Phenomenology in its Beginnings

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Husserl explicitly acknowledges the great debt which we owe Brentano who, in his efforts to reform psychology, revealed intentionality as the decisive feature of psychic life.¹ Yet Brentano’s efforts failed to escape the prevailing prejudices of the naturalistic tradition. Intentionality is treated as a property of consciousness with psychical life being always understood as parallel to the physical. Methodological procedures of psychology and physics would be parallel. Because of this Husserl believes that Brentano did not grasp the true sense of inquiry into conscious life in its regressive character. A genuine intentional psychology is therefore never worked out by Brentano.

It is precisely this task which is accomplished in Husserl’s Logical Investigations.² One must only attend to what is decisively new in these studies to see how this is carried out:

What is new in the Logical Investigations is found not at all in the merely ontological investigations, which had a one-sided influence contrary to the inner most sense of the work, but rather in the subjectively directed investigations (above all the fifth and sixth, in the second volume of 1901) in which, for the first time, the cogitata qua cogitata, as essential moments of each conscious experience as it is given in genuine inner experience, come into their own and immediately come to dominate the whole method of intentional analysis.³

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³ Carr, p. 234.
With the emergence of the cogitata qua cogitata⁴ in these subjectively oriented investigations, self-evidence (Evidenz) that "petrified logical idol"⁵ viz. self-evidence, itself becomes a problem. Husserl further asserts that the examination of these texts would disclose the beginnings of phenomenology. Keeping in mind the central importance of clarifying origins in Parts I and II of the Crisis as preparatory for entering upon the path of phenomenological philosophy one might very well ask whether Husserl himself is calling for a retrieval of the beginnings of his phenomenology in the Logical Investigations. Taking the text we have cited above from Logical Investigations as our guide we would like to take such a step in the following remarks. The focal point of our interest will be the ascendency in importance of Husserl's doctrine of truth as a way of response to the problems of establishing the boundaries of natural science and psychology. From a consideration of these themes in their interrelatedness we hope to show how the primal sense of Husserlian phenomenology is established, the sense which he is still involved in developing even in his last work.

I. PROBLEM OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE ESSENCE OF PSYCHICAL BEING

In the beginning of his analysis of intentional experience in chapter two of the fifth investigation Husserl indicates that there are serious reasons for calling into question Brentano's supposed delimitation of the fields of psychology and natural science in terms of the distinction between psychical and physical phenomena. For Husserl there is a great deal of ambiguity attaching to this distinction. He addresses himself directly to this ambiguity in the appendix to the sixth study.⁶

1. Inner and outer perception: Brentano's View

Brentano sought to delimit the boundaries of empirical psychology while avoiding all presuppositions. The Lockean distinction between sensation and reflection⁷—outer and inner perception—provides a suitable point of depar-


⁵ Carr, p. 254.

⁶ Findlay, pp. 852-869.