
**Reviewed by Amedeo Giorgi, Saybrook Graduate Institute**

It is hard to imagine a more comprehensive book about the development of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl than this one by J.N. Mohanty. The author, of course, is an established Husserl scholar and he has commented on the writings of Husserl throughout his career. However, in this work, Mohanty outshines himself. He does not merely repeat his earlier commentaries, but he raises them to new heights. We are learning about Husserl’s struggles and achievements by a scholar who has reached his most mature level of development as he brings new insights to, and new queries concerning, Husserl’s conceptualizations as he tracks his zig-zag development of phenomenology from its earliest moments.

It turns out that the book under review is actually the first volume of a projected two volume work, the second of which has not appeared as yet. So this first volume really only deals with the first half of Husserl’s career. Mohanty divides his coverage of Husserl into two basic periods: the Halle Period (1886–1900) and the Göttingen Period (1901–1916). Mohanty points out that the Halle Period’s achievement was the *Logical Investigations* and the capstone of the Göttingen years was *Ideas I* as well as much research that did not appear in *Ideas I*. It should be noted that while Mohanty is dutiful in tracking the emergence of Husserlian ideas, this is not an introductory book. Prior readings of, and grappling with, Husserl’s two major works would be a precondition for a successful following of Mohanty’s unfolding of Husserl’s phenomenological concepts.

Mohanty begins with Husserl’s *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, which appeared in 1891, and which Mohanty interprets to be a phenomenology of arithmetic before Husserl ever explicitly dreamt about the movement he started. After covering that work, Mohanty covers some of the articles Husserl wrote between 1886 and 1900, and what was key during this period was that Husserl broke out of the Brentanian framework in which he was trained. Husserl clarified some ambiguities that he discovered in Brentano’s understanding of *Vorstellung* (presentation). Husserl argues that every presentation has an immanent content (versus an object as Brentano held) and that they do not refer to existence. This breakthrough was achieved with the help of interactions with other members of the school of Brentano, such as Twardowski and Marty, as well as with Bolzano.
The next critical topic is Mohanty’s discussion of the *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901). It is impossible to cover all of the rich insights and pertinent historical remarks that Mohanty makes in discussing the issues raised by the *Logical Investigations*. Suffice it to say that he covers the refutation of Psychologism, the theory of meaning, Husserl’s development of formal ontology, the theory of consciousness and intentionality, and finally, the phenomenology of knowledge. In his concluding remarks concerning the *Logical Investigations*, Mohanty asserts that he believes that the work is a unified project whose essential task was “(1) to determine the essence of the logical as such and (2) to clarify the relation between subjective logical experiences (Erlebnisse) and objective logical entities (propositions, truths and laws)” (pp. 173–174). Despite his admiration for Husserl’s thinking, Mohanty’s presentation is not hagiographical. He points out and discusses the limitations and difficulties of Husserl’s thought as well as his achievements throughout the text.

While the discussion of *Ideas I* takes up a major portion of the second part of this book, Mohanty also covers several important topics that were critical in leading Husserl “from the descriptive-psychological clarification of pure logic…. To the transcendental phenomenology of absolute consciousness” (pp. 185–186). These topics are the publications: *The Idea of Phenomenology, Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge, Lectures on the Theory of Meaning and Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*. During this time Husserl also gave lectures on thing and space and on time. Equally important topics covered by Mohanty that Husserl lectured on during these years were: Intersubjectivity, ethics and the theory of values, aesthetic consciousness and phantasy, picture consciousness and memory. Of course, the lectures on time were especially critical for Husserl’s development even though he did not include their results in *Ideas I*.

Finally, Mohanty comes to a discussion of *Ideas I*. He devotes four chapters to the review of this important book. He discusses it under the guidance of the following headings: Facts and essence; natural standpoint and epoché; the structure of consciousness; and truth and reason. The comments here are thorough and enlightening. Despite my many years of studying Husserl, I learned a great deal more about Husserl’s philosophy because of Mohanty’s mode of summarizing and presenting the key issues. His comments are always clear.

Mohanty clearly appreciates what Husserl achieved in *Ideas I*. He writes, “The value of this work is sometimes unfairly underrated in the light of Husserl’s later works, but I must add that without a comprehension of the *Ideas I*, it is not possible to enter into the later philosophy” (p. 395). Mohanty then adds “… *Ideas I* is able to combine logical-analytical acumen with deep spiritual vision, and achieves a level of philosophical sophistication seldom attained by Husserl’s contemporaries” (p. 396).