sense can they be posed? In the sense that is the Cartesian one, whether an evidence or a kind of evidence is at all “valid” or sound, and give justification for the belief that the object for whose being the cognizing subject has evidence is actual? (VII 335)

And he suggests that the answer to this question is “no” when, a little later, he asks: “Is it not meaningless to throw the possibility of the soundness of an evidence into doubt?” (VII 336)

With this, I have barely scratched the surface of Husserl’s discussions of scepticism, which merits far more attention than it has so far received.<sup>61</sup> An adequate treatment of this topic requires the prior treatment of a number of other topics, however, including those addressed in the three present essays, of which I will now give a presentation.

## 5. Presentation of the Essays

As already noted, the essays relate to the three themes delineated above, with the first concerning the subject matter of epistemology, the second concerning the methodology of epistemology, and the third concerning the epistemology of perception.

### 5.1 *Essay 1*

The immediate aim of the first essay is to specify the core of the problem of transcendence, or the “riddle of cognition” (*Rätsel der Erkenntnis*), as Husserl also calls it. As noted above, the problem concerns the possibility of transcendent cognition in general and rational transcendent cognition in particular. There are several concepts of transcendent cognition in Husserl, however. And it is not immediately clear in terms of which of these the problem is cast, and thus what, exactly, Husserl takes the problem to consist in.

Getting clear about this is necessary for getting clear about the exact

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<sup>61</sup> For treatments of the topic in the literature, see, for instance, Aguirre (1970), Mertens (1996) and the papers collected in Wachterhauser (1996).

nature of the epoché, which, as we recall, is to consist in a refraining from making use of transcendent cognition of the kind that the problem concerns. And getting clear about this is, in turn, important for at least two reasons.

First, it is needed in order to see just what Husserl's main metaepistemological claim—the claim that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology—actually amounts to. Without a specification of the epoché, the exact nature of what it supposedly leaves behind as a possible domain of investigation—the phenomenological residuum—would be left unclear. And Husserl's main metaepistemological claim being more or less equivalent to the claim that epistemology is possible only as a pure description of this domain, this would also leave unclear the exact content of the former claim.

Second, getting clear about the nature of the epoché is also needed in order to be able to evaluate Husserl's case for his main metaepistemological claim. As we have seen, the requirement that any attempt to solve the problem of transcendence must involve performance of the epoché forms a crucial part of that case. And in the absence of a specification of the epoché, it will, therefore, be unclear both what the requirement actually comes to, and whether it can plausibly be satisfied.

Despite its exegetical and systematic importance, the question of how to specify the core of the problem of transcendence has received little attention in the literature. Usually when discussing the problem, reference is made to one or another of the formulations that Husserl's different concepts of transcendent cognition allows for, without much attempt being made to determine its relation to the others, and so determine whether or not it represents his ultimate specification of the problem.

In my discussion, I make two basic claims. First, I argue that Husserl, in effect, formulates the core of the problem of transcendence in terms of four problems, where the first three correspond to three different Husserlian concepts of transcendence or transcendent objects. The first problem, which I designate as the problem of metaphysical transcendence, is to understand how there can be rational cognition of objects that have being in themselves, or what I propose to call metaphysically transcendent objects. The second problem, which I call the problem of proper transcendence, is to understand how there

can be rational cognition of what could be called properly transcendent objects, where, roughly, an object is properly transcendent just in case it does not form a “proper” (*reell*) or non-repeatable part of the experience whose object it is. The third problem, which I term the problem of intuitional transcendence, is the problem of how there can be rational cognition of objects that are what I suggest calling intuitionally transcendent, in the sense of not being absolutely or adequately given. And the fourth problem, which I call the problem of defeasible cognition, is the problem of how defeasible rational cognition is possible, where a cognition is defeasible just in case it is based on defeasible justificatory grounds, grounds that fail to guarantee the being of the object for the positing of which they constitute grounds.

Second, I argue that these formulations of the problem form a systematic sequence, leading from the first to the fourth, such that any later formulation in the sequence can be seen to constitute a specification of the core of the previous one. Thus, taking it that the problem of metaphysical transcendence represents Husserl’s initial formulation of the problem of transcendence, I seek to show that the core of that problem is specified in terms of the problem of proper transcendence, whose core, for its part, is specified in terms of the problem of intuitional transcendence, the core of which Husserl in effect specifies in terms of the problem of defeasible cognition, which, then constitutes his ultimate specification of the problem of transcendence.

My discussion relates primarily to texts from what could be called Husserl’s middle period, which began with his so called transcendental turn around 1906, and ended with the publication of *Ideen I* in 1913.<sup>62</sup> These texts provide Husserl’s clearest formulations of what I have called his argument from the problem of transcendence—that is, his attempt to show that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology by showing that only phenomenology can satisfy the methodological requirements that supposedly flow from the very nature of that problem, among which the alleged need for the epoché is the most crucial. In seeking to determine the core of the problem from which this argument takes off, I do not, however, follow Husserl’s account in any one

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<sup>62</sup> The most important of these are XXIV, II and M VII, as well as parts of XXXVI, VII and VIII.

particular text. Instead, I take a modestly reconstructive approach, combining characterizations of the problem from different texts, so as to attempt to bring out what I take to be their systematic interrelations and significance.

On what I regard as Husserl's ultimate specification of it, then, the core of the problem of transcendence concerns the possibility of transcendent cognition, in the sense of defeasible cognition. This result is exegetically interesting for at least two reasons.

First, it means that Husserl is committed to holding that only indefeasible cognitions are epistemologically admissible. For if the problem of transcendence, at its core, concerns the possibility of defeasible cognition, then the epoché supposedly required to solve it must consist in a suspension of any and all such cognition. And so the result means that Husserl's claim that the problem of transcendence, and epistemological problems in general, are solvable only by phenomenology must be taken as equivalent to the claim, roughly, that they can be solved only through pure description of the essences of intentional experiences and their intentional correlates, not just as originally given, but as indefeasibly given, or as given in indefeasible eidetic intuitions.

Second, by the same token, the suggested specification of the core of the problem of transcendence means that the prospects for finding a coherent fallibilist view of epistemological cognition in Husserl look dim. As many have pointed out, the later Husserl would seem to allow that the forms of cognition by means of which the problem of transcendence, and other epistemological problems, are to be solved, need not, or need not all, be indefeasible.<sup>63</sup> I cannot here enter the complicated discussion of what might be Husserl's reasons for this view, and whether, at the end of the day, he would really commit to it.<sup>64</sup> I merely want to note that, to the extent that Husserl construes the core of the problem of transcendence as the problem of the possibility of defeasible cognition, the requirement that any attempt to solve it must involve performance of the epoché effectively commits him to reject as incoherent any

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<sup>63</sup> For a classical discussion, see Landgrebe (1963). For more recent discussions, see, for instance, Føllesdal (1988) and Welton (2002).

<sup>64</sup> A proper treatment of the latter issue would have to involve a close consideration of XXXV, which, as the editor points out, contains Husserl's most sustained discussion of the requirements and possible scope of apodictic philosophical cognition (Gossens 2002).

epistemology on which epistemological cognition may be fallible.<sup>65</sup>

In light of the supposed requisiteness of the epoché, the suggested specification of the core of Husserl's problem of transcendence is also interesting from a contemporary systematic point of view. According to Husserl, an important instance of the problem concerns the question of how perceptually based cognition can be rational, or, more fundamentally, how the perceptual givenness of a physical object can constitute a defeasible justificatory ground for positing it. But questions such as these—roughly, questions concerning the capacity of perception to provide defeasible justification for belief—are in the forefront of contemporary epistemological debate.<sup>66</sup> And so Husserl's attempt to show that any attempt to answer them must involve performance of the epoché should be highly interesting, entailing, as it does, that no such attempt can rely on defeasible cognition of any kind.

## 5.2 *Essay 2*

Picking up the thread from the first essay, the second essay has two aims. The first is to clarify the basic structure of Husserl's argument from the problem of transcendence. Doing so is important for at least two reasons. First, it is necessary for being able to assess the argument, and thereby assess what is arguably the principal way in which Husserl seeks to establish that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology. Second, in spite of its exegetical and metaepistemological significance, this task has yet to be taken up in a systematic way.

The second aim of the essay is to evaluate Husserl's case for one of the steps of the argument—the claim that solving the problem of transcendence requires performance of the epoché. Doing so is, again, important for at least two reasons. First, this step being the decisive step of the argument, evaluating Husserl's case for it is crucial for evaluating the argument as a whole. Second,

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<sup>65</sup> This is not, of course, to deny that Husserl recognizes that there may be fallible cognition—the problem of transcendence is, precisely, the problem of how to understand the possibility of such cognition. It is just to say that his insistence on the need for the epoché commits him to the view that the cognition by means of which this possibility is to be made intelligible cannot, on pain of incoherence, itself be fallible.

<sup>66</sup> For an overview of central issues in contemporary epistemology of perception, see Siegel and Silins (2015).

much like the first task, this task has not really been taken up commentators, who, to the extent that they have considered Husserl's case for his claim, have tended merely to restate it.<sup>67</sup>

As noted above, Husserl's clearest formulations of the argument from the problem of transcendence are to be found in texts from his middle period. So the textual basis for the second essay is more or less the same as the basis for the first. And as in the first essay, I take a modestly reconstructive, as opposed to a narrowly exegetical approach, combining elements from different texts into what I take to be an adequate representation of the gist of Husserl's reasoning.

For reasons of space, I do not attempt to reconstruct the entire argument, however, but restrict myself to identifying and describing what I regard as four of its basic premises. The first, which I call the Centrality Claim, states that the problem of transcendence is the central problem of epistemology, in the sense that any other epistemological problem is such only by virtue of being essentially related to the problem of transcendence. The second premise, which I call the No Transcendence Requirement, effectively coincides with the claim that any attempt to solve the problem of transcendence requires performance of the epoché, in the sense of a refraining from making use of transcendent or defeasible cognition. The third premise, which I term the Phenomenology Claim, states that phenomenological cognition, in the sense of pure descriptions of immanently perceived intentional experiences and their intentional correlates, and the essences of these as given in eidetic intuition, is the only form of non-transcendent or indefeasible cognition.

From these premises it follows that phenomenological cognition is the only form of cognition admissible for solving the central problem of transcendence. It does not follow, however, that the problem can actually be solved by means of this form of cognition. In drawing that conclusion, Husserl can be seen to rely on a fourth premise. According to this premise, which I call the Clarification Claim, solving the problem of transcendence is a matter of clarifying the possibility of transcendent cognition, where to clarify the possibility of something consists in describing its essence on the basis of the originary givenness of that essence.

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<sup>67</sup> See for instance Lohmar (2002), Rinofner-Kriedl (2004) and Rizzoli (2008).



Even granted this premise, however, Husserl would not be able to reach his desired metaepistemological conclusion. For from the fact that the central problem of epistemology can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition it does not immediately follow that any epistemological problem can only be thus solved. Due to limitations of space, though, I do not seek to identify the further premises on which Husserl must be seen to rely in drawing that conclusion. Instead, I turn to a consideration of his case for the second premise of the argument, the No Transcendence Requirement.

As indicated in Section 3.1, Husserl can be seen to provide two arguments for this requirement. I argue that both of these are questionable. The first, which I propose to call the circularity argument, says that trying to solve the problem of transcendence by means of transcendent or defeasible cognition would be viciously circular. I maintain that there is strong reason to think that this argument fails. More specifically, I seek to show that although using transcendent cognition in attempting to solve the problem of transcendence would be circular in some sense, it is far from clear that it would be unacceptably so, if due account is taken of the fact that the problem of transcendence is a problem of understanding, and not of justification. The second argument, which I call the metabasis argument, says that transcendent cognition is simply not suited to solve the problem of transcendence, and that attempting to solve it by means of such cognition would therefore, in effect, be to replace it with another in an illegitimate way. I maintain that although it is not the clear that this argument fails, its success can be seen to hinge on two problematic assumptions: that to make the possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible can only consist in describing its essence on the basis of its originary givenness; and that this originary givenness must be an adequate or absolute one.

Given that the No Transcendence Requirement is the decisive step of the argument from the problem of transcendence, these results give at least some reason to think that that argument fails. If it does, that would not, by itself, entail that the intended conclusion of the argument—that the problem of transcendence, and, by supposed implication, any genuine epistemological problem can be solved only by phenomenology—cannot be established. For the

conclusion might be establishable by means of some other argument, one that does not rely on the No Transcendence Requirement. It is difficult to imagine what such an argument might look like, however. For an argument that did not rely on the No Transcendence Requirement would be one that did not appeal to the requisiteness of the epoché. And it is hard to see how such an argument might establish that epistemological problems can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition given that, as we have seen Husserl hold, the epoché is the “method of access” to the domain to be investigated by means of cognition of this kind.

If these suspicions are well founded, and no argument can establish that the problem of transcendence, and any other genuine epistemological problem, can be solved only by phenomenology, phenomenology would not, thereby, have been shown to be epistemologically irrelevant. But it would raise the question of what, exactly, that relevance would or could consist in.<sup>68</sup> Saying this is not to deny that Husserl’s writings contain a wealth of epistemological analyses that might not depend for their viability on the viability of the metaepistemological framework in which he himself places them. It is just to point out that, absent that framework, it would no longer be clear in what sense, exactly, these analyses were to count as phenomenological.

### 5.3 *Essay 3*

As noted above, among the epistemological considerations of Husserl’s arguably separable from their original methodological context, perhaps the most important are those relating to the epistemic role of perception. With the third essay, I want to contribute to the assessment of these considerations. As we have seen, the core of Husserl’s epistemology of perception is what I have called his perceptual intuitionism—the view that the perceptual givenness of a physical object constitutes a justificatory ground for positing it. In the essay, I argue that this view would appear to be in tension with Husserl’s general view of epistemic justification. More precisely, I argue that fundamental aspects of

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<sup>68</sup> It would also raise the question of the exact sense in which Husserlian phenomenology would be a transcendental philosophy—a transcendental phenomenology—if, as Husserl argues, the rationale for thus characterizing it is that it, and it alone, can solve the problem of

Husserl's own analysis of perception give at least some reason to doubt that perceptual givenness satisfies the three requirements on justificatory grounds that constitute his basic conception of justification: the Being Requirement, the Awareness Requirement and the Immediacy Requirement.

As noted above, Husserl clearly takes perceptual givenness to satisfy these requirements. That is, he holds, first, that the perceptual givenness of an object is being-indicative, in the sense of indicating that the object has being and actually has the features it is presented as having; second, that it is consciously available, in the sense of being something of which the perceiving subject is explicitly or implicitly aware; and, third, that it is an immediate justificatory ground, in the sense of a ground that does not depend on other grounds for its justificatory force.

As I seek to show, however, these claims appear to sit uneasily with a fundamental tenet of Husserl's theory of perception—namely, his idea of the horizontal or anticipatory structure of perception and perceptual givenness, or rather, his view of the basis for this structure. According to Husserl, the anticipations of future experience by which perception and perceptual givenness are co-constituted are not arbitrary, but motivated by justificatory grounds in the form of previous perceptions and instances of perceptual givenness. This, however, is to say that perceptual givenness is what I propose to call a rational mode of givenness: a mode whose instantiation for a subject requires the accomplishment of relevant rationally motivated intentions on her part—in this case, anticipations of future experiences or appearances of the object perceived. And this, I suggest, puts pressure on the idea that perceptual givenness satisfies the three requirements of Husserl's basic conception of justification.

With regard to the Being Requirement, I argue that there is reason to think that Husserl both must and cannot account for the supposed being-indicativeness of perceptual givenness in terms of perceptual givenness being a rational mode of givenness. With regard to the Awareness Requirement, I argue that, when combined with the idea that perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, the requirement would seem to entail that perceptual givenness is impossible, since it would then seem to demand that a perceiving subject can be

aware of all the previous perceptions by which her current perceptual anticipations are motivated. Finally, with regard to the Immediacy Requirement, I argue that the idea of perceptual givenness being a rational mode of givenness would seem to entail that perceptual givenness cannot be an immediate justificatory ground. For the idea would seem to entail that any instance of such givenness depends on other justificatory grounds for its justificatory force—namely, the previous perceptions by which the perceptual anticipations involved would be rationally motivated.

The upshot of my discussion is that Husserl's perceptual intuitionism would appear to be at odds with his basic conception of justification. This poses a challenge, not just for Husserlian epistemology of perception, but for any epistemology of perception that would want to combine a teleological, access internalist or foundationalist conception of epistemic justification with a view of perception and perceptual justification relevantly similar to Husserl's. Thus, for instance, recognizing that perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness in the present sense would seem to put considerable pressure on current neo-Moorean or dogmatist accounts of perceptual justification.

In making my case, I leave out of consideration many complications relating to Husserl's theory of perception, including the different ways it changed over the course of his thinking, and the many interpretations to which it has been subjected. I take this to be defensible, however. First, as already indicated, the problem arises from fundamental aspects of his theory, aspects that remained more or less invariant throughout the course of his thinking, and that any interpretation must recognize as crucial. Second, my aim in considering these aspects is not to establish that Husserl's perceptual intuitionism is incompatible with his basic conception of justification, but merely to pose a challenge that, I believe, anyone wishing to combine the two would have to try to meet.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> I want to thank Ingunn Larsen for helpful comments on an earlier version of this Introduction.

## ESSAY 1

### Husserl's Riddle of Cognition

Eine erkenntnistheoretische Arbeit von Jahrtausenden und doch nicht einmal die reinliche und klare Problemstellung! Aber hier von allem gilt es, daß die Problemstellung die größte wissenschaftliche Leistung ist. Der Weg von dunklen intellektuellen Unbehagen, von dem Gefühl der Unklarheit in betreff der Erkenntnissachlage bis zur reinen Herausstellung dessen, was hier vernünftigerweise zu fragen ist, ist ungleich viel größer als der Weg nachher bis zur Lösung (XXIV 340).

Für den Anfang handelt es sich darum, die Art des Unklarheit zu klären, die das Motiv für eine immanente Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Kritik der "Vernunft" ist (XXXVI 41).

What is the correct method in epistemology? Or, somewhat differently, what is the nature of epistemological cognition, the form of cognition by means of which epistemological problems are to be solved? The answer to this question must, at least in part, be dictated by the specific nature of the problems concerned. This, at any rate, is Husserl's view: He holds that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology, in that genuine epistemological problems can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition (XXXV 270). And, in a number of texts, he argues that this is so because the nature of the central problem of epistemology places certain methodological constraints on its solution, which constraints phenomenological cognition alone can satisfy (cf. M VII 74; XXXVI 41).<sup>1</sup>

According to the line of argument developed in these texts, the central problem of epistemology is the "riddle of cognition" (*Rätsel der Erkenntnis*), which Husserl specifies as the "problem of transcendence" (*Problem der Transzendenz*) (cf. II 36; VII 367). On one formulation, this is the problem of how there can be "transcendent cognition" (*transzendente Erkenntnis*), or cognition of "transcendent objects" (*transzendente Gegenstände*), in the sense of objects that exist "in themselves" (*an sich*), or independently of mind (cf. XXIV 152, 369; M VII 5). And the most decisive constraint that, according to

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<sup>1</sup> Most of these texts belong to the transitional period from Husserl's so-called transcendental turn around 1906 to his first comprehensive presentation of transcendental phenomenology in *Ideen I* in 1913. The most important are Husserliana XXIV, II and M VII, as well as parts of XXXVI, VII and VIII.

Husserl, flows from the nature of this problem is that it cannot be solved by means of transcendent cognition, since trying to account for the possibility of a given kind of cognition by means of cognitions of that very kind would be viciously circular (X 346; XXXVI 83; IX 290 ff.).<sup>2</sup> But, Husserl argues, the only form of non-transcendent cognition is phenomenological cognition—roughly, immediate reflective cognition of the essence of one’s conscious experiences construed, not as mental states of oneself as a human being, but as “pure” experiences belonging to oneself as a “pure” or “transcendental” ego (cf. III/1 156 ff.). So, he concludes, the problem of transcendence, and, by extension, any other genuine epistemological problem, can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition, which, then, constitutes the only form of epistemological cognition.

One difficulty involved in assessing this argument from the problem of transcendence, or transcendence argument, as I shall call it, is that Husserl, as already indicated, offers several formulations of the problem of transcendence, each of which is cast in terms a different concept of transcendent cognition. So to see which conditions the above mentioned constraint places on epistemological cognition, and whether phenomenological cognition can plausibly meet them, one would need to determine the relation between these different formulations, and decide which, if any, is the ultimate one.

Despite its importance when it comes to understanding and assessing the transcendence argument—which is arguably the central argument by means of which Husserl seeks to establish that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology—this task has not been taken up in the literature in a systematic way. In what follows, I want to contribute to remedying this. Husserl’s problem of transcendence is a complex one, however, and for reasons of space, I will only seek to determine its most basic form. In doing so, I will not be following Husserl’s exposition in any one particular text. Instead, I will be drawing on different texts, from which I will extract and combine different formulations of the problem, in order, thereby, to bring out a more or less

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<sup>2</sup> For an account of this requirement, see Lohmar (2002). For a critical discussion of it, see Essay 2 below.

explicit line of reasoning within which the formulations can be seen to form a sequence of increasing fundamentality.

I begin by distinguishing the problem that figures in the transcendence argument from two other problems also described by Husserl as problems of transcendence, suggesting that it be designated as the problem of rational transcendence. I then give a general characterization of the problem, clarifying certain key aspects of it. I go on to present four specifications of the problem, related to four specifications of the concept of transcendent cognition, arguing that the most fundamental is its specification as what I propose to call the problem of defeasible cognition. I close with a brief consideration of the view of epistemological cognition to which, given the transcendence argument, Husserl would be committed by this specification.

### 1. The Threefold Problem of Transcendence

As so far characterized, the riddle of cognition—the problem of transcendence that figures in the transcendence argument—is the problem of the possibility of transcendent cognition. There are at least three problems in Husserl characterizable in this way, however, each of which corresponds to a different concept of cognition.

On the first and broadest of these, a cognition is an “intentional experience” (*intentionale Erlebnis*)—a conscious experience that has the inherent character of being “of” or “directed on” something (VII 377). That on which such an experience has the character of being directed Husserl calls its “intentional object” (*intentionale Gegenstand*) (XIX/1 414; cf. IX 430). The intentional object of an intentional experience is not a particular kind of entity with a particular kind of being, but simply that on which the experience has the character of being directed, whatever it might be (cf. XIX/1 438 ff.).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, intentional objects need not even exist (XIX/1 386; cf. XXV 148). So the class of potential Husserlian intentional objects is extremely broad, including anything on which a given experience can be directed, which, for Husserl, includes

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<sup>3</sup> As so construed, Husserl’s conception of intentional objects would be what Crane calls a schematic, as opposed to a substantial conception (2001, 15 ff.). I should note that this construal is controversial. For a similar interpretation, see Drummond (1990) and Meixner (2006). For an alternative interpretation, see Smith and McIntyre (1982).

everything that may figure as a subject of predication (M III 145, 153; III/1 15; M VII 87).

The problem of transcendence corresponding to this concept of cognition is to understand how experiences can be intentionally directed on transcendent objects (cf. XXIV 153; XXXVI 26; XXX 341 f.). Let us refer to this as the problem of mere transcendence. The problem can be seen to arise from two assumptions. The first is that intentional directedness is what Husserl calls an “intentional relation” (*intentionale Beziehung*), whose relata are intentional experiences and the objects on which they are directed (XIX/1 385 f.). The second is that intentional relations cannot be construed as real relations, since real relations require the existence of their relata, and intentional objects, as we have seen, need not exist.<sup>4</sup> And this makes it unclear how they are to be construed.<sup>5</sup>

On Husserl’s second concept of cognition, a cognition is what could be called a veridical intentional experience—an experience whose directedness on, or intending of, its object is true or correct in the sense that the object concerned actually exists or has “being” (*Sein*) (cf. VII 377). The problem of transcendence corresponding to this concept of cognition is to understand how positings of transcendent objects can be veridical in this sense. We could refer to this as the problem of veridical transcendence, or the problem of how veridical transcendent cognition is possible. This problem, too, can be seen to arise from two assumptions. The first is that the possibility of veridical intentional experiences would be unintelligible unless the logical categories and laws by which, supposedly, any correct intending of objects is determined and normatively regulated—categories such as subject and predicate, and laws such as the law of non-contradiction—somehow corresponded to the ontological categories and laws of reality as it is in itself (cf. XXIV 390 f.). The second is that

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<sup>4</sup> As Smith and McIntyre put it, Husserlian intentional relations are “existence-independent” (1982, 13 ff.).

<sup>5</sup> Husserl will attempt to construe them in terms of intentional experiences having what he calls a “sense” (*Sinn*) or “signification” (*Bedeutung*), which supposedly determines both which object the experience is directed on, and which features the object is presented as having (II 19). It is important to see, however, that with this proposal Husserl does not so much take himself to be offering a solution to the problem of mere transcendence, as offering a heading for such a solution. Thus, having maintained that “thinking relates itself to things that are not immanent to it, and that, when they have being at all, have being in themselves, through its immanent signification content [*immanenten Bedeutungsgehalt*]”, he goes on to ask: “But, once again, how is all this to be understood?” (XXIV 150/148; cf. XXIV 141 ff., 154; XXX 341 f.).



it is, initially, unclear how they could so correspond. In Husserl's words: "What do the things in themselves care about our ways of thinking and the logical laws that govern them?" (II 3/1)<sup>6</sup>

On Husserl's third concept of cognition, or what he calls the concept of cognition "in the pregnant sense", a cognition is a rational intentional experience, which is an experience of which the following is true (cf. VII 377; XXXVI 26 f.; M III 76). First, it involves a "positing" (*Setzung*) of its intentional object, where to posit an object is to take it to have "being" (*Sein*) (cf. XIX/1 499).<sup>7</sup> Second, the positing involved is "rational" (*vernünftig*), in the sense of being motivated by "justificatory grounds" (*Rechtsgründe*), grounds that provide epistemic justification for it (cf. VII 377).

Husserl can be seen to place at least three requirements on justificatory grounds.<sup>8</sup> The first is that they be being-indicative, in the sense, roughly, of making it likely that the object posited has being, where guaranteeing that this is so would be the upper limit of making it likely (cf. VII 377; XXIV 154). The second is that they be reflectively accessible (cf. XXIV 130; XXXVI 84; XXX 316). And the third is that they be either immediate or mediate, where, roughly, an immediate ground is one that does not depend on other grounds for its justificatory force, and a mediate ground is one that does depend for its justificatory force on other grounds, at least one of which must be immediate (cf. XXIV 136; III/1 326).

The problem of transcendence corresponding to this concept of cognition is, initially at least, that of understanding how positings of transcendent objects can be rational in the sense just delineated—in the sense, that is, of being motivated by immediate or mediate being-indicative justificatory grounds of which the subject is suitably aware.<sup>9</sup> Let us refer to this as the problem of

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<sup>6</sup> See also, for instance, XXV 185 ff. and XXXVI 47. This problem is similar to what McGinn calls the "matching problem", the problem of how our concepts can "match" the properties of things (1989, 11 f.).

<sup>7</sup> To be precise, this would be what Husserl calls "doxic" positing, which he distinguishes from various other forms of positing (cf. III/1 268 ff.).

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed account of these conditions, see Essay 3.

<sup>9</sup> I say "initially at least" since, as I will argue below, the problem does not, ultimately, seem to concern the possibility of rational positings of objects of a certain kind—transcendent ones—but the possibility of rational positings motivated by justificatory grounds of a certain kind: namely, defeasible ones.

rational transcendence, or the problem of how rational transcendent cognition is possible. Of the three problems considered, this is the problem Husserl regards as the central problem of epistemology, and the one that figures in the transcendence argument (cf. XXXVI 7 f.).<sup>10</sup> In what follows, therefore, this is also the one I will be focusing on, and the one I shall have in mind when referring simply to the problem of transcendence.

## 2. The General Nature of the Problem

Before turning to see how, exactly, Husserl construes the problem of transcendence, I want to make two points with regard to its general nature. First, the problem is not a problem of justification, but what could be called a problem of understanding. That is, the problem is not whether transcendent cognition is possible, but how it is possible. And so the task it poses is not to justify that such cognition is possible, in the face of sceptical arguments to the contrary, but to make intelligible what such cognition is or consists in, by clarifying its “sense” (*Sinn*) or “essence” (*Wesen*) (VII 378).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, taking scepticism about the possibility of transcendent cognition to derive wholly from a lack of clarity with regard to its essence, Husserl argues that the former task can seem meaningful and pressing only as long as the latter has not been successfully discharged (cf. XXIV 397; VII 67).

Second, the problem cannot, it seems, be the problem in what Husserl calls its “anthropological” formulation, but must be the problem in what he calls its “radical” or “pure” formulation. In its anthropological formulation, the problem concerns the possibility of human transcendent cognition. In Husserl’s words: “How is cognition of something that is (or can be) transcendent to consciousness possible for us human beings?” (XXV 137) In its pure formulation, by contrast, the problem concerns the possibility of transcendent cognition as such: “How is it possible that something transcendent to cognizing

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<sup>10</sup> On the centrality of this problem for Husserl, see Naberhaus (2007, 250 f.)

<sup>11</sup> Husserl argues that such clarification must take the form of descriptions of the essential structures of intuitively given instances of transcendent cognition (M III 73). Although a crucial part of his view of the method by which the problem of transcendence can and must be solved, this claim does not form part of his basic specification of the problem itself, and I will therefore disregard it here.

consciousness becomes cognizable in it?" (XXV 137)

The reason why it seems that the problem would have to be the problem in its pure formulation is that the problem in its anthropological formulation is incoherent, or so Husserl argues. For to ask how human transcendent cognition is possible is to ask how a certain kind of transcendent object—"us human beings"—can achieve cognitive contact with certain other kinds of transcendent objects. And this is to take the general possibility of cognizing transcendent objects for granted, and so is to assume the solution to the problem to be solved in the very formulation of it (XXV 137; cf. I 116).<sup>12</sup> But, taking it that the problem that figures in the argument from the problem of transcendence—the problem that the argument is to show can only be solved by means of phenomenological cognition—must be a coherent one, this would seem to entail that the problem cannot be the problem in its anthropological formulation.<sup>13</sup> And, assuming further that the only other available formulation of the problem is the pure one, this in turn entails that the problem must be the problem in this formulation.

That this is so is also suggested by the texts. For instance, in a 1906/07 lecture course, at the beginning of a long description of the problem that will figure in a later formulation of the transcendence argument, he writes:

It is to be noted that in the rest of the exposition the problem of objectivity constituting itself in subjectivity is nowhere interpreted as if the genuine problem lies in the relation to empirical and, say, human subjectivity (XXIV 149/150).

That said, there is a consideration suggesting that the problem figuring in the transcendence argument must, rather, be the problem in its anthropological formulation. Note first that, in its pure formulation, the problem can only be seen to concern what Husserl calls "pure" cognition, and by which, very roughly,

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<sup>12</sup> Formulating the problem in terms, not of the plural "us human beings", but of the singular "I human being" would be of no help here, on Husserl's view. For in asking how transcendent cognition is possible for me as a human being, I would be asking how such cognition is possible for me as an embodied being located in objective space. And so I would still be taking the general possibility of transcendent cognition for granted (XXV 137 f.; cf. XXXIV 288).

<sup>13</sup> Husserl's argument for the incoherence of the anthropological formulation of the problem could be challenged. At least this is so if we take the problem to be, not whether, but how natural cognition is possible, as we have seen we should. For to presume that I am able rationally to posit something beyond my consciousness is not obviously to presuppose clarity as

he means cognitions construed without relying on any transcendent cognitions whatsoever (cf. II 7). As a notion of something construable without reliance on any kind of transcendent cognition, however, the notion of pure cognition is unavailable in what Husserl calls the “natural attitude”—roughly, the cognitive perspective we occupy just in case we make cognitive use of transcendent cognition of some kind or other (cf. II 17). The notion is available only in the “phenomenological attitude”—again roughly, the cognitive perspective that is to be established, precisely, by way of a thoroughgoing refraining from making cognitive use of transcendent cognitions, or what Husserl calls an “epistemological reduction” (II 48; XXIV 214) or “epoché” (XXIV 189; XIII 80). And this is to say that the problem of transcendence in its pure formulation is available only in the phenomenological attitude, and that it is available in the natural attitude only in its anthropological formulation.<sup>14</sup>

Now, the transcendence argument must be conducted within the natural attitude. For this is the attitude in which we ordinarily find ourselves, and the attitude in which we first encounter the problem of transcendence—in Husserl’s words, it represents the “position of the beginner” with which any “systematic theory of cognition must ... itself begin” (XXV 144). And the very point of the argument is to bring us to see that the problem can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition, and hence by adopting the phenomenological attitude. And the argument cannot, therefore, presuppose that this attitude has already been adopted. But if the argument must be conducted in the natural attitude, then the problem that figures in it must be available in that attitude. As we have just seen, however, the problem cannot be available in the natural attitude in its pure formulation, but only in its anthropological formulation.

It seems, then, that we face a dilemma: On the one hand, the requirement that the problem figuring in the transcendence argument be coherent entails that it must be the problem in its pure formulation. On the other hand, the requirement that the problem be available in the natural attitude entails that it

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to how I am able to do so. (For discussion of this point, see Essay 2.)

<sup>14</sup> According to Husserl, in the phenomenological attitude, the problem in its pure formulation will, more specifically, take the form of the problem of understanding how transcendent being is “constituted” in complexes of “pure consciousness” (cf. II 12 ff., 75 f.; III/1 Part 4). Needless to say, this problem can be no more available in the natural attitude than can the problem of which it is a specification.

must be the problem in its incompatible anthropological formulation.

How, if at all, can this dilemma be resolved? One way of trying to do so would be to accept the first horn of the dilemma, and blunt the second by arguing that although the problem in its pure formulation is not explicitly available in the natural attitude, it is still somehow implicitly available. More specifically, one might try arguing that the pure formulation of the problem is available in the natural attitude in a nascent form that announces itself, and provides a motive for considerations like the transcendence argument, in and through its distorting anthropological formulation. Husserl, at any rate, seems in effect to attempt to deal with the dilemma in something like this way. For instance, having indicated the supposedly intractable difficulties that traditional epistemology, with its reliance on the anthropological formulation of the problem, runs into, he writes:

Of course, our opinion cannot be that theory of cognition as such is an empty heading, and not rather a heading for big and fully peculiar problems, indeed for the biggest problems that the human power of reasoning in general is faced with. That which provides the impetus for any transcendental philosophy, even an erroneous one, is an unclarity that already in the natural attitude becomes a philosophical torment, the unclarity of how the relation, which remains in the immanence of consciousness, to objects of consciousness—and, at the highest level, the relation involved in scientific cognition of cognized objects—can be understood, what this relation really means, how the transcendence that constitutes itself in the context of the cognizing consciousness itself, and the cognizing that accomplishes this achievement, themselves can be rationally clarified (XXXV 271).

I cannot here attempt to develop and assess this approach to the dilemma.<sup>15</sup> Instead, I will simply assume that something like it can be made to work, and take it that the problem figuring in the transcendence argument is the problem in its pure formulation. However, since I am interested in determining, not just the problem *that* figures in the argument, but also the problem *as it* figures in the argument, or the problem in the form it assumes as a putative motive for adopting the phenomenological attitude, I will not consider it as it is

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<sup>15</sup> One difficulty facing the approach is that it would seem to require construing the distinction between the natural and the phenomenological attitude as less radical than Husserl usually takes it to be (cf. Fink 1933). For if the problem of transcendence in its pure formulation is available in the natural attitude, even in a nascent, distorted form, then that attitude cannot, it seems, be wholly distinct from the phenomenological attitude, the attitude in which, supposedly, the problem is explicitly available.

explicitly available in that attitude—that is, as a specifically phenomenological one. Instead, I want to consider the pure formulation of the problem in the form it assumes when announcing itself in its anthropological formulation, while disregarding the anthropologizing effects of that formulation. In the terms of the passage just quoted, I want to consider the “unclarity that already in the natural attitude becomes a philosophical torment” in the form in which it makes itself felt when it, supposedly, “provides the impetus for any transcendental philosophy”.

As already noted, however, I will only attempt to determine what I called the basic form of the problem—the form of the problem of which its other form are complications. And I will do so by considering four Husserlian specifications of the problem, and the relations between them.

### 3. The Problem of Metaphysical Transcendence

As described so far, the problem of transcendence concerns the possibility of rational positings of objects that are transcendent in the sense of existing in themselves, independently of being cognized. For lack of a better term, I will refer to transcendence in this sense as metaphysical transcendence; and I will designate the problem of how rational positings of metaphysically transcendent objects are possible as the problem of metaphysical transcendence.<sup>16</sup> In a formulation of the problem of transcendence from a 1908 research manuscript, where the “lived experiences” referred to are rational intentional experiences of various kinds, Husserl in effect specifies it in just this way:<sup>17</sup>

How is it to be understood that in such connections of lived experiences, called “cognitions”, I can achieve cognition of an object that exists in itself, whether or not it is cognized? (XXXVI 23)

As it turns out, however, this cannot be taken as Husserl’s ultimate specification of the problem. To see this, let us begin by asking in what, exactly,

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<sup>16</sup> The term is admittedly somewhat unfortunate. For by ‘metaphysical transcendence’ (*metaphysische Transzendenz*), Husserl on at least some occasions means something that is not just *an sich*, but also in principle uncognizable, which metaphysically transcendent objects in the current sense are not (cf. VII 248).

<sup>17</sup> For similar formulations of the problem, see XXIV 150, 339; II 3, 25; XXXVI 41 ff.; and M VII 5, 46, 49, 73.

the problem of metaphysical transcendence is supposed to consist. Why should the possibility of positing metaphysically transcendent objects in a rational way pose a mystery? A passage from the 1906/07 lecture course previously cited suggests an answer:

The trivial truism [*Selbstverständlichkeit*] that there are things [*Sachen*] in themselves and that we just appear on the scene and grasp them, regard them, make statements about them, etc. turns into a mystery. Knowing about things in themselves means having a subjective experience called “knowing”, and if the things are not something itself occurring at the same time in the human consciousness, like a feeling, a sensation, and so on, then all talk about knowledge seems fictional. No knowing can go beyond itself. It is precisely knowing, consciousness, and not something that is not consciousness (XXIV 153/151).

According to this, the possibility of rational positings of metaphysically transcendent objects is mysterious because it entails that there can be rational positings of objects that are not experiences or occurrences in consciousness (cf. M VII 50). More specifically, the supposedly problematic entailment is that there can be rational positings of objects that are not experiences belonging to the positing experiences themselves as “proper” (*reelle*) parts—roughly, parts that come into being and cease to exist with the experiences to which they belong (cf. II 35; III/1 74). This is already indicated by the two last sentences of the passage, and it is further suggested by other formulations of the problem of transcendence:

[T]he cognitive act, the *cogitatio*, has proper moments [*reelle momente*] properly constituting it. But the physical thing, which it means and supposedly perceives, remembers and so on, is not properly to be found in the *cogitatio* itself, as an experience; it is not to be found in the experience as a piece [*Stück*], a being that is really contained therein. So the question is: how can the experience so to speak go beyond itself? (II 35/27 f.)

Specified as the problem of metaphysical transcendence, then, the problem of transcendence would appear to be the problem of how a positing can be rational when the object posited does not form a proper part of the positing experience itself. But to specify the problem in this way is, in effect, to specify it in terms of a different Husserlian concept of transcendence, on which an object is transcendent precisely if and only if it does not form a proper part of the experience whose object it is (II 35; XIII 171). Let us refer to transcendence in

this sense as proper transcendence.<sup>18</sup> Given this, it would seem that the problem of transcendence may also be specified as what could be called the problem of proper transcendence, or the problem of how rational positing of properly transcendent objects is possible. And Husserl does, in fact, specify the problem in this way:

I do not now ask: How can consciousness go beyond itself; but, rather, how can it become certain of the legitimacy [*Rechtmäßigkeit*] of its judging. How does the “actual world”, which is not a *cogitatio* in consciousness, authenticate its being in the *cogitationes*—that is, before that tribunal before which it must authenticate itself—if it is justifiably [*rechtmäßig*] to count for this consciousness as the actual world? (XXXVI 7 f.)<sup>19</sup>

To so specify the problem is, however, implicitly to deny that it may also be specified as the problem of metaphysical transcendence—at least ultimately.<sup>20</sup> For, despite what the above passages may suggest, Husserl’s concept of proper transcendence is broader than his concept of metaphysical transcendence. Among the objects falling under the former, but not under the latter, are cognized experiences belonging to streams of consciousness other than that of the cognizing subject herself, or to past phases of her own stream.<sup>21</sup> These do clearly not have being in themselves, but just as clearly they are not proper parts of the cognitions whose objects they are (cf. III/1 87). Also included, on Husserl’s view, are such things as beautiful and useful objects, or, more precisely, the axiological and practical determinations by virtue of which certain physical objects qualify as beautiful and useful. Unlike physical determinations like extension and colour, which, according to Husserl, have being in themselves

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<sup>18</sup> Ingarden calls this “ontic” transcendence (1992, 177 ff.), and Willard refers to it as “ontological” transcendence (1995, 158).

<sup>19</sup> My translation of this passage draws on Naberhaus’s translation in his (2007, 250).

<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that, on Husserl’s view, there are no special problems relating to the possibility of rational positings of metaphysically transcendent objects. It is just to say that, judging from the passages cited, the mystery with which it supposedly presents us derives, not from the fact that the objects rationally posited are metaphysically transcendent, but from the fact that they are properly transcendent. Consequently, we need to distinguish between what could be called the general problem of proper transcendence, which concerns the very possibility of properly transcendent rational acts, and a range of specific problems concerning the possibility of specific kinds of such acts, acts directed on objects that are metaphysically transcendent as well as acts directed on objects that are not.

<sup>21</sup> To be sure, cognized experiences belonging to streams of consciousness other than the subject’s own have being in themselves in relation to her stream of consciousness. But they do not have being in themselves in general.



(IV 59), such determinations depend for their being on certain kinds of intentional experiences—in this case, experiences of evaluation and practical intention (IV 14 f.; IX 118). Yet, they do not depend on these experiences in the sense of forming proper parts of them. The beauty of the statue I see is present as a determination, not of my experience of seeing the statue, but of the statue itself: What I see is, precisely, the beauty of the statue (cf. IV 8 f.).

#### 4. The Problem of Proper Transcendence

Assuming that the riddle of cognition may be specified as the problem of proper transcendence, what exactly is this problem? Why should the possibility of positing properly transcendent objects in a rational way be so mysterious? To see how Husserl answers this question, it will be useful first to take a look at why he regards the possibility of rational positings of properly immanent objects as readily intelligible, where a properly immanent object is one that *does* belong to its experience as a proper part. What Husserl calls “immanent perception” (*immanente Wahrnehmung*) provides an example—indeed, for him, the only example—of such positings. Roughly speaking, a Husserlian immanent perception is a rational positing of a current experience belonging to the same stream of consciousness as it itself does. As such, Husserl argues, it is an intentional experience whose object belongs to it as a proper part, or, as he also puts it, forms an “unmediated unity” with it (III/1 78). And this, he maintains, means that the rationality of the involved positing is unproblematic:

[T]he rationality of the positing of something that the positing consciousness contains within itself is beyond question. In reflective experience is, say, the desire on which the I directs its experiential gaze is not just transcendentally supposed; the desire is not just the intentional object of the experience, but at the same time properly [*reell*] integrated in it. By contrast, where I posit a physical thing and, in general, a transcendence, there I posit something that does not enter into the consciousness of it with its proper essence [*Eigenwesen*] (XXXVI 82).

Why is the rationality of immanent perception beyond question? This passage indicates an answer:

We do not understand how perception can reach what is transcendent; but we understand how perception, in the form of reflective and purely immanent perception, can reach what is immanent. ... Yes, why we do understand this?

Well, we directly see and directly grasp what we mean in the manner of seeing and grasping. ... Seeing, or the grasping of what is selfgiven, in so far as it is actual seeing and actual selfgivenness in the strictest sense, and not another sort of givenness, which intends [*meint*] something that is not given—this is an ultimate. It is an absolute self-evidence [*Selbstverständlichkeit*] (II 49 f./39 f.).

According to this, the possibility of rationally positing properly immanent objects is unproblematic because such objects can be “selfgiven” (*selbstgegeben*) in Husserl’s strictest sense of the term. To see what this claim amounts to, note first that for an object to be selfgiven in the present sense is for it to be “adequately” given, where to be thus given is to be “bodily selfgiven” (*leibhaft Selbstgegeben*) in an absolute way (cf. III/1 319 ff.). Bodily selfgivenness is a “mode of givenness” (*Gegebenheitsweise*) of intentional objects, by which Husserl means, roughly, a way of being present to consciousness. It contrasts with two other modes of givenness. As *selfgivenness* it contrasts with modes in which an object is present, not “as itself”, but only as represented by some other object, like a sign or an image (III/1 90). And as *bodily selfgivenness* it contrasts with modes in which, although present as itself in the sense of not being represented by another object, an object is not present “in the flesh”, but only as “presentiated” (*vergegenwärtigt*), or “as if” present in the flesh, as it supposedly is when it is present as, for instance, remembered or phantasized (III/1 90; XXV 169).

Now, instances of bodily selfgivenness may vary in different ways, of which I will here mention two. First, they may vary with regard to the specific type of bodily selfgivenness involved. For, Husserl argues, to every basic kind of intentional objects there corresponds a way of being bodily selfgiven that is proper to objects of that kind (III 10 f.; 321). For instance, intentional experiences, spatio-temporal particulars and states of affairs involving spatio-temporal particulars have their own distinct ways of being bodily selfgiven. Second, as already suggested above, instances of bodily selfgivenness may vary with regard to their degree of bodily selfgivenness—that is, with regard to the extent to which the attributed features of the objects given are bodily selfgiven.<sup>22</sup> Absolutely bodily selfgiven objects, then, are objects all of whose features are

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<sup>22</sup> These two dimensions of variability are closely related, on Husserl’s view, since, he argues, the degree to which an object can, in principle, be bodily selfgiven is determined by its

bodily selfgiven. They contrast with relatively bodily selfgiven objects, objects only a more or less restricted range of whose features are bodily selfgiven.

Let us return to Husserl's claim that the possibility of rational positings of properly immanent objects is unproblematic. As we now can see, his reason for this claim—that properly immanent objects can be adequately given—amounts to the claim that such objects can be present to consciousness in such a way that all of their features are bodily selfgiven. I will not attempt to determine the correctness of this claim here.<sup>23</sup> What matters at present is that it suggests a reason why the possibility of rationally positing properly transcendent objects should be problematic—namely, that unlike properly immanent objects, properly transcendent objects cannot be present to consciousness in this way. It suggests, in other words, that the problem of transcendence, construed as the problem of proper transcendence, amounts to the problem of how positings of objects that are not adequately given may be rational. But to so construe the problem is, in effect, to specify it in terms of a yet another Husserlian concept of transcendence, on which an object is transcendent precisely if and only if it is not adequately given (II 35; XXIV 234; XIII 171). Intentional experiences whose objects are adequately given being characterized as “adequate intuitions” (*adäquate Anschauungen*), we could refer to transcendence in this sense as intuitional transcendence.<sup>24</sup> Given this, it seems that the problem of transcendence can, or can also, be specified as what we might call the problem of intuitional transcendence, or the problem of how rational positing of intuitionally transcendent objects is possible.

As the following formulation of the problem indicates, Husserl does, indeed, specify it in this way:

[H]ow can cognition posit something as being that is not directly and truly given in it? (II 35/28)

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general nature (III/1 321).

<sup>23</sup> Husserl's justification for the claim is, roughly, that conscious experience are not spatial, and therefore have no sides or aspects that would be “hidden” in an immanent perception of them (cf. III/1 88).

<sup>24</sup> Ingarden refers to this as one of four epistemological concepts of transcendence in Husserl (1992, 164 ff.). Willard refers to it simply as “epistemological” transcendence (1995, 158).

Again, characterizing the problematic feature of the forms of cognition whose possibility falls within the scope of the problem, he writes:

[W]hat is not self-evident, problematic, and perhaps even mysterious concerns the transcending intending [*Meinen*], that is, the intending, believing, and even elaborate justifying of something that is not given (II 50/40).

And yet again, referring to transcendent cognition:

[I]ts transcendence is questionable; the being of the objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*] to which it relates itself in so far as it is transcendent is not given to me, and in question is, precisely, how that objectivity can still be posited, and what sense it has and may have, if such positing is to be possible (II 46/36).

However, to specify the problem as the problem of intuitional transcendence is also to deny that it can, ultimately, be specified as the problem of proper transcendence. For despite what the above presentation may suggest, Husserl's concept of intuitional transcendence is narrower than his concept of proper transcendence. Specifically, he holds that whereas all intuitionally transcendent objects are properly transcendent, some properly transcendent objects may be intuitionally immanent, where an object is intuitionally immanent just in case it is adequately given. Supposed examples of such objects include certain abstract or, in Husserl's terms, "ideal" (*ideale*) objects, objects like universals or essences and mathematical states of affairs (II 51, 60). Take the essence red—roughly, red conceived as what all red things have in common. This object is surely properly transcendent, Husserl argues: It can figure as the identical intentional object of different intentional experiences—I can think of the essence red at several different times and in several different ways—and it cannot, therefore, constitute a proper part of any one of them. Yet, it can also, Husserl insists, be intuitionally immanent. For, unlike particular red things, the essence red does not have any hidden sides or aspects preventing it from being capable of being adequately given (II 56 f.). I will not attempt to decide whether or not Husserl is right to hold that properly transcendent objects can be intuitionally immanent.<sup>25</sup> What is important here is only that his doing so implies that the problem of transcendence cannot, on his view, ultimately be

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<sup>25</sup> The later Husserl came to have misgivings about this claim. See, for instance, VIII 33 f., where he revisits the question of the possibility of adequate intuition of the essence red.

specified as the problem of properly transcendent cognition. For it implies that some rational positings of properly transcendent objects will be no more mysterious with respect to their possibility than will rational positings of properly immanent objects—namely, those whose objects are intuitionally immanent.

### **5. The Problem of Intuitional Transcendence**

Taking it that the problem of transcendence is to be specified as the problem of intuitional transcendence, in what does the problem consist? Why should the possibility of rationally positing objects that are not adequately given be so enigmatic? To answer this question, let us begin by asking why Husserl claims that the possibility of positing adequately given objects in a rational way is unmysterious, which, as we have seen, he does.

Note first that, on Husserl's view, adequate givenness is sufficient for apodictic givenness, where an object is apodictically given just in case it is reflectively recognizable as guaranteed to be actual or have being (cf. VIII 35; I 55 f.). Thus, for instance, in the case of properly immanent objects, Husserl attributes what he regards as their indubitable being precisely to their being adequately given:

What is properly immanent qualifies as indubitable, precisely because it does not present anything else, does not “mean” anything “beyond” itself, because what is here meant is also fully and wholly adequately selfgiven (II 5/3).

And he says of immanent perception that it guarantees the being of its object on account of the fact that the latter is adequately given, or given as an “absolute self”, as he puts it here:

Every perception of something immanent necessarily guarantees the existence of its object. If the reflective grasping directs itself on my experience, then I have grasped an absolute self, whose existence is not negatable—that is, the insight that it does not exist is in principle impossible; it would be a countersense to regard it as possible that an experience that is given in this way does not exist (III/1 96/100).

His justification for the claim is, very roughly, that if an object is adequately given, it cannot come to be bodily selfgiven in a different way, or come to be seen as not capable of being so given at all. And, assuming, as he

does, that bodily selfgivenness is the “originary”, or most fundamental, mode of givenness of intentional objects, he takes this to mean that the object must then be actual (cf. VIII 31 ff.).<sup>26</sup>

Now, assuming, as Husserl does, that an object’s being adequately given can provide a motive for positing it, the claim that adequate givenness is sufficient for apodictic givenness suggests a reason why the possibility of positing intuitionally immanent objects in a rational way should be readily intelligible. For, since the adequate givenness of an object must, necessarily, be reflectively accessible, the claim would imply that any positing of an adequately given object that is motivated by its adequate givenness will, thereby, be motivated by a reflectively accessible item that guarantees the being of that object. And, given that rational positings are positings motivated by Husserlian justificatory grounds—that is, reflectively accessible and being-indicative motives for positing—it is hard to see what could provide a clearer instance of rational positing than such a positing. For what could be a better example of a Husserlian justificatory ground than a reflectively accessible item that indicates the being of an object in the sense of guaranteeing it (cf. III/1 317)?

However, Husserl does not only claim that adequate givenness is sufficient for apodictic givenness. He also, as a rule, claims that it is necessary (VIII 35). And this suggests a reason why the possibility of positing intuitionally transcendent objects in a rational way should *not* be readily intelligible. For it implies that, unlike positings of intuitionally immanent objects, positings of intuitionally transcendent objects cannot, in principle, be motivated by the reflectively recognizable guaranteed being of the objects posited. And this may be seen to make it unclear how such positings could still be rational in Husserl’s sense. For what could serve as their motivating justificatory grounds? How, or in what sense, can a reflectively accessible item indicate the being of an object when it cannot do so in the sense of guaranteeing it?

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<sup>26</sup> Bodily selfgivenness is the most fundamental mode of givenness of intentional objects in the sense that whereas it is not dependent on any other mode of givenness for its possibility, all other modes is thus dependent on it: The givenness of an object as “presentiated” depends on the possibility of objects being bodily selfgiven since such givenness has the inherent character of being a modification of bodily selfgivenness (III/1 233). And the givenness of an object as represented by another object depends on the possibility of bodily selfgivenness since the representing object must, ultimately, be either a bodily selfgiven or a presentiated one (cf. III/1 234).

That this is, in fact, the supposed reason why the possibility of rational positings of intuitionally transcendent objects should be problematic is also suggested in a more direct way by the texts. Thus, for instance, in the context of discussing the justificatory force of perception of physical objects, or “outer perception” (*äussere Wahrnehmung*), which Husserl takes to be a form of immediate rational cognition whose objects can never be apodictically given, he writes:

If immediate experiential cognition (in the form of perception and, thereby, immediate cognition of any kind whatsoever) were such an absolutely clear and indubitable grasping of a being-in-itself that every doubt as to whether ... the cognized does not exist would be fully non-sensical and excluded, then everything would be in order. So, to the extent that cognition leads back to absolute selfgivenness, which excludes every doubt as non-sensical, is it no mystery [*Rätzel*]. This requirement the cognition of nature [*Naturerkenntnis*] does not satisfy (XXXVI 46).

And again:

The absolute givenness is essentially unproblematic precisely in the sense of the problem of transcendence. Positing of a factual existent that is not given itself in the absolute sense is enigmatic just because it is not given itself. If we possess and if we apprehend something itself without going beyond what is truly given itself in our meaning, stating and judging, then it makes no sense to doubt (X 352/363).

On the present construal, the possibility of positing intuitionally transcendent object in a rational way is problematic because intuitionally transcendent objects cannot be apodictically given, and because positings of such objects cannot, therefore, be motivated by their reflectively recognizable guaranteed being. And this is to say that, construed as the problem of intuitional transcendence, the problem of transcendence amounts to the problem of how positings based on grounds that fail to recognizably guarantee the being of the objects posited can still be rational, or how grounds of this kind can still constitute justificatory grounds. It is, in other words, to say that the problem amounts to what could be called the problem of the possibility of defeasible cognition, in the sense of rational positings based on defeasible justificatory grounds—grounds that fail to recognizably guarantee the being of the objects for which they constitute grounds—or the problem of the possibility of grounds of this kind.

How does the problem of intuitional transcendence relate to the problem of defeasible cognition? In most of the relevant texts, Husserl in effect takes the problems to be equivalent, arguing, as he there does, that adequate givenness is not just sufficient, but necessary for apodictic givenness (cf. VIII 35). For this view entails that all and only intuitionally transcendent cognitions are defeasible. At least one text suggests a different answer, however. In *Cartesianische Meditationen* he denies that adequate givenness is necessary for apodictic givenness (I 55). And this entails that at least some intuitionally transcendent cognitions are indefeasible, and hence that the problem of intuitional transcendence and the problem of defeasible cognition are not equivalent after all.

For this reason, and because the problem of defeasible cognition in any case constitutes the core of the problem of intuitional transcendence, as we have seen, I take this problem to represent Husserl's ultimate specification of the problem of transcendence. I now want to consider some aspects of the problem as so specified.

## **6. The Problem of Defeasible Cognition**

As I have argued, the heart of the problem of defeasible cognition concerns the possibility of defeasible justificatory grounds. To see more clearly what this problem consists in, note first that, on Husserl's view, both mediate and immediate justificatory grounds may be defeasible: To characterize a ground as immediate is not, in and of itself, to say anything about the strength of the justification it provides, but only about the conditions of that justification—namely, that it does not depend on justification provided by other justificatory grounds (cf. III/1 51). Add to this that, as Husserl also holds, any justificatory ground is either immediate, or suitably related to an immediate ground, and it follows that the basic question concerning defeasible justificatory grounds must be the question of the possibility of immediate grounds of this sort: How, or in what sense, can an immediate justificatory ground indicate the being of an object when it cannot do so in the sense of recognizably guaranteeing it?

To see what this question, for its part, amounts to, note further that Husserl takes bodily selfgivenness in general to be an immediate justificatory



ground (cf. III/1 51). Indeed, recognizing different kinds of immediate justificatory grounds, he takes bodily selfgivenness to be the most basic ground of this sort. That said, he also holds that the degree of justification, or being-indicativeness, provided by instances of bodily selfgivenness varies with their degree of such givenness (cf. III/1 51). We have already seen him claim that the being-indicativeness of instances of absolute bodily selfgivenness is itself absolute, in the sense that any such instance guarantees the being of the object given. What we should now note is that he also holds that the being-indicativeness of instances of relative bodily selfgivenness is itself relative, in the sense that they do not, in most cases at least, guarantee the being of the objects concerned, and this for parallel reasons:<sup>27</sup> If the attributed features of an object are not all bodily selfgiven, then the object could come to be bodily selfgiven in a way different from how it is presently given, or come to be recognizable as not being capable of being bodily selfgiven at all, which means that it could turn out to be different from how it is presently given as being, or turn out not to be at all (cf. XXXVI 109).

Given this, the basic question of the possibility of immediate defeasible justificatory grounds can, more precisely, be taken as the question of how the relative bodily selfgivenness of an object can constitute an immediate justificatory ground for positing that object, when its indicating the being of the object cannot be a matter of guaranteeing it. For Husserl, one instance of this question concerns outer perceptual givenness: that is, the way in which physical objects are present to consciousness when they occur as objects of outer perception. Outer perceptual givenness is a form of bodily selfgivenness—the one specific to physical objects, the mode of givenness in which they are most originally present to consciousness (III/1 11). So the perceptual givenness of a physical object constitutes an immediate justificatory ground for positing it (XXXVI 118; III/1 319). Outer perceptual givenness is only a relative form of bodily selfgivenness, however: For a feature of a physical object to be bodily selfgiven in the strict sense is for it to be sensuously present. But outer perception is necessarily perspectival, in that it must present its object from a

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<sup>27</sup> I say “in most cases” to allow for the later Husserl’s view, noted in the previous section, that being adequately given is not necessary for being apodictically given.

certain point of view, one determined by the position of the perceiver's body. And, since physical objects are essentially spatial, this means that any perceptually given physical object will be present as having features that are not bodily selfgiven in the strict sense—features pertaining to its flanks, rear and insides—which will be present in a non-sensuous, more or less “empty” manner (XVI 51; XI 18 f.). And so, although the perceptual givenness of a physical object is an immediate justificatory ground for positing the object, it can never constitute an indefeasible ground for doing so (cf. XXXVI 109; III/1 319).

According to Husserl, however, the question of how the perceptual givenness of a physical object can constitute a justificatory ground for positing it is not merely an instance of the general question of the possibility of immediate defeasible justificatory grounds. It is also the most important instance of that question. For he takes it that perceptual givenness constitutes the ultimate ground, not just for any cognition relating to the natural world, whether scientific or non-scientific, but for any non-phenomenological cognition whatsoever (cf. XIII 121; EU 13). And lack of clarity with regard to how it can constitute a justificatory ground would, therefore, entail a lack of clarity with regard to the rationality of any such cognition.

## **7. Conclusion**

On the specification I have arrived at, Husserl's riddle of cognition, construed as the problem that figures in the transcendence argument, is the problem of how defeasible cognition is possible. And the core of this problem is the problem of how there can be defeasible immediate justificatory grounds, in the form of relative bodily selfgivenness, outer perceptual givenness in particular.

Returning to the question with which I began, this means that Husserl must be seen to be committed to a very strong view of the nature of epistemological cognition, on which a form of cognition is epistemological only if it is indefeasible. According to what I called his transcendence argument, as we recall, the problem of transcendence cannot, on pain of circularity, be solved by means of cognitions of the kind whose possibility it concerns. But if the problem, ultimately, concerns the possibility of defeasible cognition, this is to

say it cannot be solved by means of such cognition, or equivalently, that it can be solved, if at all, only by means of indefeasible cognition. And if, as Husserl holds, what applies to the form of cognition required to solve the problem of transcendence applies to epistemological cognition in general, this is, in turn, to say that no form of cognition qualifies as epistemological unless it is indefeasible.

A consequence of this is that Husserl cannot consistently hold that phenomenological cognition may be defeasible, and still serve as a means for solving the problem of transcendence, or any other genuine epistemological problem. To be sure, the later Husserl might appear to hold just this, as many have noted.<sup>28</sup> Given the above, however, to the extent that phenomenological cognition is defeasible, it will fail to qualify as a form of epistemological cognition, let alone as the only form of such cognition.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, Føllesdal (1988), Welton (2002, Ch. 6) and Crowell (2013, Ch. 4). Crowell suggests that Husserl could derive the philosophical need for phenomenological cognition, not from the demand that philosophical cognition be apodictic, but from the demand that it promote “ultimate self-responsibility”, where this does not require that it be apodictic (2013, 94). This suggestion fails to take into account, however, that unless one rejects the circularity argument just indicated, which Husserl never did, the demand that epistemological cognition be apodictic cannot consistently be given up. The same point applies to Poellner’s suggestion that “nothing of significance is lost to [Husserlian] phenomenology if it contents itself with claiming, for most of its results, an epistemic distinction less ambitious than apodicticity” (2007, 416).

<sup>29</sup> I am grateful to Frode Kjosavik, Nicolas de Warren and Ingunn Larsen for helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.



## ESSAY 2

### Husserl's Argument from the Problem of Transcendence

What is the epistemological relevance of Husserlian phenomenology? Husserl's writings contain a wealth of analyses of particular subjects at the heart of contemporary epistemological debate, the epistemic role of perceptual experience in particular.<sup>1</sup> However, they also contain strong and interesting claims about the very nature of epistemology, according to which epistemology, construed as the theory of the possibility of objective cognition, is possible only as phenomenology:<sup>2</sup>

If we disregard the metaphysical aims of the critique of cognition [*Erkenntniskritik*], and keep purely to its task of clarifying the essence of cognition and the object of cognition, then it is phenomenology of cognition and the object of cognition and forms the first and principal part of phenomenology as a whole (II 23/18).

Husserl also puts the claim by saying that genuine epistemological problems can be formulated only as phenomenological ones, which, for him, is equivalent to saying that any such problem can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition:

The rightful problems of epistemology [*Erkenntnistheorie*] can ... only be posed on the ground offered by phenomenology. All radical epistemological problems are phenomenological; and all other problems that, beyond those, can be designated as epistemological, including the problems of the correct "interpretation" of actually existing nature and the results of the sciences concerned with it, presupposes the pure epistemological problems, the phenomenological ones (XXV 189).

Husserl offers different considerations in support of this view, one of which takes its point of departure from a certain view of the requirements for solving what he calls the "riddle of cognition" (*Rätsel der Erkenntnis*), and specifies as the "problem of transcendence" (*Problem der Transzendenz*) (II 36; M VII 76, 91 f.). My purpose in what follows is to reconstruct parts of this argument from the problem of transcendence, or transcendence argument, as I

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive attempt to show the relevance of Husserl's early phenomenology of perception for issues in contemporary epistemology of perception, see Hopp (2011).

<sup>2</sup> See also I 118; VII 386; M III 60

shall call it, and consider Husserl's case for one of these parts.<sup>3</sup>

I begin with a brief presentation of the problem of transcendence. I then present what I take to be four of the main premises of the transcendence argument, before turning to assess the two arguments Husserl can be seen to provide in support of what is arguably the most decisive of these. Arguing that the arguments are either unsuccessful or in need of significant elaboration and defence, I close by noting some consequences of this for Husserlian metaepistemology.

### 1. The Problem of Transcendence

On its most general formulation, the problem that figures in the transcendence argument is the problem of how “transcendent cognition” (*transzendente Erkenntnis*) is possible. There are several problems characterizable in this way in Husserl, however, each of which corresponds to a different concept of transcendent cognition.<sup>4</sup> So to see what the problem of concern to us here consists in, we must first of get clear about the concept of transcendent cognition involved.

On Husserl's broadest use of the term, a cognition is an “intentional act” (*intentionale Akt*) (VII 377; M VII 49, 103)—roughly, a conscious experience that has the inherent character of being “of” or “directed” on something, where the latter constitutes its “intentional object” (*intentionale Gegenstand*) (XIX/1 414). On the interpretation I shall be relying on here, a Husserlian intentional object is not an object of a particular kind, but simply that on which an intentional act has character of being directed, whatever it might be (cf. XIX/1 438 ff.). For instance, the intentional object of an “outer perception” (*äußere Wahrnehmung*) is the physical object perceived; the intentional object of an act of reflecting on an outer perception is that perception; and the intentional object of an act of thinking about what Husserl would call the “essence” (*Wesen*) of

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<sup>3</sup> This argument represents the predominant way in which Husserl seeks to motivate his transcendental phenomenology in the transitional phase that spanned the period between his so called transcendental turn around 1906 and the publication of *Ideen I* in 1913. The most relevant texts are Husserliana XXIV, II and M VII, and parts of XXXVI, VII and VIII, which all contain somewhat different versions of the argument. My reconstruction may be taken as an attempt to articulate part of the core of these different versions.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview, see Essay 1.

outer perceptions—the invariant features by virtue of which they are the kind of experiences they are—is that essence.<sup>5</sup>

On what Husserl calls the pregnant sense of the term, however, a cognition is a “rational act” (*Vernunftakt*), by which he means an intentional act of which the following holds (cf. VII 377; XXXVI 26 f.; M III 76.). First, the act involves a “positing” (*Setzung*) of its intentional object—roughly, a taking the object to have “being” (*Sein*) (cf. XIX/1 499).<sup>6</sup> Second, the positing in question is “rationally motivated” (*vernünftig motiviert*), in that it is based on “justificatory grounds” (*Rechtsgründe*), grounds providing epistemic justification for it (cf. VII 377).

On Husserl’s more or less explicit view of justificatory grounds, any justificatory ground must meet three requirements. First, it must be being-indicative, in the sense, roughly, of making it likely that the object for the positing of which it constitutes a ground has being and actually has the features it is posited as having, where guaranteeing that this is so would be the upper limit of making it likely (cf. VII 377; XXIV 154). Second, it must be something of which the subject has suitable implicit or explicit awareness (XXIV 130; XXX 316). Third, it must be either immediate or mediate, where, roughly, an immediate justificatory ground is one that does not depend on other justificatory grounds for its justificatory force, and a mediate justificatory ground is one that is suitably related to an immediate ground (XXIV 136; III/1 326).<sup>7</sup> Thus, an intentional act is rational in Husserl’s sense only if it involves a positing of its intentional object, where the positing is based on an immediate or mediate being-indicative ground of which the positing subject has suitable awareness.

Now, transcendent cognition of the kind whose possibility the problem of transcendence concerns is a kind of rational act. To see what characterizes it, note must be taken of a further element of Husserl’s theory of epistemic

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<sup>5</sup> On the current interpretation, then, Husserl’s concept of an intentional object would be what Crane calls a schematic, as opposed to a substantial, concept of an object (2000, 15 ff.). For a defence of this interpretation, see Drummond (1990). See also Meixner (2006). For an alternative interpretation, see Smith and McIntyre (1982).

<sup>6</sup> Strictly speaking, this would be what Husserl calls “doxic” positing, which is one of several forms of positing recognized by him (cf. III/1 268).

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed account of these requirements, see Essay 3.

justification: namely, his view that the “originary givenness” (*originäre Gegebenheit*) of an intentional object constitutes an immediate justificatory ground for positing it. Originary givenness is a “mode of givenness” (*Gegebenheitsweise*) of intentional objects, a way of being present to consciousness. For an object to be originally given is, roughly, for it to be present as “itself”, or “in the flesh”, as opposed to, say, being present as represented by some other object, or as merely imagined or thought about (III/1 90; M VII 108 f.).

Husserl holds that all categories of objects have their own particular way of being originally given (III/1 10 f.). For instance, whereas physical objects are originally given in outer perception, intentional acts are originally given in acts of reflection or “immanent perception” (*immanente Wahrnehmung*), and essences are originally given in acts of so called “ideation” (*Ideation*) or “eidetic intuition” (*eidetische Anschauung*). That said, Husserl also holds that objects can be originally given to different degrees, where the degree of givenness is determined by the extent to which their features are present in the flesh, and where an object is “adequately given” just in case all of its features are thus present. And he further holds that whether or not an object can be adequately given depends on its general kind (III/1 321). Physical objects, for instance, cannot be adequately given, since, being spatial, they will always be perceived as having features that are not present in the flesh—namely, features relating to the sides of the object that are “hidden” from the perceiver’s current perspective (XVI 51; XI 18 f.). By contrast, intentional acts can be adequately given, Husserl argues, since they are not spatial, and will therefore not be perceived as having any “hidden” sides or features (cf. III/1 88).<sup>8</sup>

According to Husserl, then, all forms of originary givenness constitute immediate justificatory grounds for positing objects of the relevant kinds (III/1 51). Thus, the outer perceptual givenness of a physical object, the immanent perceptual givenness of an experience, and the eidetic intuitedness of an essence

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<sup>8</sup> As many have noted, Husserl later came to have reservations about, or even reject, the claim that intentional acts can be adequately given. (See, for instance, Crowell 2013, 86.) This notwithstanding, the claim forms parts of the transcendence argument, as we shall see. And since my purpose here is to consider this argument, I will not take these reservations into account in what follows.



all provide immediate justification for positing the objects given. Different forms of originary givenness provide justification to different degrees, however, with the degree of justification provided by an instance of givenness being determined by its degree of bodily selfgivenness. Specifically, Husserl argues, the adequate givenness of an object recognizably guarantees the being of the object, and thereby constitutes an “apodictic”, absolute or indefeasible justificatory ground for positing it (VIII 35). By contrast, the inadequate givenness of an object does not guarantee its being, and therefore constitutes only a relative or defeasible ground for positing it (cf. III/1 319).

Now, Husserl offers several more or less explicit specifications of the concept of the transcendent cognition whose possibility the problem of transcendence concerns. On what is arguably his most fundamental explicit specification, transcendent cognition is cognition of non-adequately given objects. More precisely, a transcendent cognition is a rational act where the positing involved is motivated by a justificatory ground other than the adequate givenness of the object posited (II 46, 50). As a rule, however, Husserl holds that the adequate givenness of an object constitutes not just *a*, but the *only* indefeasible ground for positing it (cf. VIII 35).<sup>9</sup> And it seems clear that when he regards as problematic the possibility of positings motivated by grounds other than the adequate givenness of the objects posited, it is because such positings cannot be motivated by indefeasible grounds, and that it is therefore unclear in what sense they can be construed as rational (cf. XXXVI 46; X 352). But this suggests that, on what would seem to be the ultimate specification of the concept of transcendent cognition in terms of which the problem of transcendence is cast, transcendent cognition is defeasible cognition: rational acts whose positings are motivated by defeasible grounds, in the sense of grounds that fail to recognizably guarantee the being of the objects posited.<sup>10</sup>

Given this, the problem of transcendence that figures in the transcendence argument can also be specified as the problem of how defeasible cognition is

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<sup>9</sup> I say “as a rule” since, in some late texts, Husserl allows that, in some cases at least, something other than the adequate givenness of an object can constitute an indefeasible ground for positing it (cf. I 55).

<sup>10</sup> For a defence of this construal of the relevant concept of transcendent cognition, see Essay 1.

possible. For future reference, it is important to emphasize that the problem is not *whether* transcendent or defeasible cognition is possible, but *how* it is possible. We can put this by saying that the problem of transcendence is not a problem of justification, but a problem of understanding: The task it poses is not to justify *that* there can be transcendent or defeasible cognition, but to make intelligible *what* such cognition essentially is or consists in.<sup>11</sup> Referring to the general task of epistemology, Husserl writes:

It should not be said that cognition, true and genuine cognition, is never given, that for every cognition epistemology has first to decide whether it is valid or not, and that prior to that it lacks any inherent justification. ... Certainly, it is correct that logic establishes laws under which any cognition stands, that the critique of cognition [*Erkenntniskritik*] provides clarifications under whose generality all cognitions fall. But this is not to say that before logic and the critique of cognition are constituted, and called upon for normative evaluation [*Normierung*], no cognition is a cognition, that no cognition carries its legitimation of right [*Rechtsausweis*] within itself (XXIV 196).

And, in a different text, he describes the aim of epistemology as follows:

[W]hat we want to understand is what these so called acts of intuition, of thinking, of cognition actually *are*, and what it is about them that makes them mean this or that in this or that way. We want to study what belongs to their immanent essence and to the sense of their meaning [*Meinen*], study the immanent relations and laws that are grounded therein (VII 378; Husserl's emphasis).

It is also important to emphasize that the problem is entirely general: It does not concern the possibility of this or that kind of transcendent cognition, but the possibility of transcendent cognition as such. That is, it concerns the possibility of any and all forms of rational positings based on defeasible grounds, or grounds other than the adequate givenness of the objects posited, irrespective of whether these objects are physical things, experiences, essences, or some other kind of object.

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<sup>11</sup> This is something of a commonplace among commentators. Thus, Sokolowski writes: "Husserl does not want to *prove* that we encounter objectivity; he accepts that as a patent fact, but he does want to explain how it is possible, how it can be understood (1970, 39). Willard makes much the same point: "[W]hen [Husserl] asks how a certain kind of knowledge is possible, the 'how' is not a sceptical 'how', and does not mean 'whether'. Rather, he is inquiring only about the means, or the nature of the specific structures and processes, through which subjective experiences succeed in cognitively grasping independent and publicly accessible objects" (1984, 5). And in a similar vein, after having stated that "[the] epistemological concern is not the predominant theme of phenomenology," Mohanty says: "The concern is rather about what is involved in knowledge (as well as in other sorts of experience, moral, aesthetic) than in *justifying* any cognitive (or other non-cognitive) claims. The motive of 'blocking scepticism'—that typical Anglo-Saxon concern—is conspicuous by its absence" (1983, 94).

## 2. The Transcendence Argument

I turn now to what I have called Husserl's transcendence argument: his attempt to use a consideration of the requirements for solving the problem of transcendence to show that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology, or, equivalently, that any genuine epistemological problem can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition. As noted, I will not attempt to reconstruct the entire argument, but will only seek to identify some of its main premises. In doing so, I will not be following Husserl's exposition of the argument in any one particular text, but will be extracting, combining and condensing elements from different texts, thereby giving a presentation of what I take to be the core of his reasoning.

The first question to ask is why solving the problem of transcendence should be so important. What may be taken as the first main premise of the transcendence argument can be seen as an attempt to answer this question:

*(Centrality Claim):* The problem of transcendence is the central problem of epistemology.

That Husserl endorses some such claim, and that he does, in fact, take it to form part of the transcendence argument, is suggested by the following passage, which occurs in the course of one of his most explicit formulations of the argument:

Transcendence is the initial and leading problem of the critique of cognition [*Erkenntniskritik*]. It is the riddle that stands in the path of natural cognition, and forms the impetus for new research. One could at the outset designate solving this problem as the task of the critique of cognition, and thereby give the new discipline its first preliminary delimitation, instead of more generally designating the problem of the essence of cognition as such as its theme (II 36/28).

Husserl's endorsement of something like the Centrality Claim is also suggested by his arguing that the problem of transcendence is "essentially one" with the totality of possible problems of cognition:

The questions of transcendence in immanence are essentially one [*wesensmäßig eins*] with the total complex of possible questions of cognitions as such, and all questions that can concern the universe of essential occurrences [*Wesensvorkommnisse*] of pure immanence (VII 367).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See also M III 80.

Although these passages clearly indicate that Husserl regards the problem of transcendence as epistemologically central in some sense, they do not make it clear what, exactly, that sense is. A *prima facie* plausible interpretation would be to take him to hold, roughly, that any other epistemological problem is such only by virtue of being essentially related to the problem of transcendence, either as a problem the solving of which is required for solving that problem, or as a problem for the solving of which solving that problem is required.

Assuming that the problem of transcendence is the central problem of epistemology, in this or some other relevant sense, what are the requirements for solving it? The next main premise of the transcendence argument provides a partial answer to this question:

(*No Transcendence Requirement*): The problem of transcendence cannot be solved by means of transcendent cognition.

In Husserl's words:

The problem of the How (how transcendent cognition is possible, and more generally: how cognition in general is possible) can never be solved on the basis of pregiven knowledge of what is transcendent, of pregiven propositions thereof, taken no matter from where, even from the exact sciences (II 38/30).

He also puts the requirement by saying that solving the problem of transcendence demands the performance of an "epistemological reduction" (II 48; XXIV 214, 240), or "epoché (XXIV 189, 195, 207; XIII 80), by which he means a refraining from "making use" of transcendent cognition.<sup>13</sup> On the current construal of the term, to make use of a cognition in solving a problem means, roughly, to base the solution to the problem, in whole or in part, on the supposed veridicality of that cognition (XXIV 213 ff., 370; II 6). Thus, I would be making cognitive use of my justified belief that I am six feet tall in solving the

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<sup>13</sup> Husserl also refers to this operation as, *inter alia*, phenomenological reduction (II 6; XXIV 211; XXXVI 175; III/1 69), transcendental reduction (III/1 125; III/2 563; VIII 82; IX 473 f.) and transcendental-phenomenological reduction (III/2 642 f.). However, he also uses these terms to designate a more comprehensive operation that, for present purposes, and very simplified, can be construed as consisting of the former operation taken together with the phenomenological clarification of the possibility of transcendent cognition to be delineated below. (For discussion of the place of the epoché within this more comprehensive operation, see Larsen 2003. See also Luft 2002 and 2012).

problem of whether I will fit in a particular bed, if I were to use it as basis for concluding that I will not fit in that bed. For, in so doing, I would be basing my solution to the problem on its being the case that I am six feet tall. By contrast, I would not be making cognitive use of that belief in solving the problem of determining what I am currently thinking, if I were to use it as a basis for the higher-order belief that I justifiably believe that I am six feet tall. For, in so doing, I would be basing my belief, not on its being the case that I am six feet tall, but only on its being the case that I believe that this is so.

Given this, the No Transcendence Requirement can be put by saying that, in solving the problem of transcendence, one can never make use of transcendent or defeasible cognitions, in the sense of basing one's conclusions on their supposed veridicality. Leaving consideration of Husserl's proposed justification for this requirement for Section 3, here I only want to note one of its supposed implications—namely, that no solution to the problem of transcendence can, in any way, rely on the supposed existence of the natural world. For, Husserl argues, any belief in the existence of the natural world must, ultimately, be based on outer perception, perception of physical objects (cf. XIII 121; III/1 56 ff.; XXV 15). As we have seen, however, physical objects can never be adequately given in perception, and so any cognition based on outer perception will be transcendent or defeasible. To rely on the supposed existence of the world, then, would be to rely on the supposed veridicality of transcendent or defeasible cognition, which, as just noted, is precisely what the No Transcendence Requirement prohibits.

Assuming that the problem of transcendence can be solved, if at all, only by means of cognition of some sort, the No Transcendence Requirement entails that it can be solved only by means of non-transcendent or indefeasible cognition—cognition based on indefeasible justificatory grounds, grounds that recognizably guarantee the being of the objects for the positing of which they constitute grounds. In Husserl's words, it is “in the nature of the problem” that the investigation by which the problem is to be solved must be conducted “purely in the sphere of absolute indubitable givens, of givens that must be

exhibited and seen as absolute there” (XXIV 200/196; cf. II 60 f.).<sup>14</sup>

This brings us to the third main premise of the transcendence argument, which might be put as follows:

*(Phenomenology Claim):* Phenomenological cognition is the only kind of non-transcendent cognition.

The premise can be seen to rest on two claims. The first is that only two kinds of objects can be adequately given. One of these is one’s current intentional acts, which are adequately given in immanent perception (II 29 ff., 49 f.). We should note that what is adequately given in such perception does not, according to Husserl, include only what he calls the “proper” (*reelle*) contents of the acts perceived—that is, the non-repeatable parts and features unique to them as temporal occurrences. Included are also their “non-proper” (*irrele*) contents, by which he means, roughly, their intentional objects considered as, and only as, their intentional objects, or what he calls their “intended objects as intended” or “noemata” (cf. M VII 54 ff.; III/1 202 ff.).<sup>15</sup> The other kind of object that can be adequately given are the essences of one’s intentional acts and their noemata, which can be thus given in eidetic intuition (cf. M VII 83, 88).<sup>16</sup> Given Husserl’s previously mentioned view that the adequate givenness of an object constitutes the only indefeasible ground for positing it, this is equivalent to saying that there are only two kinds of indefeasible grounds—namely, intentional acts and their noemata, and the

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<sup>14</sup> As will become clear in Section 3, the presumed reason why only cognitions based on “absolute givens” are fit as means for solving the problem of transcendence is not the mere fact that, as based on such grounds, they will be indefeasible, but the fact that, as indefeasible, they will not exhibit the problem that is to be solved by their means (cf. M VII 50, 74; M III 90). Thus, Poellner is wrong to attribute Husserl’s demand that phenomenological cognition be indefeasible or “apodictic” to a commitment to the “classical foundationalist aspiration to provide philosophy with a set of basic non-inferential propositions that are known with certainty to be true” (2007, 415). As just indicated, and as we shall see in more detail later, the demand must, rather, be attributed to a concern for the need to avoid a certain kind of presumed inconsistency.

<sup>15</sup> This, at any rate, is Husserl’s view from around 1906, or thereabouts. The exact nature of Husserlian noemata, and their relation to actual objects, is a matter of controversy. For two influential conflicting views, see Smith and McIntyre (1982) and Drummond (1990). Taking a stand on this issue is not required for present purposes, and I will therefore leave it aside.

<sup>16</sup> Strictly speaking, from the time of *Ideen* I at least, Husserl takes the set of possible indefeasible grounds to include also the adequate givenness of the subject of pure acts, or what he calls the “pure I” (III/1 123). However, since this complication does not matter in what follows, I will disregard it.

essences of both of these, as adequately given. And so he can claim that “transcendental subjectivity”—the investigative sphere left behind after performance of the epoché—contains “the only store of apodictic immediacies, of absolutely indubitable experiential givens” (VIII 41).

The second claim is that a cognition is phenomenological just in case it is based exclusively on grounds of these kinds, the latter in particular. More specifically, and very roughly, a phenomenological cognition in the strict sense of the term is one that is based only on the adequately given essences of intentional acts and their noemata, in the sense of consisting in no more than accurate descriptions of these essences as thus given (cf. III/1 156 ff.).

Before we move on, we should note that the acts on whose eidetically intuited essences phenomenological cognition is supposedly based cannot, according to Husserl, be construed as psychological acts, in the sense of mental states of human beings. For, as so construed, they could not be taken to be adequately given, and thereby as constituting indefeasible grounds, since they would then be taken to belong to denizens of the natural world, none of whom can, as noted, be adequately given. Taking it that refraining from making use of non-adequate or defeasible cognition would leave us with our acts and their essences as possible grounds for positing, Husserl concludes that both they, as adequately given, and the originary intuitions whose objects they are must be construed, not as psychological, but as “pure” experiences—pure in the sense of being rationally positible without any reliance on transcendent cognition, perceptual or otherwise (II 7, 45; XXIV 209 ff.; 215 f.).

Together the No Transcendence Requirement and the Phenomenology Claim entail that phenomenological cognition is the only epistemologically admissible kind of cognition—that is, the only kind of cognition by means of which the problem of transcendence can be solved, if it can be solved at all. This is not sufficient for Husserl, however, who also wants to establish that phenomenological cognition is epistemologically fecund, in the sense of being a kind of cognition by means of which the problem of transcendence can actually be solved.

With this we reach what may be seen as the fourth main premise of the transcendence argument:

(*Clarification Claim*): To solve the problem of transcendence is to clarify the possibility of transcendent cognition.

This premise, too, can be seen to rest on two claims. The first is the previously noted claim that the problem of transcendence is a problem, not of justification, but of understanding—a problem, not of establishing the possibility of transcendent cognition, but of making that possibility intelligible. The second is that to make the possibility of something intelligible is to “clarify” (*aufklären*) it, where to do so is to accurately describe its essence on the basis of the originary givenness of the latter (cf. III/1 156 ff.).

Given this, phenomenological cognition would not just be epistemologically admissible, but would also be epistemologically fecund. For, as a description of the essences of pure intentional acts and their noemata on the basis of their originary givenness, phenomenological cognition would amount to a clarification of the possibility of those acts. And phenomenological cognition of the essence of pure transcendent cognition and its noemata would, therefore, amount to a clarification of the possibility of transcendent cognition, which it to say that it would be a kind of cognition by means of which the problem of transcendence can actually be solved.<sup>17</sup>

The four main premises of the transcendence argument so far considered together entail that the central problem of epistemology can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition. If correct, this would be a highly interesting metaepistemological result. But it would not be enough for Husserl, who, as we have seen, wants to establish that *any* epistemological problem can be solved only by means of phenomenological cognition.

For reasons of space, I will not here attempt to identify the additional premises on which Husserl must be seen to rely in taking himself to be able to reach this further conclusion. Instead, I now want to consider Husserl’s case for the No Transcendence Requirement, which is arguably the most fundamental

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<sup>17</sup> More specifically, the phenomenological cognition by which the problem of transcendence is to be solved is to take the form of a description of the “correlation” between pure cognitions and their noemata, conceived as a relation of “constitution”, in the sense of a relation of the former “constituting” the latter (cf. II 12 ff., 75 f.; III/1 Part 4). The precise content of Husserl’s conception of constitution, and its implications for, among other things, the nature of his transcendental idealism, is a matter of debate. For a classical account, see Sokolowski (1970). For recent contributions, see, for instance, Smith (2003), Zahavi (2007b) and Thomasson (2007).



premise of the argument. For this premise is crucial when it comes to showing the need for phenomenological cognition in solving the problem of transcendence. So if it cannot be sustained, there would seem to be little point in trying to establish the other premises, at least in the context of attempting to use a consideration of the requirements for solving the problem of transcendence to show that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology.

Husserl can be seen to attempt to support the No Transcendence Requirement by means of two more or less explicit arguments, which I shall call the circularity argument and the metabasis argument.<sup>18</sup> I will consider these in turn.

### 3. The Circularity Argument

According to the circularity argument, one cannot solve the problem of transcendence by means of transcendent cognition since attempting to do so would be presupposing that the problem has already been solved, and would hence be viciously circular:

If it is in principle unintelligible to us how consciousness with its consciousness-characters [*Bewusstseinscharakteren*] can come to grasp and determine an object that is in principle transcendent to it, and in such way that it is not just itself intellectually satisfied, but in such a way that this transcendent object actually is, and is as it has been determined to be—if, I say, this is in principle unintelligible to us, then any attempted solution that appeals to a particular kind of transcendent existents, and to what they do or do not do, is a circle (XXXVI 83).<sup>19</sup>

Attempting to solve the problem of transcendence by means of transcendent cognition would, plausibly, be circular in some sense. But why should it have to be viciously so? If the problem were a problem of justification—if it were a problem of justifying that there can be transcendent cognition—the answer would appear straightforward. For using transcendent cognition to establish that there can be transcendent cognition would, indeed, seem to be presupposing that the problem to be solved has already been solved. But, as we have seen, the problem is not a problem of justification, but of understanding—a problem, not of justifying the possibility of transcendent

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<sup>18</sup> Not all commentators distinguish clearly between these arguments. See, for instance, Rinfner-Kreidl (2008, 44).

<sup>19</sup> See also, for instance, XXIV 407; IX 292; XXV 15; VIII 66; and XXIX 119.

cognition, but of making it intelligible. And it is not obvious why, in using transcendent cognition to make the possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible, one would be presupposing the intelligibility of that possibility.<sup>20</sup>

The following passage suggests an answer to this question:

If I am confused, then I do not actually have any right to make use of what is presented as valid, in particular when it is precisely this confusion that I want to eliminate (XXIV 176/174).

One way of construing this claim is to take it as an endorsement of the following general principle:

*(General Principle of Intelligibility):* A cognition can be used in solving a problem only if the possibility of cognitions of its kind is fully intelligible.

Given this principle, using transcendent cognition to solve the problem of transcendence would be viciously circular. For, by the principle, one can use transcendent cognition to solve the problem of transcendence only if the possibility of transcendent cognition is fully intelligible. But to solve the problem of transcendence is, precisely, to make the possibility of transcendent cognition fully intelligible. And so, given the principle, one can use transcendent cognition to solve the problem of transcendence only if the problem is already solved.

The General Principle of Intelligibility would provide a basis for the circularity claim, then. But the principle is also highly counterintuitive, leading to an extreme form of scepticism. For given the plausible assumption that few, if any, cognitions are at present fully intelligible with regard to their possibility, it entails that few, if any, cognitions may at present be used as problem solving means, and hence that few, if any, problems can at present be solved. It is also worth noting that Husserl, his apparent endorsement of it notwithstanding, implicitly rejects the General Principle of Intelligibility. For he clearly holds that cognitions may be used as problem solving means, even if they are unclear with regard to their possibility, or epistemologically “naïve”, as he also puts it:

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<sup>20</sup> In their respective discussions of what I have called Husserl’s circularity argument, Lohmar (2002, 753), Rizzoli (2008, 3 f.) and Rinofner-Kreidl (2004, 44 ff.) all appear to find it compelling. However, their positive assessment of the argument would, in each case, seem to rely on taking the problem of transcendence to be a problem, not of understanding, but of justification. And this, as we shall see shortly, gives reason to question that assessment.

In the naïve direction of thinking [*Denkrichtung*], which is the direction of thinking of the sciences in the ordinary sense, one gets to work with a view to [the] givenness of the scientific domain concerned: What is valid for such objects? What are their properties, under which laws do they stand? One gets to work, one deduces and follows the forms of concepts and propositions, one experiences evidence in each step; one induces and experiences the preference of probability, etc. One thinks, cognizes, works scientifically without investigating the principles on which the sense, the right, the source of truly objective validity everywhere ultimately hang (XXIV 164/162).

Another way of construing Husserl's claim in the passage quoted, one suggested by its last segment—"in particular when it is precisely this confusion that I want to eliminate"—is to take it as an endorsement of a more restricted principle:

*(Restricted Principle of Intelligibility):* A cognition can be used to remove a lack of intelligibility only if the possibility of cognitions of its kind is intelligible, in the sense of not itself suffering from the lack of intelligibility to be removed.

That this is, in fact, the principle Husserl means to endorse is further suggested by passages like these:

All the riddles taken together mean: We do not understand science at all. That is: We do not understand any of its thus and so characterizable achievements. And this in radical generality. Thus, the worm of doubt or unclarity hides in any particular cognition. No naturally obtained scientific result is free of it; and *therefore* we cannot make use of any such result as a premise from which to derive what we are looking for: The answer to these questions (XXIV 177/174; my emphasis).

In general, the question concerns the possibility, sense, achievement of objectively valid cognition as such. As long as it is not decided or, rather, not even addressed, any cognition is affected by the question, it is questionable with regard to its ultimate sense and right [*Recht*]; and *therefore* it may not be taken as unquestionable beforehand (XXIV 187/184; my emphasis).

There are also systematic reasons for taking Husserl to be endorsing only the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility. Like the General Principle of Intelligibility, the principle would provide a basis for the circularity claim. But, unlike that principle, it is invulnerable to the extreme scepticism charge. For it disallows the problem solving use of cognitions only under very specific circumstances—namely, when it comes to removing a lack of intelligibility pertaining to the possibility of those cognitions themselves.

Assuming that Husserl does endorse the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility, why does he do so? From the passages just quoted, it might appear that his reasons turn on the idea that attempting to use a cognition to

remove a lack of intelligibility pertaining to the possibility of cognitions of its kind would raise anew the problem to be solved. That it would do so is seems undeniable. The question, however, is why this should be unacceptable. And, as far as I know, this question Husserl does not really answer. One option would be to appeal to the following principle:<sup>21</sup>

*(General Principle of Idleness):* Any problem solving use of cognitions that raises anew the problem to be solved is idle.

This principle would provide a reason why attempted problem solving uses of cognitions that raise anew the problem to be solved would be unacceptable. But it is also counterintuitive, implying, as it does, that certain attempted uses of cognition must be idle that do not seem to have to be so. Consider the use of immanent perception or reflection in attempting to understand the possibility of intentional acts—that is, to understand what it means for an experience to be intentionally directed on something. Reflection is a kind of intentional act. So any attempt to use reflection to understand the possibility of intentional acts would, in a sense, raise anew the question to be solved. And, by the General Principle of Idleness, it would, therefore, have to be idle. But this seems wrong. And it would clearly not be acceptable to Husserl, who holds, not only that the possibility of intentional acts can be made intelligible by means of reflection, but that this is the only way in which it can be made intelligible.

Assuming, therefore, that at least some problem solving uses of cognitions that raise anew the problem to be solved are not idle, why would this be so? The natural answer is that they raise the problem, not its original form, but in a modified form that makes it more tractable. Consider again the attempt to use reflection to understand the possibility of intentional acts. This might—and, on Husserl's view, would—yield the result that the intentional directedness of

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<sup>21</sup> Given this principle, the following direct argument for the No Transcendence Requirement would also be available: (1) Any problem solving use of cognitions that raises the problem to be solved is idle [*Principle of Idleness*]. (2) Any use of transcendent cognition to make the general possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible raises the problem to be solved [*Assumption*]. (3) So any use of transcendent cognition to make the general possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible is idle [*From (1) and (2)*]. (4) So the problem of transcendence cannot be solved by means of transcendent cognition [*From (3) and Husserl's characterization of the problem of transcendence*]. In what follows, I shall consider only the argument for the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility, since the crucial premise in this argument—the Principle of Idleness—is also the crucial premise in the direct argument.

intentional acts is a matter of their having an inherent content of the kind that Husserl calls “sense” (*Sinn*) (cf. II 19). But, if so, the problem that would be raised anew by this use of reflection would not simply be the problem of how experiences can be directed on something, but that problem in a modified form—namely, in the form of the problem of how experiences can be directed on something *by virtue of having a sense*. And this form of the problem would, arguably, be more manageable, because more specific, than the first.

That the problem solving use of cognitions that raise anew the problem to be solved can be fruitful in this way is, in fact, something that Husserl might be seen more or less explicitly to recognize when he points out that epistemological clarification must proceed in a “zigzag” manner:

Progress is here possible only in this way: that a preliminarily achieved, and therefore relative, clarity on the one side must help further clarity on the other. The investigation can thus never progress in a straight line; it must rather constantly move in zigzag. Having arrived at the end, it must in a way always again begin; it must always again reflect on the concepts and methods employed in the method itself (M III 8).

These considerations might suggest that the problem facing the General Principle of Idleness can be met by restricting the principle as follows:

(*Restricted Principle of Idleness*): Any problem solving use of cognitions that raises anew the problem to be solved, in the sense of simply re-raising it in its original form, is idle.

That this is, in fact, the principle by reference to which Husserl means to establish the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility is suggested by passages like this:

If we do not understand how cognition can grasp an object that is *an sich* vis-à-vis it—an object, in other words, that is what it is whether cognition is directed on it or not—then obviously we cannot reach this understanding if, remaining in the natural attitude of cognition, we let objects existing *an sich* count as valid, and describe and otherwise theoretically cognize them as they are given. For each step here implies *the full unsolved riddle* (M VII 49; my emphasis)

The Restricted Principle of Idleness is *prima facie* plausible: If using a cognition to solve a problem succeeded only in re-raising the problem in its original form, then so using it would clearly seem to be futile. Unlike the General Principle of Idleness, it is also invulnerable to counter-examples of the kind just rehearsed. For, in allowing that attempted problem-solving uses of cognitions that raise anew the problem to be solved need not be idle, as long as

the problem is raised in a modified form, it allows that, for instance, attempting to understand the possibility of intentional acts by means of reflection can be productive.

This invulnerability comes at a price, though. For it means that, despite Husserl's apparent implicit assertions to the contrary, the principle cannot replace the General Principle of Idleness in the considered argument for the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility. The role of the General Principle of Idleness in that argument was to provide a reason why attempted problem solving uses of cognitions that raise anew the problem to be solved should be unacceptable. But, since the Restricted Principle of Idleness allows that attempted problem solving uses of cognitions that raise anew the problem to be solved need not be idle, it cannot fill that role.

I take it, therefore, that the considered argument for the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility fails. Of course, this does not mean that one might not succeed in supporting the principle by means of a different argument. But the usefulness of trying to do so would be questionable. For the principle is vulnerable to considerations similar to those adduced against the General Principle of Idleness. According to the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility, a cognition cannot be used to remove a lack of intelligibility from which the possibility of cognitions of its own kind suffers. But this entails that one cannot use reflection in attempting to understand the possibility of intentional acts, which seems wrong, and is clearly so on Husserl's view. Or consider a priori cognition. It is an understatement to say that the general possibility of a priori cognition still remains to be made fully intelligible. And it is arguable that an—if not, the—essential means for doing so is, precisely, a priori cognition. This, at any rate, is clearly Husserl view. But the Restricted Principle of Intelligibility disallows this, and, if a priori cognition cannot be made intelligible by any other means, effectively implies, not only that the general possibility of a priori cognition cannot be made intelligible, but also that the very attempt to do so would be meaningless, which seems implausible.

I conclude that there is strong reason to believe that the circularity argument fails. I now turn to what can be seen as Husserl's second argument for the No Transcendence Requirement, the metabasis argument.

#### 4. The Metabasis Argument

According to the metabasis argument, one cannot solve the problem of transcendence by means of transcendent cognition since transcendent cognition is simply not of the right kind to solve the problem. And to attempt to solve it by means of such cognition is, therefore, to commit a so-called *metabasis eis allo genos*, or an illegitimate change of subject.<sup>22</sup> More specifically, Husserl argues, epistemological states of affairs—the states of affairs on which cognition fit to solve the problem of transcendence must be directed—are different from transcendent states of affairs—the states of affairs on which transcendent cognition can be directed. Thus, he writes:

Epistemology lies prior to all natural cognition and science, and lies on a wholly different plane from natural science (XXIV 176/174).

And, in a footnote attached to this passage, he elaborates the point as follows:

On a wholly different plane: It is a false metabasis if we want to derive epistemological results from natural science. ... The sense of epistemological propositions is different from the sense of natural logical propositions, etc. Epistemological states of affairs <are> different from states of affairs of nature, etc. (XXIV 176/174).

The question on which the fate of the metabasis argument would seem to hang, then, is whether Husserl can substantiate this claim. To do so, he must be able to draw the distinction between epistemological and transcendent states of affairs in a relevant and dialectically defensible way. As I will now argue, however, there is reason to think that he does not succeed in doing so.

Husserl can be seen to suggest two ways of drawing the required distinction. According to the first, the distinction would amount, roughly, to one between states of affairs concerning transcendent cognitions and their intentional contents or noemata on the one hand, and states of affairs concerning things in nature on the other:

[T]he epistemologist concerns himself with nature and with natural science. But, for all that, he is not a natural scientist. He does not deal with nature <in order> to investigate it—that is, to discover natural-scientific propositions—and with natural science to appropriate it, and with natural-scientific thinking to do psychology; but he questions and investigates in order <to understand> the sense of nature as content of natural-scientific

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<sup>22</sup> On the roles Husserl attributes to the need to avoid different forms of *metabasis*, see O'Connor (2006).

thinking, of natural-scientific “consciousness”, and the “possibility”, sense, “scope” of [the] objective validity of natural-scientific thinking, as thinking concerning a nature existing *an sich*. Accordingly, the “phenomenological reduction” means nothing other than the requirement to always remain within the sense of one’s investigation, and to not confuse epistemology with natural-scientific (objectivistic) investigation (XXIV 410/413).

In the present context, there are at least two problems with this proposal. The first is that it is not clear why states of affairs concerning transcendent cognitions and their noemata should be radically distinct from states of affairs concerning things in nature. Of course, if we took the transcendent cognitions in question to be pure in Husserl’s sense of the term, or rationally positable without any reliance on transcendent cognition, then any states of affairs concerning them would be radically distinct from any state of affairs concerning things in nature, which are not thus positable. But construing epistemological states of affairs as states of affairs concerning pure transcendent cognitions and their noemata is inadmissible at the present stage of the dialectic. For this conception of epistemological states of affairs is, in effect, precisely what the transcendence argument is to establish. And so it cannot be presupposed in any consideration by which any premise of that argument is to be supported. But if, for this reason, we do not simply presuppose that the transcendent cognitions concerned must be construed as pure, it is no longer clear why states of affairs concerning them should have to be radically distinct from states of affairs concerning things in nature. There is nothing in the very concept of transcendent cognition demanding that they be construed as pure. At least this is so for Husserl, who, although he holds that transcendent cognitions can be construed as pure intentional acts, also holds that, from another perspective, they can be construed as psychological acts—that is, as mental states of human beings, or “things” in nature (cf. II 44 f.; XXIV 215 f.; III/1 116 ff.).

The second problem is that even if one could, in a dialectically defensible way, radically distinguish states of affairs concerning transcendent cognitions and their noemata from transcendent states of affairs in the sense of states of affairs concerning things in nature, one would not, thereby, have distinguished them from any and all transcendent states of affairs. For, given the general characterization of transcendent cognition as inadequate or defeasible cognition, transcendent states of affairs would be any state of affairs concerning objects that cannot be adequately given, and therefore cannot be posited on the



basis of indefeasible grounds. And so, by distinguishing states of affairs concerning intentional acts from states of affairs concerning things in nature, one would have succeeded in distinguishing them from one kind of transcendent states of affairs—one kind of states of affairs concerning objects that cannot be adequately given. But, assuming, as Husserl does, that the domain of objects that cannot be adequately given is not exhausted by things in nature, one would not, thereby, have succeeded in distinguishing them from transcendent states of affairs in general.

This problem brings us to what may be seen as Husserl's second suggested way of drawing the distinction between epistemological and transcendent states of affairs. According to this proposal, the distinction would be one between states of affairs concerning the essence of transcendent cognitions and their noemata as adequately given, and states of affairs concerning any and all transcendent or non-adequately given objects. That this is, in fact, the distinction Husserl has in mind is suggested when, having argued that someone who had at his disposal all and only transcendent cognitions would still be lacking the understanding needed to solve the problem of transcendence, and so make the "relation to transcendence" and the "reaching of a transcendent" intelligible, he goes on to ask:

Where and how can he achieve clarity? Now, if the essence of this relation were somewhere given in such a way that he could see [*Schauen*] it, in such a way that he could have the unity of cognition and object of cognition, which the word validity [*Triftigkeit*] suggests, before his eyes, and thereby did not only have knowledge of its possibility, but had this possibility in its clear givenness (II 37/29 f.).<sup>23</sup>

Why should epistemological states of affairs—the states of affairs through the cognition of which the problem of transcendence alone can be solved—have to concern the essence of transcendent cognition as adequately given, or as available in its "clear givenness", as he puts it here? Husserl's answer can be seen to consist of two claims. The first is that the problem of transcendence, as a problem of making the possibility of transcendent cognition intelligible, is a

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<sup>23</sup> This passage occurs in a slightly different form in an appendix to the text concerned: "When do we have clarity, and where do we have it? Now, when and where the essence of this relation would be given to us, in such a way that we could see it. Then we would understand the possibility of cognition (for the kind of cognition concerned, the kind with regard to which this would be accomplished)" (II 83).

problem of clarifying that possibility, in the previously noted sense of describing the essence of transcendent cognition as originally given in eidetic intuition. As Husserl, referring to the possibility of transcendent cognition, puts it shortly after the passage just quoted:

How can I understand this possibility? Naturally, the answer is: I could understand it only if the relation [between cognition and object of cognition] could itself be given as something to be seen (II 37/30).

The second claim is that the clarification by means of which the possibility of transcendent cognition alone can be made intelligible must take the form of a description of the essence of transcendent cognition, not just as originally given, but as adequately given.

Both of these claims could be challenged. With regard to the first, we could question the underlying assumption that to make the possibility of something fully intelligible consists in clarifying that possibility, in the sense of describing its essence on the basis of the originary givenness of that essence. Although not clearly false, this assumption is very strong and stands in need of significant defence, relying, as it does, on a number of contentious ideas, including the idea that Husserlian eidetic intuitions are actually possible.

With regard to the second, we could ask why, if we grant that the possibility of transcendent cognition can be made fully intelligible only by way of Husserlian clarification, the required givenness would have to be an adequate one. Husserl does, after all, acknowledge that not all essences can be adequately given (III/1 345; cf. VIII 33 ff.).<sup>24</sup> So why should the essence of transcendent cognition have to be capable of being thus given? To be sure, the clarification of the possibility of transcendent cognition achievable by means of descriptions of its essence as inadequately given would be less perfect than one achievable by means of descriptions of its essence as adequately given. But if the essence of transcendent cognition should, in fact, be incapable of being adequately given, less than perfect clarification would be the only form of clarification obtainable.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> On this point, see, for instance, Mohanty (1973, 223 ff.) and Smith (2012, 316).

<sup>25</sup> Crowell suggests what is, in effect, a version of the metabasis argument, designed to show that “[w]orldly things don’t belong to the terrain of philosophical inquiry at all” (2013, 95). This conclusion would appear to rest on two premises. The first is that the philosophical

## 5. Conclusion

I have found cause to question both of the arguments for the No Transcendence Requirement considered. I have argued that there is strong reason to believe that the circularity argument fails. And I have argued that the success of the metabasis argument requires the provision of strong support for two questionable claims: that the possibility of transcendent cognition can be made intelligible only by clarifying it, in the sense of describing the essence of transcendent cognition on the basis of the originary givenness of that essence; and that the originary givenness concerned must be an adequate one.

The No Transcendence Requirement being the most decisive premise of the transcendence argument, failure to establish it would entail the failure of that argument. Such failure would not, by itself, allow us to reject the argument's conclusion—that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology—since that conclusion might be reachable by means of other arguments, arguments not relying on the No Transcendence Requirement, or other premises to the same effect. Without being able to argue the point here, however, I think it is at least questionable whether there can be any argument of this kind.<sup>26</sup>

Conversely, if the No Transcendence Requirement could be established, whether by means of the metabasis argument or some other argument, that

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demand for “ultimate self-responsibility” entails that the domain of philosophical inquiry consists in “the (reflectively grasped) intentional structure of mental acts” (2013, 95). The second is that this domain “exhibits its own laws—normative rather than causal, intentional rather than natural” (2013, 95). The main problem here is with the second premise, which remains unsupported. For, even granting that the general subject matter of philosophy is the intentional structure of mental acts, why should this structure have to be conceived as the structure of mental acts construed as non-natural occurrences? The problem is made more pressing by Crowell's admission, on Husserl's behalf, that philosophical cognition need not be indefeasible or apodictic, allowing, as this does, that it can be transcendent.

<sup>26</sup> At any rate, it is a fact that the other considerations of Husserl's that can be taken as attempts to establish the epistemological indispensability of phenomenology—the ones commonly referred to as other “ways” to the transcendental-phenomenological reduction—all involve crucial appeals to the indispensability of the epoché. (For the classical account of these ways, see Kern 1978. For critical engagements with Kern's construal, see Drummond 1975 and Larsen 2003.) An interesting feature of the transcendence argument, conceived as a way to the reduction, is that it introduces the need for the epoché by reference to the presumed requirements for solving a problem that is supposed to be recognizable as pressing in the natural attitude. For it thereby holds out the promise of a solution to the much discussed problem, first noted by Fink (1933), of the motivation for the reduction—the problem that, it might first seem, the need for the epoché can only be motivated from the standpoint of the phenomenological attitude it is to help establish.

would not, by itself, guarantee the success of the transcendence argument, which would require the establishment of its other premises as well. Perhaps the most controversial of these is the Phenomenology Claim, the claim that phenomenological cognition is the only kind of indefeasible cognition. I cannot here consider Husserl's case for this claim. I will say this, though. In discussions of Husserl's view of the epistemic status of phenomenological cognition, it has become common to point out that he found it increasingly hard to maintain that phenomenological cognition can be indefeasible, or at least that it can be indefeasible to the extent required for it also to be epistemologically fecund.<sup>27</sup> I will not here dwell on the reasons for this development, or Husserl's many attempts to deal with the problem.<sup>28</sup> I merely want to point out that, from the point of view of the transcendence argument at least, what is at stake is no less than the possibility of solving the central problem of epistemology, and, hence, by supposed implication, any epistemological problem at all. For to the extent that phenomenological cognition would have to be deemed defeasible, it would also, by the No Transcendence Requirement, have to be deemed epistemologically inadmissible.

Finally, should it turn out that Husserl's claim that epistemology is possible only as phenomenology cannot be established by means of the transcendence argument or any other argument, it would by no means follow that phenomenology lacks epistemological relevance. But it would make it unclear what, exactly, that relevance might consist in. This is especially so if the Phenomenology Claim should turn out to be unsustainable, raising, as this would, the question of how, exactly, phenomenological cognition is to be distinguished from other forms of cognition, and, in particular, from introspective psychological cognition, if it cannot be distinguished from them by being non-transcendent or indefeasible.<sup>29</sup> For, although failure to answer this

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Welton (2002, Ch. 6), Poellner (2007), and Crowell (2013, Ch. 4).

<sup>28</sup> See, in particular, XXXV.

<sup>29</sup> Crowell suggests that even if, as Husserl came to realize, the philosophical need for phenomenological cognition cannot be derived from the demand for apodicticity, it can still be derived from the demand for "ultimate self-responsibility", in so far as the latter can be met only through a "methodological intuitionism based on first-person *Evidenz*, direct seeing of the things themselves" (2013, 92). The question, though, is in what sense, exactly, this methodological intuitionism would be a phenomenological one, if it did not meet the requirement of apodicticity. As Crowell notes, phenomenological cognition is to provide an

question would not entail that Husserl's many analyses of cognitive phenomena of various kinds of are epistemologically irrelevant, it would leave obscure in what sense they would be phenomenological, and hence in what sense their epistemological relevance could underwrite the epistemological relevance of phenomenology.<sup>30</sup>

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“ultimate grounding” of our cognitive practices, meaning, among other things, that it “cannot take anything for granted” (2013, 94). But, in a Husserlian perspective at least, not to take anything for granted is, precisely, to remain within the bounds of what is adequately and thus apodictically given.

<sup>30</sup> I want to thank Frode Kjosavik and Ingunn Larsen for valuable comments on an earlier version of this essay.



## ESSAY 3

### Perceptual Givenness and Justification in Husserl

According to Husserl, the perceptual givenness of a physical object—roughly, its presence as an intentional object of perceptual experience—is an epistemic justifier for belief about it. In what follows, I suggest that this claim is in tension with Husserl’s general theory of epistemic justification. More specifically, I argue that aspects of his analysis of perceptual givenness provide at least some reason to think that it fails to satisfy what could be called his basic conception of epistemic justification, or justification for short. This conception being teleological, access internalist and modestly foundationalist, my argument potentially raises a problem, not just for Husserlian epistemology of perception, but also for other attempts to combine such accounts of justification with accounts of perceptual experience and its epistemic role relevantly similar to Husserl’s.

I begin with a brief outline of Husserl’s basic conception of “rational acts” (*Vernunftakte*), which constitutes the context for his basic conception of justification. I then present the conception itself, specifying it in terms of three requirements on epistemic justifiers. Next I delineate Husserl’s notion of perceptual givenness, with emphasis on its supposed character as an “inadequate” form of givenness. I then turn to his view of the epistemic role of perceptual givenness, on which it meets the three requirements on epistemic justifiers previously described. I proceed to argue that, on account of its supposed inadequacy, perceptual givenness as described by Husserl is what I propose to call a rational mode of givenness. And I go on to argue that this, in different ways, gives at least some reason to doubt that it satisfies his basic conception of justification. I close with a brief consideration of the consequences this holds for his epistemology of perception.

## 1. Husserl's Basic Conception of Rational Acts

Husserlian rational acts are a subset of “intentional acts” (*intentionale Akte*)—phenomenally conscious mental occurrences, or “lived experiences” (*Erlebnisse*), that have the character of being “of” or “directed on” something, which something constitutes their “intentional object” (*intentionale Gegenstand*) (XIX/1 414). Intentional objects in Husserl’s sense of the term are not a particular kind of entity, but simply that on which an intentional act has the character of being directed, whatever it might be (cf. XIX/1 438 ff.).<sup>1</sup> Husserl draws a number of implications from this, of which I will here note three.

First, the concept of intentional objects is extremely broad. Anything—be it physical or mental, concrete or abstract, existent or non-existent, actual or fictional, a particular or a state of affairs, a property or a substance—may be an intentional object, and will be if it is that on which some intentional act has the character of being directed (cf. XIX/1 386 f., 427). Second, any intentional object will be presented as having a more or less extensive set of more or less determinate features; and one the same intentional object can, at different time, be presented with different sets of features (XIX/1 414 f.).<sup>2</sup> Third, any intentional object will be presented in a certain “mode of givenness” (*Gegebenheitsweise*), a certain way of being consciously present to the subject of the act (cf. III/1 232 ff.). Take my computer screen. The screen can figure as the intentional object of acts of various kinds: perceptual acts, recollective acts, acts of symbolic representation, and so on. In all of these it is present in a different way: as something perceived, as something remembered and as something represented by a symbol of some kind. And to specify what these ‘as ...’ phrases refer to is to specify the different modes of givenness in which the screen is presented in the acts concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> At least this is so on the interpretation I shall be relying on here. For a defence of this interpretation, see (Drummond 1990). For a different interpretation, see Smith and McIntyre (1982).

<sup>2</sup> Husserl takes both the identity and the features of intentional objects to be determined by a certain content of the corresponding acts that he calls their “sense” (*Sinn*) (cf. II 19; XXIV 150). Although a crucial part of his analysis of intentionality, I will not take his notion of sense into account in what follows, for two reasons. First, the points I wish to make can be made in equally adequate, and more economic, ways without it. Second, disregarding the notion allows me to steer clear of the controversy concerning the nature of Husserlian senses, and their relation to intentional acts on the one hand, and intentional objects on the other, to which my points are insensitive. (For two influential and conflicting contributions to the debate, see Smith and McIntyre 1982 and Drummond 1990.)



Now, rational acts have two main distinguishing features. The first, by which they differ from acts like imaginings and mere thoughts, is that they involve a “positing” (*Setzung*) of their intentional object, by which, roughly, Husserl means a taking the object to have “being” (*Sein*) (XIX/1 499).<sup>3</sup> Depending on the case, this taking will be either “monothetic” (*monothetisch*) or “polythetic” (*polythetisch*) (cf. XIX/1 501; III/1 275 f.). Monothetic positings are non-propositional positings of particular objects, like my computer. By contrast, polythetic positings are propositional positings of “categorical” or “synthetic” objects, such as the state of affairs of my computer’s being grey. The second main distinguishing feature of rational acts, by which they differ from positing acts like, say, lucky guesses, is that the positing involved is “rationally motivated” (*vernünftig motiviert*), in the sense of being based on an epistemic justifier or “justificatory ground” (*Rechtsgrund*) (III/1 316; cf. VIII 330).<sup>4</sup>

To be rational, then, an intentional act must satisfy three conditions: (i) it must involve a monothetic or polythetic positing of its intentional object; (ii) the subject of the act must have justificatory grounds for the positing; and (iii) the positing must be based on or motivated by those grounds. My concern here is with the second condition, and, in particular, with the requirements that Husserl places on justificatory grounds. I will consider three such requirements: namely, those that can be seen to make up what I propose to call his basic conception of justification, to a brief consideration of which I now turn.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I am simplifying here. First, the positing referred to is what Husserl calls “doxic” positing, which is one of several forms of positing recognized by him (cf. III/1 268 ff.). (For discussion of Husserl’s differentiated concept of positing, see Melle 1988 and 1990.) Second, doxic positing is not exhausted by attributions of being *simpliciter*, but includes any and all attributions of “being-characters” (*Seinscharactere*), which, in addition to that of being *simpliciter*, also includes such characters as being dubitable, possible and probable (III/1 239 ff.). Since these complications do not matter in what follows, I shall repress them, and understand by ‘positing’ only attributions of being *simpliciter*.

<sup>4</sup> Despite what the term might suggest, Husserlian justificatory grounds need not, as we shall see, be propositionally structured.

<sup>5</sup> This conception is not explicit in Husserl. However, I take it to be implicit in passages like those to be quoted below.

## 2. Husserl's Basic Conception of Justification

The first requirement could be put as follows:

*(Being Requirement)*: G is a justificatory ground for a subject S to posit an object O only if G indicates that O has being, and hence indicates that S's positing of O would be correct.<sup>6</sup>

Husserl's commitment to some such requirement is indicated by passages like the following characterization of rational acts, or "cognition in the pregnant sense" (*Erkenntnis in prägnanten Sinn*), as he says here:

The objectual relation [*gegenständliche Beziehung*] is supposed to be sometimes correct and sometimes false, and this difference is supposed to emerge in cognition in the pregnant sense of an intentional experience in which immediately, or on the basis of mediating grounds, we see: it is thus, and not just presumably, but truly and actually (VII 377).

Given what Husserl says elsewhere, it is natural to see the Being Requirement as expressive of a so called teleological or veristic conception of justification, on which, roughly, justification is a means to an end, the end being the possession of truth and the avoidance of falsity (cf. XXXVI 85; VIII 398).<sup>7</sup> Contrary to what the passage just quoted might suggest, however, Husserl does not, as we shall see, hold that a justificatory ground for positing an object must guarantee its being, but only that it must make it likely, where guaranteeing the object's being would be the upper limit of making it likely.

The second requirement could be put thus:

*(Awareness Requirement)*: G is a justificatory ground for a subject S to posit an object O only if S is suitably aware of G.

Husserl's endorsement of a requirement to this effect may be gleaned from passages like the following:

All cognition accomplishes itself as subjective act, and the subjective act must contain *within itself* that which represents and justifies its claim of right [*Rechtsanspruch*]. *Only* there is <the justification> [*das Recht*] to be found (XXIV 130; my emphases).

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<sup>6</sup> In light of note 3 above, this requirement can be seen as an instance of what might be called the Being-Character Requirement: G is a justificatory ground for S to posit an object O as having a certain being-character BC only if G indicates that O has BC, and hence indicates that S's positing of O would be correct.

<sup>7</sup> The characterization of such conceptions as veristic is due to Berker (2013).

In the *connections of cognitive consciousness itself* must *everything* that makes up its claim of right [*Rechtsanspruch*], and that, when the consciousness is a genuine cognition, justifies it in an obvious way, be contained and be capable of being exhibited (XXX 316; my emphases).

An assertion can, so to speak, be made out of the blue, without any rational ground [*Vernunftgrund*], without the asserting I being led by any rational grounds. In the meaning, as a living consciousness, there is then nothing that provides it with a justificatory ground [*Rechtsgrund*], and that, when this is not expressly stated, would make it possible to state the justificatory ground of its positing *through mere analysis and reflection on the own content of consciousness* (XXXVI 84; my emphasis).

On these passages, something is a justificatory ground for a positing involved in a current rational act only if it is, in some sense, contained within the act itself. A rational act being a form of conscious experience, this implies that something is a justificatory ground only if the experiencing subject is, somehow, aware of it in or through her accomplishing the act. And, assuming that any requirement on being a justificatory ground for the actual positing involved in a current act is, at the same time, a requirement on being a justificatory ground for the subject to posit that object, even if she does not actually posit it, this, in turn, implies that something is a justificatory ground for a subject to posit an object only if she is aware of it—which is what the Awareness Requirement states.<sup>8</sup>

With the Awareness Requirement, Husserl commits to a version of what is often called access internalism, on which, roughly, something is an epistemic justifier for a subject only if she has suitable access to it.<sup>9</sup> What characterizes this version? In particular, how is the required awareness to be specified? On the above construal of the requirement, something is a justificatory ground for a subject only if she is aware of it in or through accomplishing intentional acts. This immediately suggests two candidates for the awareness concerned. The first is the intentional awareness that the subject has of the intentional object of the act. The second is the so called “experiential” awareness or “experiencing” (*erleben*) that, according to Husserl, the subject has of the act itself—a non-intentional form of self-awareness that, he argues, is constitutive of the very

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<sup>8</sup> The passages quoted in support of this conclusion seem clearly to undermine Hopp’s suggestion that Husserl might be taken to endorse a restricted form of epistemological externalism (see his 2008a, 2009 and 2012).

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of different forms of epistemic internalism, see Fumerton (1995, 60 ff.) and Bergmann (2006).

being of lived experiences in general.<sup>10</sup> Of these forms of awareness, the one demanded by the Awareness Requirement would seem to have to be the former. At least this is so, if, as there is reason to think, Husserl takes justificatory grounds in general to be intentional objects, in so far as they are present in certain modes of givenness, or rationally posited, or both (cf. III/1 11, 51, 316; XLII 188, 189 ff.).<sup>11</sup> This is not, of course, to say that intentional acts, as experiences of which the subject is experientially aware, cannot constitute justificatory grounds. It is just to say that they can do so only as the intentional objects of other acts.

Assuming, then, that the awareness required under the Awareness Requirement is intentional awareness, how is it to be further specified? For present purposes, the following three points will do. First, it can, but need not, be epistemic, in the sense of involving a rationally motivated positing of the epistemic relevance of the intentional object concerned.<sup>12</sup> So, an intentional object need not be rationally posited as a justificatory ground in order to be a justificatory ground. This is clear from Husserl's explicit rejection of higher order requirements on rational acts, on which a positing act would be rational only if it were rationally posited as such in a further rational act (M III 97; VIII 33). Second, the required awareness can, but need not, be positional, in the sense of involving a positing, whether rationally motivated or not, of the intentional object concerned. This is clear from the fact that, as we shall see, Husserl takes so called "originary intuitions" (*originäre Anschauungen*), which is a species of non-positing intentional acts, to represent awareness of justificatory grounds of a certain kind (cf. III/1 51, 316). Third, the awareness required can, but need not, be explicit, in the sense of being of the kind involved in actually accomplished intentional acts. It can also be implicit, in the sense, roughly, of being capable of being made explicit through a mere change of focus on the part of the subject (cf. XXXVI 84). This means that, for instance, past

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<sup>10</sup> For an account of this form of self-awareness, see Zahavi (1999).

<sup>11</sup> As we shall see below, the most fundamental mode of givenness by virtue of being given in which an intentional object supposedly qualifies as a justificatory ground is that of "bodily self-givenness" (*leibhafte Selbstgegebenheit*).

<sup>12</sup> In Bergmann's terms, the required awareness need only be weak, as opposed to strong, awareness (cf. 2006, 13). Whether or not this makes Husserl's internalism vulnerable to the problems Bergmann seeks to raise for access internalisms relying on weak awareness is a topic for a different occasion.

intentional acts that are not currently intentional objects of actually accomplished recollective acts of mine qualify as justificatory grounds under the Awareness Requirement, provided they are retained in memory in such a way that a change of focus on my part would suffice to turn them into such objects.

The third requirement of Husserl's basic conception of justification could be put in this way:

*(Immediacy Requirement):* G is a justificatory ground for a subject S to posit an object O only if G is either an immediate or a mediate justificatory ground, where a justificatory ground is immediate just in case it does not depend on other justificatory grounds for its justificatory force, and mediate just in case it does so depend, and where any mediate justificatory ground ultimately depends for its justificatory force on one or more immediate justificatory grounds.<sup>13</sup>

Husserl's endorsement of a requirement to this effect is suggested by passages like the following two. In the first, he effectively claims that the justification provided by a justificatory ground must be either immediate or mediate, in the sense indicated:

One distinguishes those [cognitive acts] that carries an immediate justification [*Rechtfertigung*] within themselves, and those that derive a justification from determinate kinds of connections with other cognitive acts, those that possesses such justification only in connection and mediately (XXIV 136/134 f.).

And in the next, he claims that all mediate justification ultimately derives from immediate justification:

As is well known, all mediate justification [*Begründung*] leads back to immediate justification. With respect to all domains of objects and positings related to them, the primal source of all legitimacy lies in the immediate evidence, and more particularly, in the originary evidence, or in the originary givenness motivating it (III/1 326).<sup>14</sup>

Husserl's endorsement of the Immediacy Requirement commits him to a form of epistemological foundationalism. How strong is this foundationalism? For now, suffice it to say that to endorse the idea that there is, or can be, immediate justificatory grounds, is not, by itself, to commit to the idea that there is, or can be, indefeasible justificatory grounds: To characterize a

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<sup>13</sup> Note that a justificatory ground may depend on another justificatory ground for its existence, and still be immediate in this sense, as long as it does not also depend on that ground for its justificatory force. For this distinction, see Alston (1976) and Pryor (2000).

<sup>14</sup> See also III/1 328 and XXIV 345.

justificatory ground as immediate, in the present sense, is not to make a claim about the strength of the justification it provides, but only about its relation to other grounds the subject might possess—namely, that the justification it provides is independent of any justification provided by such other grounds.<sup>15</sup> Thus, for all that the passages quoted indicate, and as we shall see below, Husserl's is a modest foundationalism, on which the immediate justificatory grounds required need not be indefeasible.<sup>16</sup>

Now, according to what could be called Husserl's perceptual intuitionism, perceptual givenness constitutes a justificatory ground, and thus satisfies the three requirements just delineated. To see what this view amounts to, we must first take a look at his notion of perceptual givenness itself.

### **3. Perceptual Givenness as an Inadequate Mode of Givenness**

Husserl's theory of perception is comprehensive and complex, and underwent numerous changes and refinements over the years. For present purposes, however, rehearsing a few basic points will suffice.<sup>17</sup>

As I shall construe the term here, perceptual givenness is a mode of

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<sup>15</sup> See Alston (1976); Pollock (1986); and Pryor (2000).

<sup>16</sup> Drummond denies that Husserl endorses moderate foundationalism, on the presumed grounds that, for Husserl, any supposedly foundational experience will be "associatively informed" by previously made judgements, which, Drummond argues, implies that "foundations present themselves in the form of a hermeneutic circle" (1991, 62). I believe this denial to be unfounded for two reasons. First, it flies in the face of the seemingly unequivocal commitment to foundationalism expressed in passages like the above. Second, as Hopp points out, Drummond's argument for the denial fails, since the fact that supposedly foundational perceptual experiences may, and perhaps always do, depend on previous judgements for their content does not entail that they also depend on them for their justification (2008a, 200). That said, I believe Drummond is gesturing towards a cogent argument to the effect that, given Husserl's account of perception, perception cannot, in fact, provide immediate justification, an argument akin to the one I will present in Section 8. Unlike Drummond, however, I regard the conclusion to this argument, not as expressive of, but as contrary to, Husserl's official view, which, on my construal, is that his account of perception is not only consistent with holding that perception provides immediate justification, but actually serves to clarify the sense in which it does so.

<sup>17</sup> After 1906, or thereabouts, Husserl conducted most of his analyses of perception, and intentionality in general, within the framework supposedly established by the so called "transcendental-phenomenological reduction"—very roughly, an operation whereby one refrains from making use of positings of physical and other worldly objects in order to study the essential structures of those positings. The exact nature of this operation, as well as its motivation and implications, are controversial, however. And since the points I will be making are both insensitive to any particular view of the operation, and articulable without reference to it, for simplicity I will refrain from any such reference in what follows.

givenness of physical objects, in the sense of spatio-temporal individuals.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, perceptual givenness is the mode of givenness in which physical objects are present when they figure as the intentional objects of “outer perceptual intuitions” (*äußere Perzeptionen*), or perceptual intuitions for short (cf. XXIII 353).<sup>19</sup> Following Husserl, I shall be focusing on visual perceptual intuition, with the understanding that the points I will be making apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to his view of perceptual intuition in the other sense-modalities as well.

Perceptual givenness is an example of “bodily selfgivenness” (*leibhafte Selbstgegebenheit*), which can be characterized in terms of two contrasting modes of givenness. As *selfgivenness* it differs from representational modes, modes in which objects are present, not “as themselves”, but only as represented by other objects, like signs or images (III/1 90). And as *bodily selfgivenness* it differs from so called “presentiating” (*vergegenwärtigende*) modes, modes in which, although not represented by others objects, objects are not present “in the flesh”, but only “as if” they were present in the flesh, as they are when they are present as, say, remembered or phantasized (III/1 90; XXV 169).

Husserl characterizes bodily selfgivenness as “originary givenness” (*originäre Gegebenheit*) on the grounds that it constitutes the most basic mode of givenness of intentional objects, a mode on which all other modes, in one way or another, depend for their possibility: The possibility of objects being bodily selfgiven is necessary for the possibility of objects being given as presentiated, since an object’s givenness as presentiated—its being present “as if” present in the flesh—has the inherent character of being a modification of bodily selfgivenness (III/1 233). The possibility of objects being bodily selfgiven is also necessary for the possibility of objects being given in representational modes,

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<sup>18</sup> Husserl draws a distinction between two senses of ‘physical object’, or, rather, between two levels of perceived spatio-temporal individuals: “phantoms” (*Phantome*) or “sense-things” (*Sinnendinge*), by which he means individuals that, in addition to extension and duration, are possessed only of sensuous qualities like colour and texture (IV 37); and “substances” (*Substanzen*) or “material things” (*materielle Dinge*), by which he means individuals possessed of causal properties like elasticity and penetrability (IV 44). Of these two, the former is taken to be the more fundamental, in the sense, roughly, that substances attain to givenness only on the basis of the givenness of systematically co-varying phantoms (cf. IV 41 ff.). Although I do not make this explicit, the points to follow apply most immediately to the givenness of phantoms. However, due to the supposed relationship between phantoms and substances just indicated, *mutatis mutandis* the points also apply to the givenness of substances.

<sup>19</sup> I translate *Perzeption* as ‘perceptual intuition’ to distinguish it from what Husserl calls *Wahrnehmung*, which I translate as ‘perception’. I return to this distinction in Section 4.

since the representing objects involved must be either bodily selfgiven or presentiated (cf. III/1 234).

Perceptual givenness, then, is the bodily selfgivenness of physical objects, the mode of givenness in which they are present as themselves, in the flesh. And it is therefore also the originary mode of givenness of physical objects, the mode in which they are most basically present as the kind of objects they are (III/1 11).

As an act whose object is originally given, perceptual intuition is an “originary giving intuition” (*originär gebende Anschauung*), or originary intuition for short (III/1 51). Originary intuitions are either “adequate” or “inadequate” (cf. III/1 319 ff.). An adequate intuition is one whose intentional object is adequately given, where an object is so given just in case it is actually given with respect to all the features attributed to it. Husserl’s prime example of such intuition is “immanent perception” (*immanente Wahrnehmung*): the direct reflective experience that, he holds, I may have of my own current experiences (II 49 f.). By contrast, an inadequate intuition is one whose intentional object is inadequately given, where to be thus given is to be actually given with respect only to a more or less restricted range of attributed features. An example of such intuition is, precisely, perceptual intuition (M VII 115; XI 18 f.): As perceptually given, any physical object is intentionally present as a three-dimensional object having a number of different features pertaining to all of its different sides. But of these features only some will be actually given, in the sense of being sensuously present—namely, those pertaining to the currently exposed side of the object.<sup>20</sup>

The features pertaining to the currently non-exposed sides of perceptually given objects are present as features that would become sensuously given, were future experience to take one of a range of specifiable possible courses (cf. I 82). And so the awareness of non-sensuously given features involved in perceiving a physical object takes the form of anticipations of possible future perceptual

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<sup>20</sup> According to Husserl’s standard account, the sensuous presence of the sensuously present features of perceptually given objects is due to certain experiential contents called “sensations” (*Empfindungen*) being “apprehended” (*aufgefasst*) as experiences of the features concerned (XVI 46 f.). This account has been heavily criticized by other phenomenologists. (See for instance Gurwitsch 1978, and Drummond 1990). However, since nothing in what follows hinges on the correctness of this or any other particular account of the determinants of sensuous presence, I will disregard both it and the debate over it.



intuitions or appearances of the object (cf. XXXII 135; EU 28; XIX/2 590). These anticipations, for their part, are specifiable in terms of conditionals in which the appearances figure as consequents and possible subjectively experienced bodily movements, or “kinaestheses”, on the part of the perceiving subject figure as antecedents (cf. XIII 84 f.; VI 164; XI 13 ff.).<sup>21</sup>

As the above already indicates, perceptual intuition is essentially inadequate (cf. III/1 331; I 96). An inessentially inadequate intuition would be one involving only anticipations all of which could, in principle, be confirmed or “fulfilled” (*erfüllt*) by the actual givenness of the features anticipated, in a finite course of experience. By contrast, an essentially inadequate intuition is one not all of whose constituent anticipations can, for essential reasons, be thus fulfilled. In other words, essentially inadequate intuitions are inadequate intuitions that will exhibit a surplus of unfulfilled anticipations at any point of their duration. And the reason why perceptual intuition fits this description is, most fundamentally, that physical objects are spatial (XVI 135 ff.). For, since any physical object must be perceived from a certain perspective—the one determined by the location of the perceiving subject’s body—this implies that any perceived physical object will be present as having features that are only anticipatorily given: namely, those belonging to the sides of the object that are “hidden” from the subject’s current perspective (cf. XI 18 f.).

According to Husserl, then, any perceptual intuition will involve two kinds of intentional directedness or “intentions” (*Intentionen*): sensuously informed or “filled” intentions, by virtue of which features pertaining to the currently exposed sides of the thing perceived are sensuously given; and “empty” anticipations, by virtue of which features pertaining to the currently hidden sides of the thing are non-sensuously and anticipatorily given (XXXII 135; XI 5; EU 136 f.). And any instance of perceptual givenness will, consequently, involve two different modes of givenness: the sensuous givenness of the former kind of features and the non-sensuous and anticipatory givenness of the latter. Any physical object that is sensuously given with regard to a range of its attributed features will, in other words, be thus given with what Husserl calls an “horizon”

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed account of Husserl’s view of the role of bodily movement in perception, see Drummond (1979-80).

(*Horizont*) of merely anticipatorily given features (IX 181).<sup>22</sup>

This means that perceptual givenness is what could be called a relative as opposed to an absolute form of originary givenness, where an instance of originary givenness is absolute just in case it does not depend on the correctness of anticipations of further experiences of the object given, and relative if it does so depend. Adequate givenness is absolute in this sense: Being actually given with respect to all of their features, adequately given objects do not depend for their originary givenness on the course of further intentional experiences directed at them (cf. III/2 598). But perceptual givenness, and inadequate givenness in general, is not: Being actually given only with respect to a more or less restricted range of its features, perceptually given objects *do* depend for their originary givenness on the course of further experience, in the sense of being originally given only if further perceptions will serve to fulfil, rather than disappoint, the anticipations by virtue of which its anticipatorily given features are present (XXXVI 82; cf. XXXII 138).<sup>23</sup>

For Husserl, the relativity of perceptual givenness means that any instance of perceptual givenness will be “presumptive” (*präsumptiv*), in the sense of involving a presumption on the part of the perceiving subject to the effect that the further course of experience will be “harmonious” (*einstimmig*)—that is, roughly, be such that the anticipations involved will be fulfilled (III/2 598). And, since any perceptual intuition will involve a surplus of relevant unfulfilled anticipations at any point of its duration, what is presumed is, ultimately, that the process of perception would remain harmonious even if, *per impossible*, it were to run off into infinity.<sup>24</sup> By virtue of this presumption, then, the adequate

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<sup>22</sup> On the current use of the term, horizons are characteristics of intentional objects, or, rather, of ways in which they may be given. For a sampling of other uses of the term, both in Husserl and among commentators, see Hopp (2011, 54 ff.).

<sup>23</sup> Strictly speaking, the perceptual givenness of an object requires, not that all the anticipations involved be fulfilled, but only that a relevant set of them be fulfilled. For the disappointment of a set of anticipations would not necessarily mean that the object was not perceptually given. It could simply mean that the way in which it was previously perceptually given conflict, to a greater or lesser degree, with the way in which it is presently given, in the sense that some of its previously anticipatorily given features conflict with some of its presently actually given features. Which anticipations will be included in the relevant set—the set of anticipations such that, if they were to be disappointed, the object would not be perceptually given—will depend both on the type of the object concerned and the circumstances of the subject’s perceiving it, including her behaviour in relation to it. This point does not matter in what follows, and for the sake of simplicity, I will disregard it.

<sup>24</sup> More precisely, it is a presumption *both* that the perceptual process would remain infinitely harmonious no matter which of the many mutually exclusive courses of perception

givenness of any perceptually given object is prefigured in its perceptual givenness in the form of an “Idea in the Kantian sense” (*Idee im Kantischen Sinn*)—a regulative ideal that any instance of perceptual givenness occurring in the course of a harmonious progress of perception approximates to a greater or lesser degree (III/1 330 ff.; XI 21).<sup>25</sup>

I have delineated Husserl’s notion of perceptual givenness. Let us now return to what I have proposed to call his perceptual intuitionism, the view that the perceptual givenness of an object constitutes a justificatory ground for positing it.

#### 4. Perceptual Givenness as a Justificatory Ground

Like his theory of perception in general, Husserl’s theory of the epistemic role of perception is highly complex. Again, however, highlighting a few basic points will be sufficient here.

Let us begin by noting that, on Husserl’s view, the perceptual givenness of an object constitutes a justificatory ground for two kinds of positing of it. First, it constitutes a ground for monothetic positings of the object—that is, non-propositional affirmations of its being. Indeed, any instance of perceptual givenness necessarily motivates such a positing, which, as thus motivated, Husserl characterizes as a “perceptual positing” (*Wahrnehmungssetzung*) (XXXVI 5; M VII 109 f.).<sup>26</sup> Perceptual intuitions involving such perceptual positings he calls “positing perceptual intuitions” (*setzende Perzeptionen*) or *Wahrnehmungen* (XXIII 353 f.; M VII 111). Thus, he draws a distinction between *Wahrnehmung* and *Perzeption*, or what I have called perceptual intuition. As noted above, *Perzeptionen* are a kind of originary intuition—specifically, originary intuitions of physical objects. By contrast, *Wahrnehmungen*, or what I shall call perceptions, are a kind of “originary

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that, at any point of its duration, would be possible would be actualized, *and* that the process would have remained infinitely harmonious no matter which of the previously possible courses of perception would have been actualized. For a discussion of this point, see Smith (2003, 171 ff.).

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the role of this prefigurement of adequate givenness in Husserl’s theory of perception, see Bernet (1978a) and (1978b).

<sup>26</sup> To be more precise, it does so as long as the perceptual intuition concerned does not enter into conflict with other perceptual intuitions of the same or other objects, which would result in the initially motivated positing’s becoming modified or “modalized” into a negating, doubting, or mere presumption of the actuality of the object (EU 93 ff.).

evidence” (*originäre Evidenz*), by which Husserl means originary intuitions involving positings motivated by the originary givenness of the objects intuited—in this case, the perceptual givenness of physical objects (III/1 318; cf. XXXVIII 342).

Second, however, the perceptual givenness of an object also constitutes a ground for polythetic positings of the object in the form of perceptual judgements relating to it—say, a judgement to the effect that it forms the subject of some states of affairs. Two qualifications are in order at this point. The first is that what constitutes a justificatory ground here is not the mere perceptual givenness of the object, or its presence as an object of a perceptual intuition or *Perzeption*, but its presence as an object of a perception or *Wahrnehmung*—that is, as an object posited in a perceptual positing (cf. XXXVI 5; XXXVIII 242). The second qualification is that the justificatory ground concerned is not, strictly speaking, the object as given in what Husserl calls “simple” (*schlichte*) perception—that is, a perception directed on individual objects. The ground is, rather, the judged state of affairs as given in so called “categorial” (*kategoriale*) perception: a special kind of evidence that is founded on, and thus presupposes, simple perception, from which it arises through a process of logical or categorial articulation of the object perceived (XIX/2 681 ff.; XXVI 126; EU 242 ff.)

Now, as his regarding it as a justificatory ground would lead to expect, Husserl takes perceptual givenness to satisfy his basic conception of justification. With regard to the Being Requirement, he holds that any instance of perceptual givenness is indicative of the being of the object given:

Every experience [*Erfahrung*] evidently has a right [*Recht*] in itself. If I see a table, then I have a right to say: “That is a table”, the most evident right, a primordial right. For I see, precisely, the table itself in the flesh. And that is no coincidence, but it is an essential matter that experience has experiential right [*Erfahrungsrecht*] (XXXVI 118).

As this makes clear, Husserl takes perceptual givenness to be indicative of the being of the object given because it constitutes the originary givenness of the object—the mode of givenness in which it is present as itself in the flesh (XXXVI 86). Indeed, he holds that the originary givenness of any object, of whatever kind, is indicative of its being (cf. III/1 51, 316). However, he also holds that the degree to which it is thus indicative varies with its degree of bodily self-givenness. Specifically, he argues that whereas instances of adequate

givenness are absolutely being-indicative, in the sense of guaranteeing the being of the object given, instances of perceptual givenness, and inadequate givenness in general, are only relatively or presumptively being-indicative, where this means that they indicate the being of the object given in a merely defeasible way (cf. III/1 329; VIII 35; XXXII 138). This difference is a consequence of the difference in status between these forms of originary givenness. As noted, adequate givenness is absolute, in the sense of not depending on the correctness of anticipations of future experience. And, given that originary givenness is a justificatory ground for positing at all, this means that the being-indicateness of adequate givenness will, likewise, be absolute. By contrast, perceptual givenness is relative or presumptive, in the sense of depending on a presumption to the effect that future experience will, or would, fulfil the anticipations involved. And this, according to Husserl, means that its being-indicateness will be similarly relative or presumptive:

The being of what is bodily there in the thing-perception is in principle a mere pretension; a justified one, in so far as the perception provides an originary justificatory ground [*Rechtsgrund*] for the statement that the thing is, and has the properties that appear. But it depends precisely on the further course and entire context of experience whether this justified pretension of being retains and sustains, and perhaps constantly further confirms, its justification—namely, if further experience, and first of all the further continuing harmonious progress of the perception, again and again justifiably motivates the positing of the being and being-thus of the thing (XXXVI 109).

Although he does not make any comparable statements with regard to the Awareness Requirement, Husserl no doubt takes perceptual givenness to satisfy this requirement as well. Indeed, it is, initially, hard to see how it could possibly fail to do so. According to this requirement, something is a justificatory ground for a subject to posit an object only if she is aware of it, where the awareness required is intentional awareness of a kind that need not be epistemic, positional or explicit. Being the mode of givenness in which physical objects are intentionally present in acts of outer perception, perceptual givenness would clearly seem to be a possible subject of intentional awareness. And there is nothing in Husserl's notion of perceptual givenness to suggest that this awareness must be epistemic, positional or explicit.

Finally, Husserl clearly believes that perceptual givenness meets the Immediacy Requirement, holding, as he does, that perceptual givenness

constitutes an immediate justificatory ground in the relevant sense:

Irrespective of the object-domain [*Gegenständlichkeitssphäre*] to which it may relate itself, cognition, as is well known, is immediate or mediate. That is: Cognitions, in the form of judgements that have a—perhaps limited—justificatory ground, draw their justification [*Recht*] either immediately from a being-grasping [*seinserfassenden*], “giving” act, in the way in which, for instance, a perceptual judgement immediately “expresses” (or explicates and expresses) what is “given” in a perceiving as actual; or they draw their justification from an inferential process that, with regard to the question concerning the justification of its “premises”, for its part lastly points back to immediately giving acts (III/2 534).<sup>27</sup>

And, again:

Perception is the ultimate source of justification for any assertion of reason [*Vernunftsbehauptung*] concerning existence. For perception is the most ordinary form of experience [*Erfahrung*] (XXXVI 86).

Husserl’s claims to the contrary notwithstanding, I want to suggest that there are grounds for doubting whether perceptual givenness meets the requirements of his basic conception of justification. And I want to suggest that these reasons, in different ways, all relate to the fact that Husserlian perceptual givenness is what could be called a rational mode of givenness, as we now shall see.

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<sup>27</sup> According to this passage, a perceptual judgement can be immediately justified by what is given in a perception. In light of the above account, this claim might seem problematic for at least two reasons. First, if the perception in question is construed as a categorial perception of the judged state of affairs, we might worry whether the justification provided by what is given in such perception can really be seen as immediate. For, as we saw, categorial perception is founded on, and thereby presupposes, simple perception. And this might, at least initially, suggest that whatever justificatory force the perceptual givenness of the states of affairs may have derives, in part, from the justificatory force of the perceptual givenness of the individual objects on which it is founded, and hence that it cannot, after all, be seen as providing immediate justification. Second, the worry would remain even if we were to take the perception concerned to be a simple perception of the individual object occurring in the judged state of affairs, and so were to take Husserl to hold, contrary to his official view, that perceptual judgements can be immediately justified by simple perceptions. For the simple perception of an object involves a perceptual positing of the object justified by its perceptual givenness in perceptual intuition. And this can make it seem as if, in being justified by a simple perception, a perceptual judgement is at least partly justified by something—the perceptual positing involved—that is itself justified by something else—the perceptual givenness by which the perceptual positing is justified and motivated. And this, in turn, can make it seem as if the justification that the perception provides for the perceptual judgement cannot, after all, be construed as immediate, depending as it does for its justificatory force on another justificatory ground. Addressing these issues here would lead too far afield, requiring, as it would, consideration both of Husserl’s conception of categorial perception and of its relation to simple perception, and his complex view of the relation between perceptual intuition and perception. Fortunately, however, this is not needed, since the points I will be making with regard to whether perceptual givenness meets the Immediacy Requirement are independent of them.

## 5. Perceptual Givenness as a Rational Mode of Givenness

As I shall use the term, a mode of givenness is rational just in case an object's being given for a subject in that mode requires the accomplishment of relevant rationally motivated intentions on her part—that is, intentions motivated by justificatory grounds. That Husserl, in effect, regards perceptual givenness as rational in this sense is clear from his holding that the anticipations supposedly involved with any instance of such givenness are not random, but rationally motivated. Thus, for instance, he characterizes them as “predelineating intentions” (*vorzeichnenden Intentionen*), by which he means intentions for which something “speaks” (cf. XI 22, 41 ff.), or for which the subject has “motives and justificatory grounds” (XXXII 256).<sup>28</sup>

What are these justificatory grounds? The following passage, where “progress of approximation” refers to perception conceived as a process oriented towards the regulative idea of adequate givenness, suggest that they are of two kinds, which Husserl calls “self-givenness” and the “progress of harmonious self-givenness”:

Every progress of approximation carries within itself ... a necessary horizon of coming indubitability, a necessary future-expectation that it will be thus, and bring us nearer to the true self [*wahre Selbst*]. This is not an expectation in general, but an expectation that is motivated and justified by the self-givenness and by the progress of harmonious self-givenness, an expectation that is apodictic in this modality of certainty (VIII 399).

Beginning with the former kind of ground, what is the self-givenness in question? It cannot be the givenness of the perceptually given object taken as a whole. For in that case the anticipations concerned would both be conditions of the possibility of such givenness and be motivated by it, which would be incoherent. It can only, it seems, be a part of the givenness of the object—specifically, the actual or sensuous givenness of a certain range of its features. But how can the sensuous givenness of certain features of an object constitute a justificatory ground for the anticipations by virtue of which other features of the

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<sup>28</sup> I might note that in taking Husserl to construe the anticipations at issue as rationally motivated, I am not claiming that he regards them as intentions for which the subject must be able to *provide* justification in the form of justificatory grounds. I am claiming that he takes them to be intentions that, by their very nature, always already *are* justified for the subject, and hence intentions that simply could not arise unless she already had the relevant kind of justificatory grounds.

object are anticipatorily given? As it turns out, the supposed justificatory ground here is not merely the sensuously givenness of the relevant features, but also the “object-type” (*Gegenstandstypus*) that this givenness activates (cf. XVI 183 f.).

For present purposes, Husserlian object-types can—very simplified—be construed as rules to the effect that such and such object-features typically occur in such and such combinations, and appear in such and such ways from such and such perspectives (cf. EU 31 f.; 400 f.).<sup>29</sup> According to Husserl, any set of sensuously given features will invariably activate some object-type of other (EU 114). The activation will be associatively based: The object-type activated will represent a combination of features that includes those instantiated in the set by which the object-type is activated. The object-type will, however, also include other features, instances of which will not be included in this set. And the anticipations of future appearances of features involved will be motivated by the object-type in the sense that the anticipatorily appearing features will be, precisely, instances of those other features (cf. EU 385 f., 399; XXXII 152 ff.).<sup>30</sup>

Roughly speaking, object-types are generated and consolidated through repeated perceptual intuitions of objects exhibiting the relevant combinations of features, and the retaining of these intuitions in memory, first in fresh memory or “retention” (*Retention*), and then, after a process of becoming increasingly vague, in “sleeping” (*schlafende*) memory, in which they are maintained as undifferentiated “sediments” (*Sedimente*) (EU 136 ff., 385; XI 178).<sup>31</sup> We should note that the object-types brought about through this process do not simply coincide with the memorially retained perceptual intuitions concerned, but are a product of them. Thus, an object-type may become associatively activated without any corresponding previous perceptual intuitions, be they maintained in fresh or sleeping memory, having to become activated too. Upon entering a room, my general belief that rooms have floors may become activated, and inform my further perceptual intuitions of the room. And although this belief has been generated and consolidated through previous particular perceptual intuitions of rooms with floors, none of these need be activated along with the

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<sup>29</sup> For detailed accounts of the nature of Husserlian object-types, and their supposed role in perception, see Lohmar (2003) and (2014). See also Rapic (1991).

<sup>30</sup> Depending on the degree of generality of the object-type, the features whose future appearance the type gives reason to anticipate will be more or less general, and thus be compatible with a more or less extensive range of actually appearing features (cf. EU 35 f.).



belief (cf. EU 395).

As already indicated, the object-type associatively activated by the sensuous givenness of a set of object-features do not only contribute to motivate anticipations of the appearance of further such features, however. It also contributes to justifying them, in the sense of constituting a reason for anticipating the appearance of precisely these features (cf. EU 114).<sup>32</sup> And it does so because the object-types are themselves justified—namely, by the memorial process through which they are brought into being. The retaining of the relevant perceptual intuitions in retention and sleeping memory does not, in other words, only serve to generate the object-types, but also provides justification for them, a justification that increases with every type-consistent (cf. XI 188 f.).

As this suggests, the first kind of ground by which the perceptual anticipations involved with an instance of perceptual givenness are justified, what Husserl in the passage quoted above calls “selfgivenness”, should be seen as a complex one, consisting, ultimately, of two components. One is the memorially retained perceptual intuitions responsible for the generation and justification of the object-type by which the anticipations concerned are motivated. And the other is the sensuous givenness of the set of object-features by which that object-type is associatively activated.

Let us now turn to the second kind of justificatory ground mentioned in the passage quoted above, the “progress of harmonious selfgivenness”. The progress in question is that of continuous perceptual fulfilment, whereby anticipations of appearances of features of an object become increasingly fulfilled by the actual appearances of those features. The supposed relevance of such processes in the present context derives from the fact that, as Husserl argues, what is achieved through them is not merely a continuous confirmation of previous anticipations, but also an increased justification for current ones:

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<sup>31</sup> For an account of what this retaining in memory consists in, see de Warren (2009).

<sup>32</sup> As Husserl notes, one and the same set sensuously given features may, and often does, activate conflicting object-types. This, however, does not detract from the present point—namely, that he takes the anticipations involved in any instance of perceptual givenness to be, in part, rationally motivated by some activated object-type or other. On the contrary, it supports the point. For, in the case of a conflict between activated types, the conflict consists, precisely, in the fact that each of them rationally motivates conflicting sets of anticipations (cf. EU 103 f.).

Every progress of experience in the sense of bringing-closer [*Näherbringung*] and harmonious certainty [offers] not just new certainty in general, but [accomplishes], for the future and for any free intervention and the experiential future to be accomplished thereby, an originally justified expectation, whose correlate is the necessity of the experienced being—a relative necessity, that it actually is; the impossibility that it is not (VIII 400).

And again:

Evidently, the justificatory force [*Rechtskraft*] of the expectation must increase with the number of earlier inductions and confirmations, presupposed that, through analogy, not just the earlier perceptions, but also their pre-expectations and fulfilments come to co-awakening and to merging coincidence (XXXII 256).<sup>33</sup>

Given this, the second kind of ground by which the perceptual anticipations involved with a current instance of perceptual givenness are justified would, it seems, consist in memorially retained fulfilments of anticipations involved with earlier instances of perceptual givenness belonging to the same perceptual process as the current one. And the sense in which the retained fulfilments of previous anticipations contribute to justifying the current anticipations would be that they provide inductive justification for believing that the current anticipations, too, will be fulfilled in the further course of perception, a justification whose strength increases with the duration of the perceptual process as a harmonious one.

There is no need here to enter into the question of the supposed relation between the two sorts of grounds considered. What matters for present purposes are just the following basic points: first, that Husserl takes the anticipations involved with an instance of perceptual givenness to be rationally motivated, and so takes perceptual givenness to be a rational mode of givenness in the present sense of the term; and, second, that he takes the justificatory grounds by which the anticipations are rationally motivated to include memorially retained perceptual intuitions and perceptual fulfilments. For these points are sufficient to pose a challenge to perceptual givenness satisfying the three requirements of Husserl's basic conception of justification. Or so I will now argue.

## 6. Perceptual Givenness and the Being Requirement

The problem with regard to the Being Requirement is that there seems to be grounds for thinking that the supposed being-indicativeness of perceptual givenness both must and cannot be accounted for in terms of perceptual givenness being a rational mode of givenness. To see this, recall first that, unlike the being-indicativeness of adequate givenness, which is absolute, the being-indicativeness of perceptual givenness is merely presumptive. That is, an instance of perceptual givenness indicates the being of the object given only on the presumption that the further process of perception would remain harmonious, no matter which of the many currently possible courses it might take. Granting for the moment Husserl's assumption that the adequate givenness of a physical object would have guaranteed its being, this means that accounting for the being-indicativeness of an instance of perceptual givenness must include accounting for the involved presumption about the possibly continued harmoniousness of the perceptual process to which the instance belongs. In particular, it must include showing that and how the presumption is rationally motivated. For unless it were—unless the subject had justificatory grounds for taking it that her perceptual process would continue to unfold harmoniously—it would be unintelligible how the presumption could contribute to establish the being-indicativeness of the instance of perceptual givenness concerned.

Accounting for the being-indicativeness of an instance of perceptual givenness, then, must include accounting for the justificatory grounds the perceiving subject has for presuming that the relevant anticipations would be fulfilled in the further course of perception. This, however, is tantamount to saying that it must include accounting for the justificatory grounds she has for these anticipations themselves. And, as we saw in the previous section, Husserl proposes to account for these grounds, in part, in terms of the previous perceptual intuitions responsible for the generation and justification of the associatively activated object-types by which the anticipations are motivated. But to account for the being-indicativeness of an instance of perceptual givenness in terms of the anticipations involved being rationally motivated by

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<sup>33</sup> See also XXIV 347 and III/1 320.

previous perceptual intuitions is, in effect, to account for it in terms of perceptual givenness being a rational mode of givenness, of the kind delineated above. Indeed, if one accepts that perceptual givenness must involve anticipation in the way Husserl supposes, it is hard to see how else one could account for its being-indicativeness.

Inescapable as this approach to the problem of the being-indicativeness of perceptual givenness would seem, though, it faces two problems. The first is that it requires a solution to a problem that is at least just as hard as the problem to be solved. For, on the proposed approach, in order to understand how a current instance of perceptual givenness can indicate the being of the object given, we need to understand how past perceptual intuitions can provide justification for the object-type by virtue of which the current anticipations of future perceptual intuitions are motivated. We need, in short, to understand how previous experiences can provide justification for positing future ones. And, as the long history of attempts to solve the problem of induction makes clear, this is no small task.

The second, and more important problem, is that the proposed approach would seem to be circular, in that it would appear to require a solution to the very problem that is to be solved. As we have just seen, the approach requires a solution to the problem of how past perceptual intuitions can provide justification for current anticipations. But any solution to this problem must, for its part, rely on a solution to the problem of the being-indicativeness of perceptual givenness. To see this, note first that past perceptual intuitions could offer justification for current anticipations only if they previously offered justification for positing the combinations of features of which they were intuitions: From what could the justification that past perceptual intuitions of a particular combination of features supposedly provides for positing future appearances of that combination ultimately derive, if not from a justification that these perceptual intuitions, each of them, previously offered for positing the combination as a then currently instantiated one? But, given the Being Requirement, this is to say that past instances of the perceptual givenness of a combination of features can constitute justificatory grounds for current anticipations of appearances of that combination only if those past instances were being-indicative—specifically, in this case, with regard to the instantiation

of the combination of features in question. And this, in turn, means that solving the problem of the being-indicativeness of perceptual givenness is required for solving the problem of how perceptual anticipations can be justified by past perceptual intuitions. So, to account for the being-indicativeness of an instance of perceptual givenness partly in terms of the anticipations involved being rationally motivated by past perceptual intuitions is to presuppose that the problem to be solved has already been solved.

Now, these problems, and especially the second, give at least some reason to doubt that perceptual givenness satisfies the Being Requirement. At least this is so if, as I have suggested, the proposed account of its being-indicativeness is the only initially plausible account available. For, if that account is in fact circular, we then have at least some reason to believe that perceptual givenness cannot be coherently conceived as being-indicative, which, in turn, gives at least some reason to doubt that it is, in fact, thus indicative.

### **7. Perceptual Givenness and the Awareness Requirement**

The problem with regard to the Awareness Requirement is that, when combined with the presumed fact that perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, the requirement might appear to entail that perceptual givenness is impossible. As we recall, if perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, then a subject has a physical object perceptually given to her only if the anticipations involved are rationally motivated—that is, motivated by justificatory grounds. Given the Awareness Requirement, on which something is a justificatory ground for a subject only if she is aware of it, this is, in effect, to say that a subject has an object perceptually given to her only if she is aware of all the justificatory grounds by which her anticipations are motivated. Such awareness seems impossible, however: As saw in Section 5, the justificatory grounds for the perceptual anticipations involved in an instance of perceptual givenness include, among other things, the past perceptual intuitions responsible for generating and consolidating the object-type by which those anticipations are motivated. And these intuitions, it would seem, are simply too numerous and, most of them, too far removed in time, for them all to be subject to awareness. If perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, then, the Awareness Requirement would appear to entail that perceptual givenness

requires an impossible form of awareness, and hence that it is itself impossible—which, obviously, would mean that it fails to meet the requirement.

The most promising way of challenging this argument would be to reject the premise that there can be no awareness of all the justificatory grounds of which, if perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, the Awareness Requirement demands that there be awareness. One way of doing so would be to argue that, for Husserl at least, the claim makes no sense. For, as we saw in Section 5, the past perceptual intuitions by which, supposedly, a subject's object-types have been generated and justified are not previous perceptual intuitions *simpliciter*, but previous intuitions as retained in current memory, be it fresh or sleeping.

It is, of course, true that this is Husserl's view. But one might well wonder whether it can be correct. Is it really plausible that a subject can have a form of memorial awareness, even if only very minimal, of *all* the perceptual intuitions by which her object-types have been generated and justified, including those accomplished in early childhood?

Moreover, even if Husserl were right, it is far from clear that the supposed memorial awareness of many of the perceptual intuitions in question is of a kind that the Awareness Requirement would or should allow. As noted in Section 2, it is reasonable to see the requirement as allowing that the required awareness can be implicit, where an implicit awareness is one that could, but need not, become explicit through a change of mental focus. And while, in ordinary circumstances, a subject can be explicitly aware of only a very few of the perceptual intuitions serving as justificatory grounds for her object-types, she can, plausibly, be implicitly aware of a significantly higher number of them. But it would also seem that, if she is to be aware of all of them, the awareness she must have of many, if not most, of them must be so minimal as to be not even implicit, implying as this would that it could be made explicit. A case in point would, again, be those, or most of those, accomplished in early childhood: If they can be conceived as retained in memory at all, they can only be conceived as so deeply sedimented as to be unreachable by any form of explicit awareness—which indeed Husserl himself could be seen to recognize (cf. XLII 39). Now, it does not follow from the account in Section 2 that such awareness would not be allowed under the Being Requirement. But one could argue that, if it were

allowed, the restrictions the requirement places on justified grounds would be so minimal as to undermine whatever motivation it has.<sup>34</sup> For it is hard to see how there could be a relevant justificatory difference between something of which a subject has this sort of minimal awareness, and something of which she is not aware at all—say, the reliability of her perceptual faculties. And so it is hard to see what basis there could be for a requirement on which the former, but not the latter, qualifies as a justificatory ground.

This problem might suggest a different way of rejecting the premise that there can be no awareness of all the previous perceptual intuitions of which, if perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, the Awareness Requirement would seem to demand that there be awareness. For if, on pain of being deprived of its basis, the requirement should be construed as allowing only implicit and explicit awareness, then why not restrict the perceptual intuitions of which the requirement demands that there be awareness to perceptual intuitions of which there is at least implicit awareness? This would make it possible to reject the premise without undermining the rationale for the Awareness Requirement, as the first attempted rejection would appear to do.

The problem with this move, at least from a Husserlian perspective, is that it would seem to run counter to Husserl's view that the perceptual intuitions through which object-types become generated, also, and at the same time, provide justification for them. For, assuming that perceptual intuitions of which a subject is not even implicitly aware—such as intuitions accomplished in early childhood—may still have contributed to the generation of at least one object-type of hers, then, on the current construal of the Awareness Requirement, those intuitions would not also have contributed to justifying the type.

## **8. Perceptual Givenness and the Immediacy Requirement**

With regard to the Immediacy Requirement, the problem is that there is reason to think that perceptual givenness is not an immediate justificatory ground, which reason, once more, relates to the presumed fact that perceptual

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<sup>34</sup> This is especially so if, as some passages suggest, Husserl's motivation for the requirement is akin to what Bergmann has called the Subject's Perspective Objection: "If the subject holding a belief isn't aware of what the belief has going for it, then she isn't aware of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or an arbitrary conviction. From that we may conclude that from her perspective it is an accident that her belief is true. And that implies that

givenness is a rational mode of givenness. For, given this fact, any instance of perceptual givenness would seem to depend for its justificatory force on other justificatory grounds—specifically, the previous perceptual intuitions and fulfilments by which the perceptual anticipations involved are, in part, motivated and justified. And, by the Immediacy Requirement, this would be to say that perceptual givenness is not an immediate justificatory ground.

One way of trying to resist this argument would be to claim that although perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, it is not wholly so. Specifically, it might be claimed that although, in the case of a perceptually given object, the givenness of its non-sensuously present features depends on the subject's having justificatory grounds for the anticipations through which these features are given, the givenness of the sensuously present features of the object does not so depend. This, if successful, would allow that while the perceptual givenness of an object does not provide immediate justification for positing the object as a whole, it still provides such justification for positing certain features of the object—namely, those that are sensuously present.<sup>35</sup> And this would suffice for its being an at least partly immediate justificatory ground.

For this line of argument to succeed, the actual givenness of the sensuously present features of a perceptually given object would have to be independent of the anticipatory givenness of its non-sensuously present features. For otherwise the justificatory grounds required for the givenness of the latter features would also be required for the givenness of the former. As we now shall see, however, there are reasons to think that this condition cannot be met, reasons that Husserl himself provides.

A perceptually given object is present as having a range of different features, some of which are non-sensuously given and some of which are sensuously given. But these features are interdependent, and form an integrated whole, in which the identity of each feature is at least partly dependent on that

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it isn't a justified belief" (2006, 12).

<sup>35</sup> That this is Husserl's view receives some measure of support from this passage: "Perception justifies only in so far as it is actual perception, only in so far as the genuine perceptual appearance is in question. Thus, not with respect to the determinations pertaining to the genuinely non-perceived rear side" (XXIV 346/342). This support is, however, effectively undermined by the, presumably later, addition of the following footnote: "That is not correct. The mode of justification might be a different and less perfect one, but the being of the object with rear side determinations is also posited. How else could I justifiably say: There is the thing? Thus, differences in perfection" (XXIV 346/342).



of the others. And this means that no subset of the features can be given as an independent part of the features of the object as a whole (III/1 319). Consider a perception of a house from the front. In this case, only the front of the house, and the features pertaining to it, are sensuously given. But the sensuously present features of the house depend on its non-sensuously present features for their identity: The object could not, for instance, be sensuously given as having a *front-side* were it not also given as having a *left-side*, a *right-side* and a *rear-side* (cf. XVI 51; M VII 130; EU 31).

However, if the sensuously given features of a perceptually given object depend, in this way, on its non-sensuously given features, then their sensuous givenness will, as such, depend on the non-sensuous givenness of these other features. For the sensuous givenness of the former and the non-sensuous givenness of the latter are, precisely, the sensuous and non-sensuous givenness of the features concerned. And the interdependence that characterize the relation between these features in their respective forms of givenness will, therefore, also characterize the relation between these instances of givenness themselves. And this is to say that the stated condition for perceptual givenness being an at least partly immediate justificatory ground cannot be met.

Yet another way of challenging the argument would be to claim that although perceptual givenness is a rational mode of givenness, this entails only that instances of perceptual givenness depend on other justificatory grounds for their occurrence, and does not also entail that they depend on them for their justificatory force, which is what my argument requires. It might, in other words, be argued that from the fact that an instance of perceptual givenness requires the subject to have justificatory grounds for the anticipations involved, it does not follow that the justification provided by that instance depends on the justification provided by those grounds. All that follows it that the very occurrence of the instance depends on those grounds, since, without them, there would be no anticipations of the kind required for perceptual givenness.

The problem with this response is that, like the previous one, it requires that the actual givenness of the sensuously present features of a perceptually given object be independent of the anticipatory givenness of its non-sensuously present features. For if the justification provided by an instance of perceptual givenness does not depend on justification provided by the grounds for the

anticipations involved, this can only be because that justification is provided by a part of the givenness that these anticipations do not contribute to determine. But, as we have just seen, there can be no such part, at least not by Husserl's lights.

Finally, it could be argued that while the argument presented might show that perceptual givenness is not an immediate justificatory ground, it would not, for all that, show that perceptual givenness fails to satisfy the Immediacy Requirement. For the possibility remains that perceptual givenness is a mediate justificatory ground, which could suffice for it to satisfy the requirement. Indeed, that it should be construed in this way is, arguably, precisely what the argument suggests.

It is, of course, true that the argument does not show that perceptual givenness falls short of the Immediacy Requirement, and this for the reason stated. But if sustainable it would, I believe, come close. For if perceptual givenness is to be a mediate ground in the sense of the requirement, it would, ultimately, have to depend for its justificatory force on an immediate ground. And, although I cannot argue the point here, there are no plausible candidates for such a ground, at least not in Husserl. But if this is so, then, even granting that the argument establishes that perceptual givenness is a mediate ground in some other sense, perceptual givenness would not meet the Immediacy Requirement as stated.

## **9. Conclusion**

I have argued that there are reasons to think that Husserlian perceptual givenness fails to meet the three requirements of Husserl's own basic conception of justification, reasons relating to the presumed fact that perceptual givenness is what I have proposed to call a rational mode of givenness. If the argument can be upheld, the upshot is that one may endorse Husserl's basic conception of justification or the view that perceptual givenness is a justificatory ground, but not both. This would pose a challenge, not only for Husserlian epistemology, but for any approach that would want to combine veritism, access internalism or modest foundationalism with a view of perception and perceptual justification relevantly similar to Husserl's.

How best to meet the challenge would depend on the perceived relative

weight of the considerations in favour of each of the conflicting views. For a Husserlian, it might seem that the best option would be to retain the view that perceptual givenness is a justificatory ground, and discard Husserl's basic conception of justification. At least this would be so if the emphasis is placed on the crucial epistemological role Husserl accords the former. This option would come at a price, though. Not only does Husserl take his basic conception of justification to be correct. But an important part of his attempted justification for perceptual givenness being a justificatory ground is taken to consist in its satisfying this conception. So, opting for the alternative concerned would require the provision of a new basis for construing perceptual givenness as a justificatory ground, in the form of a non-veritist, non-foundationalist and at least partly non-internalist conception of justification.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> I would like to thank Frode Kjosavik, Søren Overgaard, John Richard Sageng and Ingunn Larsen for valuable comments on an earlier version of this essay.



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