

HUSSERL'S *LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS*: AN INTRODUCTION

The years 2000/2001 mark the centennial of the initial publication of Edmund Husserl's remarkable *Logical Investigations*, to which the present volume is devoted. Each of the first six essays in this issue is directed respectively at a different one of the six logical investigations in the second volume of Husserl's work.¹ The aim of the present paper is to set the stage for these essays by making some remarks about the first volume, the *Prolegomena to Pure Logic* and by providing a thumbnail sketch of the argument of the second volume as a whole.² In the opening lines of the foreword to the second edition (1913) Husserl famously characterized the *Logical Investigations* as "a breakthrough and thus not an end, but a beginning". In order to appreciate the sense of this remark, it is necessary to look backwards as well as forwards from the book. With this in mind, I begin with review of the two sources of the work, as reported by Husserl himself in the original foreword of 1900.

Husserl says that the *Logical Investigations* grew, first, out of unavoidable (*unabweisbare*) problems that repeatedly hindered his efforts, over many years, to provide a philosophical clarification of the theory and method of pure mathematics. When he looked to contemporary deductive systems, he found only obscurity regarding their theoretical status. Flagging the self-reflexive demands he would place on phenomenology, Husserl complains that contemporary logic, called to clarify science, is not itself a science. This complaint, it bears emphasizing, should not be construed as a failure to appreciate the development of mathematical logic which Husserl characterizes as an "indisputable discipline of mathematical form and method". Yet it was precisely the development of this logic, not restricted to a purely quantitative domain, that brought home to him the need for "a general theory of formal deductive systems", a theory that not only elaborates the connections and differences between quantitative and non-quantitative domains, but takes the further step towards "the more fundamental questions of the essence of the form of knowledge in contrast to the matter of knowledge and the sense of the difference between formal ... and material determinations, truths, laws".³

In the original foreword of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl singles out an additional source of the work, namely, a dissatisfaction with attempts, including his own, to clarify the logic of deductive sciences through psychological analyses. Psychology was “clear and helpful” when it came to questions of origins of mathematical notions or the formation of a practical method. But the transition “from the psychological connections of thinking to the logical unity of the content of thinking” was uneven and obscure. Increasingly, he came to doubt that “the objectivity of mathematics and science was compatible at all with a psychological grounding of the logical”. As a result of these doubts, as he puts it, “I saw myself forced more and more to general critical reflections on the essence of logic and especially on the relation between the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of the content of knowledge”. He resigned himself to postponing his philosophical-mathematical investigations until he had succeeded in “penetrating the basic questions of epistemology and the critical understanding of logic as a science”.⁴

By Husserl's own account, then, the *Logical Investigations* has two sources: the problem of providing a scientific, self-reflexive account of logical form and method, as a condition of science, and the problem of relating the subjectivity of knowing with the objectivity of the content of knowledge. Among the many formidable issues confronted by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*, perhaps the most formidable is that of the convergence of these two problems.

In this connection, there are two important clues to the work, flanking the foreword of the first edition. These clues deserve mention both because they situate the work historically and biographically and because, not unlike the two sources of the work, they signal a basic tension running through it. The first clue is the dedication “in admiration and friendship” to Carl Stumpf, Brentano's erstwhile student, under whom Husserl, at Brentano's suggestion, wrote his habilitation “On the Concept of Number: Psychological Analyses”, later incorporated into the *Philosophy of Arithmetic: Psychological and Logical Investigations* of 1891 (XII: 1–21, 289–338). The second clue is the quotation from Goethe at the end of the foreword: “One is against nothing more stridently than the errors one has first set aside” (Goethe 316).

What makes these clues intriguing is their seeming incongruity both with aspects of the historical record and with one another. There is a standard picture of Husserl's development in the last decade or so of the nineteenth century to the effect that Frege's criticisms, in an 1894 review of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, enabled Husserl to see the error of his psychologistic ways in the days when he worked under Brentano and Stumpf.⁵

On this standard picture, the Goethe quotation is tantamount to an admission of such a lapse. The quotation, however, is misleading inasmuch as it suggests that Husserl embraced the psychologistic arguments criticized in the *Prolegomena*. But there is no evidence in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic* or elsewhere that he ever seriously entertained a theory of the sorts drafted by Mill, Sigwart, Mach, or others.⁶

Still, Husserl does attribute the mistakes of his earlier writings, if not explicitly to a psychologistic approach, at least to a conviction that psychology in some sense – no doubt the “descriptive psychology” that he learned from Brentano – is the key to a “philosophical clarification” of logic. Husserl also observes that the course of his development had distanced him “from the men and works to which my scientific education is most indebted” (XVIII: 7). Given this observation and the critique of his earlier work, his dedication to Stumpf might seem disingenuous, to say the least.

Yet Husserl’s debt to Stumpf is sufficient to regard the dedication as quite genuine. When Husserl penned his dedication, Stumpf was mainly known for three works: his habilitation, *On the Psychological Origin of the Representation of Space* (1873), his two volume study of the *Psychology of Sound* (1883–90), and a long essay entitled “Psychology and Epistemology” (1892). From the account, in Stumpf’s habilitation, of the relation between visual qualities and extension, Husserl derives his definition of dependent and independent parts, a central theme of the Fourth Investigation, and the notion of “fusion” (*Verschmelzung*) elaborated by Stumpf in his *Psychology of Sound* provides Husserl with crucial hints in the same context. What also no doubt struck a sympathetic chord in Husserl’s thinking is the essay “Psychology and Epistemology”, with its insistence that there must be a way between empiricism and Kantian transcendentalism and that, while rational justification and psychological explanation are not to be confused, “no claim can be epistemologically true and psychologically false”.⁷

This last remark might in fact be considered one of the mottos of the first volume of the *Logical Investigations*, entitled “Prolegomena to Pure Logic”. As the title suggests, the *Prolegomena* say what must be said first, in order to carry out the task of the *Logical Investigations*. In the *Prolegomena* Husserl accordingly argues that logic is a theoretical, formal, and a priori science, independent of psychology or metaphysics, in contrast to the widely held assumption that logic is a practical art dependent upon some other, typically empirical science. Yet he is far from denying that the question of logic’s “theoretical foundations” (*theoretische Grundlagen*) and its relationship to psychology “essentially coincides . . . with the car-



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